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## UK briefing: January

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# Palestine

Britain playing double role:  
withholding UNRWA funds and  
sending troops to Saudi, while  
attempting return to pre-October 7th  
status quo

- Britain has continued to increase its support for Israel in deed, while offering rhetorical concessions to the Palestinians in an attempt to try and salvage a pre-October 7th 'political solution'.
- In January Britain participated alongside the US in [airstrikes on Yemen](#) and [stationed 50 British troops](#) in Saudi Arabia to defend them from Yemen's Ansar Allah.

It also joined the US, Canada and others in ['pausing' urgently-needed funds](#) for the UN Palestinian aid agency UNRWA following allegations by Israel that 12 UNRWA employees were 'involved' in the October 7th operation.

- The claims have not been corroborated. It is widely believed that Israel made the allegations against UNRWA - which has long sought to break - as revenge for the International Court of Justice (ICJ) issuing its provisional ruling the day prior, which indicated credibility to the accusations of genocide being carried out by Israel, and calling on it to halt its attacks.
- Alongside this, the Foreign Office has made noises ostensibly in support of Palestinians in a bid to appear 'balanced'. This includes Foreign Secretary David Cameron calling on Israel to ['stop and think'](#) before carrying out further bombardment of Palestinian refugees crowded into camps in Rafah, in Gaza's south.

More significant was Cameron's suggestion that Britain accelerate bilateral [recognition of a Palestinian state](#) in order to revitalise hopes of a political solution.

- Cameron's call came at the same time as news broke that the US State Department [was reviewing options](#) for recognising Palestine as a state.
- Such a move would entrench the rule of the discredited Palestinian Authority and signal an attempted return to the pre-October 7th status quo of the flatlining Oslo process.

It also reflects anxieties within Britain and the US over losing support from the likes of regional allies like Saudi Arabia - who have [demanded the institution](#) of the 'two state solution' before progressing with normalisation with Israel - over their fanatically one-sided support for Israel, and lack of 'endgame'.

- Cameron's suggestion does not constitute a formal government position, and was [met with backlash](#) by other Conservative MPs who believed it would be 'rewarding Hamas'.

Government bans Hizb ut-Tahrir under  
terror laws, debate turns to Iranian IRGC as  
next target

- On 19th January the government added Hizb ut-Tahrir (HT) to its list of proscribed terrorist organisations, with the ban spanning both its UK branch and its international organisations.
- Calls to proscribe HT have been issued by British politicians for at least 3 decades, and a [pledge by then-Prime Minister Tony Blair](#) to ban the group after the 7/7 bombings in 2005 never materialised, after the government failed to establish a link between the group and international terrorism.

This time, [the government argued](#) that HT's support of Hamas and the Al Qsa Flood operation was an indication that it was 'an antisemitic organisation that actively promotes and encourages terrorism'.

[Renewed scrutiny](#) of the UK branch of HT came after a video of a Palestine demonstration by the group saw attendees calling for jihad, a few weeks after the beginning of Israel's assault.

- Curiously, however, the Parliamentary debate on the proscription of HT quickly shifted to debates around Iran's IRGC (Iranian Revolutionary Guard Corps) and the possibility of proscribing the military branch.

Shadow Security Minister Dan Jarvis, for example, [asked whether](#) "a bespoke proscription mechanism for state-sponsored organisations—which Labour has already called for—is now required", while hawkish backbench Conservative MP Iain Duncan Smith [claimed that](#) "America has asked the British Government to proscribe it, and we simply have not yet responded."

- In response, Security Minister Tom Tugendhat was non-committal but pointed to powers in the National Security Act 2023 that could be used against state/state-sanctioned actors, like the IRGC.

# National Security

- A proscription of the IRGC is something that has been called for by [the opposition Labour Party](#) and most recently [by Robin Simcox](#), leader Commissioner for Countering Extremism.

These calls form part of an escalation in rhetoric and action against Iran, largely for its role in supporting anti-Zionist groups in the region.

## Expectation of future British war against Russia lead to calls for conscription and 'citizen army' by senior military figures

- The head of the British Army, General Patrick Sanders, has called for Britain to be put on a 'war footing' for a future potential direct war with Russia - which includes the [development of a voluntary 'citizen army'](#) to supplement the formal armed forces, whose numbers have been reduced over the years.

This suggestion was affirmed by former Army officer and NATO leader Richard Sherriff, who went further and suggested that Britain [consider the possibility of bringing back conscription](#) to the armed forces themselves.

- These calls came shortly after Defence Secretary Grant Shapps described the current context as having moved from a ['post-war' to a 'pre-war world'](#), in which Britain should prepare for future military conflict with China, Russia, Iran and North Korea.

They also come after months of mounting belief among the US, Britain and others that Russia will be victorious in the war with Ukraine.

- Amidst backlash at the suggestion, the British government [formally distanced itself from the idea](#) that it would be introducing proscription, but it is now clear that there is a growing expectation of Britain engaging in direct warfare with Russia and other countries in the near future.