UK confirms it will honour pledge to oppose anti-Israel resolutions

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The government has confirmed it will oppose all four UN Human Rights Council resolutions against Israel under Item 7 this week – devoted to discussing abuses in the West Bank and Gaza.

The Jewish state is the only country to be subject to a such a permanent item of condemnation and the foreign office of Boris Johnson threatened last year to vote against all motions if the bias persisted.

Making good on that promise, Alistair Burt, the Middle East minister, told the House of Commons on Wednesday: “The UK made clear some time ago in relation to Item 7 of the UN Human Right Council determinations we would oppose those items – and we expect to do so.” The vote is due to take place in Geneva on Friday.

It comes after a Jewish Leadership Council-led meeting with Jeremy Hunt this week at which the foreign secretary confirmed he would press for the abolition of the notorious segment, saying it continued to undermine the credibility of the international body. Conservative Friends of Israel chairs Lord Pickles and Stephen Crabb and honorary president Lord Polak also wrote to Hunt and Theresa May to urge the UK to take a stand.

World Jewish Congress president Ronald Lauder said: “These resolutions place undue blame on Israel for human rights abuses, while explicitly ignoring the responsibility and culpability of the Palestinian leadership, including Hamas, to this regard.

“This one-sided approach directly harms the Palestinians and exacerbates their suffering, while derailing the Council from meaningful and effective debate and undermining its credibility as a body dedicated to defending human rights around the world. We urge other European Union states to follow in the UK’s lead and firmly reject the UNHRC’s pathological promotion of anti-Israel resolutions.”

Marie van der Zyl, President of the Board of Deputies, said: “We congratulate the UK on its new and principled stance on announcing that it will fulfill its promise to vote against all resolutions tabled under the UN Human Rights Council’s discriminatory Item 7. We would particularly like to thank Prime Minister Theresa May and Foreign Secretary Jeremy Hunt for their leadership on this issue.

“All supporters of human rights should applaud this move, which could in time lead to the UN ceasing to be discredited through its overt partisanship and becoming trusted once again as the arbiter of universal human rights that we all want it to be. We call on other states who genuinely support the advancement of human rights to follow the UK’s moral stand.”