

# Political Affairs Digest

*A daily summary of political events affecting the Jewish Community*

Scottish Council of Jewish Communities

SCoJeC

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## Home Affairs

### House of Commons Point of Order

**Matthew Offord (Conservative):** On a point of order, Mr Speaker. In December 2016, the British Government adopted the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance definition of “anti-Semitism”. This definition explains that claiming that the existence of the state of Israel is a racist and illegitimate endeavour is anti-Semitic. Therefore, by the Government’s own measure, the words “Israeli apartheid week” are manifestly anti-Semitic and violate this country’s own definition of anti-Semitism. Given that the Secretary of State and his team are here and that yesterday marked the beginning of Israeli Apartheid Week, may I ask you, Sir, how we can have a statement from the Government condemning these actions and, if appropriate, bringing forward the necessary legislation to prevent them?

**Mr Speaker:** I do not know whether a Minister is minded to make a statement on the matter, and I am not entirely sure which Minister the hon. Gentleman had in mind. The Secretary of State for Education is in his place, but it is not obvious to me that the matter is for the Secretary of State. Other Ministers are also present on the Treasury Bench and they will have heard what the hon. Gentleman has had to say. I suspect that what he has had to say will be communicated more widely to members of the Government. I think that for today we will leave it there, but I thank him for saying what he wanted to say.

<https://hansard.parliament.uk/commons/2018-02-20/debates/8139424C-3A59-4A95-930B-A5D6E308BAEC/PointsOfOrder#contribution-7FF18811-151A-4CAD-B9BD-0E5986F0E120>

### House of Commons Written Answers

#### Antisemitism

**Ivan Lewis (Independent)** [127178] To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what assessment she has made of the implications for her Department's policies of the Community Security Trust's Antisemitic Incidents Report 2017.

**Victoria Atkins:** The Home Office is committed to addressing all forms of hate crime. In July 2016, the Department published *Action Against Hate: The UK Government’s Plan for Tackling Hate Crime*.

The Government will refresh this action plan in 2018, working closely with a wide

network of partners and stakeholders including the Community Security Trust (CST).

<http://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Commons/2018-02-07/127178/>

The report referred to above can be read at  
<https://cst.org.uk/data/file/a/b/IR17.1517308734.pdf>

The Plan for Tackling Hate Crime referred to above can be read at  
[https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/543679/Action\\_Against\\_Hate\\_-\\_UK\\_Government\\_s\\_Plan\\_to\\_Tackle\\_Hate\\_Crime\\_2016.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/543679/Action_Against_Hate_-_UK_Government_s_Plan_to_Tackle_Hate_Crime_2016.pdf)

### Antisemitism

**Catherine West (Labour)** [127282] To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many anti-Semitic hate crimes have been reported in each of the last 12 months in (a) London Borough of Haringey, (b) London and (c) England.

**Nick Hurd:** The Home Office collects and publishes data on the number of religious hate crimes recorded by the police in England and Wales by police force area.

Data on religious hate crimes by police force area can be found in the Home Office Hate Crime Open Data Tables, available here:

[https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/651719/hate-crime-1617-hosb1717-tables.ods](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/651719/hate-crime-1617-hosb1717-tables.ods)

For religious hate crimes, the Home Office began collecting information on the perceived religion of the victim on a mandatory basis in April 2017. These data are due to be published in the next hate crime statistical bulletin in autumn 2018.

This Government is committed to tackling hate crime. The UK has a strong legislative framework to tackle hate crime. We are working across Government with police, (including National Community Tensions Team), the Crown Prosecution Service and community partners to send out a clear message that hate crime will not be tolerated and we will vigorously pursue and prosecute those who commit these crimes.

<http://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Commons/2018-02-07/127282/>

### Faith Schools: Admissions

**Jo Stevens (Labour)** [127674] To ask the Secretary of State for Education, pursuant to the Answer of 2 February 2018 to Question 125493 on Faith Schools; what discussions his Department has had with local authorities on the effect of the removal of the cap on the distribution of (a) school admissions and (b) catchment areas.

**Anne Milton:** The department is considering carefully its response to the 'Schools that work for everyone' consultation, including in relation to the faith cap. We will set out our response in due course.

With any free school proposal, the department takes account of the views of local authorities when making decisions. This will continue for future free schools application rounds.

<http://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Commons/2018-02-08/127674/>

### Faith Schools: Admissions

**Jo Stevens (Labour)** [127675] To ask the Secretary of State for Education, pursuant to the Answer of 2 February 2018 to Question 125493 on Faith Schools, what assessment he has made of whether allowing faith schools greater freedom to discriminate on the grounds of faith conflicts on the Government's proposals to strengthening equalities legislation.

**Anne Milton:** Faith designated schools are allowed to admit children on the basis

of their faith as part of their oversubscription criteria. The ability to do this is permitted by the Equality Act.

<http://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Commons/2018-02-08/127675/>

*The answer referred to above can be read at*

<http://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Commons/2018-01-30/125493/>

### **Hezbollah: Flags**

**Damien Moore (Conservative)** [127109] To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what records her Department holds on complaints to the police about the display of Hezbollah flags at the Al-Quds Day rally in London on 18 June 2017.

**Ben Wallace:** The Home Office does not hold records of complaints made to the police about the display of Hezbollah flags at the 2017 Al-Quds Day rally in London.

<http://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Commons/2018-02-07/127109/>

## **UK Parliament Early Day Motion**

**John Mann (Labour) (949) Community Security Trust – Incident Report** – That this House notes the 2017 incidents report by the Community Security Trust (CST); further notes that the report details the highest annual total of antisemitic incidents that CST has ever recorded of 1,382 cases, a three per cent increase from the 2016 total, which was itself a record annual total; is concerned that there is now a pattern of consistently high incident totals; is further concerned that these most recent high figures were sustained by a combination of factors, including the increase in all forms of recorded hate crime and the publicity regarding alleged antisemitism in the Labour Party; resolves to continue to offer cross-party parliamentary support for CST's work and vital activities for the Jewish community; and further resolves to work with CST, the Government and other organisations to ensure the safety of the Jewish Community in Britain.

<http://www.parliament.uk/edm/2017-19/949>

## **House of Commons Home Affairs Committee**

### **Inquiry into Hate crime and its violent consequences**

**Q259 Baroness Warsi of Dewsbury:** ... If I go back to my first public intervention on this in politics in 2011 when I talked about Islamophobia having passed the dinner table test, one of the first questions that was raised both within Government and by other parliamentarians was: where is the evidence for the fact that Islamophobia exists? One of the challenges at the time was that we had no mechanism by which we could record hate crime and so over a period of years since 2011 to now successive Governments have introduced mechanisms through the police, third-party reporting, individual organisations, community trusts, to bring forward the statistics and data. ...

It gives me no comfort to say that since 2011 to now there is a huge amount of data to show that the statement that I made at the time that Islamophobia had passed the dinner table test was correct and there is widespread Islamophobia, anti-Muslim and anti-Muslim discrimination across Britain. ...

**Q260 Baroness Warsi of Dewsbury:** ... Unfortunately, because of the climate that we live in and because of this rise in Islamophobia over time, a shock jock Muslim story on the front page sells papers. This is nothing new. We have been here before. In fact, I was talking to the guys from IPSO before we came in about that some of the headlines we

see now could have been written about the Jewish community in the 1930s, and indeed were, could have been written about the gay community in the 1950s when they were the other, or could have been written about Irish Catholics in the 1980s. ...

**Q262 Professor Frost (Chair of the Ethics Council, National Union of Journalists):**

... One of the best ways to sell newspapers ... is to raise issues of fear. ... Newspapers over the years have tried to develop the idea that there is a risk for which they either provide a solution or at least try to ameliorate what the risk is, because then people will continue to buy the newspapers. One of the easiest ways to do that is to pick a group which is an “other” group, a small minority of the community, and at the moment a good one is Muslims, because of Isis and terrorists based around Isis and others. It is very easy to say, “This is a group of which you should be fearful”, ignoring the fact that the percentage of terrorists in the Muslim community is no larger than in any other community. They are easily identified and you can say, “That is a Muslim”, and it makes for easy stories. ...

**Q265 Baroness Warsi of Dewsbury:** ... There was a recent case with multiple headlines on the front page of *The Times* about this story that you may recall. It was a story of a young Christian child who was adopted by Muslim parents. There was a photograph that was doctored and then used. I think it was an Abu Dhabi photo that was used as a local photo. It was presented as a kind of black and white issue. This was a Christian child adopted or fostered by a very conservative Muslim couple who would not let her eat bacon or wear the crucifix. I think you will remember the details of that. Much of that story has proven to be false. ...

**Q266 Professor Frost:** ... 64% say they get all their knowledge from the press and that 74% of Britons know next to nothing about Islam. ... What is worrying is if they are getting all their information about Islam from the press and if that press is basically dripping small doses of inaccurate knowledge into their ears ...

**Q269 Baroness Warsi of Dewsbury:** ... I think Islamophobia is Britain’s bigotry blind spot. I think we still fail to see it in the way that we see other forms of discrimination and it is why the press choose to focus on it because it is the bit of bigotry that they feel they can still get away with. ...

... you can’t get away with writing homophobic comment pieces or racist comment pieces or anti-Semitic comment pieces, thankfully, in the way that you could have done in the past. But it is obvious from the comment pieces that we are seeing—when people like Trevor Kavanagh, who was on IPSO ... start complaining that complainants are complaining about his conduct or when they start talking about the Muslim Problem—capital letters—which leads to people like yourself and 100 parliamentarians, the Board of Deputies, to hold their hands up in horror and say, “Where are we going with this kind of Nazi type language?” ...

**Q271 Stephen Doughty (Labour Co-op):** ... I am regularly being told about the actual impact of this on the lives of individual constituents. One of the most powerful examples was from young Muslim girls in the constituency who are fourth, fifth generation families who certainly felt that in the last few years they were getting more abuse in the streets and so on and they directly attributed this back to what was going on in the press. ...

**Q273 Professor Frost:** ... Since IPSO started it has dealt with 18,666 cases of discrimination and I can’t say that all of those are Islamophobia but I think we can all imagine that quite a significant percentage of them is going to be. ...

**Q276 Professor Frost:** ... IPSO can’t monitor what is going on in the way that we were promised. The code of conduct is exactly the same as the one that the PCC had. ...

**Q280 Baroness Warsi of Dewsbury:** ... if you say “Muslim grooming town” you might have got it inaccurate because it is not a Muslim grooming town, which is obvious and this was one of the headlines that was run, and you might say, “I’m really sorry, that was inaccurate”, but what I would really like them to say is, “That was discriminatory”. Inaccuracy makes it look like, “Oops, I made a mistake” whereas discriminatory means, “I

did a really nasty, malicious piece". I am absolutely convinced that these pieces in the media are nasty malicious pieces, deliberately targeting a community with a view to getting a reaction in their readership and poisoning the public discourse, not "Oops, I made a mistake because I got a digit wrong in some maths figure". I think inaccuracy has been an easy copout when we should be dealing with discrimination. ...

**Q283 Baroness Warsi of Dewsbury:** ... We do not tolerate preachers of hate in this country and we consistently work through the Home Office and the Home Secretary excludes people from coming into this country. We have a Prevent programme, whatever its challenges are but its aim is, among other things, to deal with preachers of hate. Hate can be preached from a paper as much as it can be preached from a pulpit. I think Government have to take this seriously and apply the laws in relation to hate speech consistently, whether it is done in a place of worship, over the television by hate preachers, in big gatherings that people may come and attend from overseas and we exclude those people, or whether it is done on a daily basis through newspapers. ...

**Q296 Chair (Yvette Cooper, Labour):** Why do you not have incitement to hatred included within your code?

**Sir Alan Moses (Chair, Independent Press Standards Organisation):** Because it is a criminal offence.

**Q297 Chair:** Does that mean you think it is okay if the prosecutors, for whatever reason, do not have the capacity or resources to pursue something through the criminal route, you will still not take any further action if it is referred to you? If you have a complaint referred to you that may or may not be pursued by the police or prosecutors, even if you look at the case and you think it is incitement to racial hatred or incitement to hatred against another protected group, it is okay and you will not pursue it because it is a matter for the police?

**Sir Alan Moses:** I do not see how you can say that because you do not pursue it if you think it is okay. The mere fact that you do not pursue it as a regulatory breach does not mean to say you think it is okay. It is merely a fact that regulation ought to deal with those matters in the interstices that are not within the criminal law. ...

**Q304 Sir Alan Moses:** A balance has to be struck between allowing people to criticise or write offensive material about groups or religions or beliefs, and about protecting individuals. The reason clause 12 is drafted the way it is is in order to maintain that balance. People in this country, however much you may regret it, are allowed to write offensive abusive things about individuals as long as they do not attack the individuals but only attack the groups. That is part of the freedom of expression that the media has. ...

**Chair:** Why do you think it is important to include discrimination against individuals if it is not important to include discrimination, including inflammatory content, against groups?

**Sir Alan Moses:** ... it seems to me a balance has to be struck, however much one may dislike it, between the right to express yourselves in pejorative, provocative ways about groups. There seems to be a distinction between doing that and attacking an individual in those ways.

**Q306 Chair:** Why is that? What is the distinction?

**Sir Alan Moses:** The distinction is that you are allowed, in the law of this country, to attack groups and be abusive about them.

**Q307 Chair:** Your clear view is that you think there is a real problem, you think there is a real problem in the print media but there is no further role for you to play in addressing it. Is that correct?

**Sir Alan Moses:** I think there is a great role that we play in addressing it ...

**Chair:** In 0.0001% of cases.

**Sir Alan Moses:** ... a balance has to be struck between ... allowing people to criticise groups in highly pejorative ways, on the one hand, and on the other hand seeking to

protect individuals. It is an extremely difficult task that my Committee take very seriously every day. The fact that we do not uphold complaints, I would like to stress, does not mean to say that we approve or do not find deeply offensive some of the material written. The question is how the balance should be struck. ...

**Q321 Naz Shah (Labour):**... Trevor Kavanagh attacked a complainant for complaining to IPSO, breaching the very reason of IPSO's existence; he remained on the board. He breached the code himself for his article; he remained on the board. He wrote a number of inflammatory articles about Muslims, including the infamous "Muslim Problem"; he remained on the board. Did you sack Trevor Kavanagh, who left two years into his three-year term, after his latest act or did he resign?

**Sir Alan Moses:** He resigned.

**Q322 Naz Shah:** Why didn't you sack him?

**Sir Alan Moses:** The sequence of events was that when the complaint was made about the latest article, the Complaints Committee had to consider it. It did consider it and it dismissed the complaint under Article 12 and it did not find a breach of Article 1. After it had ruled in relation to that, then Trevor Kavanagh resigned. ...

**Q325 Naz Shah:** Sir Alan, do you consider "the Muslim Problem" article not hatred?

**Sir Alan Moses:** I considered it deeply offensive.

**Q326 Naz Shah:** Despite the fact that the Jewish Board of Deputies, myself, lots of parliamentarians, more than a fifth of this house, complained and found it to be hate speech, you found it to be offensive?

**Sir Alan Moses:** I found it to be offensive, yes. ...

**Q327 Chair:** Do you think it was hate speech?

**Sir Alan Moses:** I am not prepared to answer that question, because my job as Chairman of the Committee is to speak for the Committee and the Committee made no ruling about that ...

**Q328 Chair:** Was it hate speech? ...

**Nazir Afzal (Member, Complaints Committee, Independent Press Standards Organisation):** It was hateful. ... There is no other way I could perceive what was said, particularly the words "Muslim Problem".

**Anne Lapping (Board Member, Independent Press Standards Organisation):** I found it deeply offensive, really offensive.

**Q329 Chair:** The word "offensive" is a bit of a one to hide behind. I am interested in whether you think it is hate speech.

**Anne Lapping:** I thought it was disgusting. I am not sure what hate speech is in legal terms. I am not sure if it was legally hate speech. I do not know. ...

**Q336 Naz Shah:** ... Nazi-like terminology was not considered a breach? ...

**Sir Alan Moses:** If it was Nazi-like, it would have been considered as hate speech.

**Naz Shah:** Sorry, it was Nazi-like. The Jewish Board of Deputies stated as such.

**Sir Alan Moses:** That was their opinion.

**Naz Shah:** That was their opinion. I agree with that opinion, but you disagree with that opinion?

**Sir Alan Moses:** My view was that to use that language was deeply offensive. ...

**Q338 Naz Shah:** Do you agree referring to "the Muslim Problem" in capitals, as "the Jewish Problem" was referred to by the Nazis, was hate speech, yes or no?

**Sir Alan Moses:** I am not prepared to give an off-the-cuff view about that.

**Naz Shah:** It is not an off-the-cuff view, is it, Sir Alan?

**Sir Alan Moses:** My only function as a member of the Committee is to represent and indicate the ruling of the Committee on those questions. I am not prepared to give a personal view on what I think of that particular article more than I have said. ...

Q359 **Chair:** ...you have within the Editor's Code a whole series of statements that are basically replicating the law of the land.

**Sir Alan Moses:** ... yes.

Q360 **Chair:** Therefore, what is your justification for not including the law on incitement to hatred?

**Sir Alan Moses:** The justification that I have given is that the Editor's Code committee has taken the view that the matter in that particular circumstance ought to be dealt with by the criminal law.

Q361 **Chair:** Why? The others are not. You are not expecting the criminal law to deal with these other things. You are expecting your code, as well as the law, to deal with those. Why would you on this one issue and not on all of these others?

**Sir Alan Moses:** I think the context is totally different. There is a difficult line to be drawn between incitement to racial hatred, or religious hatred, and protecting the right to write offensive material about a group. ...

Q369 **Naz Shah:** ...Coming back to the question I raised earlier, we talked about "the Muslim Problem". Would you agree that using the terminology "the Jewish Problem" is Nazi-like?

**Sir Alan Moses:** Yes.

Q370 **Naz Shah:** Would you agree that is hate speech?

**Sir Alan Moses:** Yes, I would.

Q371 **Naz Shah:** What is the difference between "the Jewish Problem" for the Jewish community and "the Muslim Problem"? Why are you finding it so difficult to accept "the Muslim Problem" being hate speech when you are happy to say "the Jewish Problem" was hate speech?

**Sir Alan Moses:** The difference is that I am a member of a committee that did consider that particular question ... The committee reached a view about it and gave its decision. We cannot have, in any press regulator, individual members of the committee giving their own personal views, whether they agree or do not agree with the decision of the committee. ...

Q372 **Naz Shah:** Sorry, Sir Alan, let me make this really clear. You have just stated very clearly that you accept "the Jewish Problem" is Nazi-like language and is language of hatred. Putting the article to one side—I am not talking about the article—I am asking you, to this end, do you agree that "the Muslim Problem" is also language that is hatred?

**Sir Alan Moses:** I cannot put the article aside.

Q373 **Naz Shah:** Why can't you? It is a simple question.

**Sir Alan Moses:** No, because it is in the article on which the committee ruled. ...

**To read the full transcript see**

<http://data.parliament.uk/writtenevidence/committeeevidence.svc/evidencedocument/home-affairs-committee/hate-crime-and-its-violent-consequences/oral/78630.html>

TOP

## [Israel](#)

*See also the Point of Order relating to 'Israel Apartheid Week' which has been listed in the "Home Affairs" section above, and the Written Answer relating to Hezbollah, also in the "Home Affairs" section above.*

## House of Commons Oral Answers

### Middle East

7. **Luciana Berger (Labour Co-op):** What recent discussions he has had with the

Secretary of State for International Development on supporting the creation of an international fund for Israeli-Palestinian peace. [903895]

17. **Alex Cunningham (Labour):** What recent discussions he has had with the Secretary of State for International Development on the political obstacles to the provision of healthcare to Palestinians in the west bank and Gaza. [903905]

**The Minister for the Middle East (Alistair Burt):** The United Kingdom supports the concept of an international fund for Israeli-Palestinian peace. The Department for International Development's people-to-people programme has similar aims, and brings together individuals from both sides to build support for a durable solution. We also remain concerned about the provision of healthcare in Gaza, and we are urging all the parties to take the necessary steps to improve conditions there.

**Luciana Berger:** I think the Minister for his response. With the UK's increased commitment to funding coexistence projects in Israel-Palestine, which many on both sides of the House have long supported, we have an opportunity to lead the way on the global stage. Will he therefore pledge the UK's diplomatic support to help to create that international fund, to ensure that our funding is matched by others as part of a sustainable international initiative to build the peace in the middle east that we all long for?

**Alistair Burt:** Many of us have worried over the years that one of the worst aspects of the conflict has been the separation of peoples. To that extent, we are following the concept of the development of this fund very carefully, and I will continue to take a strong personal interest in it. The sentiment behind it is exactly why we have the £3 million programme, but we will be watching the development of the international fund and giving it support where we can.

**Alex Cunningham:** A couple of weeks ago, I was humbled to meet a group of young Palestinians and listen to their personal stories about the restrictions on healthcare. A report from the World Health Organisation states that 54 patients died in 2017 while awaiting exit permits to get medical treatment outside Gaza. Will the Minister press Israel to remove the restrictions on patients, to prevent more Palestinians from dying while waiting for medical treatment?

**Alistair Burt:** The circumstances in Gaza remain dire in many ways. The free movement of patients and medical personnel is vital to the effectiveness of care. We regularly raise concerns about ambulance and permit delays with the Israeli authorities, and we will continue to do so.

**Bob Blackman (Conservative):** Since September 2015, some 58 Israelis and four foreign nationals have been murdered by Palestinian terrorists in more than 400 separate stabbing, shooting and car ramming incidents. The terrorists have been rewarded with honorary titles, monthly salaries and other opportunities. Will my right hon. Friend make it clear to the Palestinian Authority that, until such time as glorification of terrorism ends, there can be no peace in the middle east?

**Alistair Burt:** As my hon. Friend is aware, we continue to condemn incitement and violent activities in the region at all times. The attacks that he mentions are absolutely not conducive to peace and should not be celebrated. However, the context of the situation means that we must continue to work for an end to the conflict between Israel and the Palestinians, because only when that happens will the seeds of conflict be taken away. In the meantime, we unreservedly condemn all terrorist and violent attacks.

**Liz McInnes (Labour):** After the US halved its funding for the United Nations Relief and Works Agency last month, President Trump explained the decision by saying that the Palestinians "disrespected us...by not allowing our great vice president to see them...that money is not going to them unless they sit down and negotiate peace."

May I ask the Minister to state, on behalf of this House, that extorting the Palestinian Authority to bend the knee to Mike Pence by removing essential healthcare and education from impoverished Palestinian families is nothing short of a disgrace?

**Alistair Burt:** The actions of the United States Government in this case have nothing to do with us. Our view on UNRWA remains absolutely clear. I met the director of UNRWA just this morning at the Department for International Development. We will continue to support it and to fund it. To leave refugees in Lebanon and Jordan without support would be a disaster. UNRWA needs to continue to get support, and it will do so from the United Kingdom.

<https://hansard.parliament.uk/commons/2018-02-20/debates/C7A868F2-8D00-4FE1-B8A5-815239D87C9A/MiddleEast>

## House of Commons Written Answers

### Gaza: Fuels

**Catherine West (Labour)** [127744] To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, what information his Department holds on fuel supplies for back-up generators in Gaza; and if he will make a statement.

**Alistair Burt:** We are aware of reports that Israel has resumed supplying additional electricity to Gaza following an official request by the Palestinian Authority. This has increased supply from an average of four hours a day to six hours per day. We remain concerned about the humanitarian situation in Gaza and continue to monitor it closely. The UK will continue to urge all the parties to take the necessary practical steps to improve conditions in Gaza, including restoring the availability of electricity as a matter of urgency.

<http://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Commons/2018-02-08/127744/>

### Gaza and West Bank: Health Services

**Catherine West (Labour)** [127749] To ask the Secretary of State for International Development, what steps her Department is taking improve health provision for communities in (a) the West Bank and (b) Gaza.

**Alistair Burt:** UK financial assistance to the Palestinian Authority helps to pay the salaries of vetted health public servants in the West Bank, providing up to 3,700 immunisations for children and around 185,000 medical consultations annually. The UK is a long-term supporter of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA), which provides basic services, including basic healthcare, to over 800,000 Palestinian refugees in the West Bank and 1.3 million Palestinian refugees in Gaza. In addition, the UK is supporting approximately 1 million Gazans by providing clean water, rehabilitating sanitation facilities and promoting hygiene standards to stop the spread of disease through the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF).

<http://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Commons/2018-02-08/127749/>

### West Bank: Demolition

**Richard Burden (Labour)** [127853] To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, what recent discussions he has had with his counterpart in the Israeli Government on the demolition of EU-funded structures in the village of Abu Nuwar in the West Bank; and if he will make a statement.

**Alistair Burt:** Officials from our Embassy to Tel Aviv most recently discussed the issue of demolitions of Palestinian property with the Israeli authorities on 19 February. On 6 February, the EU released a local statement expressing strong concerns about demolition by the Israeli authorities of parts of the school of the Bedouin community of Abu Nuwar. Demolitions and evictions of Palestinians from their homes cause unnecessary suffering to ordinary Palestinians; call into

question Israel's commitment to a viable two-state solution; and, in all but the most exceptional cases, are contrary to International Humanitarian Law.

<http://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Commons/2018-02-08/127853/>

## House of Lords Written Answers

### Israeli Settlements

**Baroness Tonge (Non-affiliated)** [HL5451] To ask Her Majesty's Government whether they have made any assessment of the economic, environmental and heritage damage caused to Palestinians by the destruction of ancient olive trees by Israeli settlers.

**Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon:** We are aware of the difficulties facing Palestinian olive growers. We have expressed our serious concerns to the Israeli Government and security officials about the destruction of olive trees and the prevention of access to them on a number of occasions.

<http://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Lords/2018-02-06/HL5451/>

### Marah Bakeer

**Baroness Tonge (Non-affiliated)** [HL5452] To ask Her Majesty's Government what representations they have made to the government of Israel regarding the eight and a half year sentence given to 17 year-old Marah Bakeer, who was arrested on 10 October 2015.

**Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon:** Whilst we have not raised this specific case with the Israeli Government, we regularly discuss matters concerning the treatment of Palestinian minors in detention with the Israeli authorities.

<http://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Lords/2018-02-06/HL5452/>

## Foreign and Commonwealth Office

**Reaffirming UK commitment to a two-state solution which ends the Israeli-Palestinian conflict: Statement by Ambassador Jonathan Allen, Chargé d'Affaires, at the Security Council Briefing on the Middle East.**

... The United Kingdom remains committed to a two-state solution which ends the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and we will support all and any efforts to that end.

Our long-standing goal is a negotiated peace settlement that leads to a safe and secure Israel living alongside a viable and sovereign Palestinian state, with secure and recognised borders and with Jerusalem as a shared capital of both States.

US leadership on this issue is indispensable to achieving a solution that meets the aspirations of both parties, and we look forward to the announcement of peace proposals when the US Administration judges them to be ready. ...

... if a peace process is to succeed, it needs to be conducted in an atmosphere free from violence. We regret that too many people continue to undermine efforts to achieve peace. We condemn the detonation of an Improvised Explosive Device along the Gaza border with Israel on Saturday, wounding four Israeli soldiers, including two seriously. We also condemn the recent terrorist attack in the West Bank settlement of Ariel. ...

... it is unacceptable for anyone to deny the legitimacy of the connection of either the Jewish or Palestinian peoples to the land. ...

We are concerned by the Israeli Government's recent decision to establish a settlement deep in the West Bank – the second in twelve months. ...

We are ... concerned by incursions across Israel's border with Syria earlier this month.

Our commitment to Israel's security is unwavering, and we support Israel's right to defend itself. ...

We want to see renewed peace negotiations, supported by the international community, which lead to a safe and secure Israel, the homeland for the Jewish People, living alongside a viable and sovereign Palestinian state, the homeland for the Palestinian people. ...

**To read the full transcript see**

<https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/reaffirming-uk-commitment-to-a-two-state-solution-which-ends-the-israeli-palestinian-conflict>

## United Nations

**'There is no plan B,' says Guterres, reiterating UN's commitment to two-state solution to Israeli-Palestinian conflict**

UN Special Coordinator for the Middle East Process Nikolay Mladenov delivered his latest monthly briefing to the Security Council, noting that he was doing so at a time when "regional tensions are taking an [increasingly perilous turn](#)."

His comments echoed remarks by UN Secretary-General António Guterres who opened the meeting by underscoring his commitment to achieving two democratic States living side-by-side in peace.

Mr. Guterres emphasized the Organization's long-held support for a two-state solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, stressing: "[There is no Plan B](#)." ...

Warning that "obstacles on the ground have the potential to create an irreversible one-state reality," Mr. Guterres underscored however that: "It is simply impossible to square the circle of a one-state reality with the legitimate national, historic and democratic aspirations of both Israelis and Palestinians." ...

Mr. Mladenov ... spoke of the violence affecting both sides, including the killing of seven Palestinians by the Israeli security forces and the stabbing death of an Israeli civilian by a Palestinian in the West Bank. ...

Also addressing the Council, Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas addressed concerns surrounding the status of Jerusalem, considered holy by both Jews and Muslims as well as Christians.

He recalled the decision announced last December by United States President Donald Trump to recognize the city as Israel's capital.

"It did so ignoring that East Jerusalem is part of the Palestinian territory. It is occupied since 1967. And it is our capital open to all the faithful of the three monotheistic religions," he said.

Mr. Abbas described the situation of the Palestinian people as "no longer bearable," and he called for an international peace conference to be convened this year as a means to find a solution to the stalemate.

Israel's representative to the United Nations Danny Danon also touched on the issue of Jerusalem, observing that the Palestinian leader had left the room prior to his presentation.

"Let me be clear: for thousands of years, Jerusalem has been the heart and soul of our people. Jerusalem has been our capital since the days of King David and Jerusalem will remain the undivided capital of the State of Israel forever," he said.

"We will always insist on Israeli sovereignty but even fair-minded observers would agree that under any possible agreement, Jerusalem would be recognized internationally as our capital." ...

**To read the full transcript see**

<https://news.un.org/en/story/2018/02/1003131>

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## Foreign Affairs

### House of Commons Written Answer

#### Freedom of Religion

**Jim Shannon (DUP)** [903909] What steps he is taking to provide training on freedom of religion or belief for officials of his Department.

**Mark Field:** The FCO provides religious literacy training and organises ad-hoc seminars on specific freedom of religion or belief related themes. These are advertised widely and are open to all staff. Our Diplomatic Academy provides in depth training on human rights, including freedom of religion or belief.

<http://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Commons/2018-02-20/903909/>

### House of Lords Written Answers

#### Hezbollah

**Sheryll Murray (Conservative)** [127153] To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, pursuant to the oral contribution of the Minister for Security of 19 December 2017, Official Report, column 1008, how her Department differentiates between members of the political and military wings of Hezbollah, and if she will make a statement.

**Ben Wallace:** The Government distinguishes between those parts of Hizbollah which are involved in Lebanese politics (and that maintains a social welfare network that encompasses education and health services) and those which are actively concerned in terrorism (and are responsible for the planning, coordination and execution of terrorist attacks). The activity an individual in Hizbollah is engaged in will contribute to what part of the organisation they belong to.

<http://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Commons/2018-02-07/127153/>

*The comments referred to above can be read at*

<https://hansard.parliament.uk/commons/2017-12-19/debates/945F981B-91CA-4DE7-9DEA-0A262ECD7E9C/PreventionAndSuppressionOfTerrorism>

#### Hezbollah: Weapons

**Ian Paisley (DUP)** [127169] To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, what assessment he has made of the extent of expansion of Hezbollah's weapons arsenal; and if he will make a statement.

**Alistair Burt:** We are aware of reports that Hizballah continues to amass an arsenal of weapons in Lebanon. We condemn the threat this poses to regional stability and the direct contravention of UN Security Council Resolutions 1559 and 1701.

<http://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Commons/2018-02-07/127169/>

#### Hezbollah: Iran

**Craig Tracey (Conservative)** [127192] To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, what recent assessment he has made of the level of financial support provided to Hezbollah in Lebanon by Iran.

**Alistair Burt:** We are deeply concerned by reports of Iranian financial support to Hizballah in Lebanon. We continue to work with our partners to challenge Hizballah's regional activities.

<http://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Commons/2018-02-07/127192/>

### **Hezbollah: Terrorism**

**Zac Goldsmith (Conservative)** [127250] To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, what assessment his Department has made of the level of terrorist activity supported by and carried out by Hezbollah.

**Alistair Burt:** We are deeply concerned by Hizballah's involvement in terrorist activity in the Middle East and beyond. We condemn the threat this poses to regional security and stability. We also condemn Hizballah's military support for Assad's brutality in Syria.

<http://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Commons/2018-02-07/127250/>

### **Religious Freedom**

**Baroness Cox (Crossbench)** [HL5398] To ask Her Majesty's Government how the contents of meetings between the Stabilisation Unit and religious and other groups about freedom of religion or belief is disseminated across Government.

**Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon:** The Stabilisation Unit works with Government Departments to help facilitate cross-government conflict assessments, which seek to understand the key characteristics of conflicts. Freedom of religion or belief is considered as part of this framework where there are causes, actors or dynamics of the conflict related to religious beliefs. These internal cross-government analyses are owned and commissioned by Government Departments and often inform wider Government programming and policy making.

<http://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Lords/2018-02-06/HL5398/>

### **Religious Freedom**

**Baroness Cox (Crossbench)** [HL5399] To ask Her Majesty's Government what use they intend to make of the Stabilisation Unit's work on freedom of religion or belief in the establishment of UK Aid Connect consortia.

**Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon:** The Stabilisation Unit's (SU) cross-government conflict assessments analyse the key characteristics of conflicts. These analyses are not normally externally available due to classification issues, and as such will not be available to the consortia selected through the UK Aid Connect programme. The consortia will therefore be encouraged to use the best analysis available to develop coherent and effective programmes of work.

<http://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Lords/2018-02-06/HL5399/>

### **Religious Freedom**

**Baroness Cox (Crossbench)** [HL5400] To ask Her Majesty's Government how the contents of the series of round-table meetings on freedom of religion or belief hosted by the Foreign and Commonwealth Office will be disseminated across Government; and what impact they anticipate it having on Government action overseas.

**Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon:** I have hosted two roundtables to date. The first roundtable on 23 October 2017 looked at Burma in the light of the Rohingya crisis. The second roundtable on 12 December examined the role of women in tackling religiously motivated violent extremism. These roundtables have been excellent opportunities for myself and officials to hear the perspectives of faith leaders whose insights contribute to increasing their overall awareness and policy-making capacity. The meetings will also serve as a platform to inform the Freedom of Religion or Belief (FoRB) work plan that we are developing.

<http://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Lords/2018-02-06/HL5400/>

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## Relevant Legislation \*\* new or updated today

### UK Parliament

#### **European Union (Withdrawal) Bill**

<http://services.parliament.uk/bills/2017-19/europeanunionwithdrawal.html>

#### **Marriage Act 1949 (Amendment) Bill**

<http://services.parliament.uk/bills/2017-19/marriageact1949amendment.html>

#### **\*\* Organ Donation (Deemed Consent) Bill**

<http://services.parliament.uk/bills/2017-19/organdonationdeemedconsent.html>

Briefing paper

<http://researchbriefings.files.parliament.uk/documents/CBP-8236/CBP-8236.pdf>

### Scottish Parliament

#### **Offensive Behaviour at Football and Threatening Communications (Repeal) (Scotland) Bill**

<http://www.parliament.scot/parliamentarybusiness/Bills/105269.aspx>

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## Consultations \*\* new or updated today

**Introducing 'opt-out' consent for organ and tissue donation in England** (closing date 6 March 2018)

<https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/introducing-opt-out-consent-for-organ-and-tissue-donation-in-england>

**Promoting Organ Donation and Transplantation in Northern Ireland** (closing date 9 March 2018)

<https://www.health-ni.gov.uk/consultations/promoting-organ-donation-and-transplantation-northern-ireland>

**Electoral Reform (Scotland)** (closing date 12 March 2018)

<http://www.gov.scot/Resource/0052/00529431.pdf>

**Human Rights (Scottish Parliament)** (closing date 16 March 2018)

<http://www.parliament.scot/parliamentarybusiness/CurrentCommittees/106453.aspx>

**Creating a Parliament for Wales** (closing date 6 April 2018)

<http://senedd.assembly.wales/mgConsultationDisplay.aspx?ID=292>

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