

# Political Affairs Digest

A daily summary of political events affecting the Jewish Community

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## Home Affairs

### House of Lords Written Answer

#### Islam: Legal Systems

**Baroness Cox (Crossbench)** [HL12576] To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the ruling by the Grand Committee of the European Court of Human Rights in the case of Molla Sali v. Greece on the application of sharia law, issued on 19 December 2018; what plans, if any, they have to (1) provide support to women and girls in the UK who suffer as a result of the application of sharia law, and (2) ensure that relevant vulnerable people are made aware of their rights in relation to the application of sharia law within the UK judicial system.

**Lord Keen of Elie:** The Grand Chamber found that the difference of treatment suffered by the applicant, as a beneficiary of a will drawn up in accordance with the Greek Civil Code by a testator of Muslim faith, as compared to a beneficiary of a will drawn up in accordance with the Civil Code by a non-Muslim testator, had no objective and reasonable justification, contrary to the applicant's rights under Article 14 of the European Convention on Human Rights read in conjunction with Article 1 of Protocol No. 1 to the Convention. The Government's initial assessment is that the judgment does not affect inheritance law in England and Wales. Inheritance law in Scotland and Northern Ireland is a devolved matter.

People may choose to abide by the interpretation and application of Sharia principles if they wish to do so, provided their actions do not conflict with the national law. All individuals retain the right to seek a remedy through the English and Welsh courts in the event of a dispute, and the law of England and Wales in relation to the inheritance of property prevails.

The independent Sharia review was published in February 2018. The Government's commitments in response, including supporting awareness raising campaigns with voluntary organisations, can be found in the Integrated Communities Strategy green paper published in March 2018.

<https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Lords/2019-01-07/HL12576/>

A press release about the ECHR ruling referred to above can be read at

<https://tinyurl.com/ycdx5ovc>

and the full judgement at

<http://hudoc.echr.coe.int/eng?i=001-188985>

The Sharia Review referred to above can be read at

[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/678478/6.4152\\_HO\\_CPGF\\_Report\\_into\\_Sharia\\_Law\\_in\\_the\\_UK\\_WEB.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/678478/6.4152_HO_CPGF_Report_into_Sharia_Law_in_the_UK_WEB.pdf)

The Green Paper referred to above can be read at

[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/696993/Integrated\\_Communities\\_Strategy.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/696993/Integrated_Communities_Strategy.pdf)

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## Holocaust

**See the speech by Commissioner Jourovà: “Countering the old disease Antisemitism in Europe – ways forward” in the “Other Relevant Information” section below.**

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## Israel

### House of Commons Written Answers

#### Israel: West Bank

**Louise Haigh (Labour)** [207316] To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, what recent representations he has made to his Israeli counterpart on the (a) forceable removal of shepherding families in Ibzik, in the Jordan Valley (b) destruction of those communities' land by large-scale tank manoeuvres and (c) demolition of a school classroom serving those communities.

**Alistair Burt:** Whilst we have not raised these specific issues, we regularly make clear our serious concerns about the situation in the Occupied Palestinian Territories to the Israeli authorities, both bilaterally and in co-operation with EU partners. These concerns include the evictions of Palestinians and demolition of Palestinian property, which cause unnecessary suffering to ordinary Palestinians, calls 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.

<https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Commons/2019-01-10/207316/>

#### Palestinians: Schools

**Joan Ryan (Labour)** [209284] To ask the Secretary of State for International Development, pursuant to the Answer of 12 December 2018 to Question 200063 on Palestinians: Schools, whether her Department has commissioned the study into the new Palestinian textbooks referred to in that answer.

**Alistair Burt:** The UK government is deeply concerned about the findings of the IMPACT-se report into the Palestinian Authority's (PA) new curriculum and it remains a priority for the Department for International Development (DFID) to commission an independent review of the PA's textbooks. I personally will be

meeting with the PA's Minister for Education to discuss these issues this week. Our timeline for the textbook review remains unchanged. We will publish findings from the review by September 2019. The UK has been convening discussions with potential international partners on commissioning the review together, in order to increase the impact of the study. We will commission the review once we have concluded these discussions. We will publish further information once the assessment has been commissioned.

<https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Commons/2019-01-16/209284/>

*The answer referred to above can be read at*

<https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Commons/2018-12-07/200063/>

*The report referred to above can be read at*

[http://www.impact-se.org/wp-content/uploads/The-New-PA-2018-Curriculum\\_Grades-1-12.pdf](http://www.impact-se.org/wp-content/uploads/The-New-PA-2018-Curriculum_Grades-1-12.pdf)

## House of Lords Written Answers

### Israel: Churches

**Lord McInnes of Kilwinning (Conservative)** [HL12542] To ask Her Majesty's Government what discussions they had with the government of Israel about proposed changes to land ownership in relation to the sale of church properties in Israel.

**Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon:** Officials from our Embassy in Tel Aviv have previously raised the Bill with the Israeli authorities and encouraged a swift resolution that all parties are content with. Our Embassy in Tel Aviv is closely following developments on the Church Lands issue, and we understand that the Bill has been paused.

<https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Lords/2019-01-07/HL12542/>

### Israel: Gaza

**Baroness Tonge (Non-affiliated)** [HL12573] To ask Her Majesty's Government what representations they are making to the government of Israel regarding its frequent incursions into Gaza and of any associated destruction of farmland and crops.

**Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon:** We have not had any discussions on this specific issue.

<https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Lords/2019-01-07/HL12573/>

### Israel: West Bank

**Baroness Tonge (Non-affiliated)** [HL12681] To ask Her Majesty's Government what representations they have made to the government of Israel about the safety and security of the Palestinian population following a reported increase in Israeli violence against Palestinians in the West Bank including East Jerusalem, during the second half of December 2018.

**Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon:** Officials from our Embassy in Tel Aviv raised the issue of settler violence and the importance of accountability with the Israeli authorities on 3 January. Our Ambassador to Israel discussed the issue of settler violence with the Israeli Attorney General on 6 November. The British Government condemns any violence by settlers against Palestinians. Under international law, Israel, as the occupying power, has an obligation to take all measures in its power to protect the Palestinian population from all acts of violence.

<https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Lords/2019-01-08/HL12681/>

#### **Israel: West Bank**

**Baroness Tonge (Non-affiliated)** [HL12682] To ask Her Majesty's Government what representations they have made to the government of Israel about the protection of archaeological finds from the West Bank that are being displayed within Israel.

**Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon:** We have not raised this issue with the Israeli authorities.

<https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Lords/2019-01-08/HL12682/>

#### **Israel: Palestinians**

**Baroness Tonge (Non-affiliated)** [HL12683] To ask Her Majesty's Government what representations they have made to the government of Israel about the treatment of Palestinians who have been shot and wounded by the Israeli Defence Force.

**Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon:** The UK has repeatedly made clear to Israel our longstanding concerns about the manner in which the Israel Defence Forces respond to protests in the border areas, including use of live ammunition. The UK is providing funding to Physicians for Human Rights Israel (PHRI) to enable access to healthcare of Palestinians in Gaza and protect the right to health.

<https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Lords/2019-01-08/HL12683/>

#### **Israeli Settlements: Palestinians**

**Baroness Tonge (Non-affiliated)** [HL12684] To ask Her Majesty's Government what representations they intend to make to the government of Israel following reports of attacks against Palestinian farmers and shepherds by Israeli settlers in the West Bank.

**Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon:** We are aware of reports about attacks against Palestinian farmers. While we have not raised this specific issue, officials from our Embassy in Tel Aviv raised the issue of settler violence and the importance of accountability with the Israeli authorities on 3 January. Our Ambassador to Israel discussed the issue of settler violence with the Israeli Attorney General on 6 November. The British Government condemns any violence by settlers against Palestinians. Under international law, Israel, as the occupying power, has an obligation to take all measures in its power to protect the Palestinian population from all acts of violence.

<https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Lords/2019-01-08/HL12684/>

#### **Israeli Settlements: Palestinians**

**Baroness Tonge (Non-affiliated)** [HL12685] To ask Her Majesty's Government what steps they intend to take to protect Palestinians in the West Bank whose land is being used by Israeli settlers to build new settlements under the protection of the Israeli military.

**Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon:** The Government funds a number of projects to monitor and report on settlement expansion in East Jerusalem and the West Bank and to protect vulnerable Palestinian communities from the effects of settlement expansion. The Minister for the Middle East and North Africa issued a statement on 27 December expressing our disappointment in the latest announcement by the Government of Israel to advance over 2,800 housing units in settlements in the West Bank. Such actions are illegal under international law and call into question Israel's commitment to any future peace agreement with the Palestinians. We strongly urge Israel to cease such actions. We regularly raise our grave concerns

on this issue with the Government of Israel and urge it to reverse its policy of settlement expansion.

<https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Lords/2019-01-08/HL12685/>

*The statement referred to above can be read at*

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/minister-for-middle-east-statement-on-israeli-settlement-announcement>

### **Israel: Palestinians**

**Lord Hylton (Crossbench)** [HL12582] To ask Her Majesty's Government what representations they are making to the government of Israel about that government's decision to lower prison standards for Palestinian prisoners held in Israel; and what assessment they have made of the impact of those measures.

**Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon:** Whilst we have not raised this specific issue with Israeli authorities, we have previously raised our concerns over the treatment of Palestinian prisoners, especially children, in Israeli detention and encourage for international standards to be upheld.

<https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Lords/2019-01-07/HL12582/>

**Lord Hylton (Crossbench)** [HL12583] To ask Her Majesty's Government what is their most recent assessment of the impact on public health in Palestine of (1) the reduction in food aid provided by the World Food Programme, and (2) the level of availability of antibiotics and other medical supplies, water, power and fuel in Gaza.

**Lord Bates:** DFID continually assesses the humanitarian context in Gaza, including in the health sector, which remains under significant strain. Recent information from the World Food Programme states that cuts in its funding will affect 193,000 of the poorest people in Gaza and the West Bank as of January 2019. High food insecurity and poverty rates in Gaza contribute to the dire humanitarian situation. Although the recent increase in electricity supply has positively impacted health facilities, there is still a major shortage of essential drugs, including antibiotics and other medical supplies. Movement restrictions on patients seeking medical treatment outside Gaza and access to water also remain critical concerns.

DFID continues to provide assistance in the region, including providing food assistance to the most vulnerable refugees, supporting urgent health needs, preventing the spread of diseases, and improving access to safe water.

<https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Lords/2019-01-07/HL12583/>

## **World Health Organisation**

### **WHO concerned over health impact of evolving fuel crisis in Gaza**

The World Health Organization is concerned over the potential impact the evolving fuel crisis in Gaza might have on the lives and health of patients whose treatment requires uninterrupted power supply if no immediate solution to address the aggravating shortages is found.

The functionality of Gaza's 14 public hospitals is increasingly jeopardized by electricity shortages and the rapidly declining UN coordinated fuel reserves required to run emergency generators during prolonged electricity cuts from the main grid.

Several of the most severely impacted hospitals have already put rationalization measures in place and suspended sterilization, diagnostic imaging, cleaning, laundry and catering

services during cut-off hours. Elective surgeries have been further reduced and drastic service reductions, including closures of wards and hospitals, are imminent, doctors and nurses in Gaza are warning. ...

“The acute fuel shortages are rapidly exhausting the last coping capacities of the health system in Gaza, which is struggling with chronic shortages of pharmaceuticals, medical supplies and electricity. Without a quick solution to address the critically low emergency fuel supplies in hospitals, many of the most vulnerable patients will be put at risk. Following our visits to several affected facilities in Gaza to assess the situation firsthand, we call on all parties to de-politicize health and to collectively ensure that lifesaving services are sustained,” said Dr Gerald Rockenschaub, head of WHO office for the West Bank and Gaza.

Current fuel reserves are expected to sustain critical hospital services for only a few more days, depending on the number of hours of electricity cuts. ...

**To read the full press release see**

<http://www.emro.who.int/palestine-press-releases/2019/who-concerned-over-the-health-impact-of-evolving-fuel-crisis-in-gaza.html>

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## Other Relevant Information

### European Commission

#### **Speech by Commissioner Jourovà: Countering the old disease Antisemitism in Europe – ways forward**

I am fully aware of the threat Antisemitism poses still today. While remembering the dead, we must also focus on the living.

We may take the presence of the Jewish communities in Europe for granted, as they 'blend in'. But 74 years after the end of the Shoah, we know it is not a given. ... On a recent visit to Vienna, I was again struck by just how much the Jewish community formed the nucleus of the political, intellectual and artistic avant-garde in several European countries before the Second World War. ...

The Nazis and their collaborators tried to extinguish Jewish life across Europe, by systematically killing six million members of the community. This is what we commemorate on Holocaust Memorial Day on 27 January, the day of liberation of the Auschwitz concentration camp.

It is thus not surprising that for almost all European Jews (95% to be precise), saying “the Holocaust is a myth or is being exaggerated” is seen as antisemitic.

The Eurobarometer which we release today, reveals that of all the antisemitic expressions, denying the Holocaust is seen also by the general public as the most problematic, albeit by a significantly lower number, namely only one in two (53%).

The lower the education level, the lower the awareness. Education is key to not only understanding the Shoah as the abyss of humanity, but also to increasing awareness of Antisemitism and how it is still very much alive in Europe today. We need to be vigilant and recall the words of Primo Levi, the famous author and Holocaust survivor: “Those who deny Auschwitz would be ready to remake it”.

The fact that 9 out of 10 Jews in Europe today again perceive a rise in Antisemitism, as recently stated in a Fundamental Rights Agency (FRA) survey, is Europe's shame. And it stands in stark contrast to the perception of the problem among general public where two thirds do *not* perceive an increase of Antisemitism. ...

In fact, 4 in 10 Jews (once again!) think about leaving Europe. When Jews have left Europe

in the past, it has never been a good sign of the state of Europe. ...

... According to the FRA survey, Jews encounter antisemitic hate speech most often online. Hate crime often starts with hate speech. ...

Security is a major issue for the Jewish community and, in fact, only one in two respondents of the FRA survey believe their governments respond adequately to the security needs of the Jewish community. I have said repeatedly that ensuring the security of all its citizens is the primary responsibility of the state and the costs for it must not be borne by individual communities. ...

Following the Fundamental Rights Colloquium in 2015, First Vice-President Timmermans and I appointed a Coordinator on combatting Antisemitism; to be a dedicated contact point for the Jewish communities and to help translate our determination into a meaningful fight against Antisemitism. ...

I am convinced that Antisemitism cannot be defeated if it cannot be defined. Therefore, already in January 2017 I endorsed the IHRA working definition as a basis for our work on countering Antisemitism. The definition outlines the wide variety of ways in which antisemitism is expressed today: from traditional racist ideology, to conspiracy theories, left, right and centre, to antisemitism coming from within the Muslim community or hiding behind anti-Zionism. The FRA survey confirms that these examples are congruent with what the vast majority of respondents see as antisemitic. ...

By now, seven Member States ... have adopted it, as well as many universities, city councils and political parties. The working definition, though non-legally binding in its nature, is very helpful in public discourse as well as training for media, educators and public authorities, without impeding the legal right to freedom of speech. It can support those at the forefront, like law enforcement agencies and teachers, to discern the potentially antisemitic nature of an incident and thus improve victim support. ...

This past December, Member States unanimously agreed a Council declaration to step up their fight against Antisemitism and to improve the security for Jewish communities across Europe. This is an important step forward.

This declaration must not remain an empty shell. It should rather become our guiding manual and a solid basis for concrete action. ...

In the declaration, I see four key areas that we should tackle together with member states:

- 1) security of Jewish communities and premises,
- 2) education and Holocaust remembrance,
- 3) increasing the awareness of Antisemitism as a problem by making use of the IHRA definition and better data collection of Antisemitic incidents, also beyond hate crime and
- 4) supporting the development of national strategies. ...

... I want to announce today that I will ask my services to set up a working group focused on the 'Implementation of the Declaration on Antisemitism' as part of this forum. This will provide a mechanism to provide active support to Member States to make concrete progress in this area. ...

As said earlier, learning from the Holocaust and remembering the victims is at the core of the European project. I am pleased that the European Union acquired Permanent International Partnership with International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance this past November. This will allow the European institutions to liaise even closer with one of the most important European organisation on Holocaust remembrance. ...

I also believe that we need to put our money where our mouth is. So, for 2019 within the Rights, Citizenship and Equality Programme we have made projects a priority that tackle antisemitism and anti-Muslim hatred in innovative ways, that foster Jewish life or engage in coalition building with other communities. ...

Finally, I believe we need to understand better how young people perceive Antisemitism. I have heard more than once from Jewish people of my generation 'I will stay, but I tell my children leave'. ...

The European Union was built on the values of respect for human dignity, human rights,

freedom, democracy, equality and the rule of law. We have the obligation to protect and strengthen the richness of Jewish culture and diversity and its contribution to Europe. With all these initiatives, I sincerely hope that the efforts countering Antisemitism advanced by this Commission will become a turning point for the Jewish people in Europe.

Jewish people should never again have to ask themselves whether they or their children have a future in Europe. They should never have to question whether the authorities will stand on their side to guarantee their safety. Nobody should ever be afraid to go to a synagogue or wear a kippah in the European Union.

**To read the full transcript see**

[http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release\\_SPEECH-19-581\\_en.htm](http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_SPEECH-19-581_en.htm)

**Fact Sheet: Q&A – Eurobarometer survey on Antisemitism in Europe**

[http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release\\_MEMO-19-542\\_en.htm](http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_MEMO-19-542_en.htm)

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

### **UK Parliament**

#### **Holocaust (Return of Cultural Objects) (Amendment) Bill**

<https://services.parliament.uk/Bills/2017-19/holocaustreturnofculturalobjectsamendment.html>

#### **International Development Assistance (Palestinian National Authority Schools) Bill**

<https://services.parliament.uk/Bills/2017-19/internationaldevelopmentassistancepalestiniannationalauthoritieschools.html>

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

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

#### **Online Forums Bill**

<https://services.parliament.uk/Bills/2017-19/onlineforums.html>

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

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

#### **Palestinian Statehood (Recognition) Bill**

<https://services.parliament.uk/Bills/2017-19/palestinianstatehoodrecognition.html>

### **Scottish Parliament**

#### **Human Tissue (Authorisation) (Scotland) Bill**

<http://www.parliament.scot/parliamentarybusiness/Bills/108681.aspx>

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## Consultations

\*\* new or updated today

**\*\* closes in 9 days**

**Extremism in England and Wales** (closing date 31 January 2019)

<https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/extremism-in-england-and-wales-call-for-evidence>

**Racial harassment in higher education** (closing date 15 February 2019)

<https://www.equalityhumanrights.com/en/inquiries-and-investigations/racial-harassment-higher-education-our-inquiry>

**Draft guidance to challenge bullying in schools** [Wales only] (closing date 15 February 2019)

<https://beta.gov.wales/draft-guidance-challenge-bullying-schools>

**One Scotland: Hate Has No Home Here** (closing date 24 February 2019)

<https://consult.gov.scot/hate-crime/consultation-on-scottish-hate-crime-legislation/>

**Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission – Draft Strategic Plan 2019-22**

(closing date 15 March 2019)

<http://www.nihrc.org/news/detail/ni-human-rights-commission-draft-strategic-plan-2019-2022-consultation>

**Scottish charity law** (closing date 1 April 2019)

<https://tinyurl.com/y9ln88df>

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