

# Political Affairs Digest

A daily summary of political events affecting the Jewish Community

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## Home Affairs

### House of Commons Written Answer

#### Internet: Hate Crime

**Paul Farrelly (Labour)** [234737] To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of bringing forward legislative proposals to prevent social media companies and other online media outlets from assisting in the spreading of hate speech via their platforms.

**Margot James:** We will publish a joint DCMS-Home Office Online Harms White Paper in the coming weeks setting out a range of legislative and non-legislative measures detailing how we will tackle online harms and setting clear responsibilities for tech companies to keep people safe.

<https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Commons/2019-03-20/234737/>

### House of Lords Written Answers

*The following two questions both received the same answer*

#### Oluwole Ilesanmi

**Baroness Cox (Crossbench)** [HL14365] To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the implications for freedom of speech of the arrest of Christian street preacher Oluwole Ilesanmi.

#### Religious Freedom

**Baroness Cox (Crossbench)** [HL14366] To ask Her Majesty's Government what guidance they provide to the police in relation to preaching in public places.

**Baroness Williams of Trafford:** The Government does not prevent individuals from following their religious beliefs or cultural traditions provided they do so within the law. The diversity of modern Britain is one of our strengths and many British people of different faiths follow religious codes and practices.

The right to freedom of expression is a vital part of a democratic society. It is a long-standing tradition in this country that people are free to share their views with others.

Decisions on arrests are an operational matter for the police working within the provisions of the legal framework set by Parliament.

<https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Lords/2019-03-11/HL14365/>

and

<https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Lords/2019-03-11/HL14366/>

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## Israel

### House of Commons Written Answers

*The following two questions both received the same answer*

#### **Occupied Territories: Demonstrations**

**Richard Burden (Labour)** [234657] To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, what discussions he has had and on what dates with (a) the United Nations Human Rights Council Commission of Inquiry, (b) the Israeli Government, (c) the Palestinian Authority, and (d) partner countries on the Human Rights Council on the Commission of Inquiry (i) investigation and (ii) report into protests in the Occupied Palestinian Territory.

#### **Gaza: Demonstrations**

**Richard Burden (Labour)** [234658] To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, (a) what discussions he has had and (b) on what dates with the Israeli Government on Israeli investigations into deaths during protests on the Gaza border in 2018.

**Alistair Burt:** We regularly raise our concerns about the situation in Gaza with the Israeli Government and the Palestinian Authority, pressing them on the need for a long-term strategy to improve humanitarian and economic conditions, and reduce movement and access restrictions. I raised Gaza with the Israeli Ambassador to the UK on 30 January, and with the Palestinian Foreign Minister on 4 February. On 18 March, the EU gave an intervention on the UN Human Rights Council Commission of Inquiry, in which we expressed our concern about the high number of Palestinians killed and injured and the use of excessive force including live fire, and condemned violence and provocations against Israel by Hamas and other militant groups.

<https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Commons/2019-03-20/234657/>

and

<https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Commons/2019-03-20/234658/>

*The intervention referred to above can be read at*

[https://eeas.europa.eu/delegations/un-geneva/59838/hrc-40-eu-intervention-interactive-dialogue-commission-inquiry-situation-human-rights\\_en](https://eeas.europa.eu/delegations/un-geneva/59838/hrc-40-eu-intervention-interactive-dialogue-commission-inquiry-situation-human-rights_en)

### House of Lords Written Answers

#### **Israel: Palestinians**

**Baroness Tonge (Non-affiliated)** [HL14435] To ask Her Majesty's Government what

representations they are making to the government of Israel about the reported treatment of a blind, disabled and unarmed Palestinian during a night raid by Israeli forces in February.

**Baroness Goldie:** We have not raised this specific issue with the Israeli authorities. While we recognise Israel's legitimate need to deploy security measures, we encourage them to deploy these in a way which minimises tension and to use appropriate force. In instances where there have been accusations of excessive use of force, we have advocated swift, transparent investigations.

<https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Lords/2019-03-11/HL14435/>

### **Jerusalem: Israeli Settlements**

**Baroness Tonge (Non-affiliated)** [HL14436] To ask Her Majesty's Government what representations they are making to the government of Israel about the excavation of tunnels by Israeli settlers in East Jerusalem causing structural damage to Palestinian homes above.

**Baroness Goldie:** We are concerned by the reports of excavations by Israeli settlers in East Jerusalem and the impact it has on Palestinian homes. We condemn the destruction of Palestinian property and have called on the Israeli authorities to cease such activity.

<https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Lords/2019-03-11/HL14436/>

### **Israel: Palestinians**

**Baroness Tonge (Non-affiliated)** [HL14437] To ask Her Majesty's Government, further to the Written Answer by Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon on 6 March (HL14021), what action they intend to take ensure that the Palestinian population is protected in compliance with international law.

**Baroness Goldie:** It has long been the Government's view that Israel's presence in the Occupied Palestinian Territories is governed by the provisions of the Fourth Geneva Convention of 1949, to which Israel is a state party. We repeatedly call on Israel to abide by its obligations under international law and have a regular dialogue with Israel on legal issues relating to the occupation, including settlements and the treatment of Palestinian children in military custody.

<https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Lords/2019-03-11/HL14437/>

*The answer referred to above can be read at*

<https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Lords/2019-02-25/HL14021/>

### **Israel: Arms Trade**

**Baroness Tonge (Non-affiliated)** [HL14438] To ask Her Majesty's Government what steps they are taking to ensure that parts and components sold to the Israeli military are not used in weaponry that targets civilian populations within the occupied territories.

**Baroness Goldie:** The British Government takes its defence exports responsibilities extremely seriously and operates some of the most robust export controls in the world. We only approve equipment which is for Israel's legitimate self-defence, when we are satisfied that this would be consistent with the Consolidated EU and National Arms Export Licensing Criteria and other relevant commitments. All applications for export licences are assessed on a case-by-case basis against strict criteria. We will not issue a licence if there is a clear risk that the equipment might be used for internal repression, or if there is a clear risk that it

would provoke or prolong conflict. We continue to monitor closely the situation in Israel and Gaza, and if extant licences are found to be no longer consistent with the Criteria, those licences will be revoked.

<https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Lords/2019-03-11/HL14438/>

### **Israel: Palestinians**

**Baroness Tonge (Non-affiliated)** [HL14439] To ask Her Majesty's Government what representations they intend to make to the government of Israel following reports that two Palestinian children died as a result of a fire on 5 March where Israeli forces delayed a Palestinian fire engine from reaching the scene.

**Baroness Goldie:** While we have not made any representations on this specific matter, we continue to stress to Israel the importance we attach to protection of civilians in the Occupied Palestinian Territories. We remain deeply concerned about restrictions on freedom of movement within the West Bank. Through our Embassy in Tel Aviv we have lobbied the Israeli authorities on the issue and we continue to work closely with EU partners to call on Israel to ease restrictions on access.

<https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Lords/2019-03-11/HL14439/>

### **Israel: Gaza**

**Baroness Tonge (Non-affiliated)** [HL14497] To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment has been made of (1) the contamination by heavy metal weapon remnants in Gaza, following the attacks by Israel in 2012 and 2014, and (2) the impact of that contamination on prevalence of pre term infants, low birth weight and birth defects in Gaza since 2011.

**Lord Bates:** The Government has not made its own assessment of this specific issue. We continue to engage closely with the World Health Organisation, UN OCHA, and other health and humanitarian based NGOs working in Gaza to ensure we are able to comprehensively monitor health and humanitarian needs there.

To help ensure hospitals in Gaza can continue to provide essential services on a range of health issues, we provided £1.5 million for the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) OPTs Appeal in 2018. This funding has helped treat patients in 11 hospitals which are under extreme pressure in Gaza by restocking vital medical supplies including medicines, surgical equipment, and bandages and helping provide physical rehabilitation services for around 4,000 people.

<https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Lords/2019-03-12/HL14497/>

### **Jerusalem: Religious Buildings**

**The Marquess of Lothian (Conservative)** [HL14577] To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the (1) current situation in regard to Jerusalem's Holy Esplanade, following the Islamic Waqf Council's refusal to shut down the Bab al-Rahma building in response to the ultimatum by the Israeli authorities, and (2) impact this is having on relations between Israel and Jordan and the Jordan–Israel Peace Treaty.

**Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon:** We continue to encourage Israel, the Palestinian Authority and Jordan to do all they can to work together to continue to uphold the status quo at the holy sites in Jerusalem. We are committed to working with all parties to maintain calm, and avoid provocation to ensure the safety and the security of the Al Haram Al Sharif/Temple Mount compound and all who worship there. We value Jordan's important role as custodian of the holy sites in Jerusalem.

## Foreign and Commonwealth Office

**Jeremy Hunt:** Appalled by terrorist attack from Gaza against civilians, including British-Israeli dual nationals. My thoughts are with all those affected. Completely UNACCEPTABLE actions by militant groups

[https://twitter.com/Jeremy\\_Hunt/status/1110199957460529153](https://twitter.com/Jeremy_Hunt/status/1110199957460529153)

*Since posting this comment, Alistair Burt has resigned from his post as Minister of State for the Middle East*

**Alistair Burt:** I condemn the rocket attack from Gaza, which destroyed a family home in Mishmeret with innocent civilians inside. Shocked to hear that dual British-Israeli citizens are among those injured. Such acts are unacceptable and part of a hopeless cycle of violence and suffering.

<https://twitter.com/AlistairBurtUK/status/111021454809777664>

## United Nations

### **UN urges ‘maximum restraint’ as Israel-Hamas tensions rise over rocket attack**

... UN Spokesperson Stéphane Dujarric, said that the rocket attack was “a serious and unacceptable violation.”

He also noted the reports of Israeli fire directed towards Gaza in response, saying that the UN chief was “monitoring events” closely. According to news reports, Israeli forces said they had carried out strikes against what were described as Hamas targets, and Gaza’s health ministry reported that seven had been injured during the retaliatory air strikes. ...

“We continue to work with Egypt and all concerned parties to try to de-escalate the situation and again, encourage restraint” said Mr. Dujarric. “Further escalation is likely to make an already bad situation worse, in particular for civilians in and close to Gaza,” he added.

**To read the full press release see**

<https://news.un.org/en/story/2019/03/1035411>

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## Other Relevant Information

### United Nations

#### **All Society ‘Diminished’ When People Are Attacked over Their Ethnicity, Beliefs, Secretary-General Says at Event on Elimination of Racial Discrimination**

... Today and every day, we must stand united against racial and religious hatred and the terrorism of bigots. No country or community is immune.

I am deeply alarmed by the current rise of xenophobia, racism and intolerance, fed increasingly by nationalist and populist ideologies.

Hate speech is entering the mainstream, spreading like wildfire through social media and radio. We are seeing it spread in liberal democracies and authoritarian States alike.

These dark forces menace democratic values, social stability and peace. They stigmatize women, minorities, migrants and refugees.

When people are attacked, physically, verbally or on social media, because of their race, religion or ethnicity, all of society is diminished.

It is crucial for all of us to join hands, stand up and defend the principles of equality and human dignity.

With that in mind, I have asked my Special Adviser for the Prevention of Genocide, Adama Dieng, to bring together the United Nations system to design a strategy and plan of action to combat hate speech.

We must work harder to repair the fissures and polarization that are so prevalent in our societies today. We must nurture mutual understanding and invest in making diversity a success. And we must counter and reject political figures who exploit differences for electoral gain.

But we must also ask why so many people feel excluded, and why they are tempted by messages of intolerance against others. ...

Even today, decades after the pseudoscience of the Nazis contributed to the Holocaust, the world is seeing the persistence — and even a surge — of neo-Nazi thinking and white supremacy. We must bury such lies once and for all. ...

**To read the full transcript see**

<https://www.un.org/press/en/2019/sqsm19513.doc.htm>

### **Rise of Supremacist Ideologies Spark Alarm as General Assembly Marks Day for Elimination of Racial Discrimination, Remembers Slavery's Victims**

... **María Fernanda Espinosa Garcés (Ecuador), President of the General Assembly** [recalled] that racist ideologies helped to fuel the genocide in Rwanda, the Srebrenica massacre and the atrocities committed since, she stressed they are not accidents, but part of a continuum of racism that begins with small things, such as stereotyping and suspicious looks. ... Hate speech is not free speech, but racism, she stressed. ...

**Kate Gilmore, United Nations Deputy High Commissioner for Human Rights**, said millions of people still pay the cruel cost of race-based discrimination, including xenophobia, anti-Semitism and Islamophobia. ... She emphasized that people need not agree with each other to defend each other's rights, which are "for every one of us with the exception of none". ...

**Jonathan R. Cohen (United States)** ... expressed firm commitment to fighting racial discrimination. ... Noting the dangers of offensive speech, he stressed the importance of prosecuting hate crimes and proactive Government outreach to vulnerable communities. ...

**To read the full press release see**

<https://www.un.org/press/en/2019/ga12128.doc.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>

## **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 6 days**

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

<https://tinyurl.com/y9ln88df>

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The Scottish Council of Jewish Communities (SCoJeC) is Scottish Charitable Incorporated Organisation SC029438