



Political Affairs Digest

A daily summary of political events affecting the Jewish Community

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House of Commons Written Answer

Religious Buildings: Security

Yasmin Qureshi (Labour) [236388] To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of bringing the funding for the protection for mosques in line with that provided for the protection of synagogues via the grant administered by the Community Security Trust.

Victoria Atkins: The Jewish Community Protective Security Grant was introduced in 2015 following a series of terrorist attacks against Jews and Jewish locations across Europe and the West, including Paris, Copenhagen, Brussels and Marseilles.

International terrorist propaganda, particularly by Daesh has repeatedly highlighted Jews as targets for terrorist attacks. The grant mainly funds security guarding at Jewish schools, nurseries and some synagogues

The Places of Worship Protective Security Funding Scheme is specifically for the provision of protective security measures such as access control, fencing and lighting for places of worship that are vulnerable to hate crime attacks.

The Home Secretary announced a boost in funding for the hate crime Places of Worship Protective Security Funding Scheme to £1.6 million for 2019/20. This is double the amount awarded in 2018/19. In addition, £5 million over three years has been committed to providing security training to places of worship in England and Wales. This funding marks a significant change in our funding for protective security for places of worship. We also committed to consult with communities on what more can and should be done to protect faith communities. If the threat changes or there is a sense that more money is needed, we will always look at how we should respond.

<https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Commons/2019-03-25/236388/>

Information about the Places of Worship Protective Security Funding Scheme, referred to above, can be read at

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/places-of-worship-security-funding-scheme>

The announcement referred to above can be read at

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/places-of-worship-to-get-security-funding-boost>

House of Lords Written Answers

Voluntary Schools: Admissions

Baroness Blackstone (Labour Independent) [HL14689] To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the impact that voluntary-aided schools that select 100 per cent of their pupils based on faith will have on religious integration.

Lord Agnew of Oulton: Many schools with faith-based admissions have diverse intakes, and many schools that don't have faith based admissions have homogenous school populations. While faith schools are allowed to give priority to children of their faith, some choose to allocate only a certain percentage of their places with reference to faith in order to open up places to other children regardless of faith, and many do not have faith admissions criteria at all. Where there are sufficient places, faith schools must offer a place to every applicant regardless of faith.

The department undertook an extensive series of activities as part of the Schools that Work for Everyone consultation to understand the variety of opinions relating to faith schools. Having considered the views of respondents, and those of a range of other stakeholders, the department decided to establish the voluntary-aided capital scheme alongside retaining the 50% cap in faith admissions in faith designated free schools.

An analysis of how the voluntary-aided schools capital scheme will affect specific protected groups (equalities impact assessment) is attached and can be found here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/voluntary-aided-schools-capital-scheme-equalities-impact-assessment>.

HL14689_voluntary_aided_schools_capital_scheme_equ

<https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Lords/2019-03-20/HL14689/>

Voluntary Schools: Teachers

Baroness Whitaker (Labour) [HL14761] To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the negative impact new fully religiously selective voluntary-aided schools could have on employment opportunities for teachers without a religious faith.

Lord Agnew of Oulton: New voluntary-aided (VA) schools will have the same freedoms as existing ones to include religious criteria in their recruitment of teaching staff.

Schools with a faith designation (this includes VA schools, free schools, and academy converters which were previously VA schools) are able to recruit 100% of their teaching staff on the basis of faith. Voluntary controlled schools can only recruit up to 20% of their teaching staff on the basis of faith.

The department does not collect data relating to the religious belief of school staff or the extent to which VA schools with a religious character use the freedoms they have to apply religious criteria when recruiting staff.

<https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Lords/2019-03-21/HL14761/>

Welsh Assembly Oral Answer

National Museums and Galleries of Wales

94 David Melding (Conservative): ... Will you join me in commending Dawn Bowden's work to promote knowledge of Merthyr's Jewish community, established in 1848, and most magnificently seen in the Gothic revival style synagogue, which was built in 1877? That synagogue's future is still in question, and I wonder if you would ask the National Museum to look at the new initiative that's called the Historic Synagogues of Europe project, which is looking our industrial communities and other areas where there was a large Jewish population and ensuring that these historic treasures are preserved.

Deputy Minister for Culture, Sport and Tourism (Dafydd Elis-Thomas): I'm very grateful to you for your support on our activity. I have a particular interest, of course, because of my own background and my own practice, in the history of faith communities and particularly the role of the Jewish community in the development of Wales, the development of business and capitalism and investment within Wales, especially in the key periods of the Industrial Revolution, and I will certainly make sure that I discuss this. There has been an initiative, and I have attended some meetings of faith groups specifically looking at the use of faith buildings for the conservation purposes that will then lead to them having a current value, and it seems to me that the key here, as always, is monuments are not there to be monuments. They're there to be used currently in order to interpret what happened there in the past. ...

<http://record.assembly.wales/Plenary/5574#C184215>

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Holocaust

Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government

Communities Secretary praises Holocaust survivors on visit to survivors centre in Hendon

Survivors of the Holocaust were today praised for their fortitude and "great service" to Britain by Communities Secretary, the Rt Hon James Brokenshire MP, as he stressed the importance of plans for a new national memorial. ...

Mr Brokenshire met and spoke to survivors about the challenges they faced as refugees in Britain after the war, how they went on to build new lives for themselves and became part of the essential fabric of British life.

It was also an opportunity to discuss the importance of the new National Holocaust Memorial and Learning Centre planned for Victoria Tower Gardens beside Parliament, as a significant proportion of the centre's content will be devoted to survivors' testimony.

Speaking after the visit to the weekly 'Yiddish and Kiddush' social club held at the Hendon centre, Mr Brokenshire said: For more than 70 years the survivors who built a community here in Hendon have done Britain and the world a great service.

Through their powerful testimony, in the retelling of difficult, personal, tragic stories we've learnt the terrible consequences of where bigotry, intolerance and division can lead.

The striking National Holocaust Memorial and Learning Centre is a powerful symbol of our commitment to remembering the men, women and children who were murdered in the Holocaust but also those who survived and made their lives in this country.

Rightly located in the shadow of Parliament, it will be the focal point for national remembrance of the Holocaust. The view of Parliament from the Memorial will provide a constant reminder that political decisions have far-reaching consequences.

The Holocaust remains the worst example of the disintegration of democratic values and remains unsurpassed in its horror.

A time capsule will be buried at the site. In a century's time, those opening it will be reminded that survivors fought long and hard for this memorial.

As these first-person testimonies fade with time, the Memorial and Learning Centre will make sure Britain will never forget.

Jewish Care's [Holocaust Survivors' Centre](#) is the only centre in the UK designed and run specifically for Holocaust survivors. It provides outings, lunches, music concerts, talks on art and culture and therapeutic events 6 days a week.

The Centre also records testimonies and links survivors to schools so that they can share their experiences with future generations as well as arranges Holocaust education trips to Poland.

The [United Kingdom Holocaust Memorial](#) is dedicated to the 6 million Jewish men, women and children murdered in the Holocaust and all other victims of the Nazis and their collaborators.

It will honour and remember all victims and survivors of the Holocaust and subsequent genocides and educate future generations on the importance of fighting prejudice and persecution in all its forms. ...

To read the full press release see

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/communities-secretary-praises-holocaust-survivors-on-visit-to-survivors-centre-in-hendon>

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House of Commons Oral Answers

Middle East

8. **Guto Bebb (Conservative):** What assessment he has made of the diplomatic implications of rocket fire from Gaza towards Tel Aviv. [910168]

The Minister for Asia and the Pacific (Mark Field): We are concerned by the recent violence in Israel and Gaza, and we welcome the Egyptian efforts to de-escalate the situation. At the UN Security Council on 26 March, the UK condemned the rocket attacks, which injured two British-Israeli citizens. We regret the loss of life, including the death of four children in protests over the weekend—mercifully, fears of major violence were not realised. Our diplomats in the region urge all parties to continue to demonstrate restraint in the tense days that lie ahead.

Guto Bebb: I thank the Minister for his response and associate myself with his comments. Last month, more than 60 rockets were fired from Gaza towards Israel. Two were intercepted above Tel Aviv, while another destroyed a residence in central Israel that was occupied by a British-Israeli family, resulting in injuries, including an injury to a six-month-old baby. What steps are the Government taking to support our ally, Israel, as it fights this terrorist attack on the country?

Mark Field: I think we all recognise that Israel is an important strategic partner for the United Kingdom and that we need to collaborate actively on issues of defence, security and intelligence. In October 2018, the Government launched the UK-Israel counter-terrorism dialogue to share best practice and insights on a wide range of capabilities. We are now committed to holding such a dialogue annually, which will help to complement the already strong operational relationship between our countries.

21. **Lloyd Russell-Moyle (Labour Co-op):** Two weeks ago at the United Nations Human

Rights Council, the UK abstained on a motion to support the accountability of violations of international law in the occupied Palestinian territories. Since then, another Palestinian health worker, Sajid Muzher, has been shot and killed by Israeli forces—the fourth in just this year. Does the Minister agree that the killing of Palestinian medics is fuelled by the impunity that results from countries not voting at the UNHRC? Will we use our vote in future? [910181]

Mark Field: There are two issues at stake, so I shall go into some detail, if I may. We abstained on that UNHRC resolution calling for an inquiry on the basis that the substance of such a resolution must be impartial and balanced. We could not support such an investigation when the resolution refused explicitly to call for an investigation into non-state actors such as Hamas. I should also say—this relates to the hon. Gentleman's Question 21—that we have stressed and will continue to stress the importance of protecting and delivering medical services, particularly in Gaza. As recently as 28 March, the Department for International Development announced a new £2 million package for the International Committee of the Red Cross, which will contribute to the delivery of urgently needed supplies.

Bob Blackman (Conservative): What action has my right hon. Friend taken, given that Hamas is organising for women and children to go to the border between Gaza and Israel and therefore provoking violent confrontations?

Mark Field: Clearly, we want to try to avoid violent confrontation at all costs. As I said in my earlier answer, mercifully, the major concerns about violence at the protests this weekend, which we felt could have been a lot more serious than they were, were not realised. My hon. Friend will recognise that we do all we can on the ground to try to defuse some of the tensions. That is an important part of our diplomatic work, which we do with other countries as well, of course.

Joan Ryan (Independent): I utterly condemn the latest rocket attacks that the hon. Member for Aberconwy (Guto Bebb) raised. We know that Hamas is given tens of millions of dollars a year by Iran to fund these terrorist acts. What steps are the Government taking to stop the Iranian regime funding barbaric middle east terror groups such as Hamas?

Mark Field: The right hon. Lady is absolutely right. She will recognise that Hamas is one of a number of Iranian proxies in the region. Our position is that Hamas must renounce violence, recognise Israel and accept previously agreed and signed agreements. We condemn Hamas and other terrorist groups for firing rockets into Israel from not only Gaza but elsewhere, in the way described by my hon. Friend the Member for Aberconwy (Guto Bebb). Those groups must permanently end such attacks against both civilians and defence forces.

<https://hansard.parliament.uk/commons/2019-04-02/debates/3EAF83B2-5FDD-4963-8038-F6CBB7B067DC/MiddleEast>

House of Commons Written Answer

Gaza: Death

Lisa Nandy (Labour) [237094] To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, what steps he has taken to ensure there is an independent and transparent investigation into killings on the Gaza border in 2018.

Mark Field: I refer the hon. Member to the answer of 26 March 2019 (PQ 235241).

<https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Commons/2019-03-26/237094/>

The answer referred to above can be read at

<https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Commons/2019-03-21/235241/>

Mark Field: *The UK fully supports the need for an independent and transparent investigation which establishes the facts about the violence last year in Gaza. We have repeatedly called for such an investigation at the highest levels, as well as in multiple forums including in Parliament in an urgent question on 22 March, and at the UN Security Council. The Prime Minister and former Foreign Secretary raised the issue directly with Prime Minister Netanyahu, stressing the need for an independent investigation, and encouraging urgent action to improve the situation in Gaza. Earlier this week British Embassy officials raised Gaza with the Israeli authorities, highlighting the importance of proportionality, and raising concerns about the volume of live fire against unarmed women, children and medics. We welcome that the Israeli Military Advocate General has recently ordered five criminal investigations which relate to 11 separate instances of Palestinian fatalities during the Gaza border protests. These investigations are ongoing. We will continue to make clear to the Israeli authorities that it is vital their investigations are independent and transparent and that their findings are made public, and importantly, if wrongdoing is found, those that are responsible are held to account.*

House of Lords Written Answer

Imports: Israeli Settlements

Baroness Tonge (Non-affiliated) [HL14807] To ask Her Majesty's Government what trade agreements apply to goods coming from Israeli settlements (1) now, and (2) after the UK leaves the EU.

Baroness Fairhead: The EU-Israel Trade Agreements and the transitioned UK-Israel Trade Agreement apply to the State of Israel. The UK has been clear that it does not recognise the Occupied Palestinian Territories (OPTs), including the settlements, as part of the State of Israel and that the OPTs are not covered by the UK-Israel Agreement.

The EU-Palestinian Authority Interim Agreement and the transitioned UK-Palestinian Authority Interim Agreement apply to the territory of the West Bank and the Gaza Strip.

Products produced in the Israeli settlements, located within the territories brought under Israeli administration since June 1967, are not entitled to benefit from preferential tariff treatment under either agreement.

<https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Lords/2019-03-25/HL14807/>

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Other Relevant Information

United Nations

Secretary-General Welcomes General Assembly Resolution, Urges Protection of Religious Sites, in Message Following New Zealand Attack

... I welcome the work of the General Assembly on a resolution condemning terrorism and other acts of violence based on religion or belief. I reiterate my own horror at the vile attack that killed 50 worshippers in a mosque in Christchurch, New Zealand, just a few months after the appalling shooting at the Tree of Life Congregation synagogue in Pittsburgh in the United States.

The world must stand together to protect all religious sites against rising anti-Muslim hatred, anti-Semitism, xenophobia, racism and hate speech. We must counter those who seek to demonize and divide. And we must defend the freedom of religion and belief. The United Nations is urgently working on global action plans to combat hate speech and to safeguard religious sites. ...

To read the full press release see

<https://www.un.org/press/en/2019/sgsm19530.doc.htm>

Resolution Condemning Violence Targeting Individuals Based on Religion, Beliefs, among Texts Adopted by General Assembly

... By the terms of that resolution, titled “Combating terrorism and other acts of violence based on religion or belief”, the Assembly condemned in the strongest terms the heinous, cowardly terrorist attack aimed at Muslim worshippers in Christchurch, New Zealand, on 15 March 2019, and expressed its deepest condolences to the families of the victims and to the Government and the people of that country. In further terms, the Assembly urged States to protect and promote freedom of religion and belief and to foster a domestic environment of religious tolerance, peace and respect.

Introducing that resolution, Mevlüt Çavuşoğlu, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Turkey, told the Assembly that the international community must stand up against the spiral of hate. Sending condolences to the families of the Muslims who were killed in Christchurch in a clearly planned terrorist attack, he said that Islamophobia and racism go hand in hand. ...

... the representative of New Zealand welcomed the focus of the text on strengthened international efforts on a global dialogue to foster a culture of tolerance, diversity and peace. ...

Canada’s delegate recalled the attack in a Quebec City mosque two years ago and said that when violence like this occurs, whether in mosques, churches, synagogues or on the streets, it must be called what it is: neo-Nazism, white supremacism, Islamophobia, anti-Semitism. ...

The representative of Israel said the negotiation process on this resolution could have been more inclusive and transparent and condemned any acts of violence against any person based on belief or religion. The European Union’s delegate said that “attacks on places of worship are attacks on all of us who value diversity”, adding that sensitive issues require careful consideration and the deliberations on the draft were “somewhat compressed”. ...

To read the full press release see

<https://www.un.org/press/en/2019/ga12133.doc.htm>

Combating terrorism and other acts of violence based on religion or belief

<https://undocs.org/A/73/L.79>

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