

Political Affairs Digest

A daily summary of political events affecting the Jewish Community

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House of Commons Written Answers

Religious Buildings: Security

Yasmin Qureshi (Labour) [237671] To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how much Government funding is allocated to the protection of (a) mosques, (b) synagogues, (c) churches, d) Hindu Temples, e) Gurdwaras and (f) other places of worship.

Victoria Atkins: Under the 2016 Hate Crime Action Plan, we committed £2.4m over three years to the Places of Worship Protective Security Funding Scheme to provide protective security measures to places of worship who have been victim of or are vulnerable to hate crime attacks. Last week, we announced an uplift of funding for 2019/20 of the scheme to £1.6 million. This is double the amount awarded in 2018/19. Following the Finsbury Park terror attack in June 2017, we also announced a one year £1m fund to protect vulnerable faith institutions.

Both the Places of Worship Protective Security Funding Scheme and the Vulnerable Faith Institution Scheme are/were open to Christian, Muslim, Sikh and Hindu faiths. There are no specific allocations of funding per faith group, with decisions on funding being based on eligibility criteria and the recommendations of the multi-faith independent advisory panel (with security expertise).

We provide funding for the security of Jewish sites separately through the Jewish Community Protective Security (JCPS) Grant, which is delivered by the Community Security Trust. Funding to synagogues is allocated on a risk assessed basis, and is as follows:

2015-16 - approx. £800k

2016-17 - approx. £900K

2017-18 - approx. £1.3m

<https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Commons/2019-03-27/237671/>

The Action Plan referred to above can be read at

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/543679/Action_Against_Hate_-_UK_Government_s_Plan_to_Tackle_Hate_Crime_2016.pdf

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>

Information about the Vulnerable Faith Institution Scheme, referred to above, can be read at

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/vulnerable-faith-institutions-scheme>

Ministers of Religion: Migrant Workers

Kate Green (Labour) [237680] To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what discussions his Department has held with representatives of faith communities on (a) the application of immigration rules to religious workers under Tier 5 and (b) the reassignment of ministers of religion from Tier 5 to Tier 2, with particular regard to definitions of preaching and teaching.

Caroline Nokes: The Government recognises the contributions religious workers and Ministers of Religion make to our communities in the UK. Home Office officials maintain regular contact with faith groups and their representatives, with regards to our immigration provisions and to address specific concerns individual groups may have.

<https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Commons/2019-03-27/237680/>

Ministers of Religion: Migrant Workers

Kate Green (Labour) [237681] To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what discussions his Department has had with representatives of faith communities on the qualifications which will be recognised in order for an individual to be recognised as a minister of religion under immigration rules.

Caroline Nokes: The Immigration Rules include a definition of a Minister of Religion. Officials ensure that published guidance provides the necessary direction for sponsors and migrants wishing to come to the UK, to ensure they select the appropriate visa category. All guidance documents are subject to review, both as a matter of routine and in response to feedback from users.

<https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Commons/2019-03-27/237681/>

The definition referred to above can be read at para 31.1 of

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/792725/Tier-2-5-sponsor-guidance_Mar-2019_v1.0_FINAL.PDF

House of Lords Written Answer

Racial Discrimination

Baroness Tonge (Non-affiliated) [HL14838] To ask Her Majesty's Government whether they intend to produce a definition of (1) Islamophobia, and (2) other forms of racism.

Lord Bourne of Aberystwyth: The Cross-Government Working Group to Tackle Anti-Muslim Hatred will be undertaking a programme of work to consider a definition following consultation, which effectively tackles prejudice and hatred.

Government is clear that all forms of hate crime, including race-related hate crime, are unacceptable and there is legislation in place to deal with perpetrators of hateful acts. We have asked the Law Commission to undertake a review of the current hate crime legislation.

<https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Lords/2019-03-26/HL14838/>

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United Nations

Speakers Consider Proposed Law in Ireland to Ban Imports from Illegal Settlements, as United Nations Forum on Question of Palestine Discusses de Facto Annexation ... Oscar Fernandez-Taranco, United Nations Assistant Secretary-General for Peacebuilding Support, recalling that some of the first decisions of the Organization were aimed at resolving the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, said that the problem goes to the heart of the Charter of the United Nations, according to which the annexation of territory by another State is inadmissible. The Palestinians have endured prolonged occupation and the peace process has stalled, with security incidents and provocations continuing to escalate the situation in Gaza and the West Bank. A new conflict would be devastating for the Palestinian people, he said, noting the humanitarian crisis in Gaza and the military build-up by Hamas and other militant groups.

Stressing that Palestinian unity is essential for a politically stable and economically viable Palestine, he welcomed the tireless efforts of Egypt to continue dialogue with Palestinian factions and urged Israel to lift restrictions on movement of people and goods. In the occupied West Bank, the construction of settlements continues unabated, he pointed out, emphasizing that settlements are illegal under international law. Both parties must avoid unilateral actions that undermine the two-State solution — the only way to achieve the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people and lasting peace for Israel. “There is no plan B,” he underscored, and the parties to the conflict owe it to their citizens as well as future generations of Israelis and Palestinians to break the cycle of violence. ...

Riyad Mansour, Permanent Observer for the State of Palestine, described the tremendous frustration experienced by its people and leadership. Israel’s protracted illegal occupation of Palestinian territories and its construction of illegal settlements must end, he said. ... “They are getting away with murder,” he emphasized, adding “something has to change”. He recalled that Palestinians have proposed ideas for a collective process led by the Security Council, noting that a political will must emerge in that regard. “We do not accept the fate of being between a rock and a hard place,” he said, noting that the United States Administration is providing Israel with political support and denying Palestinians their rights at political and diplomatic levels. ...

“Palestinian people will not raise white flags,” he emphasized, adding “they will never surrender.” ...

Mr. Sourani (Director of the Palestinian Centre Human Rights) who spoke from Gaza via videoconference, said ... The situation in Gaza is the biggest manmade disaster, he said, adding that all international agencies, including the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), have made it clear that the siege of Gaza is a political punishment and a crime against humanity. Even reconstructing Gaza has become a mission impossible due to the blockade, he said, adding that this year, approaching the first anniversary of the March of Return protests, Israel made it clear it would shoot and kill anyone protesting.

With a free hand in the Gaza Strip, the Judaization of Jerusalem and expanding settlements in the West Bank, Israel is perpetuating a new brand of apartheid, he said. Practically and legally, it is as if the Palestinians did not exist, he said, adding that when Palestinian activists resorted to international mechanisms to seek remedies for victims or attempted to apply universal jurisdiction in European countries, “in a very strange way, within months, laws are changed, providing more legal immunity to Israel”.

Mr. Baruch (Former Ambassador of Israel and Chairperson of the Policy Working Group of activists on the Middle East Peace Process based on the two-State paradigm) said that as the occupation turned into annexation, he turned from a loyal diplomat who served the Israeli Government to a political activist. Jerusalem is the core

of the Palestine-Israel relations, he stressed, and the Netanyahu Government has taken strides to consolidate its physical control over East Jerusalem, while systematically weakening the Palestinian's capacity to maintain livelihood, education, housing and political leadership in the city. ... Alongside the systematic eviction of Palestinian residents from the city, Israel is also entrusting tourist properties to nationalist organizations that portray only the Jewish narrative, thus setting up the extinction of the Palestinian story. "Jerusalem is the most glaring example of a systematic denial of the Palestinian essence," he stressed.

Mr. Lynk (Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Palestinian territory occupied since 1967) who focused on the legal aspects of the topic, said that annexation is strictly prohibited under international law ... Noting how last week the Israeli Prime Minister, upon returning to Tel Aviv from Washington, D.C., said that territory occupied in a defensive war "is ours", he stressed that this is not the opinion shared by international legal scholars. ...

... he said that while Israel denies that the laws of occupation apply to the West Bank and has expressed a willingness to negotiate, in reality, it has taken multiple steps to establish a sovereign claim over the West Bank, such as control over the West bank's water system. Another example is that the highway network that used to be a north-south system has now been reconfigured as an east-west system benefiting the Israeli economy. ...

Ms. Black (Senator of the Seanad Éireann of Ireland) recalled that she tabled an Occupied Territories bill in Ireland's Senate in January 2018 and expects it to pass into law shortly. The bill seeks to ban the import and sale of goods produced in illegal settlements in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, and is the first of its kind in the European Union. "There have to be consequences for breaking international law," she emphasized, adding that "trade in settlement goods helps sustain injustice". Noting that the bill does not represent a boycott of Israel, she pointed out that it is focused solely on the settlements. ...

Israel's Government sanctioned more than 1,000 new settlement homes in 2018, she observed, stressing: "At this rate, there will soon be no Palestinian State left to recognize." Ireland was the first country in the world to end trade in goods with Apartheid South Africa, she recalled, adding that she wants to do the same with this bill. ...

Mr. O'Neill (Researcher and Policy Adviser of the Seanad Éireann of Ireland) said that, with the Occupied Territories bill, Ireland is seeking to give meaningful effect to the basic rules of international law. It represents a step towards fulfilling Ireland's existing obligations under existing international law :

... the European Union imports 15 times more goods from Israeli settlements than from the State of Palestine. This has a material impact on the State of Palestine's ability to grow a functioning economy. He also emphasized that the Irish bill should not be seen as anti-Israel or as partisan, citing testimony by Israeli citizens in that regard. ...

To read the full press release see

<https://www.un.org/press/en/2019/gapal1424.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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The Scottish Council of Jewish Communities (SCoJeC) is Scottish Charitable Incorporated Organisation SC029438