

# Political Affairs Digest

A daily summary of political events affecting the Jewish Community

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## Home Affairs

### House of Commons Library

**Debate Pack: The definition of Islamophobia**

<http://researchbriefings.files.parliament.uk/documents/CDP-2019-0086/CDP-2019-0086.pdf>

### Scottish Parliament Written Answer

#### **Hate Crime: Racially Motivated Assaults**

**S5W-22882 Jamie Greene (Conservative):** To ask the Scottish Government how many instances of racially motivated assaults have been reported in (a) North Ayrshire, (b) Inverclyde and (c) Scotland in each of the last 10 years.

**Ash Denham:** In February 2019, the Scottish Government published a report entitled “Developing information on hate crime recorded by the police in Scotland”. This report includes the number the hate crimes that were aggravated by the five hate strands (race, religion, sexual orientation, disability and transgender identity). Table 1 includes additional analysis of the dataset used to produce the report ‘Developing Information on Hate Crime Recorded by the Police in Scotland’ and shows the number of assaults, including Attempted murder, Serious assault and Common assaults, recorded by the police with a race aggravator for the past four years for North Ayrshire, Inverclyde and Scotland. Further information is available at the following link:

<https://www.gov.scot/publications/developing-information-hate-crime-recorded-police-scotland/>

The Scottish Government previously published information on Racist Incidents Recorded by the Police, derived from a different source. Table 2 includes further analysis of this dataset and shows the number of assaults, including Attempted murder, Serious assault and Common assaults, recorded by Police Scotland as part of racist incidents for the years 2008-10 to 2013-14 for North Ayrshire, Inverclyde and Scotland. Further information is available at the following link:

<https://www.gov.scot/publications/racist-incidents-recorded-police-scotland-2013-14/>

The tables relate to crimes which have been perceived by the victim or any other

person, to be motivated (wholly or partly) by malice and ill-will towards a social group based on race. A person does not need to be a member of a social group to be the victim of a hate crime. The law states that the identity of the victim is irrelevant as to whether something is a hate crime or not; the motivation of the perpetrator is the key factor in defining a hate crime. Furthermore, this will not include any incidents which did not include the committing of a crime or racially aggravated assaults that were not reported to the police.

It is important to note that the tables presented here are not directly comparable as they are derived from different sources. Table 1 is based on information taken from Police Scotland's Interim Vulnerable Persons Database (IVPD), an incident-based database which was introduced in 2013, and became a national system in 2014, whereas Table 2 is based on information previously extracted annually from individual Police Scotland crime management systems.

Table 1. Number of assaults 1 recorded by the police, with a race aggravator 2014-15 to 2017-18

	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18
North Ayrshire	13	*	*	7
Inverclyde	8	*	*	-
Scotland	646	573	664	68

Source: Additional analysis of the extract of data from the Interim Vulnerable Persons Database (IVPD) used to produce the report 'Developing Information on Hate Crime Recorded by the Police in Scotland'

Table 2. Number of assaults 1 recorded by the police as part of racist incidents, 2014-15 to 2017-18

	2008-10	2009-10	2010-11	2011-12	2012-13	2013-14
North Ayrshire	16	25	10	18	7	9
Inverclyde	8	*	*	10	*	*
Scotland	728	723	733	754	593	628

Source: Additional analysis of the extract of data used to produce the report 'Racist incidents recorded by the police in Scotland, 2013-14'

<sup>1</sup> Includes Attempted Murder, Serious assault and Common assault

<sup>2</sup> Will also include some crimes where there may have been multiple aggravators for example if a crime was aggravated by race and religion.

\* indicates a value of less than five.

- indicates a value of zero.

<https://www.parliament.scot/parliamentarybusiness/28877.aspx?SearchType=Advance&ReferenceNumbers=S5W-22882>

## Welsh Assembly Oral Answers

### Improving Community Safety

**1. Mohammad Asghar (Conservative):** What action will the Welsh Government take to improve community safety in the next twelve months? OAQ53830

**Deputy Minister and Chief Whip (Jane Hutt):** The Welsh Government is committed to making our communities safer. Last week, I spoke at the serious and organised crime strategy launch in Wales, and welcomed the contribution of the police, local government and third sector, working together with Welsh Government, to improve community safety.

**Mohammad Asghar:** Thank you very much for that answer, Minister. Religious intolerance is on the rise around the world. In the last two months, we have seen attacks on mosques in New Zealand, on churches in Sri Lanka and on a synagogue in California. In response,

the Home Secretary, Sajid Javid, has doubled the amount of funding available to provide protective security for places of worship. Given that the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion is a basic human right, Deputy Minister, what action is the Welsh Government taking to protect and reassure communities across Wales that they are safe at their place of worship?80

**Jane Hutt:** I thank the Member for the question, because on 25 March, following the horrific events in New Zealand, I did write to all our faith communities—in fact, to all the imams across Wales—about protective security at places of worship. What was important was that I enabled those who were affected to liaise with me and officials to see how we could support them, and I drew attention to the places of worship protective security funding scheme. Yes, an uplift was announced by the Home Secretary; the difficulty, of course, is that it's only £5 million over three years and, indeed, it's not going to be available until July. So I'm pressing for that to be brought forward, and I'll certainly make sure that all of our mosques and, indeed, places of worship across Wales are aware of that funding.

<http://record.assembly.wales/Plenary/5656#C192987>

*The announcement referred to above can be read at*

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

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## Israel

### House of Commons Oral Answers

#### Hezbollah

7. **Robert Halfon (Conservative):** What recent assessment [the Minister] has made of the security threat posed by Hezbollah to (a) Israel and (b) the middle east. [910872]

18. **Victoria Prentis (Conservative):** What recent assessment [the Minister] has made of the security threat posed by Hezbollah to (a) Israel and (b) the middle east. [910883]

**The Minister for the Middle East (Andrew Murrison):** The UK remains deeply concerned about Hezbollah's actions and behaviour in the region. As the Home Secretary outlined in February, Hezbollah's destabilising role in the middle east led to our proscription of the group in its entirety. We continue to condemn Hezbollah and all armed militia groups for seeking to amass illegal weapons and arms, and for putting the security of Lebanon and Israel at risk, in direct contradiction of UN Security Council resolution 1701.

**Robert Halfon:** ... I strongly welcome the Government's decision to proscribe Hezbollah in full earlier this year. Israel recently revealed that it has exposed Hezbollah cells in border villages on the Syrian side of the Golan Heights. Does the Minister share my grave concern and agree that were the Golan Heights to be under Syrian control, the security risk would be catastrophic, not only for Israel but for the entire region?

**Andrew Murrison:** ... I share his concerns about this matter. We condemn Hezbollah—we could not be clearer than that—and have gone further than most countries in doing so. However, we consider the Golan Heights to be occupied territory, which is contrary to international law. We do not believe that the Golan Heights are part of the territory of the state of Israel.

**Victoria Prentis:** ... I welcome the Government's recent decision to proscribe the whole of Hezbollah, but will the Minister tell me what more we are doing to confront people in this country who encourage the group's terrorism?

**Andrew Murrison:** ... We have proscribed Hezbollah, so it will not be able to

demonstrate and spread its message of hate, contrary to the interests and values of this country. I do not think we could have done much more, immediately, to make it clear that the organisation is beyond the law and that people who campaign for or show support for it are committing a criminal act.

**Louise Ellman:** Hezbollah, as a proxy for Iran, promotes terrorism and instability right throughout the middle east. Last year, Hezbollah built six terror tunnels between the border of Lebanon and Israel, for the purpose of promoting terrorism and ruining any chances of peace; why has all that not been taken more seriously?

**Andrew Murrison:** I hope the hon. Lady will understand that it is most definitely being taken seriously. Hezbollah is a clear and present danger: it destabilises the region and also offers instability in this country, which is why we have proscribed it in its entirety. That proscription has now taken effect—it happened in March—and I very much hope not only that it will assist in ensuring that activity in this country is curtailed but, more particularly, that when we are dealing with the region we make it absolutely clear that Hezbollah has no place in the middle east's future.

**Mike Gapes (Change UK):** ... Will he confirm that Hezbollah is in Syria working as a proxy for the Iranian regime and the Assad Government, and has played a malign role, killing many, many innocent people in the Syrian conflict?

**Andrew Murrison:** The hon. Gentleman is absolutely correct. Hezbollah is a force for evil in our world today, which is why we have taken the strong action we have against it.

**Stephen Crabb (Conservative):** Hezbollah is arguably the most successful export to come out of revolutionary Iran. Does the Minister share my serious concern that we are talking not just about Hezbollah but about the presence of the Revolutionary Guard of Iran in Syria today? Does he share my serious concerns about the new threat this poses on the northern borders of Israel?

**Andrew Murrison:** We need to understand what is happening in Syria and the fact that so many proxies of one sort or another are active and engaged in it—it is a maelstrom of such activity, and we need to deal with that. I think we know which countries are behind support for this in Syria, and all we can do is do what we can to maintain good relationships, as far as we possibly can, with those countries in the hope that our good counsel will prevail and that we will be able to curtail some of these unpleasant groups.

<https://hansard.parliament.uk/commons/2019-05-14/debates/2390D2B2-8F5C-4993-B0B3-B1D8BBAFF6C8/Hezbollah>

### Middle East

12. **Nigel Dodds (DUP):** What recent discussions [the Minister] has had with his international counterparts on the middle east peace process. [910877]

16. **Tommy Sheppard (SNP):** What recent representations [the Minister] has made to his Israeli counterpart on the annexation of land in the Occupied Palestinian Territories. [910881]

20. **Andrew Selous (Conservative):** What recent assessment [the Minister] has made of the likelihood of a two-state solution for Israel and Palestine. [910885]

21. **Philip Hollobone (Conservative):** What assessment [the Minister] has made of the (a) sources of funding and supply for, (b) size of the arsenal behind and (c) political implications for an Israeli-Palestinian peace process of continued rocket fire into Israel from the Gaza strip. [910886]

**The Minister for the Middle East (Andrew Murrison):** The UK remains committed to a two-state solution to end the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, and we maintain a regular dialogue with our international counterparts about the peace process. My right hon. Friend the Minister for Asia and the Pacific met Israeli Ambassador Mark Regev on 30 April, and raised our concerns about recent Israeli comments on west

bank annexation. We wholly condemn rocket fire by Hamas and other militants. We urge the parties to make progress towards a long-term agreement, and we look forward to the details of Mr Jared Kushner's proposals.

**Nigel Dodds:** The successful conclusion of peace talks between Israel and the Palestinians is absolutely key to peace in the region; we accept that. Does the Minister not agree that the continued rejection of peace talks by Hamas and its continued commitment to the destruction of the state of Israel are real problems, and that until that is addressed it is very difficult for Israel to sit down and negotiate with Hamas?

**Andrew Murrison:** The right hon. Gentleman is absolutely correct. I strongly urge Hamas to desist from its activities. There is no way we can proceed towards a two-state solution until we have revocation of violence. Particularly from his position of strength as a Northern Ireland Member of Parliament and somebody who is well used to these matters, he speaks extremely wisely.

**Tommy Sheppard:** I welcome the Minister's condemnation of any proposals to annex Occupied Palestinian Territories, but we know that President Trump will announce the "deal of the century" shortly after he visits this country next month. It might include proposals that support the Netanyahu Administration's idea of going ahead with annexation, so what will the Minister do to prevent that, and what will he do if they do?

**Andrew Murrison:** I thank the hon. Gentleman for the question, but I am certainly not going to speculate on the matter he raises. Apropos the Foreign Secretary's remarks a few moments ago, we are America's closest friend and ally, but that does not prevent us from criticising it from time to time; that is what being friends is all about. *[Interruption.]* The shadow Foreign Secretary is chuntering from a sedentary position, but I gently point out that on 26 March officials in our embassy in Washington raised concerns directly with US counterparts regarding the United States's decision to recognise the Golan Heights as part of the state of Israel, which is unacceptable. ...

**Andrew Selous:** A perception that the west applies the rule of law partially undermines our ability to broker peace, so what steps are the Government taking to ensure that the international rule of law is applied equally to the expansion of illegal Israeli settlements and to terrorist elements within Palestine?

**Andrew Murrison:** I thank my hon. Friend for his question. He is right that we need to be fair and equitable, and nowhere more so than in the middle east. I point to the postponed demolition of Khan al-Ahmar in area C of the west bank as an example of a positive intervention. We urge Israel to convert that postponement into something permanent. Although we are clearly friends with Israel, and indeed equally, I hope, with the Palestinians, that enables us from time to time to give a word to the wise, and that is what we will continue to do on both sides.

**Philip Hollobone:** While unemployment in Gaza is at 50% and two thirds of Gazans live in poverty, over half of Hamas's budget goes on military expenditure. Would not the lives of civilians in Gaza be improved, and the prospects for the peace process enhanced, were Hamas to spend its money, time and effort on the civilian population, rather than on building up its rocket arsenal?

**Andrew Murrison:** My hon. Friend is absolutely right. Good governance means doing the things he describes. If Hamas aspires to run its territory as a good Government, it must address the concerns of its population. I will just point out that we have supported Gazans recently by addressing critical water and sanitation needs through a £2 million grant to UNICEF, and we have announced £2 million for the International Committee of the Red Cross for medicines and surgical supplies, so we are doing our bit.

**Emily Thornberry (Labour):** I join colleagues in welcoming the new Minister for the Middle East to his post. Although I applaud the sterling work that other Foreign Office Ministers have been doing to cover the absence, it really is a disgrace that, at a time like this, we

should have 50 days without a dedicated Minister for such a critical region. Does he agree that it is also a disgrace that Prime Minister Netanyahu is proposing to give the Israeli Government and Parliament the legal authority to ignore rulings from the Israeli Supreme Court and to put himself personally above the law?

**Andrew Murrison:** I have to say to the right hon. Lady that in general we would support the Israeli Government, who are the only democracy in the middle east and a firm friend of this country. Where we find that our friends are doing something that we consider to be edgy or with which we disagree, we will certainly be keen to discuss that with them. I will meet the Israeli ambassador shortly to discuss a range of issues, and that matter might form part of our discussions, given that the right hon. Lady has raised it on the Floor of the House.

**Emily Thornberry:** We of course support Israel, but we also support the rule of law. We can all see where this is going. Exactly one year on from the slaughter on the Gaza border, Netanyahu is taking a further giant step away from democracy and the rule of law by giving himself immunity against prosecution and complete impunity when it comes to attacking the freedoms of Israeli Arabs, ignoring the human rights of Palestinians in Gaza and completing the annexation of the west bank. Does the Minister agree that now is finally the time for the British Government to take a different step by recognising the state of Palestine while there is still a state left to recognise?

**Andrew Murrison:** The crux of the right hon. Lady's question is whether the British Government would recognise the state of Palestine, and I think she can anticipate my response. We support the two-state solution, when the time is right. That inevitably implies that we will support—recognise—the state of Palestine, but in the meantime we are engaged in building institutions that are necessary to sustain such a state. As I said earlier, that means building institutions across the piece, and we will continue to do that.

<https://hansard.parliament.uk/commons/2019-05-14/debates/4B36072E-8742-4644-B7B0-8BB3FC2155E9/MiddleEast>

*The Foreign Minister's remarks, referred to above, can be read at*

<https://hansard.parliament.uk/Commons/2019-05-14/debates/1E6EE21B-FE5B-429B-8512-A90212FD9F33/PresidentTrumpStateVisit>

### **Topical Questions: Foreign and Commonwealth Office**

**T9. Marie Rimmer (Labour):** ... Given the recent comments and actions of President Trump and Prime Minister Netanyahu during the Israeli elections, when he called for the annexation of part or all of the west bank, and given that present international law prohibits the acquisition of territory by force and that any such move would put under threat a solution for Israel and Palestine, will the Secretary of State or a Minister commit to calling for an international examination of and protection for the human rights of Palestinians? [910900]

**Andrew Murrison:** The human rights of Palestinians are quite clearly very close to the top of our list of priorities. The hon. Lady touched on Israel, the annexation of territory and the involvement of the US. Let us be clear. We want to see a two-state solution based on the 1967 borders. I hope that makes our position clear.

<https://hansard.parliament.uk/commons/2019-05-14/debates/D6A29B94-784C-4BC0-9BC5-8744EF4D6E93/TopicalQuestions#contribution-FF8A2ECF-7DA1-4D32-A145-FF079FE55E78>

## Foreign and Commonwealth Office

### Israel economic factsheet (updated)

[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/798356/0419\\_Israel.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/798356/0419_Israel.pdf)

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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

#### **Online Harms White Paper** (closing date 1 July 2019)

<https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/online-harms-white-paper>

#### **Opt-out organ donation: organs and tissues excluded from the new system** (closing date 22 July 2019)

<https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/opt-out-organ-donation-organs-and-tissues-excluded-from-the-new-system>

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