

Political Affairs Digest

A daily summary of political events affecting the Jewish Community

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Westminster Hall Debate

Intimidation in Public Life

col 298WH **Lisa Cameron (SNP):** ... In my own recent case, a man pleaded guilty to sending me abusive messages. He had previously come to my surgery and asked for help. I had tried to help him by writing to the Government on his behalf, but unfortunately they said they could not take his case any further, and, following that, I appeared to become a target. He has now been given a four-year non-harassment order after quite a lengthy court procedure. Two other cases are ongoing. In one, my office was attacked and in another, I had death threats cut out from newspaper words, put together and sent to me. ...

col 299WH I contributed to Lord Bew's report in 2017. What is happening with the recommendations? ... If someone thinks they are anonymous, it is almost as if they have carte blanche to say and do what they want, and then they are emboldened to abuse ... Some of the recommendations were specifically for political parties: ...

"Political parties should set clear expectations" about Members' conduct. They should be, "consistently and appropriately disciplined in a timely manner."

In my experience, that has never been the case. I am on the appeals committee for my own party and have not heard a single appeal all year since being elected, so I am not sure how things are processed, but they certainly never get to appeal. ...

In 2017, there were instances when I had to attend meetings as a candidate in the election and I knew I would face verbal abuse, but I did not get a response from the party. ... No advice or support came in 2017, and there is still none in 2019. It is disappointing, and it emboldens individuals to carry on as they have been doing.

There has been no disciplinary follow-up since I complained. I want to make the point that that emboldens people, and I know it led to other incidents that I experienced. ...

col 300WH In 2015, way before that incident, the same individuals called me to a meeting to ask me to explain why someone had said online that I was an agent of Israel and was among "shameless British parliamentarians willing to sacrifice freedom of expression to please their paymasters". The message went on: "British politics must cleanse itself of this corrosive influence ... Zionist corruption which has implanted its roots in pretty much every British Parliamentary party."

I was asked to explain that. I was not asked how I or my family felt about it, or whether I was okay and whether we were coping. I was asked why the individual had said it. Obviously, I have a Jewish family background, which gives a link to why I was targeted; but I experienced no support. ...

Andrew Percy (Conservative): I pay tribute to the hon. Member for East Kilbride, Strathaven and Lesmahagow (Dr Cameron). I have travelled with her on a trip about antisemitism and I know some of the things that she has gone through. It was a brave speech, and I hope she will not now be called in to explain that; such treatment is unacceptable. ...

... when I was elected in 2010 I did not expect a situation in which, because of death threats and various other incidents, including some public incidents, I would have restraining orders against people, my house would have panic alarms, and court cases would be brought against people who had done things to me. The police have generally been very good, but the sole reason for the collapse of the case against two people who were twice involved in incidents against me in the street, in Doncaster and Scunthorpe, was the failings of Humberside police, and I have not yet received a satisfactory response on that. Despite their racist and antisemitic abuse, those two individuals continue to walk around scot-free. ...

col 304WH Cat Smith (Labour): ... Intimidation, including death threats, criminal damage, sexism, racism, homophobia and antisemitism, has no place in our democracy, but all those kinds of abuse have been raised in our debate. ...

To read the full transcript see

<https://hansard.parliament.uk/commons/2019-05-21/debates/19052166000001/IntimidationInPublicLife>

The report referred to above can be read at

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/666927/6.3637_CO_v6_061217_Web3.1_2_.pdf

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Holocaust

House of Commons Written Answers

National Holocaust Memorial Centre and Learning Service

Edward Leigh (Conservative) [253496] To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what the area of Victoria Tower Gardens to be occupied by the structures and hard paving of the Holocaust Memorial and Learning Centre is in square metres under the (a) planning application submitted in December 2018 and (b) revised proposals of May 2019.

Heather Wheeler: The area of Victoria Tower Gardens to be occupied by the structures and courtyard paving of the Holocaust Memorial and Learning centre in square metres was 1400 m² in the planning application submitted in December 2018 (7.43 per cent of the park area) and 1429 m² in the revised proposals of April 2019 (7.58 per cent of the park area).

<https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Commons/2019-05-13/253496/>

National Holocaust Memorial Centre and Learning Service

Edward Leigh (Conservative) [253497] To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, for what reason the Government has allocated an

additional £25 million to the construction of the Holocaust Memorial and Learning Centre.

Heather Wheeler: The additional £25 million will provide further funding for the revised entrance pavilion, the Memorial courtyard and surrounding landscaping, and to take account of VAT incurred on the overall project costs.

<https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Commons/2019-05-13/253497/>

National Holocaust Memorial Centre and Learning Service

Edward Leigh (Conservative) [253498] To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what the current estimated cost is for the construction of the Holocaust Memorial and Learning Centre; and what proportion of that cost will be covered by funds from the public purse.

Heather Wheeler: The estimated total cost for building the Holocaust Memorial and Learning Centre is £102 million (including VAT). Government has committed up to £75 million towards the overall costs subject to at least £25 million being secured from private sources.

<https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Commons/2019-05-13/253498/>

National Holocaust Memorial Centre and Learning Service

Edward Leigh (Conservative) [253499] To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, how much funding from private sources has been promised towards the construction of the Holocaust Memorial and Learning Centre; how many promises of funding exceeding £1 million have been made; and what conditions have been attached by the donors to those donations.

Heather Wheeler: A fund-raising campaign is being led by a newly established independent charity, led by Foundation member Gerald Ronson CBE, who has committed to securing pledges of at least £25 million.

<https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Commons/2019-05-13/253499/>

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Israel

See also Lisa Cameron's contribution to the Westminster Hall debate on "Intimidation in Public Life" in the "Home Affairs" section above.

House of Lords Debate

UK Foreign Policy in a Shifting World Order (International Relations Committee Report)

col 1924 Lord Grocott (Labour): ... surely it is only a matter of time before Palestine is recognised as a new state. ...

col 1965 The Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office (Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon): ... we have differences [with the United States] over ... the recognition of the Golan Heights as part of Israel...

To read the full transcript see

[https://hansard.parliament.uk/lords/2019-05-21/debates/58F88BF4-49C8-464E-A5F2-98FD7B27168F/UKForeignPolicyInAShiftingWorldOrder\(InternationalRelationsCommitteeReport\)](https://hansard.parliament.uk/lords/2019-05-21/debates/58F88BF4-49C8-464E-A5F2-98FD7B27168F/UKForeignPolicyInAShiftingWorldOrder(InternationalRelationsCommitteeReport))

The report referred to in the title of the debate can be read at <https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/ld201719/ldselect/ldintrel/250/250.pdf>

and the government response can be read at <https://www.parliament.uk/documents/lords-committees/International-Relations-Committee/foreign-policy-in-a-changing-world/Government-Response-UK-Foreign-Policy-in-a-Shifting-World-Order.pdf>

House of Commons Written Answers

Israel: Palestinians

Nicholas Soames (Conservative) [253449] To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, what the Government's definition is of a two-state solution for Israel and Palestine; and what steps the Government plans to take to help achieve that solution.

Andrew Murrison: The UK's longstanding position on the Middle East Peace Process is clear: we support a negotiated settlement leading to a safe and secure Israel living alongside a viable and sovereign Palestinian state; based on 1967 borders with agreed land swaps, Jerusalem as the shared capital of both states, and a just, fair, agreed and realistic settlement for refugees. We consistently call for an immediate end to all actions that undermine the viability of the two-state solution, including terrorism, anti-Semitic incitement, settlement expansion, and the demolition of Palestinian property in the West Bank. Steps to transform the situation in Gaza are also needed. At this highly sensitive time in the region, there is an urgent need to restart the peace process between Israel and Palestine. We regularly press both parties to resume direct negotiations towards a two-state solution.

<https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Commons/2019-05-13/253449/>

Palestinians: Humanitarian Aid

Nicholas Soames (Conservative) [253450] To ask the Secretary of State for International Development, what recent assessment he has made of the humanitarian situation in the Occupied Palestinian Territories.

Andrew Murrison: We continually monitor the humanitarian situation in the Occupied Palestinian Territories. We are concerned by the high levels of poverty, unemployment, and food insecurity, as well as the fragile health system, shrinking Gazan economy and the lack of access to consistent supplies of electricity. DFID recently announced an aid package of £2 million to the International Committee for the Red Cross to support delivery of medicines, equipment and rehabilitation services. The UK's new economic development programme aims to help the economy in Gaza and the West Bank by increasing trade and creating jobs. The UK has also made a commitment to UNRWA of up to £80m over the next two years to help provide health services and education to Palestinian refugees living across the Middle East. The UK is committed to alleviating the humanitarian situation in the OPTs and continues to urge the parties to prioritise progress towards reaching a durable solution.

<https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Commons/2019-05-13/253450/>

Israel: Bedouin

Douglas Chapman (SNP) [253601] To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and

Commonwealth Affairs, what representations he has made to his Israeli counterparts on the future of the village Khan al-Ahmar; and what steps he plans to take to prevent further threats to villages in the Occupied Palestinian Territories.

Andrew Murrison: We regularly raise our concerns with the Israeli authorities at senior levels, including with the Israeli Prime Minister and Israeli Attorney General, urging them not to go ahead with the proposed demolition of Khan al-Ahmar. Officials from our Embassy in Tel Aviv discussed this issue with the Israeli National Security Council on 7 March and the Israeli Office for the Coordination of Government Activities in the Territories on 3 January. Officials from our Consulate General in Jerusalem continue to visit the Khan al-Ahmar community regularly, most recently on 28 March. The UK repeatedly calls on Israel to abandon demolition plans entirely, and instead provide a transparent route to construction for Palestinians in Area C.

<https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Commons/2019-05-13/253601/>

House of Lords Written Answers

Israel: Golan Heights

Lord Hylton (Crossbench) [HL15546] To ask Her Majesty's Government what discussions they have had with the government of Israel about the extension of Israeli laws, jurisdiction and administration to the Golan Heights; what were the outcomes of any such discussions; and what assessment they have made of whether that extension prejudices the possibility of peace in Syria.

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: We have been clear to our Israeli counterparts that the UK views the Golan Heights as territory occupied by Israel. Annexation of territory by force is prohibited under international law, including the UN Charter. The UK did not recognise Israel's annexation in 1981 and we have no plans to change our position. On 26 March we reiterated our firm position on this matter at a meeting of the UN Security Council.

<https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Lords/2019-05-07/HL15546/>

The UK contribution to the UN Security Council meeting referred to above can be read at <https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/latest-rocket-attacks-in-israel-humanitarian-situation-in-gaza-and-the-status-of-the-golan-heights>

Israel: Bedouin

Lord Hylton (Crossbench) [HL15547] To ask Her Majesty's Government what steps they are taking to secure the permanent protection and improvement of Bedouin villages in Israel and the West Bank, in particular Khan al-Ahmar.

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: The UK is gravely concerned by Israeli proposals to relocate the Bedouin population from the E1 area, which the UN has said could constitute forcible transfer. We have also expressed our strong opposition to the proposed demolition of Khan al-Ahmar. We regularly raise our concerns with the Israeli authorities

<https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Lords/2019-05-07/HL15547/>

The following two questions both received the same answer

Israel: Palestinians

Lord Hylton (Crossbench) [HL15548] To ask Her Majesty's Government what estimate

they have made of the number of Palestinian children detained in prison in Israel; whether, and to what extent, they consider such detentions to violate Article 147 of the Geneva Convention; and whether they intend to call for penal sanctions under that Convention against persons who commit unlawful deportation, transfers or confinement.

Lord Hylton (Crossbench) [HL15549] To ask Her Majesty's Government what action they will take to ensure proper access for parents and legal advisers to Palestinian children under arrest by Israel.

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: We understand 203 Palestinian children were in Israeli military detention at the end of December 2018. It remains our assessment that the transfer of Palestinian child and adult detainees to prisons inside Israel is in violation of the Fourth Geneva Convention. We continue to make representations on this important issue to the Israeli authorities as well as to ensure proper access for parents and legal advisers to Palestinian children under arrest by the Israeli authorities.

<https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Lords/2019-05-07/HL15548/>

and

<https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Lords/2019-05-07/HL15549/>

Israeli Settlements

Baroness Tonge (Non-affiliated) [HL15579] To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of reports that the government of Israel intends to seize 95 acres of Palestinian-owned agricultural lands in order to build new roads for Israeli settlers; and what steps they intend to take to protect Palestinians who own and farm such land.

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: We oppose any steps taken by the Israeli Government towards the expansion of settlements. We consistently call for an immediate end to all actions that undermine the viability of the two-state solution, including the UK's statement at the UN Security Council on 29 April, and we continue to raise with our Israeli counterparts our concerns about the destruction of Palestinian agricultural land that has been caused by settlement-related activity.

<https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Lords/2019-05-07/HL15579/>

The statement referred to above can be read at

<https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/at-this-holy-time-of-year-we-urge-the-new-mandates-to-pursue-a-lasting-legacy-of-peace>

Israel: West Bank

Baroness Tonge (Non-affiliated) [HL15580] To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of reports that the government of Israel's Ministry of Tourism has made monetary grants available for the construction of hotels in Area C of the West Bank.

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: We oppose any steps taken by the Israeli Government towards the expansion of settlements. Such settlements are illegal under international law and undermine the physical viability of the two-state solution. We reiterated this in the UK's statement at the UN Security Council on 29 April. We continue to urge the Government of Israel to develop improved mechanisms for zoning, planning and permitting in Area C for the benefit of the Palestinian population, including by facilitating local Palestinian participation in such processes.

<https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Lords/2019-05-07/HL15580/>

Israel: Palestinians

Baroness Tonge (Non-affiliated) [HL15581] To ask Her Majesty's Government what representations they are making to the government of Israel about the number of Palestinian properties being demolished, in particular those that have been demolished without warning or explanation.

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: We have repeatedly made representations to the Government of Israel to end the demolition of Palestinian properties. Demolitions and evictions of Palestinians from their homes cause unnecessary suffering to ordinary Palestinians, call into question Israel's commitment to a viable two-state solution, and, in all but the most exceptional of cases, are contrary to International Humanitarian Law.

<https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Lords/2019-05-07/HL15581/>

Israel: Palestinians

Baroness Tonge (Non-affiliated) [HL15582] To ask Her Majesty's Government what representations they intend to make to the government of Israel about the treatment of Palestinian detainees in Israeli prisons.

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: We regularly raise the treatment of Palestinians in Israeli prisons with the Israeli authorities and emphasise the importance of treating prisoners and detainees humanely and in accordance with international law.

<https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Lords/2019-05-07/HL15582/>

Israel: Palestinians

Baroness Tonge (Non-affiliated) [HL15583] To ask Her Majesty's Government what steps they intend to take to protect Palestinian agricultural land following reports that Israeli occupation forces used military bulldozers to raze Palestinian cultivated land lots in Beit Jala.

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: We continue to raise with our Israeli counterparts our concerns about the destruction of Palestinian agricultural land that has been caused by settlement-related activity.

<https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Lords/2019-05-07/HL15583/>

Jerusalem: Demolition

Baroness Tonge (Non-affiliated) [HL15616] To ask Her Majesty's Government what action they will take in response to the call by UN officials on 3 May for an immediate halt to demolitions in East Jerusalem and respect for international law.

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: We have repeatedly urged the Government of Israel to end demolitions of Palestinian properties in East Jerusalem given the impact on ordinary Palestinians and on the viability of a future Palestinian state. The EU issued a statement on 26 April noting recent demolitions with grave concern and requesting that Israel reconsider pending demolition orders in East Jerusalem.

<https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Lords/2019-05-08/HL15616/>

The UN statement referred to above can be read at

<https://www.ochaopt.org/content/un-officials-call-immediate-halt-demolitions-east-jerusalem-and-respect-international-law>

The EU statement referred to above can be read at

https://eeas.europa.eu/delegations/palestine-occupied-palestinian-territory-west-bank-and-gaza-strip/61531/local-eu-statement-demolition-palestinian-property-east-jerusalem-neighbourhood_en

Israel: Palestinians

Baroness Tonge (Non-affiliated) [HL15617] To ask Her Majesty's Government what consideration they have given to supporting the establishment of safe havens for the people of Gaza who are unable to protect themselves from Israeli bombing.

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: We deplore the loss of life in both Israel and Gaza during the recent exchange of rocket fire. We remain deeply concerned about the humanitarian situation in Gaza, and remain a committed and leading supporter of the UN Refugees and Works Agency for Palestinian refugees (UNRWA). The UK also recognise that Israel has the right to protect itself from indiscriminate Hamas rocket attacks on Israeli communities. The UK welcomes the announcement of a ceasefire and recognises the vital role played by the UN and Egypt in securing it.

<https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Lords/2019-05-08/HL15617/>

Foreign and Commonwealth Office

Andrew Murrison: A pleasure to attend Israel's National Day reception this evening. I look forward to strengthening the UK and Israel's already close partnership.

<https://twitter.com/AWMurrison/status/1130925612460331008>

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Foreign Affairs

House of Lords Debate

UK Foreign Policy in a Shifting World Order (International Relations Committee Report)

col 1939 **The Lord Bishop of Winchester:** ... I suggest that in a world where up to 80% of people are committed to a religion or belief, it is vital that our policy of international relationships includes an expertise and engagement with what motivates billions of people, framing their personal and social aspirations. There are literally billions of Christians and Muslims and millions of Hindus, Buddhists and members of other religions. This dimension of human life is not confined to the private; it is public, social and transnational, and a core element of civil society. From a Christian perspective, I know well the importance of the Catholic Church and the networks of the Anglican Communion, which stretch across over 160 countries. I therefore warmly welcome the recent draft report from the Bishop of Truro looking at the persecution of Christians worldwide. This not only points up a key dimension of human rights but shows the need for greater religious literacy about what people are prepared to live and die for in the contexts of their countries and nations. People seek change and vote for change mostly on the basis of deeply held convictions. Our understanding of politics and how these shape our global economics cannot be separated from the tap-roots of the religious beliefs that people who construct these imaginations draw on and express. I therefore urge that religious literacy is a language that could be invested in as part of this new openness to international relations. ...

To read the full transcript see

[https://hansard.parliament.uk/lords/2019-05-21/debates/58F88BF4-49C8-464E-A5F2-98FD7B27168F/UKForeignPolicyInAShiftingWorldOrder\(InternationalRelationsCommitteeReport\)](https://hansard.parliament.uk/lords/2019-05-21/debates/58F88BF4-49C8-464E-A5F2-98FD7B27168F/UKForeignPolicyInAShiftingWorldOrder(InternationalRelationsCommitteeReport))

The report referred to in the title of the debate can be read at

<https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/ld201719/ldselect/ldintrel/250/250.pdf>

and the government response can be read at

<https://www.parliament.uk/documents/lords-committees/International-Relations-Committee/foreign-policy-in-a-changing-world/Government-Response-UK-Foreign-Policy-in-a-Shifting-World-Order.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

Scottish Human Rights Commission Draft Strategic Plan (closing date 28 June 2019)

<http://www.scottishhumanrights.com/media/1860/strategic-plan-consultation-vfinal-eh.docx>

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