

Political Affairs Digest

A daily summary of political events affecting the Jewish Community

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House of Commons Written Answers

Religious Hatred: Christianity

Andrew Rosindell (Conservative) [254766] To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what recent estimate he has made of trends in the level of hate crimes against Christians.

Victoria Atkins: The Home Office has collected on a mandatory basis the number of religious hate crimes where the targeted religion was Christian since 2017/18. Data for 2017/18 can be found in 'Hate Crime, England and Wales, 2017/18' which can be accessed here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/hate-crime-england-and-wales-2017-to-2018>

<https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Commons/2019-05-15/254766/>

Prisons: Ministers of Religion

Crispin Blunt (Conservative) [255249] To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, how many (a) prisoners and (b) chaplains employed within prisons there are of each religion or belief.

Robert Buckland: The Prison Act 1952 enshrines in law the statutory duties of a prison chaplain. These tasks, which must be undertaken daily, are incorporated into Prison Rules and Young Offender Rules. They are explained in detail in Prison Service Instruction 05/2016 Faith and Pastoral Care for Prisoners.

We recognise and respect the right of prisoners to register and practice their faith while serving their prison sentence. Chaplaincy plays a critical and unique role in the work of prisons and life of prisoners. It provides not only faith advice but pastoral care in support of HM Prison and Probation Service's commitments to decency, safety and rehabilitation. A breakdown of prisoner population by religion is provided in the quarterly Offender Management statistics publication on GOV.UK. The latest publication can be found at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/offender-management-statistics-quarterly-october-to-december-2018>.

The relevant extract of those statistics is provided in the following table:

Table 1.5: Prison population by religion and sex

	31-Mar-18	30-Jun-18	30-Sep-18	31-Dec-18	31-Mar-19	Percentage change March 2018 to 2019
Males and Females	83,263	82,773	83,005	82,236	82,634	-1%
All Christian	39,839	39,541	39,784	39,293	39,515	-1%
Anglican	13,971	13,808	13,755	13,496	13,480	-4%
Free Church	776	764	782	758	737	-5%
Roman Catholic	14,334	14,277	14,246	14,094	14,160	-1%
Other Christian	10,758	10,692	11,001	10,945	11,138	4%
Muslim	12,847	12,894	12,868	12,894	13,008	1%
Hindu	379	354	350	361	343	-9%
Sikh	625	632	634	638	611	-2%
Buddhist	1,517	1,518	1,569	1,575	1,619	7%
Jewish	480	488	477	482	477	-1%
Other religious group	1,724	1,777	1,782	1,838	1,876	9%
Non recognised	10	11	12	6	7	**
No religion	25,711	25,393	25,413	25,053	25,034	-3%
Not recorded	131	165	116	96	144	10%

Chaplains may work on a full-time, part-time, sessional or voluntary basis. A breakdown of Chaplains in employed in prisons and by faith, is provided below.

Number of chaplains (headcount) employed by HM Prison and Probation Service¹, as at 31 March 2019.

	Religion	Headcount
Prison Service establishments		Number of chaplains
	Christian	242
	Muslim	118
	Sikh	12
	Hindu	3
	Unknown ²	99
Total		474

Notes to Table

1. A substantial amount of Chaplaincy services within the public sector Prison Service are provided by non-employed staff on a sessional basis, which are not included in the figures presented in this table. Chaplains fill roles in bands 5 and 7 or above under the Fair and Sustainable structures.
2. These are mostly managing Chaplains where the religion of the post is not specified.
3. Only includes chaplains working in prisons and therefore will not match published data which includes Chaplains who work in other areas of HMPPS, such as at Headquarters.
4. Information on the private estate is not held centrally. The total number of chaplain staff since 2010 can be found in the HMPPS Workforce Statistics Bulletin. The latest publication on the number of Chaplains can be found at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/hm-prison-and-probation-service-workforce-quarterly-march-2019> Information on the religious affiliation of chaplains is not published.

House of Lords Written Answers

Euthanasia: Vulnerable Adults

Baroness Lister of Burtersett (Labour) [HL15678] To ask Her Majesty's Government whether the current law permitting mentally competent adults to refuse life-sustaining medical treatment has ever been proven inadequate in the courts to protect vulnerable people from being pressured to end their life prematurely.

Lord Keen of Elie: We have not seen evidence from the courts that the current provisions permitting mentally competent adults to refuse life-sustaining treatment provide inadequate protection for vulnerable people.

<https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Lords/2019-05-13/HL15678/>

Euthanasia

Baroness Lister of Burtersett (Labour) [HL15679] To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of recent research from the UK's Assisted Dying Coalition, published on 8 February, which found that more than one person a week now travels from the UK to Switzerland to end their life; and in light of that research, whether they plan to review the UK's assisted dying law.

Lord Keen of Elie: It remains the Government's view that any change to the law in this area in England and Wales is an issue of conscience and a matter for Parliament to decide rather than one for Government policy.

Parliament has not so far voted to legalise assisted suicide in any circumstances.

<https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Lords/2019-05-13/HL15679/>

The research referred to above can be read at

[https://humanism.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019-2-1-KM-Assisted-Dying-Briefing - Number-of-UK-citizens-going-to-Switzerland-to-see-an-assisted-death-1.pdf](https://humanism.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019-2-1-KM-Assisted-Dying-Briefing_-_Number-of-UK-citizens-going-to-Switzerland-to-see-an-assisted-death-1.pdf)

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Israel

House of Lords Written Answer

Israeli Settlements

Lord Judd (Labour) [HL15803] To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the amount of UK financial involvement with illegal settlements in the West Bank; and what action they will take to curb it.

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: We have not made an assessment of this issue. It has long been our position that Israeli settlement activity is illegal. We do not recognise the Occupied Palestinian Territories, including the settlements in the West Bank, as part of Israel and these settlements are not covered by the current EU-Israel Association Agreement which governs our trade with Israel.

<https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Lords/2019-05-16/HL15803/>

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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