



Political Affairs Digest

A daily summary of political events affecting the Jewish Community

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House of Commons Written Answer

Religious Hatred: Islam

Nic Dakin (Labour) [257527] To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what steps the Government (a) is taking and (b) plans to take to address Islamophobia in the UK.

Heather Wheeler: We remain deeply concerned at hatred directed against British Muslims and others because of their faith or heritage. This is utterly unacceptable and does not reflect the values of our country.

This Government has done more than any other to tackle Islamophobia and anti-Muslim hatred. In early March 2019, the Communities Secretary and Home Secretary chaired a high-level roundtable discussion on Islamophobia to hear directly from communities about their concerns. In addition, the Cross-Government Working Group to Tackle Anti-Muslim Hatred plays a critical role as the Government's main forum for discussing issues of concern around Islamophobia and anti-Muslim hatred.

Alongside, we have supported Tell MAMA (Measuring Anti-Muslim Attacks) with over £2.5 million between 2016 and 2020 to monitor and combat anti-Muslim hatred. We have committed £1.6 million for the Places of Worship Security Grant this year, and a further £5 million over three years to support security training for places of worship.

To agree a formal definition of Islamophobia the government will be appointing two advisers, building on the important work already undertaken by the Anti Muslim Hatred Working Group.

<https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Commons/2019-05-22/257527/>

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Holocaust

House of Lords Written Answer

National Holocaust Memorial Centre and Learning Service

Lord West of Spithead (Labour) [HL15866] To ask Her Majesty's Government, further to the Written Answer by Baroness Williams of Trafford on 15 May (HL15445), whether the proposed siting of the new Holocaust Memorial and Learning Centre in Victoria Tower Gardens would increase the threat level around Parliament compared to its current usage as a park and children's playground.

Baroness Williams of Trafford: I refer to my response to my noble friend on 5th February (HL1427), that the Government provide a wide range of advice and guidance to the public about threats and how they can be mitigated. It is a matter for the owners and operators of crowded places to consider this advice and take forward appropriate security measures. The Metropolitan Police Service CTSA security assessment for the proposed Holocaust memorial would have assessed the future use of that part of Victoria Tower Gardens as a Holocaust Memorial and Learning Centre. Parliamentary security is a separate matter dealt with by the House Parliamentary security department.

<https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Lords/2019-05-20/HL15866/>

Answer 15445, referred to above, can be read at

<https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Lords/2019-04-30/HL15445/>

Answer HL1427, referred to above, does not relate to this subject. The answer intended is probably at col 1427 of Hansard for 5 February which can be read at

<https://hansard.parliament.uk/lords/2019-02-05/debates/DF4B1B4E-D1A9-433E-B1F9-CF56250E132E/WestminsterSecurity>

in particular the response to

<https://hansard.parliament.uk/lords/2019-02-05/debates/DF4B1B4E-D1A9-433E-B1F9-CF56250E132E/WestminsterSecurity#contribution-EC58AB47-DB76-44EA-8678-2A6D8B5CDD5F>

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Israel

House of Lords Written Answers

Overseas Trade: Israeli Settlements

Lord Judd (Labour) [HL15841] To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of any direct, or indirect, trade by UK public bodies with illegal settlements in the West Bank; and whether they will review the adequacy of the advice on the UK Trade and Investment website in that respect.

Viscount Younger of Leckie: The Government neither supports nor encourages such dealings. The Government routinely updates its guidance on the Overseas Business Risk website, outlining the clear risks related to economic and financial activities (including financial transactions, investments, purchases and procurements) in the settlements.

<https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Lords/2019-05-20/HL15841/>

Israeli Settlements: Overseas Trade

Lord Judd (Labour) [HL15842] To ask Her Majesty's Government what is their policy towards the use, in all Government departments and services, of goods sourced from illegal settlements in the West Bank; and in particular, how the use of such goods applies to UK missions in Israel and Palestine.

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: Government departments and missions are aware of UK policy on this issue, which is that we do not recognise the Occupied Palestinian Territories, including settlements in the West Bank, as part of Israel and indeed 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/2019-05-20/HL15842/>

Israel: Palestinians

Lord Judd (Labour) [HL15843] To ask Her Majesty's Government what recent assessment they have made of the number of Palestinian children held in Israeli prisons; how many representations they have made to the government of Israel about this being a war crime under Article 147 of the Fourth Geneva Convention; when those representations were made; by whom they were made; and what action they are taking under Article 146 of the Geneva Convention to provide effective penal sanctions for person committing unlawful transfers.

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 transfer of Palestinian child and adult detainees to prisons inside Israel is in violation of the Fourth Geneva Convention. We continue to make representations to the Israeli authorities at Ministerial and senior official level outlining our concerns around Israel's treatment of Palestinian children in Israeli detention. Most recently officials at our Embassy in Tel Aviv raised our concerns with the Israeli authorities on 18 March.

<https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Lords/2019-05-20/HL15843/>

Israel: Palestinians

Baroness Tonge (Non-affiliated) [HL15859] To ask Her Majesty's Government what representations they have made, and intend to make, to the government of Israel about the use of collective punishment against the families of Palestinians who have been accused of violent acts by Israel.

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: We have serious concerns about the use of punitive acts against the families of Palestinians who have been accused of violent acts by Israel, including Israel's policy of demolitions to destroy the homes belonging to suspected Palestinian terrorists or their families. Such punishments 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. Officials from our Embassy in Tel Aviv have registered concerns about this policy with Israeli authorities.

<https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Lords/2019-05-20/HL15859/>

Gaza: Travel Restrictions

Baroness Tonge (Non-affiliated) [HL15860] To ask Her Majesty's Government what representations they have made, and intend to make, to the government of Israel about family members not being permitted to accompany children who are receiving medical treatment outside of Gaza.

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: The British Embassy in Tel Aviv regularly raises the matter of medical permits with the Israeli authorities. Israeli restrictions severely restrict the movement of medical professionals, patients and families in Gaza, hampering the provision of quality health services. The situation in Gaza is particularly acute, and is compounded by frequent closure by Egypt of the Rafah crossing, preventing urgent medical cases from seeking treatment in Egypt. We are clear that Israel's occupation of Gaza is not sustainable. That is why we need a lasting peace agreement which ensures that all those who are in need of medical attention have access to healthcare provisions.

<https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Lords/2019-05-20/HL15860/>

Palestinians: Health Services

Baroness Tonge (Non-affiliated) [HL15861] To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the report by Safeguarding Health in Conflict and other international human rights and medical groups, Impunity Remains: 2018 Attacks on Health Care in 23 Countries in Conflict, published in May, that found that the Occupied Palestinian Territories experienced the highest number of attacks of those 23 countries on healthcare facilities, workers and vehicles in 2018.

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: We are concerned by the report on attacks on health workers and healthcare facilities in the Occupied Palestinian Territories, in particular in Gaza. We regularly raise our concerns about the situation with the Israeli Government, pressing them on the need for a long-term strategy to improve humanitarian conditions. We are clear that medical staff and services should have the protection that allows them to do their jobs in safety. We are providing funding to UNICEF and the International Committee of the Red Cross to help improve the situation for healthcare in Gaza.

<https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Lords/2019-05-20/HL15861/>

The report referred to above can be read at

<https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/SHCC2019final.pdf>

West Bank: Pipelines

Baroness Tonge (Non-affiliated) [HL15863] To ask Her Majesty's Government what representations they have made, and intend to make, to the government of Israel about the proposed routing of a water pipeline through the West Bank by Mekorot Water, which, if built, may destroy Palestinian agricultural land.

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: We have previously raised with Israeli authorities our concerns about the damage to Palestinian agricultural land. We also remain seriously concerned by the continued demolition of Palestinian property and have raised these concerns with the Israeli authorities.

<https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Lords/2019-05-20/HL15863/>

Israel: Palestinians

Baroness Tonge (Non-affiliated) [HL15864] To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the government of Israel's decision to deduct \$138 million from tax revenue it collects on behalf of the Palestinian Authority under the Oslo Agreement.

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: We have repeatedly raised with the Government of Israel our concerns about Israel's decision to withhold tax revenues to the Palestinian Authority (PA). We expect economic and fiscal agreements between

Israel and the PA to continue to be fully implemented, including Israel's obligations under the Oslo Accords and Paris Protocol.

<https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Lords/2019-05-20/HL15864/>

Gaza: Contamination

Baroness Tonge (Non-affiliated) [HL15911] To ask Her Majesty's Government, further to the Written Answer by Baroness Sugg on 15 May (HL15578), in view of concerns about heavy metal contamination in Gaza, whether they will conduct research into that contamination.

Baroness Sugg: The government at this moment will not conduct research into heavy metal contamination. We continue to engage closely with the World Health Organisation, UN OCHA, and other health and humanitarian-based NGOs working in Gaza to ensure we are able to comprehensively monitor health and humanitarian needs there.

<https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Lords/2019-05-21/HL15911/>

The answer referred to above can be read at

<https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Lords/2019-05-07/HL15578/>

Foreign and Commonwealth Office

Human Rights & Democracy: The 2018 Foreign & Commonwealth Office Report pp48-49: The State of Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territories

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/805108/Human_Rights_Democracy_The_2018_Foreign_Commonwealth_Office_Report.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>

Regulation of pre-paid funeral plans (closing date 25 August 2019)

<https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/regulation-of-pre-paid-funeral-plans-consultation-on-a-policy-proposal>

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