

Political Affairs Digest

A daily summary of political events affecting the Jewish Community

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House of Commons Written Answers

The following two questions both received the same answer

Islamic Resistance Support Organization and Hezbollah

Joan Ryan (Change UK) [266618] To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what assessment he has made of the relationship between Hezbollah and the Islamic Resistance Support Organisation.

Hezbollah

Joan Ryan (Change UK) [266894] To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what estimate his Department has made of the number of UK citizens who are members of Hezbollah.

Ben Wallace: I refer the Hon. Member to the answer given on 15 January 2018, UIN 122667.

<https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Commons/2019-06-19/266618>

and

<https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Commons/2019-06-19/266894/>

The answer referred to above can be read at

<https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Commons/2018-01-15/122667/>

The department does not collect data on specific numbers of Hezbollah members or supporters in the UK.

UK Parliament Petition

Non-stun slaughter

The petition of residents of the UK, Declares that animals killed by having their throats cut while fully conscious is unacceptable; further that animals should not be made to suffer

such profound trauma in the name of religion; further that this method of slaughter runs counter to any belief in compassion and mercy; further that animals should be stunned before they are slaughtered; further that, Shechita slaughter does not allow animals to be stunned before they are slaughtered; further that, when the Holy Prophet was alive, modern stunning methods did not exist; further that the Food Research Institute states that killing an animal before it is bled out by high voltage electrical stunning does not affect the amount of blood from the carcass; and further that this petition relates to e-petition 131591. The petitioners therefore request that the House of Commons to debate non-stun slaughter.

And the petitioners remain, etc.—[\[Presented to the House but not read on the Floor, Official Report, 22 May 2019; Vol. 660, c. 8P.\]](#)

[P002456]

Observations from the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (David Rutley): The Government encourages the highest standards of animal welfare and would prefer all animals to be stunned before slaughter, but is committed to respecting the rights of Jews and Muslims to eat meat prepared in accordance with their beliefs.

The European Council Regulation 1099/2009, on the protection of animals at the time of killing, sets out the main requirements for slaughter including a requirement that all animals are stunned by a permitted method before slaughter. The EU regulation includes a derogation from stunning for religious slaughter and also allows individual member states to impose stricter national rules for religious slaughter.

In England, the Welfare of Animals at the Time of Killing (England) Regulations 2015 (WATOK) enforce the EU requirements and contain stricter national rules that apply when animals are slaughtered by either the Jewish or Muslim method.

National regulations on religious slaughter have a long history. Religious slaughter was first debated in Parliament in 1875. The Slaughter of Animals Act 1933 introduced a legal requirement for stunning of animals prior to slaughter, and contained an exemption where animals were slaughtered for specific religious communities. Over the years, the rules governing religious slaughter have developed to provide additional protection for animals slaughtered in accordance with religious rites and have maintained the long standing exception for Jews and Muslims to eat meat prepared in accordance with their religious beliefs.

Animal welfare requirements are monitored and enforced by official veterinarians of the food standards agency to ensure that animals are spared unnecessary pain, suffering or distress during the slaughter process.

The Government are aware that there is public concern about meat from animals being slaughtered in accordance with religious beliefs being sold to consumers who do not require their meat to be prepared in this way and that there are calls for such meat to be labelled. The Government believes that consumers should have the necessary information available to them to make an informed choice about their food. This is an issue the Government are considering in the context of the UK leaving the EU.

The Government are currently engaging with religious communities and other stakeholders on issues around religious slaughter, including consumer transparency.

<https://hansard.parliament.uk/commons/2019-06-24/debates/19062424000024/Non-StunSlaughter>

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Holocaust

House of Commons Point of Order

Peter Bottomley (Conservative): On a point of order, Mr Speaker. You may have been as surprised as I was to read in *The Times* today that the Government have paid £118,000 to a company called Big Ideas to get lots of apparent objections to the objections to the Victoria Tower Gardens being used for a national holocaust memorial and learning centre. Until the close of objections to Westminster City Council, the majority were against the proposal. Now that Big Ideas has been there, the numbers have gone up massively, apparently mostly in favour.

Will the Government please explain who made the decision to use public money to influence the apparent responses to a consultation on a planning application that the Government themselves have made? This is the first time I have ever heard of this happening. It deserves an explanation and perhaps the Minister can explain now.

Mr Speaker: ... the attempted point of order—I use that term advisedly, as he will understand—does suffer from the notable disadvantage, which does not put it in a minority category, that it is many things but not a point of order. In other words, it is not a matter for the Chair; it is not for my adjudication.

In so far as the hon. Gentleman is referring to something that seems to resemble an organised campaign, I cannot say that that of itself is a great shock to me. However, his reference to the fact that there is public money involved is of course of great interest and does render the matter worthy of ministerial attention. It is quite open to a Minister now to respond and to seek to assuage the concerns of the hon. Gentleman, but I do not notice a Minister leaping to his feet with alacrity to do so. Indeed, it would be fair to say that the Leader of the House is seated comfortably in his perch on the Treasury Bench. Ah—he evinces a display of interest. Does the Leader of the House wish to comment? He is not obliged to do so, but we are always happy to hear his mellifluous tones.

The Leader of the House of Commons (Mel Stride): Further to that point of order, Mr Speaker. My hon. Friend's point is noted. I do not know the answers to his very specific questions with regard to the appointment of the Big Ideas group, but I will look into the matter and I will come back to him on it.

<https://hansard.parliament.uk/commons/2019-06-24/debates/144C2F73-6C53-4A0F-8225-DD5D30FDEAC9/PointsOfOrder#contribution-080DE6FB-4933-4E63-BA16-F26CDFFC0BF2>

The article referred to above can be read at

<https://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/pr-firm-big-ideas-hired-to-rig-decision-on-holocaust-memorial-site-fpmfkwlv>

House of Lords Written Answer

Roma Holocaust Memorial Day

Lord Judd (Labour) [HL16311] To ask Her Majesty's Government how they will be represented at the Roma Holocaust Memorial Day commemoration in Krakow on 2 August.

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: The British Government will be represented at the Roma Holocaust Memorial Day commemoration in Krakow on 2 August by The Rt Hon Lord Pickles, Special Envoy for Post-Holocaust Issues.

<https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Lords/2019-06-12/HL16311/>

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Israel

See also the written answers relating to “Hezbollah” and the “Islamic Resistance Support Organization” in the Home Affairs section above.

House of Lords Written Answers

Israel: West Bank

Baroness Tonge (Non-affiliated) [HL16226] To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the Israeli Civil Administration's powers to demolish, within 96 hours, any type of new building in Area C of the West Bank without any opportunity for appeal.

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: We have repeatedly made clear to the Israeli authorities our serious concern at the increase in demolitions of Palestinian properties in Area C of the West Bank. We call on them to cease the policy of demolitions and provide a clear, transparent route to construction for Palestinians in Area C.

<https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Lords/2019-06-10/HL16226/>

Israel: Palestinians

Baroness Tonge (Non-affiliated) [HL16227] To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of reports of the treatment by Israel of Palestinian children who have been shot by Israeli forces, prevented from immediate medical help and taken into Israeli custody without family support.

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: We continue to have strong concerns about continued reports of ill-treatment of Palestinian minors in Israeli military detention and to seek improvements to Israeli practices. Officials from our Embassy in Tel Aviv last raised our concerns with the Israeli Ministry of Justice on 6 June. We also regularly press Israel on the use of live fire, particularly against children, and urge unimpeded access to medical treatment.

<https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Lords/2019-06-10/HL16227/>

Jerusalem: Archaeological Sites

Baroness Tonge (Non-affiliated) [HL16228] To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the security of archaeological sites in East Jerusalem.

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: We have not made any assessment of the security of archaeological sites in East Jerusalem. We regularly make clear our serious concerns about the situation in East Jerusalem to the Israeli authorities, both bilaterally and in co-operation with EU partners. We are strongly opposed to any attempts to change the facts on the ground in the East Jerusalem.

<https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Lords/2019-06-10/HL16228/>

Jerusalem: Religious Buildings

Baroness Tonge (Non-affiliated) [HL16229] To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the number of incursions onto the Al-Aqsa compound by Israeli settlers and reports that they are supported by Israeli forces and encouraged by some Israeli politicians.

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: We are concerned by recent tensions and violence at the Haram al Sharif/Temple Mount, and urge all parties to avoid provocation and work to uphold the status quo. In our meetings with the Israeli authorities we

regularly raise the need to respect the status quo on the holy sites in Jerusalem. The Minister for the Middle East expressed the Government's concern at recent escalations at the Haram al Sharif/Temple Mount with Israel's Ambassador to London on 11 June.

<https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Lords/2019-06-10/HL16229/>

Gaza: Fisheries

Baroness Tonge (Non-affiliated) [HL16230] To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the consequences of frequent alterations to the fishing zones that the government of Israel allows fishermen in Gaza to use.

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: We regularly raise with the Government of Israel the urgent need to ease all access and movement restrictions on Gaza, including fishing limits. This would help to restore the fishing industry as regular alterations to the zone, often as a punitive measure, cause uncertainty and insecurity. The UK would like to see a permanent increase in the size of the fishing zone off the coast of Gaza in line with the limit of 20 nautical miles stipulated in the Oslo accords.

<https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Lords/2019-06-10/HL16230/>

Hebron

Baroness Tonge (Non-affiliated) [HL16231] To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the consequences for Palestinian children in Hebron of the removal of the Temporary International Presence in Hebron by the government of Israel.

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: We are concerned by Israel's decision not to extend the mandate for Hebron's international monitoring mission. The mission has been in Hebron for over 20 years and fulfilled an important role in reducing tensions in the city between Israeli settlers and Palestinian communities. Our Ambassador to Israel raised our concerns over this decision with the Israeli authorities on 29 January. The former Minister for the Middle East discussed our concerns with the Israeli Ambassador to the UK on 31 January and in a tweet on 2 February.

<https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Lords/2019-06-10/HL16231/>

The tweet referred to above can be read at

<https://twitter.com/AlistairBurtUK/status/1091681894721376256>

Israel: Lebanon

Lord Hylton (Crossbench) [HL16308] To ask Her Majesty's Government how they assess progress in negotiations between Israel and Lebanon about offshore gas and oil, in particular over the Block 9 oilfield; and whether they are able to provide technical assistance to the parties involved with offshore resources in the eastern Mediterranean.

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: We welcome attempts by all parties involved in negotiations over the maritime border to find a solution which is acceptable to all sides. A deal is in everyone's interests and the UK stands ready to support.

<https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Lords/2019-06-12/HL16308/>

End-of-mission statement of the UN Special Committee to Investigate Israeli Practices

A United Nations committee [the Special Committee to Investigate Israeli Practices Affecting the Human Rights of the Palestinian People and Other Arabs of the Occupied Territories] notes with deep concern the continued degradation of the human rights situation in the Occupied Palestinian Territory – Gaza and the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, as a result of Israeli policies and practices, and expresses particular alarm at a spike in settlement expansion and settler violence, including the targeting of children and schools.

During its annual mission to Amman, Jordan, the United Nations Special Committee to Investigate Israeli Practices Affecting the Human Rights of the Palestinian People and Other Arabs of the Occupied Territories received information about the killing and injury of Palestinians, resulting from the use of live ammunition, rubber-coated metal bullets and tear gas by Israeli security forces, in what appears to be excessive and disproportionate use of force against people posing no direct threat to life.

Since the beginning of the “Great March of Return” in March 2018, Israeli forces have reportedly killed more than 270 Palestinians and injured nearly 30,000 along the Gaza fence. More than 40 of those killed were children. In the West Bank, the Committee heard about rising numbers of persons injured or killed in and around the cities of Hebron, Qalqilya, Ramallah, Nablus, and near Israeli settlements.

The Committee notes with strong concern the impact of Israeli policies and practices on children.

Several organisations told the Committee about the practice of night raids to arrest children in the West Bank, with serious consequences for children’s wellbeing and the enjoyment of their rights. Following such raids, children are often taken to unknown locations, held in military vehicles, and subjected to threats and verbal abuse during interrogations. In some instances, and without the presence of a lawyer, children face pressure to sign a confession in Hebrew, a language they often do not understand.

According to testimonies received, more than 300 children are detained at any given time in the Israeli military system. The majority are held for minor offences, such as related to stone-throwing and social media posts. Such practices contravene Article 37 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, which requires States to use child detention as a measure of last resort.

In Gaza, children exhibit unusually high rates of psychological distress, fuelled by deteriorating living conditions and a high prevalence of violence, among other factors. A recent survey revealed that 49 per cent of children felt that there was no hope, and increased cases of substance abuse, child labour and early marriage were also reported.

The Committee expresses concern over the deteriorating human rights situation in the H2 area of Hebron, which is under the direct control of Israel. Due to a stark increase in settler violence and the proliferation of physical barriers, freedom of movement is severely restricted and Palestinians face serious hurdles in undertaking daily activities, including attending school and social gatherings, going to work and opening shops and businesses. This rise in violence and the atmosphere of impunity have been further exacerbated by Israel’s decision in January 2019 not to renew the mandate of the protective Temporary International Presence in Hebron (TIPH), a civilian observer mission that had been in place since 1994.

The Committee also heard that Israeli authorities were increasingly speaking openly about annexation of territories in the West Bank. The massive expansion of Israeli settlements – with 2018 marking the highest approval rate for new settlement housing units since 2002 – contributes even more to violence and existing human rights violations, including lack of freedom of movement, appropriation of land, water and other key natural resources, as

well as pollution and waste dumping. In the past two months alone, Israeli authorities advanced, approved or tendered nearly 6,000 housing units in the occupied West Bank, in a move that constitutes the largest settlement advancement in two years.

In addition, settlement expansion and recent legal developments are strongly linked to the acceleration of Palestinian house demolitions, in particular in East Jerusalem. The Committee noted with deep concern the continued threat of eviction of the Bedouin community in Khan al-Ahmar Abu al-Helu in Area C, which would amount to forcible transfer under international humanitarian law.

The Committee expresses its alarm at the dire humanitarian and human rights situation in the Gaza Strip, with the Israeli blockade entering its 13th year. It heard that the Gazan economy is in a deep recession, with an unemployment rate of over 50 per cent. The severe, arbitrary and punitive restrictions on the fishing zone and the lack of safe drinking water are cited as serious impediments to an adequate standard of living in Gaza. ...

In this context of increased Israeli discriminatory practices against Palestinians in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, and in order to cease the deterioration of their human rights situation, members of the Committee stress the importance of the peace process and of the two-State solution. ...

To read the full press release see

<https://www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=24729&LanglD=E>

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Relevant Legislation ** new or updated today

UK Parliament

Divorce, Dissolution and Separation Bill

<https://services.parliament.uk/Bills/2017-19/divorcedissolutionandseparation.html>

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>

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Consultations

** new or updated today

****closes in 3 days**

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

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

****closes in 6 days**

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