



Political Affairs Digest

A daily summary of political events affecting the Jewish Community

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Welsh Parliament Oral Answer

First Minister's Questions: Listed Buildings

Darren Millar (Conservative): ... One of the communities that was once very vibrant in Wales and, indeed, had faith communities across the country, was the Jewish community. Unfortunately, the numbers of people in the Jewish community across Wales have fallen in recent years, and they're pretty much confined now to Cardiff, Swansea and Llandudno in north Wales. Very often, though, those places of worship have been lost to future generations. And I know that Dawn Bowden, of course, has been ardently campaigning, quite rightly so, for a fantastic synagogue in her own constituency. But, unfortunately, I've lost places in my constituency, in places like Colwyn Bay, where there used to be a synagogue. Can you tell us what you are doing as a Government to particularly protect the last vestiges, if you like, of the Jewish community's heritage here in Wales, given the importance of this to the rich fabric and history of our nation?

The First Minister (Mark Drakeford): I thank Darren Millar for that question. He's absolutely right to point to the changes in the nature of the Jewish community here in Wales, and the rich legacy, both in the built environment, but also in many other ways, which that community provides. In my own constituency, there is a listed frontage to a synagogue that Members will have noticed on Cathedral Road here. There are local activities. Darren Millar asked me last week about local history, and I'm sure that he will have seen a local exhibition in Bangor that was held earlier this year that traced the history of Jewish people in that part of Wales. And a really fascinating exhibition it was too. I have been working with some Jewish interest groups to see whether we could have an exhibition here in the National Assembly, drawing attention to the history of Jewish people here in Wales. And the education Minister is meeting people on that score next week as well. So, there are steps we need to take, I agree, at this point in the history of that community, to make sure that people are aware of that very rich heritage. And where there are things that can be done to preserve it and to draw it to wider public attention, the Welsh Government will be keen to play our part in that.

<http://record.assembly.wales/Plenary/5668#C207085>

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Israel

House of Commons Oral Answers

Topical Questions: Foreign and Commonwealth Office

Rushanara Ali (Labour): ... last month I was part of a delegation with Medical Aid for Palestinians and the Council for Arab-British Understanding that visited the Palestinian refugee camp of Dheisheh in the occupied west bank. There we witnessed the vital work in education, health and other areas of humanitarian relief that the United Nations Relief and Works Agency does but which is now at risk because the US has threatened to defund and delegitimise the agency. Can the Foreign Secretary confirm that the UK intends to support the renewal of UNRWA's mandate at the General Assembly later this year so that it can continue its vital work of protecting people and giving them a sense of hope?

Jeremy Hunt: ... I can confirm that we will continue to support the renewal of UNRWA's mandate and the vital work it does.

T2. Paul Masterton (Conservative): Earlier this month a school in the beautiful Israeli town of Sderot was hit by a rocket—one of 800 fired from Gaza this year. What message do the UK Government have for the innocent Israeli civilians living in constant fear of terror, and does the Minister agree that there will be no progress until terror groups stop prioritising the eradication of Israel over peace? [911565]

Andrew Murrison: As it happens, I recently visited a kibbutz very close to the Gazan border, and I saw for myself the effect that such attacks were having on the civilian population, despite Israel's Iron Dome, which is good but not infallible. We condemn all rocket attacks from Gaza towards Israeli. They are completely unacceptable. While they and other violence like that continues, there is no realistic prospect of peace being forthcoming in that part of our troubled world. We must see the cessation of rockets from Gaza into Israel.

<https://hansard.parliament.uk/commons/2019-06-25/debates/F1B64AEA-AEC7-40D8-AE31-BBCDC8B79E61/TopicalQuestions#contribution-98979BC8-298C-4F63-8D5B-81C7C24814D0>

Middle East

Stephen Crabb (Conservative): ... Time and again, Iran demonstrates that it has no intention of being a serious and responsible member of the international community through its human rights abuses, its ballistic missile tests and its export of terror and violence throughout the region. Are we not naive in thinking that with a bit more love and a bit more carrot, Iran will change its ways?

Jeremy Hunt: My right hon. Friend speaks very wisely on this. The truth is that the only real solution to this problem is for Iran to stop its destabilising activities in Yemen, which has seen missiles being fired into airports in Saudi Arabia; in Lebanon, which is seeing Hezbollah activity and attacks happening on Israel; and in Iraq and in Syria. That is the long-term solution.

<https://hansard.parliament.uk/commons/2019-06-25/debates/871D3A80-AF3E-444E-BF51-FFB3D45F58B5/MiddleEast#contribution-B76488A4-C9DF-43DA-BEA0-93DA9ECA4E45>

House of Commons Written Answer

Israel: Palestinians

Labour Co-op) [267161] To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, whether his Department will be represented at the Bahrain Middle East conference on 25 and 26 June 2019.

Andrew Murrison: The UK will be represented at the economic workshop in Bahrain by the Exchequer Secretary to the Treasury Robert Jenrick MP.

House of Lords Written Answer

Israel: Palestinians

Baroness Tonge (Non-affiliated) [HL16288] To ask Her Majesty's Government what is their response to the joint open letter sent to High Representative Federica Mogherini and EU Ministers of Foreign Affairs on 4 June highlighting concern about the proposed United States' Middle East peace plan and requesting that any plan that (1) does not uphold the principles of international law including the right to self-determination, fulfilment of human rights for Palestinians throughout the region, and (2) legitimises a policy of separation and fragmentation of the Palestinian population, should be rejected.

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: 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 with equal land swaps to reflect the national, security, and religious interests of the Jewish and Palestinian peoples. Every Israeli and Palestinian has the right to live in peace and security. We understand and share the deep frustration on all sides at the lack of progress on the Middle East Peace Process. The ongoing violence underlines that a just and lasting resolution that ends the occupation and delivers peace for both Israelis and Palestinians is long overdue.

<https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Lords/2019-06-11/HL16288/>

Foreign and Commonwealth Office

UK continues to be among top donors to UNRWA: Statement by Ambassador James Roscoe, Head of Open Societies and Partnerships at the UK Mission to the UN at the Ad Hoc Committee of the General Assembly for the Announcement of Voluntary Contributions to the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees (UNRWA).

We have heard today about the challenges facing UNRWA, in particular the ongoing financial insecurity of the agency and the unpredictable context in which UNRWA operates. We have also heard about the positive impact that UNRWA's services have on the lives of Palestinian refugees and have seen for ourselves the bright hope for the future. In Hanan and Hatem, two impressive ambassadors for the UNRWA school system ...

The UK remains a strong supporter of UNRWA. We recognise its unique mandate from the General Assembly to protect and provide essential health and education services to Palestinian refugees across the Middle East. And we know that UNRWA is a vital humanitarian and stabilising force in the region.

The UK has consistently been among UNRWA's top donors, in 2018 in recognition of UNRWA's, severe financial constraints. We increased our planned support from £33.5 million to £65.5 million, and encourage other donors to step up their contributions. We recognise that until a permanent solution is found, Palestinian refugees need UNRWA to be on a more secure financial footing to ensure that their basic needs are met. ... as the number of refugees grows, balancing the books will remain an ever present challenge. ... I'm pleased to ... that the UK intends to again increase our planned level of funding this year to match the £65.5 million we provided in 2018. This UK aid about \$84 million, will help to provide essential services, including healthcare and education for millions of Palestinian refugees - living in Jordan, Syria, Lebanon, Gaza and the West Bank. As well

as cash and basic food supplies for the most vulnerable Palestinian refugees in Gaza and in Syria. ...

The UK is clear that the status of Palestinian refugees must be agreed as part of the wider peace negotiations. Until that time, the UK remains firmly committed to supporting the UN Relief and Works Agency and Palestinian refugees across the Middle East.

To read the full press release see

<https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/uk-continues-to-be-among-top-donors-to-unrwa>

Department for International Development

New UK aid will ensure millions of Palestinian refugees receive education, healthcare and food

A new package of UK aid will ensure millions of Palestinian refugees have access to vital health services, basic education and food, Minister for the Middle East Dr. Andrew Murrison announced today ...

Minister for the Middle East, Dr. Andrew Murrison, said: Today's new UK aid package is a vital lifeline for Palestinian refugees who are facing greater uncertainty than ever before. Our support will help UNRWA ensure families have enough to eat, providing basics such as flour, chickpeas and rice. It will also help to keep over half a million children in the classroom and provide essential access to healthcare for more than three million Palestinian refugees. ...

Only a political solution can provide a just, fair, and realistic settlement for Palestinian refugees, and until that time the UK remains firmly committed to supporting UNRWA's work and Palestinian refugees across the Middle East.

To read the full press release see

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/new-uk-aid-will-ensure-millions-of-palestinian-refugees-receive-education-healthcare-and-food>

European Commission

EU mobilises €21 million to support Palestine refugees via the UN Relief and Works Agency

The European Commission will mobilise additional €21 million for the United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA) on top of €82 million already paid into the programme budget this year to support vulnerable Palestine Refugees in the Middle East.

Commissioner for European Neighbourhood Policy and Enlargement Negotiations Johannes Hahn said: *"UNRWA is an essential provider of vital services to millions of Palestine refugees, and a stabilising force in the region. The EU's additional contribution is to ensure that millions of Palestine refugees continue to benefit from health services and education across the region. We hope that others will also step forward."* ...

The EU acknowledges and supports the essential contribution made by UNRWA to the well-being, protection and human development of Palestine refugees. Generations of Palestine refugees have been educated and provided with opportunities to live in dignity via the efforts of UNRWA. ...

To read the full press release see

http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_IP-19-3390_en.htm

Addressing Pledging Conference for Palestine Refugee Agency, Secretary-General Urges Donors Maintain Their Support at 2018 Levels

... When we gathered last year at this meeting, we feared the worst — UNRWA schools not opening, food for refugees running out, clinics closing.

Fortunately, that did not happen because, in 2018, many of you stepped up to assert that Palestine refugees deserved the assistance, dignity and hope that UNRWA provides. ...

For nearly seven decades, UNRWA has faithfully and effectively fulfilled its mandate to assist Palestine refugees until a just and lasting solution is found.

It is tragic that a political solution has not yet been reached that satisfies the needs and aspirations of both Palestinians and Israelis. I reiterate the importance of continuing to pursue peace efforts to realize the vision of two States, Israel and Palestine, living side by side in peace and security. In the meantime, the continued work of UNRWA should be viewed not only as our common responsibility, but as our common success.

Millions of children have benefitted from an UNRWA education. When I visited UNRWA schools in Gaza and Jordan, I was struck by the positive energy and attitudes of the children, who learn United Nations values of human rights and tolerance, and who want to be positive citizens of this world. ...

UNRWA's innovative health-care services maintain high standards and are remarkably cost-effective. ...

To read the full press release see

<https://www.un.org/press/en/20190/sqsm19643.doc.htm>

With Palestine Refugee Agency Approaching Funding Shortage, 23 Donors Step In, Announcing Contributions at Pledging Conference

A total of 23 donors today announced contributions, or their intention to contribute, to the 2019 budget of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) after two young Palestinian students told the General Assembly Ad Hoc Committee how critical funding was making a deep, lasting and positive impact on the lives of millions of children like them.

The voluntary contributions were made during a meeting of the Ad Hoc Committee, established by the General Assembly as the primary forum for announcing financial support. UNRWA has been providing health, education, relief and social services, as well as emergency humanitarian assistance, across its five fields of operation — Jordan, Lebanon, Syria, West Bank and the Gaza Strip — since 1950. The Agency currently serves 5.4 million Palestinian refugees — 20 per cent of the world's refugees.

Hanan Abu Asabah, President of the UNRWA Student Parliament, said ... the students at the UNRWA school learn about human rights and democracy. "Yes, I have lived a life of suffering, I hear the sound of explosions and bullets," she recalled. On her way to school, stops at checkpoints and humiliations are ordinary. But, the UNRWA school gives her hope, she said, expressing concern that the schools risked closure in 2018. ...

Hatem Hamdouna, President of the Gaza Student Parliament, said ... "I did not choose to live through war and blockade ... The scenes of war and destruction still haunt me." UNRWA schools give kids a sense of normality. ...

To read the full press release see

<https://www.un.org/press/en/2019/ga12155.doc.htm>

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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>

Second Reading, House of Commons

<https://hansard.parliament.uk/commons/2019-06-25/debates/BEF1408D-1207-4133-ADD1-D90A05DFF17A/DivorceDissolutionAndSeparationBill>

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 2 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 5 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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