

# Political Affairs Digest

A daily summary of political events affecting the Jewish Community

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## Home Affairs

### House of Commons Written Answers

#### Hate Crime

**Paul Williams (Labour)** [291470] To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what steps the Government is taking to prevent a potential rise in hate crime in the event that the UK leaves the EU without a withdrawal agreement.

**Luke Hall:** We are clear that there is no excuse for using the British people's decision to leave the EU to target people of any faith or background, and that includes EU nationals. All forms of hate crime are completely unacceptable and this country has one of the strongest legal frameworks in the world to report, record and prosecute hate crime. We are funding hate crime reporting platforms, including Tell MAMA and True Vision who seek to increase hate crime reporting, helping communities unearth and challenge such behaviour.

More broadly, we are continuing our work to ensure that Britain remains a country where people live, work, learn and socialise together and share rights and responsibilities, whatever their background. We are engaging with communities of all faiths and background, to make sure that we understand any concerns communities may have and can provide targeted support. We have also worked with community and local partners to develop and publish guidance to support local authorities to engage effectively with all communities during this period.

<https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Commons/2019-09-26/291470/>

#### Census: Sikhs

**Preet Kaur Gill (Labour Co-op)** [291409] To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, what estimate his Department has made of the number of Sikhs who did not identify themselves as either religious or ethnically Sikh in the 2011 census.

**Kevin Foster:** The information requested falls within the responsibility of the UK Statistics Authority. I have asked the Authority to reply:

... I am able to provide the following information based on the data we hold:

In the 2011 Census of England and Wales, the Office for National Statistics (ONS)

estimated the number of persons who identified themselves as Sikh at 430,020. There were 423,158 persons who identified as Sikh in the religion question, and 83,362 persons who identified as Sikh in the ethnic group question. Of the 83,362 persons who identified as Sikh in the ethnic group question, 6,862 did not also identify as Sikh in the religion question.

For the 2021 Census, the ONS has made a number of recommendations in the White Paper (*Help Shape Our Future: The 2021 Census of Population and Housing in England and Wales*<sup>1</sup>) to ensure that the need for high-quality data, for those who identify as Sikh, is met. The recommendations fully recognise the need for good data on the Sikh community, both in terms of the need for high-quality data from the Census and also more widely across all public services. I want to assure you that everyone who wishes to identify as Sikh will be able to do so under the published proposals for the 2021 Census.

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-2021-census-of-population-and-housing-in-england-and-wales>

<https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Commons/2019-09-26/291409/>

*The following three questions all received the same answer*

#### **Census: Jainism**

**Gareth Thomas (Labour Co-op)** [290594] To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, whether he will hold discussions with the Office of National Statistics on the potential merits of introducing alternatives to the write-in option and search box to be used in the 2021 Census to ensure more accurate data on the Jain community in that census; and if will he make a statement.

**Gareth Thomas (Labour Co-op)** [290595] To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, what plans he has to promote to the Jain population in the UK the ability to identify as a Jain in the 2021 census, and if he will make a statement.

**Gareth Thomas (Labour Co-op)** [290596] To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, what discussions he has had with the Office of National Statistics to ensure that the religious classification of Jainism is not confused with the term Hindu; and if he will make a statement.

**Kevin Foster:** The Government will be guided by the Office for National Statistics' (ONS) recommendations, to Government and Parliament, regarding the demand for particular questions in the next census.

These recommendations were published in the White Paper 'Help Shape our Future: The 2021 Census of Population and Housing in England and Wales' in December 2018 (Cm 9745).

Under the ONS proposals, everyone who wishes to identify as being of the Jain religion in the 2021 Census will be able to do so using the write-in option and the new online search-as-you-type facility.

The ONS will work with local groups and organisations to ensure anyone who wishes to identify as Jain knows that they can use these options to do so. The ONS has been in discussions with the Institute of Jainology (IoJ) about how best to reach and work with Jain communities, as well as working with local authorities to identify areas with Jain communities.

<https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Commons/2019-09-25/290594/>

and

<https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Commons/2019-09-25/290595/>

and

<https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Commons/2019-09-25/290596/>

The White Paper referred to above can be read at

[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/765089/Census2021WhitePaper.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/765089/Census2021WhitePaper.pdf)

## Downing Street

**Prime Minister's Rosh Hashanah 2019 message (video)**

<https://twitter.com/10DowningStreet/status/1178202819234615296>

## Foreign and Commonwealth Office

### Foreign Secretary's Rosh Hashanah 2019 message

Foreign Secretary Dominic Raab said: I send my warmest wishes to the British Jewish community and to Jewish communities around the world for the Jewish New Year and high holidays.

Rosh Hashanah is a special time to reflect. This year many will reflect on the 75th anniversary of the liberation of Auschwitz-Birkenau and Bergen Belsen. My father grew up knowing that the loved ones he left behind when he fled Czechoslovakia were systematically slaughtered for one simple reason. They were Jews.

I would like to reassure the Jewish community in the UK and worldwide: the UK is committed to your safety and wellbeing, and stands alongside you in the fight against racism and intolerance.

I thank the community for their invaluable contribution to the UK and to our heritage, and wish you all a happy and peaceful new year. Shana Tova and Chatima Tova!

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/foreign-secretary-rosh-hashanah-message>

## Charity Commission

**The Value of the Charity Sector**

[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/835686/Value\\_of\\_Charity\\_-\\_Oct\\_19\\_-\\_published.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/835686/Value_of_Charity_-_Oct_19_-_published.pdf)

## Scottish Parliament Written Answer

### Definition of Antisemitism

**S5W-25296 John Finnie (Green):** To ask the Scottish Government what plans it has to evaluate the full implications of its decision to adopt the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance definition of antisemitism.

**Aileen Campbell:** There is no place in Scotland for any form of antisemitism or religious hatred that makes our communities feel insecure or threatened in their daily lives. The IHRA definition of anti-Semitism helps to bring some much needed clarity to what is often a complex issue and helps to send a clear message that anti-Semitism of any kind will not be tolerated in Scotland. The definition was adopted as part of our Tackling Prejudice and Building Connected Communities Action plan and, although there are currently no plans for an evaluation of the definition, the action plan is due for review in 2020.

<https://www.parliament.scot/parliamentarybusiness/28877.aspx?SearchType=Advance&ReferenceNumbers=S5W-25296>

The Action Plan referred to above can be read at <https://tinyurl.com/yy4b7xht>

## Scottish Government

### First Minister's Jewish New Year message

First Minister Nicola Sturgeon sends best wishes to all celebrating the Jewish New Year. She said: Warmest greetings to everyone in Scotland's Jewish communities as they begin to celebrate Rosh Hashanah and mark the holy day of Yom Kippur. At this special time of contemplation, I send my best wishes for the year ahead.

Scotland's Jewish communities make a significant contribution to our society and we appreciate everything you do to promote peace and understanding. Celebrating the cultural and religious identity of our faith communities is more important now than ever as we work to tackle the hatred and prejudice that unfortunately still exists within society. I look forward to continuing to work together as we build more inclusive, resilient communities across Scotland.

I hope for the year ahead to bring joy and happiness to you all – Shanah Tovah!

<https://firstminister.gov.scot/first-ministers-jewish-new-year-message/>

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## Israel

### House of Commons Written Answer

#### West Bank: LGBT People

**Paul Masterton (Conservative)** [290446] To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, what representations he has had made to the Palestinian Authority on (a) its decision to prevent Palestinian LGBTQ group Al Qaws from holding events in the West Bank and (b) the effect of that decision on the LGBTQ community in the West Bank.

**Andrew Murrison:** The Government shares your concern about the Palestinian Police statement banning LGBT activities, which has now been removed. Officials from our British Consulate-General in Jerusalem raised our concerns with the Palestinian Authorities and directly engaged with Al Qaws and international partners on this matter. We will continue to encourage all governments to respect the rights of LGBT people, especially those that criminalise homosexuality and those that fail to defend the rights of LGBT people against social prejudice and violence.

<https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Commons/2019-09-24/290446/>

### House of Lords Written Answers

#### UNRWA

**Baroness Deech (Crossbench)** [HL17613] To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of whether the work of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) is in line with their objective to

make the UK international aid process transparent and accountable; and what discussions they have had with UNRWA about transparency and accountability.

**Baroness Sugg:** DFID's Memorandum of Understanding with UNRWA requires it to apply transparency standards in line with the UK Aid Transparency Guarantee and the International Aid Transparency Initiative (IATI) for all funding received from DFID. DFID officials last discussed this with UNRWA as part of our annual review cycle in June 2019 and assessed that UNRWA's work was in line with the UK's objective to make the international aid process transparent and accountable.

<https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Lords/2019-09-03/HL17613/>

### **Gaza: Weedkillers**

**Lord Hylton (Crossbench)** [HL17645] To ask Her Majesty's Government what representations they have made to the government of Israel about drift from herbicide sprays, aimed at the buffer zone, but affecting crops and population inside the Gaza Strip.

**Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon:** Officials from our Embassy in Tel Aviv raised this issue with the Israeli authorities earlier this year. The UK continues to urge the Government of Israel to ease their restrictions to help improve the dire humanitarian situation and living standards of ordinary Palestinians in Gaza.

<https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Lords/2019-09-03/HL17645/>

### **UNRWA**

**Lord Polak (Conservative)** [HL17686] To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of whether the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East's mandate is aligned with their commitment to a two-state solution for an end to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict; and what steps they will take to ensure that alignment if necessary.

**Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon:** UNRWA is a necessary humanitarian and stabilising force in the region, providing vital services to millions of Palestinian refugees every day. The UK recognises UNRWA's unique mandate from the UN General Assembly, to protect and provide essential health and education services to Palestinian registered refugees across the Middle East. We accompany our support to UNRWA with stringent attention to neutrality and values of peace and remain in close contact with UNRWA's senior management to monitor and drive progress on essential reforms.

<https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Lords/2019-09-03/HL17686/>

### **Israeli Settlements**

**Baroness Tonge (Non-affiliated)** [HL17695] To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of reports that Israeli authorities are using the approval of new settlement housing units in the West Bank as collective punishment for Palestinian acts of violence.

**Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon:** The UK's position on settlements is clear. They are illegal under international law, present an obstacle to peace, and threaten the physical viability of a two-state solution. We regularly raise our concerns on this issue with the Government of Israel.

<https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Lords/2019-09-03/HL17695/>

### Jerusalem: Palestinians

**Baroness Tonge (Non-affiliated)** [HL17696] To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of reports that Israeli authorities intend to extend the closure of Palestinian institutions in East Jerusalem and prohibit any cultural or political activities by Palestinian organisations held there.

**Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon:** 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. These concerns include the evictions of Palestinians and demolition of Palestinian property; the construction of illegal Israeli settlements; removal of residency rights from Palestinians; possible unilateral changes to the municipal borders; and severe difficulties of access to Jerusalem for Palestinians from the West Bank or even for those residents of Jerusalem who live beyond the Separation Barrier.

<https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Lords/2019-09-03/HL17696/>

### Nassim Abu Roumi

**Baroness Tonge (Non-affiliated)** [HL17733] To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of reports that Israeli Interior Minister Aryeh Deri has decided to withhold the body of Nassim Abu Roumi from East Jerusalem to exchange it for the body of an Israeli soldier held in Gaza; and whether they intend to take any action in response to those reports.

**Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon:** Whilst we have not made an assessment on this specific issue, we urge all sides to treat the dead with respect and to return any bodies they are holding.

<https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Lords/2019-09-04/HL17733/>

### Jerusalem: Palestinians

**Baroness Tonge (Non-affiliated)** [HL17734] To ask Her Majesty's Government what representations they will make to the government of Israel regarding the breaking up of a Palestinian soccer team in East Jerusalem on the grounds that the location is under Israeli sovereignty.

**Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon:** The UK's position is clear. In line with Security Council Resolution 242 (1967) and subsequent Council resolutions, we regard East Jerusalem as under Israeli military occupation. We do not recognise Israel's sovereignty over the territories occupied by Israel since June 1967, including East Jerusalem.

<https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Lords/2019-09-04/HL17734/>

### Jerusalem: Demolition

**Baroness Tonge (Non-affiliated)** [HL17735] To ask Her Majesty's Government what representations they will make to the government of Israel regarding the recent break up by Israeli forces of a Palestinian Bar Association conference on Israel's home demolition policy in East Jerusalem.

**Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon:** Whilst we have not raised this specific issue, 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. These concerns include the evictions of Palestinians and demolition of Palestinian property; the construction of illegal Israeli settlements; removal of residency rights from Palestinians; possible unilateral changes to the municipal

borders; and severe difficulties of access to Jerusalem for Palestinians from the West Bank or even for those residents of Jerusalem who live beyond the Separation Barrier.

<https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Lords/2019-09-04/HL17735/>

### **Israeli Settlements**

**Baroness Tonge (Non-affiliated)** [HL17736] To ask Her Majesty's Government what representations they will make to the government of Israel regarding the taking over by Israeli settlers of dozens of Palestinian-owned springs in the West Bank, preventing their owners from using them.

**Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon:** While we have not raised this specific issue, the UK has previously raised our concerns over access to water in the Occupied Palestinian Territories with the Israeli authorities, including stressing the need to take immediate and practical measures to improve the situation and ensure fair distribution of water in the West Bank.

<https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Lords/2019-09-04/HL17736/>

## **UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights**

### **Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights meets with civil society representatives from Switzerland, Israel and Ecuador**

... Palestinian Centre for Human Rights said in 2018, the World Health Organization had reported that 31 per cent of patients wishing to exit the Gaza Strip had not been able to. The Israeli authorities had also taken measures that amounted to collective punishment. ...

Physicians for Human Rights Israel said two specific violations had significantly worsened since Israel's last review in 2011: the denial of medical treatment to undocumented migrant children, and the denial of access to medical care for medical patients from Gaza, including particularly vulnerable communities, such as women and children. Israel should abolish the current medical exit permit mechanism. The impact of the blockade on Gaza women must be examined.

Al Marsad/Al-Haq highlighted Israel's organized, systematic and illegal exploitation of natural energy resources in the occupied Golan, which violated the Covenant. ... Israel's exploitation of energy resources in the Golan restricted Syrians' right to work ... The Committee should condemn Israel's actions in advancing its own energy interests at the expense of indigenous Syrians' rights under the Covenant.

ASSAF-Aid Organization for Refugees and Asylum Seekers in Israel said there were about 30,000 Eritrean and Sudanese asylum seekers in Israel. While the Israeli authorities had periodically announced various plans to reform services of refugees and asylum seekers, it usually amounted to little more than a bureaucratic smokescreen. Asylum seekers, many of them victims of torture, received no mental health related support. They were becoming poorer, more marginalized and more vulnerable. ...

The Legal Centre for Arab Minority Rights in Israel said Bedouins formed 34 per cent of the population in the Naqab. A third of them lived in villages that Israel refused to recognize. Its policy was guided by the false depiction of the area as a vast empty space. Using different policies, laws and planning mechanisms, Israel was displacing the Bedouins to assert State control over the land. It had recently promoted huge infrastructure projects in Naqab. Evictions were also carried out to build Jewish-only towns.

Al Mezan Centre for Human Rights said Gaza's fishermen continued to endure constant

harassment, arrest and detention, inter alia, by the Israeli navy. ...

Geneva International Centre for Justice said that while Israel maintained that it was not responsible for the application of the Covenant in the occupied Palestinian territories due to the armed conflict, whether or not such a conflict was taking place was immaterial to Israel's responsibilities under the Covenant.

Housing and Land Rights Network/Habitat International Coalition highlighted the discrimination inflicted by institutions that operated under the Israeli State. They carried out development projects and controlled water resources with discriminatory purposes and effects. ...

Kayan Feminist Organization said Palestinian women could not exercise their full rights and this problem required immediate attention. In 2018 alone, 15 Arab women had been killed. Often, victims had sought the help of the police prior to their murder, to no avail. On sexual harassment, the State did not provide data about Arab women specifically, nor did it provide accurate data. ...

Women's Centre for Legal Aid and Counselling recalled that the Covenant applied in all territories under the effective control of the State party. Israel was using the occupied Palestinian territories as a dumping site for hazardous and industrial waste. Palestinian women living in polluted surroundings also suffered from psychological impacts. ...

Negev Coexistence Forum for Civil Equality said Israel was denying the Bedouins' historical rights. They faced constant harassment and fear of being relocated to urban areas against their will. The Bedouins found themselves in a situation where they had to ask the oppressor for permission to stay on their own ancestral lands. In 2018, the Bedouins had experienced over 2,000 house demolitions. The entire community was being criminalized and persecuted.

Al-Huq said Israel continued to restrict movement and demolish houses, and had, along with private actors, continued to illegally exploit resources. It had denied the occupied population the right to use its natural resources and its right to economic development. ...

**To read the full press release see**

<https://www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=25081&LangID=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>

#### **\*\* Domestic Abuse Bill**

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

House of Commons Library Briefing

<http://researchbriefings.files.parliament.uk/documents/CBP-8630/CBP-8630.pdf>

#### **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**

### **\*\* Civil Partnership (Scotland) Bill**

<https://www.parliament.scot/parliamentarybusiness/Bills/112997.aspx>

*The Bill includes measures in relation to the postponement of a decree of dissolution of a civil partnership where a religious impediment to marriage exists.*

Bill as introduced

[https://www.parliament.scot/S5\\_Bills/Civil%20Partnership%20Scotland%20Bill/SPBill57S052019.pdf](https://www.parliament.scot/S5_Bills/Civil%20Partnership%20Scotland%20Bill/SPBill57S052019.pdf)

Policy Memorandum

[https://www.parliament.scot/S5\\_Bills/Civil%20Partnership%20Scotland%20Bill/SPBill57PMS052019.pdf](https://www.parliament.scot/S5_Bills/Civil%20Partnership%20Scotland%20Bill/SPBill57PMS052019.pdf)

Explanatory Notes

[https://www.parliament.scot/S5\\_Bills/Civil%20Partnership%20Scotland%20Bill/SPBill57ENS052019.pdf](https://www.parliament.scot/S5_Bills/Civil%20Partnership%20Scotland%20Bill/SPBill57ENS052019.pdf)

Financial Memorandum

[https://www.parliament.scot/S5\\_Bills/Civil%20Partnership%20Scotland%20Bill/SPBill57FMS052019.pdf](https://www.parliament.scot/S5_Bills/Civil%20Partnership%20Scotland%20Bill/SPBill57FMS052019.pdf)

Delegated Powers Memorandum

[https://www.parliament.scot/S5\\_Bills/Animals%20and%20Wildlife%20Bill/SPBill57DPMS052019.pdf](https://www.parliament.scot/S5_Bills/Animals%20and%20Wildlife%20Bill/SPBill57DPMS052019.pdf)

Equality impact assessment

<https://www.gov.scot/publications/civil-partnership-scotland-bill-equality-impact-assessment/>

Business and regulatory impact assessment

<https://www.gov.scot/publications/civil-partnership-scotland-bill-business-regulatory-impact-assessment/>

Press Release: Civil Partnership Bill introduced

<https://www.gov.scot/news/civil-partnership-bill-introduced/>

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## **Consultations**

\*\* new or updated today

**Welsh Government Strategic Equality Objectives 2020-24** (closing date 19 November 2019)

<https://gov.wales/sites/default/files/consultations/2019-09/strategic-equality-objectives-2020-2024-consultation.pdf>

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