



# Political Affairs Digest

A daily summary of political events affecting the Jewish Community

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## Home Affairs

### House of Commons Written Answer

#### Hate Crime: Religious Buildings

**Sarah Owen (Labour)** [11666] To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many incidents of hate crime at places of worship were recorded in each year since 2010.

**Victoria Atkins:** The Home Office collects and publishes statistics annually on the number of religious hate crime offences recorded by the police in England and Wales. However, information on the location of these offences is not collected.

The latest 'Hate Crime, England and Wales' statistical bulletin is available here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/hate-crime-england-and-wales-2018-to-2019>

<https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Commons/2020-02-03/11666/>

### House of Lords Oral Answers

#### Hate Crime: Anti-Semitism

**The Lord Bishop of St Albans:** To ask Her Majesty's Government what steps they have taken to address antisemitic hate crime.

**Baroness Berridge:** My Lords, the Government are committed to combating all forms of antisemitism. Our cross-party working group ensures that we are alive to Jewish community concerns and can respond effectively, alongside the advice of the noble Lord, Lord Mann, as our independent adviser. We have spent nearly £860,000 this year on projects tackling religiously and racially motivated hatred, including almost £150,000 to tackle anti-Semitism online.

**The Lord Bishop of St Albans:** I thank the noble Baroness for her Answer. According to the Community Security Trust, the number of anti-Semitic instances has risen for each of the past four years. It is a growing problem. We in the churches have been exploring with Jewish groups any role that we may have played in the past with any stereotyping.

Recently, the entire College of Bishops of the Church of England signed up to the IHRA definition of anti-Semitism. Education will be key. I am grateful for what the noble Baroness has said, but can she tell us not only about the funds but which projects and resources Her Majesty's Government are making available so that we can address, through education, the stereotyping and the troping of Jewish people to address this scourge.

**Baroness Berridge:** I am pleased to note that the right reverend Prelate said that the bishops have adopted the definition. In 2016, this Government were the first to do so. The Department for Education specifically teaches on the Holocaust in schools through programmes such as lessons on Auschwitz and the work of the UCL Centre for Holocaust Education. It is the only compulsory named topic in the history curriculum. We agree that the effective teaching of pupils can help them understand the possible consequences of anti-Semitism. I am sure that the right reverend Prelate is taking his experience back to the many schools that the Church of England runs in our country.

**Lord Mann (Non-affiliated):** I refer to my declaration in the register of interests. As well as the bishops, six football clubs—Chelsea, West Ham United, Newcastle United, Bournemouth, Brighton and Crystal Palace—have all adopted the IHRA definition of anti-Semitism. Does the Minister agree that if it is good enough for the Church and football clubs, then it should be good enough for employers, trade unions, universities and other institutions of civil society?

**Baroness Berridge:** I agree with the noble Lord. He will be aware that the relevant Ministers have written to local authorities and universities asking them to adopt this definition. Noble Lords will be aware that I answered this question on behalf of the Department for Education not many months ago. The rate of take-up is not what the Government want. There is now a proposal that information about those universities and local authorities which have not signed up to the definition will in some form be made public.

**Lord Pickles (Conservative):** My Lords, I draw noble Lords' attention to my declaration of interests and associate myself with the question asked by the noble Lord, Lord Mann. Given that anti-Semitism is often an open gateway to violent extremism, does the Minister think that now is an appropriate time for the Government to incorporate anti-Semitism into their Prevent strategy?

**Baroness Berridge:** My Lords, I am unfortunately not aware of whether that has been proposed although, as noble Lords will know, we have recently reviewed the Prevent strategy. I will take my noble friend's suggestion back, write to him and put the letter in the Library.

**Lord Singh of Wimbledon (Crossbench):** My Lords, anti-Semitism is evil and should be combated in every possible way, but will the Minister make it clear that the Government are equally committed to tackling hate crimes against all communities, even those of non-Abrahamic faiths?

**Baroness Berridge:** My Lords, the Government abhor all hate crimes committed on the basis of religion or of lack of religious belief. In relation to the legislative framework in this area, I am pleased to tell the House that, due to the prevalence of these offences online, the Law Commission is currently looking at the Malicious Communications Act and will shortly be announcing a consultation on hate crime legislation to see whether it sufficiently covers all religious groups. There are peculiarities in relation to the legislation when a religious group is also a racial group.

**Lord Kennedy of Southwark (Labour Co-op):** My Lords, I agree with others in this House that anti-Semitism is an evil prejudice and that we must do everything to drive it out. Will the Minister agree to speak to the Cabinet Office Minister Chloe Smith to look at the possibility of changing the nomination process for all public elections, to require candidates to confirm their opposition to anti-Semitism, Islamophobia and all other race and hate

crimes, as well as changing our code of conduct in this House? If anyone falls short of their commitments, swift action can be taken by the relevant authorities, up to and including expulsion from the relevant House, Parliament, Assembly or local authority.

**Baroness Berridge:** I thank the noble Lord for his suggestions. In relation to the Cabinet Office, I am sure that officials are listening to today's debate and will act upon it. The code of conduct is for the authorities here, but the noble Lord will be aware that the APPG has been asking all MPs to sign the declaration; 641 out of 643 have signed the definition. Unfortunately, two sitting MPs and seven Sinn Féin MPs—who do not take up their places—have not signed.

**Baroness Burt of Solihull (Liberal Democrat):** My Lords, we have just marked the 75th anniversary of the liberation of Auschwitz, but this shocking report referred to by the right reverend Prelate shows that levels of anti-Semitism have never been higher. I fear that we have not learned the lessons of the past. What will the Government do right now to stem this tide of what the Home Secretary herself has called this shameful stain on our society”?

**Baroness Berridge:** My Lords, I have outlined some of the actions that the Government are taking. However, it is for all of society to take responsibility: families, communities and faith groups. Yes, the Community Security Trust figures are the highest on record; they match the Home Office figures, which show that a greater proportion of religiously motivated hate crime is against the Jewish community. The Government have now announced funding of half a million pounds to take 200 university students to Auschwitz so that they can then go back to their campus and educate others.

<https://hansard.parliament.uk/lords/2020-02-11/debates/B70471E8-75CF-414D-805A-A6A1DD1A9081/HateCrimeAnti-Semitism>

*The CST report referred to above can be read at*

<https://cst.org.uk/public/data/file/9/0/IncidentsReport2019.pdf>

*Information about the Law Commission review referred to above can be read at*

<https://www.lawcom.gov.uk/project/reform-of-the-communications-offences/>

## House of Commons Library

**Briefing: Coroners' investigations and inquests**

<http://researchbriefings.files.parliament.uk/documents/SN03981/SN03981.pdf>

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## Holocaust

*See the House of Lords oral answers “Hate Crime: Anti-Semitism” that are included in the “Home Affairs” section above.*

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## Israel

### House of Commons Written Answers

**Israel: Palestinians**

**Andrew Rosindell (Conservative) [11472]** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and

Commonwealth Affairs, whether he has made representations to the Palestinian Authority on accepting the peace plan recently proposed by Israel.

**Andrew Murrison:** The Foreign Secretary called President Abbas on 27 January. He emphasised the UK hope that the plan would encourage a return to negotiations. We will continue to encourage all parties to resume dialogue.

<https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Commons/2020-02-03/11472/>

### **Palestinians: Schools**

**Jack Lopresti (Conservative)** [12287] To ask the Secretary of State for International Development, what steps his Department takes to ensure, through the allocation of official development assistance, that children studying in schools run by the Palestinian Authority are not being taught that it is honourable to commit violent acts against Israelis; and if he will make representations to the Palestinian leadership on upholding their pledge to renounce violence.

**Andrew Murrison:** The UK government strongly condemns all forms of violence and incitement to violence.

We have robust conversations with the highest levels of the Palestinian leadership, challenging them about the need to prepare their population for peace, including by promoting a positive portrayal of others. I most recently raised the issue with the Palestinian Authority's Minister for Education at a meeting on 22 January 2020.

We continue to judge that the Palestinian Authority is demonstrating a credible commitment to DFID's 'partnership principles', including the principle of non-violence.

<https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Commons/2020-02-04/12287/>

### **Israel: Palestinians**

**Yasmin Qureshi (Labour)** [12306] To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, what assessment he has made of whether the Palestinian state proposed in the US Administration's Peace to Prosperity plan would be viable and sovereign.

**Andrew Murrison:** The UK's longstanding position on the Middle East Peace Process is clear and has not changed: we want to see a safe and secure Israel living alongside a viable and sovereign Palestinian state; based on 1967 borders with agreed land swaps, Jerusalem as the shared capital of both states, and a just, fair, agreed and realistic settlement for refugees. But exactly how that vision is achieved will be a result of negotiations between Israelis and Palestinians. Only the leaders of Israel and the Palestinians can determine whether these proposals can meet the needs and aspirations of the people they represent.

<https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Commons/2020-02-04/12306/>

### **Gaza: Humanitarian Situation**

**Yasmin Qureshi (Labour)** [12308] To ask the Secretary of State for International Development, with reference to the UN's warning that Gaza may be unlivable by 2020, what steps he is taking to tackle the humanitarian situation in Gaza.

**Andrew Murrison:** The UK remains deeply concerned by the situation in Gaza. In 2019/20 DFID will provide £16 million in humanitarian assistance to Gaza, which will help support the health system, including improved trauma care, and contribute to emergency food aid for around 1.2 million vulnerable people.

To help address the underlying causes of the humanitarian situation we are investing to build the capacity of Gaza's water and energy services and to address

barriers to trade. Ultimately, Gaza's immense challenges can only be resolved with a political solution that delivers peace, stability and the easing of movement and access restrictions.

<https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Commons/2020-02-04/12308/>

### **Pensions: Reciprocal Arrangements**

**Kate Osamor (Labour Co-op)** [11556] To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, which nations the UK has reciprocal pensions agreements with; when those agreements were signed; and if she will make a statement.

**Guy Opperman:** The UK has reciprocal social security agreements covering pensions with the countries outside the European Economic Area (EEA) listed in the table below. Social security and pension rights for people who have moved between the UK and the EEA countries and Switzerland are regulated by the EU social security coordination regulations. These regulations will remain in force until the end of the transition period, and will continue to apply after that period for individuals in scope of the Withdrawal Agreement.

<b>Country</b>	<b>Date of Signature</b>
Barbados	7-Jan-92
Bermuda	13 October 1969 (London) 23 October 1969 (Hamilton)
Ireland <sup>1</sup>	1-Feb-19
Israel	25-Apr-57
Jamaica	12-Nov-96
Mauritius	22-Apr-81
New Zealand	1-Nov-83
The Philippines	27-Feb-85
Turkey	9-Sep-59
USA	13-Feb-84
Former Yugoslavia <sup>2</sup>	24-May-58

<sup>1</sup> The agreement with Ireland maintains the social security and pensions rights associated with the Common Travel Area after the UK's exit from the EU.

<sup>2</sup> The agreement with Yugoslavia continues to be applied bilaterally, and with their consent, to the now separate republics – Bosnia-Herzegovina, Kosovo, Montenegro, North Macedonia and Serbia.

<https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Commons/2020-02-03/11556/>

## **House of Lords Written Answers**

### **Israel: Palestinians**

**Baroness Tonge (Non-affiliated)** [HL821] Her Majesty's Government what representations they have made to the government of Israel about reports of drug experimentation being conducted on Palestinian prisoners and schoolchildren in Palestine.

**Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon:** None. We emphasise the importance of treating prisoners and detainees humanely and in accordance with international law.

<https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Lords/2020-01-27/HL821/>

## Jerusalem: Sovereignty

**The Lord Bishop of Southwark [HL1281]** To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the competing claims to the territory of East Jerusalem and the prospects for a likely resolution to such claims.

**Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon:** The UK's longstanding position on the Middle East Peace Process is clear and has not changed: we support a negotiated settlement leading to a safe and secure Israel living alongside a viable and sovereign Palestinian state; based on 1967 borders with agreed land swaps, Jerusalem as the shared capital of both states, and a just, fair, agreed and realistic settlement for refugees. A final determination of the status of Jerusalem should be sought as part of a negotiated settlement between Israelis and Palestinians.

<https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Lords/2020-02-03/HL1281/>

## Foreign and Commonwealth Office

**Negotiations are the only path to peace for the Israelis and Palestinians: Statement by Ambassador Karen Pierce, UK Permanent Representative to the UN, at the United Nations Security Council briefing on the Middle East.**

... the Israeli-Palestinian conflict has blighted an entire region and untold lives. To this day, its implications are felt across the Middle East and around the world. ...

... the UK's longstanding position on the Middle East Peace Process is clear and has not changed: we support a negotiated settlement leading to a safe and secure Israel living alongside a viable and sovereign Palestinian state, based on 1967 borders with agreed land swaps, Jerusalem as the shared capital of both states, and a just, fair, agreed and realistic settlement for refugees.

The United Kingdom's commitment to the resolutions of this Council is unwavering – and we support what the German representative said about Israel's security.

We need to acknowledge progress towards meaningful peace has stalled. The absence of dialogue risks a prolonged political vacuum that will only fuel instability and extremism.

Israelis and Palestinians deserve better; they deserve a durable resolution that provides all with dignity and security. Palestinians deserve self-determination and freedom from occupation. Israelis deserve to live free of terrorist rocket fire, and a future characterized by fruitful cooperation with their neighbours in the region.

This can only be achieved by finding a path back to negotiations, and securing the settlement that is acceptable to all parties. No other path to peace exists. ...

Illegal settlements have expanded. Acrimony between Palestinian factions has deepened. ...

Our American colleagues have offered proposals for breaking this deadlock. ... The United Kingdom does not believe these proposals are the end of the road, but we hope that they may lead to a first step. Both Israeli and Palestinian leaders owe it to their people to give them due consideration. ...

President Abbas has long championed peace and dialogue. We have not forgotten. ...

President Abbas has expressed serious concerns with the proposals. That is certainly his right. It is for Israeli and Palestinian leaders to determine whether the plan meets the needs and aspirations of those they represent. ...

The United Kingdom looks to the Palestinian leadership to offer its own vision for a settlement, and to find a way of re-engaging with the negotiation process so that its concerns can be considered and discussed. ...

Unilateral action by either party is unacceptable. The UK government, including our Foreign Secretary, most recently in his statement on 31 January, has made clear our serious concern about reports of possible moves towards annexation of parts of the West

Bank by Israel.

I have said in this Council before, and I repeat, that any such unilateral moves would be contrary to international law and damaging to renewed efforts to restart peace negotiations. We hope that President Abbas returns to negotiations, but if he cannot, that would not justify annexation. ...

**To read the full transcript see**

<https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/negotiations-are-the-only-path-to-peace-for-the-israelis-and-palestinians>

## United Nations

### **Political Resolution of Israeli-Palestinian Conflict Still Crucial to Sustainable Middle East Peace, Secretary-General Stresses in Security Council**

... I address you today with a deep sense of concern as we witness growing tensions and instability around the globe, particularly in the Middle East. Tensions and risks in the Gulf have risen to troubling levels. And after seeing some promising developments last year, today we are witnessing dangerous re-escalations of the conflicts in Yemen, Syria and even Libya.

This volatile context only underscores the need for a political solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, which has lasted for far too long, and which remains crucial to sustainable peace in the Middle East. ...

... the position of the United Nations in this regard has been defined, throughout the years, by resolutions of the Security Council and General Assembly, by which the Secretariat is bound. The United Nations remains committed to supporting Palestinians and Israelis to resolve the conflict on the basis of relevant United Nations resolutions, international law and bilateral agreements, and realizing the vision of two States — Israel and Palestine — living side by side in peace and security within recognized borders, on the basis of the pre-1967 lines.

This is a time for dialogue, for reconciliation, for reason. I urge Israeli and Palestinian leaders to demonstrate the necessary will required to advance the goal of a just and lasting peace, which the international community must support. Rest assured of the full commitment of the United Nations to a just and comprehensive peace between Palestinians and Israelis, based on our shared multilateral framework set by United Nations resolutions and international law. ...

<https://www.un.org/press/en/2020/sgsm19969.doc.htm>

### **Key Players Reject Proposed United States Peace Plan as Failing to Meet Minimum Rights of Palestinians, Special Coordinator Tells Security Council**

... **Nickolay Mladenov, Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process**, reported that the Palestinian Authority, League of Arab States and the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) have rejected the peace plan proposed by the United States on 28 January, as failing to meet the minimum rights and aspirations of the Palestinian people. The European Union's High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy described the proposal as departing from internationally agreed parameters, while a number of African Union member States similarly rejected it during the bloc's recent summit.

Noting that senior figures in the Government of Israel said they would be willing to use the proposal as the basis for direct negotiations, he said that some Member States have expressed hope that its release will offer an opportunity to bring the parties back to the negotiating table ... Since the proposal was announced, however, violent incidents have occurred throughout the occupied West Bank, including East Jerusalem, as well as in and around Gaza ...

Underlining that the United Nations remains deeply committed to working with Israelis and Palestinians, as well as international and regional partners, to realize the objective of a lasting and just peace, he declared: “There is no other road to achieve this goal except through negotiations.” ...

**Mahmoud Abbas, President of the State of Palestine**, said he was attending the Council on behalf of 13 million Palestinians to call for a just peace and reaffirm their rejection of the proposal by Israel and the United States. It violates international legitimacy and the Arab Peace Initiative and annuls the very legitimacy of Palestinian rights to self-determination, freedom and independence, he said, adding that it legitimizes what is illegal: settlements and the annexation of Palestinian land. ...

“This plan will not bring peace or stability to the region,” he reiterated, underlining that Palestinians, therefore, will not accept it and will confront its application on the ground. ...

The deal entails the entrenchment of occupation and annexation by military force, he said, stressing that it only strengthens an apartheid regime, rewarding the occupation instead of holding it accountable for the crimes it perpetrated against Palestinian land and people. ...

“Jerusalem is occupied land,” he pointed out, demanding: “Who has the right to give this as a gift to one State or another?”

Palestinians are committed to all Council resolutions and have behaved responsibly, he said, noting that 140 countries now recognize the State of Palestine. ...

Recalling Israel’s rejection of the Palestinian push to hold elections out of concern about the polls being conducted in Jerusalem, he declared: “East Jerusalem is ours and West Jerusalem is theirs,” stressing: “Nothing prevents cooperation between both States and both capitals.” ...

Criticizing the proposal further for linking economic assistance to a political settlement, he underlined that Palestinians cannot accept an economic solution before a political one. ...

He went on to stress that the United States cannot be the sole mediator and to call for pressure on Israel. ...

**Danny Ben Yosef Danon (Israel)** said that, if President Abbas is truly interested in peace, he would not be present today, but would instead have used the opportunity to start negotiations in Jerusalem or with partners in Washington, D.C. President Anwar Sadat did not come to New York in a time of crisis, but went to the Knesset, speaking directly to the Israeli people ... However, President Abbas came to distract the international community from his unwillingness to speak to Israel, evidenced by that fact that he has met Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu only once in the last decade. ...

At the same time, more than 150 United Nations resolutions have been adopted over past decades, he said, adding that voting in favour of one-sided resolutions only encourages the behaviour of President Abbas. ... He went on to state that, when President Abbas feels there is no reason for compromise, it makes peace an ever more impossible goal. ...

**Kelly Craft (United States)**, pointing out that none of the resolutions addressing the question of Palestine has led to a just and lasting peace, said the United States proposal challenges the status quo. ... It is time for a new conversation ...

She went on to state that the proposed plan offers realistic prospects for a self-governing and fully recognized Palestinian State, and more broadly, recognizes that a political solution to the conflict is not enough. It proposes historic levels of economic investment in a Palestinian future — more than \$50 billion — to reverse the cycle of poverty that has trapped Palestinians for decades ...

**Nicolas De Rivière (France)** emphasized that international law and Security Council resolutions are not merely options that Member States can choose to embrace or abandon. In the absence of efforts to advance a two-State solution, the political vacuum and the deteriorating situation on the ground threaten to dash the hopes of new generations and risks fostering radicalization among young Palestinians, he warned. He

went on to underline the importance of security guarantees for Israel, while stressing that peace negotiations must begin immediately. The United States plan was the fruit of months-long efforts, and action must be taken to relaunch the political process, with the involvement of both parties and their partners. ...

**Juergen Schulz (Germany)** expressed his delegation's commitment to a negotiated two-State solution along the pre-1967 lines and with Jerusalem as the future capital of both Israel and an independent, contiguous viable State of Palestine. ... He urged the parties to refrain from measures that could undermine the viability of a two-State solution. Noting that the proposal by the United States departs from the internationally agreed parameters regarding Jerusalem, borders and settlements, he stressed that the absence of direct negotiations is a source of frustration ... However, Germany welcomes fresh thinking to revive the political process ... Germany will continue to distinguish between Israel and land occupied since 1967, he stressed. He went on to call for free and fair Palestinian elections while pressing both Hamas and Palestinian Islamic Jihad to stop launching rockets into Israel. ...

**Karen Pierce (United Kingdom)** [see "Foreign and Commonwealth Office" section above] said the current political vacuum will only continue to fuel violence and extremism. Palestinians deserve self-determination and Israelis deserve security, she noted, emphasizing that finding a path towards negotiations remains the only way forward after a decade-long impasse. ...

**To read the full press release see**

<https://www.un.org/press/en/2020/sc14103.doc.htm>

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## **Relevant Legislation** \*\* new or updated today

### **UK Parliament**

#### **Assisted Dying Bill**

<https://services.parliament.uk/Bills/2019-20/assisteddying.html>

#### **Divorce, Dissolution and Separation Bill**

<https://services.parliament.uk/Bills/2019-20/divorcedissolutionandseparation.html>

#### **Education (Assemblies) Bill**

<https://services.parliament.uk/Bills/2019-20/educationassemblies.html>

#### **Genocide Determination Bill**

<https://services.parliament.uk/Bills/2019-20/genocidedeterminationbill.html>

#### **Marriage Act 1949 (Amendment) Bill**

<https://services.parliament.uk/Bills/2019-20/marriageact1949amendment.html>

#### **Marriage and Civil Partnership (Minimum Age) Bill**

<https://services.parliament.uk/Bills/2019-20/marriageandcivilpartnershipminimumage.html>

## Scottish Parliament

### Civil Partnership (Scotland) Bill

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

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## Consultations

\*\* new or updated today

**Harassment and sexual misconduct in higher education** (closing date 27 March 2020)

<https://www.officeforstudents.org.uk/media/76f6bdd3-bb14-4956-b089-cd1598323d55/consultation-on-harassment-and-sexual-misconduct-in-higher-education.pdf>

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