



# Political Affairs Digest

A daily summary of political events affecting the Jewish Community

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### Scottish Parliament Oral Answer

#### Islamophobia

**Anas Sarwar (Labour):** “He started screaming in my face, that I should go home, that I was a terrorist. Again, he used the ‘p’ word, swearing at me, telling me I wasn’t welcome here.” Those are the words of Linsay Taylor, a Scots-born Muslim who wears a hijab. She goes on to say: “I don’t use public transport. I don’t walk about streets I am unaware of. It has altered my behaviour.”

The initial findings of our public inquiry into Islamophobia will shock the majority of Scots, but sadly they will not surprise Scottish Muslims. The inquiry has found that a third of Muslims say that Islamophobia is an everyday issue, 80 per cent have experienced Islamophobia and 80 per cent believe that it is getting worse. That impacts education, policing, communities, transport and employability.

Will the First Minister commit to ensuring that all relevant Scottish Government departments make themselves available to support the work of the inquiry? I know that there are lots of issues that divide people in this chamber and in the country, but the fight against all forms of prejudice and hatred is a fight that must unite us all.

**The First Minister (Nicola Sturgeon):** I will give that commitment on the part of the Scottish Government that the Government and its agencies will make themselves available to co-operate with the inquiry. As Anas Sarwar said, the findings coming out of the inquiry will shock many people, but unfortunately, they do not shock Muslims and, I am sad to say, they do not entirely shock me either, because I regularly hear from Muslim friends and constituents about the completely unacceptable and heinous abuse that they are the victims of almost daily. It is unacceptable. It shames our country and, whatever else we may disagree or divide on, we must unite to stamp it out. Bigotry, racism, prejudice, antisemitism, Islamophobia and prejudice of any shape, form or nature is completely unacceptable. That is not who we are. We must never tolerate it and we must come together to make sure that it can be eradicated once and for all.

<http://www.parliament.scot/parliamentarybusiness/report.aspx?r=12541&i=113370#ScotPariOR>

The initial findings referred to above have only been published in the media at <https://www.dailyrecord.co.uk/news/politics/race-hate-reality-modern-scotland-21574705>

## Police Service of Northern Ireland

**Incidents and Crimes with a Hate Motivation Recorded by the Police in Northern Ireland Update to 31 December 2019**

[https://www.psnipolice.uk/globalassets/inside-the-psni/our-statistics/hate-motivation-statistics/2019-20/q3/hate-motivations\\_bulletin-dec-19.pdf](https://www.psnipolice.uk/globalassets/inside-the-psni/our-statistics/hate-motivation-statistics/2019-20/q3/hate-motivations_bulletin-dec-19.pdf)

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## Israel

### House of Commons Written Answers

#### Israel: Palestinians

**Christian Matheson (Labour)** [1956] To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, what assessment he has made of the effect of the decision by the Government of Israel to ban export of Palestinian agricultural products on Palestinian farmers in the West Bank.

**James Cleverly:** The UK is concerned about the impact of recent Israeli trade restrictions in the Occupied Palestinian Territories. The British Government strongly supports the principle of free trade. British businesses should be free to import Palestinian products without barriers. Our Ambassador to Israel raised this issue with the Government of Israel, most recently on 12 February. We welcome the agreement reached by the Government of Israel and the Palestinian Authority, on 20 February, to lift their respective trade restrictions. We urge both sides to ensure the swift implementation of this agreement.

<https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Commons/2020-02-13/1956/>

#### Gaza

**Emily Thornberry (Labour)** [15014] To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, what assessment he has made of the implications for his policies of the United Nations' assessment that Gaza will be uninhabitable by the year 2020.

**James Cleverly:** We continue to encourage the reconciliation process in which the Palestinian Authority resumes control of Gaza and restores effective and accountable governance; and that Israel lifts its restrictions in order to ease the suffering of ordinary Palestinians and allow the Gazan economy to grow. We encourage the PA, Israel and regional/international actors to put forward long-term sustainable proposals for ending Hamas' rule. 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 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/2020-02-12/15014/>

### **Middle East: Overseas Aid**

**Theresa Villiers (Conservative)** [18534] To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, what steps he is taking to ensure that Official Development Assistance is not used directly or indirectly to pay for pensions for terrorist offenders in the Middle East.

**James Cleverly:** All Government programme spend in the Middle East, in accordance with standard HMG programme management procedures, is subject to due diligence, risk management and continuous review throughout design, procurement and implementation to ensure funds are disbursed and used appropriately. This is monitored via a range of programme management tools and scrutinised through HMG governance structures.

<https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Commons/2020-02-21/18534/>

## **House of Lords Written Answers**

### **Israel: Palestinians**

**Baroness Tonge (Non-affiliated)** [HL1499] To ask Her Majesty's Government what representations they are making to the government of Israel about the reported imprisonment of Palestinian children in Israel in conditions that are insanitary and abusive.

**Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon:** The UK has significant concerns about the continued reports of ill-treatment of Palestinian minors in Israeli military detention. Reports of the heavy use of painful restraints and the high number of Palestinian children who are not informed of their legal rights, in contravention of Israel's own regulations, are particularly concerning. We also remain concerned at reports of the continued transfer of Palestinian child and adult detainees to prisons inside Israel in violation of the Fourth Geneva Convention. We remain committed to working with Israel to secure improvements to the practices surrounding children in detention in the country. We welcomed progress made with recent Israeli policy amendments. This includes a reduction in the number of detainees aged 12 to 14 years old, the increase in the age of maturity from 16 to 18 years old, the establishment of separate juvenile courts and the enactment of a special statute of limitations for minors. Initial detention periods have also been shortened. However, we continue to make representations to the Israeli authorities on the treatment of Palestinian children in detention. Officials from our Embassy in Tel Aviv did so most recently on 16 December 2019.

<https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Lords/2020-02-10/HL1499/>

### **Israel: Palestinians**

**Baroness Tonge (Non-affiliated)** [HL1501] To ask Her Majesty's Government what representations they are making to the government of Israel about reports of harassment, detention and violence towards teachers and pupils by Israeli forces, sometimes accompanied by Israeli settlers.

**Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon:** We have publicly and privately expressed our longstanding concerns about the use of excessive force by the Israel Defense Forces. We have also stressed the importance of the Israeli security forces providing appropriate protection to the Palestinian civilian population, including children. We are clear that Israel has the legitimate right to self-defence, and the right to defend their citizens from attack. In doing so, it is vital that all actions are proportionate, in line with International Humanitarian Law, and are calibrated to avoid civilian casualties. We also condemn any incidence of violence by settlers

against Palestinians. Officials from our Embassy in Tel Aviv last raised settler violence with the Israeli authorities on 17 December 2019. We welcome the efforts of Israeli authorities to address settler violence, and urge them to thoroughly investigate every instance and bring those responsible to justice.

<https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Lords/2020-02-10/HL1501/>

### **West Bank: Water Supply**

**Baroness Tonge (Non-affiliated)** [HL1503] To ask Her Majesty's Government what representations they are making to the government of Israel about the reported destruction of a Palestinian water network in the village of Bardala in the Jordan Valley.

**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. These resources are limited and therefore require the effective co-operation from all parties to manage them in such a manner that ensures there will be enough for all. The UK is more than tripling our spending on economic development programming - providing £58 million between 2018 and 2023. This includes helping to improve water and energy supply across the Occupied Palestinian Territories.

<https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Lords/2020-02-10/HL1503/>

## **UK Parliament Early Day Motion**

**Andy Slaughter (Labour) (225) International law and trade with illegal Israeli settlements** – That this House recognises the publication of the UN's database of companies operating in Israeli settlements; acknowledges that all Israeli settlements are illegal and that the transfer of a civilian population to an occupied territory is a war crime under international law; notes that complicity in war crimes is a serious criminal offence; reaffirms the Government's obligation to uphold international law, and the corporate responsibility of companies to respect human rights, as outlined in the UN Guiding Principles; is alarmed that UK businesses are listed in the UN database, while also recognising that the database itself is not exhaustive of all companies supporting illegal settlement infrastructure; welcomes the report of Amnesty International highlighting that companies cannot do business in or with settlements without contributing to violations of international humanitarian and human rights law; and calls on the Government to fulfil its obligations under the Fourth Geneva Convention, relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War and under customary international humanitarian law, by banning UK trade with illegal settlements and making binding regulations for companies to uphold human rights standards.

<https://edm.parliament.uk/early-day-motion/55688/international-law-and-trade-with-illegal-israeli-settlements>

*The database referred to above can be read at*

[https://www.ohchr.org/EN/HRBodies/HRC/RegularSessions/Session43/Documents/A\\_HRC\\_43\\_71.docx](https://www.ohchr.org/EN/HRBodies/HRC/RegularSessions/Session43/Documents/A_HRC_43_71.docx)

*The report referred to above can be read at*

<https://www.amnesty.org/download/Documents/MDE1594902019ENGLISH.PDF>

## UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights

### **Human Rights Council holds separate interactive dialogues on situations in the Palestinian occupied territory and in Eritrea**

... Ilze Brands Kehris, United Nations Assistant Secretary-General for Human Rights, introducing the report, said it was an update on matters related to accountability for alleged violations of international human rights law and international humanitarian law, including in the context of large-scale civilian protests. ... Between November 2018 and 31 October 2019, 131 Palestinians, including 23 children, were killed by Israeli security forces, and 11 Israelis were killed by Palestinians.

During demonstrations known as the Great March of Return at the Israel-Gaza fence, which continued to take place almost every Friday, 39 Palestinians, including 12 children, were killed and 2,078 Palestinians, including 577 children, were injured with live ammunition; 110 paramedics and 62 journalists were also injured. In the West Bank, during the reporting period, 35 Palestinians were killed, including six children. As for the escalation of hostilities in Gaza in 2014, the lack of accountability had persisted. Impunity prevailed with regard to accountability for the unlawful use of force by Israeli security forces, outside the context of hostilities, confirming a worrying trend highlighted by the Secretary-General and the High Commissioner. Such human rights violations further fuelled the cycle of violence.

**Israel** was not present in the room to take the floor as the concerned country.

**State of Palestine**, speaking as the concerned country, said the report outlined Israel's actions in recent months that had led to the killing of 121 Palestinians, including five women and 21 children. In addition, many thousands of people were injured, including health workers and journalists. Last week more killings along the contested border were carried out by the Israeli army, with dehumanizing actions such as collecting the corpses of those killed with bulldozers. Israel's actions went against the recommendations of the Committee's report on the conflict, which stated that all crimes committed against Palestinians could constitute war crimes and crimes against humanity. ...

Speakers were alarmed by the findings of the Commission of Inquiry ... Israel had a right to self-defense but excessive use of force and disproportionate attacks on civilian protesters in Gaza were condemned. ... This constituted a great breach of international humanitarian and international human rights law. The use of incendiary devices during demonstrations was also condemned. The Israeli occupation of Jerusalem was seen as another flagrant violation of international law.

Speakers welcomed the long-awaited publication of the report on the database on business enterprises involved in Israeli settlements. ... The complete impunity of Israel was considered a dangerous reality ... Tackling impunity had to be the highest priority as it was precisely the lack of accountability that compromised chances for sustainable peace and security. ...

Delegations echoed that prompt investigations were needed for all violations in the occupied Palestinian territory and victims had to have access to justice. ...

Delegations said the Council had an ethical responsibility towards the Palestinian people and their right to self-determination ...

**To read the full press release see**

<https://www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=25620&LangID=E>

**Ensuring accountability and justice for all violations of international law in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem (A/HRC/43/21)**

<https://undocs.org/en/A/HRC/43/21>

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## Other Relevant Information

### European Commission against Racism and Intolerance (ECRI)

**Annual Report on ECRI's Activities covering the period from 1 January to 31 December 2019**

<https://rm.coe.int/ecri-annual-report-2019/16809ca3e1>

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

**UN expert denounces the propagation of hate speech through social media**

The UN Special Rapporteur on minorities issues accused the propagation of hate speech through social media of contributing directly to the rise of hate crimes against minorities and called for this “poisoning of minds” online to be acknowledged and confronted.

“The last decade has seen minorities around the world facing new and growing threats, fuelled by hate and bigotry being spewed through social media platforms,” said Fernand de Varennas as the German town of Hanau recovers from a gunman’s attack in which nine people were killed out of apparent hatred of minorities.

“This has contributed to the rise of violent extremist groups and to a dramatic increase in many countries of hate crimes targeting religious, ethnic and other minorities, including migrants,” he noted.

The UN expert decried the “banalization of bigotry,” the increasing “otherization and dehumanization of minorities through social media” and the use of social networks to propagate hate speech and even live stream hate crimes, such as the recent attacks targeting centres of worship of minorities in Sri Lanka, New Zealand, India and the United States.

“The more hate speech is widespread, the more it becomes part of the mainstream and creates a permissive and toxic environment where calls for violence against the ‘hated’ group, usually a minority, become normalized. This propagation of hate against minorities online must be stopped,” he stressed.

UN Secretary-General António Manuel de Oliveira Guterres announced last year the creation of a UN Strategy and Plan of Action to tackle hate speech.

<https://www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=25626&LangID=E>

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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>

### **\*\* Amendments to the organ donation regulations (Wales)** (closing date 30 April 2020)

<https://gov.wales/amendments-organ-donation-regulations>

### **Regulating Independent Educational Institutions** (closing date 8 May 2020)

<https://consult.education.gov.uk/school-frameworks/regulating-independent-education-institutions/>

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