



# Political Affairs Digest

A daily summary of political events affecting the Jewish Community

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## Home Affairs

### House of Lords Written Answers

#### Funerals: Coronavirus

**Lord Bourne of Aberystwyth (Conservative)** [HL2923] To ask Her Majesty's Government what steps they are taking to ensure that there is timely, accessible advice available to religious communities concerning rules relating to (1) funeral services, (2) burials, and (3) cremations, during the COVID-19 pandemic.

**Baroness Bloomfield of Hinton Waldrist:** The government issued guidance on closure of business and venues on 23 March:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/further-businesses-and-premises-to-close/further-businesses-and-premises-to-close-guidance>. This sets out that funerals may continue to take place in places of worship and crematoria. On 31 March, Public Health England (PHE) published further guidance to ensure funerals are conducted safely, consistent with social distancing principles:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/new-advice-for-safe-funerals-after-discussions-with-faith-leaders>. Faith leaders were consulted and worked with PHE to ensure that communities, the funeral industry and the NHS are protected.

Government is working with partners, including leaders and members of faith and belief communities, to communicate relevant guidance and to understand the issues faith communities are facing at this difficult time. We continue to value the input of our faith and belief communities.

<https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Lords/2020-03-25/HL2923/>

#### Local Government: Coronavirus

**Lord Bourne of Aberystwyth (Conservative)** [HL2924] To ask Her Majesty's Government whether they have established a hotline service to (1) advise on faith and secular gatherings, (2) provide information to the public, and (3) receive relevant information from members of the public, during the COVID-19 pandemic.

**Baroness Bloomfield of Hinton Waldrist:** The Government has issued guidance on social distancing on 16 March:

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/covid-19-guidance-for-mass-gatherings>. In line with this guidance, large gatherings should not take place. Further guidance was published on 23 March on the closure of businesses and venues, including places of worship:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/further-businesses-and-premises-to-close/further-businesses-and-premises-to-close-guidance>.

The guidance is clear that all places of worship should be closed. This includes for the holding of faith and secular gatherings and solitary prayer. However, services are encouraged to take place with congregations online.

Government continues to have regular discussions with faith and belief groups to ensure that guidance relating to the COVID-19 pandemic is communicated clearly and effectively.

<https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Lords/2020-03-25/HL2924/>

## Downing Street

Wishing everyone a very happy Passover from Downing Street. In these difficult times, it may be challenging to celebrate without family and friends, but by staying at home this Passover you're protecting the NHS, and you're saving lives. So thank you – and Chag Pesach Sameach!

<https://twitter.com/10DowningStreet/status/1247805181137285120>

## Scottish Government

**First Minister's Passover Message** (video)

<https://firstminister.gov.scot/first-ministers-passover-message/>

## BBC

**BBC unveils plans to support and represent faith communities during unprecedented times**

The BBC will support and represent faith communities during the COVID-19 pandemic across its networks.

With public worship curtailed as social distancing measures have been introduced, the BBC is providing a wide range of different faith groups the opportunity to reflect, worship and mark key religious festivals during these challenging times. ...

There will be a rich mix of new programming across TV and radio to mark the Easter weekend ... as well as special content for Passover ... Further festivals from different faiths will be marked in the coming weeks, including Vaisakhi, Ramadan, Eid, Vesak Day and Hindu reflections ...

Christine Morgan, Head of Radio, Religion and Ethics, says: "In these unprecedented times music, worship, conversation and the lived experience of faith communities will be more important than ever. Unusually over the next few weeks the festivals of several faith traditions coincide. We will provide programmes to serve those who aren't able to gather in their places of worship, those who rely on the breadth of our religious programmes and those who may be looking for them for the first time." ...

- The beginning of Passover will be marked with another opportunity to see the documentary Passover: Why Is This Night Different? on BBC One ... exploring the significance of the festival

- Newsround will feature a new piece looking at how one family is celebrating Passover during such an extraordinary time and Rabbi Jonathan Sacks will be on Good Morning Sunday
- There will be new digital content on the BBC's social media accounts with Love Island's Eyal Booker looking into Seder, Passover and the importance of the celebration in Eyal's Passover Lockdown ...

**To read the full press release see**

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/mediacentre/latestnews/2020/religion-coronavirus>

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## Israel

### House of Lords Written Answer

#### Israel: Prisons

**Baroness Tonge (Non-affiliated)** [HL2895] To ask Her Majesty's Government, in the light of the COVID-19 pandemic, what representations they have made to the government of Israel about reports (1) that the Israeli Prison Service plans to stop the provision of cleaning products and medical visits to Palestinian prisoners, and (2) of unsanitary conditions in Israeli prisons.

**Lord ahmad of Wimbledon:** Whilst we have not made representations regarding these reports, the British Embassy in Tel Aviv and the British Consulate-General in Jerusalem are in regular contact with the Israeli and Palestinian authorities respectively. Both report good co-operation between the two entities in response to COVID-19.

<https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Lords/2020-03-24/HL2895/>

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## Other Relevant Information

### Community Security Trust (CST)

#### Coronavirus and the Plague of Antisemitism

<https://cst.org.uk/data/file/d/9/Coronavirus%20and%20the%20plague%20of%20antisemitism.1586276450.pdf>

### United Nations

#### UN chief calls on religious leaders to unite in the fight against COVID-19

Religious leaders of all faiths are being urged by the UN Secretary-General to join forces and work for peace around the world and focus on the common battle to defeat COVID-19.

António Guterres made the call in a [special appeal](#) issued on Saturday, and at a time when Christians are celebrating Easter, Jews are marking Passover, and Muslims will soon begin the holy month of Ramadan.

"We have always known these occasions to be moments of community. Of families coming

together. Of hugs and handshakes and the gathering of humanity. But this is a time like no other", he said. ...

In the spirit of this holy period, the Secretary-General encouraged people everywhere to use this as a time for reflection, remembrance and renewal.

"As we reflect, let us spare a special thought for heroic health workers on the frontlines battling this awful virus – and for all those working to keep our cities and towns going", said Mr. Guterres.

This is also time to remember "the most vulnerable of the vulnerable around the world": people in war zones, refugee camps, slums and other areas least equipped to fight the virus.

"And let us renew our faith in one another and draw strength from the good that is gathering in troubled times as communities of diverse faiths and ethical traditions unite to care for one another", he added.

"Together, we can and will defeat this virus – with cooperation, solidarity, and faith in our common humanity".

**To read the full press release see**

<https://news.un.org/en/story/2020/04/1061512>

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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

**\*\* closes in 10 days**

**Electing a more diverse Assembly** (closing date 22 April 2020)

<http://www.senedd.assembly.wales/mgConsultationDisplay.aspx?ID=389>

**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/>

**Protecting places of worship** (closing date 10 May 2020)

<https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/protecting-places-of-worship-consultation>

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