



Political Affairs Digest

A daily summary of political events affecting the Jewish Community

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Guidance for those involved in managing COVID-19 deaths

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/guidance-for-those-involved-in-managing-covid-19-deaths/guidance-for-those-involved-in-managing-covid-19-deaths>

Scottish Government

Coronavirus (COVID-19): Updated Guidance for burial and cremation authorities

<https://tinyurl.com/ycg9j5jd>

Coronavirus (COVID-19): Updated Guidance for funeral directors

<https://tinyurl.com/y8uy3ll9>

Coronavirus (COVID-19): Updated Guidance for funeral services

<https://www.gov.scot/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-guidance-for-funeral-services/>

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Israel

House of Commons Written Answers

The following two questions both received the same answer

Palestinians: Coronavirus

Alex Norris (Labour Co-op) [34399] To ask the Secretary of State for International Development, what assessment her Department has made of the capacity of the Palestinian health sector to respond to the covid-19 pandemic.

Gaza: Coronavirus

Alex Norris (Labour Co-op) [35037] To ask the Secretary of State for International Development, what assessment her Department has made of the (a) availability and (b) adequacy of (i) medical and (ii) sanitation supplies required in response to an outbreak of covid-19 in Gaza.

James Cleverly: The UK is providing vital support to help respond to COVID-19 in the Occupied Palestinian Territories. Our \$1 million funding contribution will enable the World Health Organisation and UNICEF to purchase and co-ordinate the delivery of medical equipment, treat critical care patients, train frontline public health personnel and scale up laboratory testing capacity.

The UN assesses that although the current number of detected cases remains relatively low, the capacity of the Palestinian health system to cope with an expected increase in COVID-19 cases is poor. The situation is particularly severe in Gaza, where the health system has shortages in specialised staff, drugs and equipment. We continue to monitor the situation and are working closely with the UN and the international community to ensure a co-ordinated response

<https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Commons/2020-03-24/34399/>

and

<https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Commons/2020-03-25/35037/>

The following two questions both received the same answer

Palestinians: Coronavirus

Alex Norris (Labour Co-op) [34400] To ask the Secretary of State for International Development, what assessment she has made of the potential effect of the covid-19 pandemic on levels of health in Palestinian refugee camps (a) in Lebanon and (b) throughout the Middle East.

UNRWA: Coronavirus

Alex Norris (Labour Co-op) [35038] To ask the Secretary of State for International Development, what recent assessment her Department has made of the capacity of the UN Relief and Works Agency to respond to healthcare needs arising from the covid-19 outbreak.

James Cleverly: The UK recognises the United Nations Relief and Works Agency's (UNRWA) unique mandate to provide protection and core services to Palestinian refugees in Gaza, the West Bank, Lebanon Jordan and Syria. In 2019/20 the UK has committed £65.5 million to UNRWA, matching our 2018 contribution. Overcrowded living conditions, physical and mental stress and years of protracted conflict make the population of over 5.6 million Palestine refugees across the Middle East particularly vulnerable. UNRWA is supporting the delivery of national pandemic response plans and has put in place a range of measures to help prevent the spread of COVID-19 and to treat patients with symptoms, working in cooperation with WHO and other partners.

<https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Commons/2020-03-24/34400/>

and

<https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Commons/2020-03-25/35038/>

Overseas Aid: Coronavirus

Alex Norris (Labour Co-op) [34401] To ask the Secretary of State for International Development, whether her Department plans to respond to the UN Relief and Works Agency's flash appeal for an emergency response to the covid-19 outbreak.

James Cleverly: The UK is a long-term supporter of the UN Relief and Works Agency (UNWRA), committing £65.5 million in 2019/20. Our funding contributes to UNRWA's provision of health services for more than 3 million Palestinian refugees across the region. These services will play a key role in helping contain and address the spread of COVID-19. We continue to monitor the situation closely and are working closely with UNRWA and the international community to ensure a co-ordinated response to COVID-19.

<https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Commons/2020-03-24/34401/>

Israel: Palestinians

Matthew Offord (Conservative) [34965] To ask the Secretary of State for International Development, with reference to the Answer of 18 July 2017 to Question 3942 on Israel: Palestinians, what initiatives have the £3 million been allocated to help Israelis and Palestinians to work together.

James Cleverly: Our People to People programme aimed to bring together Israelis and Palestinians to cooperate on issues that can have a positive impact on both communities, helping to build understanding between people on both sides of the conflict in support of a peaceful, negotiated resolution.

Our £3 million three-year (2017-2020) programme facilitated interaction between youth leaders, religious communities and within the health sector. It:

- helped tackle a neglected tropical disease (Leishmaniasis) through cooperation between health academics and senior health workers for the wellbeing of both populations.
- facilitated discussion and activity between young people on reducing interreligious tensions around holy sites.
- brought together young leaders from different professional, political and religious backgrounds to identify future areas for co-operation.

<https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Commons/2020-03-25/34965/>

Foreign and Commonwealth Office

Updated Travel Advice: Israel

<https://www.gov.uk/foreign-travel-advice/israel>

Updated Travel Advice: The Occupied Palestinian Territories

<https://www.gov.uk/foreign-travel-advice/the-occupied-palestinian-territories>

Scottish Government FoI Release

Petition PE01803: Right to Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions

<https://www.gov.scot/publications/foi-202000022584>

and

<https://tinyurl.com/y8eoehrl>

and

<https://tinyurl.com/yb5cg3th>

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Other Relevant Information

UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights

UN expert warns against religious hatred and intolerance during COVID-19 outbreak

States must ensure COVID-19 measures are not twisted for economic or political gain and clamp down on hate speech blaming religious or ethnic groups for the crisis, a UN expert said today.

“The pandemic has caused a flare-up in existing religious intolerance in many countries. I am alarmed to see the upsurge in incitement to hatred, scapegoating religious or belief communities, including Christians, Jews, and Muslims for the spread of virus,” said the UN Special Rapporteur on freedom of religion or belief, Ahmed Shaheed.

“Migrants, refugees and asylum seekers from different minority groups have also been similarly stigmatised,” he said. “Those targeted also have faced verbal abuse, death threats, physical attacks and experienced discrimination accessing public services, including denial of vital health services.”

“Any incitement to hatred or violence based on religious, belief or ethnic identity is simply not acceptable,” Shaheed said. “To combat disinformation, it is critical that States establish effective strategies and channels of communication to provide accurate and reliable information to the public,” Shaheed said.

“The firm commitment by political leadership to curb hate speech that stigmatises people on the grounds of their religion or belief is essential in this regard,” he said stressing that religious leaders can also play an important role. “Solidarity among people of all faiths and none has never been more critical in living memory.”

The Special Rapporteur noted not all religious or belief communities or those living in marginalised conditions can access online information regarding COVID-19 and best practices to avoid transmission. ...

“Inclusive dialogue will ensure that all communities implement and adhere to the required public health measures voluntarily, including by analysing how religious practices may be adapted in response to COVID-19 preventive measures, such as organising virtual religious services.” ...

To read the full press release see

<https://www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=25814&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

** closes today

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

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

** closes in 8 days

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