



# Political Affairs Digest

A daily summary of political events affecting the Jewish Community

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## Home Affairs

### House of Commons Written Answers

#### Coronavirus: Religion

**Mike Amesbury (Labour) [33745]** To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to provide guidance to religious bodies during the covid-19 outbreak.

**Helen Whately:** To make sure people are staying at home and apart from each other, the government has stopped all public gatherings of more than two people. This includes weddings, baptisms and other religious ceremonies. However, this excludes funerals in places of worship and crematoria.

More details can be found at the following links:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/full-guidance-on-staying-at-home-and-away-from-others/full-guidance-on-staying-at-home-and-away-from-others#closing-certain-businesses-and-venues>

[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/875304/240320\\_Revised\\_Guidance.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/875304/240320_Revised_Guidance.pdf)

While the government recognises the importance of rituals and gatherings, it is advised that the actions detailed in their “guidance for communities managing a death” are taken to reduce the spread of infection. More information can be found at the following link:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-guidance-for-care-of-the-deceased/guidance-for-care-of-the-deceased-with-suspected-or-confirmed-coronavirus-covid-19#guidance-for-professionals-who-manage-bodies-including-mortuary-staff-pathologists-and-funeral-directors>

<https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Commons/2020-03-23/33745/>

#### Charities: Coronavirus

**Afzal Khan (Labour) [37972]** To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what steps his Department has taken to support charity workers in faith organisations during the covid-19 outbreak.

**Luke Hall:** Faith communities have a long history of service supporting many of the

most vulnerable members of our society. The rapid response during the current pandemic has been no different. We value the work being done to support those in need.

Charities can access many of the support measures the Chancellor has announced for businesses, including deferring their VAT bills, paying no business rates on charity shops next year, and furloughing staff with the Government paying 80 per cent of their wages. Further details can be found at

<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/financial-support-for-businesses-during-coronavirus-covid-19>

However, we know that some charities cannot furlough staff as they are contributing to the frontline response. That is why the Chancellor on 9 April announced £750 million of funding for charities providing key frontline services to vulnerable people affected by the pandemic. Further details can be found here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/chancellor-sets-out-extra-750-million-coronavirus-funding-for-frontline-charities>

We will continue to engage with the voluntary and community sector and faith organisations to understand how we can support them to respond to the pressures they may be facing.

<https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Commons/2020-04-20/37972/>

### **Charities: Coronavirus**

**Afzal Khan (Labour)** [37974] To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what steps his Department is taking to support Mosques with charity work during the month of Ramadan during the covid-19 outbreak.

**Luke Hall:** British Muslims, like many faith communities across the country, have responded during the COVID 19 pandemic to support their neighbours, communities and the most vulnerable. We welcome the Muslim community's continued contributions to our shared national effort and know this will take on a special meaning during Ramadan.

The coronavirus pandemic has, however, challenged many parts of our daily life and means that Muslims in the UK and around the world will not be able to mark Ramadan and Eid Al-Fitr in the way they would normally do and are instead finding ways to do this virtually, including charitable work, such as fundraising, that would have otherwise been done in person.

Charities can access many of the support measures the Chancellor has announced for businesses, including deferring their VAT bills, paying no business rates on charity shops next year, and furloughing staff with the Government paying 80 per cent of their wages. Further details can be found at

<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/financial-support-for-businesses-during-coronavirus-covid-19>

However, we know that some charities cannot furlough staff as they are contributing to the frontline response. That is why the Chancellor on 9 April announced £750 million of funding for charities providing key frontline services to vulnerable people affected by the pandemic. Further details can be found here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/chancellor-sets-out-extra-750-million-coronavirus-funding-for-frontline-charities>

The Government continues to engage with a range of faith groups, including Muslim community representatives, to maintain a complete picture of the impact of coronavirus and understand how we can support them to respond to the pressures they may be facing.

<https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Commons/2020-04-20/37974/>

## Scottish Government

### Safer Communities and Justice statistics: monthly briefs

... **Fall in charges for race and religion.** Between 2017-18 and 2018-19, charges aggravated by race fell by 12% from 3,280 to 2,880 while, for religion, numbers fell by 18% from 649 to 529. Despite the fall, racial crime remains the most commonly reported hate crime. There were slight rises in charges reported to COPFS in relation to disability and sexual orientation. Charges aggravated by sexual orientation rose by 5% from 1,117 to 1,176. Apart from 2014-15, there have been annual increases in charges with an aggravation of prejudice relating to sexual orientation since the legislation introducing this aggravation came into force. ...

**Numbers stable for police recorded hate crime.** Between 2014-15 & 2017-18, the number of hate crimes recorded by the police has been relatively stable, at around 6,600 to 7,000. In 2017-18, 67% of hate crimes included an aggravator for race, 16% sexual orientation, 7% religion, 4% disability and 1% trans-gender identity. The remaining 5% had multiple hate aggravators. ...

**To read the full brief see**

<https://tinyurl.com/ycx8j86b>

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## Israel

### House of Lords Written Answer

#### Jerusalem: Coronavirus

**Baroness Tonge (Non-affiliated)** [HL3287] To ask Her Majesty's Government what steps they intend to take to assist Palestinians in East Jerusalem to prevent the spread of COVID-19.

**Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon:** The UK has pledged £744 million to support the global humanitarian response to COVID-19, including the Occupied Palestinian Territories. We have delivered additional vital support in the Occupied Palestinian Territories by providing £840,000 to WHO 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. This funding was provided to support activities in the Inter-Agency Plan for COVID-19. We have encouraged the UN and the Palestinian Authority to ensure that the revised plan reflects the needs in East Jerusalem. The UK continues to monitor the situation and coordinate closely with international partners.

<https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Lords/2020-04-21/HL3287/>

## Supreme Court

### **R (on the application of Palestine Solidarity Campaign Ltd and another) (Appellants) v Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government (Respondent)**

This appeal concerns the breadth of the ethical investments that the authorities which administer the local government pension scheme ... are permitted to make. ...

The appellants brought a claim for judicial review alleging that two passages in the guidance issued in 2016 by the Secretary of State pursuant to that regulation were unlawful. The first passage states that "the Government has made clear that using pension

policies to pursue boycotts, divestment and sanctions against foreign nations and UK defence industries are inappropriate, other than where formal legal sanctions, embargoes and restrictions have been put in place by the Government”. The second passage states that authorities “[s]hould not pursue policies that are contrary to UK foreign policy or UK defence policy”. In the High Court the claim was upheld, and the two passages ruled unlawful, on the basis that the issue of them by the Secretary of State exceeded his powers. The Court of Appeal upheld the Secretary of State’s appeal. The appellants now appeal to the Supreme Court. ...

By a majority, the Supreme Court allows the appeal and restores the High Court’s order. Lord Wilson gives the main judgment, with which Lady Hale agrees. Lord Carnwath gives a concurring judgment. Lady Arden and Lord Sales give a joint dissenting judgment. ...

Lord Wilson observes that Schedule 3 to the 2013 Act identifies the matters which, in particular, Parliament had in mind when conferring the power, one of which was “the administration and management of the scheme” ... The guidance adopts two uncontroversial tests for the taking into account of such considerations: does the proposed step involve significant risk of financial detriment to the scheme and is there good reason to think that members would support taking it? ... But in the passages under challenge, “the Secretary of State has insinuated into the guidance something entirely different: ... an attempt to enforce the government’s foreign and defence policies” by providing that, even when the two tests above have been met, an administrator is prohibited from taking an investment decision if it runs counter to such policies ...

Lord Carnwath notes that, while the scope of the guidance is unclear, it appears to have been intended to preclude authorities who are making investment decisions both from engaging in political campaigns and from taking into account considerations in policy areas reserved for the UK government ... But the 2013 Act and the 2016 Regulations required any guidance to respect the primary responsibility of the authorities as quasi-trustees of the fund ... The Secretary of State was not entitled, therefore, to make authorities give effect to his own policies in preference to those which they themselves thought it right to adopt in fulfilment of their fiduciary duties ...

Lady Arden and Lord Sales consider that the purposes of the 2013 Act, which implemented the Hutton report, extend to reflecting the public interest and instituting good governance ... the guidance related only to decisions based on non-financial considerations which are taken to pursue boycotts and disinvestment campaigns against foreign nations ... The Secretary of State had serious concerns that these might undermine foreign policy or trade and might lead to racist behaviour. These were matters for government ... The schemes were liable to be identified with the British state ...

**To read the full press release see**

<https://www.supremecourt.uk/cases/docs/uksc-2018-0133-press-summary.pdf>

**To read the full judgement see**

<https://www.supremecourt.uk/cases/docs/uksc-2018-0133-judgment.pdf>

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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>

### **Hate Crime and Public Order (Scotland) Bill**

<https://beta.parliament.scot/bills/hate-crime-and-public-order-scotland-bill>

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## **Consultations**

\*\* new or updated today

### **\*\* closes tomorrow**

**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 EXTENDED TO 28 June 2020)

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

**Hate Crime and Public Order (Scotland) Bill** (closing date not stated)

The Scottish Government welcomes your views on any aspect of the Bill as it begins its passage through Parliament. Please send any queries titled 'Hate Crime Bill Launch' to [ConnectedCommunities@gov.scot](mailto:ConnectedCommunities@gov.scot)

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