



# Political Affairs Digest

A daily summary of political events affecting the Jewish Community

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## Home Affairs

### House of Commons Written Answers

#### Marriage: Coronavirus

**Kevan Jones (Labour)** [86225] To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, whether his Department plans to publish further guidance on holding weddings during the covid-19 outbreak.

**Luke Hall:** We have published guidance on how weddings can be carried out safely. The guidance can be found here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-guidance-for-small-marriages-and-civil-partnerships/covid-19-guidance-for-wedding-and-civil-partnership-receptions-and-celebrations>.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2020-09-07/86225>

#### Funerals: Coronavirus

**Julian Sturdy (Conservative)** [86646] To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment his Department has made of the potential merits of increasing the maximum permitted number of attendees at funeral services where the venue allows for more than 30 people to be safely accommodated whilst adhering to social distancing rules.

**Nadine Dorries:** There remains an increased risk of transmission of COVID-19 where families and communities come together following the death of a loved one, from any cause. While recognising the importance of these rituals and gatherings, it is strongly advised, in order to stay safe, that numbers of mourners in physical attendance are kept to a modest number.

The premises will limit capacity based on how many people it can safely accommodate with social distancing in place. The guidance advises that the number of attendees should be restricted to a maximum of 30 persons for public health reasons. This is on the basis there is a high risk of social mixing and contact due to the nature of the events. In some cases the premises may restrict attendance to less than 30 people.

Guidance for managing a funeral during the COVID-19 pandemic is provided at the following link:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-guidance-for-managing-a-funeral-during-the-coronavirus-pandemic/covid-19-guidance-for-managing-a-funeral-during-the-coronavirus-pandemic>

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2020-09-08/86646>

### Marriage

**Ruth Jones (Labour)** [86165] To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, whether the Government will seek to change the terms of reference for the Law Commission's review of marriages in response to the High Court judgement in R (Harrison and others) v Secretary of State for Justice [2020] EWHC 2096 (Admin).

**Alex Chalk:** The Law Commission's terms of reference make it clear that it will not be making recommendations as to whether new groups should be allowed to conduct legally binding weddings. However, they will consider how marriages by humanist and other non-religious belief organisations could be incorporated into a revised scheme for all marriages that is simple, fair and consistent. The Government will decide on provision on the basis of the Law Commission's recommendations.

The Law Commission published its consultation paper on 3 September and will welcome contributions from all stakeholders.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2020-09-07/86165>

*The judgement referred to above can be read at*

<https://www.bailii.org/ew/cases/EWHC/Admin/2020/2096.html>

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

<https://www.lawcom.gov.uk/law-commission-begins-work-on-weddings-reform/>

*The consultation paper referred to above can be read at*

<https://www.lawcom.gov.uk/project/weddings/#weddings-consultation-paper>

## House of Lords Deposited Paper

**Letter from Baroness Williams of Trafford regarding the Immigration and Social Security Co-ordination (EU Withdrawal) Bill: response to questions raised during Committee stage**

*See p4 re Ministers of Religion*

<http://data.parliament.uk/DepositedPapers/Files/DEP2020->

[0530/Letter from Baroness Williams to All Peers ISSC Bill Cttee Day 2.pdf](http://data.parliament.uk/DepositedPapers/Files/DEP2020-0530/Letter from Baroness Williams to All Peers ISSC Bill Cttee Day 2.pdf)

## Welsh Assembly Oral Answers

### Freedom to Worship

**Darren Millar (Conservative):** Will the Deputy Minister make a statement on freedom to worship in Wales? OQ55484

**Deputy Minister and Chief Whip (Jane Hutt):** I recognise and support the freedom to hold and practise belief in Wales. I'm pleased to have worked with the Wales faith communities forum and the reopening places of worship task and finish group to support the phased and safe reopening of places of worship.

**Darren Millar:** ... One of the issues that has been raised with me by members of various faith communities, but particularly the Christian community, is the impact of the restrictions on the ability to worship through song in our churches at the moment, for congregational singing. I don't know whether you are familiar with recent research, which was published by the University of Bristol, which seems to suggest that singing doesn't produce substantially more respiratory particles than speaking at a similar volume. Therefore, will

you look again at the current coronavirus restrictions in relation to worship in churches, and the ability of congregations to sing as part of their worship, and consider that piece of research in order to assist your decision?

**Jane Hutt:** Thank you very much, Darren Millar, for that supplementary question. I would say at the outset that the Welsh Government is very grateful to our Wales faith communities forum, and you're well aware of the full and diverse membership of that, and their advice and guidance they've given us—they have a task and finish group—advice and guidance they've given us on reopening places of worship. And they have reopened on a safe basis, in terms of their advice, guidance and the science. But I am very well aware that music and singing are an important part of services and ceremonies. It's greatly missed, and we're actively looking at this, based on scientific advice again, and the guidance from the task and finish and ceremonies group. I hope we'll be able to make further announcements.

<https://record.assembly.wales/Plenary/6563#C307267>

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## Israel

### House of Lords Written Answer

#### **Gaza: Coronavirus**

**Lord Hylton (Crossbench)** [HL7782] To ask Her Majesty's Government what plans they have to increase the provision medical and other aid to Gaza for COVID-19 prevention during the latest ceasefire.

**Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon:** The UK Government remains deeply concerned by the situation in Gaza. Our recent £840,000 funding contribution has enabled the World Health Organisation (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. The Foreign Secretary also recently announced a further £2.7m of funding to UN agencies to provide food assistance, medical supplies and personal protection for the most vulnerable Palestinians. We welcome the recent ceasefire between Israel and Hamas and continue to monitor the situation closely.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2020-09-03/hl7782>

### Scottish Parliament Public Petitions Committee

#### **Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions (PE1803)**

**The Convener (Johann Lamont, Labour):** The next new petition for consideration today is PE1803, on the right to boycott, divestment and sanctions, which has been lodged by Dr Eurig Scandrett on behalf of the Scottish Palestine Solidarity Campaign. The petition calls on the Scottish Government to support the right of public bodies and institutions in Scotland to debate and, where doing so is democratically supported, to endorse and implement boycott, divestment and sanctions against foreign countries and those who trade with them.

The Scottish Government advises that it does not advocate a policy of boycotting Israel, believing that engagement with the Israeli Government provides an opportunity, but it strongly discourages trade with and investment in illegal settlements. The Scottish Government also advises that it does not wish to mandate how Scottish public institutions, organisations or individuals approach the issue. ...

**Tom Mason (Conservative):** ... we should support the Scottish Government's attitude and encourage the UK Government to develop its UK-wide legislation. ...

**David Torrance (SNP):** I have some sympathy with the petition. However, seeing as the Scottish Government does not support it and does not wish to impose such a mandate on public institutions and organisations, I am happy for us to close it ...

**Maurice Corry (Conservative):** ... I do not want the Scottish Government to mandate how institutions source their material or services from a country, provided that the entities involved are legal. ...

**Gail Ross (SNP):** ... The Scottish Government has made it clear that it does not want to mandate how institutions approach the issue. In a democratic society, that is entirely the right way to go. ...

**The Convener:** There is a strong view from the committee that we should close the petition. We recognise that the petition raises important issues, and there is nothing that would prevent the BDS campaign from pursuing and arguing for such an approach with individual institutions. Nevertheless, the Scottish Government takes the view that it is not its job to advocate for that campaign. ...

Although it is not for the Scottish Government to direct people, institutions and organisations should be able to campaign in that way if they wish to do so. ...

**Petition closed**

<http://www.parliament.scot/parliamentarybusiness/report.aspx?r=12817&i=115856#ScotParlOR>

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

### UK Parliament

#### **Assisted Dying Bill**

<https://bills.parliament.uk/bills/2592>

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

<https://bills.parliament.uk/bills/2579>

#### **Genocide Determination Bill**

<https://bills.parliament.uk/bills/2621>

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

<https://bills.parliament.uk/bills/2608>

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

<https://bills.parliament.uk/bills/2584>

### Scottish Parliament

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

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

## Post-mortem Examinations (Defence Time Limit) (Scotland) Bill

<https://beta.parliament.scot/bills/post-mortem-examinations-defence-time-limit-scotland-bill>

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## Consultations

\*\* new or updated today

**Getting Married: A Consultation Paper on Weddings Law** (closing date 3 December 2020)

<https://www.lawcom.gov.uk/project/weddings/#weddings-consultation-paper>

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