



# Political Affairs Digest

A daily summary of political events affecting the Jewish Community

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## Home Affairs

### House of Commons Written Answers

#### **Security: Training**

**Mark Eastwood (Conservative)** [86773] To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what the timetable is for the launch of the Security Training Fund.

**James Brokenshire:** The Home Office has listened to the security concerns of our faith communities, including through the recent public consultation on faith security. We recognise that protective security must be tailored to support the specific requirements of faith communities. The Home Office is currently developing a security training package, which will be suitable for all faiths. This will ensure that our commitment of 19 March 2019 to deliver this training within three years is met. Security advice for places of worship is currently available for free from the National Counter Terrorism Security Office on GOV.UK.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2020-09-08/86773>

*The commitment referred to above can be read at*

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/places-of-worship-to-get-security-funding-boost>

#### **Local Government: Sanctions**

**Rupa Huq (Labour)** [86772] To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, with reference to the Supreme Court ruling of 29 April in R (on the application of Palestine Solidarity Campaign Ltd and another) (Appellants) v Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government (Respondent), what plans the Government has to bring forward legislative proposals to allow local authorities to pursue boycotts, divestments and sanctions against foreign nations and UK defence industries.

**Luke Hall:** The Government remains firmly opposed to local boycotts which can damage integration and community cohesion, hinder exports, and harm foreign relations and the UK's economic and international security. Local authorities should not undertake boycotts that could undermine foreign policy, which is a matter for the UK Government alone. We will legislate as soon as Parliamentary time allows.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2020-09-08/86722>

*The judgement referred to above can be read at*

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

## Scottish Parliament Oral Answers

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

**Christine Grahame (SNP):** To ask the Scottish Government, in light of concerns regarding the term “likely” in relation to hatred being stirred up in section 3 of the Hate Crime and Public Order (Scotland) Bill, whether it is reviewing that phrase. (S5O-04584)

**The Cabinet Secretary for Justice (Humza Yousaf):** Christine Grahame will have heard last week’s very good debate. I thought that the tone of the debate, across the chamber, was good. Before the debate, I promised to listen to all the stakeholders involved, including those who are critical of the bill and who want to see the bill amended. Those people are being listened to and will continue to be listened to.

I am looking at all sections of the bill and I can confirm that I am of course looking at the stirring-up offences, which include the “likely” threshold in regard to the stirring up of hatred. That is one area that is being explored. I hope to come to the Parliament with an update shortly.

**Christine Grahame:** The cabinet secretary is right to say that there is broad support across the chamber for the principles of the bill. However, that phrase causes concern. Will the cabinet secretary consider the essential requirement for, or ingredient in a crime, which is intent, or mens rea? In my view, “likely to” does not meet that test.

**Humza Yousaf:** I am listening carefully to the comments that have been made about the stirring-up offence. If I may make a counter-argument, we have had a racial stirring offence for almost 35 years. The threshold for that offence is behaviour that is threatening or abusive or insulting—there is that additional threshold—but it is based on not only intent, but the potential for or likelihood of stirring up hatred.

That law has operated in Scotland for nearly 35 years with almost no controversy. We can look to that example. The protection that we hope to provide for other vulnerable groups with other protected characteristics is broadly based on the racial stirring-up offence. It is not a mirror, but it is based on that.

Notwithstanding all that I have said, I am exploring that area. The Liberal Democrats in particular pushed me on that and I have committed to come to the Parliament well in advance of the Justice Committee taking oral evidence. I will do that, and I will look closely at that issue.

**Liam Kerr (Conservative):** I agree with the cabinet secretary that we had a good debate last week. Following revelations at the weekend that the Hate Crime and Public Order (Scotland) Bill has received the largest number of written responses in the history of devolution, and that the Justice Committee was not aware of that when it agreed its timetable for the bill, does the cabinet secretary now consider that it would be sensible to rethink the approach to the stirring-up part of the bill? That would ensure that the other parts could be sufficiently scrutinised and legislated on to tackle the pernicious hate crime that we all wish to address.

**Humza Yousaf:** I thank Liam Kerr for the tone of his question. I understand his arguments about timing. I hope that he will understand the counter-argument, which was best articulated by Victim Support Scotland. If we delay the bill beyond this parliamentary term, those who need its protections the most—at a time when the atmosphere for minority groups can be febrile and hostile—will wait even longer.

My commitment is to come to the Parliament as soon as I can, and before the oral evidence stage at the Justice Committee, with some proposed changes. It is for the Parliament to decide the timetable for the bill. I am beholden to the Parliament. The first part of Liam Kerr’s question was about this being the most controversial bill, and about the 2,000-plus submissions on the bill. It is not my job to avoid

criticism; my job is to make decisions that can be extremely difficult and to ensure that we have legislation that is both effective and protects people's rights. I go back to the quote by the American author Elbert Hubbard: "To avoid criticism, do nothing, say nothing and be nothing."

Our job is not to avoid criticism. Our primary aim as legislators is to pass good legislation that protects people and also protects their freedom of speech.

**Liam McArthur (Liberal Democrat):** I thank the justice secretary for that confirmation that he has responded to my call in last week's debate for him to come forward ahead of the Justice Committee's stage 1 oral evidence with proposed changes to the Hate Crime and Public Order (Scotland) Bill, and particularly to part 2 of the bill.

The cabinet secretary has referred on a couple of occasions to coming to the Parliament as soon as possible. When and how does he intend to come back to the Parliament with those proposals?

**Humza Yousaf:** Those are decisions for the Parliamentary Bureau to take. I suggest that the correct approach would be for me to make another ministerial statement. That would give as many members as possible the opportunity to ask questions and to scrutinise what I propose. If the Justice Committee wished me to come to the committee thereafter, I would be more than happy to do that.

I would have to speak to the business team, who would speak to the Parliamentary Bureau, and get agreement from parties across the chamber. I intend to do that as soon as I can, to give the Justice Committee as much time as possible in advance of its taking oral evidence.

<http://www.parliament.scot/parliamentarybusiness/report.aspx?r=12821&i=115905#ScotParlOR>

## Scottish Parliament Written Answers

### Scottish Places of Worship Security Funding Scheme

**S5W-31593 Jackson Carlaw (Conservative):** To ask the Scottish Government what recent work has taken place on establishing a Places of Worship fund, and whether this will be available at some point in 2020, as was planned prior to the COVID-19 pandemic.

**Humza Yousaf:** Prior to the COVID 19 pandemic, good progress was made in developing the Scottish Places of Worship Security Funding Scheme. This work has recently resumed including the rescheduling of key elements of the scheme. We aim to open the scheme for applications later in 2020.

<https://www.parliament.scot/parliamentarybusiness/28877.aspx?SearchType=Advance&ReferenceNumbers=S5W-31593>

### Scottish Places of Worship Security Funding Scheme

**S5W-31594 Jackson Carlaw (Conservative):** To ask the Scottish Government whether its Places of Worship fund will still have a value of £500,000.

**Humza Yousaf:** The Places of Worship security funding scheme will have a value of £500,000. Taking into account the time required for engagement with faith groups, and the application and assessment process we anticipate that grants will be paid in Spring 2021.

<https://www.parliament.scot/parliamentarybusiness/28877.aspx?SearchType=Advance&ReferenceNumbers=S5W-31594>

### Scottish Places of Worship Security Funding Scheme

**S5W-31595 Jackson Carlaw (Conservative):** To ask the Scottish Government what progress has been made in determining how best to involve religious groups in formulating

the Places of Worship fund, and to help with the development of it.

**Humza Yousaf:** The Scottish Government has well-developed relationships with representatives from the main faith groups in Scotland. These groups will provide us with an effective way to involve faith communities in the development of the security funding scheme.

<https://www.parliament.scot/parliamentarybusiness/28877.aspx?SearchType=Advance&ReferenceNumbers=S5W-31596>

### **Scottish Places of Worship Security Funding Scheme**

**S5W-31596 Jackson Carlaw (Conservative):** To ask the Scottish Government what progress there has been with developing the application process for the Places of Worship fund, and when religious groups will be able to apply for the financial support to enhance their security measures.

**Humza Yousaf:** The Scottish Government has considered a number of approaches, including the application process used by the UK Government for their security funding scheme. We will work with faith groups and delivery partners to develop the application process, including the eligibility criteria. The scheme will be open for applications later in 2020.

<https://www.parliament.scot/parliamentarybusiness/28877.aspx?SearchType=Advance&ReferenceNumbers=S5W-31596>

## **Scottish Government**

### **Scotland's Census 2022 Equality Impact Assessment Results v3.0**

*Religion and Belief: pp39-42*

<https://tinyurl.com/yxjbq7jm>

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## **Israel**

**See also the House of Commons written answer “Local Government: Sanctions” that has been included in the Home Affairs section above.**

## **House of Lords Written Answers**

### **Jerusalem: Health Services**

**Baroness Tonge (Non-affiliated) [HL7829]** To ask Her Majesty's Government what steps they plan to take to protect Palestinian medical facilities in East Jerusalem from violent incursions by the Israel Defence Forces.

**Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon:** The UK is concerned by any reports of incursions into, or demolitions of, Palestinian medical facilities by Israeli authorities. In all but the most exceptional circumstances demolitions are contrary to International Humanitarian Law (IHL). Such actions also weaken the capacity of Palestinians to withstand the impact of COVID-19. Under IHL, an occupying power has the duty of ensuring and maintaining public health and hygiene in the occupied territory to the fullest extent of the means available to it. We call on both parties to avoid any provocative action which might undermine the cooperation that is so critical.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2020-09-03/hl7829>

### Israel: Palestinians

**Baroness Tonge (Non-affiliated)** [HL7827] To ask Her Majesty's Government, further to the Written Answer by Baroness Sugg on 6 August (HL7404), what plans they have to make an assessment of the case for using the Royal Navy to protect Palestinian fishermen from attacks by the Israeli Navy.

**Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon:** Her Majesty's Government has no plans to make an assessment on using the Royal Navy in this way.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2020-09-03/hl7827>

*The answer referred to above can be read at*

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2020-07-27/hl7404>

### Israel: Palestinians

**Baroness Tonge (Non-affiliated)** [HL 7830] To ask Her Majesty's Government what steps they plan to take to protect Palestinians in Kafr Qaddum in the light of reports (1) that explosive devices have been placed by the Israel Defence Force in civilian areas, and (2) of violence towards unarmed Palestinians.

**Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon:** We repeatedly call on Israel to abide by its obligations under international law and have a regular dialogue with Israel on legal and security issues relating to the occupation. We have also stressed the importance of the Israel security forces providing appropriate protection to the Palestinian civilian population.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2020-09-03/hl7830>

### West Bank: Demolition

**Baroness Tonge (Non-affiliated)** [HL7831] To ask Her Majesty's Government what steps they plan to take to protect Palestinians living in the West Bank from having their (1) property, (2) land, and (3) infrastructure, demolished by the government of Israel on the grounds of an alleged lack of planning permission.

**Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon:** The UK is concerned by the continued demolition of Palestinian property by Israeli authorities. In all but the most exceptional of circumstances demolitions are contrary to International Humanitarian Law. The practice causes unnecessary suffering to ordinary Palestinians and is harmful to the peace process. We continue to urge the Government of Israel to develop improved mechanisms for zoning, planning and permitting in Area C for the benefit of the Palestinian population, including by facilitating local Palestinian participation in such processes.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2020-09-03/hl7831>

### Israel: Palestinians

**Baroness Tonge (Non-affiliated)** [HL7826] To ask Her Majesty's Government what action they plan to take to protect civilians in Gaza from bombing by the government of Israel.

**Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon:** We are deeply concerned by the recent hostilities in Gaza and welcome steps taken on 31 August 2020 to de-escalate the situation, and ease some restrictions. All countries, including Israel, have a 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 urge both sides to maintain calm and avoid taking actions which make peace more difficult to achieve.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2020-09-03/hl7826>

### Gaza: Water

**Baroness Tonge (Non-affiliated)** [HL7733] To ask Her Majesty's Government what

action they intend to take to support efforts (1) to address water shortages, and (2) to improve living conditions, in Gaza.

**Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon:** The UK Government remains deeply concerned by the situation in Gaza. To address water shortages we are funding the construction of pipelines and reservoirs in Gaza that will carry water from the planned Gaza Central Desalination Plant to households and businesses across the strip. When completed this will have doubled the water supply in Gaza, ensuring two million Gazans have greater access to this vital resource.

Our recent £840,000 funding contribution has also 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 in response to COVID-19. The Foreign Secretary recently announced a further £2.7 million funding to UN agencies to provide food assistance, medical supplies and personal protection for the most vulnerable Palestinians.

In addition to our commitment to funding, our Embassy in Tel Aviv and Consulate-General in Jerusalem frequently urge the Israeli and Palestinian authorities to take steps to improve conditions in Gaza. The issue was most recently raised on 20th August. The UK will continue to work to help address the humanitarian situation and improve the lives of the people of Gaza.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2020-09-02/hl7733>

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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