



Political Affairs Digest

A daily summary of political events affecting the Jewish Community

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House of Commons Oral Answers

Business of the House

col 488 Valerie Vaz (Labour): ... Finally, happy new year, shanah tovah, to the Jewish community. I know that it has been difficult to have the celebrations, but maybe Rosh Hashanah next year will be back to normal.

Jacob Rees-Mogg (Conservative): May I also wish the Jewish community a happy new year? Of course, celebrations are difficult this year under the regulation. ...

Col 492 Christian Wakeford (Conservative): May I also wish shana tova to the Jewish community in my constituency and across the globe? ...

<https://hansard.parliament.uk/commons/2020-09-17/debates/4B0EC505-CFE3-4BE1-99AD-AFCD65177387/BusinessOfTheHouse>

House of Lords Written Answer

Hate Crime

Lord Vinson (Conservative) [HL7740] To ask Her Majesty's Government, further to the Written Answer by Baroness Williams of Trafford on 12 March (HL2248), whether the Law Commission review of legislation related to hate crime has called witnesses; if so, whom; what weight any such hearings with witnesses are giving to the importance of free speech in the UK; whether they intend to submit any recommendations by the Law Commission to Parliament for approval; and if not, why not.

Baroness Williams of Trafford: The Government has asked the Law Commission to undertake a review of the legislation related to hate crime, which will report in 2021. The review's Terms of Reference require the Law Commission to make recommendations that 'comply with, and are conceptionally informed by' the right to freedom of expression.

The Law Commission are scheduled to conduct a public consultation later in the year as part of their review. They will be seeking a wide range of perspectives and

inviting comment from all interested parties. They have conducted pre-consultation meetings and will hold formal consultation meetings with stakeholders.

As part of their review, the Law Commission are engaging with a variety of stakeholders, including civil rights group, the CPS, community organisations, law enforcement, legal experts and academics.

The Government will reflect on the Law Commission's recommendations when it is due to report next year.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2020-09-02/hl7740>

The answer referred to above can be read at

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2020-03-04/hl2248>

Information about the review referred to above can be read at

<https://www.lawcom.gov.uk/project/hate-crime/>

Downing Street

Rosh Hashanah message from the Prime Minister (video)

I know #RoshHashanah will be difficult this year without the close embrace of family, but I also know the Jews of Britain will respond with the same vigour and ingenuity they have displayed throughout this crisis. Shana Tova and may you be inscribed and sealed for a good year.

<https://twitter.com/BorisJohnson/status/1306873215784976384?s=20>

Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office

Foreign Secretary's 2020 Rosh Hashanah message

Foreign Secretary Dominic Raab said:

I send my warmest wishes to the British Jewish community and to communities around the world for the Jewish New Year and high holidays.

Every year, Rosh Hashanah gives us a chance to reflect on the past 12 months and plan our new path for the year ahead. This year, for many, planning ahead will feel more uncertain as we all continue to adjust and adapt to the coronavirus pandemic.

Yet there are also reasons for hope. My recent visit to Israel, our valued partner, gave me hope that there is a bright future and new dynamic for Israel across the Middle East.

We need to grasp that opportunity with trade, technology, business, and science to expand peace and prosperity in the region.

I wish you all a happy, healthy and peaceful new year. Shana Tova and Chatima Tova.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/foreign-secretarys-2020-rosh-hashanah-message>

UK Labour Party

Rosh Hashanah message from Keir Starmer (video)

As we usher in #RoshHashanah, I want to send heartfelt good wishes to Jewish communities throughout the UK and across the world.

https://twitter.com/Keir_Starmer/status/1306849938957979648?s=20

Scottish Government

Rosh Hashanah message from the First Minister (video)

First Minister @nicolasturgeon has wished Scotland's Jewish communities, and those celebrating around the world, a happy and joyful Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur.

<https://twitter.com/ScotGovFM/status/1306888192734294017>

Coronavirus (COVID-19) Phase 3: updated guidance for the safe use of places of worship

<https://www.gov.scot/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-phase-3-guidance-for-the-safe-use-of-places-of-worship/>

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Israel

House of Commons Written Answers

Israel: Palestinians

Rushanara Ali (Labour) [85045] To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what recent assessment his Department has made of the rate of (a) demolitions and (b) confiscations of (i) Palestinian homes and (ii) other structures by Israel in 2020 compared to the last five years.

James Cleverly: The UK is concerned by the demolition of Palestinian property by Israeli authorities. In all but the most exceptional of circumstances demolitions are contrary to International Humanitarian Law. We also remain concerned about Israeli confiscations of Palestinian homes and structures. These practices are 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/2020-09-04/85045>

Israel: Palestinians

Rushanara Ali (Labour) [85048] To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, with reference to the report to the UN Human Rights Council of the UN Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Palestinian Territory occupied since 1967, dated 15 July 2020, what representations he has made to the Government of Israel on ending all measures amounting to collective punishment of Palestinians including the closure of Gaza.

James Cleverly: We have serious concerns about the use of punitive acts against the families of Palestinians who have been accused of violent acts by Israel, including Israel's policy of demolitions to destroy the homes belonging to suspected Palestinian terrorists or their families. Such punishments, in all but the most exceptional of cases, are contrary to international humanitarian law. Officials from our Embassy in Tel Aviv have registered concerns about this policy with Israeli authorities. The UK also remains deeply concerned about the situation in Gaza. We continue to stress to the Israeli authorities the damage that their restrictions are doing to the economy and to the living standards of ordinary Palestinians in Gaza. There remains an urgent need for all parties to reach an agreement that addresses the underlying causes of the conflict in Gaza.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2020-09-04/85048>

The report referred to above can be read at

<https://www.un.org/unispal/document/report-of-the-special-rapporteur-on-the-situation-of-human-rights-in-the-palestinian-territories-occupied-since-1967-report-a-hrc-44-60-advance-unedited-version/>

Palestinians: Overseas Aid

Rushanara Ali (Labour) [85046] To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what support his Department plans to provide to vulnerable Palestinians through the £2.7m UK aid package that he announced on 25 August 2020.

James Cleverly: The Foreign Secretary recently announced a £2.7 million UK aid package to UN agencies to help provide food assistance, medical supplies and personal protection for the most vulnerable Palestinians. This includes food vouchers for over 120,000 people for one month to prevent malnutrition; cash assistance for 1,114 households for eight months and personal protection for frontline doctors and aid workers to stop the spread of the virus.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2020-09-04/85046>

The announcement of the aid package referred to above can be read at

<https://twitter.com/dominicraab/status/1298279722133200897>

Palestinians: Textbooks

Jonathan Gullis (Conservative) [86781] To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what discussions he has had with his EU counterparts in response to reports that the EU's review into the Palestinian curriculum presents Israeli textbooks as those published by the Palestinian Authority.

James Cleverly: The UK Government has a zero tolerance approach towards incitement to violence and lobbied our European partners to conduct a thorough independent review of textbooks used in the Occupied Palestinian Territories, which is now underway. This review is ongoing, and the final report is not due until the end of 2020. We will study its findings carefully.

The UK does not comment on leaked reports. Our European partners have been clear that the study does not look at Israeli textbooks. We understand that the methodology of the study will include a separate section on a very limited sample of textbooks used in East Jerusalem and modified by Israel for the purpose of comparison.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2020-09-08/86781>

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Foreign Affairs

House of Commons Written Answer

Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office: Religious Freedom

Jim Shannon (DUP) [87546] To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, if he will make protecting freedom of religion or belief a priority for his Department.

Nigel Adams: Defending the right to Freedom of Religion or Belief (FoRB) for all is a priority for the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office. The UK Government has committed to implement the Bishop of Truro's 22 recommendations in full, in a way that will bring real improvements in the lives of

those persecuted because of their faith or belief. Over half of the recommendations have either been implemented, or are in progress, and work is continuing to implement the remainder.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2020-09-09/87546>

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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