



Political Affairs Digest

A daily summary of political events affecting the Jewish Community

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Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme: Voluntary Work

Ben Lake (Plaid Cymru) [41576] To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if he will add an exemption to the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme guidance allowing furloughed workers employed by faith-based organisations to participate in activities usually undertaken by volunteers in their faith community.

Jesse Norman: The purpose of the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme is to support people who would otherwise have been made redundant. To prevent fraudulent claims, the Government made clear that individuals cannot work or volunteer for their organisation. This aims to protect individuals too; if workers were allowed to volunteer for their employer, the employer could ask them to effectively work full time while only paying them 80% of their wages. DCMS is working with other Government departments and the voluntary, community and social enterprise sector to identify areas where volunteers can contribute to the COVID-19 response.

<https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Commons/2020-04-29/41576/>

Food Supply: Coronavirus

Matthew Offord (Conservative) [39632] To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what assessment is made of the suitability of the contents of food parcels, provided to vulnerable people, in regard to their (a) medical, (b) religious and (c) ethical preferences.

Christopher Pincher: This offer is an emergency response to a very fast-moving situation, to support those in greatest medical need. Some of the boxes may contain some products that are not permitted culturally or for faith reasons by some groups. In the standardised box which is delivered to individuals there is an A4 note which explains that should the individual have any allergies or religious/cultural dietary requirements and are not able to eat some of the food and feel that the remaining contents of the package are not enough to provide food for 1 week, they should contact their local authority.

The packages include tinned meat and tinned tuna, but as the product is packaged

there is no risk of individuals having to touch foodstuffs that are unsuitable.
<https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Commons/2020-04-24/39632/>

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Holocaust

Scottish Parliament Motion

S5M-21649 Jackson Carlaw (Conservative): 75th Anniversary of VE Day – That the Parliament commemorates the 75th anniversary of Victory in Europe (VE) Day; pays tribute to the surviving veterans and recognises the enormous sacrifice of men and women from across the Allied nations and resistance fighters in Nazi-occupied territory for their contribution and courage in defeating fascism; regrets the enormous loss of life whether in combat, as victims of the Holocaust or the many innocent civilians killed during the hostilities; celebrates the enduring peace achieved in Europe since 1945; notes that current circumstances do not allow for a more traditional celebration of the collective endeavour to bring peace to Europe, but pledges again to ensure that such a conflict is never allowed to engulf the world again.

<https://www.parliament.scot/parliamentarybusiness/28877.aspx?SearchType=Advance&ReferenceNumbers=S5M-21649>

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Israel

House of Commons Written Answers

The following two questions both received the same answer

Overseas Companies: Israeli Settlements

Kate Osamor (Labour Co-op) [38939] To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, what action he plans to take in relation to JCB, Opodo and Greenkote in the light of the publication of the UN Human Rights Council's database of companies directly doing business with Israeli settlements.

Kate Osamor (Labour Co-op) [38940] To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, with reference to the report by the UN Human Rights Office published on 12 February 2020 on companies involved in certain activities relating to settlements in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, what discussions he has had with (a) JCB, (b) Opodo and (c) Greenkote.

James Cleverly: The UK, along with a number of other European countries, opposed the creation of the UN Human Rights Office's database. Human rights obligations are directed at states, and not individuals or businesses. Ultimately it is the decision of an individual or company whether to operate in settlements in the Occupied Palestinian Territories. The British Government neither encourages nor offers support to such activity.

<https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Commons/2020-04-22/38939/>

and

<https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Commons/2020-04-22/38940/>

The database referred to above can be read at

https://www.ohchr.org/EN/HRBodies/HRC/RegularSessions/Session43/Documents/A_HRC_43_71.docx

The report referred to above can be read at

<https://undocs.org/A/HRC/37/39>

Palestinians: Health Services

Christian Matheson (Labour) [39660] To ask the Secretary of State for International Development, what assessment she has made of the adequacy of Palestinians' access to healthcare throughout the Occupied Palestinian Territories during the covid-19 pandemic.

James Cleverly: The UK has pledged £744 million to support the global humanitarian response to COVID-19, including in the Occupied Palestinian Territories (OPTs). We have delivered additional vital support in the OPTs by providing £840,000 to 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/2020-04-24/39660/>

Palestinians: Coronavirus

James Murray (Labour Co-op) [41608] To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, what assessment he has made of the effect of recent demolitions and seizures of Palestinian (a) homes, (b) water and hygiene structures and (c) clinics on the Palestinian Authority's ability to contain the spread of covid-19 in the Occupied Palestinian Territories.

James Cleverly: The UK is seriously concerned by any demolition and seizure of Palestinian property by Israeli authorities. In all but the most exceptional circumstances demolitions are contrary to International Humanitarian Law (IHL). We are particularly concerned that demolitions are continuing at this time. Such actions 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://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Commons/2020-04-29/41608/>

Israel: Palestinians

James Murray (Labour Co-op) [41609] To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, what representations he has made to his Israeli counterpart on the increase in settler violence against Palestinians and their property reported by the United Nations Office for the Co-ordination of Humanitarian Affairs since the outbreak of covid-19 in the occupied Palestinian territory.

James Cleverly: We are concerned by reports that settler violence is continuing at this time. We called on both parties to avoid any provocative action which might undermine the cooperation that is so critical in response to COVID-19, including

settler violence, at the UN Security Council remote meeting on the Middle East Peace Process on 23 April. We condemn any incidents of violence by settlers against Palestinians.

<https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Commons/2020-04-29/41609/>

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>

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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 in 3 days**

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 28 June 2020)

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

**** Hate Crime and Public Order (Scotland) Bill** (closing date 24 July 2020)

<https://www.parliament.scot/parliamentarybusiness/CurrentCommittees/115038.aspx>

**** Legislative proposals for religion, values and ethics [Wales]** (closing date 28 July 2020)

<https://gov.wales/legislative-proposals-religion-values-and-ethics>

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