



Political Affairs Digest

A daily summary of political events affecting the Jewish Community

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House of Commons Oral Answer

Prime Minister's Questions

Q4. Jane Hunt (Conservative): I have a number of businesses that serve the wedding market and that would like to hold viewings to make bookings for the future. Church leaders of Loughborough have also contacted me about access to churches both for services and to help to tackle loneliness. Please could I ask that religious faiths be allowed to let people into their places of worship, observing social distancing within their premises, and that wedding venues be allowed access for bookings? [902901]

The Prime Minister: I very much understand the urgency that many people in this country feel about the need to reopen places of worship. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government is of course leading a taskforce on this very matter. It is a tough one: every time we do something like this, we push up the risk of infection and the risk of pushing up the R again. To repeat what I was saying earlier to the Leader of the Opposition, we are not there yet. We are getting there, but we are not yet there. It is vital that the people of this country understand the continued need to push down on the infection rate.

<https://hansard.parliament.uk/commons/2020-06-03/debates/BD52C1B9-0DB7-42FB-9169-ED5E912E4156/Engagements#contribution-3D2A5356-B488-4D65-B04F-2F4AB5BE238E>

House of Commons Written Answer

Coronavirus: Religious Buildings

Catherine West (Labour) [46116] To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether the Government plans to publish for what reasons places of worship are not included in the initial easing of covid-19 lockdown measures.

Helen Whately: The ongoing closure of places of worship reflects the need to limit social contact in indoor spaces, where the risk of infection is higher. We recognise that transparency is important in these unprecedented times. We have therefore

published the statements and the accompanying evidence to demonstrate how our understanding of COVID-19 has continued to evolve as new data emerges, and how the advice from the Scientific Advisory Group for Emergencies has quickly adapted to new findings that reflect a changing situation.

The scientific evidence supporting the government response to COVID-19 can be found at the following link:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/groups/scientific-advisory-group-for-emergencies-sage-coronavirus-covid-19-response>

<https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Commons/2020-05-12/46116/>

House of Lords Written Answer

Government Departments: Equality

Baroness Nicholson of Winterbourne (Conservative) [HL4854] To ask Her Majesty's Government what measures are in place in (1) Government departments, and (2) Government-funded institutions, to ensure that no person is discriminated against on the grounds of (a) age, (b) disability, (c) marriage and civil partnership, (d) pregnancy and maternity, (e) race, (f) religion or belief, (g) sex, and (h) sexual orientation.

Baroness Berridge: The Equality Act 2010, which applies to all employers and providers of services and functions including Government departments and Government funded institutions, proscribes discrimination on the grounds of each of the protected characteristics listed in the Question.

The Equality and Human Rights Commission has produced statutory codes to support understanding of the Equality Act 2010, including on Employment and Services, Public Functions and Associations. In addition, under the Public Sector Equality Duty, set out in the Equality Act 2010, all public authorities and those delivering public functions must have due regard to the need to eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct prohibited by the Act; advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not; and foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not. The protected characteristics covered by the duty include all those listed in the Question.

In 2015, GEO published a guide on 'Providing services for transgender customers', which was applicable, but not limited, to the public sector. There are many examples of Government produced guidance to help with the provision of services that take protected characteristics into account, such as the Inclusive Transport Strategy and www.gov.uk guidance on disability and pregnancy.

<https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Lords/2020-05-21/HL4854/>

The Equality and Human Rights Commission codes referred to above can be read at
<https://www.equalityhumanrights.com/en/advice-and-guidance/equality-act-codes-practice>

The GEO guide referred to above can be read at
https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/484857/Providing_services_for_transgender_customers-a_guide.pdf

The other UK Government guidance referred to above can be read at
https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/728547/inclusive-transport-strategy.pdf

and

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/570382/Equality_Act_2010-disability_definition.pdf

and

<https://www.gov.uk/working-when-pregnant-your-rights>

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Israel

House of Commons Written Answer

Iran: Diplomatic Relations

Giles Watling (Conservative) [49116] To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, what representations he has made to his Iranian counterpart on reported social media comments by Iranian Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei stating that Britain has always been a source of evil and catastrophe.

James Cleverly: We have a long-standing bilateral relationship with Iran. This is not without its challenges and we continue to engage with Iran, including at ministerial level, on a range of important issues. However, no representations have been made on the Supreme Leader's comments.

On the reference to Palestine, we are clear that we want to see the creation of a sovereign, independent and viable Palestinian state - living in peace and security, side by side with Israel.

<https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Commons/2020-05-19/49116/>

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Foreign Affairs

House of Commons Written Answer

Iran: Arms Trade

John Lamont (Conservative) [49098] To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, what assessment he has made of the level of regional threat posed by Iran re-entering the arms market following the expiration of the UN conventional arms embargo in October 2020.

James Cleverly: The UK remains committed to the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), a reciprocal deal that lifts sanctions in exchange for tough nuclear limits. Iran has broken the nuclear limits in the JCPOA and we are working to bring Iran back into compliance through the deal's Dispute Resolution Mechanism.

United Nations Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 2231, which underpins the JCPOA, includes a number of clauses designed to allow sanctions to expire on fixed dates: the UN conventional arms embargo is due to expire in October 2020. We have repeatedly set out concerns about Iranian destabilising behaviour, including proliferation to non-state actors. UNSCRs 1540, 2216 and 1701, which prohibit the proliferation of weapons to the Houthis and Lebanese Hizballah, will remain in place after the arms embargo expires. The EU arms embargo and UN ballistic missile restrictions will also remain in place until 2023. We are consulting partners on the broader implications of the UN arms embargo expiry and encourage all states to implement national export control best practice.

<https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Commons/2020-05-19/49098/>

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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>

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

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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