



Political Affairs Digest

A daily summary of political events affecting the Jewish Community

Contents

Home Affairs
Israel

Relevant Legislation
Consultations

Home Affairs

House of Commons Written Answers

Prosecutions: Racial Discrimination

Catherine West (Labour) [53545] To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many incidents of racism were recorded in each year from 2015 to 2020; and how many of those incidents resulted in a prosecution.

Kit Malthouse: The Home Office collects and publishes statistics annually on the number of racially motivated hate crime offences recorded by the police in England and Wales.

The latest 'Hate Crime, England and Wales' statistical bulletin contains the number of racially motivated hate crimes in Table 2 and is available here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/hate-crime-england-and-wales-2018-to-2019>

Data on prosecutions are published by the Ministry of Justice. These data include outcomes for 'racially or religiously aggravated' offences only as it is not possible to separately identify other hate crimes which are prosecuted under the specific offence in legislation that they fall under. The latest data can be found here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/criminal-justice-system-statistics-quarterly-december-2019>

<https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Commons/2020-06-02/53545/>

Hate Crime: Internet

Bambos Charalambous (Labour) [52338] To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what progress has been made on the Online Hate Speech Dashboard created in partnership with the National Police Chief's Council and Cardiff University.

Kit Malthouse: The National Police Chief's Council's (NPCC) partnership with Cardiff University is still in development and is intended to design a tool for understanding trends in hateful sentiment online. The tool is currently in a pilot stage.

<https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Commons/2020-06-01/52338/>

Churches: Coronavirus

Luke Evans (Conservative) [53638] To ask the Member for South West Bedfordshire, representing the Church Commissioners, what steps he is taking to ensure that places of worship can open for (a) private prayer and (b) active worship in compliance with social distancing measures as covid-19 lockdown restrictions are lifted.

Andrew Selous: The Government has announced that from the 15th June Church of England places of worship may be opened for individual prayer, alongside those of other faiths.

The Church of England has been developing advice, following information from Public Health England and other bodies, to enable its churches to be opened safely, and has been communicating that to dioceses for planning purposes. Not all buildings will be able to open for individual prayer on the 15th June, and bishops will be discussing with local clergy the needs of each parish. We expect a phased reopening that takes into account local circumstances and the available resources to enable it to be done safely.

The House of Bishops will be issuing revised advice once the Government has published its own guidance, further to the statement made by Lord Greenhalgh on Saturday 6th June.

<https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Commons/2020-06-02/53638/>

The UK Government announcement referred to above, including Lord Greenhalgh's statement referred to above, can be read at

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/places-of-worship-to-re-open-for-individual-prayer>

The Church of England guidance referred to above can be read at

<https://www.churchofengland.org/more/media-centre/coronavirus-covid-19-guidance-churches>

Religious Buildings: Coronavirus

Afzal Khan (Labour) [55024] To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, pursuant to the Answer of 4 June 2020 to Question 52458 on Religious Buildings: Coronavirus, what steps he is taking to discuss with (a) the Muslim Council of Britain and (b) other major Muslim organisations on the safe re-opening of Mosques.

Luke Hall: We are currently engaging a broad range of faith communities to discuss the safe re-opening of places of worship through the Places of Worship Taskforce which includes representation from the Muslim community. We currently have no plans to engage with the Muslim Council of Britain.

<https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Commons/2020-06-04/55024/>

The answer referred to above can be read at

<https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Commons/2020-06-01/52458/>

Religious Buildings: Coronavirus

Afzal Khan (Labour) [55025] To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, pursuant to the Answer of 4 June 2020 to Question 52457 on Religious Buildings: Coronavirus, what steps he has taken to translate Government guidance into other languages.

Luke Hall: New guidance will be published shortly to ensure the limited reopening of places of worship can be done safely and in line with social distancing guidelines. The Government is currently considering how best to publish this guidance so it reaches the widest possible audience.

<https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Commons/2020-06-04/55025/>

The answer referred to above can be read at

<https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Commons/2020-06-01/52457/>

Scottish Parliament Time for Reflection

Rabbi Moshe Rubin (Rabbi of Giffnock and Newlands Hebrew Congregation and Senior Rabbi of Scotland): I was recently sent a picture of the first day back at primary school after the lockdown, and there, sitting at the children's desks, were pupils—all in their 90s. There is humour and sadness, laughing and crying, worry and hope. I do not envy your task, parliamentarians. The word that we keep on hearing is “unprecedented” times—and never a truer word was said.

In making decisions about how and when to end the lockdown, how and when to reopen the schools, how and when to reopen the economy, and how and when to support the many who are suffering economically due to the lockdown, you are literally debating and deciding the wellbeing of every person in the country—what an incredible ask of you.

In the great book of the Talmud, Ethics of the Fathers, the sage Rabbi Yochanan asked his students, “What is the most virtuous path in life that one should choose?” The replies came back: one said a good eye; the second said a good friend; the third said a good neighbour; and the fourth said always seeing the outcome of your actions. Finally, Rabbi Eleazar replied, “A good heart,” to which their teacher responded that Rabbi Eleazar's answer was the correct one, as it encapsulated all the other answers.

A good heart means being a supportive neighbour and a caring friend, and having a generous eye towards the other. Throughout the crisis, what has kept the country going is the good heart: the dedication of the key workers, the amazing voluntary work that is taking place in communities, the Thursday night clapping for the national health service, the sweet art work of rainbows by the children, the home-schooling parents, the ingenuity of our teachers—it goes on and on.

However, as we come out of lockdown and the full scale of the cost and the many other challenges that are due to lockdown come to light, that good heart will be tested. It is to you—the country's leaders—that society will look for reassurance, hope and strength. It will be you and the leaders of the communities who will have the task of keeping that heart good and strong.

I bless you, and all leaders, with our prophet Moses's blessing. May it be God's will that he rest his divine presence in the work of your hands.

<http://www.parliament.scot/parliamentarybusiness/report.aspx?r=12684&i=114736&c=2260264#ScotParlOR>

TOP

Israel

House of Commons Written Answers

Trade Agreements: Israel

Andrew Percy (Conservative) [51842] To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, what recent discussions she has had with her counterpart in the Israeli government on a UK-Israel free trade deal.

Ranil Jayawardena: The United Kingdom-Israel Trade and Partnership Agreement was signed on 18th February 2019. This Agreement will enter into force at the end of the Transition Period on 1st January 2021 and will allow businesses to trade as

freely as they do now, without additional tariffs or barriers.

Total trade between the United Kingdom and Israel increased by 15 per cent in 2019 to £5.1bn. We value this trade relationship and are committed to strengthening it, so we will seek to work with counterparts in the new Israeli government to host a bilateral trade and investment summit in London.

<https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Commons/2020-06-01/51842/>

The Trade and Partnership Agreement referred to above can be read at

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/781440/CS_Israel_1.2019_Trade.pdf

UNRWA

Sammy Wilson (DUP) [54073] To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, whether he has made representations on replacing the United Nations Relief and Work Agency with a new body working under the rules of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees; and if he will make a statement.

James Cleverly: We have not made representations on this matter. The UK recognises the United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA) unique mandate from the UN General Assembly, to protect and provide protection and core services to Palestinian refugees across the Middle East. UNRWA is also a vital humanitarian and stabilising force in the region and the UK remains firmly committed to supporting UNRWA and Palestinian refugees across the Middle East. However, we recognise that UNRWA needs to be on a more secure financial footing, to ensure that Palestinian refugees' basic needs are met. To that end, the UK is working with UNRWA and other donors to help ensure its sustainability. This includes finding further cost savings, broadening UNRWA's donor base, and encouraging multi-year funding.

<https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Commons/2020-06-03/54073/>

Israeli Settlements

Neil Coyle (Labour) [54922] To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, what support the Government plans to provide to the Occupied Palestinian Territories in the event that the Government of Israel attempts to annex parts of those territories.

James Cleverly: The UK remains committed to excellent relationships with the Palestinians and our partnership with the Palestinians is improving healthcare, education and security. As we made clear at the UN Security Council remote meeting on the Middle East Peace Process on 20 May, we are concerned by reports that the new Israeli Government coalition has reached an agreement which may pave the way for annexation of parts of the West Bank. The UK position is clear: any unilateral moves towards annexation of parts of the West Bank by Israel would be damaging to efforts to restart peace negotiations and contrary to international law. The UK is committed to making progress towards a two-state solution. We will continue to press Israel and the Palestinians strongly on the need to refrain from taking actions which make peace more difficult.

<https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Commons/2020-06-04/54922/>

The British statement to the UN Security Council meeting referred to above can be read at

<https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/securing-a-peaceful-future-for-israelis-and-palestinians>

House of Lords Written Answers

Palestinians: Recognition of States

Baroness Tonge (Non-affiliated) [HL5129] To ask Her Majesty's Government, further to the Written Answer by Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon on 19 May (HL3850), what (1) conditions they require to have been met before they recognise Palestine as a state; and (2) what steps they are taking to support Palestine to meet those conditions.

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: As I made clear in my answer of 19 May 2020 (HL3850), the UK will recognise a Palestinian state at a time when it best serves the objective of peace. Bilateral recognition in itself cannot end the occupation. Without a negotiated settlement the occupation and the problems that come with it will continue. The UK will continue to support a negotiated settlement leading to a safe and secure Israel living alongside a viable and sovereign Palestinian state.

<https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Lords/2020-06-02/HL5129/>

The answer referred to above can be read at

<https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Lords/2020-05-05/HL3850/>

The following two questions both received the same answer

Israel: Geneva Conventions

Baroness Tonge (Non-affiliated) [HL5130] To ask Her Majesty's Government what steps they are taking to encourage the government of Israel to ensure that it meets the obligations of the Geneva Convention relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War.

Baroness Tonge (Non-affiliated) [HL5131] To ask Her Majesty's Government what steps they are taking to ensure that the government of Israel meets the obligations of the Geneva Convention relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War.

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 issues relating to the occupation.

<https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Lords/2020-06-02/HL5130/>

and

<https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Lords/2020-06-02/HL5131/>

Israel: Palestinians

Baroness Tonge (Non-affiliated) [HL5132] To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the conditions any Palestinian children who are being detained in Israel without a conviction are living in during the COVID-19 pandemic; and what steps they are taking to ensure that any such children are treated in line with international law and agreements.

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: We remain concerned by the impact that COVID-19 could have on Palestinian detainees, including children. We continue to make representations to the Israeli authorities to take steps which will reduce the risk of COVID-19 spreading in prisons whilst simultaneously respecting fundamental human rights.

<https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Lords/2020-06-02/HL5132/>

West Bank: Agriculture and Water

Baroness Tonge (Non-affiliated) [HL5133] To ask Her Majesty's Government what representations they have made to the government of Israel about reports of the destruction of livestock pens and waterlines belonging to the al-Ras al-Ahmar and al-Baq'a Bedouin communities in the northern Jordan Valley.

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: While we have not made representations on these reports, we urge both sides to avoid taking actions which make peace more difficult to achieve. 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.

<https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Lords/2020-06-02/HL5133/>

TOP

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>

TOP

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>

[TOP](#)

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