



Political Affairs Digest

A daily summary of political events affecting the Jewish Community

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House of Commons Written Answers

Marriage: Visas: Coronavirus

Rosena Allin-Khan (Labour) [56103] To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what plans her Department has to extend the fiancée visa for people who are unable to (a) give notice to marry and (b) marry during the covid-19 outbreak.

Kevin Foster: The Home Office has put in place a range of measures to support those affected by the Covid-19 outbreak. We continue to monitor the situation closely and take these exceptional circumstances into account.

A fiancé, fiancée or proposed civil partner whose wedding or civil partnership is delayed due to Covid-19 can request an extension until 31 July by updating their records with the Coronavirus Immigration Team.

(https://gov.smartwebportal.co.uk/homeoffice/public/ho_form.html)

The family Immigration Rules allow for an extension of leave if there is good reason for a wedding or civil partnership not taking place during the initial six-month period of leave to enter. Restrictions on giving notice to marry or delay to a wedding or civil partnership due to Covid-19 will be considered a good reason under this policy. They may otherwise be eligible to remain on the basis of exceptional circumstances.

These are unprecedented times and we may make further temporary adjustments to requirements where necessary and appropriate.

<https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Commons/2020-06-08/56103/>

Academies: Discrimination

Justin Madders (Labour) [58728] To ask the Secretary of State for Education, for what reasons academy-related discrimination cases are outside the remit of the Education and Skills Funding Agency; and what options people have in an academy setting to pursue a discrimination case.

Nick Gibb: The law covering discrimination is the Equality Act 2010. This applies to all maintained and independent schools, including academies, and maintained

and non-maintained special schools in England.

The Act makes it unlawful for the responsible body of a school to discriminate against, harass or victimise a pupil or potential pupil:

- in relation to admissions;
- in the way it provides education for pupils;
- in the way it provides pupils access to any benefit, facility or service; or
- by excluding a pupil or subjecting them to any other detriment.

If an individual feels that discrimination has taken place, in the first instance these cases could be resolved informally with the school. Should this fail to satisfactorily resolve the issue, then an official complaint can be made to the academy.

If the complainant feels that the trust has not followed its complaints procedure, they can escalate this to the Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA). The ESFA will assess the trust's compliance with their complaints policy but cannot overturn the decision itself or suggest remedy.

Formal proceedings in relation to a contravention of the education provisions of the Act will be brought in a county court. If the court rules that there has been a contravention, then it has the power to award an appropriate remedy, including any award of damages.

Specialist tribunals which have experience and knowledge of disability issues will hear cases of contravention of the education provisions on grounds of disability. In England this will be the First-tier Tribunal. If the Tribunal rules that there has been a contravention, then it has the power to make an order of a remedy, which it sees as appropriate.

The Department has set out advice on the Equality Act on GOV.UK, which is available

at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/equality-act-2010-advice-for-schools>.

<https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Commons/2020-06-11/58728/>

House of Lords Written Answer

Religious Hatred: Prosecutions

Lord Roberts of Llandudno (Liberal Democrat) [HL5092] To ask Her Majesty's Government how many cases involving anti-Semitism or Islamophobia were prosecuted in UK courts in (1) 1980, (2) 2000, and (3) 2015.

Lord Keen of Elie: The Ministry of Justice has published information on prosecutions in England and Wales for racially or religiously aggravated offences, however to identify which of these, or wider hate crime offences involved anti-Semitism or Islamophobia would require a manual search of court records which would be of disproportionate cost.

<https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Lords/2020-06-02/HL5092/>

Public Health England

Beyond the data: Understanding the impact of COVID-19 on BAME groups

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/892376/COVID_stakeholder_engagement_synthesis_beyond_the_data.pdf

Welsh Government

Updated Guidance to local authorities on the impact of the Health Protection (Coronavirus Restrictions) (Wales) Regulations 2020 on funerals

<https://gov.wales/sites/default/files/publications/2020-06/covid-19-guidance-on-funerals-15-june-2020.pdf>

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Israel

House of Commons Oral Answer

Global Britain

Crispin Blunt (Conservative): ... In two weeks' time, our ally Israel will annex elements of the Occupied Palestinian Territories. That will be a grave breach of international law. Surely we must try to divert Israel from that prospect with real sanctions if it breaches international law? ...

The Prime Minister: Yes, I believe that what is proposed by Israel would amount to a breach of international law. We have strongly objected. We believe profoundly in a two-state solution and we will continue to make that case.

<https://hansard.parliament.uk/commons/2020-06-16/debates/20061637000001/GlobalBritain#contribution-F5658762-2DD9-44B7-8245-FBEF0E51ADD9>

House of Commons Written Answers

The following four questions all received the same answer

Imports: Israel

James Murray (Labour Co-op) [56189] To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, how many requests for information have been raised by HM Revenue and Customs with the Israeli Customs Authorities to establish whether consignments have been imported from (a) Israel and (b) Israeli settlements under the technical arrangements of the EU-Israel Association Agreement, in each of the last three years.

James Murray (Labour Co-op) [56190] To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, how many consignments of agricultural produce imported from Israel and claiming preference under the EU-Israel Association Agreement have been checked by HM Revenue and Customs to ensure they did not originate in settlements in the Occupied Palestinian Territories, in each of the last three years.

James Murray (Labour Co-op) [56191] To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what documentary information is required under the technical arrangements of the EU-Israel Association Agreement for goods entering the UK from Israel to enable differentiation between goods produced within Israel's internationally recognised borders and Israeli settlements in the Occupied Palestinian Territories.

James Murray (Labour Co-op) [56194] To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, with reference to the import of (a) fresh fruit, (b) vegetables and (c) dairy products from Israel, what checks are made by HMRC to ensure that the place of origin given on the certificate of marketing standards is consistent with the post codes given on the relevant invoice/EUR1.

Jesse Norman: Under the technical arrangement of the EU-Israel Association Agreement a proof of preferential origin document is required that must contain the

postal code and the name of the city, village or industrial zone in which the goods were produced. Where HMRC's risk assessment indicates that the goods may have been produced in non-eligible locations, HMRC perform physical examinations of goods or check proof documents. HMRC refuse preference where the goods cannot be shown to be produced in an eligible location. HMRC can also request that the Israeli Customs Authorities verify the accuracy of the information provided on the proof of preferential origin document.

HMRC raised verification requests with the Israeli Customs Authorities to confirm that claims to preferential tariff treatment were made in compliance with the EU-Israel Association Agreement and the technical arrangement on:

- 17 occasions in 2017
- 10 occasions in 2018, and
- 7 occasions in 2019.

The number of agricultural consignments imported from Israel claiming preferential tariff treatment under the EU-Israel Association Agreement and checked by HMRC was:

- 52 in 2017
- 70 in 2018, and
- 29 in 2019

In accordance with the terms of EU-Israel Association Agreement and the technical arrangement, when confirming eligibility to preferential treatment, HMRC should only verify the details on the preferential proof of origin. A certificate of marketing standards is not a preferential proof of origin.

<https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Commons/2020-06-08/56189/>

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<https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Commons/2020-06-08/56190/>

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<https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Commons/2020-06-08/56191/>

and

<https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Commons/2020-06-08/56194/>

Occupied Territories: Coronavirus

Alex Cunningham (Labour) [57196] To ask the Secretary of State for International Development, what recent assessment her Department has made of the effect of Israel's blockade on Gaza's capacity to respond to the covid-19 pandemic.

James Cleverly: The UN assesses that although the current number of detected cases remains relatively low in Gaza and the West Bank, the capacity of the Palestinian health system to cope with an increase in COVID-19 cases is poor, including the low availability of PPE and ventilators. The situation is particularly severe in Gaza, where the health system has shortages in specialised staff, drugs and equipment.

The UK remains deeply concerned about the restrictions on movement and access that affect Gaza. The restrictions impact infrastructure development, the delivery of vital humanitarian services and limit the professional development of health and humanitarian workers.

During this global crisis, cooperation is vital. The cooperation between the Government of Israel and the Palestinian Authority towards tackling COVID-19, as well as the important part played by the United Nations, was a very welcomed

response. The British Embassy in Tel Aviv and the British Consulate-General in Jerusalem are in regular contact with the Israeli and Palestinian authorities respectively. We encourage UN agencies, the PA and the Israeli Government to work together to ensure that essential medical supplies and staff are able to access Gaza.

DFID is providing £1.3 million (2018-21) to support the UN's Access Coordination Unit (ACU), which works to ensure humanitarian access to Gaza for UN and NGO workers. The ACU has played an important role in facilitating movement of humanitarian personnel and goods during the COVID-19 crisis.

<https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Commons/2020-06-09/57196/>

Jerusalem: Evictions

Barbara Keeley (Labour) [55926] To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, what discussions he has had with the Israeli Government on the eviction of Palestinian families from their homes in East Jerusalem; and if he will make a statement.

James Cleverly: The UK is concerned by the continued demolition of Palestinian property by Israeli authorities. In all but the most exceptional of circumstances demolitions by an occupying power are contrary to International Humanitarian Law. The practice causes unnecessary suffering to ordinary Palestinians and is harmful to the peace process. We instead urge Israel to provide a clear, transparent route to construction for Palestinians in Area C.

<https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Commons/2020-06-08/55926/>

House of Lords Written Answer

Occupied Territories: Coronavirus

Baroness Deech (Crossbench) [HL4953] To ask Her Majesty's Government what steps they are taking to ensure that any financial support they provide to assist the response to the COVID-19 pandemic in Gaza and the West Bank is spent as intended.

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: The UK has pledged £764 million to support the global humanitarian response to COVID-19. We have delivered additional vital support in the Occupied Palestinian Territories by providing £840,000 to 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.

All UK funding to the OPTs is subject to robust controls against fraud and the diversion of aid, and DFID's funding agreements also commit partners to understand and comply with UK and international counter terrorism legislation. We maintain regular dialogue with all implementing partners to ensure UK funding is spent as intended.

<https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Lords/2020-06-02/HL4953/>

UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights

Ends General Debate on the Human Rights Situation in Palestine and Other Occupied Arab Territories

... Speakers said statements made in this chamber that focused on Israel as the sole

antagonistic party in the conflict demonstrated the Human Rights Council's bias against Israel. The Council never seemed to miss an opportunity to obsessively attack the nation State of the Jewish people. The biased agenda item under discussion, which was anti-Jewish by nature, was partly the reason why the United Nations faced a credibility problem. The United Nations General Assembly resolution on Zionism cited by Iran was a canard that had been rightfully rescinded. If this Council truly cared about the occupation of Arab territories, why had it failed to adopt a single resolution on Turkey's occupation of parts of Syria, speakers asked. Other speakers welcomed the long-awaited release this session of the report on the database of businesses contributing to illegal Israeli settlements, despite geopolitical pressure seeking to prevent this. The database encouraged companies to comply with their human rights responsibilities by ending their contribution to rights abuses. It had already had an impact on the ground: several companies contacted by the High Commissioner's Office had responded by ceasing their settlement activities. Some speakers denounced the de facto annexation, colonization and exploitation of Palestinian resources, which sometimes relied on corporate complicity. Annexation was entrenched in Israeli apartheid, which must be dismantled. ...

To read the full press release see

<https://www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=25963&LangID=E>

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Other Relevant Information

UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights

Human Rights Council holds debate on the Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action and starts debate on racism and racial discrimination

... Speakers welcomed the progress achieved thanks to the implementation of the Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action but expressed concerns about the rise of nationalism and racism ... speakers urged the Council to redouble its efforts to counter the "hate pandemic," noting that some States had cracked down against human rights defenders and sowed hate speech under the guise of responding to the emergency. ... Speakers expressed concern about the increasing levels of racist violence around the world. The twentieth anniversary of the adoption of the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action should be an opportunity to strengthen the fight to combat racism and hate speech. The socio-economic consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic were having disproportionate effects on persons already suffering from structural racism. Unlike COVID-19, however, racial discrimination, xenophobia and hatred were human made messages. As a result, responses to COVID-19 must not perpetuate discrimination and prejudice, despite the growing climate of racism and violence. Speakers cited the recent global Black Lives Matter protests as a sign that people all over the world wanted their governments to strengthen their commitment to equal societies and their fight against racism, xenophobia and related discrimination.

To read the full press release see

<https://www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=25963&LangID=E>

Combating intolerance, negative stereotyping, stigmatization, discrimination, incitement to violence and violence against persons, based on religion or belief

<https://undocs.org/en/a/hrc/43/72>

Note by the Secretariat on Report of the Intergovernmental Working Group on the Effective Implementation of the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action on its seventeenth session

<https://undocs.org/en/a/hrc/43/73>

Addendum to the Report of the Intergovernmental Working Group on the Effective Implementation of the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action on its seventeenth session entitled Preliminary exchange of views on the preparations of the twentieth anniversary of the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action

<https://undocs.org/en/a/hrc/43/73/Add.1>

Resolution adopted by the Human Rights Council on 22 March 2019 on Combating intolerance, negative stereotyping and stigmatization of, and discrimination, incitement to violence and violence against, persons based on religion or belief

<https://undocs.org/en/a/hrc/res/40/25>

Human Rights Council concludes general debate on racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance

... Speakers said the world was still witnessing a disturbing wave of hate speech that had an adverse effect on the enjoyment of human rights and fundamental freedoms. The racist events that had taken place, including those targeting peaceful protesters, were concerning...

The rise of racial discrimination, Islamophobia, xenophobia, ethnic hatred and intolerance ran in congruence with the rise of “infodemics,” hate speech and malignant disinformation, speakers said. They noted the important role played by multilateral institutions to prevent the trivialization of hate speech. The resurgence of anti-Semitic stereotypes in the wake of the COVID-19 outbreak was concerning, and a joint effort was necessary to eradicate it; it should be at the forefront of any human rights struggle. Expressing their adherence to the slogan “Black Lives Matter”, some speakers demanded justice for the black population. Others expressed concern about the rise of hate speech and manipulation carried out by media outlets to target certain groups. ... Several delegations denounced discrimination based on religion and warned against the rise of populism. ...

To read the full press release see

<https://www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=25964&LangID=E>

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