



Political Affairs Digest

A daily summary of political events affecting the Jewish Community

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Religious Buildings: Coronavirus

Stuart Anderson (Conservative) [59249] To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what (a) guidance and (b) financial support is available to help places of worship safely resume their activities after the covid-19 situation.

Luke Hall: We have published guidance for the safe use of places of worship during the pandemic. This includes guidance to assist places of worship to prepare to reopen for individual prayer from 13 June in a manner that is safe and in line with social distancing guidelines.

We will continue to review when it might be safe to ease other restrictions on places of worship, including for communal prayer. This is subject to the five tests for easing measures and further detailed scientific advice. We expect that places of worship will not be permitted to open for communal prayer until 4 July at the earliest.

MHCLG continues to play a facilitative role in ensuring Government understands how it can support faith groups to respond to the pressures they face during this period and throughout the Government's recovery strategy.

There are a range of Government-backed financial support measures that places of worship can access.

The Coronavirus Business Interruption Loan Scheme and the Coronavirus Large Business Interruption Scheme are both available to registered charities, and therefore places of worship registered with the Charities Commission. Any organisation, including a place of worship, that is unable to pay any HMRC bill due to COVID-19 should contact the HMRC Coronavirus helpline. If charities or places of worship are VAT registered, they are also able to use the VAT deferral scheme. The Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme provides support for any entity with a UK payroll - small or large, charitable or non-profit - to be reimbursed 80 per cent of furloughed worker wages by HMRC, up to a cap of £2,500 per month.

However, we know that some charities cannot furlough staff as they are contributing to the frontline response. There is a substantial package of targeted support for

charities on the frontline of responding to COVID-19. Further details can be found here:

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/financial-support-for-voluntary-community-and-social-enterprise-vcse-organisations-to-respond-to-coronavirus-covid-19#further-financial-support>.

<https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Commons/2020-06-12/59249/>

The guidance referred to above can be read at

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-guidance-for-the-safe-use-of-places-of-worship-during-the-pandemic/covid-19-guidance-for-the-safe-use-of-places-of-worship-during-the-pandemic>

Religious Buildings: Coronavirus

Afzal Khan (Labour) [59883] To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, pursuant to his Answer of 9 June 2020 to Question 55024 on Religious Buildings: Coronavirus, for what reason his Department has no plans to engage with the Muslim Council of Britain.

Luke Hall: Our engagement on the issue of reopening places of worship has been broad and has drawn on the expertise of all the key faiths including a broad spectrum of Muslim voices. The decision on who Government engages with is based on a number of factors and the decisions are regularly reviewed on a case by case basis.

<https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Commons/2020-06-16/59883/>

The answer referred to above can be read at

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

House of Lords Written Answers

Racial Hatred: Primary Education

Lord Taylor of Warwick (Non-affiliated) [HL5423] To ask Her Majesty's Government what plans they have, if any, to ensure that primary school children in England are taught about racism.

Baroness Berridge: We want to support all young people to be happy, healthy and safe. We also want to equip them for adult life and to make a positive contribution to society. That is why from September 2020, we are making relationships education compulsory for primary school-age pupils, relationships and sex education compulsory for secondary school-age pupils, and health education compulsory for pupils in all state-funded schools.

The statutory guidance sets out that as part of relationships education, all primary-aged pupils will be taught the importance of respecting others, even when they are very different from them, or make different choices or have different preferences or beliefs. Pupils will also be taught what a stereotype is, and how stereotypes can be unfair, negative or destructive.

Schools can also teach about racism in personal, social, health and economic education and citizenship education where pupils can develop their understanding of the diverse national, regional, religious and ethnic identities in the United Kingdom and the need for mutual respect and understanding. There is also flexibility within the history curriculum for teachers to teach about Black history across the spectrum of themes and eras.

Schools are required to actively promote fundamental British values, including democracy as well as the rule of law, individual liberty, mutual respect and tolerance of those of different faith and beliefs.

<https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Lords/2020-06-08/HL5423/>

Police: Israel

Baroness Tonge (Non-affiliated) [HL5435] To ask Her Majesty's Government what training British police officers have received from the Israeli police force in (1) the UK, or (2) Israel, in the last 12 months.

Baroness Williams of Trafford: We are not aware of any British police officers having received training from the Israeli police force, nor the IDF, in the UK or Israel in the last 12 months

<https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Lords/2020-06-08/HL5435/>

Prayer: Islam

Lord Pearson of Rannoch (Non-affiliated) [HL5470] To ask Her Majesty's Government which local authorities have authorised the broadcasting by loudspeaker of the Muslim call to prayer; and what assessment have they made of the effect of such broadcasts on community cohesion.

Lord Greenhalgh: We understand that some Mosques across the country have been given permission to broadcast the call to prayer, particularly during Ramadan, due to the closure of all Places of Worship during the Covid-19 pandemic. Places of Worship play an important role in spiritual and mental health for many, and in bringing our communities together, which is why we want to reopen them as soon as we can. Local councils understand best the needs of their communities and it is a matter for them to work with their local community. We will continue to engage with stakeholders on matters relating to integration, and the Government remains committed to building strong integrated communities.

<https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Lords/2020-06-09/HL5470/>

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See also the House of Lords written answer "Police: Israel" included in the Home Affairs section above.

House of Commons Written Answers

Imports: Israel

James Murray (Labour Co-op) [56193] To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, with reference to the import of (a) fresh fruit, (b) vegetables and (c) dairy products, from Israel, whether HMRC accepts Israeli certificates of conformity with marketing standards (i) where the place of origin is within the internationally recognised borders of Israel and (ii) where goods originate from settlements in the Occupied Palestinian Territories.

Victoria Prentis: Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs take steps to exclude the possibility that goods of West Bank origin enter the United Kingdom incorrectly described as being Israeli. This is to prevent them benefitting from preferential

tariffs in accordance with the terms of EU-Israel Association Agreement and the technical arrangements which flow from this.

EU rules do not allow the authorities in any exporting third country (such as the State of Israel) to issue valid certificates of conformity with EU marketing standards for fruit and vegetables originating outside that third country. This includes territories under Israeli administration since June 1967, for example, the West Bank. The situation referred to by the hon. Member in respect of imports originating in Israeli settlements on the West Bank cannot, therefore, arise.

EU rules allow third countries to issue a certificate of conformity, confirming compliance with marketing standards. However, that does not mean that every import consignment will be accompanied by such a document. Importers can also apply for a certificate directly from an EU Member State's authority.

For dairy products, certificates of conformity with marketing standards are not required regardless of the origin of imports. The EU marketing standards legislation will form part of UK statute and will continue to apply in the UK after the transition period.

<https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Commons/2020-06-08/56193/>

Israeli Settlements: Companies

Ben Lake (Plaid Cymru) [60846] To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, pursuant to the Answer of 8 June 2020 to Question 55878 on Israeli Settlements: Companies, what assessment he has made of the applicability of United Nations Security Council Resolution 465 to those companies.

James Cleverly: The UK supports existing UN Security Council Resolutions (UNSCRs), including UNSCR 465, and will do so until an agreement is negotiated by the parties. Our position on settlements is clear: they are illegal under international law and damaging to renewed efforts to launch peace negotiations. As I made clear in my answer of 8 June 2020 (55878), ultimately it is the decision of an individual or company whether to operate in settlements in the Occupied Palestinian Territories. The British Government is clear that it neither encourages nor offers support to such activity.

<https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Commons/2020-06-17/60846/>

The answer referred to above can be read at

<https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Commons/2020-06-08/55878/>

The UN Security Council Resolution referred to above can be read at

https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/11767/files/S_RES_465%281980%29-EN.pdf

House of Lords Written Answer

Palestinians: Overseas Aid

Baroness Altmann (Conservative) [HL5340] To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the value for money of aid sent to the Palestinian Authority, following reports that it spends seven per cent of its budget, and up to 40 per cent of its foreign aid receipts, on payments to terrorists and their families.

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: No UK aid is used for payments to prisoners or their families or the so called Martyrs Fund. Our financial support to the Palestinian Authority health and education sectors goes into a dedicated bank account and is only paid to individual workers carefully vetted through the PEGASE mechanism

(Palestinian-European Socio-Economic Management Assistance Mechanism). Each payment is independently audited to ensure it has been received by the intended recipient.

As is standard practice for all DFID programmes, we assess value for money for the UK taxpayer annually through our review process. Last year UK aid enabled 26,000 young Palestinians in the West Bank to get an education, delivered 3,300 MMR vaccinations for children and enabled 111,000 medical consultations. This is an important contribution towards supporting a stable Palestinian Authority (PA) that can deliver essential services to Palestinians and act as an effective partner for peace with Israel.

<https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Lords/2020-06-08/HL5340/>

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Foreign Affairs

House of Commons Written Answer

Religious Freedom

Zarah Sultana (Labour) [59261] To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, what support his Department provides to projects (a) with and (b) for religious communities facing discrimination throughout the world.

Nigel Adams: Since 2018, the FCO has allocated more than £1 million for Freedom of Religion or Belief (FoRB) projects through the Magna Carta Fund for human rights. This included projects to combat intolerance and encourage respect among individuals of different faiths, beliefs and those of no belief. Following the Bishop of Truro's independent Review of FCO Support for Persecuted Christians, we also launched the John Bunyan Fund for FoRB, through which we funded 15 research projects that looked at the challenges facing different communities, including Christians, Yazidis and Humanists. John Bunyan Fund projects also looked at cross-cutting issues such as migration and the double vulnerability experienced by women from minority faith backgrounds. Programme funding allocations for financial year 2020-2021 are yet to be confirmed.

<https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Commons/2020-06-12/59261/>

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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

**** closes in 5 days**

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