



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 Oral Answers

Church Services: Covid-19

Cheryl Gillan (Conservative): When the Church Commissioners plan to reopen churches for services as the covid-19 lockdown restrictions are eased. [903754]

Felicity Buchan (Conservative): When the Church Commissioners plan to reopen churches for services as the covid-19 lockdown restrictions are eased. [903761]

Desmond Swayne (Conservative): What representations the Church Commissioners have made to the Government on enabling public worship to resume in churches. [903764]

John Lamont (Conservative): What the timeframe is for the resumption of church services as the covid-19 lockdown restrictions are eased. [903778]

Michael Fabricant (Conservative): When the Church Commissioners plan to reopen cathedrals and churches for worship; and if he will make a statement. [903779]

The Second Church Estates Commissioner (Andrew Selous): The last three months have been the first time in more than 800 years that England has gone without public worship and the sacraments, so there is real joy that we can meet again, socially distanced, from 4 July. I can give an assurance that the personal safety of clergy who are shielding should be prioritised and they can continue to do their duties remotely.

Cheryl Gillan: The self-sacrifice of so many people during the extreme lockdown period will have saved many lives, but one of the great sacrifices for many people will have been the inability to attend church physically and to have had to cancel weddings, baptisms and other deeply significant ceremonies. I understand my hon. Friend had to cancel his own daughter's wedding last Saturday, and I wish her and her fiancé all the best. Will he now confirm that their wedding, as well as many others, can now go ahead in safety in church with 30 guests, and when does he expect the number of guests to be increased to reflect the capacity of the church being used and the new 1 metre-plus rule?

Andrew Selous: ... weddings can now take place from 4 July, but only with a maximum of 30 people. This is a huge relief to many couples throughout the country. For church services, there is no maximum number within a place of worship as long as the premises comply with covid-secure guidelines. ...

Desmond Swayne: I used to enjoy a hymn sandwich before this interdict, but I have

broken the habit. How is my hon. Friend going to lure us back if we are not allowed to sing? May I suggest, as a minimum, shorter services, even shorter sermons, some comfortable words from the Book of Common Prayer and an end to prating prelates?

Andrew Selous: ... what I would say to my right hon. Friend is that I hope he has taken part in some of the uplifting online worship and services that have been available to him during the lockdown, and I would add that the warmth of the welcome, the opportunity for fellowship and the chance to grow in faith through prayer, worship and the revelation of God's word will prove an irresistible temptation to my right hon. Friend to return.

John Lamont: I very much welcome that services can resume in places of worship in England and that private prayer is allowed in other nations of the United Kingdom, but what discussions have there been with Churches to ensure that people are encouraged to go back to church and are reassured that it is safe to do so?

Andrew Selous: The Church is delighted to be able to throw open its doors again, so that we can gather again for public worship and weddings in the way that we have not been able to do over the past three months. We will make sure that people are safe. I know that clergy and church wardens are taking their responsibilities very seriously to make sure that people are safe when they come, and we are really looking forward to seeing them back again in all our churches. ...

Michael Fabricant: ... Lichfield has a great choral tradition; we have a choral school and the services are very good. It is open for two hours a day at the moment for private prayer, but when does my hon. Friend anticipate that we will be able to go to evensong and enjoy the wonderful choir that sings there?

Andrew Selous: My hon. Friend is absolutely right. Cathedrals such as Lichfield are at the centre of the amazing choral tradition that we have in this country. Sadly, I have to tell him that singing and chanting are not allowed even at a distance, due to the additional risk of infection, and woodwind and brass instruments should not be used, but that still leaves many other instruments. His constituents can return for public worship from 4 July and I know that Lichfield Cathedral will be making them very welcome when they return.

<https://hansard.parliament.uk/commons/2020-06-25/debates/3B0065C6-9923-47C0-A881-D959CC8338A1/ChurchServicesCovid-19>

House of Commons Written Answers

The following six questions all received the same answer

Marriage: Coronavirus

Bob Seely (Conservative) [61591] To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, for what reason (a) weddings and (b) weddings with the minimum number of five people are not being allowed to be conducted during the current stage of the easing of the covid-19 lockdown restrictions.

Diana Johnson (Labour) [62348] To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, pursuant to Answer of 2 June 2020 to Question 48959, when the Government plans to lift covid-19 restrictions to allow small, socially distant weddings to take place.

Theresa Villiers (Conservative) [62338] To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, if he will set a date when marriages can resume as the covid-19 restrictions are eased.

Charlotte Nichols (Labour) [62661] To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, what plans he has to lift the marriage ban in England.

Steve McCabe (Labour) [62286] To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, pursuant to the Answer of 8 June 2020 to Question 54003, when he plans to review the restrictions imposed as a result of the covid-19 outbreak on weddings taking place to allow for small weddings to take place with social distancing.

Marriage and Civil Partnerships: Coronavirus

John Spellar (Labour) [62287] To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, when he plans to allow weddings and civil partnership ceremonies to recommence.

Penny Mordaunt: The Government understands the huge significance of weddings. We recognise that because weddings have not been able to take place in recent months this has caused difficulty and distress for many people. As set out in the Government's COVID-19 recovery strategy, published in May, the Government has been examining how to enable people to gather in slightly larger groups better to facilitate small weddings. We have worked closely with faith leaders and local government on how best to achieve this. The Prime Minister announced on 23 June that wedding and civil partnership ceremonies will be able to take place in England from 4 July. People should avoid having a large ceremony, and should invite no more than thirty family and friends. Venues should ensure they are COVID-19 secure.

<https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Commons/2020-06-18/61591/>

and

<https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Commons/2020-06-22/62348/>

and

<https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Commons/2020-06-22/62338/>

and

<https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Commons/2020-06-22/62661/>

and

<https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Commons/2020-06-22/62286/>

and

<https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Commons/2020-06-22/62287/>

The answers referred to above can be read at

<https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Commons/2020-05-19/48959/>

and

<https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Commons/2020-06-03/54003/>

The recovery strategy referred to above can be read at

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/our-plan-to-rebuild-the-uk-governments-covid-19-recovery-strategy/our-plan-to-rebuild-the-uk-governments-covid-19-recovery-strategy>

The announcement referred to above can be read at

<https://hansard.parliament.uk/commons/2020-06-23/debates/7E464B41-46ED-4FA9-BAFD-28EC7B3DA230/Covid-19Update>

Schools: Bullying

Layla Moran (Liberal Democrat) [62572] To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what assessment he has made of the effectiveness of the KiVa anti-bullying programme on tackling (a) bullying and (b) racist bullying.

Reply from Vicky ford: We have not made an assessment of the KiVa anti-bullying programme. All schools are legally required to have a behaviour policy with measures to prevent all forms of bullying. They also have the freedom to develop their own anti-bullying strategies and monitoring approaches to best suit their

environment.

Our Preventing and Tackling Bullying guidance sets out that schools should develop a consistent approach to monitoring bullying incidents and evaluating the effectiveness of their approaches. It also directs schools to organisations who can provide support with tackling bullying related to race, religion and nationality. The guidance is available here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/preventing-and-tackling-bullying>.

On 7 June, we announced more than £750,000 for the Diana Award, the Anti-Bullying Alliance and the Anne Frank Trust – to help hundreds of schools and colleges build relationships between pupils, boost their resilience, and continue to tackle bullying both in person and online. More information is available here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/extra-mental-health-support-for-pupils-and-teachers>.

The department has also made resources available through the Educate Against Hate website. This website provides teachers, school leaders and parents with the information, guidance and support they need to challenge radical views, including racist and discriminatory beliefs, and is available here:

<https://educateagainsthate.com/>.

<https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Commons/2020-06-22/62572/>

Information about the KiVa programme referred to above can be read at

<http://www.kivaprogram.net/>

House of Lords Oral Answers

Covid-19: Wedding Venues

Lord Farmer (Conservative): To ask Her Majesty's Government when weddings will be able to take place in venues which enable social distancing and comply with other COVID-19 precautions.

The Minister of State, Cabinet Office (Lord True): My Lords, I am sure my noble friend would welcome that, following the Prime Minister's Statement yesterday, from 4 July, wedding ceremonies and civil partnership ceremonies will be able to take place in England. Venues should ensure that they are Covid-19 secure, with clear social distancing in place. People should still avoid having a large ceremony and should invite no more than 30 close family members and friends.

Lord Farmer: My Lords, I do indeed welcome the announcement that my noble friend refers to. The Government are supporting commitment by lifting the ban on weddings, but marriages also need supporting. The Government were unable to express their commitment to do that in the Divorce, Dissolution and Separation Bill, but will not bring that Bill, when enacted, into force until autumn 2021. What commitment will my noble friend make that this Government will have enhanced support in place for marriages under strain by the time no-fault divorce is available?

Lord True: Well, my Lords, my noble friend has gone a bit wider than the Question before the House, but I can assure him that the Government are committed to supporting marriage. As the Lord Chancellor said in another place, the Government will work hard to co-ordinate and bring together the strands of policy of various departments and ensure we have a suitable family policy that is fit for the 2020s.

The Lord Bishop of Newcastle: My Lords, it is with great delight that we received news yesterday that weddings will once again be permitted. This will be an enormous joy to many couples and families all across England. As the Minister will know, hymns are most often a focal point of a wedding service. Given yesterday's announcement about live

performances, can he give us any more detailed guidance about singing in churches, both choral and congregational?

Lord True: My Lords, I very much understand the point that the right reverend Prelate makes, but the scientific advice at the moment—not only in relation to churches, I may say—is that singing generally, because of its impact, carries the risk of spreading Covid, so it should be avoided in all public spaces. ...

Lord Low of Dalston (Crossbench): My Lords, once weddings resume, there will no doubt be a huge backlog of demand for registrars that could easily stretch through to the end of next year. One way the Government should seek to ease that demand is by extending legal recognition to humanist marriages, which would mean that couples who want a humanist wedding would not also have to have a civil ceremony to gain legal recognition. Humanist marriages are already legally recognised in Scotland, Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland. Will the Government commit to acting now to bring about similar recognition here?

Lord True: No, my Lords. The current rules on marriage are set in primary legislation. This has not been changed and the Government have no plans to change it. ...

Baroness Altmann (Conservative): ... Do the Government have any plans to ensure that registration of marriages, which must be 28 days before the wedding, covers those who already have weddings booked, or might they be able to introduce emergency measures to make sure that those who have weddings already booked do not find they cannot proceed due to the difficulty in catching up on registrations of the marriage?

Lord True: My Lords, my noble friend raises an important practical point. The 28-day waiting period before weddings is set in primary legislation and has not changed, but if there are exceptional circumstances in which it is believed that the waiting period should be shortened, upon giving notice one can ask for consideration from the Registrar-General to do so. The impact of Covid-19 is identified as an exceptional circumstance, but each application will have to be considered as an individual situation. ...

<https://hansard.parliament.uk/lords/2020-06-24/debates/52AD00CB-3216-4AFF-8C23-0CEE3EB7F7AC/Covid-19WeddingVenues>

The announcement referred to above can be read at

<https://hansard.parliament.uk/commons/2020-06-23/debates/7E464B41-46ED-4FA9-BAFD-28EC7B3DA230/Covid-19Update>

Scottish Parliament Written Answers

Hate Crime and Public Order (Scotland) Bill

S5W-29826 James Kelly (Labour): To ask the Scottish Government, other than that set out in the findings of the Independent Review of Hate Crime Legislation in Scotland in 2018 and the responses to the 2019 hate crime consultation, what evidence it has to support the expansion of the "stirring up hatred" offences in the Hate Crime and Public Order (Scotland) Bill to cover all protected characteristics and not just race, and whether it will place a copy of this in the Scottish Parliament Information Centre (SPICe).

Humza Yousaf: The published policy memorandum which accompanies the Hate Crime and Public Order (Scotland) Bill details the Scottish Government's reasoning for the proposed expansion of the "stirring up hatred" offences to cover all the listed characteristics covered by the Bill and the evidence which was taken into account to inform this decision.

This includes the responses to the 2019 consultation on amending Scottish hate crime legislation and the published findings of Lord Bracadale's Independent

Review of Hate Crime Legislation in Scotland, which was itself informed by a wide range of sources including independent expert advice, academic research and learning, and extensive consultation.

In considering which characteristics should be included in any extension of stirring up offences, Lord Bracadale noted that in 2007 and 2010 the then UK Government introduced stirring up hatred offences in England and Wales to cover religion and sexual orientation respectively.

In recommending that stirring up hatred offences should be introduced in respect of all characteristics covered by the Bill, Lord Bracadale recognised the distinct nature of stirring up hatred offences and the special capacity for harm that they may cause. Stirring up hatred can contribute to an atmosphere in which prejudice and discrimination are accepted as normal. It can result in entire communities feeling isolated, scared and vulnerable to attack. In the most serious cases, the effect can be that it directly encourages activity which threatens or endangers life. The Scottish Government considers it is vital, therefore, that the criminal law protects people from this type of offending behaviour.

The proposed expansion of the stirring up hatred offences are supported by a wide range of stakeholders including equality groups and a number of faith and belief organisations.

<https://www.parliament.scot/parliamentarybusiness/28877.aspx?SearchType=Advance&ReferenceNumbers=S5W-29826>

The findings of the Independent Review of Hate Crime Legislation in Scotland, referred to above, can be read at

<https://tinyurl.com/y8of8le6>

The Policy Memorandum referred to above can be read at

<https://beta.parliament.scot/-/media/files/legislation/bills/current-bills/hate-crime-and-public-order-scotland-bill/introduced/policy-memorandum-hate-crime-and-public-order-scotland-bill.pdf>

Additional information about the Hate Crime and Public Order (Scotland) Bill can be read at

<https://beta.parliament.scot/bills/hate-crime-and-public-order-scotland-bill>

Hate Crime and Public Order (Scotland) Bill

S5W-29827 James Kelly (Labour): To ask the Scottish Government, other than that set out in the findings of the Independent Review of Hate Crime Legislation in Scotland in 2018 and the responses to the 2019 hate crime consultation, what evidence it has to support the proposed extension of protected characteristics in the Hate Crime and Public Order (Scotland) Bill, and whether it will place a copy of this in the Scottish Parliament Information Centre (SPICe).

Humza Yousaf: The published policy memorandum which accompanies the Hate Crime and Public Order (Scotland) Bill details the Scottish Government's reasoning for the proposed extension of the characteristics protected by the Bill and the evidence which was taken into account to inform this decision.

This includes the responses to the 2019 consultation on amending Scottish hate crime legislation and the published findings of Lord Bracadale's Independent Review of Hate Crime Legislation in Scotland, which was itself informed by a wide range of sources including independent expert advice, academic research and learning, and extensive consultation.

In recommending the extension of characteristics protected in Scotland's hate crime legislative framework, Lord Bracadale highlighted why it is important that the criminal law is capable of dealing with hate crime in a way which is distinct from offending which does not have an element of prejudice related to identity.

Hate crime legislation helps recognise the particular impact and harm caused by hate crime, making it clear that such behaviour is not acceptable and that it will not

be tolerated. With these principles in mind the Hate Crime and Public Order (Scotland) Bill thus provides for the modernising, consolidating and extending of hate crime legislation in Scotland.

<https://www.parliament.scot/parliamentarybusiness/28877.aspx?SearchType=Advance&ReferenceNumbers=S5W-29827>

The findings of the Independent Review of Hate Crime Legislation in Scotland, referred to above, can be read at

<https://tinyurl.com/y8of8le6>

The Policy Memorandum referred to above can be read at

<https://beta.parliament.scot/-/media/files/legislation/bills/current-bills/hate-crime-and-public-order-scotland-bill/introduced/policy-memorandum-hate-crime-and-public-order-scotland-bill.pdf>

Additional information about the Hate Crime and Public Order (Scotland) Bill can be read at

<https://beta.parliament.scot/bills/hate-crime-and-public-order-scotland-bill>

Scottish Government

Coronavirus (COVID-19): updated guidance for funeral directors

<https://www.gov.scot/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-guidance-for-funeral-directors/>

TOP

Israel

House of Commons Written Answers

Israel: Palestinians

Matthew Offord (Conservative) [60746] To ask the Secretary of State for International Development, pursuant to the Answer of 11 June 2020 to Question 54900 on Israel: Palestinians, which other suppliers submitted proposals for that project at the design phase.

James Cleverly: No other suppliers submitted proposals for our people to people programme. DFID has a range of procurement options available when developing programmes. One of these is to award an Accountable Grant to a not-for-profit organisation, which is a non-competitive process. While many organisations are clearly performing excellent work in different fields of people to people work, Search for Common Ground (SFCG) approached DFID and proposed a comprehensive programme based on international best-practice. Based on our research, we judged that the SFCG proposal was the best fit for the outcomes that we wished to pursue, and therefore awarded SFCG an accountable grant to take the project forward.

Having SFCG as the sole implementer also offered a cost-effective approach to managing the unique risks associated with the delivery of the people to people programme in the Occupied Palestinian Territories. SFCG delivered some activities directly and worked through partners in areas requiring specialist expertise.

<https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Commons/2020-06-17/60746/>

The answer referred to above can be read at

<https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Commons/2020-06-04/54900/>

The following four questions all received the same answer

Occupied Territories: Humanitarian Aid

Andrew Percy (Conservative) [60732] To ask the Secretary of State for International Development, what assessment she has made of the implications for her policies of recent reports by NGO Monitor that UK aid dispensed by the UN Office for the Co-ordination of Humanitarian Affairs to support coronavirus relief efforts in the West Bank and Gaza has been sent to organisations with links to terrorism.

Occupied Territories: Overseas Aid

Andrew Percy (Conservative) [60733] To ask the Secretary of State for International Development, what discussions she has had with her international counterparts on reports by NGO Monitor that funds from the Covid-19 emergency response plan for the West Bank and Gaza have been allocated to NGOs with ties to the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine.

Andrew Percy (Conservative) [60734] To ask the Secretary of State for International Development, what assessment she has made of the implications for value for money of reports by NGO Monitor that UK aid distributed by the UN Office for the Co-ordination of Humanitarian Affairs to support covid-19 relief efforts in the West Bank and Gaza has been allocated to organisations involved in political activism for the purpose of funding politically motivated letters and press releases.

Andrew Percy (Conservative) [60735] To ask the Secretary of State for International Development, what assessment she has made of the implications for the efficacy of UK aid of reports by NGO Monitor that the UN Office for the Co-ordination of Humanitarian Affairs has distributed funds for Covid-19 relief efforts to organisations that employ members of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine.

James Cleverly: The UK maintains robust measures to ensure that UK aid is not diverted. DFID's funding agreements also commit partners to understand and comply with UK and international counter terrorism legislation. No UK funds have been provided to the UN Office for the Co-ordination of Humanitarian Affairs for COVID-19 relief efforts in the Occupied Palestinian Territories (OPTs). The UK has provided £840,000 to WHO and UNICEF to help respond to COVID-19 in the OPTs. This funding did not go to any other partners and was used 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.

<https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Commons/2020-06-17/60732/>

and

<https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Commons/2020-06-17/60733/>

and

<https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Commons/2020-06-17/60734/>

and

<https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Commons/2020-06-17/60735/>

House of Lords Written Answers

Trade Agreements: Israeli Settlements

Baroness Tonge (Non-affiliated) [HL5731] To ask Her Majesty's Government what steps they are taking to ensure that their trade agreements will not be made with businesses which (1) exist within, or (2) support, any Israeli settlement considered to be illegal under international law.

Lord Grimstone of Boscobel: The United Kingdom does not recognise the Occupied Palestinian Territories, including settlements, as part of Israel. For this reason, goods originating from settlements in the Occupied Palestinian Territories are not covered by the United Kingdom-Israel Trade and Partnership Agreement, which enters into force at the end of the Transition Period.

<https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Lords/2020-06-15/HL5731/>

UNRWA: Expenditure

Baroness Tonge (Non-affiliated) [HL5728] To ask Her Majesty's Government what contribution they have made to the budget of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East in (1) 2017, (2) 2018, (3) 2019, and (4) 2020.

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: The UK is a long-term supporter of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA). Last year UK funding to UNRWA, helped UNRWA provide education to around half a million children (half of whom are girls), health services for around 3.5 million Palestinian refugees, and social safety net assistance for around 255,000 of the most vulnerable.

DFID's funding contribution to UNRWA 2017-2019 is as follows: £51.1m in 2017, £65.5m in 2018, £65.5m in 2019. We will announce our plans for 2020 in due course.

<https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Lords/2020-06-15/HL5728/>

Gaza: New Businesses

Baroness Tonge (Non-affiliated) [HL5729] To ask Her Majesty's Government what action they are taking to encourage new technological enterprises in Gaza.

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: The UK is more than tripling spend on Economic Development programming in the Occupied Palestinian Territories (OPTs) and we will provide £58 million between 2018 – 2023. This includes helping improve water and energy supply, particularly in Gaza, and addressing movement and access restrictions that currently inhibit trade. By focussing on these issues, we aim to improve daily life and opportunities for thousands of Palestinians.

The FCO and British Council also provide funding to the OPT's to support our commitment to educating tomorrow's academics, scientists, innovators and entrepreneurs, including in digital skills. The Chevening scholarship programme and Higher Education Scholarships for Palestinians (HESPAL) provide support to Palestinians to access the best of UK university education and expertise. The @Palestine project is working to develop the English skills of Palestinian youth to enable them to engage in the global digital economy.

<https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Lords/2020-06-15/HL5729/>

UN Officer of the High Commissioner for Human Rights

Statement of the Special Rapporteur on the Human Rights Situation in the Palestinian Territory Occupied since 1967 on the role of the EU with regards to the looming Israeli annexation of parts of the Palestinian West Bank

I urge the European Union and its member states to recognize, and act upon, the rising exigency to address the deteriorating human rights, humanitarian and political situation in the Occupied Palestinian Territory. The Israeli occupation continues to deepen. The number of announced new Israeli settlement units has risen dramatically. Gaza remains besieged and beleaguered. The new Israeli government plans to move ahead with the

annexation proposals in the American plan of January 2020. And the possibilities of a genuine Palestinian state emerging from this trajectory are fading to black. In the face of all of this, the international community is badly in need of decisive leadership to pull this situation back from the abyss and to re-set its course.

Among the major international players, it is the European Union which has the greatest potential to right the ship. The EU possesses the economic weight, the diplomatic expertise, the political authority, the respect of the parties, and the aid, trade and investment leverage to make a substantial and positive difference to the future of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

But, to do so, the EU must recognize that resolutions without resolve and criticism without consequences can no longer have a place in reaching the just and durable peace and human security that Palestinians and Israelis deserve. ...

In particular, there are four issues of particular concern regarding the 53-year-old Israeli occupation of Palestine that I urge the European Union to take decisive action on:

1. Annexation. ... What would be left of the West Bank after the annexation would be a Levantine Bantustan, an archipelago of territorial islands, completely surrounded and divided up by Israel and unconnected to the outside world. The plan would crystalize apartheid for the 21st century, it is divorced from international law and it would leave in its wake the demise of the Palestinians' right to self-determination. Annexation of territory by an occupying power is profoundly illegal under international law. ...

The European Union must clearly signal not just its declarative opposition to Israel's annexation of parts of the West Bank ... If Israel proceeds with any form of annexation, the EU should review and be willing to suspend or downgrade its array of trade and cooperation agreements ...

2. The Israeli Settlements. ... The Israeli settlements are deemed by the UN Security Council in Resolution 2334 to be a "flagrant violation of international law." They violate the *Fourth Geneva Convention*, and they are a presumptive war crime under the 1998 *Rome Statute*. The settlements are also a significant source of human rights violations and a serious obstacle to the Palestinians' right to self-determination.

International trade and investment involving the Israeli settlements provides them with the necessary economic oxygen to thrive and grow. Accordingly, the European Union should not permit Israeli settlement goods to enter into the EU market without a certificate of origin from the Palestinian Authority, replicating EU practice with respect to Crimea and northern Cyprus. Nor should it allow any EU registered companies or organizations to trade or invest in, donate to or financially assist, the settlements in any way.

As well, the EU should deepen its policy of differentiating between Israel and the settlements across the entire scope of EU-Israel relations ...

As part of its active opposition to the Israeli settlements, I also urge the EU to fully support a robust follow-up on the UN database on business activities in the Israeli settlements, which was released by the Human Rights Council in February 2020. ... As part of its evolving commitment towards corporate accountability domestically and abroad, the EU should support the assignment of sufficient resources to maintaining and updating the database as a living tool, as well as ensure that it accurately captures all meaningful business and economic activity that sustains the settlements.

3. The Gaza Blockade. ... The Israeli blockade on Gaza amounts to collective punishment, which is forbidden under Article 33 of the *Fourth Geneva Convention*. Numerous international voices have called for an end to the blockade, commensurate with Israel's security needs. In 2016, Ban Ki-moon, the then United Nations Secretary General, stated that: "The closure of Gaza suffocates its people, stifles its economy and impedes reconstruction efforts. It is a collective punishment for which there must be accountability."

Accordingly, I urge the EU to insist that Israel honour its obligations under international law and end the Gaza blockade, while taking the necessary steps to enhance Gaza's economy. ...

4. Destruction of Property, including EU-funded Humanitarian Aid. ... Israel's wrongful seizure and destruction of property is aimed at depriving communities adjacent to settlements and destined for annexation of essential relief. It also is designed to discourage the EU and its member states from protecting them from forcible transfer, as well as hinder humanitarian organizations in the delivery of aid in an effective and timely manner. ...

I urge the EU to condition its present and any future agreements with Israel on the complete halt to the destruction of such property. The European Union should also seek reparations if the humanitarian assistance it has provided has been adversely affected. Additionally, the EU should resort to instruments of retorsion to enforce the right of Palestinians to receive aid, and its right to provide such imperative relief.

Conclusion In the absence of any other influential international leadership on this issue, it is incumbent upon the European Union to not only insist upon Israel's strict adherence to international law, but to detail the political, diplomatic and economic consequences that it will implement should Israel proceed to defy world opinion. This is a moment of truth for the EU and the integrity of its foreign policy. ...

I also urge the EU to undertake the following:

- Take the lead in creating a working group among UN member states to develop a menu of counter-measures that would be employed should Israel's annexation plans materialize; and
- Remind all UN member states that they all bear legal duties through the fundamental principle of Third State Responsibility, as per the 2001 *Articles on State Responsibility*, Common Article 1 of the *Geneva Conventions* and Article 25 of the *Charter of the United Nations*. ...

... the European Union can prove that defying international law can only come at a significant cost to the perpetrator. This is the best hope, and perhaps the last hope for the foreseeable future, that justice can be salvaged, and peace may remain on the agenda.

To read the full transcript see

<https://www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=25991&LangID=e>

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>

Royal Assent

<https://hansard.parliament.uk/lords/2020-06-25/debates/965A3EFB-7FED-4A7B-A809-FD3C153F926B/RoyalAssent>

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

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

**** closes in 2 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>

TOP

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