



Political Affairs Digest

A daily summary of political events affecting the Jewish Community

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House of Commons Written Answer

Religious Buildings: Coronavirus

Edward Davey (Liberal Democrat) [61414] To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what assessment has he made of the economic effect of covid-19 on places of worship; and if he will make a statement.

Reply from Luke Hall: Faith communities have a long history of service supporting many of the most vulnerable members of our society. The rapid response during the current pandemic has been no different and I would like to reiterate how much the government values the work being done to support those in need. Responsibility for faith engagement is led by the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, who continue to play a facilitative role in ensuring Government understands the needs of faith communities and the challenges they may be currently facing due to the pandemic.

We are working closely with a range of faith and community groups, including the Places of Worship Taskforce to better understand how Government can support them to respond to the pressures they face on sustaining their organisations during this period of time.

The Government has announced a range of funds available to charities. Further information about what funding is available and how to apply 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>

<https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Commons/2020-06-18/61414/>

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House of Commons Written Answers

Palestinians: Politics and Government

John Hayes (Conservative) [61421] To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, what steps he is taking to (a) support and (b) promote the establishment of an independent Palestinian state.

James Cleverly: We are committed to the objective of an independent, sovereign and prosperous Palestinian state, living side by side with a safe and secure Israel. That is why we put such emphasis on strengthening Palestinian institutions and fostering sustainable economic growth. Economic progress can never be a substitute for a political settlement, but it is vital in the interim that Palestinians see tangible improvements in their daily lives. 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. We consistently call for an immediate end to all actions that undermine the viability of the two-state solution and are encouraging both sides to maintain calm and avoid taking actions which make peace more difficult to achieve.

<https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Commons/2020-06-18/61421/>

Palestinians: Christianity

John Hayes (Conservative) [61422] To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, what steps he is taking to help protect Palestinian Christians from aggression.

James Cleverly: Every Palestinian and Israeli has the right to live in peace and security. Our Embassy in Tel Aviv and Consulate-General in Jerusalem raise issues of religious freedom with the Israeli and Palestinian Governments. I also met with representatives of the Holy Land Coordination Group, Bishop Declan Lang and Bishop Christopher Chessun, on 22 June to discuss the situation in Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territories, and their work with the Christian community there.

<https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Commons/2020-06-18/61422/>

Jerusalem: Christianity

John Hayes (Conservative) [61423] To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, what steps he is taking to help ensure that Israel enables Christians from all nations to (a) visit and (b) have access to Holy sites in Jerusalem.

James Cleverly: The holy sites of Jerusalem hold particular significance for many groups around the globe, especially the three Abrahamic faiths of Christianity, Islam and Judaism. The UK is committed to working with all parties to maintain calm, avoid provocation and uphold the Status Quo in order to ensure the safety and security of the holy sites and all who worship and visit there, including Christians from all nations. We continue to urge the Israeli and Palestinian leadership to avoid actions that make it more difficult to achieve a negotiated solution to the conflict.

<https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Commons/2020-06-18/61423/>

Israeli Settlements

Patrick Grady (SNP) [62491] To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, if he will issue a response to EDM 464, Proposed Israeli annexation of part of the West Bank.

James Cleverly: As we made clear at the UN Security Council remote meeting on the Middle East Peace Process on 24 June, 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 Foreign Secretary reiterated this message in his introductory calls with Israeli Deputy Prime Minister Gantz on 20 May and Israeli Foreign Minister Ashkenazi on 2 June. 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. We continue to urge Israel not to take these steps.

<https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Commons/2020-06-22/62491/>

The EDM referred to above can be read at

<https://edm.parliament.uk/early-day-motion/56954/proposed-israeli-annexation-of-part-of-the-west-bank>

The UK speech to the Security Council meeting referred to above can be read at

<https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/urging-a-negotiated-two-state-solution-between-israelis-and-palestinians>

Foreign and Commonwealth Office

Urging a negotiated two-state solution between Israelis and Palestinians: Statement by the Rt Hon James Cleverly MP at the Security Council briefing on the Middle East Peace Process

... Like many, I am troubled and frustrated by the lack of progress towards a two-state solution.

In 1947, at the end of the British Mandate over Palestine, the General Assembly confirmed the international community's view of the need for partition into two states.

In 1993, the Palestine Liberation Organisation recognised Israel and accepted the 1967 lines as the basis for the future boundary between Israel and the Palestinian Territories.

It was a moment of great optimism.

It marked Palestinian agreement to the solution Israel itself had accepted in 1947, and confirmed the only solution that the world could see.

Despite moments of optimism, both parties have struggled to find the common ground needed for a lasting, peaceful settlement. ...

We have heard about settlement expansion, increases in demolitions, seizures, and worsening settler violence.

The UK has long urged Israel to end these counterproductive activities.

Meanwhile, Palestinian militants have fired rockets and launched incendiary devices from Gaza, threatening Israel's security.

Israelis have suffered from the scourge of terrorism and anti-Semitic incitement.

Let me be clear: the UK is committed to Israeli security. We condemn all forms of incitement and anti-Semitism wholeheartedly.

Most critically, Israel's plans to annex parts of the West Bank pose a significant and possibly existential threat to the peace process.

The UK has been clear, in this Council and beyond, that unilateral action is unacceptable. Annexation risks signalling Israeli rejection of the very solution Israel and the international community agreed in 1947.

As my Prime Minister said on 16 June, the UK strongly opposes annexation, which would breach international law. The United Kingdom will not recognise any unilateral attempt to change the border. Such a step would go against the rules-based international order and the UN Charter. Annexation could not go unanswered, and we implore Israel to reconsider. Such a step has the potential to trigger regional instability, threatening Israel's own security. It could have a real impact on Israel's relations with the region, as well as the international community.

And let us not forget the consequences for those most directly affected: the Palestinian people. We cannot predict the implications as a loss of hope. But we can say with some degree of certainty that it is the extremists who would benefit most. ...

We do not underestimate the challenges, but firmly believe that with bold leadership, peace is possible. ...

It is the only way to preserve Israel's Jewish, democratic identity and realise Palestinians' rights, including self-determination. And it is the only way to permanently bring an end to this conflict.

To read the full transcript see

<https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/urging-a-negotiated-two-state-solution-between-israelis-and-palestinians>

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Relevant Legislation ** new or updated today

UK Parliament

Assisted Dying Bill

<https://services.parliament.uk/Bills/2019-20/assisteddying.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

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 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