



Political Affairs Digest

A daily summary of political events affecting the Jewish Community

Contents

Home Affairs

Israel

Foreign Affairs

Other Relevant Information

Relevant Legislation

Consultations

Home Affairs

House of Commons Written Answers

The following three questions all received the same answer

Places of Worship Security Funding Scheme

Claudia Webbe (Labour) [23611] To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many mosques have received funding from the Place of Worship Security Fund since its establishment.

Claudia Webbe (Labour) [23612] To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many mosques have unsuccessfully applied for funding from the Place of Worship Security Fund since its establishment.

Claudia Webbe (Labour) [23485] To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many mosques have applied unsuccessfully for funding from the Place of Worship Security Fund.

James Brokenshire: 431 applications have been made to the Places of Worship Security Funding Scheme since it began in 2016. In total, 109 applications were from Muslim communities. Of these, 49 applications were successful whilst 60 applications were unsuccessful.

<https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Commons/2020-03-02/23611/>

and

<https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Commons/2020-03-02/23612/>

and

<https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Commons/2020-03-02/23485/>

Information about the Places of Worship Security Funding Scheme, referred to above, can be read at

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/places-of-worship-security-funding-scheme>

Schools: Bullying

Afzal Khan (Labour) [61793] To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what guidance his Department provides to schools on handling (i) incidents and (ii) sustained cases of (a) racist, (b) xenophobic, (c) Islamophobic and (d) antisemitic bullying.

Vicky Ford: The government is clear that all bullying is unacceptable and should be tackled by schools. The department issues guidance to schools on how to prevent and respond to bullying as part of their statutory behaviour policy.

It sets out that bullying is behaviour by an individual or group, repeated over time, that intentionally hurts another individual or group either physically or emotionally. The guidance is clear that some types of harassing or threatening behaviour – or communications – could be a criminal offence. It sets out that if school staff feel that, during an incident, an offence may have been committed they should seek assistance from the police.

The guidance 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. This is 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. The website is available here:

<https://educateagainsthate.com/>.

In November 2018 we published Respectful School Communities, a self-review and signposting tool to support schools to develop a whole-school approach which promotes respect and discipline. This can combat bullying, harassment and prejudice of any kind and is available here:

<https://educateagainsthate.com/school-leaders/?filter=guidance-and-training-school-leaders>.

From September 2020, relationships education will be compulsory for all primary aged pupils, relationships and sex education will be compulsory for all secondary aged pupils and health education will be compulsory in all state-funded schools in England. Under the content for respectful relationships, the guidance sets out that pupils should know about the different types of bullying, the impact it has, the responsibility of bystanders and how to get help, and it is available here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/relationships-education-relationships-and-sex-education-rse-and-health-education/>.

<https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Commons/2020-06-19/61793/>

Racial Discrimination: Education

Afzal Khan (Labour) [61787] To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what resources are available to (a) primary and (b) secondary schools to teach anti-racism.

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

From September 2020, Relationships Education will become compulsory for primary-aged pupils and Relationships and Sex Education will become compulsory for secondary-aged pupils. Statutory guidance for these subjects requires all primary-aged pupils to be taught the importance of respecting others, even when they are 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. This will be reinforced at secondary school when pupils will also learn about legal rights and responsibilities regarding equality (particularly with reference to the protected characteristics as defined in the Equality Act 2010) and that everyone is unique and equal.

Schools can also choose to teach a range of subjects related to racism at primary, following the non-statutory framework for Citizenship. Pupils can be taught to identify and respect the differences between people; the consequences of anti-social and aggressive behaviour, including racism, on individuals; and how to respond to them and ask for help. The National Curriculum for Citizenship at secondary phase enables pupils to develop their understanding of the diverse national, regional, religious and ethnic identities in the UK and the need for mutual respect and understanding. There is also flexibility within the history curriculum for teachers to teach about Black and minority ethnic history across the spectrum of themes and eras, to support an understanding of the active role Black and minority ethnic people have played in history.

The Department does not specify how schools should teach curriculum subjects. Schools have the freedom to use their professional judgements and an understanding of their pupils to develop the right approach for their schools. This includes decisions about which resources they may choose to support their teaching. The Department is developing training materials to support schools' implementation of Relationships Education and Relationships and Sex Education. This will include training modules, implementation guidance, support to access resources and case studies. Schools who require more support will be able to access training through existing regional teaching school networks.

<https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Commons/2020-06-19/61787/>

Schools: Racial Discrimination

Afzal Khan (Labour) [61792] To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what his Department's policy is on the handling of complaints against schools accused of racism.

Nick Gibb: All schools in England must have and publish a complaints policy. The Department expects them to be given the first opportunity to respond to complaints, including those involving racism. If complainants are still unhappy once the local procedure is complete, they may either choose to complain direct to the Equality and Human Rights Commission, or they can ask the Secretary of State to consider the school's handling of the complaint, under his powers of intervention. These are set out under Sections 496/497 of the Education Act 1996, if the school is maintained by the local authority or, under the terms of its Funding Agreement, if the school is an Academy or Free School.

The Department considers complaints about schools on an individual basis, depending on the nature of the complaint.

<https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Commons/2020-06-19/61792/>

The following two questions both received the same answer

Teachers: Racial Discrimination

Afzal Khan (Labour) [61783] To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what training

his Department requires of (a) prospective teachers and (b) teachers on anti-racism and racial literacy.

Afzal Khan (Labour) [61784] To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what anti-racism training his Department provides as part of teacher's continued professional development.

Nick Gibb: The new Initial Teacher Training (ITT) Core Content Framework sets out a core minimum entitlement for all trainees of what should be covered during their teacher training. The Government does not prescribe the curriculum of ITT courses, it remains for individual providers to design courses that are appropriate to the needs of trainees and for the subject, phase and age range that the trainees will be teaching.

Qualified Teacher Status (QTS) will continue to be awarded at the end of ITT against the Teachers' Standards (2011). The Standards set out the key elements of effective teaching and the minimum expectations for the professional practice and conduct of teachers. In order to be awarded QTS, trainees must demonstrate that they satisfy all of the Teaching Standards at the appropriate level, including the requirement that they have a clear understanding of the needs of all pupils and set goals that stretch and challenge young people of all backgrounds and abilities.

High-quality professional development is important for teachers at all stages of their careers to ensure they receive appropriate support and to enable them constantly to improve their practice. Decisions relating to teachers' professional development rests with schools, headteachers, and teachers themselves, as they are in the best position to judge their own requirements. While teachers and headteachers are responsible for their own professional development, we recognise that it is of vital importance teachers are sensitive to issues of race and discrimination at all times. Teachers are required to always meet the Teachers' Standards and their training and development should support them to do this. Part two of the Standards refer to 'Personal and Professional Conduct' and includes the requirement to always show tolerance of and respect for the rights of others.

<https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Commons/2020-06-19/61783/>

and

<https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Commons/2020-06-19/61784/>

Schools: Transport

Richard Holden (Conservative) [62664] To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether free school transport arrangements will be maintained on the same terms for school children from families of low income who are required to travel by bus from one local education authority to another.

Nick Gibb: Local authorities have a statutory duty to provide free home to school transport for eligible children. A child is eligible if they are of compulsory school age, attend their nearest suitable school and it is more than the statutory walking distance from their home. The statutory walking distance is 2 miles for children under the age of 8 and 3 miles for children aged 8 and over. A child is also eligible if they live within the statutory walking distance but could not reasonably be expected to walk to school because of their special educational needs, disability or mobility problems, or because the nature of the route means it would be unsafe for them to do so.

There are additional entitlements to free home to school transport for those children who are eligible for free school meals, or if a parent they live with receives the maximum amount of Working Tax Credit. These are known as extended rights and are intended to support low income families in exercising school choice. Under the extended rights criteria, a child is eligible if they are aged 8 to 10 years, attend their

nearest suitable school and it is more than 2 miles from their home, they are aged 11 to 16 years, and attend one of their three nearest suitable schools which is between 2 and 6 miles from their home; or they are aged 11 to 16 years, attend a school that is between 2 and 15 miles from their home that their parents have chosen on the grounds of their religion or belief and, having regard to that religion or belief, there is no suitable school nearer to their home.

The duty applies even if the school an eligible child attends is in the area of another local authority.

There is no intention to change these requirements.

<https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Commons/2020-06-22/62664/>

Hezbollah

Andrew Rosindell (Conservative) [62325] To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many people in the UK have been (a) investigated and (b) charged for displaying the flag or other symbols of Hezbollah since March 2019.

James Brokenshire: The Home Office does not collect specific statistics on the number of people in the UK who have been (a) investigated or (b) charged with displaying the flag or other symbols of Hezbollah or other proscribed organisations. It is an offence under Section 13 of the Terrorism Act 2000 to carry or display articles supporting a proscribed organisation. Data relating to this offence is included with Sections 11 and 12 of the Act in the publication 'Operation of Police Powers under the Terrorism Act 2000'.

The most recent publication up to year ending March 2020, was published on 11 June on the GOV.UK website:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/operation-of-police-powers-under-the-terrorism-act-2000-financial-year-ending-march-2020>

<https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Commons/2020-06-22/62325/>

House of Lords Oral Answers

Marriage and Religious Weddings

Baroness Cox (Crossbench): To ask Her Majesty's Government, further to the *Integrated Communities Strategy Green Paper*, published on 14 May 2018, what progress they have made on their commitment to "explore the legal and practical challenges of limited reform relating to the law on marriage and religious weddings".

The Advocate-General for Scotland (Lord Keen of Elie): My Lords, the Government continue the exploration of limited reform and non-legislative options that they began in detail last spring. We are doing so with the greatest care. Any proposals affecting how religious groups are permitted to conduct marriages must be thoroughly assessed for their fairness to all religious groups, and for how far they could achieve the change of practice intended.

Baroness Cox: My Lords, I remain deeply concerned because we have seen no evidence of any significant progress since I asked a similar Oral Question nine months ago, on 23 October. Given the strong recommendations of the Casey review, the sharia law review and the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, and given the number of Private Members' Bills that I have submitted since 2011 with cross-party support and the support of Muslim women's groups, will the Minister give an assurance at last that government legislation will be introduced as a matter of urgency? So many Muslim women in this country are suffering in ways which are unacceptable and make our suffragettes turn in their graves.

Lord Keen of Elie: My Lords, I am not in a position to give such an undertaking. The issues raised are considered in the *Integrated Communities Action Plan*.

Lord Mackay of Clashfern (Conservative): My Lords, to what extent does the right to practise one's religion, subject to a proviso, affect the right to maintenance and property during marriage and on divorce or separation?

Lord Keen of Elie: My Lords, if a religious ceremony of marriage or purported marriage does not conform to the requirement of Lord Hardwicke's Act of 1753 or the marriage Act of 1836, then there will be no marriage. In these circumstances, a couple would be regarded as cohabiting and that would clearly have an impact upon any circumstances in which they ceased to cohabit.

Baroness Meacher (Crossbench): My Lords, it is seven years next month since the same-sex marriage Act was passed, enabling Governments to bring about legal recognition for humanist marriages by ministerial order. Since then, successive Ministers have been very supportive but have had a series of reviews rather than taking action. Meanwhile, 6,000 couples who have had humanist weddings have also been required to have a second marriage ceremony with a registrar to get legal recognition of their ceremony. This cannot be justified. Will the Minister help to achieve legal recognition of humanist marriages, which has the support of the majority in all religious groups?

Lord Keen of Elie: My Lords, the Law Commission is proposing to look at the matter of where and in what circumstances marriage should be celebrated. I understand that its consultation document will be available in September.

Baroness Whitaker (Labour): My Lords, following the question of the noble Baroness, Lady Meacher, can I press the Minister on this issue? Provision for legally recognised humanist marriages was overwhelmingly supported in the government consultation. What are the real obstacles to our having equal rights with Scotland?

Lord Keen of Elie: The major obstacle is the fundamental difference between the law of marriage in Scotland and that in England. The law of marriage in England and Wales, as determined since Lord Hardwicke's Act, depends upon the place of celebration as well as the celebrant. That is not the position in Scotland, where it is not necessary to identify the location for the marriage ceremony.

Lord Dholakia (Liberal Democrat): My Lords, is there any evidence of girls being married before reaching the legal age at which marriage is permissible, particularly during the Covid emergency of recent times, and is the situation regularly monitored here and abroad to ensure that this does not happen to girls settled in the United Kingdom?

Lord Keen of Elie: My Lords, any purported marriage to a person under the age of 16 would be void and of no effect. A marriage of an individual between that age and the age of 18 would of course require parental consent.

Baroness Uddin (Non-affiliated): My Lords, for some years, I have spoken in this House in support of the Register Our Marriage campaign led by Aina Khan OBE, whose commendable work has established the urgent need for legal recognition of any marriages conducted with religious ceremonies. This is not the case at present, as noble Lords have said, which significantly impacts many vulnerable women, who often only become aware when the marriage dissolves that they have little or no marital and financial rights. Will the Minister agree to meet—even on Zoom—with me, interested Members of Parliament and the legal and community experts of the ROM team, to gain greater insight into resolving these outstanding anomalies and eradicating their harmful impact, given that the laws on marriage are due to undergo further and imminent changes?

Lord Keen of Elie: My Lords, the position is that there is a very real social issue, but not a legal issue, with regard to this matter. It is not possible simply to say that we will acknowledge all religious ceremonies of marriage, of any kind, as legally enforceable. That would actually expose people to greater harm in the long term. I am perfectly content to meet with the noble Baroness and others to discuss this matter. It would be sensible to defer such a meeting until we have the Law

Commission's terms of reference and consultation document in September of this year.

Baroness Warsi (Conservative): My Lords, I am sure my noble and learned friend accepts that the role of politicians and indeed government is to ensure that the law responds to the needs of a changing community. Therefore, could he explain why, despite 10 years of government policy consensus on religious marriages—that Muslim women in particular deserve the same protection as other married women—the Government still fail to put that protection in place?

Lord Keen of Elie: First of all, those who undergo only a sharia ceremony are not in marriage; that is the source of the problem we have to face here. That is more a social issue than a legal one, and it requires education and information more than legislation.

Baroness Deech (Crossbench): Do the Government not realise how urgent reform is in this area? Not only are religious marriages continuing to take place, with all the drawbacks outlined by my noble friend Baroness Cox—the Minister is right to say that this must be stopped by education—but lockdown has shown the need for simpler weddings and more certainty in formalities, to increase choice, lower cost and ensure legality. Will the Government make time for statutory reform soon, encompass those reforms and whatever the Law Commission comes up with in its timely work on weddings, which has a broader scope but will include discussion of religious-only marriages and the consequences for couples who do not comply with the requirements?

Lord Keen of Elie: My Lords, the Law Commission review will consider the law on how and where marriages may take place in England and Wales. The terms of reference for that project have already been published and we look forward to the consultation paper and the results of that consultation.

Lord Desai (Labour): My Lords, the evidence is not only that underage marriage is sanctioned by parents, but that any woman defying parental orders can suffer violent death. We have to understand that it is not just a matter of the law of marriage but of the legal human rights of underage children, especially girls, to have protection from their families. The Government must do something about that part of the law and not just wait for the Law Commission.

Lord Keen of Elie: My Lords, there is an issue to be addressed with regard to what amounts to forced marriage. Since 2014 that has been a specific criminal offence, and since 2017 we have ensured that those who come forward in these circumstances receive lifelong anonymity.

Baroness Sheehan (Liberal Democrat): May I ask the Minister how the Government measure the effectiveness of awareness campaigns to educate socially isolated Muslim women and girls on the benefits of a civilly registered marriage?

Lord Keen of Elie: My Lords, there is no absolute means by which one could accurately measure that, so it is necessary to engage with these communities and to analyse feedback from them in order to ascertain the extent of the problem. I readily acknowledge that there is a very real issue with regard to the Muslim community's tendency, in many cases, to undergo a sharia ceremony rather than a legal marriage.

<https://hansard.parliament.uk/lords/2020-06-30/debates/9F2CD5B2-5CF8-459D-8C30-9E821BCD5CE2/MarriageAndReligiousWeddings>

The Green Paper referred to above can be read at

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/696993/Integrated_Communities_Strategy.pdf

The Government response to the Green Paper referred to above can be read at

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/777160/Integrated_Communities_Strategy_Government_Response.pdf

The oral question referred to above can be read at <https://hansard.parliament.uk/lords/2019-10-23/debates/D7C380E1-3F77-4BE0-BF60-89B390587A7D/ShariaLawMarriages>

Information about the Law Commission review referred to above can be read at <https://www.lawcom.gov.uk/law-commission-begins-work-on-weddings-reform/>

The Casey review, referred to above, can be read at https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/575973/The_Casey_Review_Report.pdf

The sharia law review referred to above can be read at https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/678478/6.4152_HO_CPFGR_Report_into_Sharia_Law_in_the_UK_WEB.pdf

The Resolution of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe referred to above can be read at <http://assembly.coe.int/nw/xml/XRef/Xref-XML2HTML-en.asp?fileid=25353>

Ministry of Housing, Communities, and Local Government

Guidance: COVID-19: Guidance for the safe use of places of worship from 4 July [England only]

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-guidance-for-the-safe-use-of-places-of-worship-from-4-july/covid-19-guidance-for-the-safe-use-of-places-of-worship-from-4-july>

TOP

Israel

See also the House of Commons written answer “Hezbollah” which is included in the Home Affairs section above.

House of Commons Oral Answers

West Bank: Planned Annexation

Tonia Antoniazzi (Labour): What recent representations [has the Minister] made to the Israeli Government on their planned annexation of parts of the west bank. [904016]

Julie Elliott (Labour): What assessment [[has the Minister] made of the effect of Israel’s plan to annex parts of the west bank on human rights in that region. [904018]

The Minister for the Middle East and North Africa (James Cleverly): The UK’s position is clear: we oppose any unilateral annexation. It would be a breach of international law and risk undermining peace efforts. The Prime Minister has conveyed our position to Prime Minister Netanyahu on multiple occasions, including in a phone call in February and a letter last month. The UK’s position remains the same: we support a negotiated two-state solution based on 1967 borders, with agreed land swaps, Jerusalem as a shared capital and a pragmatic, agreed settlement for refugees.

Tonia Antoniazzi: Current sanctions are clearly not working as a deterrent for Israel’s plan to annex the west bank illegally. Strong words at this point are a betrayal of the Palestinian people—they need actions. Can the Minister outline what action the Government will take against annexation?

James Cleverly: The Government have maintained a dialogue with Israel. We are

attempting to dissuade it from taking this course of action, which we believe to be not in its national interest and not compliant with international law.

Julie Elliott: In 1980, the UN Security Council condemned Israel's illegal annexation of East Jerusalem and, in '81, its illegal annexation of the Golan Heights. What lesson does the Minister think the Israeli Government took from the failure to see those Security Council resolutions adhered to? Are the UK Government abandoning the Palestinian people, as suggested in a recent open letter by UK charities?

James Cleverly: The UK Government remain a friend of Israel and also a friend of the Palestinian people. We have continued to have dialogue both with the leaders of the Palestinian Authority and with the Government of Israel, and we encourage them to work together to come towards an agreed settlement that will see a safe, secure state of Israel alongside a safe, secure and viable Palestinian state. There is still the opportunity for that negotiated settlement to be the outcome, and we will continue working with both the Israelis and the Palestinians to facilitate that.

Lisa Nandy (Labour): World leaders are warning of consequences should annexation go ahead, but the silence from this Government has been deafening, so much so that the Israeli newspaper *Haaretz* says that France is now the world's "last, best hope" to stop annexation. This really is shameful. I raised my concerns with the US ambassador—has the Minister? Will he commit to a ban on settlement imports and recognise Palestine, as this House voted to do? Forgive me, I may have missed it. If he will not do those things, can he tell us what exactly he is proposing to do?

James Cleverly: The UK remains a friend and ally to the state of Israel and a good friend to the Palestinian people. It is tempting—and I am sure it will placate certain voices on the left of the political spectrum—to stamp our feet and bang the table, but we will continue to dissuade a friend and ally in the state of Israel from taking a course of action that we believe will be against its own interests, and we will do so through the most effective means available.

Alyn Smith (SNP): I listened carefully to the previous exchange, and I have much respect for the Minister, but I am not asking him to stamp his feet or bang the table—I am asking him to match the sensible position that he has outlined today on the illegal annexation of the already illegally claimed settlements with some actual action. No amount of warm words and sympathy are going to cut it in this discussion. My party, likewise, is a friend of the two-state solution. We are a friend of the Israeli state, and we are a friend of the Palestinians as well. We want to see a viable solution, but there is a lively debate that we can influence right now within Israel, and we need to put action on the table, not warm words and sympathy. Settlement goods should at the very least be labelled as illegal, and targeted sanctions need to be put on the table to focus the minds of the coalition. I urge him to act, not just talk. ...

James Cleverly: My right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary has spoken with his opposite number and other members of the Israeli Government, as have I and indeed our Prime Minister. We are working to dissuade Israel from taking this course of action. There will always be voices in British politics that would jump at any opportunity to bring in sanctions and disinvestment. We do not agree with those voices, and we will continue to work towards a negotiated two-state solution, using the diplomatic means we have at our disposal.

Alyn Smith: I appreciate that answer, and I would urge more. When Russia illegally occupied Crimea, the UK Government, with our support, implemented sanctions with the international community. We need that sort of action now, and I would urge the Minister to greater efforts than we have heard today.

James Cleverly: I reiterated the UK's position at the UN Security Council on 24 June. I made it clear that annexation would not go unanswered. However, I will not stand at this Dispatch Box in order, as I say, to placate some of the traditional voices in criticism of Israel when the best way forward is to negotiate and speak with a

friend and ally, in the Government of Israel, to dissuade them from taking a course of action that we believe is not in their own best interests.

<https://hansard.parliament.uk/commons/2020-06-30/debates/B7FFA316-BBC6-4025-91CE-3F68A84A4D30/WestBankPlannedAnnexation>

The Minister's statement to the UN Security Council, referred to above, can be read at <https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/urging-a-negotiated-two-state-solution-between-israelis-and-palestinians>

Topical Questions: Foreign and Commonwealth Office

Anthony Higginbotham (Conservative): The situation in the middle east is a concern to me and my constituents and it is a long-running problem, which has not just existed for the past couple of weeks. Could the Secretary of State outline the steps that we are taking to bring both Israel and Palestine to the table, so that we can secure lasting peace in the region? [904081]

Dominic Raab: I have spoken to President Abbas and Benny Gantz and Foreign Minister Ashkenazi, as well as Prime Minister Netanyahu previously. We make clear that the United Kingdom's consistent position—in fairness, across all sides of this House—is that we want to see a two-state solution based on the 1967 borders. We acutely feel that the vacuum without talks is very dangerous. We want to see talks proceed. That is why we are working with those partners in the region, Arab countries and the E3.

Let me be absolutely crystal clear to the House: we have made clear that any annexation, partial or full, in relation to further territory in the occupied territories and the west bank would be both contrary to international law and counterproductive to peace.

Julie Elliott: Does the Foreign Secretary agree that it is time for the UK Government and others to ban trade with settlements, given that Israeli settlements are illegal? It is now the time for a ban, not a sanction, of goods. [904087]

James Cleverly: The UK's position on imported goods from Israel remains unchanged. As my right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary has highlighted, we oppose annexation. We have made it clear to the Government of Israel that we regard it as contrary to international law, and also not in their own interests. That position will remain unchanged.

<https://hansard.parliament.uk/commons/2020-06-30/debates/84388CA7-EDC9-49C1-908C-72F4109A23C8/TopicalQuestions#contribution-363799C4-7A05-4251-B7C5-2BA94D233AF7>

House of Commons Written Answers

Middle East: Coronavirus

Anna McMorrin (Labour) [63461] To ask the Secretary of State for International Development, what recent assessment she has made of the effect of increased numbers of covid-19 cases in (a) Iran, (b) Saudi Arabia, (c) Turkey and (d) Israel on the (i) health and (ii) humanitarian situation in fragile states that border those countries.

James Cleverly: The Department for International Development is concerned by the continued high rates of COVID-19 cases in the Middle East region and is tracking the situation closely. According to World Health Organisation (WHO) data Iran and Turkey are the countries in the region with the highest infection and death rates. We are especially concerned by the situation in Yemen and Syria where the conflict in both countries, coupled with under-resourced health care facilities means the impacts are likely to be significant and the number of cases far higher than reported. This is why the UK has so far pledged £764 million of UK aid to end the

coronavirus pandemic as quickly as possible. Countries in need in the Middle East including Yemen, Syria, Iran and the Occupied Palestinian Territories will benefit from this. This is in addition to other UK aid that has been flexed to support the response around the world, including the Middle East.

<https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Commons/2020-06-23/63461/>

The following question was originally answered on 12 May 2020 but an error was later identified in that response. A corrected answer has now been issued.

Palestinians: Refugees

Anna McMorris (Labour) [43743] To ask the Secretary of State for International Development, what recent assessment she has made of the need to increase the UK Government's contributions to the United Nations Relief and Works Agency to meet increased demand for core services for Palestinian refugees throughout the Middle East.

James Cleverly: The UK is a long-term supporter of the UN Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA). Our funding helps provide education to more than 533,000 children (half of which are girls), health services for around 3.1 million Palestinian refugees, and social safety net assistance for around 255,000 of the most vulnerable.

The services that UNRWA provide play a key role in helping contain and address the spread of COVID-19. We continue to monitor the situation closely and are working closely with UNRWA and the international community to ensure a co-ordinated response to the outbreak.

<https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Commons/2020-05-05/43743/>

House of Lords Written Answers

Palestinians: World Heritage Sites

Baroness Tonge (Non-affiliated) [HL5813] To ask Her Majesty's Government what action they are taking to protect sites owned by Palestinians which have been designated as UNESCO World Heritage Sites from being damaged by Israeli (1) settlers, or (2) forces.

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: In our meetings with the Israeli authorities we regularly raise the need to respect the status quo of the holy sites in East Jerusalem and the West Bank. 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/Lords/2020-06-16/HL5813/>

Palestinians: Health Services

Baroness Tonge (Non-affiliated) [HL5730] To ask Her Majesty's Government what action they are taking, if any, to ensure that health services in Palestine have sufficient medical facilities and expertise in (1) the West Bank, and (2) Gaza, to enable those services to care for those with serious medical problems without the need to enter Israeli territory for treatment.

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 funding to the World Health Organization 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. Minister Cleverly also recently announced

£20 million in new funding, which will help the Palestinian Authority support its health workers who have been on the frontline battling coronavirus and who help deliver life-saving medical services.

We also provided around £16 million in humanitarian assistance in 2019/20 to alleviate humanitarian and health needs in the OPTs. This included establishing a centralised surgical multi-disciplinary limb reconstruction unit, strengthening trauma care, enhancing the ambulance system, and training paramedics and frontline providers in Gaza. Our funding to the United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA) also helps provide health services for around 3.5 million people in the Occupied Palestinian Territories.

<https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Lords/2020-06-15/HL5730/>

The announcement referred to above can be read at

<https://twitter.com/JamesCleverly/status/1268579140841676803>

Israeli Settlements

Baroenss Tonge (Non-affiliated) [HL5814] To ask Her Majesty's Government what action they plan to take, if any, to protect any Palestinian villages within the areas designated for annexation by the government of Israel which are at risk of (1) forced removal, or (2) destruction.

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: We are deeply 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. We are urging Israel not to proceed. The Foreign Secretary reiterated this message during a call with Alternate Israeli Prime Minister Gantz on 20 May and Israeli Foreign Minister Ashkenazi on 2 June. The UK position is clear: any unilateral moves toward annexation would be damaging to renewed efforts to restart peace negotiation, and contrary to international law. Demolitions and evictions of Palestinians from their homes cause unnecessary suffering to ordinary Palestinians and, in all but the most exceptional of cases, are contrary to International Humanitarian Law.

<https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Lords/2020-06-16/HL5814/>

Entry Clearances: Israeli Settlements

Baroness Tonge (Non-affiliated) [HL5815] To ask Her Majesty's Government what plans they have, if any, to ensure that Israeli settlers living illegally on Palestinian land do not receive preferential treatment in the requirements for travel to the UK.

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: All visitors to the UK are assessed against a set of suitability and eligibility criteria, under the Immigration Rules. The rules apply to all visitors, whether they are applying for a visa in advance of travel or are applying for entry at the UK border. Applications for visit visas or for entry as a visitor are considered on their merits, regardless of where the visitor lives.

In addition, all applicants seeking to stay for more than 6 months (e.g. for work, study, settlement) are required to obtain an entry clearance in advance of travel.

<https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Lords/2020-06-16/HL5815/>

West Bank: Demolition

Baroness Tonge (Non-affiliated) [HL5816] To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of reports that Palestinian-owned property in Al-Walaja is under threat of demolition to make way for construction of a park exclusively for Israelis; and what support, if any, are they giving to the owners of any such property.

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: Our legal aid supports residents in Al-Walaja and officials from our Embassy in Tel Aviv and Consulate-General in Jerusalem visited the area on 17 June. As we made clear at the UN Security Council remote meeting on the Middle East Peace Process on 20 May, the UK is seriously 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 urge both sides to avoid taking actions which make peace more difficult to achieve.

<https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Lords/2020-06-16/HL5816/>

Downing Street

As Israel's friend, I urge you not to annex: Prime Minister Boris Johnson's article in Yedioth Ahronoth newspaper

... I am a passionate defender of Israel. Few causes are closer to my heart than ensuring its people are protected from the menace of terrorism and anti-Semitic incitement. The UK has always stood by Israel and its right to live as any nation should be able to, in peace and security. Our commitment to Israel's security will be unshakeable while I am Prime Minister of the United Kingdom.

So it is with sadness that I have followed the proposals to annex Palestinian territory. As a life-long friend, admirer and supporter of Israel, I am fearful that these proposals will fail in their objective of securing Israel's borders and will be contrary to Israel's own long-term interests.

Annexation would put in jeopardy the progress that Israel has made in improving relationships with the Arab and Muslim world. I have never been more convinced that Israel's interests overlap with those of our closest partners in the Arab world, including potential security cooperation against shared threats.

But however strong their interest in a different kind of relationship with Israel, annexation would inevitably set back these opportunities and constrain potential Arab partners. Israel's enemies would seize upon it, and use it against those in the Middle East who want to see progress.

I want to see an outcome that delivers justice for both Israelis and Palestinians. The UK has often stood in a small minority at the UN in defending Israel against unwarranted and wholly disproportionate criticism.

Annexation would represent a violation of international law. It would also be a gift to those who want to perpetuate the old stories about Israel.

I profoundly hope that annexation does not go ahead. If it does, the UK will not recognise any changes to the 1967 lines, except those agreed between both parties.

There is another way. Like many Israelis, I am frustrated that peace talks have ended in failure. While I understand the frustration felt by both sides, we must now use the energy of this moment to once more come back to the table and strive to hammer out a solution.

This will require compromise on all sides. ...

But I still believe the only way to achieve true, lasting security for Israel, the homeland for the Jewish people, is through a solution that allows justice and security for both Israelis and Palestinians. I refuse to believe that this is impossible. ...

I am immensely proud of the UK's contribution to the birth of Israel with the 1917 Balfour Declaration. But it will remain unfinished business until there is a solution which provides justice and lasting peace for both Israelis and Palestinians.

The only way it can be achieved is for both sides to return to the negotiating table. That must be our goal. Annexation would only take us further away from it.

To read the full article see

<https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/as-israels-friend-i-urge-you-not-to-annex-pm-boris-johnson>

Foreign and Commonwealth Office

Change of Her Majesty's Consul-General to Jerusalem: Spring 2021

Ms Diane Corner OBE has been appointed Her Majesty's Consul-General to Jerusalem in succession to Mr Philip Hall OBE. Ms Corner will take up her appointment during Spring 2021. ...

To read the full press release see

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/change-of-her-majestys-consul-general-to-jerusalem-spring-2021>

Church of Scotland, Church of England, Catholic Church, United Reformed Church, Methodist Church, and Quakers in Britain

Churches call on UK Government to deter annexation of West Bank

The Moderator [of the Church of Scotland] has joined church leaders from across the UK in calling on the Westminster Government to help deter annexation of the West Bank ...

Rt Rev Dr Martin Fair joined representatives from the United Reformed Church, Quakers in Britain, the Methodist Church, the Church of England and Catholic Church in signing a letter sent to the UK government. The letter said:

"We stand alongside the Holy Land's Christian leaders, who have warned that the Israeli Government's plan to annex parts of the West Bank after 1 July "would bring about the loss of any remaining hope for the success of the peace process.

"All our Churches are committed to promoting justice and peace for everyone who calls the Holy Land their home.

"If annexation proceeds, it would gravely undermine international law with serious consequences for the common good of our global society.

"The UK Government should do everything in its power to deter annexation. Only a robust response, working alongside others in the international community, can help to prevent this tragedy.

"We remain united in prayer that plans for annexation will be abandoned, allowing for renewed efforts towards a negotiated solution that upholds the human dignity of Palestinians and Israelis alike." ...

To read the full press release see

<https://www.churchofscotland.org.uk/news-and-events/news/2020/churches-call-on-uk-government-to-deter-annexation-of-west-bank>

Muslim Council of Britain

MCB Calls for the Stopping of Further Land Grab of West Bank

The Muslim Council of Britain today calls on our government to take firmer action in stopping the State of Israel from taking further land away from the Palestinian people.

Plans to annex nearly 30% of West Bank territory not only contravene international law, they render the very possibility of the establishing of a viable, independent Palestinian state impossible. Given such breaches of international law by the State of Israel aren't unprecedented, condemnation alone will not suffice – concrete action must be taken to

prevent what would amount to the effective dismantling of the two-state solution itself. We call upon the UK Government and opposition parties to stand united against such extremism and the prospect of the annexation of West Bank territories in clear defiance of international law. ...

The call for a binding recognition of Palestine as an independent and sovereign state is something many British Muslim communities, and indeed a cross-section of communities across the UK, support ...

The UK Government must also advocate on behalf of the Palestinian people, against the erosion of their rights, and refuse to accept the nomination of the new Israeli Ambassador to the UK. ...

To read the full press release see

<https://mcb.org.uk/general/mcb-calls-for-the-stopping-of-further-land-grab-of-west-bank/>

UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights

End-of-mission statement by the UN Special Committee to Investigate Israeli Practices

The United Nations Special Committee to Investigate Israeli Practices notes with deep concern the ongoing deterioration of the human rights situation in the Occupied Palestinian Territory – including in the West Bank, East Jerusalem and Gaza - as a result of the decades-long Israeli occupation, its policies and practices.

The Committee is particularly alarmed by the recently announced annexation plans by the Israeli Government which would constitute a grave breach of international law, the United Nations Charter and a flagrant violation of UN resolutions. It would also potentially have grave consequences on the human rights of Palestinians and would further worsen violations committed against them. ...

... members of the Committee were briefed on the human rights situation in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including the marked increase in settlements expansion, settler violence and demolitions of Palestinian-owned property.

The Committee was also briefed on cases of continued use of excessive force by Israeli Security Forces against Palestinians and the ongoing lack of accountability for these and other human rights violations. ...

The Committee noted with strong concern the impact of Israeli policies and practices on women and girls. ...

To read the full statement see

<https://www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=26011&LangID=E>

Bachelet urges Israel to halt West Bank annexation plans, warning “shockwaves will last for decades”

The UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, Michelle Bachelet, on Monday added her voice to the wave of international and national calls on the Government of Israel not to proceed with its plans to illegally annex a swathe of occupied Palestinian territory, saying it would have a disastrous impact on human rights of Palestinians and across the region.

“Annexation is illegal. Period,” she said. “Any annexation. Whether it is 30 percent of the West Bank, or 5 percent. I urge Israel to listen to its own former senior officials and generals, as well as to the multitude of voices around the world, warning it not to proceed along this dangerous path.”

“The precise consequences of annexation cannot be predicted,” Bachelet said. “But they are likely to be disastrous for the Palestinians, for Israel itself, and for the wider region. The Secretary-General of the United Nations has called on the Israeli Government to abandon its annexation plans, and I back that call one hundred percent.”

“As many others have noted, any attempt to annex any part of the occupied Palestinian

territory will not only seriously damage efforts to achieve lasting peace in the region, it is likely to entrench, perpetuate and further heighten serious human rights violations that have characterized the conflict for decades,” Bachelet said.

Restrictions on the right to freedom of movement would almost certainly increase substantially as Palestinian population centers become enclaves. Significant tracts of private land could be illegally expropriated, and even where this does not occur, many Palestinians may not be able to access and cultivate their own lands. Palestinians living within the annexed zone would experience greater difficulty accessing essential services like education and health, and humanitarian access may also be hindered.

Palestinians would come under even heavier pressure to move out of the annexed zone, and entire communities that are currently not recognized under Israel’s planning regime would be at high risk of forcible transfer. Palestinians outside the annexed zone risk seeing their access to natural resources cut off, their opportunity for natural growth removed, and even their ability to leave and return to their own country severely restricted.

Settlements – already a clear violation of international law – will almost certainly expand, increasing the existing friction between the two communities.

“This is a highly combustible mix,” Bachelet said. “I am deeply concerned that even the most minimalist form of annexation would lead to increased violence and loss of life, as walls are erected, security forces deployed and the two populations brought into closer proximity. The existing two-tier system of law in the same territory will become embedded, with devastating impacts on the lives of Palestinians who have little or no access to legal remedy,” she added.

The High Commissioner warned that illegal annexation “will not change the obligations of Israel as occupying power towards the occupied population under international humanitarian or human rights law. Instead, it will grievously harm the prospect of a two-state solution, undercut the possibilities of a renewal of negotiations, and perpetuate the serious existing human rights and international humanitarian law violations we witness today.”

“The shockwaves of annexation will last for decades, and will be extremely damaging to Israel, as well as to the Palestinians,” Bachelet warned. “However there is still time to reverse this decision.”

<https://www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=26009&LangID=E>

TOP

Foreign Affairs

House of Lords Written Answer

International Organisations: Religion

Lord Brooke of Alverthorpe (Labour) [HL5898] To ask Her Majesty’s Government which intergovernmental agencies in which they participate involve representatives of churches and faith organisations.

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: The UK Government participates in a large number of intergovernmental bodies including but not limited to the UN. Many of these bodies involve churches and faith organisations in their work and discussions in one capacity or another, whether regularly or periodically. We believe that faith and belief leaders have a valuable role to play in promoting Freedom of Religion or Belief and in other areas particularly in regards to other human rights issues and we will continue to work with them both within intergovernmental bodies and elsewhere.

Other Relevant Information

Runnymede Trust

Race and Racism in English Secondary Schools

<https://www.runnymedetrust.org/uploads/publications/pdfs/Runnymede%20Secondary%20Schools%20report%20FINAL.pdf>

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>

Consultations ** new or updated today

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