



Political Affairs Digest

A daily summary of political events affecting the Jewish Community

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House of Commons Written Answer

Marriage: Coronavirus

Stephen Hammond (Conservative) [65107] To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what plans he has to publish guidance on (a) indoor and (b) outdoor wedding receptions from August 2020.

Luke Hall: Any receptions that typically follow or accompany marriages or civil partnerships are strongly advised not to take place at this time.

We recently published guidance preparing for small marriage ceremonies and civil partnership formations to take place from 4 July, which can be found at <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-guidance-for-small-marriages-and-civil-partnerships/covid-19-guidance-for-small-marriages-and-civil-partnerships>.

The Government is working with the wedding and civil partnership celebration industry on how receptions that typically follow or accompany marriages and civil partnerships could take place safely in the future.

<https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Commons/2020-06-26/65107/>

Welsh Parliament Debate

Proposed New Curriculum

... **601 Jenny Rathbone (Labour):** ... At the cross-party group on faith I attended yesterday, some representatives of faith schools were anxious about what the new curriculum means for their mission. I would say to them that religion is a journey not an event, and reflects the values and customs of our societies. ...

620 Darren Millar (Conservative): ... that cross-party group discussed at some length changes to the religious education curriculum, which, of course, is going to be renamed and rebranded 'religion, ethics and values'. And whilst there's a great deal of optimism that that presents a great opportunity going forward, there are some concerns about the ability of the sector, if you like—the faith sector—to be able to respond to the ongoing consultation

that's taking place at the moment. Because of the fact that everyone's been in lockdown, lots of organisations and groups haven't been able to meet, including local standing advisory councils on religious education. ...

To read the full transcript see

<https://record.assembly.wales/Plenary/6380#A58988>

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House of Commons Written Answers

Palestinians: Curriculum

Steve McCabe (Labour) [64065] To ask the Secretary of State for International Development, with reference to the 2019-20 Memorandum of Understanding between her Department and the Palestinian Authority, what assessment she has made of the Palestinian Authority's progress on curriculum reform.

James Cleverly: Our partnership with the Palestinian Authority (PA) is underpinned by a Memorandum of Understanding and our 'partnership principles'. We continue to judge that the PA is demonstrating a credible commitment to this Memorandum and the 'partnership principles'.

We are pleased the PA is currently revising its textbooks and hopes to update them before the start of the new school year in September. I most recently discussed progress of the PA's review with the Minister for Education on 4 June.

<https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Commons/2020-06-24/64065/>

The Memorandum of Understanding referred to above is not available online

The following two questions both received the same answer

Palestinians: Overseas Aid

Steve McCabe (Labour) [64066] To ask the Secretary of State for International Development, with reference to the 2019-20 Memorandum of Understanding between her Department and the Palestinian Authority, what assessment she has made of the adequacy of the steps taken by the Authority to ensure that funding allocated by her Department was not used to cover payments made to prisoners or their families.

Steve McCabe (Labour) [64067] To ask the Secretary of State for International Development, with reference to the 2018-19 Memorandum of Understanding between her Department and the Palestinian Authority what assessment she has made of the effectiveness of the Palestinian Authority's efforts to ensure that funding from her Department was not used to cover payments made to prisoners or their families as administered by the Palestinian Liberation Organisation.

James Cleverly: No UK Aid is used for payments to prisoners or their families, or the so called Martyrs' Fund. Our financial support to the Palestinian Authority health and education sectors goes into a dedicated bank account and is only paid to individual workers who have been carefully vetted through the PEGASE mechanism (Palestinian-European Socio-Economic Management Assistance Mechanism). Each payment is independently audited to ensure it has been received by the intended recipient. This rigorous process means we are confident no UK aid is being diverted.

Our partnership with the PA is underpinned by a Memorandum of Understanding and our 'partnership principles'. We continue to judge that the PA is demonstrating

a credible commitment to DFID's partnership principles. Our partnership works to improve the lives of Palestinians and support the UK's commitment to maintain the viability of a two-state solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

<https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Commons/2020-06-24/64066/>

and

<https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Commons/2020-06-24/64067/>

The Memorandum of Understanding referred to above is not available online

Palestinians: Textbooks

Steve McCabe (Labour) [64068] To ask the Secretary of State for International Development, pursuant to the Answer of 11 May 2020 to Question 42246, on what date she expects the George Eckert Institute to deliver its interim report.

James Cleverly: Following UK calls for action, our European partners commissioned the Georg Eckert Institute to conduct an independent review of Palestinian textbooks, which is currently underway.

We understand the report has been delayed due to COVID-19. We have regular discussions with our European Partners on the review and we continue to encourage the EU to finalise the interim report as soon as possible.

<https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Commons/2020-06-24/64068/>

The answer referred to above can be read at

<https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Commons/2020-05-01/42246/>

Palestinians: Textbooks

Steve McCABe (Labour) [64069] To ask the Secretary of State for International Development, pursuant to the Answer of 11 May 2020 to Question 42246 on Palestinians: Textbooks, by what date she expects the internal panel of researchers to complete their analysis.

James Cleverly: Our three-year People to People programme aimed to bring together Israelis and Palestinians to cooperate on issues which can have a positive impact on both communities, helping to build understanding between people on both sides of the conflict in support of a peaceful, negotiated resolution.

The research component for this programme seeks to look more broadly at the impact of People to People work on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict to build the evidence base in this area – something that is presently limited. To ensure a thorough analysis of this programme, an internal panel is reviewing the report. Work on this is currently underway and the panel hopes to complete its review by Autumn this year.

<https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Commons/2020-06-24/64069/>

The answer referred to above can be read at

<https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Commons/2020-05-01/42246/>

House of Lords Written Answers

Israeli Settlements

Baroness Northover (Liberal Democrat) [HL5873] To ask Her Majesty's Government,

further to the Written Answer by Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon on 19 February (HL1289), what assessment they have made of the government of Israel's planned annexation of parts of the occupied West Bank.

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: As we made clear at the UN Security Council remote meeting on the Middle East Peace Process on 20 May, 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. 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/Lords/2020-06-17/HL5873/>

The answer referred to above can be read at

<https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Lords/2020-02-03/HL1289/>

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

<https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/securing-a-peaceful-future-for-israelis-and-palestinians>

Palestinians: Christianity

Lord Hylton (Crossbench) [HL6003] To ask Her Majesty's Government what representations they have made to the government of Israel about the number of permits granted to Christians from Gaza to visit holy sites in Bethlehem and Jerusalem, or to visit family in the West Bank during Easter and Christmas holidays; and what responses, if any, they have received.

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: Whilst we have not made representations on this particular issue, our Embassy in Tel Aviv and Consulate-General in Jerusalem do raise issues of religious freedom with the Israeli Government and Palestinian Authority. The Minister of State for the Middle East and North Africa 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. The UK recognises that the holy sites of Jerusalem hold particular significance for many groups around the globe, especially the three Abrahamic faiths of Christianity, Islam and Judaism. We are 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.

<https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Lords/2020-06-22/HL6003/>

Israel: Palestinians

Baroness Tonge (Non-affiliated) [HL1289] To ask Her Majesty's Government, following the publication of Peace to Prosperity: A Vision to Improve the Lives of the Palestinian and Israeli People by the government of the United States, what plans they have to prevent illegal annexation in the occupied territories.

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: As the Foreign Secretary set out in Parliament on 4 February, we are concerned by reports of possible moves toward annexation of parts of the West Bank by Israel. Any such unilateral move would be damaging to renewed efforts to re-start peace negotiations, contrary to international law and could not pass unchallenged. The former Minister for the Middle East and North Africa raised our concerns about unilateral annexation with the Israeli Ambassador

to the UK on 4 February. We call on all parties to refrain from actions that would imperil the viability of a two-state solution, based on the 1967 lines, and make it harder to achieve a just and lasting peace.

<https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Lords/2020-02-03/HL1289/>

“Peace to Prosperity”, referred to above, can be read at

<https://www.whitehouse.gov/wp-content/uploads/2020/01/Peace-to-Prosperity-0120.pdf>

The Foreign Minister’s comments about annexation referred to above can be read at

<https://hansard.parliament.uk/commons/2020-02-04/debates/9F34A0FA-A2FE-4390-B7DA-723A9B2EAC88/MiddleEastPeacePlan>

Department for International Development

UK aid will help provide millions of Palestinians with healthcare and education

The UK has pledged new funds to the UN Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA) to provide vital support to Palestinian refugees, the UK’s Minister for the Middle East, James Cleverly, announced today. ...

The UK has consistently been one of UNRWA’s top donors, and its support in the last year has enabled UNRWA to provide education for more than half a million children and helped over 3.5 million Palestinians access health services.

Minister for the Middle East, James Cleverly, said: Overcrowded living conditions and years of conflict have left Palestinian refugees particularly vulnerable to the impact of coronavirus. The pandemic has made it more difficult for UNRWA to carry out its essential work, yet its staff continue to work tirelessly to provide help to those in need.

I am delighted the UK is providing this new support to UNRWA so it can continue to deliver its vital services, including healthcare and education, to Palestinian refugees.

The UK continues to support a negotiated settlement leading to a safe and secure Israel living alongside a viable and sovereign Palestinian state; based on 1967 borders with agreed land swaps, Jerusalem as the shared capital of both states, and a just, fair and realistic settlement for refugees.

Until that happens, the UK remains firmly committed to supporting UNRWA and Palestinian refugees across the region. ...

To read the full press release see

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/uk-aid-will-help-provide-millions-of-palestinians-with-healthcare-and-education>

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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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** 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>

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