



Political Affairs Digest

A daily summary of political events affecting the Jewish Community

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House of Commons Written Answers

The following two questions both received the same answer

Coronavirus: Protective Clothing

Janet Daby (Labour) [73082] To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps have been taken to provide appropriate personal protective equipment to NHS staff with religious beards.

Janet Daby (Labour) [73083] To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he has taken to provide personal protective equipment for NHS staff with (a) turbans and (b) other religious head coverings.

Jo Churchill: We are clear frontline staff should have the equipment they need to do their job safely. The National Medical Director and Chief Nursing Officer of NHS England and NHS Improvement wrote on 24 April 2020 to NHS Chief Executives, Chief Nurses and Medical Directors, emphasising the importance of proper fit testing of disposable sessional personal protective equipment (PPE) face masks (such as FFP3 masks). The Government is dedicated to providing appropriate fitting PPE for all frontline staff, including those with religious beards, turbans and other religious head coverings.

We are also working to secure products for specific groups of patients and staff, for example, having 2,000 powered respirators that Sikh male doctors or others who cannot fit test well against masks will be able to use.

<https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Commons/2020-07-13/73082/>

and

<https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Commons/2020-07-13/73083/>

Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government

COVID-19: updated guidance for the safe use of places of worship and special religious services and gatherings during the pandemic

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

COVID-19: Updated Guidance for small marriages and civil partnerships

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-guidance-for-small-marriages-and-civil-partnerships/covid-19-guidance-for-small-marriages-and-civil-partnerships>

Scottish Government

Updated Guidance: Coronavirus (COVID-19): wedding ceremonies and civil partnership registrations

<https://www.gov.scot/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-guidance-for-small-marriages-and-civil-partnership-registrations/>

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House of Lords Written Answers

UNRWA: Coronavirus

Lord Judd (Labour) [HL6992] To ask Her Majesty's Government what discussions they have had with UNWRA about any additional funding required to meet costs resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic; and what assessment they have made of the decision of the governments of Germany and Italy to increase contributions to that organisation.

Baroness Sugg: We are aware of increasing needs in the region due to the impact COVID-19, including in Palestinian refugee camps and continue to monitor the situation closely. We are currently reviewing options for support to UNRWA and recognise the central role it plays in the region until a just solution is found for refugees. Until that time, we support all efforts to increase funding to UNRWA, including from key partners such as Germany and Italy.

<https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Lords/2020-07-20/HL6992/>

Palestinians: Electricity

Baroness Tonge (Non-affiliated) [HL7060] To ask Her Majesty's Government what representations they have made to the government of Israel about reports that rolling blackouts are being implemented in Palestine as a result of a contested accusation that electricity bills have not been paid.

Baroness Sugg: During the period of September to December 2019, we were aware that the Israel Electric Corporation implemented power cuts to parts of the West Bank, citing outstanding payments from Palestinian power distributors. We understand that that the Government of Israel and Palestinian Authority were able to reach an agreement to end the power cuts.

<https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Lords/2020-07-20/HL7060/>

Gaza: Israel

Baroness Tonge (Non-affiliated) [HL7118] To ask Her Majesty's Government what discussions they have had with the government of Israel about the future of Gaza.

Baroness Sugg: We are deeply concerned by the situation in Gaza. We encourage the Palestinian Authority, Israel, regional and international actors to put forward sustainable, long-term proposals for resolving the threat posed to Israel's security by Hamas and for returning the Palestinian Authority to government functions in Gaza. Hamas' ongoing decision to embrace violence lies at the heart of the Gazan tragedy. Officials from our Embassy in Tel Aviv and our Consulate-General in Jerusalem also frequently urge the Israeli and Palestinian authorities to take steps to improve conditions in Gaza. The UK will continue to urge the parties to take the necessary practical steps to ensure Gaza's reconstruction and economic recovery. We continue to stress to the Israeli authorities the damage that their restrictions on movement, access and trade are doing to the living standards of ordinary Palestinians in Gaza.

<https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Lords/2020-07-21/HL7118/>

Israel: Armed Forces

Baroness Tonge (Non-affiliated) [HL7116] To ask Her Majesty's Government what statistics they have on the number of Israeli soldiers who have been charged with crimes of unlawful killing.

Baroness Sugg: The Government is very concerned at the high numbers of Palestinians killed by Israel Defense Forces in the West Bank and Gaza. We have raised the issue with the Israeli authorities, encouraging them to carry out transparent investigations where necessary into whether use of live fire had been appropriate.

<https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Lords/2020-07-21/HL7116/>

Iran: Israel

Baroness Tonge (Non-affiliated) [HL7062] To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made (1) of reports that recent attacks on military sites in Iran have been authorised by the government of Israel, and (2) of the possible consequences of such attacks.

Baroness Sugg: Following an explosion on 2 July in a building at the Natanz facility, Iran's Supreme National Security Council said they knew the cause but due to "security concerns" further details would be released at an "appropriate time". We will continue to monitor Iran's response to recent explosions, and continue to urge de-escalation in the region.

<https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Lords/2020-07-20/HL7062/>

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Foreign Affairs

House of Lords Written Answer

China: Uighurs

Lord Alton of Liverpool (Crossbench) [HL7068] To ask Her Majesty's Government, what assessment they have made of the statement by the President of the Board of Deputies

of British Jews, in a letter of 20 July to the Ambassador of China to the UK that “the world will neither forgive nor forget a genocide against the Uyghur people.”

Baroness Sugg: We are aware of the statement. We have made clear our serious concerns about the human rights situation in Xinjiang, including the extra-judicial detention of over a million Uyghur Muslims and other minorities in "political re-education camps", systematic restrictions on Uyghur culture and the practice of Islam, and extensive and invasive surveillance targeting minorities.

<https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Lords/2020-07-21/HL7068/>

The letter referred to above can be read at

<https://www.bod.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/07/Letter-from-President-Marie-van-der-Zyl-to-His-Excellency-Mr.-Liu-Xiaoming.pdf>

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