



Political Affairs Digest

A daily summary of political events affecting the Jewish Community

Contents

Home Affairs

Israel

Foreign Affairs

Relevant Legislation

Consultations

Home Affairs

House of Lords Written Answer

Coronavirus: Religious Buildings

Lord Jones of Cheltenham (Liberal Democrat) [HL8634] To ask Her Majesty's Government what is the evidence base for regulations permitting six people to sing in public houses but banning six people from singing in churches and other places of worship.

Lord Bethell: The regulations place specific obligations on business premises to stop customers from singing on the premises in groups of more than six. Singing in general within hospitality premises is advised against in guidance due to the increased risk of transmission. This is in line with the guidance on churches.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2020-09-30/hl8634>

TOP

Israel

House of Commons Written Answers

Palestinians: Schools

Anna McMorrin (Labour) [104173] To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether he has taken steps to help prevent the demolition of the Palestinian school in Ras Al Tin on the West Bank.

James Cleverly: The UK is seriously concerned by the possible demolition of a Palestinian school in Ras Al-Tin by Israeli authorities. Our Embassy in Tel Aviv raised our concern with the Government of Israel on 13 October, alongside European partners. Officials also visited the school on 16 October. In all but the most exceptional of circumstances demolitions are contrary to International Humanitarian Law. We recognise that Palestinians face severe difficulty in securing building permissions for homes and infrastructure in East Jerusalem and Area C.

We continue to urge the Government of Israel to develop improved mechanisms for zoning, planning and permitting in Area C for the benefit of the Palestinian population, including by facilitating local Palestinian participation in such processes.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2020-10-15/104173>

Palestinians: Schools

Anna McMorrin (Labour) [104175] To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what assessment he has made of the implications for his policies of the demolition of UK aid-funded schools and other social and humanitarian service projects by Israeli authorities in the West Bank and Gaza; and what recent discussions he has had with his counterpart in the Israeli Government on that demolition.

James Cleverly: The UK is concerned by the continued demolition of Palestinian property, including schools, by Israeli authorities. In a joint statement on 16 October, the UK, alongside France, Germany, Spain and Italy, urged Israel to halt its policy of evictions and demolitions of Palestinian structures in the Occupied Palestinian Territories. Our Embassy in Tel Aviv also raised this issue with the Government of Israel on 13 October, alongside European partners. We keep the case for compensation under review but the UK is focused on preventing demolitions from happening in the first place. In all but the most exceptional of circumstances demolitions are contrary to International Humanitarian Law. The right to education is a basic right, and it is essential to have a strong and thriving Palestinian education system in order to provide opportunities for the next generation. This is why the UK is committed to providing support to education workers in the West Bank, and UNRWA education in the West Bank and Gaza.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2020-10-15/104175>

The statement referred to above can be read at

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/quint-statement-on-israeli-settlements>

West Bank: Foreign Aid

Anna McMorrin (Labour) [104174] To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether he has had discussions with (a) EU and (b) West Bank Protection Consortium members on (i) deducting funds from EU-Israel bilateral support and (ii) securing other compensation for demolished projects and seized aid in the West Bank.

James Cleverly: The UK is concerned by the continued demolitions of Palestinian structures by Israeli authorities. In all but the most exceptional of circumstances demolitions are contrary to International Humanitarian Law. We have made clear to the Israeli authorities our serious concern at the increase in demolitions of Palestinian properties in the West Bank and in East Jerusalem. The UK is focused on preventing demolitions from happening in the first place through our legal aid programme, which supports Bedouin communities and Palestinians facing demolition or home eviction in both the West Bank and East Jerusalem. The UK and international partners will continue to call bilaterally, and in international fora, for Israel to cease demolitions and provide a clear, transparent route to construction for Palestinians in Area C. No funds have been deducted from EU-Israel bilateral support. We have consulted a number of EU and West Bank Protection Consortium partners on the issue of compensation. They share our concerns. We are keeping the case for compensation under review.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2020-10-15/104174>

House of Lords Written Answers

Jerusalem

Lord Blencathra (Conservative) [HL8799] To ask Her Majesty's Government what representations they have made to the government of Turkey regarding President Erdogan's statement on 1 October that "Jerusalem is our city".

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: The UK recognises that Jerusalem holds particular significance for many groups around the globe, especially the three Abrahamic faiths of Christianity, Islam and Judaism. The UK's position on the status of Jerusalem is clear and long-standing: it should be determined in a negotiated settlement between the Israelis and the Palestinians. It must ensure Jerusalem is a shared capital of the Israeli and Palestinian states, with access and religious rights of both peoples respected.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2020-10-06/hl8799>

Israel: Palestinians

Baroness Tonge (Non-affiliated) [HL8837] To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of (1) the demolition of Palestinian property by the government of Israel, and (2) the impact of any such demolitions on people living in such property, during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: The UK is seriously concerned by the continued demolitions of Palestinian property by Israeli authorities, particularly at this time. In all but the most exceptional of circumstances demolitions are contrary to International Humanitarian Law (IHL). The practice causes unnecessary suffering to ordinary Palestinians, is harmful to the peace process and weakens the capacity of Palestinians to withstand the impact of COVID-19. Under IHL, an occupying power has the duty of ensuring and maintaining public health and hygiene in the occupied territory to the fullest extent of the means available to it and with the cooperation of the local authorities. We call on both parties to avoid any provocative action which might undermine the cooperation that is so critical.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2020-10-06/hl8837>

Israel: Palestinians

Baroness Tonge (Non-affiliated) [HL8838] To ask Her Majesty's Government what representations they have made to the government of Israel about reports that prominent Palestinian cultural and academic figures have been arrested by that government and are being held without charge.

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: We remain concerned about Israel's extensive use of administrative detention which, according to international law, should be used only when security makes this absolutely necessary rather than as routine practice, and as a preventive rather than a punitive measure. We continue to call on the Israeli authorities to comply with their obligations under international law and either charge or release detainees. We also continue to support the Palestinian cultural presence and identity throughout the West Bank, including in East Jerusalem, as well as Palestinian physical presence there.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2020-10-06/hl8838>

United Nations

Health Infrastructure in Occupied Palestinian Territories, Syrian Golan on 'Verge of Collapse', Speaker Tells Second Committee

The ongoing occupation of Palestinian territories and the Syrian Golan violates

international law and human rights, a situation worsening as the COVID-19 pandemic puts health infrastructure “on the verge of collapse”, the Second Committee (Economic and Financial) heard ...

... Tarik Alami, Director of the Emerging and Conflict Related Issues Division at the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia, introduced the note by the Secretary-General on the “Economic and social repercussions of the Israeli occupation on the living conditions of the Palestinian people in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, and the Arab population in the occupied Syrian Golan” (document A/75/86-E/2020/62). He noted discriminatory policies and practices, especially in the application of law, planning and zoning policies, prevent Palestinian construction in Area C and East Jerusalem.

An increase in Israeli settler attacks in 2019 was more worrisome given Israel Defense Forces sometimes accompanied them in those incidents. He also cited indefinite arbitrary detentions with documented cases of torture. The blockade of 2 million people in Gaza amounts to collective punishment, with import restrictions worsening the pandemic, while 96 per cent of water there is unfit for human consumption. ...

Responding to the report, the observer for the State of Palestine affirmed it reveals Israeli occupation is the main obstacle preventing his people from achieving the Sustainable Development Goals. However, the report is missing two sectors, first on the Dead Sea, 70 per cent of which is located in the occupied West Bank although its important natural resources have been inaccessible since the early 1980s, as well as natural gas resources in the Mediterranean Sea since approximately 2000. ...

... [he] said the situation remains catastrophic due to repressive, destructive and colonial practices, with systematic, grave violations of international law conducted with impunity. He added the pledge to “leave no country behind” will be meaningless if the occupied Palestinian territories and Syrian Golan cannot exercise their inalienable rights. ...

The representative of Israel said if she had unlimited time, she would read a shockingly long list of United Nations resolutions pushing the Palestinian narrative. Those efforts desperately deflect from the Palestinian Authority’s own role in the situation. The world is passing them by, she said, as other States normalize relations with Israel, while that Government is focused on neglect and support for terrorism. Similarly, she said the brutal Syrian regime is raising absurd allegations against Israel to turn attention from its actions against its own citizens. Stating that Israel has proven to be a partner in peace, she expressed hope this discussion will end and the situation will move forward. ...

To read the full press release see

<https://www.un.org/press/en/2020/gaef3541.doc.htm>

Economic and social repercussions of the Israeli occupation on the living conditions of the Palestinian people in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, and of the Arab population in the occupied Syrian Golan (A/75/86-E/2020/62)

<https://undocs.org/A/75/86>

TOP

Foreign Affairs

House of Commons Written Answer

Lebanon: Weapons

Jonathan Djanogly (Conservative) [102695] To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what assessment he has made of the

implications for his policies of reports that Hezbollah is storing weapons in civilian areas in Beirut.

James Cleverly: We have long been concerned by Hizballah's stockpiling of weapons within Lebanon, in contravention of relevant UN Security Council Resolutions (UNSCRs). We regularly raise this at the UN Security Council, and we call on the Lebanese authorities to abide by provisions of the relevant UNSCRs. Hizballah's destabilising influence threatens regional stability and endangers Lebanon and its people.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2020-10-13/102695>

TOP

Relevant Legislation ** new or updated today

UK Parliament

Assisted Dying Bill

<https://bills.parliament.uk/bills/2592>

Education (Assemblies) Bill

<https://bills.parliament.uk/bills/2579>

Genocide Determination Bill

<https://bills.parliament.uk/bills/2621>

Marriage Act 1949 (Amendment) Bill

<https://bills.parliament.uk/bills/2608>

Marriage and Civil Partnership (Minimum Age) Bill

<https://bills.parliament.uk/bills/2584>

Scottish Parliament

Domestic Abuse (Protection) (Scotland) Bill

<https://beta.parliament.scot/bills/domestic-abuse-protection-scotland-bill>

Hate Crime and Public Order (Scotland) Bill

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

Post-mortem Examinations (Defence Time Limit) (Scotland) Bill

<https://beta.parliament.scot/bills/post-mortem-examinations-defence-time-limit-scotland-bill>

TOP

Consultations ** new or updated today

Human Tissue (Authorisation) (Specified Type B Procedures) (Scotland) Regulations
(closing date 20 November 2020)

<https://consult.gov.scot/population-health/consultation-specified-type-b-procedures/>

Getting Married: A Consultation Paper on Weddings Law (closing date 3 December 2020)

<https://www.lawcom.gov.uk/project/weddings/#weddings-consultation-paper>

Hate crime laws (closing date 24 December 2020)

<https://www.lawcom.gov.uk/project/hate-crime/>

TOP

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