



Political Affairs Digest

A daily summary of political events affecting the Jewish Community

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House of Lords Written Answer

Skilled Workers: Clergy and Sports

Lord Moynihan (Conservative) [HL9054] To ask Her Majesty's Government what plans they have to include (1) clergy, (2) sports players, and (3) sports coaches, instructors and officials, as classified under the Standard Occupational Codes system, in their new proposed definition of a skilled worker.

Baroness Williams of Trafford: The provisions within the Immigration Rules for both Tier 2 (Sportsperson) and Tier 5 (Creative and Sporting) will continue in the future immigration system. These routes will be amended to accommodate applications from elite sportspersons and coaches from the European Economic Area and Switzerland, along with those from the rest of the world, from 1 January 2021.

The UK Government does not have any plans to include clergy, sportspersons, coaches, instructors or officials under the new Skilled Worker route. The current provisions of Tier 2 (Ministers of Religion) and Tier 5 (Religious Workers) for clergy, and Tier 2 (Sportsperson) and Tier 5 (Creative and Sporting) for sportspeople, are dedicated routes for such activities.

The UK's immigration arrangements for professional sportspersons seek to strike a balance between ensuring that UK sports can access top-end talent that will enhance sport in the UK, whilst at the same time protecting opportunities for resident players and supporting grassroots sport. The Government works with Sports Governing Bodies to set bespoke criteria, with every sport's criteria reviewed annually, ensuring that it continues to meet the changing needs of the individual sport. The success of UK sports clearly demonstrates that this system is one which works well.

The system of endorsement is operated by the Sports Governing Bodies to ensure that an objective assessment is made of each individual sportsperson. Individual clubs are asked to fulfil their sponsorship duties, in a dual-level of assurance.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2020-10-12/hl9054>

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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Holocaust

Scottish Parliament Motion

S5M-23130 Jackson Carlaw (Conservative): Sad Passing of Holocaust Survivor, Ingrid Wuga from Giffnock – That the Parliament notes with regret that Ingrid Wuga, who was a Holocaust survivor from Giffnock, sadly passed away at the age of 96 on 17 October 2020; recognises that Ingrid, who was born in Dortmund in 1924, was left with no other alternative but to leave home at the age of 15 just before the start of the Second World War; acknowledges that she arrived in the UK on the Kindertransport and moved to Scotland when her parents secured jobs in West Kilbride; understands that she met her future husband, Henry, who was also on the Kindertransport, at Pollokshields Synagogue in December 1947 and that, together, they dedicated their lives to sharing their own testimony and teaching young people about the lessons of the Holocaust; notes that, on top of her outstanding contribution to Holocaust Education, Ingrid put in a Herculean effort supporting charitable organisations, including the British Limbless ex-Serviceman's Association and The Prince and Princess of Wales Hospice in Bellahouston Park; acknowledges that it was confirmed in December 2019 that Ingrid would be awarded the British Empire Medal as part of The Queen's New Year's Honours List and that Henry was appointed an MBE in 1999 for his services to sport for disabled people; offers condolences to Henry and his family at this incredibly difficult time, and pays tribute to Ingrid for her remarkable and inspiring commitment to Holocaust education and other charitable causes.

<https://www.parliament.scot/parliamentarybusiness/28877.aspx?SearchType=Advance&ReferenceNumbers=S5M-23130>

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Israel

House of Lords Written Answers

Israel: Coronavirus

Lord Turnberg (Labour) [HL9087] To ask Her Majesty's Government what plans they have to increase collaboration with Israel with regard to (1) medical devices, (2) remote care, and (3) cutting-edge medical technology, in response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: The British Embassy in Israel has brought together numerous UK/Israel expertise exchanges covering vaccine development, testing and surveillance. Both sides continue to look to one another as new science developments are made. We have distributed widely to UK colleagues a brochure outlining many Israeli technologies and R&D projects related to COVID-19, of which several have already been followed up by both NHS England and NHSx.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2020-10-12/hl9087>

Israel: Palestinians

Baroness Tonge (Non-affiliated) [9081] To ask Her Majesty's Government, further to the Written Answer by Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon on 6 October (HL8342), what assessment they have made of the government of Israel's treatment of human rights in the Palestinian Occupied Territories; what representations they have made to that government about reports of attacks on mosques and Christian churches by Israeli citizens; and what steps they are taking to ensure that that government treats people of all religions equally.

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: Defending Freedom of Religion or Belief, and championing human rights, is a policy priority for the UK. We will continue to work to improve the lives of Palestinians. We condemn all forms of violence, including against places of worship, and raise this with the authorities when necessary.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2020-10-12/hl9081>

The answer referred to above can be read at

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2020-09-21/hl8342>

Palestinians: Travel Restrictions

Baroness Tonge (Non-affiliated) [HL9082] To ask Her Majesty's Government what representations they have made to the government of Israel about reports that travel restrictions have been placed on Palestinian mothers with new-born babies who want to travel abroad via Allenby Bridge unless such babies are registered with that government as well as by the authorities in Palestine.

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: Whilst we have not made representations on these reports, we remain deeply concerned about restrictions on freedom of movement within the West Bank, including to and from Jordan. The UK Government continues to raise our concerns about Israeli restrictions on freedom of movement and access into and out of the Occupied Palestinian Territories with the Israeli authorities.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2020-10-12/hl9082>

Palestinians: Protest

Baroness Tonge (Non-affiliated) [HL9083] To ask Her Majesty's Government what representations they have made to the government of Israel about reports that four Palestinians were injured by the Israel Defence Force during demonstrations in Kufur Qaddoum.

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: Whilst we have not made representations on these reports, we have repeatedly made clear to Israel our longstanding concerns about incidents of excessive use of force by the IDF and urge restraint in the use of live fire. We continue to stress the importance of the Israeli security forces providing appropriate protection to the Palestinian civilian population. We call on Israel to adhere to the principles of necessity and proportionality when defending its legitimate security interest.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2020-10-12/hl9083>

Maher al-Akhras

Baroness Tonge (Non-affiliated) [HL9084] To ask Her Majesty's Government what representations they have made to the government of Israel about the detention of Maher al-Akhras.

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: While we have not raised this particular case, 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.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2020-10-12/hl9084>

Palestinians: Schools

Baroness Tonge (Non-affiliated) [HL9085] To ask Her Majesty's Government what representations they have made to the government of Israel about the planned demolition of a Palestinian school that was built in Ras Al-Tin without planning permission from that government.

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: 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. 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/2020-10-12/hl9085>

Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office

Travel Advice: Israel

<https://www.gov.uk/foreign-travel-advice/israel>

Travel Advice: The Occupied Palestinian Territories

<https://www.gov.uk/foreign-travel-advice/the-occupied-palestinian-territories>

Normalising relations between Israel and its neighbours: pushing forward and Israeli-Palestinian peace process: Statement by Ambassador Jonathan Allen, UK Chargé d'Affaires to the UN, at the Security Council briefing on the situation in the Middle East

... The United Kingdom has continued to support the progress made on normalising relations between Bahrain, the United Arab Emirates and Israel. We hope others will follow suit for the benefit of the whole region, and we therefore welcome Friday's statement from the Governments of Sudan, Israel and the United States of America on the normalisation of relations between Israel and Sudan. As Foreign Secretary Dominic Raab has said, "this step is a boost for the democratic transition in Sudan and peace in the region."

Last month, Mr President, I stated that such agreements represent a profound shift in the region, a shift which must now proceed in parallel with steps to resolve the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. There is much to be done to rebuild trust. The suspension of the threat of annexation was the first step on this road. It must now become permanent. It is vital that the Palestinian Authority resumes cooperation with Israel and that the Israeli and Palestinian leaderships come together in dialogue to pursue the path of peace. ...

To rebuild trust, we must see an end to the detrimental action on the ground. Mr President, we are particularly concerned by the announcement on 15 October of nearly 5,000 settlement units, many deep in the West Bank. The expansion of settlements violates international law and is a counterproductive step ...

The United Kingdom also remains concerned about demolitions of Palestinian buildings and evictions of Palestinians from their homes across the West Bank, including East Jerusalem. ...

Mr President, the UK is seriously concerned by the possible demolition by Israeli authorities of a Palestinian school funded by the international community in Ras Al-Tin. ...

Mr President, the United Kingdom has expressed our concern of the increase in settler

violence, the destruction of olive trees and the stealing of projects coinciding with the Palestinian olive harvest. ...

And in Gaza, while relative calm has resumed, the Israeli Defense Force's discovery on 22 October of a tunnel penetrating dozens of yards into Israeli territory is of great concern. There have also been further rocket launches this month and a return to launching IED "balloons" by Gaza's militant groups. The UK condemns such indiscriminate attacks against Israeli civilians. ...

Mr President, the United Kingdom remains committed to taking forward progress on efforts towards a peaceful resolution of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. We continue to support a two-state solution, based on 1967 lines, with Jerusalem as a shared capital. We restate our support for regional and international efforts aimed at facilitating a peace process. ...

To read the full transcript see

<https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/normalising-relations-between-israel-and-its-neighbours-and-pushing-forward-and-israeli-palestinian-peace-process>

United Nations

Nickolay Mladenov Special Coordinator for the Middle East peace process briefing to the Security Council on the situation in the Middle East

... Last month at the UN General Assembly, the Secretary-General renewed his appeal for a global ceasefire in response to COVID-19, calling for a major push to make this happen by the end of the year. In the context of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, this means focusing on preventive diplomacy to avoid escalation and war in Gaza, working with all to alleviate the health and socio-economic consequences of the pandemic, modernising the economic relationship between both sides and working towards re-establishing credible negotiations with the goal of a two-State solution in line with relevant UN resolutions. ...

During the reporting period, the resurgence of COVID-19 has seriously compounded the humanitarian and economic challenges on the ground ...

Arrangements brokered by the UN continue to allow the transfer of patients from Gaza for medical treatment outside the Strip and for importing humanitarian supplies into the Occupied Palestinian Territory, even as the PA's decision to halt coordination with Israel remains in place. ...

As we remain focused on urgent health concerns, the viability of the Palestinian Authority (PA) is being severely undermined by an economic and fiscal crisis that has been exacerbated by the Palestinian decision to end civilian and security coordination with Israel. The fiscal crisis derives primarily from a collapse in domestic tax revenues during the COVID19 emergency and from the Government's refusal to receive its clearance revenues. ...

I appeal to the Palestinian leadership to resume its coordination with Israel and accept its clearance revenues – money that belongs to the Palestinian people and cannot be replaced by donor funding. When public health conditions permit, Israel should facilitate freer movement of Palestinian workers and goods into Israel and between the occupied West Bank and the Gaza Strip. ...

On 14 and 15 October, Israeli authorities advanced some 5,000 settlement housing units. This resumption of major settlement activity, which follows an eight-month break in Area C housing advancements, is of great concern. ...

During the reporting period, Israeli authorities also demolished or seized 59 Palestinian-owned structures in Area C and three in East Jerusalem, displacing 82 Palestinians, including 23 women and 40 children, and affecting 200 others. ...

On 24 September, Fatah announced that it had reached a series of understandings with Hamas, including an agreement to hold legislative and presidential elections under a proportional representation system. These discussions are a welcome development and

represent yet another effort at organizing long overdue and much needed Palestinian leadership elections, on the basis of the PLO platform. The Palestinian people have not been allowed to elect their leaders for too long. ...

Violent incidents unfortunately continued throughout the reporting period. ...

I am also deeply concerned over the deteriorating health condition of Maher Al-Akhras, a Palestinian detainee who has been on a hunger strike for over 90 days in protest of his administrative detention. ...

On 18 October, at a ceremony in Manama, Israel and Bahrain established formal diplomatic relations signing eight bilateral agreements, including a "Joint Communiqué on the establishment of diplomatic, peaceful, and friendly relations." The document affirms that the two parties will "continue their efforts to achieve a just, comprehensive, and enduring resolution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict." ...

I am concerned, Mr. President, by statements by senior Palestinian officials saying that Muslims entering the al-Aqsa mosque on the basis of the recent normalization agreements are not welcome and warning of dangerous consequences of such visits. ...

Often in this Council we have spoken of the need to act, of the urgency to act, to prevent the collapse of the two-State paradigm and to give hope to the Palestinian people – particularly the youth – that, a quarter of century after Oslo, their right to statehood can be achieved through peaceful negotiations. This is something young Israelis want too. No one wants war and conflict. But if leaders are unable to deliver on the hope for peace, this will only feed radicals and extremists. ...

I sincerely hope that new avenues of cooperation to advance Israeli-Palestinian peace will emerge. The normalization agreements between Israel and three Arab States must help create such opportunities. ...

To read the full transcript see

<https://www.un.org/unispal/document/special-coordinator-mladenovs-briefing-to-the-security-council-on-the-situation-in-the-middle-east-7/>

UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights

UN expert calls for the international community to adopt a new accountability culture respecting the Israeli occupation

The 53 year old occupation of the Palestinian Territory will only come to a just and complete end with the international community imposing accountability measures on Israel to enforce the many resolutions on the issue adopted by the Security Council, the General Assembly and the Human Rights Council, a UN human rights expert said today.

"An entirely new accountability culture is sorely needed by the United Nations to bridge the enormous gap between promise and performance," said Michael Lynk, Special Rapporteur for the Situation of human rights in the Palestinian Territory occupied since 1967. "The UN has adopted hundreds of resolutions on this occupation, and these hundreds of resolutions have been ignored and defied by Israel, the occupying power." ...

The Special Rapporteur observed that the Security Council – over the past 50 years – had adopted more than 30 binding resolutions on the Israeli occupation respecting the applicability of the Fourth Geneva Convention, the prohibition against territorial annexation, and the illegality of the Israeli settlements. Israel has accepted and applied none of them....

"The Security Council has stated that the settlements are a flagrant violation under international law," said Mr. Lynk. "I would add that they are a presumptive war crime under the 1998 Rome Statute. The settlements are the engine of the Israeli occupation.

In these circumstances, it is impossible for businesses to be engaged, directly or indirectly, with the settlements while honouring their human rights commitments."

He asked all UN member states to ensure that all corporate activities regulated by them

should cease any and all commercial relationships with the settlements. As well, he asked UN member states to prohibit the entry of all Israeli settlement goods and services into their domestic markets.

<https://www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=26424&LangID=E>

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Relevant Legislation ** new or updated today

UK Parliament

Animal Welfare (Sentencing) Bill

<https://bills.parliament.uk/bills/2622>

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>

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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/>

**** Ethnic disparities and inequality in the UK** (closing date 30 November 2020)
<https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/ethnic-disparities-and-inequality-in-the-uk-call-for-evidence/ethnic-disparities-and-inequality-in-the-uk-call-for-evidence>

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/>

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