



# Political Affairs Digest

A daily summary of political events affecting the Jewish Community

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## Home Affairs

### House of Commons Oral Answers

#### Prime Minister's Questions

**Nusrat Ghani (Conservative):** With the UK terror threat level now at severe following the horrific attacks in Paris and Vienna by cowardly Islamic State terrorists, the whole House joins the Prime Minister in heartfelt solidarity with our French and Austrian allies. Does he agree that here in the UK we must redouble our support for anti-extremism programmes such as Prevent, and does he share my concerns about UK-based TV channels such as the Islam Channel, which just this week was fined by Ofcom for giving airtime to extremist preachers who justify antisemitism, wife beating and female genital mutilation? [908159]

**The Prime Minister:** Yes, my hon. Friend is absolutely right. We stand shoulder to shoulder with France, as I have told President Macron, and shoulder to shoulder with Austria, as I have told Chancellor Kurz, in our joint war against this abominable ideology. Together, we will defeat it.

<https://hansard.parliament.uk/commons/2020-11-04/debates/8F923AAF-2F65-44A6-985F-C03BC2C4BB32/Engagements#contribution-CCD73DF3-79B4-48D7-9F2A-45A4029FB848>

#### Prime Minister's Questions

**Karl McCartney (Conservative):** ... While those of us with higher political morals than Captain Hindsight on the Opposition Front Bench have sought to do our collective best during recent times, what does my right hon. Friend believe are the views regarding antisemitism, following the recent Equality and Human Rights Commission report, that the current Leader of the Opposition—a knight of the realm, no less—holds now? Does my right hon. Friend believe that they are any different from those the right hon. and learned Gentleman displayed when serving the right hon. Member for Islington North (Jeremy Corbyn)?

**The Prime Minister:** The only comment I would make on all that was that I was genuinely amazed that the leader of the Unite union should make a remark of the kind that he did, and that the Labour party should remain in receipt of funding from Unite and take no steps to dissociate itself from that union after that remark. I did find that absolutely astonishing.

<https://hansard.parliament.uk/commons/2020-11-04/debates/8F923AAF-2F65-44A6-985F-C03BC2C4BB32/Engagements#contribution-62D6C9CF-BC4A-4B5D-A01C-0FB59501DB30>

The remark to which the Prime Minister is probably referring can be heard at 6.29mins of <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FrSEnJs6Bm0>

### Hate Crime Sentences

**Nicola Richards (Conservative):** What assessment she has made of the effectiveness of the CPS in securing sentence uplifts in hate crime cases. [908173]

**The Solicitor General (Michael Ellis):** I recognise the devastating impact that hate crimes have on victims and communities, and the CPS is committed to bringing offenders to justice. Training for prosecutors draws on input from key community groups, helping to improve the prosecution response to hate crime. In the 12 months to the end of June this year, the proportion of convictions for hate crime with a recorded sentence uplift increased to 78.4%, which is the highest rate yet.

**Nicola Richards:** Having heard directly from victims of hate crime in the west midlands, during a virtual session hosted by our candidate for police and crime commissioner, Jay Singh-Sohal, it is obvious that we need to do more to support victims of that appalling type of crime, through all stages of the judicial process. Will my right hon. and learned Friend commit to working with the CPS, and police across the country, to ensure that hate crime victims feel able to come forward and report incidents in the first place?

**The Solicitor General:** I thank my hon. Friend for her work with the Holocaust Educational Trust and on tackling antisemitism. I visited the CPS East of England yesterday, and heard about its great work on tackling hate crime. The CPS works closely around the country with members of the community, to ensure that the approach to hate crime prosecutions is sensitive and provides sufficient support to victims. For example, the CPS recently met key groups that represent the Jewish community, including the Community Security Trust, to discuss work on antisemitism. It also recently delivered a webinar on its approach to hate crime to an audience invited by the Chinese Welfare Trust and the Covid-19 anti-racism group, both of which support the Chinese and south-east Asian communities.

<https://hansard.parliament.uk/commons/2020-11-05/debates/DDBB72B5-96AD-4C4E-905B-E7C20AE794AB/HateCrimeSentences>

## House of Commons Written Answers

### Religious Buildings: Coronavirus

**Alex Cunningham (Labour)** [109343] To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of providing grants to churches and other places of worship which face potential closure as a result of the covid-19 outbreak.

**Nigel Huddleston:** Listed places of worship represent some of the nation's finest heritage. The Government recognises the very significant impact that Covid-19 has had on places of worship to continue to operate and on the ability of congregations to maintain them.

Since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, the Government has announced significant cross-sector support to deal with the impacts and aid recovery. This includes a £1.57 billion Cultural Recovery Fund announced earlier this year aimed at helping key cultural and heritage organisations, including listed places of worship. The Fund has and will continue to provide grants to cover operating costs, support organisations become financially viable again and finance stalled capital projects. In addition, many places of worship have been eligible for other Covid-19

funding schemes including the emergency grant schemes run by Historic England and the National Lottery earlier this year.

The Government is committed to supporting places of worship and will continue to monitor both the impacts of the pandemic and the wider challenges that places of worship face.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2020-10-30/109343>

### **Religious Buildings: Coronavirus**

**Afzal Khan (Labour)** [110238] To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what discussions he has had with the Muslim Council of Britain on providing guidance to Mosques ahead of the November 2020 covid-19 lockdown.

**Luke Hall:** On 2 November we held a meeting of the Places of Worship Taskforce. We have also held roundtables with a broad range of representatives from all major faiths, including from the Islamic faith, to discuss the forthcoming restrictions. These discussions, as they have been throughout the pandemic, have proved invaluable in sharing information with all our faith communities, and for hearing their concerns. We remain very grateful for the understanding of faith communities during these difficult times.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2020-11-02/110238>

### **Religious Buildings: Coronavirus**

**Afzal Khan (Labour)** [110237] To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what steps his Department is taking to provide updated covid-19 guidance for places of worship in advance of the forthcoming national lockdown.

**Luke Hall:** On 2 November, we convened a meeting of the Places of Worship Taskforce and held a series of roundtables with representatives of our major faiths. This gave us the opportunity to provide the latest information to our faith representatives and to hear their concerns. This has helped us to shape the guidance ahead of the new regulations coming into effect on 5 November.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2020-11-02/110237>

### **Religious Buildings: Coronavirus**

**Tulip Siddiq (Labour)** [110197] To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, if he will publish the scientific evidence used to support the decision to extend covid-19 lockdown restrictions to places of worship and religious gatherings.

**Luke Hall:** We have had to make some tough decisions to fight this deadly virus and the decision to close our places of worship has not been taken lightly.

In all decisions we have been guided by scientific and medical advice and we have listened carefully to the views of the scientific community, in particular the information from the Scientific Advisory Group for Emergencies (SAGE) and its sub-groups. The R-Rate is above 1 across England, therefore we must limit our interaction with others.

This has sadly meant that we have had to close a broad range of premises where people interact and gather, including places of worship.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2020-11-02/110197>

### **Coronavirus: Religious Buildings**

**Rachael Maskell (Labour Co-op)** [110179] To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what the evidential basis is for the closure of covid-19 secure places of worship under the lockdown restrictions announced on 31 October 2020; and what assessment he has made using public health data of the level of infection from those places of worship during the covid-19 outbreak.

**Luke Hall:** The Government has listened carefully to the views of the scientific community, in particular the information from the Scientific Advisory Group for Emergencies (SAGE) and its sub-groups when taking decisions on the best way to tackle the pandemic. SAGE advice continues to inform the decisions made by the Government, including the announcement made on 31 October.

In view of the increase in the R Rate, we had to take action to reduce the level of infection to protect our communities and save lives which is why we made the decision to close a broad range of premises, including places of worship for communal prayer. These measures are designed to limit the number of interactions that people have and therefore reduce the risk spread.

Data and scientific advice informing the fight against COVID-19 are published on gov.uk and specific relevant findings are shared in presentations accompanying significant policy announcements.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2020-11-02/110179>

### **Religious Buildings: Coronavirus**

**Conor McGinn (Labour)** [110175] To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, if he will publish the latest public health guidance on covid-19 and (a) communal worship and (b) private worship in churches, synagogues, mosques and temples in England.

**Luke Hall:** Our approach has always been guided by scientific and medical advice and we have listened carefully to the views of the scientific community, in particular the information from the Scientific Advisory Group for Emergencies (SAGE) and its sub-groups. The number of Covid-19 cases is growing at an exponential rate so we have needed to act to limit our interaction with others.

This has sadly meant that we have had to make the difficult decision to close our places of worship for communal worship as we need to minimise social contact wherever we can for this short period of time.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2020-11-02/110175>

### **Religious Hatred: Islam**

**Afzal Khan (Labour)** [110239] To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, pursuant to the Answer of 2 November 2020 to Question 107102 on Religious Hatred: Islam and with reference to the Government's commitment on tackling Islamophobia, what representations his Department has made to the Muslim Council of Britain on that tackling Islamophobia.

**Luke Hall:** This Government stands strongly against the discrimination and intolerance faced by Muslim communities and we are determined that Muslims in our country should be able to practice their faith in freedom. The Government engages closely with a broad spectrum of Muslim voices to tackle hatred towards Muslim communities.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2020-11-02/110239>

*The answer referred to above can be read at*

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2020-10-21/107102>

### **Religious Hatred: Islam**

**Afzal Khan (Labour)** [110240] To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, pursuant to the Answer of 2 November 2020 to Question 107103 on Religious Hatred: Islam, what steps the Government has taken to adopt a formal definition of Islamophobia to help tackle that issue.

**Luke Hall:** This Government is committed to fighting any discrimination and intolerance faced by Muslim communities and we are working to develop a

definition of anti-Muslim hatred.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2020-11-02/110240>

*The answer referred to above can be read at*

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2020-10-21/107103>

## Cabinet Office

**Updated guidance: New National Restrictions from 5 November**

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/new-national-restrictions-from-5-november>

## Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government

**COVID-19: updated guidance for the safe use of places of worship 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>

## Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, and Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy

**Updated guidance: COVID-19: 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>

**Updated guidance: COVID-19: Guidance for wedding and civil partnership receptions and celebrations**

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

## Department of Health and Social Care, and Public Health England

**COVID-19: updated guidance for arranging or attending a funeral during the coronavirus pandemic**

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-guidance-for-managing-a-funeral-during-the-coronavirus-pandemic/covid-19-guidance-for-managing-a-funeral-during-the-coronavirus-pandemic>

## Welsh Government

**Updated guidance to local authorities, approved premises and places of worship on marriages and civil partnerships: coronavirus**

<https://gov.wales/guidance-marriages-and-civil-partnerships-coronavirus-html>

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## Israel

### House of Commons Written Answer

#### **Contact Tracing: Israel**

**Jonathan Gullis (Conservative)** [86780] To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, pursuant to the Answer of 15 August 2020 to Question 70524 on Israel: Contact Tracing, what comparative assessment the Government has made of the effectiveness of Israel's track and trace technology.

**Helen Whately:** As part of our National Health Service COVID-19 app development process, we maintain an overview of contact tracing apps in development and operation around the world, including Israel's HaMagen app.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2020-09-08/86780>

*The answer referred to above can be read at*

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2020-07-07/70524>

### House of Lords Written Answers

#### **West Bank: Housing**

**The Marquess of Lothian (Conservative)** [HL9492] To ask Her Majesty's Government whether they have raised objections to the approval of new settlement homes in the West Bank with the government of Israel; what assessment they have made, if any, of the number of new settlement homes that have been advanced in the West Bank this year; and what is their assessment of the impact of the increase in new settlement building on prospects for a two-state solution between Israel and Palestine.

**Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon:** We consistently call for an immediate end to all actions that undermine the viability of the two-state solution, including settlement expansion within the West Bank. As the UK made clear on 16 October, in a joint statement alongside France, Germany, Italy and Spain, we are deeply concerned by the recent decision taken by the Israeli authorities to advance more than 4,900 settlement building units in the Occupied Palestinian Territories. Our Embassy in Tel Aviv raised our concern with the Government of Israel on 13 October, alongside European partners. The UK's position on settlements is clear. They are illegal under international law, present an obstacle to peace, and threaten the physical viability of a two-state solution. Settlement expansion is also a counterproductive move in light of the positive developments of normalisation agreements reached between Israel, United Arab Emirates, Bahrain and Sudan. We urge Israel to halt settlement expansion immediately. We are encouraging both sides to maintain calm and avoid taking actions which make peace more difficult to achieve.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2020-10-22/hl9492>

*The statement referred to above can be read at*

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

#### **Maher al-Akhras**

**Lord Hylton (Crossbench)** [HL9535] To ask Her Majesty's Government what representations they have made to the government of Israel for the release on medical and compassionate grounds of Maher al-Akhras.

**Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon:** Officials in Tel Aviv have raised this case with the Government of Israel. 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/2020-10-26/hl9535>

## Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office

### **Demolition of village in the Occupied Palestinian Territories**

Following the demolition of Humsa Al- Baqai'a, Minister for the Middle East James Cleverly said: I am seriously concerned by the demolition of Humsa Al- Baqai'a, a Bedouin village in the Occupied Palestinian Territories.

This act caused unnecessary suffering to many vulnerable Palestinians, including 41 children, and may impact the community's ability to withstand Covid-19. It is also detrimental to prospects for peace.

2020 has seen the highest levels of demolitions of Palestinian homes and structures since 2016. I call on the Government of Israel to cease this policy, and provide Palestinians with a clear, transparent route to construction in Area C of the West Bank.

In all but the most exceptional of circumstances, demolitions such as these are a violation of International Humanitarian Law. This latest demolition by the Israeli Authorities destroyed the homes of 11 households comprising of 73 people, including 41 children. The UK provides funding to the West Bank Protection Consortium, which is coordinating with the Palestinian Red Cross and the United Nations to provide emergency shelter to the community of Humsa Al-Baqai'a.

The UK also continues to support Palestinians to stay on their land, including through: the West Bank Protection Consortium which provides essential infrastructure for vulnerable Palestinians in Area C, and funding legal aid which helps Palestinian communities challenge eviction and demolitions decisions in the Israeli legal system.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/demolition-of-village-in-the-occupied-palestinian-territories-uk-statement>

## Department for International Trade

### **Guidance: Trade with the Palestinian Authority from 1 January 2021**

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/summary-of-the-uk-palestinian-authority-political-trade-and-partnership-agreement>

## UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs

### **UN agencies and international NGOs call for the protection of Palestinian olive harvesters**

International NGOs and UN agencies call on the Israeli authorities to protect Palestinians participating in the ongoing olive harvest season, as well as their property, from violence by Israeli settlers, and ensure that farmers can access their land freely and safely.

In the first four weeks of the season alone (7 October – 2 November), the Office for Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) recorded 33 incidents where people known or believed to be Israeli settlers attacked Palestinians or damaged their trees or produce. Twenty-five Palestinians were injured, over 1,000 olive trees were burnt or otherwise damaged, and large amounts of produce were stolen. In some incidents, Israeli Security Forces intervened in clashes between Palestinians and settlers, including by shooting tear gas canisters and rubber bullets, resulting in the injury of olive harvesters, and forcing

them to leave the groves.

As in previous years, the Israeli authorities allow farmers to reach their farmland near certain settlements just 2-4 days during the entire season, citing the need to prevent friction with settlers. This not only undermines the productivity of the trees and Palestinian farmers' ability to harvest them, but also fails to prevent settlers from vandalizing trees when the farmers are away. ...

The annual olive harvest is a key economic, social and cultural event for Palestinians. Settler violence and access restrictions undermine the safety and livelihoods of many, which is more concerning than ever during the current economic crisis, brought about by the pandemic. ...

**To read the full press release see**

<https://www.ochaopt.org/content/un-agencies-and-international-ngos-call-protection-palestinian-olive-harvesters>

### **West Bank witnesses largest demolition in years: Statement by Yvonne Helle, the Humanitarian Coordinator *ad interim* for the occupied Palestinian territory**

... 73 people, including 41 children, were displaced when Israeli authorities demolished their homes and other structures and destroyed belongings in the Palestinian community of Humsa Al Bqai'a. Three quarters of the community's population lost their shelters, making this the largest forced displacement incident in over four years.

Humanitarian agencies visited the community and recorded 76 demolished structures, more than in any other single demolition in the past decade. The destroyed properties – including homes, animal shelters, latrines and solar panels – were essential to, livelihoods, wellbeing and dignity of community members, whose rights have been violated. ...

So far in 2020, 689 structures have been demolished across the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, more than in any full year since 2016; rendering 869 Palestinians homeless. The lack of Israeli-issued building permits is typically cited as a reason, even though, due to the restrictive and discriminatory planning regime, Palestinians can almost never obtain such permits. Demolitions are a key means of creating an environment designed to coerce Palestinians to leave their homes. ...

I remind all parties that the extensive destruction of property and the forcible transfer of protected people in an occupied territory are grave breaches of the Fourth Geneva Convention. ...

**To read the full press release see**

<https://www.ochaopt.org/content/west-bank-witnesses-largest-demolition-years>

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## **Foreign Affairs**

### **House of Lords Written Answer**

#### **Ibrahim Mounir**

**Lord Marlesford (Conservative)** [HL9551] To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the appointment of Ibrahim Mounir to the role of Acting General Guide of the Muslim Brotherhood; and what assessment they have made of any threat posed by his presence (1) to national security, and (2) to their international relations.

**Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon:** We do not comment on individuals, but the Government keeps under review the views promoted and activities undertaken by the Muslim Brotherhood, including their associates in the UK. Any allegations of threats to UK national security or misuse of charity funding within the UK are robustly investigated and appropriate action taken.

## **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>

Justice Committee, stage 1 evidence session

<https://www.parliament.scot/parliamentarybusiness/report.aspx?r=12919&i=116783#ScotParlOR>

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