



Political Affairs Digest

A daily summary of political events affecting the Jewish Community

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House of Commons Written Answers

Collective Worship and Marriage: Coronavirus

Edward Leigh (Conservative) [110039] To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what assessment he has made of the effect of the (a) covid-19 lockdown process on the human right to practice religion corporately and (b) ban on marriages during lockdown on the right to family life.

Luke Hall: Freedom of religion or belief is a fundamental human right, and one which underpins many of the others. The closure of our places of worship for communal prayer and for weddings is a step to be considered only in the most exceptional circumstances. However, our view is that this is a qualified right, subject to necessary limitations in the interest of public safety.

This includes the protection of health to protect the fundamental right to life of the population set out in Article 2 of the European Convention on Human Rights. Article 2 remains the overriding concern for the protection of the nation's health as a whole.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2020-11-02/110039>

Collective Worship: Coronavirus

Edward Leigh (Conservative) [110040] To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, whether the Places of Worship Taskforce was consulted on the announcement that communal worship will not be allowed during the new covid-19 lockdown.

Luke Hall: The Places of Worship Taskforce met on 2 November. In addition, roundtables have been held with the country's major faith groups to discuss the now published guidance.

Discussions with our faith groups at these meetings, as they have been throughout the pandemic, have proved to be extremely helpful in sharing information with our faith groups, as well as hearing of their concerns. We are very grateful to all members of the Taskforce for their support and understanding during these difficult times for our faith communities, and we will continue to draw on the expertise of the Taskforce members.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2020-11-02/110040>

Collective Worship: Coronavirus

Mark Menzies (Conservative) [110113] To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what steps he is taking to support communal religious worship while churches, mosques and other premises are closed for services.

Luke Hall: We know how important communal worship is within many of our faith communities, but to limit the spread of the virus, places of worship will be closed for communal prayer. However, they will be permitted to open for individual prayer and to record or livestream services so that worshippers can participate at home. In addition, funerals can be attended by a maximum of thirty people.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2020-11-02/110113>

Collective Worship: Coronavirus

Emma Hardy (Labour) [110896] To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of allowing communal worship to continue during the November 2020 covid-19 lockdown.

Luke Hall: With regret, places of worship will be closed for communal prayer. As the rate of infection is rising, we have made the decision to close a broad range of premises, including places of worship. These measures are designed to limit the number of interactions that people have and therefore reduce the risk spread. Places of worship are permitted to open for individual prayer and for the recording or live streaming of services so that worshippers can participate at home. In addition, funerals are also permitted and can be attended by a maximum of thirty people.

The regulations now in force will expire on 2 December, at which point we hope to be able to ease restrictions.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2020-11-03/110896>

Religious Buildings: Coronavirus

Andrew Rosindell (Conservative) [110078] To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what assessment his Department has made of the risk of covid-19 spreading in places of worship where hygiene and social distancing measures are followed.

Luke Hall: We are very grateful to our faith communities for all their efforts to ensure their places of worship are as Covid-secure as possible. However, the evidence from the scientific community, and from SAGE is that the rate of infection continues to rise and we need to reduce the level of interaction and the number of gatherings that take place. The closure of places of worship for communal prayer is one such decision.

These restrictions have not been introduced lightly. We recognise that religious practice is of fundamental importance to millions of people which is why we are enabling individual prayer in places of worship for those religions who practice in this way.

The regulations now in force will expire on 2 December, at which point we hope to be able to ease restrictions.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2020-11-02/110078>

Religious Buildings: Coronavirus

Andrew Rosindell (Conservative) [110079] To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what assessment his Department has made of the potential effect of the closure of places of worship in response to covid-19 lockdown restrictions on the (a) mental health and (b) physical wellbeing of people who regularly attend religious services and gatherings.

Luke Hall: We know how vital places of worship are to many people's health and

wellbeing. They play an important role in spiritual and mental health, and in bringing our communities together.

However, we cannot ignore the fact that the rate of infection is rising. The closure of our places of worship for communal prayer is to limit the number of interactions, thereby protecting the health of our community and the NHS.

The regulations now in force will expire on 2 December, at which point we hope to be able to ease restrictions.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2020-11-02/110079>

House of Lords Written Answer

Sex and Relationship Education

Lord Maginnis of Drumglass (Independent Ulster Unionist) [HL9548] To ask Her Majesty's Government what are the intended educational outcomes for the pupils of the sexual aspects to be included in relationships education in primary schools; whether parents have the right to withdraw their children from any such classes; and what discretion head teachers have about permitting the teaching of relationships education.

Baroness Berridge: We want to support all young people to be happy, healthy and safe. That is why we made Relationships Education compulsory for primary school pupils, Relationships and Sex Education (RSE) compulsory for secondary school pupils, and Health Education compulsory for pupils in all state-funded schools.

There is no requirement for primary schools to cover sex education. If a primary school chooses to teach sex education, it must be covered in the school's RSE policy. Schools are required to consult parents on a draft of their policy. The statutory guidance states that when schools consult with parents on their policy, they should also ensure that they provide examples of the resources that they plan to use in teaching the new subjects as this can be reassuring for parents and enables them to continue the conversations started in class at home. This will also reassure parents that the resources schools choose to use are age appropriate and do not contain oversexualised content.

The department remains committed to supporting all schools in their preparations to deliver the content of these subjects. On 24 September 2020 the department published the 'Plan your relationships, sex and health curriculum' implementation guidance to support schools to choose appropriate resources. Training resources were also published alongside the guidance and will equip all schools to provide comprehensive teaching in these areas in an age-appropriate way. These materials should give schools the confidence to construct a curriculum that reflects diversity of views and backgrounds, whilst fostering all pupils' respect for others, understanding of healthy relationships, and ability to look after their own safety and wellbeing. This guidance is available at:

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/teaching-about-relationships-sex-and-health>

In primary schools, age-appropriate relationships education will involve supporting children to learn about what healthy relationships are and their importance, as well as how to develop mutually respectful relationships in all contexts, including online. This will then provide a foundation for RSE at secondary school. Children will also be taught the importance of permission-seeking and giving in relationships with friends, peers and adults, as the building blocks for consent in secondary school. Where sex education is covered in primary schools, parents have an automatic right to withdraw their child from this part of the curriculum, although not from any sex education in the science curriculum. Head teachers must comply with these requests from parents.

The findings of the impact assessment published in January 2019 refer to the

importance of teaching children and young people about healthy relationships as an element in the approach to contributing to reducing child sexual exploitation. These findings can be viewed at:

<https://www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2019/924/impacts>

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2020-10-26/hl9548>

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Israel

House of Lords Written Answer

USA: Non-governmental Organisations

The Marquis of Lothian (Conservative) [HL9785] To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of reports that the government of the United States is considering (1) declaring a number of humanitarian organisations who have criticised the government of Israel over its policies toward Palestinians anti-Semitic, and (2) discouraging governments from supporting those organisations' work; and what representations they have received from any potentially affected human rights group about that issue.

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: The UK is committed to combatting the rise of anti-Semitism in all its forms, and we have a regular, frank and open dialogue with international partners on this issue. The UK also respects the rights and freedoms of human rights defenders and organisations. They must be able to operate freely, including in Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territories.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2020-10-29/hl9785>

Welsh Assembly Written Answer

Israeli Ambassador: Meetings

Darren Millar (Conservative) [WQ81454] Will the First Minister list, in date order, all meetings either he or his Ministers have held with the Israeli Ambassador and/or Deputy Israeli Ambassador since 12 December 2018?

The First Minister: Eluned Morgan, in her role as Minister for International Relations and the Welsh Language, met Israel's Deputy Ambassador, Sharon Bar-Li, on 7 March 2019.

Ambassador Regev attended St David's Day receptions for the London-based diplomatic corp hosted by Eluned Morgan, in her role as Minister for International Relations and Welsh Language, on 22 February 2019 and 5 March 2020.

<https://record.assembly.wales/WrittenQuestion/81454>

United Nations

Secretary-General, Deeply Saddened by Palestinian Chief Negotiator Saeb Erekat's, Death, Hails His Dedication to Peaceful Pursuit of Dignity, Legitimate Rights

... I am deeply saddened by the death of Dr. Saeb Erekat, Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) Secretary-General and Chief Negotiator for Palestinians in the Middle East Peace Process.

I am grateful to have known Dr. Erekat and to have called him my friend. He was dedicated

to the peaceful pursuit of justice, dignity and the legitimate rights of Palestinians to self-determination, sovereignty and statehood.

Now is the time to continue his crucial work and end the conflict that has tragically affected the lives of so many. I reiterate my own and the United Nations' commitment to support all efforts to bring the parties together to achieve a long-awaited, just and sustainable two-State solution, with Israel and Palestine living side by side in peace and security.

On behalf of the United Nations, I extend our heartfelt condolences to Dr. Erekat's family, President [Mahmoud] Abbas, the people of Palestine and his many friends and supporters around the world.

<https://www.un.org/press/en/2020/sqsm20408.doc.htm>

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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>

Scottish Government Freedom of Information release

<https://www.gov.scot/publications/foi-202000077510/>

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

**** closes in 9 days**

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