



Political Affairs Digest

A daily summary of political events affecting the Jewish Community

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House of Commons Written Answers

Hate Crime: Coronavirus

Bambos Charalmbous (Labour) [114992] To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps she is taking to tackle hate crime during the autumn 2020 covid-19 lockdown.

Kit Malthouse: Since the outbreak of Covid-19 we know that some police forces have reported some increases in reported hate crimes, including where people of Asian origin have been targeted. These offences are completely unacceptable. The Home Office are working closely with the National Police Chief's Council to ensure that all police forces are providing reassurance to affected communities and encouraging hate crime reporting during the pandemic. The Government are also working with civil society partners to understand what issues there are for communities.

Government continues to work with communities around the country and the police to ensure people of all backgrounds have access to the latest information and are supported through this period.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2020-11-12/114992>

Coronavirus: Exercise and Religious Buildings

Mark Hendrick (Labour Co-op) [113495] To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if his Department will publish the science-based evidence on the transmission of covid-19 in places of (a) worship and (b) exercise.

Nadine Dorries: Throughout the pandemic, the Government has listened carefully to the views of the scientific community, 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. 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.

Unfortunately, we know that the virus spreads readily in indoor environments. These restrictions are difficult in the first instance, including for those who want to use gyms and places of worship, but that we have to find a balance to make sure

we reduce the transmission rates and save lives.

We realise the impacts that these regulations have on people's health and wellbeing and we aim to minimise the impact wherever possible and noting that these restrictions are time limited. The Government have published guidance on mental health and wellbeing which includes guidance on looking after physical wellbeing and this is available at the following link:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-guidance-for-the-public-on-mental-health-and-wellbeing/guidance-for-the-public-on-the-mental-health-and-wellbeing-aspects-of-coronavirus-covid-19#what-can-help-your-mental-health-and-wellbeing>

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2020-11-10/113495>

Religious Buildings: Coronavirus

Anne Marie Morris (Conservative) [112061] To ask the Member for South West Bedfordshire, representing the Church Commissioners, what discussions the Church Commissioners have had with the Government on allowing places of worship to remain open during lockdown if they continue to implement additional covid-secure measures.

Andrew Selous: Following the Government announcement of a second lockdown, churches have been required to close again for public worship, between 5th November and 2nd December. The Archbishops of Canterbury and York, the Bishop of London and senior Christian and other faith leaders wrote to the Prime Minister about this and their letter can be read here:

[https://www.churchofengland.org/sites/default/files/2020-](https://www.churchofengland.org/sites/default/files/2020-11/Faith%20communities%20letter%20to%20Prime%20Minister%20%28ii%29.pdf)

[11/Faith%20communities%20letter%20to%20Prime%20Minister%20%28ii%29.pdf](https://www.churchofengland.org/sites/default/files/2020-11/Faith%20communities%20letter%20to%20Prime%20Minister%20%28ii%29.pdf)

In it they concluded: "We have already said there is no scientific rationale for suspension of Public Worship where it is compliant with the guidance that we have worked jointly with government to establish. We believe government, and Public Health England, accept this. Government is making decisions about what aspects of our life during this period of restrictions are essential. We believe we have demonstrated that continuation of public worship is essential, for all the reasons we have set out above. We call on government to recognise and support this, and enable us to continue to worship safely, as part of the essential fabric of the nation." The Church of England remains in dialogue with the Government about this as part of the Government's Places of Worship Task Force. I commend the work of clergy and volunteers across the country during this very challenging time.

Church buildings may remain open for individual prayer where it has been possible to make them COVID-secure. The Church has continued to encourage clergy to broadcast services and make resources available online where possible. Guidance and advice from Public Health England and the Church of England is being distributed to clergy and is published on the Church of England website here:

<https://www.churchofengland.org/resources/coronavirus-covid-19-guidance-churches>

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2020-11-05/112061>

Churches: Coronavirus

Chris Green (Conservative) [113564] To ask the hon. Member for South West Bedfordshire, representing the Church Commissioners, what assessment the Commissioners have made of the effect of churches on community health and wellbeing through their provision of food banks, youth services, mental health services, addiction support services and other community services during the covid-19 outbreak and associated lockdowns.

Andrew Selous: The parish church is a key source of community support and I commend the work of clergy and volunteers across the country during this very challenging time.

Recent research published by Theos and the Church Urban Fund <https://www.theosthinktank.co.uk/cmsfiles/GRACE-CUF-v10-combined.pdf> and separately by the National Churches Trust <https://www.houseofgood.nationalchurchestrust.org/>

has shown the substantial social and economic contribution parishes, and cathedrals make to their local communities.

Across the dioceses of the Church of England churches are operating 35,000 based projects which serve the needs of their communities, I am pleased to say that many of these have continued to operate during the pandemic within the guidelines set out by Government on Covid-19, providing crisis support such as foodbanks, bereavement counselling, night shelters, debt relief advice, as well as project work to combat modern slavery and support victim of domestic abuse.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2020-11-10/113564>

Civil Partnerships and Marriage: Ceremonies

Sarah Olney (Liberal Democrat) [105624] To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, if he will put in place a mandatory two-week notice period for changing guidelines for marriages and civil partnerships ceremonies.

Penny Mordaunt: ... On 5 November, the Department for Health and Social Care acted swiftly in accordance with growing evidence of virus prevalence to put in place new national COVID-19 restrictions in England. Under these new restrictions, weddings and civil partnership ceremonies are not permitted to take place, except in exceptional circumstances where one of those getting married is seriously ill and not expected to recover. We recognise that the restrictions may be disappointing for those who are planning such events. However, by their nature, weddings and civil partnership ceremonies are events that bring families and friends together from across the country and sometimes across the world, making them high risk events for transmission of the virus.

For further information on COVID-19 restrictions, please see

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

Information for Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland is available on related websites.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2020-10-19/105624>

Coronavirus: Travel

Hilary Benn (Labour) [112997] To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether someone is able to travel abroad under the November 2020 covid-19 lockdown rules to attend a commemorative event to celebrate the life of someone who has died or to visit their grave.

Nadine Dorries: In England, individuals must remain at home unless they meet an exemption, which includes attending a commemorative event celebrating the life of a person who has died. In addition, all but essential travel is advised against, including foreign and domestic travel. Any individual who travels abroad to attend a commemorative event must follow the guidance set out by the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office. In addition, adherence to the COVID-19 rules in the destination travelled to must be followed. This may include self-isolating, providing details to local authorities, testing for COVID-19 or even restrictions on entry.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2020-11-09/112997>

House of Lords Oral Answers

Integrated Communities Strategy

Baroness Cox (Crossbench): To ask Her Majesty's Government what progress they have made towards their commitment in the *Integrated Communities Strategy Green Paper*, published on 14 March 2018, to "explore the legal and practical challenges of limited reform relating to the law on marriage and religious weddings".

The Advocate-General for Scotland (Lord Stewart of Dirleton): [*Inaudible*]—difficulties in addressing this issue that mean we are doing so with the greatest care. The Law Commission separately is looking at aspects of the problem and has consulted with a wide range of groups with an interest. The Government continue the exploration both of limited reform and of non-legislative options. Any proposals affecting how religious groups are permitted to conduct marriages must be thoroughly assessed for fairness.

Baroness Cox: My Lords, I remain deeply concerned, because there is no evidence of any significant progress since the publication of the *Integrated Communities Strategy Green Paper* over two years ago. Given the strong recommendations of the Casey review, the sharia law review, the new Civitas report and the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, and the Private Members' Bills I have submitted since 2011, with cross-party support and the support of Muslim women's groups, will the Minister give an assurance at last that government legislation will be introduced as a matter of urgency? So many Muslim women in this country are suffering in ways which are totally unacceptable and, as I always say, would make our suffragettes turn in their graves.

Lord Stewart of Dirleton: My Lords, my noble friend's concern about this matter is indeed a matter of record. The Government are aware that the Law Commission is tasked with investigating the matter and reporting. Its report is anticipated by the middle of next year. The Government's manifesto commitment was to explore the matters; that exploration will be based upon the thorough and meticulous research which is being carried out.

Viscount Bridgeman (Conservative): The Government previously assured the House that there is no need for a change in the law because all citizens can access their rights according to law. Yet the chasm between the *de jure* situation and the *de facto* reality is an abyss into which countless women are falling and suffering as a result. Is the Minister able to assure the House that repeated commitments to "continue the exploration" of reform are not used to kick these issues into the long grass?

Lord Stewart of Dirleton: My Lords, the Government have no intention of kicking the matter into the long grass. The Law Commission's report is anticipated in the second part of next year. In the mean-time, the Government are contemplating also the introduction of interim measures and continue to explore the matter themselves, alongside the work being carried out by the Law Commission.

Lord Singh of Wimbledon: My Lords, the Government have a clear responsibility to protect the legal rights of vulnerable girls entering into that religious marriage. Simply saying all citizens can access their legal rights is like saying that all citizens have a right to dine in the Dorchester. Will the Minister agree that, while religious ceremonies should be respected, both marriage partners should be made aware of the law of the land on gender equality and women's rights?

Lord Stewart of Dirleton: My Lords, I agree with the noble Lord's point. As my predecessor, the noble and learned Lord, Lord Keen of Elie, has remarked in your Lordships' House in the past, the matter is a social and educational question as much as it is a legal one. It is in order to establish the extent of the problem that the Government are continuing to await the findings of the Law Commission and to look in detail at the meticulous research being carried out.

Lord Ponsonby of Shulbrede (Labour): My Lords, does the Minister understand that it

is relatively common for couples to come to family courts in England and Wales saying that they are married under sharia law, only to be told that the court does not recognise this status of marriage? The Government plan to support awareness programmes arising out of Dame Louise Casey's review of marriage published in 2015. Can the Minister tell us what steps have been taken to provide such educational material in the citizens advice bureaux and in the family courts across the country?

Lord Stewart of Dirleton: My Lords, sharia law is not part of the legal system of England and Wales, and that has been made clear in the past. In relation to the provision of material via the citizens advice bureaux, to which the noble Lord refers, I will write to him about the availability of that material and how it is being promulgated through these bodies.

Baroness Hussein-Ece (Liberal Democrat): Last month, I attended a nikah ceremony at the impressive Cambridge eco mosque, and I was impressed by the young imam there, who made it perfectly clear that he would refuse to perform a nikah for non-British couples and those who had not already taken part in a legal marriage in this country. Are the Government satisfied that this good practice is happening in all religious ceremonies across the country?

Lord Stewart of Dirleton: My Lords, the point raised by the noble Baroness is important. To repeat the terms of a previous answer, that matter is part of the social and educational function, which the Government are exploring.

Baroness Uddin (Non-affiliated): My Lords, for the record, may I set straight that it is not sharia marriages but sharia-compliant marriages, or religious ceremonies? My generation of women understood implicitly that a valid marriage is a registered one. This appears not to be the case for a significant proportion of my daughter's generation, because the law has allowed this ambiguous anomaly to continue. The Government are fully cognisant that up to 100,000 religious ceremonies do not proceed to civil register. Will the Minister undertake to address this at the Government's earliest convenience, through a small amendment to the Marriage Act, which has been called for for some time by leading organisations? That would not only safeguard women but empower women with their full rights.

Lord Stewart of Dirleton: My Lords, I am obliged to the noble Baroness for her correction. With regard to a change in the law, it is precisely to avoid the creation of inconsistency and anomaly that the Government are waiting for the conclusion of the Law Commission's investigations and their own work before considering whether legislation is appropriate.

Baroness Sanderson of Welton (Conservative): My Lords, there seem to be complex reasons behind the number of marriages that are not legally binding. Does my noble and learned friend agree that any way forward must take account of these issues?

Lord Stewart of Dirleton: Some couples have a legally binding religious marriage, while others do not, whether by choice or because they did not know that they could. We need a much better understanding of the factors behind this because, without such real insight into these matters, no solution can change what is happening or be sensitive to the issues facing individuals and the differing voices within communities. That is the Government's approach.

Baroness Warsi (Conservative): My Lords, the honourable Member for the Medway area recently introduced the Marriage (Authorised Belief Organisations) Bill in the other place. It would mean that people who wished to be wedded at a humanist ceremony would not to have to attend a registry office afterwards to make the marriage legally binding. Will the Government support this Bill? Secondly, nearly a decade after the issue of unregistered Muslim marriages was first discussed by a Conservative-led Government, how do the Government reconcile their stated support for the rights and protection of women with their failure to act on this issue for over 10 years?

Lord Stewart of Dirleton: My Lords, the Government invited the Law Commission

to make recommendations about how marriage by humanist and other non-religious belief organisations could be incorporated into a revised or new scheme for all marriages that is simple, fair and consistent. The Government will decide on provision on the basis of those recommendations. The Law Commission published a consultation paper on 3 September as part of its review, and welcomes responses from all.

Lord Beith (Liberal Democrat): My Lords, does the Minister appreciate that the right to a legally recognised marriage in their own place of worship was secured after a long struggle by non-conformists in England and Wales, and that nothing should be done to diminish that right or, indeed, to prevent us extending it to other groups? But what constitutes a legally valid religious wedding, and what rights, protections and obligations in law it confers, also needs to be clear. Nobody should be tricked, misled or pressured into a form of marriage that is not valid in law.

Lord Stewart of Dirleton: My Lords, I wholeheartedly endorse the noble Lord's observation that nobody should be tricked or compelled into a marriage that is not recognised by law. To continue the theme of my earlier answers, the Government are very concerned that, as well as being an opportunity for legal reform, these matters are socially and educationally important, and the Government continue to investigate the social and educational reasons why people enter into marriages that are not valid.

<https://hansard.parliament.uk/lords/2020-11-17/debates/584CAB3C-C60C-4610-85BD-A08E754ABE8C/IntegratedCommunitiesStrategy>

The Green Paper referred to above can be read at

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/696993/Integrated_Communities_Strategy.pdf

Information about the Law Commission review referred to above can be read at

<https://www.lawcom.gov.uk/law-commission-begins-work-on-weddings-reform/>

and

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

The Casey Review, referred to above, can be read at

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/575973/The_Casey_Review_Report.pdf

The Sharia Law review referred to above can be read at

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/678478/6.4152_HO_CPFGR_Report_into_Sharia_Law_in_the_UK_WEB.pdf

The Civitas report referred to above can be read at

<http://www.civitas.org.uk/content/files/A-Fallen-through-the-cracks.pdf>

The Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe resolution referred to above can be read at

<http://assembly.coe.int/nw/xml/XRef/Xref-XML2HTML-en.asp?fileid=25353>

House of Lords Written Answers

Churches: Repairs and Maintenance

Lord Alton of Liverpool (Crossbench) [HL10036] To ask Her Majesty's Government what estimate they have made of the rate of closure of churches in recent years; what assessment has been made of the ability of worshipping communities to fund ongoing repairs to church buildings; and what plans they have to provide support to worshipping communities to help maintain church buildings.

Baroness Barran: Historic England works closely with faith communities on the management of historic places of worship.

When a place of worship is no longer required for regular worship it can still make a valuable contribution to the wider community; Historic England works with faith communities to develop a sustainable future when they are not used actively for worship, retaining as much of their special historical and architectural significance as possible. Only in a small minority of cases do places of worship have to close. Historic England also offers bespoke advice to those who manage places of worship on how to address repairs.

In 2016, the Taylor Review: Sustainability of English Churches and Cathedrals was commissioned to examine the funding and sustainability of listed Church of England churches. The Review considered that a more strategic approach was needed to ensure that the previous large investments of public money were protected by timely maintenance and repair of these buildings. Consequently, the DCMS-funded Taylor Review Pilot was commissioned to test some recommendations made in the Review, pairing advice and support from building conservation and community development experts with targeted grant funding for maintenance and minor repairs. The evaluation, which was published in October 2020, demonstrated the impact of this project on historic places of worship in the pilot areas, with just over £1m of grant funding for repairs allocated almost equally between both areas to 136 applicants.

The Government has set out its vision and strategy to protect the historic environment, including England's places of worship, in the 2017 Heritage Statement. Any further financial support is subject to the Spending Review, which is due to conclude later this month.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2020-11-09/hl10036>

The Taylor Review, referred to above, can be read at

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/669667/Taylor_Review_Final.pdf

The evaluation referred to above can be read at

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/923678/Taylor_Review_Pilot_report_-_Oct20-FINAL-c.pdf

The Heritage Statement referred to above can be read at

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/664657/Heritage_Statement_2017_final_-_web_version_.pdf

Welsh Assembly Ministerial Statement and Q&A

Marking Interfaith Week

351 Jane Hutt (Deputy Minister and Chief Whip): ... Interfaith Week celebrates the contribution people of faith across this country have made to their communities. It's hard to imagine when than in the recent history of the COVID-19 pandemic this contribution has been more necessary or more appreciated by so many, and it is at times like this, times of adversity, that care and compassion in people and communities of faith and no faith shine through. ...

In February, communities were devastated by storm Dennis, Ciara and Jorge, and, just a few weeks later, we moved into a national lockdown that brought unprecedented and extraordinary restrictions on every aspect of our lives. ... So little of our lives has been left untouched, including those of faith communities, who were asked for a long period not to congregate, not to open their places of worship, not to mark their important festivals in the way they usually would. No Member here would underestimate how great an ask that was, neither will any Member be surprised to know that these restrictions did not diminish the efforts and spirit of our faiths in Wales. And while the physical doors were shut, the work

did not stop. In fact ... your resourcefulness and energy to find ways to keep in touch with your own worshippers has been remarkable. You've reached out to the wider community, and you hold both the gratitude and the admiration of this Government and the Senedd as a whole. ...

The way the Government and the faith communities have been able to work together during the past months is testimony to the strength and importance of the faith communities forum. It reflects the long-standing, multicultural and multifaith traditions that are deeply rooted in communities across Wales, and has enabled us to keep an open and constructive dialogue. ... I hope that all Members will join me in marking Interfaith Week and celebrating the outstanding work of our communities of faith and no faith in this extraordinary year.

363 Laura Anne Jones (Conservative): ... Hate crime is an increasing problem in the UK, and sadly Wales is no exception. Police forces in England and Wales recorded a 3 per cent increase in recorded religious hate crime incidents in 2018-19. Although the majority of religious hate crimes are conducted against Muslims, the rise of antisemitism is a major concern, with the number of reported incidents against Jews doubling from 2018 to 2019. While it is likely that the increase in hate crime has been driven by improvements in recording by police and a growing awareness of hate crime, there is no doubt that the problem is escalating. ...

369 Jane Hutt: ... I think we also have to face the fact that there is hate crime. Only a few weeks ago, we had the Hate Crime Awareness Week, and it was very important that we looked at the statistics. ... I met with ambassadors of Victim Support Cymru who launched their hate crime charter, focusing on the rights of victims of hate crime. We signed up, as a Welsh Government, to the charter, showing our commitment to playing our part in tackling hate crime, also recognising that we looked at statistics from the past year and there was actually a decrease in religious hate crime. But we know that it is also about people coming forward, feeling that they're confident to report. I made the point that no person in Wales should have to tolerate prejudice or hate crime, and everyone has the right to respect and should be able to go through their lives without being insulted, harassed or attacked. ...

386 Caroline Jones (Independent): ... Deputy Minister, do you agree that interfaith disputes have been the root cause of the majority of armed conflicts, and increasing understanding is absolutely vital to avoiding conflict and loss of life? What role do you envision the Welsh Government playing in promoting understanding and awareness between the faiths as well as those in secular society? ...

387 Jane Hutt: ... it is about how we work together to ensure that we can see that this is the real opportunity, and the collective view and values of Wales. I think that will of course help us to address conflict, prejudice and particularly the issues that we are concerned about, with the impact of coronavirus, where so many have lost their opportunities, perhaps, in terms of faith gatherings, but actually have turned to each other and turned to the volunteers who come with faith and no faith to their doors to support them. ...

389 Darren Millar (Conservative): ... there has been significant disruption to faith communities during the pandemic, and the inability to meet in a place of worship has obviously caused significant hardship for many individuals who rely very much on that communication with other people in their congregations for their own spiritual strength. ...
... will you also join me in thanking those individuals who are also participating in the cross-party group on faith, who work so hard to ensure that topics that are of interest to the faith community are on the agenda for all of us in the Senedd, and to really make sure that we listen to that diversity of voices that comes from the faith community? ...

393 Jane Hutt: ... I also just recall that wonderful event that we had in the Senedd last year, a Holocaust Memorial Day event, where we all came, with the cross-party group very much leading that event ...

I would like to mention the ceremonies group. This has been playing a very key part. It's a new name for a group that's looking at faith, burials and cremations, and it has now additional focus on weddings and similar events. And they've come together, again looking with faith leaders within Wales, and representatives of those of no faith, and community representatives, looking at the key issues in relation to the impact of coronavirus. ...

Officials have met with members of the task and finish group regularly over the past six months, and they held online question and answer sessions, attracting up to 125 people to each, with faith leaders, and volunteers asking questions about practical issues that have been mentioned, about reopening buildings, cleaning and safe environments. So, I think there's a whole new understanding and awareness that has come as a result of not just the infrastructure we already had, that close working relationship, but how our faith communities, and those of no faith, and their communities and interests, have responded to the coronavirus.

I just have to finally say that it's just one of the ways in which we come back to some of the words that were said to me last week. In fact, this was from a Muslim, who said, 'With hardship comes ease, and with this comes unity'.

To read the full transcript see

<https://record.assembly.wales/Plenary/6676#C332647>

Welsh Government

Analysis of protected characteristics by area deprivation

<https://statswales.gov.wales/Catalogue/Community-Safety-and-Social-Inclusion/Welsh-Index-of-Multiple-Deprivation/analysis-of-protected-characteristics-by-area-deprivation>

TOP

Israel

Westminster Hall Debate

International Fund for Israeli-Palestinian Peace

col 82WH **Catherine McKinnell (Labour):** The impending departure of the Trump Administration in January will provide an opportunity to reassert international consensus in favour of a two-state solution to the tragic conflict between Israel and the Palestinians. Britain should seize that opportunity by supporting the establishment of an international fund for Israeli-Palestinian peace.

The obstacles to a two-state solution are well known: settlement building by the Israeli Government, which threatens both the viability of the Palestinian state and, over the long term, the democratic character of the state of Israel itself; the actions of the Palestinian Authority, for example through its school curriculum, which threatened to instil hatred and violence in another generation of young people; and the refusal of terrorist groups such as Hamas, Islamic Jihad and Hezbollah to accept Israel's right to exist. The prospect of a two-state solution is threatened, too, by the growing belief among both the Israeli and Palestinian public that, even if desirable, it is no longer possible. ...

Over the past 25 years, the high hopes of Oslo have given way to fear, mistrust and pessimism, and that pessimism is understandable. ... Only direct negotiations between Israel and the Palestinian Authority, which will inevitably involve painful compromises on both sides, can bring it about. We should not, however, see the current hiatus and barriers to a two-state solution as a cause for inactivity and passivity. Instead, we should think

creatively and boldly about how we can best foster an environment in which peace negotiations and a two-state solution might resume and succeed. ...

col 83WH Since the advent of Oslo, a plethora of grassroots groups that bring Israelis and Palestinians together have sprung up in a wide variety of fields—sports clubs for children and young people, as well as cultural interface and tech and environmental projects. There is now a strong evidence base from both academic research and government evaluations to suggest that such projects work. A 2019 academic study ... found that, three to five years after their involvement, the project participants continued to hold positive feelings about those from the “other” side of the divide, had an increased belief that peace was possible and reported that their perceptions had been altered by the programme. ...

col 84WH An international fund for Israeli-Palestinian peace would provide that much-needed focus and investment to enable co-existence projects to operate at scale and to amplify their impact. Designed by the Alliance for Middle East Peace, a coalition of more than 90 Palestinian and Israeli grassroots organisations, the fund would seek to leverage and increase public and private contributions funding joint economic development and civic society projects that promote peace, co-existence and reconciliation between the two peoples. ...

Sadly, however, the Government have allowed the People for Peaceful Change programme to lapse and with it the UK’s investment in peacebuilding work in Israel and Palestine. The Government have also failed to follow up on their commitment to support an international fund ...

... will the Minister provide three undertakings today? First, will he meet me and other colleagues to discuss reinstating the UK’s financial support for peace-building work and reinvigorating support for the international fund? Secondly, will he ask his officials to explore the possibility of the UK requesting one of two international partner seats in the new middle east partnership for peace advisory board? Thirdly, at the earliest opportunity after 20 January, will he discuss with the Biden Administration how the middle east partnership fund for peace might evolve into a truly international institution? ...

col 85WH Theresa Villiers (Conservative): ... As Northern Ireland Secretary, I saw for myself the incredibly important role played by grassroots community projects aimed at bringing people together across historic and long-lasting divides. ...

Such organisations cannot on their own resolve deep-seated conflicts—that requires political leadership from all sides. We have seen that from Israel, but sadly lacking from the Palestinian side. Grassroots groups of this nature, promoting peaceful co-existence, can be part of the momentum for peace and help to create the conditions in which political leaders feel confident to come together and find common ground and compromise. ...

I have raised concerns about some of the activities in the past of War On Want with the Charities Commission. I hope those running any new fund will learn lessons from the problems that have beset existing aid programmes operating in the West Bank.

col 86WH Just over 16 years ago ... I first raised concerns about the abuse of aid money given to the Palestinian Authority. Those were the days of the flagrant misappropriation of cash by Yasser Arafat and his cronies—problems that, I am afraid, continue to some degree to this day. ...

There are now far more effective controls to save taxpayers’ money than there were in the past. The issue remains, however, that the UK makes substantial contributions to UNRWA, which distributes aid on the basis of perceived entitlement rather than humanitarian need and whose definition of “refugee” as passing down generations perpetuates division rather than bringing people together.

I accept that UK aid money, thankfully, does not fund extremist or antisemitic curriculum content, but it does pay the salaries of teachers who use such materials. Thankfully, UK aid does not fund the appalling salaries paid to terrorists, but salaries were increased dependent on the number of Israelis killed. I am worried that while, thankfully, our taxpayers’ money does not go directly to fund these salaries, it indirectly enables such

payments by the PLO by releasing money that otherwise would have to be deployed to cover the costs of the salaries of public sector workers that are currently met by the United Kingdom taxpayer. ...

col 87WH Conor McGinn (Labour): ... The dire state of political relations and the breakdown of relations—the unilateralism and illegality of occupation, settlements and annexation and its effect on the Palestinian people, and the continued terror, threats and denial of Israel's very right to exist—should not mean that we allow inertia, let the UK's response and involvement be set by the recalcitrant, or abandon our role in the historic mission to find a just and lasting two-state solution.

A fund for Israeli-Palestinian peace is one such way in which the world can provide tangible support for advancing the cause of peace and improving the lives of Israelis and Palestinians. ...

This work is vital and dangerous. Earlier this year Hamas arrested Rami Aman, a peace activist in Gaza, and seven other Palestinians for taking part in a Zoom call with Israelis. Hamas said that it amounted to a "betrayal of our people and their sacrifices", and that any joint activities, co-operation or dialogue with Israelis is unacceptable ...

I hope the Minister will recognise that consistent investment to enable programmes to achieve long-term results is vital to the success of coexistence work. It cannot be a tap that is turned on and off; it must be sustainable ...

col 88WH Steve McCabe (Labour): ... I believe that an international fund for Israeli-Palestinian peace would aim to help any future peace process by promoting co-operation, dialogue, joint economic development and reconciliation between Israelis and Palestinians. As the chair of Labour Friends of Israel ... this is something we have argued for for some time. ...

col 89WH Theresa Villiers: There have been several mentions of LFI, and I welcome the work that has been done on promoting the idea of funding peaceful co-existence projects. However, does the hon. Gentleman not find it sad that the leading MP who championed this idea, Joan Ryan, then MP for Enfield North, felt so intimidated and bullied by people in the Labour party, especially on the antisemitism issue, that she actually had to leave the party? ...

Steve McCabe: ... LFI battled through the whole of the crisis of antisemitism in the Labour party, and I certainly do not want to in any sense pretend that it did not happen or that it was not a dark stain on our history. ... I hope that the changes that Labour is experiencing under a new leadership will herald the day when someone like Joan will feel perfectly comfortable sitting alongside me once more.

While I welcome that UK Government programme, it is important to acknowledge that, astonishingly enough, the UK Government had spent nothing on supporting co-existence projects prior to that programme. ...

In February 2018, the then Middle East Minister Alistair Burt announced the UK's support for the concept of an international fund. However, since then the Government have failed to follow up on their warm words. ...

col 90WH Without funding from Governments and private philanthropy, co-existence projects can have only a limited impact but, operating at scale and properly funded, they can build powerful constituencies for peace, forcing politicians to return to meaningful negotiations. ...

This work is more critical than ever because, as elsewhere in the world, Israel is suffering the economic as well as health consequences of the pandemic. It is about to enter its first recession in more than two decades. The economic crisis in the west bank is even deeper, as it was already in recession. The Palestinian economy has shrunk by an estimated 7.6% during the pandemic, pushing an existing recession into a deep depression. This raises the prospect of increased tensions, which suits those who have no investment in building for peace.

The peacebuilding sector provides essential services to many communities, but it is dependent on global donors and support from foreign Governments. ...

As we have heard, there is a growing body of evidence showing the benefits of co-existence projects, even though most of this work has been achieved in the face of considerable challenges, most notably the collapse of the peace process and the second intifada.

Four years ago, Labour Friends of Israel was proud to launch its campaign “For Israel, For Palestine, For Peace” in pursuit of the very international fund that is now within our grasp. I acknowledge the important intervention of the British Government with the people for peaceful change fund, but I urge the Minister to build on that today by confirming that we will play a leading role in supporting this international fund.

col 91WH Nicola Richards (Conservative): ... It was revealed last week that His Royal Highness the Prince of Wales placed a private donation to the Peres Centre for Peace and Innovation, an organisation founded by President Peres. This is excellent news, and it is not difficult to see why His Royal Highness was so impressed by the organisation’s indispensable work, including programmes that pave the way for mutual understanding between all of Israel’s citizens and for a lasting peace between Israel and its neighbours. I join others today in calling on the UK Government to support the new people-to-people partnership for peace fund. ...

In recent years, the UK Government have begun to realign their aid to the Palestinian Authority away from donations to its general budget—which led to widespread misuse of aid, including the reprehensible payment of salaries to convicted Palestinian terrorists—and instead towards paying the salaries of specifically vetted healthcare and education civil servants. DFID’s announcement a few years ago of a further £3 million fund for co-existence projects marked a further step in the right direction, following growing concerns over aid abuses by the Palestinian Authority.

col 92WH Constructive dialogue is possible. At the start of the covid-19 pandemic, we saw extensive co-operation and co-ordination between the Israelis and Palestinians, developing shared solutions to the problems jointly faced. ... This international fund offers a viable pathway forward to ensure that aid goes directly to projects that bring Israelis and Palestinians together, all of which is overseen by a transparent system of scrutiny and review. It is a path that we must seize and support.

col 93WH Jim Shannon (DUP): ... Peaceful co-existence projects between Israelis and Palestinians lay the foundations for a lasting two-state solution, which I fully support. Such projects include Save a Child’s Heart, which provides life-saving heart surgery for children from the developing world and the Palestinian territories. ...

col 94WH Regrettably, some Palestine participants have been criticised—including when Prince Charles gave a private donation ... for taking part in activities that normalise relations with Israel. If we do not normalise relations, we do not move forward. ...

In 2017, the Department for International Development announced unprecedented funding of £3 million towards peaceful co-existence. ...

That project ended in June 2020. It had a health pillar, a religious pillar and a youth pillar, which involved Israeli, Palestinian and Jordanian health officials doing an exercise simulating a collaborative response to a potential cross-border infectious disease outbreak. ...

The religious pillar brought together some 1,219 young Israelis and Palestinians who took part in holy site tours aimed at increasing understanding of religious tolerance. It did not make any person less a Jew or less a Palestinian. It did not change their religious opinions, but it brought them together to understand that people of a different religion can have that religion. ...

We all say we want peace in the middle east, but we need to put money into the right projects to achieve it. ...

col 95WH **Christian Wakeford (Conservative):** ... UNRWA uniquely extends refugee status beyond the UN's 1951 refugee convention, to all descendants of Palestinian refugee males.

Although UNRWA carries out important work, including the provision of healthcare and education, defining its recipients as refugees sends a troubling message to Palestinians living in the west bank and Gaza that they have a right to relocate to Israel. This undermines the viability of a two-state solution and runs counter to our policy on the middle east peace process.

We fund the salaries of teachers who use the official Palestinian Authority curriculum, which teaches Palestinian children that Israel's existence is merely temporary, and which promotes violence against Israelis and Jews. Our aid frees up funds for the Palestinian Authority to pay salaries to convicted terrorists, with higher salaries paid to those who have killed more Israelis. ... The PA has not made the changes we have called for, and that leaves the international community with no choice but to rethink its strategy. ...

The international fund that is being discussed today would be a step in the right direction. Peaceful co-existence projects lay the foundations for a lasting two-state solution ... Yet in the past some Palestinian participants have been criticised, even by leaders in the Palestinian Authority, for taking part in activities that normalise relations with Israel. ...

Meeting young Palestinian businesspeople at an intelligence start-up in Ramallah was an eye-opening experience. It was clear that, like many young people, they have ambition and strive for success and growth. They seek peace, recognising that conflict restrains expansion, but they have achieved what they have in spite of the political leadership, not because of it. ...

We visited the Israeli charity Save a Child's Heart ... and met many children from the west bank and Gaza, and the developing world, who have received life-saving heart surgery free of charge. Palestinian surgeons are trained to carry out life-saving heart surgery by Israeli doctors, so that they can save countless lives back home. Every Tuesday, Palestinian children from the west bank and Gaza travel to Israel for the weekly cardiology clinic with their parents. It is the first time that many of them have met an Israeli in a positive setting. ...

col 96WH "They fought for my son's life. They gave us everything we needed. They are like family to me". Those are the words of the mother of Mahmad, a two-year-old Palestinian boy from Gaza whose life was saved by the charity earlier this month in its 5,555th procedure. ... Joining the international fund for Israeli-Palestinian peace as a board member will massively increase our capacity to support peacebuilding efforts such as Save a Child's Heart, and I urge the Minister to consider doing so. ...

Owen Thompson (SNP): ... I welcome efforts to establish the multilateral international fund to help build a lasting Israeli-Palestinian peace. Anything that helps to bring countries together and focuses hearts and minds is a positive step, although we have to recognise that there are clearly other issues that need to be addressed on the ground to get things moving in that direction. ...

col 97WH Like my Scottish National party colleagues, I speak as a friend of Israel, but a critical one. I absolutely understand and support Israel's right to defend its territory against aggressors where there are undoubtedly threats from militant factions in Palestine, but I cannot support actions that undermine international laws by extending territories beyond internationally agreed boundaries, such as the 53-year-old Israeli occupation of the west bank. I cannot support actions that impose such brutal living conditions on a civilian population in Palestinian territories and cut off access to vital healthcare ...

I welcome the fact that the Israeli annexations of the west bank have been put on hold through the signing of the Abraham accords. It is also positive to see some progress in normalising the diplomatic relations between Israel and the surrounding Arab states of Bahrain, Sudan and the United Arab Emirates, but at what cost? ...

Although these accords were, in principle, supposed to halt further occupation and

annexation of occupied territories, they contravene the terms of the 2002 Arab peace initiative, in which the establishment of an independent Palestinian state was given as a precondition for full, normal relations with Israel. This deal may have put further annexation on the back burner for now, but it has not removed the threat. It also disregards existing breaches of international law in occupied territories and Palestinian sovereignty rights, which could have major implications for reaching any lasting settlement between Israel and Palestine. ...

We also know that settler violence and the forced displacement of Palestinian people in the occupied west bank has continued. ...

The diplomatic role the UK has played in harbouring peace should not be undermined by continuing to sell arms that may be used in unlawful killings by any regime, whether friend or foe. The UK has massively increased the sale of arms to the Israel Defence Forces at a time when there has been rightful international condemnation of indiscriminate airstrikes and credible reports of unlawful killings, including of children and medics. The human rights record of Israel against Palestinians is woeful, and the UK should not turn a blind eye to its potential role in supplying these weapons. Arms sales should be suspended until all such reports of human rights violations are independently investigated. ...

col 98WH I want Scotland and the UK to be a force for good in the world, not an enabler of human rights abuses. ...

col 99WH **Wayne David (Labour):** ... The fund is important because eventually it will become an institution—one that will have helped lay the bedrock for the peace process. However, it will not simply be an abstract institution. It will also be a fund that will encourage practical initiatives that bring people together. ...

Theresa Villiers: ... there is—sorry to use a cliché—an elephant in the room. [Wayne David] is a member of a party from which advocates for Israel such as Ian Austin and Ivan Lewis resigned their membership because saying anything in defence of Israel within the Labour party ... was howled down and met with intimidation and antisemitism.

Wayne David: ... we are not talking about the internal politics of the Labour party here today. Frankly, we are talking about something far more important than that ... That is not to underestimate what has been said about antisemitism inside the Labour party ...

col 100WH I believe that the fund ... will be a huge step forward. However, I must say too that it is not an alternative to UNRWA funding but is something that must be introduced as well as that. It is not an excuse, as some people have suggested, for supporting settlements on the west bank. It is important to recognise that the fund is something quite different and it requires cross-party support from all good people who support peace in the middle east, coming together to find common ground. ...

col 101WH **The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs (James Duddridge):** ... The middle east peace process continues to be complex ... There are sensitive issues that divide the House ... but there were things that we agree on, as well as things that might divide us. ...

There is much to be done to rebuild trust. The suspension of the threat of annexation was a welcome first step ... but it must be made permanent. It is vital that the Palestinian Authority resume co-operation with Israel and that the Israeli-Palestinian leaderships come together to pursue the pathway to peace. Her Majesty's Government believe that the two-state solution is the only viable long-term solution and the only way permanently to end the Arab-Israeli conflict, to preserve Israel's Jewish and democratic identity and to realise Palestinian national aspirations.

The Government are aware of ongoing discussions, specifically around the international fund for Israeli-Palestinian peace, which I understand ... the US Senate will consider in 2021. ... The Government support the objectives of the international fund ... I can confirm that we have no plans to commit financial support at this stage, but we will continue to engage with the Alliance for Middle East Peace. ...

col 102WH I hear a very clear message that one of the rationales for involvement is to secure a seat.

The UK remains committed to the middle east and to the occupied Palestinian territories, providing a vital role in helping to improve the lives of Palestinians and supporting the commitment to maintain the viability of the two-state solution. Our ongoing work includes humanitarian support to meet immediate needs in Gaza, support to key services such as health and education in the west bank, promoting economic development across the occupied Palestinian territories, and helping to meet the needs of Palestinian refugees across the wider region. To give a concrete example, the UK Government are providing £20 million this year to support the salaries of teachers, nurses and doctors. ...

Jim Shannon: The Minister mentions £20 million being set aside to fund the salaries of teachers and doctors. Would it be possible to encourage those teachers and doctors to perform some cross-community work? ...

James Duddridge: ... I am not sure what the opportunities are, and there are real sensitivities in education ... but I will certainly take away that suggestion.

Christian Wakeford: I fully appreciate that £20 million is going to fund teachers and healthcare workers, but part of the problem is the curriculum that is being taught. If we are funding teachers to teach that curriculum, we perpetuate the problem. ...

James Duddridge: ... There is no funding of textbooks and there is careful selection of teachers. ...

col 103WH ... the £51 million provided through UNRWA has helped to educate about 500,000 girls and boys so far. It will pay to access healthcare for 3.5 million Palestinian refugees and create a social security net for more than 250,000 of the most vulnerable people across the region. In 2019, we also provided more than £16 million in humanitarian assistance to Gaza, supporting the health system, trauma care and emergency food supplies to more than 1.2 million people. ...

Wayne David: Will the Minister give a commitment to at least explore the possibility of the United Kingdom putting itself forward to take up one of the two seats on the governing body of the new fund?

col 104WH **James Duddridge:** I thought I had done that, but obviously not clearly enough. I will ask officials to look specifically at whether we should take one of those seats and at the timing of commitments. ...

To rebuild trust, we must see an end to detrimental actions on the ground. We consistently call for an immediate end to all actions that are likely to undermine the viability of a two-state solution. That includes terrorism, incitement, settlement expansion, the demolition of Palestinian property in the occupied Palestinian territories, including in East Jerusalem. The eviction of Palestinians from their homes causes unnecessary suffering and in all but the most exceptional cases is wholly contrary to international humanitarian law.

We are also concerned about further settlement advancements. Settlements are illegal under international law and damaging to peace efforts. ...

However, we are also clear that Israel is a close friend ... The people of Israel deserve to live free from the scourge of terrorism and free from antisemitic incitement, all of which gravely undermines the prospects of a two-state solution ...

Catherine McKinnell: ... People-to-people work is not a fluffy afterthought. The civil society dimension of peacebuilding is about very practical politics. It is about how to garner public support for any future agreement and ensure that that agreement ... can weather the challenges that it will inevitably face in the medium to long term.. Peacebuilding is essential for peacemaking. Nobody believes that co-existence by itself is going to create that lasting peace settlement, but it is absolutely necessary to ensure that it will last. ...

To read the full transcript see

<https://hansard.parliament.uk/commons/2020-11-17/debates/1E3EC84E-81DC-4068-A1E6-1143FAF36B2D/InternationalFundForIsraeli-PalestinianPeace>

House of Commons Written Answers

The following two questions both received the same answer

Palestinians: Overseas Aid

Steve McCabe (Labour) [113490] To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, with reference to the 2019-20 Memorandum of Understanding between the Department for International Development and the Palestinian Authority, what assessment he has made of the adequacy of the steps taken by the Palestinian Authority to ensure that UK Official Development Assistance funding was not used to cover payments made to prisoners or their families.

Steve McCabe (Labour) [113491] To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, with reference to the 2018-19 Memorandum of Understanding between the Department for International Development and the Palestinian Authority, what assessment he has made of the adequacy of the steps taken by the Palestinian Authority to ensure that UK Official Development Assistance funding was not used to cover payments made to prisoners or their families as administered by the Palestinian Liberation Organisation.

James Cleverly: No UK Aid is used for payments to prisoners or their families. Our financial support to the Palestinian Authority (PA) health and education sectors goes into a dedicated bank account and is only paid to individual workers who have been carefully vetted through the PEGASE mechanism (Palestinian-European Socio-Economic Management Assistance Mechanism). Each payment is independently audited to ensure it has been received by the intended recipient. This rigorous process means we are confident no UK aid is being diverted. Our partnership with the PA is underpinned by a Memorandum of Understanding and our 'partnership principles'. We continue to judge that the PA is demonstrating a credible commitment to Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office's partnership principles. Our partnership works to improve the lives of Palestinians and support the UK's commitment to maintain the viability of a two-state solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2020-11-10/113490>

and

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2020-11-10/113491>

The Memorandum of Understanding referred to above can be read at

<https://tinyurl.com/y57tmc49>

Palestinians: Textbooks

Steve McCabe (Labour) [113488] To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps the Government has taken to encourage the EU to publish the interim report of the Georg Eckert Institute on the Palestinian Authority's school textbooks; and what response the Government has received from the EU.

James Cleverly: Following UK calls for action, the EU commissioned the Georg Eckert Institute, a specialist textbook analysis centre, to undertake a robust, impartial review of Palestinian textbooks. We have remained in close dialogue with our European partners throughout the process, including urging them to complete the review as soon as possible. In July an interim report was submitted to the EU for approval. The EU used the report to inform partners, including the UK, about the current status of progress and to receive feedback. Publication of the interim report is not currently foreseen by the EU. The UK has repeatedly lobbied the EU to push for publication, but this is ultimately a decision for the EU.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2020-11-10/113488>

Palestinians: Schools

Craig Williams (Conservative) [113583] To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether he has received a copy of the EU interim report on the Palestinian Authority school curriculum.

17 November 2020

James Cleverly: Publication of the interim report is not currently foreseen by the EU. The UK has repeatedly lobbied the EU to push for publication, but this is ultimately a decision for the EU.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2020-11-10/113583>

House of Lords Written Answers

The following three questions all received the same answer

Israel: Palestinians

Baroness Tonge (Non-affiliated) [HL10135] To ask Her Majesty's Government what representations they have made to the government of Israel about reports that demolition orders have been delivered to Palestinian-owned houses in the Issawiya neighbourhood of East Jerusalem.

West Bank: Demolition

Baroness Tonge (Non-affiliated) [HL10137] To ask Her Majesty's Government what representations they have made to the government of Israel about reports that structures in the Humsa al Bqai'a Bedouin community have been demolished by the government of Israel; and what support they plan to provide to those affected.

Israel: West Bank

Baroness Tonge (Non-affiliated) [HL10139] To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the statement by Fuad al-'Amour, the coordinator of Protection and Steadfastness Committees in Masafer Yatta and Southern Hebron hills, on 3 November, about the actions of the Israel Defence Force and the impact on communities living in Masafer Yatta.

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: We are seriously concerned by increasing rates of demolition of Palestinian property by the Israeli authorities. In all but the most exceptional of circumstances demolitions are contrary to International Humanitarian Law. The Minister for the Middle East and North Africa raised our concern about demolitions with the Israeli Ambassador to the UK on 29 October, and issued a statement outlining the UK's concern about the demolitions of structures in Humsa Al-Baqai'a on 6 November. Officials from the British Consulate General Jerusalem visited Humsa Al-Baqai'a on 6 November to reiterate UK support for the community. 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, and determine the community's long-term needs. The UK is focused on preventing demolitions and evictions 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. 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/2020-11-09/hl10135>

and

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2020-11-09/hl10137>

and

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2020-11-09/hl10139>

Palestinians: Olives

Baroness Tonge (Non-affiliated) [HL10134] To ask Her Majesty's Government, further to the Written Answer by Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon on 3 November (HL9384) and the statement that they "welcome the efforts of Israeli authorities to address settler violence", which such efforts they welcome; and how they measure the...

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: We welcome the Government of Israel's strong condemnation of settler violence, as well as the establishment of a special governmental unit and legislative changes. Nonetheless, we continue to urge the Israeli authorities to thoroughly investigate every instance and to bring those responsible to justice and end the culture of impunity. We have stressed the importance of the Israeli security forces providing appropriate protection to the Palestinian civilian population. Our long-standing objective is a negotiated two-state solution which will allow Palestinians and Israelis to live in peace, lessening the likelihood of politically driven violence and incitement to violence.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2020-11-09/hl10134>

The answer referred to above can be read at

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2020-10-20/hl9384>

Palestinians: Olives

Baroness Tonge (Non-affiliated) [HL10136] To ask Her Majesty's Government what plans they have to support the planting of olive trees in Atuwani to ensure land near that village is not classified as state land by the government of Israel.

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: We are seriously concerned by the continued expropriation of land by Israel in the West Bank, including notably for settlement expansion. We regularly call on Israel to halt such counterproductive activity and instead urgently commit to creating a better environment for a just and lasting peace. Settlements are illegal under international law and undermine the physical viability of the two-state solution. We continue to call on Israel to improve Palestinians' route to securing building permissions for homes and infrastructure, including agriculture and farming, in Area C.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2020-11-09/hl10136>

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Relevant Legislation ** new or updated today

UK Parliament

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<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 (Approved Organisations) Bill

<https://bills.parliament.uk/bills/2537>

Marriage (Authorised Belief Organisations) Bill

<https://bills.parliament.uk/bills/2795>

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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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>

Independent Faith Engagement Review (closing date 11 December 2020)

<https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/independent-faith-engagement-review-call-for-evidence/independent-faith-engagement-review-call-for-evidence>

Hate crime laws (closing date 24 December 2020)

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