



Political Affairs Digest

A daily summary of political events affecting the Jewish Community

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House of Commons Written Answers

Hate Crime

Helen Hayes (Labour) [133999] To ask the Minister for Women and Equalities, what discussions she has had with the (a) Secretary of State for Justice and (b) Home Secretary on strengthening hate crime legislation.

Kemi Badenoch: Any hate crime is completely unacceptable and the Government is committed to stamping it out. As part of the Hate Crime Action Plan Refresh in October 2018, the Government asked the Law Commission to conduct a review into the coverage and approach of hate crime legislation, including consideration of whether other protected characteristics should be included. The Law Commission's consultation to support the review closed on 24 December 2020. The Government will respond to the review when it is complete.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2021-01-06/133999>

The action plan refresh referred to above can be read at

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/748175/Hate_crime_refresh_2018_FINAL_WEB.PDF

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

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

Hate Crime: Coronavirus

Sarah Owen (Labour) [131488] To ask the Secretary of State for Home Affairs, what assessment she has made of trends in the level of hate crime during the covid-19 outbreak.

Kit Malthouse (Conservative) [131488] In March, April and May, the level of racially and religiously aggravated offences in 2020 was lower than the previous year. In April the number of offences was down almost a quarter (24%) on the same month in 2019. However, the number of racially or religiously aggravated offences in June 2020 was a third higher (34%) than in June 2019 and remained high in July. More information can be found online at

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/hate-crime-england-and-wales-2019-to-2020/hate-crime-england-and-wales-2019-to-2020>

These offences are completely unacceptable and the UK has a robust legislative framework to respond to them.

The Home Office is 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.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2020-12-17/131488>

Religious Hatred: Islam

Apsana Begum (Labour) [124891] To ask the Minister for Women and Equalities, what steps her Department took to mark Islamophobia Awareness month in November 2020.

Kemi Badenoch: The Government notes Islamophobia Awareness Month but takes the view that combatting Islamophobia is not a time-limited task and such thinking and behaviour should be tackled whenever it occurs. For that reason we continue to work closely with Muslim communities to tackle hate against them, including understanding issues and trends. This includes supporting Tell MAMA (Measuring Anti-Muslim Attacks) with just over £2.8m distributed over the last five years to monitor, combat and raise awareness of anti-Muslim hatred.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2020-12-03/124891>

Religious Buildings: Planning Permission

Valerie Vaz (Labour) [128940] To ask the Member for South West Bedfordshire, representing the Church Commissioners, what steps he is taking to support building development for historic places of worship.

Andrew Selous: Advice and support for parishes and cathedrals is available via the Church of England's platform 'Church Care', this website acts as a portal for advice on management, maintenance, development and grants available to parishes and cathedrals.

During the pandemic period, £30m of grants that have been awarded to Church of England churches and cathedrals from a combination of the Government's Culture Recovery Fund (CRF) and the National Lottery Heritage Fund's Emergency Fund. The Church of England is grateful for this support and recognition by the Government of the key role these buildings play in their local communities.

The grants awarded by the Culture Recovery Fund were allocated to 227 churches and cathedrals with 43% of this money is going to the 30% most deprived parishes – over £12.9m; 20% of the money going to the 10% most deprived parishes, totalling over £5.9m.

The Lichfield Diocese received of six grants totalling £342,825 from the Culture Recovery Fund and the National Lottery Heritage Emergency Fund, this included five awards to parish churches totalling £199,925 and a grant to Lichfield Cathedral of £142,900

A second Culture Recovery Fund has now launched, and churches with listed buildings are being encouraged to apply for support.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2020-12-14/128940>

Information about the second round of the Culture Recovery Fund (closing date for applications: 26 January 2021), referred to above, can be read at

<https://www.artscouncil.org.uk/CRFgrants>

Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government

COVID-19: Updated guidance for the safe use of places of worship and special religious services and gatherings 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-from-2-december>

The Charity Commission

Coronavirus (COVID-19): Updated guidance for the charity sector

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/coronavirus-covid-19-guidance-for-the-charity-sector>

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House of Commons Written Answers

Occupied Territories: Development Aid

Preet Kaur Gill (Labour (Co-op)) [131385] To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, pursuant to the Answer of 4 December 2020 to Question 122716, whether the £20 million to the EU programme Support the Palestinian Authority will be reallocated to programmes in the Occupied Palestinian Territories.

James Cleverly: The UK has been supporting the Palestinian Authority's health and education sectors through the EU PEGASE mechanism. Salary payments have been transferred to a dedicated bank account and are then paid to carefully vetted individuals. Each payment is independently audited to ensure it has been received by the intended recipient. At the end of the transition period, the UK will be able to continue to access the PEGASE mechanism as this is available for use by both EU and non-EU member states.

As announced by the Foreign Secretary on 26 November, to maximise the Government's strategic focus in the use of ODA this year, he is leading a short cross-government process to review, appraise and finalise all of the UK's ODA allocations for 2021, the outcomes of which have not been concluded.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2020-12-17/131385>

The answer referred to above can be read at

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2020-11-30/122716>

Occupied Territories: Public Health

Lyn Brown (Labour) [132831] To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, pursuant to the Answer of 16 December 2020 to Question 127042, what assessment has he made of the Israeli authorities adherence to its legal duty of ensuring and maintaining public health and hygiene in the Occupied Palestinian Territory.

James Cleverly: Under International Humanitarian Law, Israel, as the Occupying Power, has the duty of ensuring and maintaining public health and hygiene in the Occupied Palestinian Territories (OPTs) to the fullest extent of the means available and with the cooperation of the local authorities. The British Embassy in Tel Aviv and the British Consulate-General in Jerusalem are in regular contact with the

Israeli and Palestinian authorities respectively. We again welcome the restoration of cooperation between the Government of Israel and Palestinian Authority, which shows both sides are willing to put the needs and security of Israelis and Palestinians first.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2020-12-30/132831>

The question referred to above can be read at

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2020-12-08/127042>

Gaza Strip: Coronavirus

Diana Johnson (Labour) [132801] To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what (a) diplomatic and (b) humanitarian support the Government (a) has provided and (b) plans to provide to help tackle the effects of the covid-19 pandemic in Gaza.

James Cleverly: The UK remains concerned about the ongoing humanitarian situation in Gaza, further compounded by COVID-19. The UK works closely with key partners, including the Palestinian Authority to ensure a coherent strategy to mitigate the immediate impacts of COVID-19 and to support recovery. The British Embassy in Tel Aviv and the British Consulate-General in Jerusalem are in regular contact with the Israeli and Palestinian authorities respectively.

Recognising the severity of the situation in the Occupied Palestinian Territories, we have provided £1.25 million funding (the World Health Organisation with £630,000 and the United Nations Children's Fund with £620,000) to purchase and co-ordinate delivery of medical equipment, treat critical care patients, train frontline health workers and scale up laboratory testing capacity - mainly in Gaza. In addition to our emergency support to the COVID-19 crisis, we are also providing £2.5 million to the World Food Programme to provide food and cash assistance for the most vulnerable Palestinians.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2020-12-30/132801>

The following two questions both received the same answer

West Bank: Demolition

Daisy Cooper (Liberal Democrat) [130842] To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what duties the Government has as a signatory to the Convention of the Rights of the Child and the Fourth Geneva Convention in respect of attempts to demolish school buildings in Khan al-Ahmar in the occupied West Bank.

Daisy Cooper (Liberal Democrat) [130843] To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what representations he has made to his Israeli counterpart on the potential demolition of Khan Al-Ahmer school in the West Bank.

James Cleverly: The UK is seriously concerned by the possible demolition of a Palestinian school in Khan al-Ahmar by Israeli authorities. The UK remains strongly opposed to Israel's proposed demolition of the village, and continues to call on Israel to reconsider its plans to do so. I raised UK concern about the planned demolition of humanitarian structures, as well as the wider demolition of Palestinian infrastructure, with the Israeli Ambassador to the UK on 29 October. Our Embassy in Tel Aviv also raised our concern about the demolition of schools with the Government of Israel on 13 October, alongside European partners. In all but the most exceptional of circumstances demolitions are contrary to International Humanitarian Law. We repeatedly call on Israel to abide by its obligations under international law and have a regular dialogue with Israel on legal issues relating to the occupation, including the treatment of Palestinian children. We are continuing to monitor developments in Khan al-Ahmar and officials from our Consulate-General in Jerusalem visit the community regularly.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2020-12-16/130842>

and

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2020-12-16/130843>

UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights

Israel/OPT: UN expert calls for reversal of Israel's eviction order against 16 Palestinian families

A UN expert called today on Israel to reverse its eviction orders for Palestinian families living in Occupied East Jerusalem, calling them part of an alarming pattern to change the demography of the city.

Israeli courts have, over the last few months, upheld eviction orders to force 16 Palestinian families from their homes in the Sheikh Jarrah and Silwan neighbourhoods. They include several extended families and two women raising children alone. In most cases, the Palestinian families have lived in their homes for decades as owners or long-term tenants. "These evictions are extremely alarming, and appear to be part of a broader pattern of forcing Jerusalemite Palestinian families from their homes to clear the way for more illegal Israeli settlements," said Michael Lynk, UN Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Palestinian Territory occupied since 1967. "Time is running short for these orders to be reversed.

"The eviction orders are not random but appear to be strategically focused on an area in East Jerusalem known as the Historic Basin," he said. "They seem to be aimed at clearing the way for the establishment of more illegal Israeli settlements in the area and physically segregating and fragmenting East Jerusalem from the rest of the West Bank."

With the increase in evictions, home demolitions and settlement expansion, historic Palestinian neighbourhoods such as Sheikh Jarrah and Silwan are either gradually disappearing or are becoming completely surrounded and isolated by Israeli settlements, Lynk said.

Applications by settler organisations for evictions have intensified, he said, citing reports by the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs that 877 people, including 391 children, are presently at risk of forced evictions because of such lawsuits. ...

"We believe that one of their purposes is the creation of a Jewish majority in occupied East Jerusalem, in order to establish demographic facts on the ground that would confirm the illegal Israeli annexation over that part of the city.

"The latest eviction orders, if carried out, would amount to a violation by Israel, the occupying power, of the prohibition against the forcible transfer of the protected population under Article 49 of the *Fourth Geneva Convention*," Lynk added. ...

<https://www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=26648&LangID=E>

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Foreign Affairs

House of Commons Written Answers

The following two questions both received the same answer

Sri Lanka: Cremation

Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi (Labour) [133115] To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether he plans to make representations to his Sri Lankan counterpart on the cremation in that country of covid-19 victims regardless

of religious belief.

Bell Ribeiro-Addy (Labour) [133215] To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, if he will urge his Sri Lankan counterpart to stop their policy of forcibly cremating its citizens who have died from covid-19, in accordance with their religious beliefs.

Nigel Adams: The UK Government is concerned about the Government of Sri Lanka's continued decision to mandate cremations for all those affected by Covid-19, and recognises the particular impact this is having on Sri Lankan Muslims and other faith communities. The Minister of State for South Asia and Minister responsible for Human Rights, Lord (Tariq) Ahmad of Wimbledon, has raised concerns about this directly with the Sri Lankan High Commissioner, most recently in December. Lord Ahmad also raised the importance of minority rights in a call with the Sri Lankan Foreign Minister Dinesh Gunawardena in November. The UK's High Commissioner to Sri Lanka has also raised concerns about mandatory cremations several times with the Sri Lankan Government, most recently in January.

The UK has shared guidance with the Government of Sri Lanka on how burials can continue to operate in a safe format, within the WHO guidelines, to ensure all religious groups can practise their rites. We will continue to engage with the Government of Sri Lanka on this important issue.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2020-12-30/133115>

and

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2020-12-30/133215>

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Other Relevant Information

European Commission

Fighting antisemitism: Commission and International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA) publish handbook for the practical use of the IHRA working definition of antisemitism

... The IHRA working definition for antisemitism, while not legally binding, has become a widely used tool around the world to educate people about antisemitism, as well as recognise and counter its manifestations. ... the handbook provides an overview of good practices by international organisations, national administrations, civil society and Jewish communities from across Europe. ... Vice-President Schinas said: *"We need to fight antisemitism whenever we encounter it. Jewish life is part of our societies and we are determined to protect it. This new handbook makes it easier for all to fulfil this commitment. It responds to our Member States' requests for better knowledge-sharing on the use of the IHRA definition. The handbook will become another valuable tool for Member States to effectively implement the landmark Council Declaration on combating antisemitism."*

The Commission plans to adopt a comprehensive EU Strategy against antisemitism this year. ...

https://ec.europa.eu/newsroom/just/item-detail.cfm?item_id=698894

Handbook for the practical use of the IHRA working definition of antisemitism

<https://op.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/d3006107-519b-11eb-b59f-01aa75ed71a1/language-en>

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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 (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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Consultations ** new or updated today

Introduction of a statutory opt-out system for organ donation for Northern Ireland
(closing date 19 February 2021)

<https://www.health-ni.gov.uk/consultations/organ-donation>

Social Distance, Digital Congregation: British Ritual Innovation under COVID-19

(closing date not stated)

<https://bric19.mmu.ac.uk/take-the-survey/>

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