



Political Affairs Digest

A daily summary of political events affecting the Jewish Community

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House of Commons Written Answer

Weddings: Coronavirus

Bambos Charalambous (Labour) [148870] To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what plans he has to (a) extend existing notices of intention to marry and (b) waive the fee for a further notice of intention to marry for couples whose wedding ceremonies have been cancelled due to covid-19 restrictions.

Alex Chalk: The Government acknowledges the significant upheaval that Covid-19 is causing for couples who were looking to marry at this time.

The requirement to solemnize a marriage within twelve months of giving notice to marry is set out in primary legislation, which does not provide for extending this period. It would require primary legislation to change this. The Law Commission is currently undertaking a broader review of the law on marriage ceremonies. Due to the Covid-19 pandemic, it is also considering whether a revised scheme should allow rules to adapt to the situation of a national emergency. While that work cannot provide solutions for the current pandemic it could lead to a reformed and more resilient scheme for weddings in future.

The notice fee is usually £35 per person and is paid to local authorities for the service they provide in the taking of the notice and entering it into the notice book. Local authorities are able to waive, reduce or refund fees on compassionate grounds or in cases of hardship. It is for each local authority to determine depending on the individual circumstances.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2021-02-03/148870>

Crown Prosecution Service

Youngest British terrorist sentenced for neo-Nazi manuals stash

A boy from Cornwall who committed his first terror offence when he was 13 years old has been sentenced ...

The teenage neo-Nazi downloaded a manual on how different types of compounds can be

used to cause explosions in July 2018. Over time he collected other electronic documents including ones giving instructions on how to make napalm, Molotov cocktails, learn knife fighting skills, and how to build an AK47 assault rifle using readily available supplies. He was given a 24-month youth rehabilitation order, which is a community sentence with strict requirements. ...

Jenny Hopkins, from the CPS, said: "People will rightly be disturbed that a 13-year-old should hold the most appalling neo-Nazi beliefs and start collecting manuals on bomb-making and firearms.

"He claimed not to have racist views and just wanted to appear 'cool', but the body of evidence led to him pleading guilty to possession and dissemination of terrorist material." He also became the British head of an international online neo-Nazi group called Feuerkrieg Division (FKD). The British cell was called FKD_GB and was formed in June 2019, when he was just 14. At the time of his arrest a month later it had six members. When police arrested him at the home of his grandmother, who he lived with, they found a Nazi flag and "1488" painted on the shed. The number is a Nazi rallying cry. The "14" refers to a white supremacist slogan and the "88" to the eighth letter of the alphabet – HH – or "Heil Hitler".

On various far-right chat forums in 2019 he posted messages about killing gay people, Jews and non-whites using nail bombs, firearms and other methods.

He told arresting officers that he did not have racist, homophobic or anti-Semitic views but wanted "to look cool" and "to look like [he] was doing something for the cause".

Despite this he pleaded guilty to two counts of disseminating terrorist publications and 10 counts of possessing such publications. The more serious dissemination offences related to sharing a poster of a nuclear explosion over the Houses of Parliament in the context of praising those who commit racially motivated mass murder. The other was sharing with the leader of the FKD, who was known as "Commander", a 432-page guerrilla warfare manual that advocated murder and rape.

Prosecution evidence presented to the Old Bailey during his sentencing described how the FKD views all non-white people as "sub-humans" and its stated desire is for a "white jihad". FKD approves of genocide against non-white people, and otherwise encourages violence against non-white people through its propaganda. ...

To read the full press release see

<https://www.cps.gov.uk/cps/news/youngest-british-terrorist-sentenced-neo-nazi-manuals-stash>

Scottish Government FoI Release

Places of worship COVID-19 guidance

<https://www.gov.scot/publications/foi-202000094719/>

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Israel

House of Commons Written Answers

Overseas Trade: Israel

Craig Tracey (Conservative) [146961] To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, what recent steps the Government has taken to support bilateral trade with Israel.

Ranil Jayawardena: The United Kingdom-Israel Trade and Partnership Agreement entered into force on the 1st January 2021. The agreement provides an ambitious

framework to continue to grow our future trading relationship, which totalled £4.9 billion in the four quarters to the end of Q3 2020. We are now working with Israeli counterparts on the implementation of our agreement and to scope where there is a shared ambition to deepen our bilateral trade relationship. This includes the opportunity to reinstate plans to host a United Kingdom-Israel Trade and Investment Conference.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2021-02-01/146961>

The agreement referred to above can be read at

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/781440/CS_Israel_1.2019_Trade.pdf

Overseas Trade: Israeli Settlements

Stephen Timms (Labour) [148675] To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, how consumers can recognise before purchase products from the illegal Palestinian settlements; and if she will make a statement.

Ranil Jayawardena: The United Kingdom does not recognise the Occupied Palestinian Territories, including settlements, as part of Israel. Certain products, such as food, originating from settlements must be labelled as such. Our retained EU legislation is clear that information on origin and provenance of goods must not be misleading and should be provided if failure to do so would itself be misleading to consumers.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2021-02-03/148675>

UNRWA: Overseas Aid

Wayne David (Labour) [147755] To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, when he plans to make an announcement on future funding for the UN Relief and Works Agency, as part of the cross-government review into future Official Development Assistance allocations.

James Cleverly: The UK is a long-term supporter of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA) which provides protection and core services to Palestinian refugees across the region. UNRWA is also a vital humanitarian and stabilising force in the Middle East region. FCDO is currently running a prioritisation exercise across all its programmes, to ensure that every pound we spend goes as far as possible and makes a world-leading difference. Decisions on support for UNRWA will be taken as part of this process.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2021-02-02/147755>

Palestinians: Overseas Aid

Diana Johnson (Labour) [144964] To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, pursuant to the Answer of 12 May 2020 to Question 42248 on Palestinians: Overseas Aid, on what date the internal panel of researchers will complete its analysis.

James Cleverly: The programme included a research component that looked at the impact of People to People work on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict to contribute to an evidence base in this area, which is presently limited. The research has been finalised and we are working to publish the report soon.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2021-01-28/144964>

The answer referred to above can be read at

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2020-05-01/42248>

Palestinians: Health Services

Tommy Sheppard (SNP) [147916] To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign,

Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what recent assessment his Department has made of the financial capacity of the Palestinian Ministry of Health to purchase sufficient covid-19 vaccines for its population.

James Cleverly: We remain in regular, close contact with the Palestinian Authority to discuss their plans for access to safe COVID-19 vaccines in the OPTs including on their ability to finance the purchase of vaccines.

The UK is committed to rapid, equitable access to safe and effective vaccines as demonstrated by our commitment of up to £548 million to the COVAX Advance Market Commitment (AMC) - the international initiative to support global equitable access to vaccines. Our commitment to the COVAX AMC will support access to COVID-19 vaccines for up to 92 developing countries, including in the Occupied Palestinian Territories by contributing to the supply of 1 billion doses in 2021. We are pleased to note that the Occupied Palestinian Territories (OPTs) will be among the first to benefit from the COVAX scheme with delivery of a first batch anticipated in mid-February.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2021-02-02/147916>

House of Lords Written Answers

Iran: Nuclear Power

Baroness Eaton (Conservative) [HL12483] To ask Her Majesty's Government what discussions they have had with (1) the government of Israel, (2) the government of the United Arab Emirates, and (3) the government of Bahrain, about their inclusion in any discussions regarding the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action.

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: We welcome and support President-elect Biden's commitment to return to the JCPoA, and to strengthen and extend it. We have always been clear that any sustainable solution will need to address a range of issues, in particular Iran's nuclear programme but also regional security concerns. We have continued a regular dialogue with the Governments of Israel, the United Arab Emirates and Bahrain (amongst others) regarding the JCPoA, and are committed to engaging all regional partners in any future negotiations on regional security.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2021-01-25/hl12483>

Jerusalem: Walls and Fences

Baroness Tonge (Non-affiliated) [HL12563] To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of reports that the government of Israel has approved a project to build new sections of a wall to the north and east of Aizarya.

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: The UK Government continues to raise our concerns about Israeli restrictions on freedom of movement and access into and out of the Occupied Palestinian Territories, with the Israeli authorities. We continue to stress to the Israeli authorities the damage that their restrictions on movement, access and trade are doing to the living standards of ordinary Palestinians.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2021-01-25/hl12563>

Gaza: Hospitals

Baroness Tonge (Non-affiliated) [HL12564] To ask Her Majesty's Government, further to the Written Answer by Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon on 19 January (HL11788), whether they consider the reported bombing of a paediatric hospital in Gaza on 26 December 2020 to be part of government of Israel's "legitimate right to self-defence"; if so, how; and what assessment they have made of what constitutes legitimate self-defence for those living in territory occupied by that government.

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: We continue to stress the importance of the Israel security forces providing appropriate protection to the Palestinian civilian population and to conduct prompt transparent investigations into any claims of IDF misconduct. Officials from the British Embassy in Tel Aviv raised the issue with the IDF on 20 January and will continue to follow the IDF internal investigation. The UK is clear that it is vital that all actions are proportionate, in line with International Humanitarian Law, and are calibrated to avoid civilian casualties. Any attacks targeted against civilians are unlawful and unjustifiable.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2021-01-25/hl12564>

The answer referred to above can be read at

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2021-01-05/hl11788>

West Bank: Schools

Baroness Tonge (Non-affiliated) [HL12565] To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of reports that the only school in Al-Maleh has been demolished by the government of Israel; and what steps they plan to take to support the educational rights of Palestinian children living in Area C of the West Bank.

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: The UK opposes Israel's proposed demolition of a Palestinian school in Al-Maleh and calls on Israel to reconsider its plans to do so. The Minister of State for the Middle East and North Africa raised UK concerns about the demolition of Palestinian infrastructure, including the potential demolition of schools, 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.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2021-01-25/hl12565>

The following two questions both received the same answer

Israel: Palestinians

Baroness Tonge (Non-affiliated) [HL12562] To ask Her Majesty's Government, further to the letter from Lawyers for Palestinian Human Rights to the Minister of State for the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office, sent on 19 January, regarding the withholding of the body of Ahmed Erekat, what representations they have made to the government of Israel about the release of Ahmed Erekat's body; and what plans they have (1) to seek assurances from that government about, and (2) to monitor, a criminal investigation into the killing of Ahmed Erekat.

Baroness Tonge (Non-affiliated) [HL12566] To ask Her Majesty's Government, further to the letter from Lawyers for Palestinian Human Rights to the Minister of State for the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office, sent on 19 January, regarding the withholding of the body of Ahmed Erekat, what representations they have made to the government of Israel about (1) ending its policy of withholding Palestinians' bodies, and (2) returning the bodies of all Palestinians to their families.

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: We are aware of the case of Ahmed Erekat, and reports of a High Court petition for the release of Mr Erekat's body. We understand the Israeli security cabinet have ruled that it would not allow the return of bodies of Palestinians held by Israeli Security Forces (ISF). While we have not raised the case, we will continue to monitor the situation. The UK position is clear: we urge all sides to treat the dead with respect and urge Israel to return any bodies they are holding. We regularly raise the issue of the high numbers of Palestinians killed and injured by Israel Defense Forces in the West Bank and Gaza with the Israeli authorities, encouraging them to carry out transparent investigations into whether use of live fire had been appropriate.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2021-01-25/hl12562>

and

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2021-01-25/hl12566>

The letter referred to above can be read at

<https://lphr.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/LPHR-letter-to-Minister-Cleverly-and-Ambassador-Wigan-UK-Government-intervene-in-continued-withholding-of-body-of-Ahmed-Erekat-from-his-family-19-Jan-2021.pdf>

UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights

ICC ruling on jurisdiction in occupied Palestinian territory welcome step towards justice: UN expert

A UN human rights expert said today the International Criminal Court's (ICC) ruling that it has jurisdiction over grave crimes committed in occupied Palestinian territory, including potential war crimes, is a major move towards ending impunity and ensuring justice.

"This is a significant step forward in the quest for justice and accountability involving the unaccountable 53-year-old occupation of the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, and Gaza," said Michael Lynk, the Special Rapporteur for the situation of human rights in the Palestinian territory occupied since 1967.

"The leading political organs of the United Nations have repeatedly failed to enforce their own significant body of resolutions on the Israeli occupation," the independent expert said.

"This ruling opens the door for credible allegations of Rome Statute crimes to finally be investigated and potentially reach the trial stage at the ICC. This offers profound hope to those who believe that consequences, not condonation, must be the answer to the commission of grave crimes."

The allegations of grave crimes that could be investigated by the Prosecutor of the ICC include Israel's actions during the 2014 war against Gaza, the killing and wounding of thousands of largely unarmed demonstrators during the Great March of Return in 2018-9, and Israel's settlement activities in East Jerusalem and the West Bank. As well, the Prosecutor can also look into allegations of grave crimes involving Palestinian armed groups.

"In adopting the Rome Statute and creating the International Criminal Court, the international community pledged its determination to end impunity for the perpetrators of grave crimes," the Special Rapporteur stated. "Yet, in the context of Israel's protracted occupation, the international community has permitted a culture of exceptionalism to prevail. Had international legal obligations been purposively enforced years ago, the occupation and the conflict would have been justly resolved and there would have been no need for the ICC process."

The Special Rapporteur noted that a number of authoritative UN reports in recent years have called for accountability and for Israel to meaningfully investigate credible allegations of grave crimes:

- A report into the 2008-09 Gaza conflict stated that: "...justice and respect for the rule of law are the indispensable basis for peace. The prolonged situation of impunity has created a justice crisis in the Occupied Palestinian Territory that warrants action."
- A 2013 report into the implications of the Israeli settlements called upon Israel: "...to ensure full accountability for all violations...and to put an end to the policy of impunity."
- A report into the 2014 Gaza conflict expressed concern that: "... impunity prevails across the board for violations of international humanitarian law and international human rights law allegedly committed by Israeli forces... Israel must break with its

recent lamentable track record in holding wrongdoers accountable..."

- A 2019 report into the Gaza protests found that: "To date, the Government of Israel has consistently failed to meaningfully investigate and prosecute commanders and soldiers for crimes and violations...Scarce accountability measures arising out of Operations Cast Lead (2008-09) and Protective Edge (2014)...cast doubt over the State's willingness to scrutinise the actions of military and civilian leadership...."

The Special Rapporteur said none of these calls for justice and accountability have been implemented.

He urged the international community to support the ICC process. "The preamble of the Rome Statute calls for 'international cooperation' to ensure the 'lasting respect for and the enforcement of international justice,'" Lynk said. "Ending impunity and pursuing justice can only bring us closer to peace in the Middle East." ...

To read the full press release see

<https://www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=26732&LangID=E>

The ICC ruling referred to above can be read at

https://www.icc-cpi.int/CourtRecords/CR2021_01165.PDF

with a partly dissenting opinion at

https://www.icc-cpi.int/RelatedRecords/CR2021_01167.PDF

and a partly separate opinion at

https://www.icc-cpi.int/RelatedRecords/CR2021_01166.PDF

The reports referred to above can be read at

<https://unispal.un.org/DPA/DPR/unispal.nsf/0/8D52A795C565E9AF852576470042497C>

and

https://www.ohchr.org/Documents/HRBodies/HRCouncil/RegularSession/Session22/A-HRC-22-63_en.pdf

and

<https://www.un.org/unispal/document/auto-insert-185919/>

and

https://www.ohchr.org/Documents/HRBodies/HRCouncil/CoIOPT/A_HRC_40_74.pdf

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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>

**** Domestic Abuse Bill**

<https://bills.parliament.uk/bills/2709>

Committee Stage, House of Lords

<https://hansard.parliament.uk/lords/2021-02-08/debates/0AD1E051-A663-45F6-ADE9-5683C1F79BC0/DomesticAbuseBill>

Education (Assemblies) Bill

<https://bills.parliament.uk/bills/2579>

Freedom of Speech (Universities) Bill

<https://bills.parliament.uk/bills/2820>

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>

Human Rights Act Review (closing date 3 March 2021)

<https://committees.parliament.uk/committee/93/human-rights-joint-committee/news/138635/call-for-evidence-the-governments-independent-human-rights-act-review/>

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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