



# Political Affairs Digest

A daily summary of political events affecting the Jewish Community

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## Home Affairs

### House of Lords Written Answers

#### Getters Talmud Torah

**Lord Storey (Liberal Democrat)** [HL12858] To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of reports that the Getters Talmud Torah school is continuing to operate as an unregistered school.

**Baroness Berridge:** The Department for Education has not seen any recent evidence in relation to whether the Getters Talmud Torah setting is operating as an independent school. If the noble Lord is aware of such information I would be most grateful if he would share it with me or inform the appropriate inspectorate.

An independent school is a setting which provides a full-time education to 5 or more pupils of compulsory school age (or one or more pupil who is looked after or has an education, health and care plan). The current definition of full-time education does not capture settings which offer only a narrow curriculum, even if this teaching takes place throughout all, or most, of the school day. The department consulted on proposals last year to change the definition of independent schools in primary legislation to incorporate such settings. We are currently considering responses to this consultation and will confirm further steps in due course.

All settings, whether registered or unregistered, must also comply with relevant regulations relating to COVID-19. Failure to do so will be a breach of legislation and poses a risk to public health.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2021-02-01/hl12858>

#### Social Media: Racial Harassment

**Baroness Brady (Conservative)** [HL13054] To ask Her Majesty's Government what steps they are taking to ensure that social media companies address the racist abuse of footballers.

**Baroness Barran:** The Culture Secretary and Sports Minister recently led a roundtable discussion with current and former players from the Premier League, English Football League (EFL), Women's Super League (WSL) and Women's Championship, which discussed online racist abuse and players' perspectives on

tackling discrimination in the game.

We are clear that the online racist abuse of football players is unacceptable. We must do all we can to tackle it. We are taking steps through the online harms regulatory framework to ensure that online abuse, whether anonymous or not, is addressed. Under a new legal duty of care, companies will need to remove and limit the spread of illegal content, including illegal online abuse. All companies will need to take swift and effective action against such content.

Companies providing high-risk, high-reach services will also need to undertake regular risk assessments to identify legal but harmful material on their services. These companies will need to set clear terms and conditions which explicitly state what categories of legal but harmful material they accept (and do not accept) on their service. Companies will need to enforce these terms and conditions consistently and transparently and could face enforcement action if they do not. The Online Safety Bill, which will give effect to the regulatory framework, will be ready this year.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2021-02-08/hl13054>

## Department for Education

### **Landmark proposals to strengthen free speech at universities**

Tougher legal measures to strengthen free speech and academic freedom at universities in England have been announced by the Education Secretary ... to stamp out unlawful 'silencing' on campuses.

Following an increasing number of cases of individuals being silenced, the Education Secretary has warned of a 'chilling effect' where students and staff feel they cannot express themselves freely.

The proposed measures ... include a new free speech condition placed on higher education providers in order to be registered in England and access public funding. The regulator, the Office for Students, would have the power to impose sanctions, including financial penalties, for breaches of the condition. The strengthened legal duties would also extend to Students Unions, which for the first time would have to take steps to ensure that lawful free speech is secured for their members and others, including visiting speakers.

In addition, a new legal measure would enable individuals to seek compensation through the courts if they suffer loss as a result of breach of the free speech duties – such as being expelled, dismissed or demoted.

Education Secretary Gavin Williamson said: ... I am deeply worried about the chilling effect on campuses of unacceptable silencing and censoring. That is why we must strengthen free speech in higher education, by bolstering the existing legal duties and ensuring strong, robust action is taken if these are breached.

Under the plans, the Education Secretary would also appoint a new Free Speech and Academic Freedom Champion to investigate potential infringements, such as no-platforming speakers or dismissal of academics, and higher education providers would be legally required to actively promote free speech.

The new Champion would be appointed to the board of the Office for Students and would be able to investigate potential infringements of the new registration condition on freedom of speech and academic freedom in higher education. The registration condition would work alongside strengthened legal duties on free speech and academic freedom and the Champion would also be able to recommend that the Office for Students imposes fines. ...

**To read the full press release see**

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/landmark-proposals-to-strengthen-free-speech-at-universities>

## Higher education: free speech and academic freedom

[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/961537/Higher education free speech and academic freedom web version .pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/961537/Higher_education_free_speech_and_academic_freedom_web_version_.pdf)

## Scottish Government

**Coronavirus (Scotland) (No.2) Act 2020: Fourth report on the steps taken to ensure that the solemnisation of marriages and the registration of civil partnerships continues to be available, and on the number of marriages and civil partnerships that have taken place during the reporting period.**

<https://www.gov.scot/publications/coronavirus-scotland-no-2-act-2020-fourth-report-marriage-civil-partnership/>

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## Israel

### House of Commons Written Answers

#### **Palestinians: Remote Education**

**Scott Benton (Conservative)** [149822] To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what mechanisms are in place to monitor self-learning educational materials distributed by the UN Relief and Works Agency to Palestinian children in the West Bank and Gaza.

**James Cleverly:** The UK Government has zero tolerance to incitement of violence, and we have raised this issue with UNRWA. FCDO monitors UNRWA's performance via programme monitoring and annual assessments to ensure it continues to deliver quality services.

We contacted UNRWA directly regarding this issue and understand that as soon as the mistake was identified, UNRWA took swift action to correct the issue and conducted a thorough review to identify and address any education materials in breach of its policies.

We continue to monitor the situation to ensure self-learning materials remain in line with UN values.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2021-02-05/149822>

#### **Palestinians: Remote Education**

**Scott Benton (Conservative)** [149823] To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether the UK Government is conducting an investigation into reports that the UN Relief and Works Agency distributed educational material to Palestinian children allegedly inciting violence against Israel during the covid-19 pandemic to aid home learning; and if he will make a statement.

**James Cleverly:** The UK Government has zero tolerance towards incitement of violence and we have raised this issue with UNRWA.

UNRWA informed us that they had identified the material in question through their own regular monitoring and took swift action to correct the issue. The Agency also conducted a review to identify and address any education materials in breach of its policies. UNRWA has reported that these materials are no longer circulated and are not used in current lessons. We continue to monitor the situation to ensure self-learning materials remain in line with UN values.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2021-02-05/149823>

## House of Lords Written Answers

### Israel: Nuclear Weapons

**Baroness Tonge (Non-affiliated)** [HL12869] To ask Her Majesty's Government what discussions they have had with the government of Israel about (1) whether that country possesses nuclear weapons, and (2) any plans by that government to declare any such possession.

**Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon:** Israel has not declared a nuclear weapons programme. The UK Government has called on Israel to join the Nuclear Non Proliferation Treaty as a non-nuclear weapon state and to upgrade its arrangement to a full scope Comprehensive Safeguards agreement with the International Atomic Energy Agency.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2021-02-01/hl12869>

### Israel: Palestinians

**Baroness Tonge (Non-affiliated)** [HL12868] To ask Her Majesty's Government what representations they have made to the government of Israel about reports that Palestinians have been attacked in response to the killing of an Israeli citizen by the Israeli police on 21 December 2020 in the West Bank.

**Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon:** We are not aware of these reports. The UK condemns any incidence of violence by settlers against Palestinians. We continue to stress the importance of the Israeli security forces providing appropriate protection to the Palestinian civilian population.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2021-02-01/hl12868>

### Palestinians: Housing

**Baroness Tonge (Non-affiliated)** [HL12867] To ask Her Majesty's Government what representations they plan to the government of Israel about reports that a Civil Administration official threatened Palestinians with expulsion from their homes if they invited (1) journalists, or (2) activists, to witness attacks on them by Israeli settlers.

**Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon:** We regularly make clear our concerns about the evictions of Palestinians from their homes in the West Bank to the Israeli authorities, both bilaterally and in co-operation with like-minded diplomatic partners. We regularly visit communities facing eviction from their homes. The Fourth Geneva Convention, which applies to all occupied territories, prohibits demolitions or forced evictions absent military necessity. We also continue to reiterate the importance of freedom of speech to the Israeli Government.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2021-02-01/hl12867>

### Palestinians: Health Services

**Baroness Tonge (Non-affiliated)** [HL12870] To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the statement by the Palestinian Authority's Minister of Health on 26 January requesting the intervention of international human rights organisations to stop the demolition of a health clinic in Zanouta.

**Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon:** The UK regularly raises demolitions with the Government of Israel. The Minister of State for the Middle East and North Africa raised his concerns about demolitions of Palestinian and humanitarian structures, including healthcare centres, with the Israeli Ambassador on 29 October 2020. UK officials from the British Consulate in Jerusalem have made regular visits to areas at risk of demolition and eviction to reiterate UK support for those communities. The UK also urged the Government of Israel to end demolitions of property in the West Bank at the UN Security Council on 26 January 2021. The UK is clear that in all but the most exceptional of circumstances, demolitions are contrary to International

Humanitarian Law. The practice causes unnecessary suffering to ordinary Palestinians and is harmful to the peace process.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2021-02-01/hl12870>

*The speech of the UK Permanent Representative to the United Nations, referred to above, can be read at*

<https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/normalisation-should-help-deliver-israeli-palestinian-peace>

### **Atallah Mohammad Rayan**

**Baroness Tonge (Non-affiliated)** [HL12871] To ask Her Majesty's Government what representations they have made to the government of Israel about reports that the Israel Defence Force (1) denied medical aid to Atallah Mohammad Rayan after he was shot by soldiers, and (2) raided his family home.

**Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon:** We have not raised this case with the Government of Israel. Our Embassy in Tel Aviv regularly raises the importance of the Israel security force's adherence to the principles of necessity and proportionality when defending its legitimate security interest. In instances where there have been accusations of excessive use of force, we have advocated swift, transparent investigations. They also raise access to healthcare with the Israeli authorities. The long-lasting movement restrictions and the serious constraints imposed by the occupation can impact the provision of medical care. The wounded and critically ill should be able to access the urgent medical care they need.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2021-02-01/hl12871>

### **Hala Mash'hour Qutt**

**Baroness Tonge (Non-affiliated)** [HL12872] To ask Her Majesty's Government what representations they have made to the government of Israel about (1) reports that Hala Mash'hour Qutt was injured during (a) attacks on her family home, and (b) an attempted kidnap, by Israeli settlers; and (2) the steps being taken by that government (i) to investigate, and (ii) to charge, anyone involved in perpetrating any such attacks.

**Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon:** Whilst we have not made representations on these reports, the UK condemns violence by settlers against Palestinians. We continue to stress the importance of the Israeli security forces providing appropriate protection to the Palestinian civilian population. We urge them to thoroughly investigate every instance of settler violence and bring those responsible to justice.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2021-02-01/hl12872>

### **Gaza: Overseas Aid**

**Lord Judd (Labour)** [HL12968] To ask Her Majesty's Government what estimate they have made of the health situation in Gaza; and how much financial assistance they intend to provide to that region to meet any health-related need.

**Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon:** The UK remains concerned about the ongoing humanitarian situation in Gaza and the impact of COVID-19 on an already fragile healthcare system. We are pleased that the OPTs will be among the first to benefit from the COVAX Advance Market Commitment (AMC) - the international initiative to support global equitable access to vaccines, with delivery of a first batch of more than 37,000 doses of the of the Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine anticipated in mid-February.

The UK was one of the first donors to provide funding to support the health and humanitarian response to the COVID-19 pandemic in the OPTs. We have provided £1.25m funding (WHO with £630,000 and UNICEF 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. The

FCDO is currently running a prioritisation exercise across all its programmes, to ensure that every pound we spend goes as far as possible. The Foreign Secretary will communicate the outcome shortly.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2021-02-03/hl12968>

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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>

#### **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

**\*\* closes in 3 days**

**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/>

**\*\* The future of the [Welsh Government] Equality and Inclusion Funding Programme**  
(closing date 30 March 2021)

<https://gov.wales/future-equality-and-inclusion-funding-programme>

**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