



Political Affairs Digest

A daily summary of political events affecting the Jewish Community

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House of Commons Written Answers

Funerals: Coronavirus

John Hayes (Conservative) [154746] To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what support funeral (a) directors and (b) venue owners will receive in the event that mourners break (i) the 30-person limit and (ii) other covid-19 regulations.

Kit Malthouse: It is the responsibility of the funeral director or venue owner to take all reasonable steps to ensure a funeral is Covid secure, and takes place in a way that complies with all relevant legislation, including around attendance.

A funeral director or venue owner can seek support from the police if they reasonably believe that the numbers attending are likely to breach the legal limits despite their best efforts to prevent this, or the numbers in attendance have unexpectedly exceeded the legal limits. The police can then decide the most appropriate action to take, which may include issuing a fixed penalty notice.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2021-02-19/154746>

Listed Places of Worship Grant Scheme

David Amess (Conservative) [154676] To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, pursuant to the Answers of 17 December 2020 to Question 128492 and of 20 January 2021 to Question 137326, whether he plans to extend the Listed Places of Worship Grant Scheme beyond 31 March 2021; and if he will make a statement.

24 February 2021

Nigel Huddleston: I am pleased to be able to confirm that the Listed Places of Worship Grant Scheme will be renewed this year on the same terms as it operated previously.

This scheme will continue to benefit listed places of worship across the country during these difficult times. It will also help to ensure that they are able to reopen fully once it is safe to do so.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2021-02-19/154676>

Information about the Listed Places of Worship Grant Scheme, referred to above, can be read at <http://www.lpwscheme.org.uk/>

The answers referred to above can be read at

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2020-12-14/128942>

(note that two digits in the identification number mentioned in the question have been transposed – the correct number is 128942)

and

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2021-01-13/137326>

Listed Places of Worship Grant Scheme

Alexander Stafford (Conservative) [153428] To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what is the total amount of funding that has been made available through the Listed Places of Worship Grants Scheme since 2012.

Nigel Huddleston: In 2012, DCMS and HM Treasury became joint funders of the Listed Places of Worship Grant Scheme and annual funding was increased to up to £42m (to offset changes to the rate of VAT on alterations) with DCMS funding the first £17m with the further (up to) £25m coming from HMT reserves. In total, the amount available to the grant scheme amounts to £378m since 2012.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2021-02-11/153428>

Information about the Listed Places of Worship Grant Scheme, referred to above, can be read at <http://www.lpwscheme.org.uk/>

Listed Places of Worship Grant Scheme

Alexander Stafford (Conservative) [153429] To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, how much funding has been made available through the Listed Places of Worship Grants Scheme in (a) 2016 - 2017, (b) 2017 - 2018, (c) 2018 - 2019, (d) 2019 - 2020 and (e) in the current financial year.

Nigel Huddleston: Between DCMS and HM Treasury, the funding available for the Listed Places of Worship Grant is up to £42m. The following figures show what was claimed for each of the financial years:

- 2016/2017 - £31,298,390.23
- 2017/2018 - £33,166,559.49
- 2018/2019 - £34,517,766.03
- 2019/2020 - £34,078,628.89
- Current Financial Year (up to 31/1/21) - £22,566,078.26

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2021-02-11/153429>

Information about the Listed Places of Worship Grant Scheme, referred to above, can be read at <http://www.lpwscheme.org.uk/>

Listed Places of Worship Grant Scheme

Alexander Stafford (Conservative) [153430] To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, how many places of worship have been received support under the Listed Places of Worship Grants Scheme since 2012.

Nigel Huddleston: The administrator for the scheme, TopMark, took over in 2014. They have paid out 45,655 grants to approximately 16,170 places of worship. Between 2012 and 2014, the previous administrator for the grant paid out 4,035 grants to 3,425 Listed Places of Worship.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2021-02-11/153430>

Information about the Listed Places of Worship Grant Scheme, referred to above, can be read at <http://www.lpwscheme.org.uk/>

House of Lords Written Answers

Anti-semitism

Baroness Deech (Crossbench) [HL13242] To ask the Senior Deputy Speaker what steps can be taken against members of the House of Lords who express anti-Semitic opinions falling within the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance's working definition of anti-Semitism in the course of their parliamentary duties and activities (1) during, and (2) outside, Parliamentary proceedings.

Lord McFall of Alcluith: The Code of Conduct requires members to treat those with whom they come into contact in the course of their parliamentary duties and activities (including parliamentary proceedings) with respect and courtesy. Behaviour that amounts to bullying, harassment or sexual misconduct is a breach of the Code. Under the definitions appended to the Code, harassment is unwanted physical, verbal or non-verbal conduct that has the purpose or effect of either violating a person's dignity or creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment for them and is related to the protected characteristics set out in the Equality Act 2010, including religion or belief. Anti-Semitic behaviour that amounts to harassment would thus be liable to sanction under the Code.

In relation to parliamentary proceedings, however, the Code of Conduct recognises the constitutional principle of freedom of speech and excludes members' views and opinions from the Commissioner for Standards' remit. It is open to all members to address offensive behaviour or language used in the course of proceedings.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2021-02-10/hl13242>

The Code of Conduct referred to above can be read at

<https://www.parliament.uk/globalassets/documents/lords-commissioner-for-standards/hl-code-of-conduct.pdf>

Antisemitism: Universities

Baroness Tonge (Non-affiliated) [HL13213] To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the report by the Community Security Trust Campus antisemitism in Britain 2018–2020, published on 17 December 2020; and what discussions they have had with (1) the government of Israel, and (2) the Community Security Trust, about (a) the findings of that report, and (2) the causes of antisemitism in universities in the UK.

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: We have not made any assessment. The UK is committed to combatting the rise of anti-Semitism in all its forms, and we have a regular, frank and open dialogue with international partners on this issue.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2021-02-09/hl13213>

The report referred to above can be read at

<https://cst.org.uk/data/file/3/6/Antisemitism%20on%20University%20Campuses.1609855878.pdf>

Police Service of Northern Ireland

Incidents and Crimes with a Hate Motivation Recorded by the Police in Northern Ireland: Update to 31 December 2020

<https://www.psni.police.uk/globalassets/inside-the-psni/our-statistics/hate-motivation-statistics/2020-21/q3/hate-motivations-bulletin-dec-20.pdf>

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Holocaust

House of Commons Written Answer

National Holocaust Memorial Centre and Learning Service

John Hayes (Conservative) [133642] To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what recent estimate he has made of the cost of the proposed Holocaust Memorial and Learning Centre in Victoria Tower Gardens.

Luke Hall: The estimated total cost for building the Holocaust Memorial and Learning Centre is £102 million.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2021-01-06/133642>

House of Lords Written Answer

National Holocaust Memorial Centre and Learning Service: Location

Baroness Deech (Crossbench) [HL13244] To ask Her Majesty's Government what recommendation was made by the UK Holocaust Memorial Foundation about the location of the proposed National Holocaust Memorial and Learning Centre.

Lord Greenhalgh: Following an extensive search of central London locations, the UK Holocaust Memorial Foundation recommended Victoria Tower Gardens as the most fitting site for the proposed Holocaust Memorial and Learning Centre. The Government agreed with the Foundation's recommendation.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2021-02-10/hl13244>

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Israel

See also the House of Lords written answer to "Antisemitism: Universities", that has been included in the Home Affairs section above.

House of Lords Written Answers

Occupied Territories: British Nationals Abroad

Baroness Tonge (Non-affiliated) [HL13287] To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of reports that UK citizens have been accused of involvement in the deaths of Palestinians in the Occupied Palestinian Territories.

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: The Government is aware of the high numbers of Palestinians, including children, killed by Israel Defence Forces in the West Bank and Gaza. We have urged Israel to ensure that its investigation is swift and comprehensive. We continue to stress the importance of the Israeli security forces providing appropriate protection to the Palestinian civilian population, in particular the need to protect children, and urge restraint in the use of live fire. In instances where there have been accusations of excessive use of force, we advocate transparent investigations.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2021-02-10/hl13287>

Palestinians: Human Rights

Baroness Tonge (Non-affiliated) [HL13288] To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the impact on the human rights of Palestinians of the

decision by the government of Israel to classify a nature reserve near the Ainun area in Tubas as a military zone.

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: We are aware of the continued expropriation of land by Israel in the West Bank. 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. 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/2021-02-10/hl13288>

UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights

High Commissioner for Human Rights to the Human Rights Council: Serious Violations by Israel in the Occupied Palestinian Territory while Palestinian Armed Groups in Gaza Continue to Launch Rockets towards Israel

... Michelle Bachelet, High Commissioner for Human Rights, said the report [Ensuring accountability and justice for all violations of international law in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem] provided an update on matters related to accountability for alleged violations of international human rights law and international humanitarian law in the occupied Palestinian territory. Serious violations continued during the reporting period, with 67 Palestinians, including 16 children, killed by Israeli security forces, and 3,678 injured. One Israeli soldier was killed by Palestinians during this period and 90 other Israelis were injured. The demonstrations at the Israel-Gaza fence had been suspended, however, the Office of the High Commissioner had observed a disturbing lack of progress regarding investigations into the widespread use of lethal force in 2018 and 2019 in the context of these protests.

Violations of international humanitarian law continued to be reported, including an attack by Israeli Security Forces in November 2019, which killed nine Palestinians, including five children, in Deir El Balah. Palestinian armed groups in Gaza also continued to indiscriminately launch rockets and incendiary balloons towards Israel. The Office of the High Commissioner continued to observe persistent impunity afforded to members of the Israeli Security Forces for incidents in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem. Ms. Bachelet urged far more efforts by all parties to the conflict to advance accountability, and to provide redress to victims.

Israel ... said that the report offered nowhere near a balanced view. Israel was entitled to accountability and justice for all violations of international law, yet Hamas was not even mentioned, although Hamas used Palestinian children as human shields, controlled the Gaza Strip since Israel unilaterally disengaged from Gaza 15 years ago, and indiscriminately fired rockets targeting Israeli towns. There was no reference to the terrible costs and challenges of terrorism that Israelis faced on a daily basis, no accountability for Hamas, and no justice for Israelis. Israel was a law-abiding democracy with an independent legal system and its Supreme Court was widely regarded as one of the most activist and effective High Courts in the world. The institutional bias reflected in this report was an ongoing testimony of this Council's politicization and partiality against Israel.

State of Palestine ... [said] The report explored violations committed by the occupation forces from November 2019 to November 2020 in the Gaza Strip, the West Bank and East Jerusalem - 67 civilians were killed and almost 3,700 wounded, including a number of medical personnel, persons with disabilities, journalists, children and women. The Gaza Strip had continued to be subject to collective punishment through the blockade for over 14 years. The absence of justice for Palestinians signified the absence of justice everywhere, and the culture of impunity concerning Israel must end. ...

In the ensuing discussion, some speakers condemned the ongoing excessive use of force

by Israeli forces, and the lack of cooperation by Israel with the Office of the High Commissioner, calling the human rights situation in the occupied territories calamitous and horrific. Speakers said the human rights of civilians on both sides must be respected, and some expressed strong opposition to Israel's settlement policy. Israel must comply with its obligations under international human rights law and international humanitarian law on occupied Palestinian territory. The Council was asked to take a clear and firm stand on the human rights violations against the Palestinian people that could be described as war crimes under the Rome Statute. ...

Some speakers noted that the Israeli occupying forces and the Palestinian people were being treated on an equal footing in some sections of the report. Given the inequality and asymmetric relations between them, and the vast human rights violations that the Palestinians experienced at the hands of the Israeli forces, this must not be repeated, as it legitimised these violations. ... Other speakers noted that Israel was a victim of terrorist aggression from various Palestinian groups and was within its rights to defend itself, something the report did not reflect in earnest. Something was broken in the United Nations, when 25 times more recommendations were directed at Israel than all Palestinian terrorist groups combined since 2009.

Nada Al-Nashif, Deputy High Commissioner for Human Rights, urged Israel to desist from demolishing homes, destroying private property and other acts. Israel also needed to address violence by settlers. Urban planning regimes had to comply with international law. Some of this spoke to points made on justice and healing as well as accountability. ...

To read the full press release see

<https://www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=26793&LangID=E>

Ensuring accountability and justice for all violations of international law in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem (A/HRC/46/22)

https://www.ohchr.org/EN/HRBodies/HRC/RegularSessions/Session46/Documents/A_HRC_46_22_AEV.docx

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Other Relevant Information

Court of Justice of the European Union

According to Advocate General Rantos, an employer can authorise, as part of a policy of neutrality, the wearing by its employees of small-scale religious signs

Case C-804/18 ... In March 2018, WABE [a German charitable association] adopted service instructions on observing the requirement of neutrality. They prohibited employees from wearing any visible signs of their political, philosophical or religious beliefs in the workplace, including inter alia Christian crosses, Muslim headscarves or Jewish kippahs. WABE employees working at the undertaking's headquarters are not subject to the requirement of neutrality as they have no contact with customers.

Having been informed of the instructions adopted by WABE, IX refused to remove her headscarf and, consequently, received several warnings before being temporarily suspended. ...

Case C-341/19 MH Müller Handels operates a chain of drugstores in Germany. MJ, who is of Muslim faith, has been employed by that undertaking as a sales assistant and cashier since 2002. On her return from parental leave in 2014, unlike before, she wore an Islamic headscarf. Following her refusal to remove her headscarf, she was instructed by her employer in July 2016 to attend her workplace without any conspicuous, large-scale

political, philosophical or religious signs. ...

In his Opinion ... Advocate General Athanasios Rantos recalls, first of all, that 'equal treatment' in the directive means that there is to be no direct or indirect discrimination whatsoever on the grounds of, inter alia, religion. He takes the view ... that the prohibition on wearing any visible sign of political, philosophical or religious beliefs in the workplace, which results from an internal rule of a private undertaking, does not constitute direct discrimination on the grounds of religion or belief in respect of employees who, due to religious covering requirements, follow certain clothing rules. ...

The Advocate General observes that the question amounts to whether the visible wearing of smallscale signs is appropriate. He takes the view in that regard that a policy of political, philosophical or religious neutrality pursued by an employer, in its relations with its customers, is not incompatible with the wearing, by its employees, of religious signs, whether visible or not, that are small in scale (in other words, discreet) and which are not noticeable at first glance.

According to the Advocate General, it is not for the Court to define 'small-scale', since the context in which the sign is worn may be a relevant consideration. However, he takes the view that an Islamic headscarf is not a small-scale religious symbol. ...

The Advocate General concludes that an internal rule of a private undertaking which prohibits, in the context of a policy of neutrality, only the wearing of conspicuous, large-scale signs of political, philosophical or religious beliefs in the workplace can be justified. ...

... the Advocate General concludes that a national court can apply national constitutional provisions that protect the freedom of religion in the examination of an instruction based on an internal rule of a private undertaking which prohibits the wearing of signs of political, philosophical or religious beliefs in the workplace. However, those provisions must not undermine the principle of non-discrimination laid down in the directive, which is for the referring court to ascertain.

To read the full press release see

<https://curia.europa.eu/jcms/upload/docs/application/pdf/2021-02/cp210025en.pdf>

The full judgement is not currently available in English

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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>

Stage 2 consideration of amendments, Justice Committee

<https://www.parliament.scot/parliamentarybusiness/report.aspx?r=13152&i=119045#ScotParlOR>

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 6 days**

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>

**** Evidence for Equality National Survey (EVENS): Documenting the Lives of Ethnic and Religious Minorities in a Time of Crisis** (closing date not stated)

bit.ly/evensurvey

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