



Political Affairs Digest

A daily summary of political events affecting the Jewish Community

Contents

Home Affairs

Israel

Other Relevant Information

Relevant Legislation

Consultations

Back issues

Home Affairs

House of Commons Oral Answers

Covid-19: Ethnic Minority Disparities

col 37 ... **The Minister for Equalities (Kemi Badenoch):** On Friday, I published my second quarterly report summarising the progress the Government have made in understanding and tackling covid-19 disparities experienced by ethnic minority groups. In my first report of 22 October, I concluded that ethnicity in its own right did not appear to be a factor in the disproportionately higher infection and mortality rates among ethnic minority groups. Rather, the evidence showed that a range of socioeconomic and geographical factors were responsible. The evidence base continues to grow.

The early second-wave data shows very different outcomes for different ethnic groups. In the first wave, for instance, black African men were four and a half times more likely to die from covid-19 than white British men of the same age, but in the early part of the second wave the risk of death was the same for both groups. The second wave has, however, had a much greater impact on some south Asian groups, driven primarily by differences in exposure and infection. This strengthens the argument that ethnic minorities should not be viewed as a single group in relation to covid-19 and means that our response to the pandemic and to the disproportionate impact that it has had on certain groups will continue to be shaped by the latest evidence. ...

Marsha De Cordova (Labour): ... We know that covid-19 has had a devastating and disproportionate impact on our black, Asian and ethnic minority communities. In the second wave, Bangladeshi and Pakistani people have been three times more likely to die, so my first question is to ask the Minister what steps the Government are taking to protect these groups.

I agree with the Minister that the term "BAME" has been unhelpful in assessing the impact of the virus. However, I do not agree with her conclusion that ethnicity is not a risk factor for covid-19, as in reality ethnicity risk factors cannot be separated from the socioeconomic risk factors. For example, ethnic minorities are more likely to live in overcrowded and intergenerational homes where they are unable to self-isolate effectively. What action is being taken to address this issue, especially as schools are set to return next week?

The vaccine roll-out offers hope, but take-up remains low among our ethnic minorities. The Minister's report rightly lists misinformation and disinformation as contributing factors, but fails to address the mistrust and long-standing health inequalities faced by some ethnic minority communities. What actions are being taken to tackle issues of historical mistrust? We need localised data from those who choose not to take the vaccine so that we can effectively target those people, so when will that data finally be published? ...

col 39 Kirsten Oswald (SNP): There is clear evidence of both higher covid-19 infection and higher mortality rates among people from ethnic minority backgrounds, as well as greater pandemic-related economic damage affecting these diverse groups. I also know from my own constituency that the no recourse to public funds policy locks many people, including children, out of vital support. Will the Minister urge her colleagues in the UK Government to review this damaging and discriminatory policy, which has such a disproportionate impact on BAME families? ...

col 42 Diane Abbott (Labour): The Minister is insistent that the wildly disproportionate rate of infection and death among black, Asian and minority ethnic communities has nothing to do with the fact that they are black, Asian or from a minority ethnic group. Has it occurred to her that the fact that they are more likely to be in overcrowded, poor housing conditions and in the types of job that leave them liable to infection is not random, but is to do with race and ethnicity?

Will the Minister do more in the area of data? First, will she speak to colleagues about having ethnicity routinely put on death certificates? Can we have more information on the Haredi and ultra-orthodox Jewish communities, who have had disproportionate levels of deaths from covid in America? Will she speak to Public Health England to make sure that local directors of public health make constituency-level data, particularly on ethnicity, available to constituency stakeholders, including Members of Parliament?

Kemi Badenoch: ... Recording ethnicity data on death certificates was one of the recommendations in my previous report. It is not something that can be done overnight—it will probably require legislation—but we are on our way to getting it, so that is some good news.

The right hon. Lady also mentioned the orthodox Jewish community—finally someone from the Labour Benches has talked about this community, and I am very pleased that she has. Research from the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine estimated that 64% of the orthodox Jewish community may have had covid-19 in 2020. The researchers said that the reasons behind this high rate of infection are not yet known.

Strictly orthodox families have significantly larger households than the UK average. They also live in areas of increased population density and, in pre-pandemic times, had regular attendance at communal events and gatherings. I use them as an example because this is why it is wrong for us to mix together lots of different groups. The orthodox Jewish community has been more impacted than many of the ethnic minority groups that get a lot of attention in the press, but we do not say that that is due to structural antisemitism. We look at the underlying factors. Where there are multi-generational households, for instance, that is not due to racism, but is often due to cultural factors. We are not going to take grandparents away from their families because of covid. We are going to provide them with guidance to ensure that they can look after themselves safely; that is this Government's priority. ...

col 44 Kate Griffiths (Conservative): We all know that vaccination is imperative for protecting lives and for economic recovery. ... May I urge my hon. Friend to ensure that resources are available for further work to reach out to those communities and ensure more clinics in communities where take-up is low?

col 45 Kemi Badenoch: We are ensuring that public health messages are accessible, and are published in a large number of media that ethnic minorities

read, watch and listen to. That will be critical in ensuring that the message gets to all communities, especially those that are harder to reach. ... local efforts will be key in driving vaccine uptake. It cannot all be done from Whitehall and Westminster. We are delivering communication on the channels that we believe people from ethnic minorities use, and are communicating through individuals such as religious and community leaders, as I have mentioned. The DHSC has also set up regular interviews with clinicians for more than 20 ethnic minority newspapers and programmes, including *The Voice*, BBC Asian Network, Al Jazeera, British Muslim TV, Zee TV, *Hamodia* and the *Jewish Chronicle*. ...

To read the transcript in full see

<https://hansard.parliament.uk/commons/2021-03-01/debates/9A4CA2B2-0929-4312-864E-5CF0089B192A/Covid-19EthnicMinorityDisparities>

The second quarterly report, referred to above, can be read at

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/965093/Second_Covid_Disparities_Report_Final_2.pdf

The first quarterly report, referred to above, can be read at

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/941554/First_Covid_Disparities_report_to_PM_Health_Secretary_Final_22-10-20_-_Updated_December_2020.pdf

House of Commons Written Answers

Antisemitism

Matthew Offord (Conservative) [155005] To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what assessment has made of the implications for his Department's policies of the Community Security Trust's Antisemitic Incidents Report 2020.

Luke Hall: Antisemitism has absolutely no place in our society, which is why we've taken a strong lead in tackling it in all its forms. Whilst the most recent figures from the Community Security Trust's antisemitic incident report have shown an 8 per cent decrease, this government will not be complacent. Lord Mann has been asked to provide independent advice to the government on the most effective methods to tackle antisemitism, the Secretary of State has urged all local authorities to adopt the IHRA definition of antisemitism, and we are providing £14 million this year, and provided over £65 million to date, for the Protective Security Grant to protect Jewish schools and community buildings.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2021-02-19/155005>

The report referred to above can be read at

<https://cst.org.uk/data/file/7/2/Incidents%20Report%202020.1612785103.pdf>

Information about the Protective Security Grant, referred to above, can be read at

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/home-office-grants-14-million-funding-for-security-at-jewish-institutions>

Antisemitism: Local Government

Steve Reed (Labour Co-op) [147865] To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what information he holds on which local authorities in England have adopted the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance definition of antisemitism and examples.

Luke Hall: Adopting the IHRA definition of anti-Semitism sends a clear signal that local authorities are serious about tackling antisemitism in their local communities.

The definition is already used in guidance for the Police and Crown Prosecution Service, the Premier League, and a number of political parties, providing examples of the kinds of behaviours which, depending on the circumstances, could constitute antisemitism.

The Secretary of State wrote to all local councils in early 2020 to further encourage those who had not taken this important step to combatting antisemitism in their communities. We are currently compiling the information from local authorities and will encourage those who have not adopted the definition to do as at the earliest opportunity.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2021-02-02/147865>

Welsh Parliament Debate

Stage 3 of the Curriculum and Assessment (Wales) Bill

Information about the Curriculum and Assessment (Wales) Bill can be read at

<https://business.senedd.wales/mglssueHistoryHome.aspx?Id=28836>

Group 8: Religion, Values and Ethics

526 Siân Gwenllian (Plaid Cymru): We as a group agree with the Government that religion, values and ethics should be on the face of the Bill as a mandatory element in order to help to create an inclusive society that respects all views, cultures and religions. ...

527 Wales is an inclusive nation that celebrates diversity. Equipping our young people through education to understand diversity and to fully understand the nature of the different religions and cultures that provide huge wealth to our nation is crucial. That's how we can entrench values that respect cultural and religious diversity in modern Wales. ...

528 Darren Millar (Conservative): ... The Bill in its current form is discriminatory, unfortunately, in that it places burdens on schools with a religious character across Wales that do not apply to those schools without a religious character. At present, schools across Wales either provide a religious education curriculum that has been agreed by the local standing advisory committee on religious education ... or they provide an RE curriculum that has been provided by the denomination to which the faith school belongs. These arrangements have served schools well across Wales for a long, long time, and there has been no clamour for change, but the Bill proposes that, in future, faith schools must, if requested to do so by a single parent, provide the locally agreed curriculum for the new subject of religion, values and ethics alongside the curriculum provided by their denomination. Delivering a dual curriculum is not going to be straightforward. In fact, it will be a significant challenge for faith schools, so I would rather there wasn't such a requirement at all, especially given the fact that parents know the religious character of a school when they actually choose to send their child to that school.

533 Caroline Jones (Independent): ... the Welsh Government has ignored the wishes of parents who wanted to be able to remove their children from lessons that went against their religion, values and ethics. And it's not the job of the state—it's not the state's job to dictate what those religions should be. ...

534 Parents are the primary educators, and they should have the right to withdraw their children from lessons that contradict their cultural and religious beliefs ...

540 Kirsty Williams (Liberal Democrat): ... the Bill ensures that all learners will have access to pluralistic RVE where that is wanted, and there is an obligation on the state to do that, and that is what current law requires. ...

543 The Bill does not prevent parents immersing or teaching their children in any faith that they choose, either at home or in a place of worship, but that is a matter for the parents to arrange and not for the school. In ensuring that all learners in all schools have the right of access to a RVE syllabus that has been designed having regard to an agreed syllabus,

we are supporting learners to garner an appreciation of other religions and to develop tolerance and community cohesion. The issue of the removal of the right to withdraw from RVE has been carefully considered and consulted on, but I accept that there are strong views. As the Bill will no longer allow parents to withdraw their children from RVE, it does require schools of a religious character to give effect to parents' requests for alternative RVE provision, whether that is RVE designed having regard to the agreed syllabus or RVE that accords with the school's trust deeds. ...

548 Suzy Davies (Conservative): ... Part of the purpose of this Bill in the first place is to raise children to be less judgmental and less discriminatory, less prejudiced. That's why I've been pleased that RVE is itself a compulsory part of the curriculum.

To read the full transcript see

<https://record.senedd.wales/Plenary/11181#A700000409>

Group 3: Relationships and Sexuality Education

326 Suzy Davies (Conservative): ... Part of keeping our children safe is to help them and their peers to grow up less comfortable judging others for being different, whatever that difference looks like; to get them to think increasingly about difficult questions—increasingly difficult questions—about why they develop prejudices, why some people exercise power over others through emotional as well as physical bullying and what a healthy relationship looks like, because this part of the curriculum is not just about sex education.

327 There is nothing stopping parents educating and influencing their children at home alongside school, of course, and we should also expect a child's cultural and religious background to be considered as part of deciding what is developmentally appropriate. ... But we can't get away from the fact that this Bill does remove a parental right, and any legislature should carefully examine any attempt by the Executive to remove anyone's right. ...

337 Lynne Neagle (Labour): RSE is a child's right. ...

340 ... mandatory RSE is about protecting our children's mental health. Strong, positive relationships are the essential foundation for good mental health, and I particularly welcome the commitment that RSE should be LGBT-inclusive and equality based. ...

348 Darren Millar (Conservative): My amendments 41 and 42 seek to place requirements on the face of the Bill in relation to the content of the Welsh Government's proposed relationships and sexuality education code ... At present, there's nothing on the face of the Bill to stipulate the contents of the code. The current legislative framework around the teaching of this sensitive subject of RSE, the Education Act 1996, contains some basic safeguards for the teaching of sex education. They were introduced by a Labour UK Government back in 2001, and those safeguards responded to a real need at the time to provide a more positive direction for the subject. But the Curriculum and Assessment (Wales) Bill seeks to disapply these safeguards here in Wales without putting anything similar in their place to ensure that the purposes of the mandatory element of RSE are appropriately met. ...

357 Caroline Jones (Independent): ... If the Bill had not removed the rights of parents to be able to remove their children from relationships and sexuality education lessons, I feel it would have had less opposition. ... I'm told that the way RSE and, indeed, RVE will be taught will not be in separate lessons but across the entire curriculum. What this means in practice is that it would be difficult to exempt children from RVE lessons as it could result in children missing out on entire days of lessons.

358 I was also advised that proposing such an opt-out could be open to legal challenge under human rights legislation, as it infringed the rights of children and young people who have the capacity to decide for themselves. I passionately believe that relationships and sexuality lessons, particularly for the youngest children, should be a matter for parents and

not for the state to decide. We have seen parents soundly reject the removal of parental opt-outs, not just once but twice. ...

372 Kirsty Williams (Liberal Democrat): ... We've all said this afternoon that it's really important that children get to learn about these subjects, but then some of us have said, 'Unless the parents decide it's not.' ...

373 This is absolutely a children's rights-in-action approach. Now, the right to express a preference to how your children should be educated is not an absolute right, and the Bill is entirely compatible with the European convention on human rights, including article 2 and article 9. ...

To read the full transcript see

<https://record.senedd.wales/Plenary/11181#A700000404>

TOP

Israel

House of Commons Oral Answers

East Jerusalem: Forced Evictions and Disposessions

Julie Elliott (Labour): What recent discussions [has the Minister] had with his Israeli counterpart on forced evictions and disposessions in East Jerusalem. (912757)

The Minister for the Middle East and North Africa (James Cleverly): The United Kingdom provides legal aid to vulnerable Palestinian communities at threat of demolition. In 96% of cases, those receiving UK-funded legal support have remained in their homes. The UK ambassador joined ambassadors of European states to urge the Government of Israel to cease demolitions. He attended a meeting with Israeli authorities on 25 February. At the United Nations Security Council on 26 February, the UK permanent representative called on Israel to end demolitions of Palestinian homes and allow the delivery of emergency humanitarian aid.

Julie Elliott: I, like many colleagues, have heard repeated stories from Palestinians who are facing forced eviction, dispossession and demolition of their homes in areas such as Sheikh Jarrah, Silwan and Issawiya in occupied East Jerusalem. I and many other people see that as a deliberate attempt to re-engineer the demographic make-up of occupied East Jerusalem. What more can the Government do, rather than just urge the Israeli Government to stop it? What more can the British Government do to bring an end to this unacceptable situation?

James Cleverly: The United Kingdom has a close and productive working relationship with Israel. When we speak, the Israelis absolutely do listen. The hon. Lady dismisses our urgings, but I remind her that the UK's voice has had an influence on decisions made by the Government of Israel. We will continue to engage, as my right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary did very recently with his counterpart Foreign Minister Ashkenazi and the Israeli ambassador to the Court of St James's only last month.

<https://hansard.parliament.uk/commons/2021-03-02/debates/09B45F3A-6194-4FCF-964C-1162BFBD8D2C/EastJerusalemForcedEvictionsAndDisposessions>

Israel and the Palestinians: Support for Peace

Sarah Atherton (Conservative): What diplomatic steps is [the Minister] taking to support peace between Israel and the Palestinians. (912758)

Jonathan Gullis (Conservative): What diplomatic steps is [the Minister] taking to support peace between Israel and the Palestinians. (912769)

The Minister for the Middle East and North Africa (James Cleverly): The UK is actively encouraging both parties back to dialogue. As I just mentioned, my right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary met his opposite number on 10 February. I spoke to the Palestinian head of mission here in the UK on 2 February. The UK has been working with both the Government of Israel and the Palestinian Authority, alongside the United States and international key partners, to progress specific areas of co-operation, including water and gas provision, energy infrastructure and trade facilitation. We are also seeking to re-establish formal Israeli-Palestinian mechanisms, such as the joint economic committee and its relevant sub-committees.

Sarah Atherton: The International Criminal Court's controversial determination on jurisdiction relating to Israel and the Palestinians not only undermines the middle east peace process but heightens the exposure of our armed forces to vexatious claims by setting a precedent that non-state actors can initiate proceedings. What steps is the Minister taking to ensure that the UK is at the forefront of reforms of the ICC?

James Cleverly: The UK respects the ICC's independence, but we are working with other countries to bring about positive change within the court. The UK was instrumental in the establishment of the independent expert review, which reported in September, together with other state parties. Additionally, the UK is driving forward reforms to governance, prosecutorial excellence, and a more rigorous approach to budget control and value for money.

Jonathan Gullis: ... It has been almost a year since my right hon. Friend expressed his hopes that the European Union would produce a balanced and independent report into the Palestinian Authority's school curriculum, which contains shocking material inciting violence against Israel and Jews. What steps will the Government take if the long-awaited report, due for publication this month, falls short of the required standard?

James Cleverly: I thank my hon. Friend for raising this point and for the consistent approach that he has taken to this issue. We remain concerned about the allegations in Palestinian Authority textbooks and have lobbied European partners to bring forward their report in a timely manner. I have also discussed the issue directly with the Palestinian Authority's representative in the UK, and we have regular discussions with the EU to encourage it to get this report into the public domain. In the interim, the UK will continue to raise our concerns bilaterally with the Palestinian Authority at the very highest levels.

<https://hansard.parliament.uk/commons/2021-03-02/debates/0C6EE231-4C69-4812-A7C2-10A4CDED5315/IsraelAndThePalestiniansSupportForPeace>

Occupied Palestinian Territories: Humanitarian Situation

Alan Brown (SNP): What recent assessment the Government have made of the humanitarian situation in the Occupied Palestinian Territories. (912761)

Andy Slaughter (Labour): If he will maintain the level of the UK's funding contribution to the United Nations Relief and Works Agency. (912765)

Joanna Cherry (SNP): What recent assessment the Government have made of the humanitarian situation in the Occupied Palestinian Territories. (912777)

The Minister for the Middle East and North Africa (James Cleverly): The UK remains concerned about the fragile humanitarian situation in the Occupied Palestinian Territories, particularly in Gaza. The UK is providing £4.5 million in humanitarian assistance to the OPTs, including £1 million to the United Nations Relief and Works Agency's emergency appeal and £2.5 million to the World Food Programme for cash assistance. The UK supports UNRWA as a vital humanitarian force in the region and the FCDO is running a prioritisation exercise across all its programmes to ensure that every pound goes as far as possible.

Alan Brown: The Minister rightly highlights forced evictions and demolitions breaking

international law, but none the less, Israel continues with its evictions in Sheikh Jarrah and Batan al-Hawa. The proposed construction of 1,200 houses at Givat HaMatos is out to tender at the moment. Action is needed, not just words, so when will the UK Government implement trade bans on goods from illegal settlements?

James Cleverly: The UK's position on this issue is long standing and clear. We oppose the points that the hon. Gentleman has put forward. We raise the issue of demolitions regularly with our Israeli counterparts, and we will continue to do so at every opportunity.

Andy Slaughter: [*Inaudible.*]*—*aid budget implies the loss of a third in UNRWA funding, and there are rumours that the Government could be planning to cut twice that. UNRWA is responsible for almost 6 million Palestinian refugees, including the education of 500,000 children, the healthcare of 3 million and emergency food aid for over 1 million. Because of the occupation, Palestinians in Gaza, the west bank and surrounding countries rely on UNRWA for basic public services, so will the Minister give a clear and courageous answer and guarantee at least the current level of funding?

James Cleverly: The UK Government regard UNWRA as an important partner in support of the people in the OPTs and surrounding areas. We are going through a prioritisation exercise at the moment, the outcome of which will be published in due course.

Joanna Cherry: As schools around the world deal with the challenges of the covid pandemic, Palestinian schoolchildren face a further threat. According to the United Nations, 53 Palestinian schools in the occupied west bank are subject to Israeli Government demolition orders. Does the Minister agree that demolishing any school is wrong and that any such action should have consequences?

James Cleverly: The UK regularly raises the issue of demolitions and our position on this is clear. We will continue to do so, and we will continue to highlight the importance of education, which remains one of the Government's priorities.

Wayne David (Labour): The Israeli covid-19 vaccination programme is the best in the world. However, the Minister has indicated that Israel has a legal responsibility to ensure the health and wellbeing of Palestinians on the west bank. Will he therefore join me in urging the Israeli Government to work with the Palestinian Authority to ensure that Palestinians are vaccinated, as well as Israelis?

James Cleverly: The UK is justifiably proud of the work it is doing on the international stage with regard to vaccinations, including through Gavi and the COVAX scheme. We are pleased to see the Government of Israel and the Palestinian Authority co-ordinating their work with regard to vaccinations, and we look forward to that vaccination programme rolling out not just across Israel but to the people who are living in the OPTs.

<https://hansard.parliament.uk/commons/2021-03-02/debates/F97A5898-8167-4603-85EB-26C7591D937C/OccupiedPalestinianTerritoriesHumanitarianSituation>

Topical Questions: Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office

Robert Largan (Conservative): The Prime Minister has rightly condemned the UN's Human Rights Council for its disproportionate focus on Israel, which he said was "damaging to the cause of peace".

As the UN Human Rights Council meets over the coming weeks, will the Government commit to voting against one-sided resolutions singling out Israel, including those outside permanent agenda item 7, in order to send a clear message that such blatant anti-Israel bias will not be tolerated?

Dominic Raab: My hon. Friend is absolutely right. We have stood up for Israel when it has faced bias and, frankly, politicised attacks in the UN and other forums. We will continue to press for the abolition of item 7, because it is the only country-specific standalone agenda item and it focuses on Israel, and that cannot be right.

Topical Questions: Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office

Angela Richardson (Conservative): The growing ties between Israel and her Arab neighbours are extremely positive developments that provide an opportunity to reinvigorate the middle east peace process, which has regrettably stalled for many years. Will my right hon. Friend outline what more the UK can do to help support the resumption of direct peace talks between Israelis and Palestinians, alongside our allies in the region? (912814)

Dominic Raab: I thank my hon. Friend. We have supported the normalisation of relations, which is a good step around the region. Of course, this also led to the suspension of the threat of annexation on the west bank, which was very important. As a result of that, I was able to go to talk to President Abbas and Prime Minister Shtayyeh and encourage them to resume dialogue on west bank issues, which is very important for security, and to make sure that Palestinian public servants are paid. Plans are at least mooted for elections on both sides—both in Israel and on the Palestinian side. Ultimately, we need leadership from both sides to secure the peace that my hon. Friend and other Members want. We need a two-state solution, and the UK will support all those efforts.

<https://hansard.parliament.uk/commons/2021-03-02/debates/4910204A-B68E-4E63-A18B-A4DC4C2484DE/TopicalQuestions#contribution-69AC5AA3-0FF3-41EC-8027-64E8112640DB>

Topical Questions: Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office

Cat Smith (Labour): I draw the Secretary of State's attention to War on Want's new report into Israel's military court system in the occupied west bank. Does he agree that Palestinian civilians should not be tried in military courts? What is his Government doing to support Palestinian human rights defenders who are being tried in them? (912817)

Dominic Raab: The hon. Lady is right to draw attention to the treatment of Palestinians. The reality is that I do not think there is a bar on the use of military systems of justice under international law—let alone under the International Criminal Court system. Indeed, we use a military justice system with some of the highest standards in the world. What is crucial is that there is adequate due process to ensure that people's rights can be fairly and duly heard.

<https://hansard.parliament.uk/commons/2021-03-02/debates/4910204A-B68E-4E63-A18B-A4DC4C2484DE/TopicalQuestions#contribution-41484FF5-C9F9-4EE2-932E-9F700B5E5FA9>

The report referred to above can be read at

[https://waronwant.org/sites/default/files/2021-03/Judge Jury Occupier report War on Want.pdf](https://waronwant.org/sites/default/files/2021-03/Judge%20Jury%20Occupier%20report%20War%20on%20Want.pdf)

House of Commons Written Answers

The following eight questions all received the same answer

Occupied Territories: War Crimes

Andrew Rosindell (Conservative) [153155] To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what discussions he has had with international counterparts on the International Criminal Court's ruling that it has jurisdiction to open a probe into allegations of war crimes in the West Bank, Gaza and East Jerusalem.

Christian Wakeford (Conservative) [153431] To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what discussions he has had with his Israeli counterpart on the International Criminal Court's ruling of 5 February 2021 that the Court has jurisdiction over war crimes committed in Palestinian territories.

Occupied Territories: International Criminal Court

Christian Wakeford (Conservative) [153432] To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what assessment he has made of the implications of his policies of the February 2021 International Criminal Court ruling on the scope of the ICC's territorial jurisdiction in the West Bank, Gaza and East Jerusalem.

Bob Blackman (Conservative) [154987] To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what assessment he has made of the implications for his policies of the February 2021 International Criminal Court ruling on the situation of Palestine.

Bob Blackman (Conservative) [154988] To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what discussions he has had with his counterpart in the US Administration on the International Criminal Court's ruling that it has jurisdiction over the West Bank, Gaza and East Jerusalem.

Bob Blackman (Conservative) [154989] To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what discussions he has had with his US counterpart on the International Criminal Court's ruling of 5 February 2021 that it has jurisdiction over the West Bank, Gaza and East Jerusalem.

Scott Benton (Conservative) [155428] To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what recent assessment he has made of the implications for his policies of the International Criminal Court's assertion of legal authority to UN General Assembly resolutions, with reference to the February 2021 ICC pre-trial ruling on the situation of Palestine.

Scott Benton (Conservative) [155429] To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, with reference to the February 2021 pre-trial ruling regarding the scope of the ICC's territorial jurisdiction in the West Bank, Gaza and East Jerusalem, what steps he is taking to prevent politically motivated cases at the International Criminal Court.

James Cleverly: We closely follow the important work of the International Criminal Court and are looking at the implications of this decision.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2021-02-11/153155>

and

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2021-02-11/153431>

and

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2021-02-11/153432>

and

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2021-02-19/154987>

and

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2021-02-19/154988>

and

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2021-02-19/154989>

and

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2021-02-19/155428>

and

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2021-02-19/155429>

The decision referred to above can be read at

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

A partly dissenting decision from Judge Péter Kovács can be read at

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

A partly separate decision from Judge Perrin de Brichambaut can be read at

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

Israel: Sovereignty

Theresa Villiers (Conservative) [154847] To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign,

Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether the Government continues to accept the legal validity of the San Remo declaration of April 1920 on provision of a home for the Jewish people in Palestine.

James Cleverly: San Remo marked a chapter in the history of Britain's Mandate over Palestine. The Foreign Secretary recorded a message for the San Remo Centenary Resolution celebration in April 2020, which reiterated that the occasion provided an opportunity to reflect on decades of cooperation between Britain and the Jewish people.

The United Kingdom considers that United Nations resolutions, including UNGA 181, UNSCRs 242 and 338, and UNSCR 2334 provide the relevant legal framework today.

We are proud of our bilateral relations with Israel, which continue to go from strength to strength in the twenty-first century. We also recognise - as the Prime Minister has said - that the Balfour Declaration, incorporated into the San Remo Declaration, contains unfinished business. The UK continues to believe that the two-state solution remains the only viable way to resolve the conflict and realise the rights of the Palestinian people.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2021-02-19/154847>

The San Remo Declaration, referred to above, can be read at

http://ecf.org.il/media_items/299

The UN resolutions referred to above can be read at

[https://undocs.org/A/RES/181\(II\)](https://undocs.org/A/RES/181(II))

and

<https://www.securitycouncilreport.org/atf/cf/%7B65BF9B-6D27-4E9C-8CD3-CF6E4FF96FF9%7D/IP%20S%20RES%20242.pdf>

and

<http://unscr.com/en/resolutions/doc/338>

and

<https://www.un.org/webcast/pdfs/SRES2334-2016.pdf>

Israel: Political Prisoners

Sarah Champion (Labour) [156407] To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, pursuant to the Answer of 9 February 2021 to Question 146899 on Israel: Political Prisoners, if he will call for the immediate release of Ms Layan Kayed, Ms Elyaa Abu Hijla and Ms Ruba Asi.

James Cleverly: We continue to call on the Israeli authorities to comply with their obligations under international law and either charge or release detainees.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2021-02-22/156407>

The answer referred to above can be read at

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2021-02-01/146899>

Palestinians: Elections

Paul Blomfield (Labour) [156361] To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what representations he has made to the Government of Israel on ensuring that the forthcoming Palestinian elections can take place free of interference and obstruction.

James Cleverly: We welcome President Abbas' announcement of dates for legislative and Presidential elections in the Occupied Palestinian Territories for the first time since 2006. We encourage the Palestinian leadership to work toward strong, inclusive, accountable and democratic institutions, based on respect for the rule of law and human rights. Free and fair elections are an important and necessary step. The UK will work closely with the Palestinian Authority and

international partners to support this. We are supportive of Hamas-Fatah reconciliation attempts, and of the Palestinian Authority returning to resume government functions in Gaza, helping to improve the dire humanitarian and economic situation and restore effective and accountable governance.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2021-02-22/156361>

Palestinians: Coronavirus

Marsha De Cordova (Labour) [156542] To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what recent representations he has made to his Israel counterpart to encourage the timely import of vaccines and equipment needed to (a) run immunisation programmes and (b) combat the covid-19 pandemic in the occupied Palestinian territory.

James Cleverly: Under International Humanitarian Law, Israel, as the Occupying Power, has a 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. We also recognise the Palestinian Authority's (PA) responsibilities for vaccinations under the Oslo Accords (under Article 17).

We welcome the steps that the parties have taken so far to coordinate responses to the COVID-19 pandemic and encourage further dialogue in this regard. The UK Ambassador in Tel Aviv raised the issue of vaccines with the Israeli Authorities on 24 February, encouraging the Government of Israel to continue to facilitate the transfer of vaccines to the PA when required. The British Embassy in Tel Aviv and the British Consulate-General in Jerusalem are in regular contact with the Israeli and Palestinian authorities respectively, and will continue to raise timely and appropriate access to COVID-19 vaccines and medical equipment.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2021-02-22/156542>

Palestinians: Coronavirus

Seema Malhotra (Labour Co-op) [158056] To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what discussions he has had with the Israeli Government on the covid-19 vaccination rates of Palestinians living under Israeli occupation.

James Cleverly: We welcome the steps that the parties have taken so far to coordinate responses to the COVID-19 pandemic and encourage further dialogue in this regard. The UK Ambassador in Tel Aviv raised vaccines with the Israeli Authorities on 24 February, encouraging the Government of Israel to continue to facilitate the transfer of vaccines to the Palestinian Authority when required. The British Embassy in Tel Aviv and the British Consulate-General in Jerusalem are in regular contact with the Israeli and Palestinian authorities respectively, and will continue to raise timely and appropriate access to COVID-19 vaccines.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2021-02-24/158056>

Palestinians: Textbooks

Jonathan Lord (Conservative) [155027] To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what recent progress has been made on the international review of the content of Palestinian Authority school textbooks.

James Cleverly: We understand the EU are now moving towards the final reporting stage of the study. To ensure that the final report is thorough, the study has been extended to include a sample of textbooks the Palestinian Authority introduced for school year 2020-21. We have regular discussions with our European Partners on the review and we continue to encourage them to finalise the report as soon as possible.

Israel: Palestinians

Sarah Champion (Labour) [156408] To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, if he will call on the Israeli military authorities to cease arresting, detaining and charging Palestinian university students for peacefully exercising their rights to freedom of assembly, association and expression.

James Cleverly: We continue to urge the Israeli Government to fully respect the fundamental rights and freedoms of human rights defenders and organisations, including reiterating the importance of freedom of speech. We have also raised concerns with the Palestinian Authority about the narrowing of space for civil society to operate in the West Bank.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2021-02-22/156408>

Israeli Settlements

Patrick Grady (SNP) [157201] To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what discussions he has had with his counterparts in the new US Administration on the issue of Israeli annexation of Palestinian land.

James Cleverly: The UK works closely with the US on matters relating to the Middle East Peace Process. We strongly opposed any move to annex all or part of the West Bank. Such a move would be contrary to international law and deeply damaging to prospects for lasting peace between Israel and the Palestinians. The UK welcomed the suspension of annexation as part of the normalisation agreement between the Government of Israel and the United Arab Emirates, and subsequent resumption of cooperation between the Government of Israel and the Palestinian Authority.

The Biden Administration has also outlined their opposition to unilateral acts, including annexation, settlement construction and demolitions. We are now focused on building on these positive steps to encourage greater cooperation between the parties and further confidence-building measures. We look forward to working with the US, alongside regional partners, and the Israeli and Palestinian leaderships, to pursue that goal.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2021-02-23/157201>

The following four questions all received the same answer

Hilary Benn (Labour) [154768] To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, if we will ask the Israeli Government for compensation or restitution for the destruction of UK-funded humanitarian aid structures in the occupied West Bank.

West Bank: Demolition

Patrick Grady (SNP) [157199] To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, when he last raised the issue of the demolition of Palestinian homes with his Israeli counterparts.

Israel: Palestinians

Janet Daby (Labour) [155379] To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps his Department is taking to tackle the demolition of Palestinian homes by the Israeli authorities.

Seema Malhotra (Labour Co-op) [158055] To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what representations he has made to his Israeli counterpart on the demolition of Palestinian homes.

James Cleverly: Our Ambassador in Tel Aviv raised ongoing demolitions with the Israeli Authorities, in a meeting alongside like-minded partners on 25 February. I called on Israel to stop demolitions on 5 February 2021 and raised my concerns

about demolitions of Palestinian homes and structures 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 is clear that in all but the most exceptional of circumstances, demolitions are contrary to International Humanitarian Law. The practice causes unnecessary suffering to Palestinians and is harmful to the peace process.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2021-02-19/154768>

and

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2021-02-23/157199>

and

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2021-02-19/155379>

and

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2021-02-24/158055>

The Minister's call to stop demolitions, referred to above, can be read at

<https://twitter.com/JamesCleverly/status/1357723513940045824>

UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights

UN experts condemn Israel's demolition of the Palestinian village of Humsa

UN human rights experts have called on the Government of Israel to immediately end its efforts to demolish the Palestinian village of Humsa – Al Bqai'a in the northern Jordan Valley, and allow the residents to live undisturbed on their lands and homes.

"The ongoing destruction by the Israeli military of the homes, and the destruction and seizure of property, including humanitarian assistance, in Humsa – Al Bqai'a has been causing great hardship to the approximately 60 villagers, including 35 children," said Michael Lynk, the Special Rapporteur for the situation of human rights in the Palestinian territory occupied since 1967, and Balakrishnan Rajagopal, Special Rapporteur on adequate housing as a component of the right to an adequate standard of living, and on the right to non-discrimination in this context.

"This is a traditional Bedouin village in occupied territory, which depends upon its traditional homes, its animal herds and its water tanks for shelter, food security and its economic livelihood," said the experts. "Severing the villagers from their lands and their homes is particularly punitive given the harsh winter they are experiencing and the ever-present dangers of a global pandemic."

The wanton destruction of property and the forcible removal of a protected population under occupation can only be justified under international humanitarian law when rendered absolutely necessary by legitimate military operations, and even then only for temporary periods of time until hostilities have ceased. The experts noted that there are no active military hostilities in the occupied West Bank, and have not been for many years. Such evictions also violate international human rights prohibitions against the forced removal of civilians from their homes. ...

The Government of Israel has justified the attempted destruction of Humsa – Al Bqai'a on the grounds that it lies within an Israeli military firing zone. This same rationale has been relied upon by Israel to attempt to uproot Palestinian villages elsewhere in the West Bank, notably in the region near the city of Hebron.

"These justifications by Israel do not satisfy its strict obligations under international law," the experts stated. "An occupying power cannot use the territory under occupation to conduct military training operations without ample justification. We note that Israel has plentiful grounds for military training within its own borders." ...

"The international community has positive obligations under the Fourth Geneva Convention to ensure that High Contracting Parties such as Israel fully respect their

responsibilities during an occupation," said the experts. "We welcome the support given to the villagers of Humsa Al-Bqai'a by the diplomatic representatives in Palestine and Israel. But much more must be done by their governments to insist upon Israeli accountability, which is the missing key to ending this protracted occupation." ...

To read the full press release see

<https://www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=26826&LangID=E>

International Criminal Court

Statement of ICC Prosecutor, Fatou Bensouda, respecting an investigation of the Situation in Palestine

Today, I confirm the initiation by the Office of the Prosecutor ("Office") of the International Criminal Court ("ICC" or the "Court") of an investigation respecting the Situation in Palestine. The investigation will cover crimes within the jurisdiction of the Court that are alleged to have been committed in the Situation since 13 June 2014, the date to which reference is made in the Referral of the Situation to my Office. ...

Under the Rome Statute, where a State Party has referred a situation to the Office of the Prosecutor and it is determined that a reasonable basis exists to commence an investigation, the Office is obliged to act. As a first step, the Office is required to notify all States Parties and those States which would normally exercise jurisdiction over the crimes concerned about its investigation. ...

Any investigation undertaken by the Office will be conducted independently, impartially and objectively, without fear or favour. ...

The decision to open an investigation followed a painstaking preliminary examination undertaken by my Office that lasted close to five years. During that period, and in accordance with our normal practice, the Office engaged with a wide array of stakeholders, including in regular and productive meetings with representatives of the Governments of Palestine and Israel, respectively.

On the basis of our deliberations, we knew that one issue we would need to have resolved related to the territorial scope of the Court's jurisdiction in the Situation in Palestine. For this reason, we took, as a responsible prosecuting Office, the preliminary step of seeking a ruling on the question, because it was important for us to obtain clarity on it at the outset, so as to chart the course of any future investigation on a sound and judicially tested foundation.

On 20 December 2019, therefore, aware of the complex and novel issues arising in this Situation, I [announced](#) that I would be making a [request](#) to the Judges of Pre-Trial Chamber I ("Chamber") for a ruling to clarify the territorial scope of the Court's jurisdiction in the Situation in Palestine. In our request, [dated 22 January 2020](#), the Office set out its legal position, but encouraged the Chamber to hear views and arguments from all stakeholders before deciding the specific jurisdictional question before it. The Chamber did so, hearing all points of view.

On 5 February 2021, the Chamber [decided](#), by a majority, that the Court may exercise its criminal jurisdiction in the Situation in Palestine, and that the territorial scope of this jurisdiction extends to Gaza and the West Bank, including East Jerusalem. In its majority ruling, the Chamber stressed that it was not determining whether Palestine fulfilled the requirements of statehood under public international law, or adjudicating a border dispute, or prejudging the question of any future borders; it was solely determining the scope of the Court's territorial jurisdiction for the purposes of the Rome Statute, as requested. ...

Having assessed submissions from states, international organisations and other stakeholders, the Chamber was otherwise unanimous in its view that Palestine is a State Party to the Rome Statute. The majority also ruled that Palestine's referral of the Situation obliged the Office to open an investigation, the Office having determined that there existed

a reasonable basis to do so in accordance with the Rome Statute criteria.

Given the reaction, both positive and negative, which has greeted the Chamber's ruling, some measure of reason and balance should be restored to the discussion. In their ruling, the judges entered no findings on the alleged crimes the Office identified, they only held that we have competence to investigate them. Even on some questions of jurisdiction, the majority of the Chamber chose to defer to later proceedings its consideration of any further arguments that might be raised. ...

In discharging its responsibilities, my Office will take the same principled, non-partisan, approach that it has adopted in all situations over which its jurisdiction is seized. We have no agenda other than to meet our statutory duties under the Rome Statute with professional integrity. I recall here, by way of an example, the allegations made about the conduct of the Israeli Defence Forces in the case of the *Mavi Marmara*, where, as Prosecutor, [I declined to commence an investigation](#) on the basis that there was not a reasonable basis to proceed following our clinical assessment of the Rome Statute criteria. ...

To both Palestinian and Israeli victims and affected communities, we urge patience. The ICC is not a panacea, but only seeks to discharge the responsibility that the international community has entrusted to it ... In meeting this responsibility, the Office focuses its attention on the most notorious alleged offenders or those alleged to be the most responsible for the commission of the crimes.

In the end, our central concern must be for the victims of crimes, both Palestinian and Israeli, arising from the long cycle of violence and insecurity that has caused deep suffering and despair on all sides. The Office is aware of the wider concern, respecting this Situation, for international peace and security. ... The pursuit of peace and justice should be seen as mutually reinforcing imperatives.

In carrying out our work, we count on the support and cooperation of the parties, as well as all States Parties to the Rome Statute. My Office welcomes the opportunity to engage with both the Government of Palestine and the Government of Israel, to determine how justice may best be served within a framework of complementary domestic and international action. In this way, we can hope to achieve some measure of accountability and justice for the benefit of Palestinian and Israeli victims of Rome Statute crimes. ...

To read the full statement see

<https://www.icc-cpi.int/Pages/item.aspx?name=210303-prosecutor-statement-investigation-palestine>

TOP

Other Relevant Information

Muslim Council of Britain

Defining Islamophobia: A Contemporary Understanding of How Expressions of Muslimness are Targeted

https://mcb.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/SINGLE-SPREAD-Report-020321_compressed.pdf

TOP

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>

Supplementary financial Memorandum

<https://beta.parliament.scot/-/media/files/legislation/bills/current-bills/hate-crime-and-public-order-scotland-bill/stage-2/supplementary-financial-memorandum.pdf>

Post-mortem Examinations (Defence Time Limit) (Scotland) Bill

<https://beta.parliament.scot/bills/post-mortem-examinations-defence-time-limit-scotland-bill>

TOP

Consultations

** new or updated today

**** closes today**

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 11 May 2021)

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/>

TOP

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