



Political Affairs Digest

A daily summary of political events affecting the Jewish Community

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House of Commons Written Answers

Religious Buildings: Coronavirus

Stuart Anderson (Conservative) [161870] To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what financial support is available to (a) community support groups that meet in premises that form part of places of worship and (b) to support places of worship that have lost income due to having suspended rent payments for community groups that have continued to use their premises during the covid-19 outbreak.

Luke Hall: The Government recognises the impact that the pandemic has had on a wide range of community and voluntary groups, including faith groups and places of worship. Throughout the pandemic – even during the most severe periods of national restrictions – the Government has sought to ensure that key support groups, of up to 15 people, have been able to continue to meet in places of worship and other community venues, to provide mutual aid, therapy and other vital forms of support to those most in need.

As part of the response to the impact of COVID-19, the Government made available a package of support specifically for charities and businesses. Places of worship that are also registered charities have been able to apply to a number of these schemes on the basis of being impacted organisations themselves, to support their work delivering community services in response to the pandemic. This included the Government's £750 million package of support specifically for charities, social enterprises and the voluntary sector. Many places of worship who employ people have also benefitted from the Government's furlough scheme, which was recently extended to the end of September 2021 where needed.

The Government continues to engage regularly with a range of faith leaders and community groups – including through our Places of Worship Taskforce and regular roundtable meetings with major faith groups - to better understand how the Government can support them to respond to the pressures they face at this time.

I encourage places of worship and community groups to monitor the Government's web pages that offer information on the schemes currently available, and new schemes when they are launched, such as:

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/financial-support-for-voluntary-community-and-social-enterprise-vcse-organisations-to-respond-to-coronavirus-covid-19>

The following three questions all received the same answer

Funerals: Coronavirus

Mark Pawsey (Conservative) [160636] To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what (a) guidance and (b) support his Department has provided to funeral directors and death care sector workers to help ensure compliance with covid-19 restrictions at funerals.

Mark Pawsey (Conservative) [160638] To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what guidance her Department has issued to police forces in respect of mourners that breach covid-19 social distancing regulations at funerals.

Mark Pawsey (Conservative) [160639] To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, if she will make an assessment of the potential merits of issuing a protocol to be agreed between police forces and funeral and death care sector businesses to ensure a consistent approach to compliance with covid-19 restrictions at funerals.

Reply from Kit Malthouse: The Government's [guidance for those managing funerals](#) is available through the Deceased Management Advisory Group website. This guidance details the actions funeral directors and others managing funerals should take to ensure funerals take place in a COVID-19 safe and secure way. This includes ensuring a COVID-19 risk assessment is in place and that all reasonable steps are taken to limit the risk of transmission, taking into account the risk assessment and relevant legislation including around attendance.

The Home Office does not provide guidance to police forces as they are operationally independent. [Operational guidance](#) is provided by the National Police Chiefs' Council.

A funeral director should notify the police if they reasonably believe that despite their best efforts, the numbers attending are likely to breach the legal limits. The police can decide the most appropriate enforcement which may include issuing a fixed penalty notice.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2021-03-01/160636>

and

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2021-03-01/160638>

and

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2021-03-01/160639>

Funerals: Coronavirus

Mark Pawsey (Conservative) [160637] To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether she has plans to review the covid-19 regulations in respect of funerals to protect funeral directors and staff cemeteries and crematoriums in the event of breaches of those regulations at funerals.

Kit Malthouse: The 'COVID-19 Response - Spring 2021' provides a roadmap out of the current lockdown in England. The design of the roadmap has been informed by the latest scientific evidence and seeks a balance between our key social and economic priorities, whilst preserving the health and safety of the country. The scientific evidence shows that opening too early or too quickly risks a further lockdown. The approach focuses on data, not dates. Each step has a "no earlier than" date, five weeks later than the previous step, to allow time to assess the impact of the previous step and provide a week's notice before changes occur.

Ahead of Step 4 (no earlier than 21 June), Government will launch the Events Research Programme, to consider how and when restrictions can be lifted from large events including funerals and wakes. Subject to the outcomes of the review, we hope to be able to lift restrictions.

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/2021-03-01/160637>

The roadmap referred to above can be read at

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-response-spring-2021/covid-19-response-spring-2021>

International Criminal Court

Chris Green (Conservative) [160692] To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to the Answer of 25 February 2021 to Question 156447 on International Criminal Court, what assessment he has made of the implications for UK military personnel of the International Criminal Court's decision of 5 February 2021; and if he will make a statement.

James Heapey: The UK respects the independence of the International Criminal Court (ICC), and we expect it to exercise due prosecutorial and judicial discipline. We continue to closely follow the ICC's work and are looking at the implications of this decision.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2021-03-01/160692>

The answer referred to above, which relates to the ICC ruling in respect of the West Bank, Gaza and East Jerusalem, can be read at

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2021-02-22/156447>

House of Lords Written Answer

Muslim Brotherhood Review

Lord Marlesford (Conservative) [HL13600] To ask Her Majesty's Government what plans they have to publish in full the internal review of the Muslim Brotherhood commissioned in April 2014; what assessment they have made of the conclusions contained in the summary report Muslim Brotherhood Review: Main Findings (HC 679), published in December 2015, that the Muslim Brotherhood represents a "revolutionary challenge towards established states" and has "been contrary to national interests and national security"; and what plans they have to undertake a further review of the Muslim Brotherhood.

Baroness Williams of Trafford: There are no plans to publish the internal review into the Muslim Brotherhood. Our assessment of the Muslim Brotherhood remains as set out in the summary report published in December 2015.

The UK Government continues to assess the Muslim Brotherhood's activities when appropriate to ensure our position is based on the latest information available and we will consider action against the review's commitments if and where legal thresholds are met.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2021-02-23/hl13600>

The summary report referred to above can be read at

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/486932/Muslim_Brotherhood_Review_Main_Findings.pdf

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See also the Commons written answer “International Criminal Court” which is included in the Home Affairs Section above, and the second Lords written answer “Religious Freedom” included in the Foreign Affairs Section below.

House of Commons Written Answers

Overseas Investment

Emily Thornberry (Labour) [163180] To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office and the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster, what the stock of inward foreign direct investment in the UK was from (a) Cameroon, (b) Colombia, (c) Israel, (d) Mexico and (e) Venezuela in each of the last five years.

Chloe Smith: The information requested falls under the remit of the UK Statistics Authority. I have, therefore, asked the Authority to respond. ...

The Office for National Statistics (ONS) publishes foreign direct investment (FDI) positions, flows and earnings by country, subject to disclosure procedures. The available outward positions for Cameroon, Egypt, Iraq, Libya and Yemen, for 2015 to 2019 - the last 5 years for which data are available - can be found in Table 1 below. The available inward positions for Cameroon, Colombia, Israel, Mexico and Venezuela, for 2015 to 2019, can be found in Table 2 below.

With regard to the disclosure policy for inward and outward FDI, a minimum of 3 entities are required or else the data will always be suppressed on data protection grounds. However, having 3 or more entities does not mean that it will not be disclosive, as they are subject to further disclosure checks to ensure that the values are not identifiable. Further information on our latest disclosure methodology can be found on the ONS website¹. ...

Table 1: UK outward FDI position with selected countries, in £ million, 2015 to 2019²

	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
Cameroon	21	29	..	19	33
Colombia
Israel	..	379	..	..	..
Mexico	..	- 6	..	..	..
Venezuela

Table 2: UK inward FDI position with selected countries, in £ million, 2015 to 2019³

	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
Cameroon	..	–	–	–	–
Colombia	..	–	1	1	..
Israel	489	532	..	..	..
Mexico	61	115	..	..	..
Venezuela		–	–	–	–

Source: Annual Foreign Direct Investment survey, ONS

¹ <https://www.ons.gov.uk/economy/nationalaccounts/balanceofpayments/methodologies/methodologicalimprovementstoforeigndirectinvestmentstatisticsnovember2017#introduction-of-a-new-disclosure-methodology>

² ‘..’ indicates that the value has been suppressed.

³ ‘..’ indicates value is zero or less than £0.5 million.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2021-03-04/163180>

The following two questions both received the same answer

Israel: UN Human Rights Council

Karen Bradley (Conservative) [163216] To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign,

Commonwealth and Development Affairs, if he will make it his policy that resolutions disproportionately focusing on Israel at the UN are damaging to the prospects for peace; and if he will make a statement.

Karen Bradley (Conservative) [163217] To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what recent assessment he has made of potential bias against Israel at the UN Human Rights Council.

James Cleverly: The UK has stood up for Israel when it faces bias and unreasonable criticism, and has been clear that the existence of a dedicated agenda item ('Item 7') damages the prospect for a two-state solution and does little to advance dialogue, stability or mutual understanding. As such, at the 40th session of the Human Rights Council in March 2019 we moved to voting against all resolutions under Item 7. However, the UN and its member states have every right to address issues of concern in a measured, balanced and proportionate way. We will continue to support scrutiny of Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territories in the Human Rights Council, so long as it is justified, proportionate, and not proposed under Item 7.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2021-03-04/163216>

and

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2021-03-04/163217>

House of Lords Written Answers

Occupied Territories: International Criminal Court

Lord Blencathra (Conservative) [HL13569] To ask Her Majesty's Government what action they intend to take in response to the ruling by the International Criminal Court on 5 February that it has territorial jurisdiction over the West Bank, Gaza and East Jerusalem.

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: We respect the independence of the ICC, and we expect it to exercise due prosecutorial and judicial discipline.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2021-02-23/hl13569>

The ruling 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

The following two questions both received the same answer

Palestinians: Textbooks

Baroness Deech (Crossbench) [HL13578] To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the decision by the governments of Canada and Australia to investigate their contributions to the United Nations Relief and Works Agency because of its reported use of inciteful material in educational textbooks; and what plans they have to establish their own investigation.

Baroness Deech (Crossbench) [HL13579] To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the effectiveness of their Memorandum of Understanding with the Palestinian Authority, following the publication of the report by IMPACT-se Review of UNRWA-Produced Study Materials in the Palestinian Territories, published in January, which found the reported use of inciteful material in educational textbooks used by the United Nations Relief and Works Agency in Gaza Strip and West Bank schools.

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: We are aware of the IMPACT-se report and have contacted United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA) regarding this issue.

We understand that once the issue was identified, UNRWA introduced additional quality assurance processes and will continue to develop new systems to ensure lessons taught by UNRWA are in line with UN values. The UK Government strongly condemns all forms of violence and incitement to violence and will continue to monitor UNRWA's implementation of its curriculum framework and self-learning materials to ensure lessons taught by UNRWA are in line with UN values. We use a variety of tools to monitor the UNRWA performance and ensure it continues to deliver quality services including via programme monitoring and annual assessments. We have a regular dialogue with both the Palestinian Authority and the Government of Israel in which we reiterate the need for both sides to prepare their populations for peaceful coexistence, including by promoting a more positive portrayal of one another to contribute to building the conditions needed for peace.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2021-02-23/hl13578>

and

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2021-02-23/hl13579>

The report referred to above can be read at

<https://www.impact-se.org/wp-content/uploads/UNRWA-Produced-Study-Materials-in-the-Palestinian-Territories.pdf>

The most recent Memorandum of Understanding currently available online can be read at

https://iatf.fcdof.gov.uk/iatf_documents/51857413.odt

West Bank: Demolition

Baroness Hussein-Ece (Liberal Democrat) [HL13592] To ask Her Majesty's Government what representations they have made to the government of Israel about reports of the (1) attempted removal, and (2) confiscation of property, of the residents of Khirbet Humsahin by that government.

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: The Minister of State for the Middle East and North Africa called on Israel to stop demolitions in Humsa Al Baqai'a on 5 February 2021. The UK Ambassador joined the Ambassadors of European states on 25 February in a meeting with Israeli Authorities, urging the Government of Israel to cease demolitions and allow access of humanitarian support to the community in Humsa Al Baqai'a. At the UN Security Council on 26 February, the UK Permanent Representative called on Israel to allow the delivery of emergency humanitarian aid for those who have had their homes demolished or confiscated. We also joined European UN Security Council members in delivering a specific statement on this issue following the Middle East Peace Process session. Officials from the British Consulate General Jerusalem visited Humsa Al-Baqai'a on 6 November to reiterate UK support for the community.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2021-02-23/hl13592>

The Minister's statement, referred to above, can be read at

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

The speech to the UN referred to above can be read at

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

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Foreign Affairs

House of Lords Written Answers

Religious Freedom

The Lord Bishop of Worcester [HL13551] To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the International Religious Freedom or Belief Alliance established by the government of the United States.

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: The UK is a founder and active member of the International Religious Freedom or Belief Alliance ('Alliance'), which was established in February 2020.

The Alliance is a network of countries committed to the promotion and protection of freedom of religion or belief (FoRB). As the Minister of State response for Human Rights, I represented the UK at the first Ministers' Forum of the Alliance in November 2020. Following her appointment in December 2020, the Prime Minister's Special Envoy for FoRB, Fiona Bruce MP, represents the UK at meetings of the Alliance. We use our membership to coordinate advocacy with other states to raise awareness of cases of particular concern and advocate for the rights of individuals being discriminated against or persecuted for their faith or belief. Since its launch, the Alliance has increased its membership from 27 to 32 countries. In August 2020, the UK joined a statement

(<https://www.state.gov/covid-19-and-religious-minorities-pandemic-statement/>)

by the Alliance which recognised the impact of Covid-19 on minority and religious belief communities and called for the full respect for FoRB during the pandemic.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2021-02-22/hl13551>

Religious Freedom

The Lord Bishop of Worcester [HL13550] To ask Her Majesty's Government which countries are observers to the International Religious Freedom or Belief Alliance.

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: There are three categories of participation in the International Religious Freedom or Belief Alliance (Alliance): Members, Observers, and Friends. Members are states which have joined the Alliance and are invited to participate at Ministerial level during the annual Ministers' Forum; Observers are organisations, institutions, or entities which actively advance freedom of religion or belief globally; and, Friends are states or organisations that are considering joining or becoming observers.

The current Members are Albania, Armenia, Australia, Austria, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Brazil, Bulgaria, Cameroon, Colombia, Croatia, Czech Republic, Democratic Republic of Congo, Denmark, Estonia, The Gambia, Georgia, Greece, Hungary, Israel, Kosovo, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, the Netherlands, Poland, Senegal, Slovakia, Slovenia, Togo, Ukraine, the United Kingdom, and the United States; the current Friends are Canada, Japan, Norway, South Korea, and Sweden; the current Observers are the Sovereign Order of Malta and the UN Special Rapporteur for Freedom of Religion or Belief.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2021-02-22/hl13550>

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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>

Scottish Parliament Information Centre briefing prior to Stage 3

<https://sp-bpr-en-prod-cdneq.azureedge.net/published/2021/3/10/1e1b5a44-7473-485c-8672-2127b442de84/SB%2021-18.pdf>

**** Hate Crime and Public Order (Scotland) Bill**

<https://beta.parliament.scot/bills/hate-crime-and-public-order-scotland-bill>

Delegated Powers and Law Reform Committee Report on the Bill at Stage 2

<https://sp-bpr-en-prod-cdneq.azureedge.net/published/DPLR/2021/3/5/6c52201e-4726-41de-bfdb-7ab3501df64c/DPLRS052021R14.pdf>

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

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/>

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