



# Political Affairs Digest

A daily summary of political events affecting the Jewish Community

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## Home Affairs

### House of Commons Written Answers

*The following two questions both received the same answer*

#### **Further Education and Higher Education: Antisemitism**

**Alicia Kearns (Conservative)** [167338] To ask the Secretary of State for Education, how many (a) higher and (b) further education establishments have adopted the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance's working definition of antisemitism.

**Layla Moran (Liberal Democrat)** [169020] To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps his Department is taking to ensure that all universities in England adopt the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance definition of antisemitism.

**Michele Donelan:** The government has asked all English higher education (HE) providers registered with the Office for Students (OfS) to adopt the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA) working definition of antisemitism. The IHRA definition is an important tool in tackling antisemitism. Adopting this widely recognised definition sends a strong signal that HE providers take these issues seriously. My right hon. Friend, the Secretary of State for Education, wrote to HE leaders most recently in October 2020 to reiterate the importance of the definition and to urge all providers to consider adopting it.

The government is pleased to report that at least 91 providers have now adopted the definition (78 are HE providers and 13 are further education providers), with many more preparing to adopt the definition. The decision on adoption of the definition rests with individual providers. However, the government will continue to urge them to adopt the definition and will ensure that HE is a genuinely fulfilling and welcoming experience for everyone.

I am proud that so many providers have taken a positive step towards eradicating antisemitism by adopting the IHRA definition, but further progress is still needed to stamp it out. This is why, in the Secretary of State's most recent strategic guidance letter to the OfS, the government asked the OfS to undertake a scoping exercise to identify providers who are reluctant to adopt the definition. The letter asked providers to consider introducing mandatory reporting of antisemitic incident numbers by providers, with the aim of ensuring a robust evidence base, which the

OfS can then use to effectively regulate in this area.

The Secretary of State also asked the OfS to ensure that, if antisemitic incidents do occur at a provider, they should consider if it is relevant in a particular case whether the provider has adopted the IHRA definition when considering which sanctions, including monetary penalties, would be appropriate to apply.

We will continue to work across the government to ensure that racism and religious hatred of any kind is not tolerated anywhere, including in our world-leading universities.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2021-03-11/167338>

and

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2021-03-15/169020>

## UK Parliament Joint Committee on Human Rights

### **"Put protesting on the same footing as communal worship," says committee**

In the report, *The Government response to covid-19: freedom of assembly and the right to protest*, the Joint Committee calls on the Government to bring forward regulations to amend the law to make it clear that protest is permitted if conducted in a manner that reduces public health risks to an acceptable level. ...

Gathering to protest is not, and never has been, completely illegal during the pandemic—even under lockdown. The Government provided a general prohibition on gatherings coupled with a list of lawful exceptions. Under the current lockdown, the exceptions do not include protest. ...

This 'confusing ambiguity' in the regulations governing gatherings has been the position in all three lockdowns over the past year, says the Report, leaving the public unsure of their rights and at risk of arbitrary or discriminatory decision-making. ...

The Committee has published draft Regulations that would guarantee the right to protest in public outdoor places, if done safely, by putting protest on the same footing under lockdown restrictions as picketing and communal worship.

Under lockdown, as long as the 'required precautions' are in place, people may gather for communal worship in England, in line with the human right to freedom of religion under Article 9 of the ECHR. ...

The Chair of the Joint Committee on Human Rights, Harriet Harman QC MP, said: ...

"While the Government has rightly protected the right to assemble for religion, they have not properly protected the right to protest. The right to protests should have no less protection than the right to religious assembly. The right to protest is important and should be allowed, like other current exemptions, if it is carried out in a safe way. ..."

**To read the full press release see**

<https://committees.parliament.uk/committee/93/human-rights-joint-committee/news/152905/put-protesting-on-the-same-footing-as-communal-worship-says-committee/>

**The Government response to covid-19: freedom of assembly and the right to protest**

<https://committees.parliament.uk/publications/5153/documents/50935/default/>

## Welsh Government

**Final Report: Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic Communities, Contributions and Cynefin in the New Curriculum Working Group**

<https://gov.wales/sites/default/files/publications/2021-03/black-asian-minority-ethnic-communities-contributions-cynefin-new-curriculum-working-group-final-report.pdf>

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## House of Commons Written Answers

*The following two questions both received the same answer*

### **Israel: BBC Arabic Service**

**Bob Blackman (Conservative)** [167185] To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, pursuant to the Answer of 8 March 2021 to Question 159292, on Israel: BBC Arabic Service, what assessment he has made of whether BBC World Service programming has met his Department's agreed objectives on matters relating to Israel.

**Bob Blackman (Conservative)** [167186] To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, pursuant to the answer of 8 March 2021 to Question 159293, Israel: BBC Arabic Service, whether his Department's grant-in-aid to the BBC World Service is conditional on editorial impartiality; and what assessment he has made of the impartiality of that service's editorial line on matters relating to Israel.

**James Cleverly:** The FCDO does not provide grant-in-aid funding to the BBC World Service. Through the World2020 Programme we provide funding for digital enhancements to the BBC Arabic service. The BBC is editorially and operationally independent from Government, so it would not be appropriate to agree objectives of this kind with the BBC. Questions about impartiality or perceived bias are matters for the BBC Board.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2021-03-11/167185>

and

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2021-03-11/167186>

*The answers referred to above can be read at*

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2021-02-26/159292>

and

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2021-02-26/159293>

### **West Bank: Palestinians**

**Layla Moran (Liberal Democrat)** [166527] 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 recent report by Israeli NGOs Yesh Din, Physicians for Human Rights Israel and Breaking the Silence, on the widespread practice of Israeli military invasions of Palestinian homes in the West Bank.

**James Cleverly:** We are aware of the report by Yesh Din. We repeatedly call on Israel to abide by its obligations under international law and have a regular dialogue with Israel on legal issues relating to the occupation, including the Israeli security forces' rules of engagement. While we recognise Israel's legitimate need to deploy security measures, we encourage them to deploy these in a way which minimises tension and to use appropriate force.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2021-03-10/166527>

*The report referred to above can be read at*

[https://s3-eu-west-1.amazonaws.com/files.yesh-din.org/Exposed\\_Life\\_2020/Exposed\\_Life\\_ENG.pdf](https://s3-eu-west-1.amazonaws.com/files.yesh-din.org/Exposed_Life_2020/Exposed_Life_ENG.pdf)

*The following two questions both received the same answer*

### **Israel: Palestinians**

**Layla Moran (Liberal Democrat)** [166528] To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what representations he has made to his Israeli counterpart on reports that a 15-year-old boy, Ali Ayman Saleh Abu Alia, was shot with

live ammunition by Israeli forces on 4 December 2020.

**Layla Moran (Liberal Democrat)** [166529] To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, with reference to the nine Palestinian children killed by Israeli forces in 2020, if he will make representations to the Government of Israel about the continued use of live ammunition against Palestinian children.

**James Cleverly:** The Government is aware of the high numbers of Palestinians, including children, killed by Israel Defence Forces in the West Bank and Gaza. I expressed my sadness on hearing of the death of Palestinian child Ali Ayman Abu Alaya, following clashes between the Israeli Defence Forces and Palestinian civilians. We continue to urge Israel to ensure that its investigation into this case is swift and comprehensive. We also 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.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2021-03-10/166528>

and

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2021-03-10/166529>

## House of Lords Written Answers

### Palestinians: Refugees

**Lord Hylton (Crossbench)** [HL13908] To ask Her Majesty's Government what steps they have taken to provide assistance to Palestinian refugees in poverty in Syria.

**Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon:** The UK is a longstanding supporter of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA). We recognise UNRWA's unique mandate from the UN General Assembly (UNGA), to protect and provide protection and core services to Palestinian refugees across Gaza, the West Bank, Jordan, Lebanon and Syria. The UK provided £51m to UNRWA in 2020. This includes £6m to the Regional Syria Emergency Appeal. Our support will help provide life-saving assistance for the 438,000 Palestinian refugees in Syria, 95% of whom need sustained humanitarian assistance.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2021-03-04/hl13908>

### Palestinians: Refugees

**Lord Hylton (Crossbench)** [HL13909] To ask Her Majesty's Government what steps they are taking, if any, to work with the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees to support (1) distance learning for refugee children, and (2) families in economic hardship in Lebanon.

**Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon:** In 2020, the UK provided £51 million in funding to UNRWA to support its unique role providing protection and core services to Palestinian refugees across Gaza, the West Bank, Jordan, Lebanon and Syria. In response to the pandemic, UNRWA has strengthened remote learning, which includes a virtual learning environment, television broadcasts and websites for accessing links to learning materials.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2021-03-04/hl13909>

## Department for International Trade

### Trade and investment Updated Factsheet: Israel

[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/969729/israel-trade-and-investment-factsheet-2021-02-12.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/969729/israel-trade-and-investment-factsheet-2021-02-12.pdf)

## UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights

### **High Commissioner for Human Rights Presents Three Reports on the Human Rights Situation in the Occupied Palestinian Territory and the Occupied Syrian Golan**

Michelle Bachelet, High Commissioner for Human Rights, said the thirteenth periodic report on the human rights situation in the occupied Palestinian territory covered the period from 1 November 2019 to 31 October 2020 and provided an overview of recurring violations of international humanitarian law by Israel and by Palestinian armed groups as well as violations of international human rights law by all three duty-bearers, namely Israel, the State of Palestine and the de facto authorities in Gaza. The reporting period was marked by persisting human rights violations throughout the occupied Palestinian territory, including violations of the right to life and physical integrity impacting men, women, children and persons with disabilities; restrictions of freedom of movement; and restrictions of the rights to a fair trial, freedom of expression, association and peaceful assembly. ... It highlighted persisting serious concerns of unnecessary or disproportionate use of force against Palestinians. In several incidents, Israeli Security Forces may have resorted to disproportionate or entirely unnecessary use of force resulting in arbitrary deprivation of life, including extrajudicial execution.

Israel continued to systematically use force and other means to suppress demonstrations by Palestinians and continued to hold human rights defenders under administrative or extended pre-trial detention. The land, sea and air blockade of Gaza, which amounted to collective punishment, had entered its fourteenth year. ... Ms. Bachelet said the report also highlighted human rights violations committed by the Palestinian Authority and the de facto authorities in Gaza. ... In addition, extremely concerning cases of ill-treatment of detainees by Palestinian security forces in the West Bank and Gaza de facto authorities' security forces had been documented. ...

Policies and acts contributing to a coercive environment, including the demolition of Palestinian property and the resulting displacement, had reached the highest levels since 2016, despite the COVID-19 pandemic. The demolition of residences, as well as of health, water, and sanitation and hygiene facilities during a public health crisis had further exposed many Palestinians to associated risks. ...

The delegation of Israel was absent. ...

State of Palestine, speaking as a country concerned, noted that Israel, the occupying power, refused to cooperate with all United Nations mechanisms, continuing their practices of building the wall and restricting movements of Palestinians, in addition to excavations under the Al-Aqsa Mosque and usurping natural Palestinian resources, including water. Israel targeted medical staff, journalists, human rights defenders and non-governmental organizations. ... The Palestinians suffered major collective punishment and as a result fuel and other resources were prevented from entering the entire Gaza Strip. ... Israel was also refusing to give any vaccines to the citizens of any country that had refused the movement of Israel's capital to Jerusalem. State of Palestine called for the updating of the database of companies working in the Israeli occupied territories.

Syria, speaking as a country concerned, said the Israeli occupation entity continued to commit acts of aggression against the countries of the region, threatening their territorial integrity, and practiced State terrorism against the Palestinian people and the people of the occupied Syrian Golan ... The Israeli settlements and associated measures included confiscating lands and properties, prohibiting construction and development in Syrian villages and preventing them from natural growth, stealing water and natural resources,

and transferring settlers to the occupied Syrian Golan, a flagrant violation of international law and United Nations resolutions ...

Speakers stated that Israel was more interested in colonizing Palestinian land than ensuring peace and security. They opposed Israeli settlement activities and plans for annexing any part of the West Bank as actions that undermined the two-State solution. ... They condemned the violent arrests taking place in East Jerusalem. Measures taken by Israel to change the demographic situation, such as demolitions of homes in East Jerusalem, were null and void. ...

The discriminatory distribution of vaccines by the occupying power was of extreme concern ... it was beyond understanding why Israel distributed vaccines to illegal settlers but not to Palestinians who lived in the same territory. ... Some speakers, pledging to continue speaking out against all actions that violated international law, unreservedly condemned all attacks on civilians, including the launching of rockets and incendiary balloons from Gaza which endangered Israeli civilians, and persistent acts of settler violence against Palestinians. ...

Israel's actions in the Golan Heights may amount to war crimes, which could possibly trigger individual criminal responsibility of those involved. Some speakers said the reports "whitewashed the crimes of the Palestinians." Israel, though not obliged to do so, had vaccinated hundreds of thousands of Arab Israelis and 90,000 Palestinians, some speakers pointed out. Others said this was a relatively low number, given that Israel had vaccinated more than half its population. Further, by only vaccinating Palestinians who were in contact with Israelis, Israel continued to uphold its racist policies. ... One speaker criticised the Council's bias against Israel, which explained why many countries refused to participate in the debate. Palestinians had launched attacks against Israel from populated areas; in keeping silent, the United Nations was complicit in this grave and dangerous breach of international law. Israel was committing the crime of apartheid. ...

**To read the full press release see**

<https://www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=26919&LangID=E>

**Human rights situation in Palestine and other occupied Arab territories:**

**Implementation of Human Rights Council resolutions S-9/1 and S-12/1 (A/HRC/46/63)**

[https://www.ohchr.org/EN/HRBodies/HRC/RegularSessions/Session46/Documents/A\\_HRC\\_46\\_63.docx](https://www.ohchr.org/EN/HRBodies/HRC/RegularSessions/Session46/Documents/A_HRC_46_63.docx)

**Human rights in the occupied Syrian Golan (A/HRC/46/64)**

<https://undocs.org/A/HRC/46/64>

**Israeli settlements in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, and in the occupied Syrian Golan (A/HRC/46/65)**

[https://www.ohchr.org/EN/HRBodies/HRC/RegularSessions/Session46/Documents/A\\_HRC\\_46\\_65.docx](https://www.ohchr.org/EN/HRBodies/HRC/RegularSessions/Session46/Documents/A_HRC_46_65.docx)

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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**

### **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](http://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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