



Political Affairs Digest

A daily summary of political events affecting the Jewish Community

Contents

Home Affairs

Israel

Foreign Affairs

Other Relevant Information

Relevant Legislation

Consultations

Back issues

Home Affairs

House of Lords Written Answer

Religious Buildings: Islam

Lord Pearson of Rannoch (Non-affiliated) [HL14593] To ask Her Majesty's Government, further to the Written Answer by Baroness Williams of Trafford on 22 March (HL14054), whether they will now answer the question put, namely, what assessment they have made of any Islamist teaching in mosques in the UK; what assessment they have made of the number of Imams in the UK who cannot speak English; and what plans they have to require services in mosques in the UK to be conducted in English.

Lord Greenhalgh: As outlined in our previous response, religious organisations and faith-based institutions may recruit religious leaders from overseas via our T2 Minister of Religion route. The Immigration Rules governing this category require applicants to demonstrate a strong command of the English language in order to qualify for a visa.

The Government will always protect people's legitimate rights – for example, to free speech and to practise their religion within the law – but we cannot and will not shy away from challenging cultures and practices that are harmful. Whether through Islamism or any other ideology, the Government is committed to tackling those who spread views that promote violence and hatred against individuals and communities in our society, and that radicalise others into terrorism.

MHCLG continues to lead on broader matters of integration and faith, including on religious practice in communities.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2021-03-24/hl14593>

The answer referred to above can be read at

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2021-03-09/hl14054>

Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government

COVID-19: Updated guidance for the safe use of places of worship

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-guidance-for-the-safe-use-of-places-of-worship-during-the-pandemic-from-4-july/covid-19-guidance-for-the-safe-use-of-places-of-worship-from-2-december>

Updated Government: Celebrating religious festivals during coronavirus (COVID-19)

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-guidance-for-the-safe-use-of-places-of-worship-during-the-pandemic-from-4-july/celebrating-religious-festivals-during-coronavirus-covid-19>

Department for Digital, Media and Sport

Government announces easing of coronavirus restrictions for charity fundraising

Public fundraising will be permitted to return from Monday 12 April, as part of the next phase of the Government's roadmap out of lockdown. ...

The move will mean that fundraisers across the country will be able to connect with people through door-to-door, street and private site fundraising, in line with Government guidance. ...

Minister for Civil Society and Youth, Baroness Barran, said: Our charities have played an invaluable role in the national effort against coronavirus. From supporting those suffering with poor mental health, to providing activities for young people and tackling loneliness, they have responded to the impact of coronavirus on vulnerable people and continue to relieve the pressure on our NHS. ...

As we move out of lockdown and public fundraising is permitted from next week, it's important to remember that many people still rely on the vital work our charities do. ...

Lord Toby Harris, Chair of the Fundraising Regulator, said: The announcement that public fundraising activities can resume as we enter step 2 of the Coronavirus roadmap will be welcomed by the charity fundraising sector. Door-to-door, street and private site fundraising are all essential means of generating vital funds for so many organisations that support our communities across the UK.

On 12 April, the Fundraising Regulator and Chartered Institute of Fundraising will be publishing updated guidance to support fundraising organisations as they resume public fundraising activities. The updated guidance will provide information in line with the latest Government advice. Fundraising organisations are strongly advised to review and follow this updated guidance when planning their public fundraising activities.

It is important that public fundraising activities should only take place once a thorough risk assessment has been carried out, so that the safety and wellbeing of staff, volunteers and members of the public are protected. ...

To read the full press release see

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/government-announces-easing-of-coronavirus-restrictions-for-charity-fundraising>

Charity Commission

Charity regulator appoints interim manager to Beth Yosef Foundation

The charity's objects are to advance the Jewish religion, in particular as practised by Sephardi Jews.

Beth Yosef Foundation was placed under inquiry in December 2016, over concerns about its administration and the financial management of the charity.

The regulator has ongoing concerns surrounding financial matters, including potential liabilities and debts, as well as the management of conflicts of interest. As a result, the Commission exercised its powers under the Charities Act 2011 to appoint an interim manager, Guy Hollander of Mazars, on 09 February 2021. His role will be to take on the management of the charity to the exclusion of its trustees. The Commission's inquiry continues.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/charity-regulator-appoints-interim-manager-to-beth-yosef-foundation>

Scottish Government

Coronavirus (COVID-19): Updated guidance for the safe use of places of worship

<https://www.gov.scot/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-phase-3-guidance-for-the-safe-use-of-places-of-worship/pages/overview/>

Death of HRH the Duke of Edinburgh

Prime Minister's statement on the death of His Royal Highness The Prince Philip, Duke of Edinburgh

<https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/prime-ministers-statement-on-the-death-of-his-royal-highness-the-prince-philip-duke-of-edinburgh>

HRH Duke of Edinburgh

<https://www.gov.scot/news/hrh-duke-of-edinburgh/>

Scottish Secretary pays tribute to HRH The Duke of Edinburgh

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/scottish-secretary-pays-tribute-to-hrh-the-duke-of-edinburgh>

First Minister of Wales pays tribute to The Duke of Edinburgh

<https://gov.wales/first-minister-of-wales-pays-tribute-to-the-duke-of-edinburgh>

Tributes [from the Welsh Secretary] paid to HRH The Duke of Edinburgh

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/tributes-paid-to-hrh-the-duke-of-edinburgh>

Foster and O'Neill express sympathy following death of Prince Philip

<https://www.executiveoffice-ni.gov.uk/news/foster-and-oneill-express-sympathy-following-death-prince-philip>

Statement from the Secretary of State [for Northern Ireland] on the death of the HRH The Prince Philip, Duke of Edinburgh

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/statement-from-the-secretary-of-state-on-the-death-of-the-hrh-the-prince-philip-duke-of-edinburgh>

Board of Deputies President pays tribute to the Duke of Edinburgh following announcement of his death

<https://www.bod.org.uk/board-of-deputies-president-pays-tribute-to-the-duke-of-edinburgh/>

The Jewish Community in Scotland pays tribute to HRH the Duke of Edinburgh

https://scojec.org/news/2021/21iv_duke_of_edinburgh/prince_philip.html

Israel

House of Lords Written Answers

Coronavirus: Vaccination

Lord Bourne of Aberystwyth (Conservative) [HL12138] To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the government of Israel's approach to administering vaccinations for COVID-19; and what aspects of that approach, if any, they have drawn on for the implementation of the UK's COVID-19 vaccination programme.

Lord Bethell: We have not made a formal assessment. However, the Department continues to monitor vaccine deployment programmes across the world, including Israel, to share learning and collaborate internationally on the role of deploying safe, effective vaccines in the response to COVID-19.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2021-01-14/hl12138>

Palestinians: Coronavirus

Baroness Sheehan (Liberal Democrat) [HL14535] To ask Her Majesty's Government what support they are providing to the Palestinian Authority to ensure that supplies of COVID-19 vaccines (1) to the West Bank, and (2) to Gaza, are not delayed.

Lord Goldsmith of Richmond Park: The UK is committed to global equitable access to effective vaccines as demonstrated by our £548 million contribution to the COVAX Advance Market Commitment (AMC) - the international initiative to support global equitable access to vaccines. We were pleased to note that the first shipment of over 60,000 doses from the COVAX scheme arrived in the OPTs on the 17th March and that over 21,000 were sent to Gaza.

The British Consulate-General in Jerusalem is in regular contact with the Palestinian Authority and will continue to raise timely and appropriate access to COVID-19 vaccines. UN agencies, the PA and the Israeli Government are also working together to ensure that essential medical supplies and staff can access Gaza.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2021-03-23/hl14535>

Ahmad Dola

Baroness Janke (Liberal Democrat) [HL14506] To ask Her Majesty's Government what representations they have made to the government of Israel concerning the death of Ahmad Dola in a house fire in Kafr Aqab, East Jerusalem, on 8 March; and in particular, concerning the reports of Palestinian fire engines being delayed at a checkpoint.

Lord Goldsmith of Richmond Park: We are aware of the reports surrounding the death of Ahmad Dola. Free movement of essential personnel is vital to the effectiveness of care. Delays of essential services and permit delays can endanger the health and lives of everyday Palestinians. The UK will continue to raise the issue of freedom of movement and access into and out of the Occupied Palestinian Territories, including for emergency services, with the Israeli authorities and stress the impact that their restrictions on movement and access are doing to ordinary Palestinians who rely on these fundamental rights.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2021-03-23/hl14506>

United Nations

UNRWA chief reports on despair and hope among Palestinians, as US announces \$150 million in aid

Philippe Lazzarini, Commissioner General of the UN Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees, UNRWA, briefed Member States ...

His report came just hours before the United States Government announced that it was to restart economic, development and humanitarian assistance "to the Palestinian people", including \$150 million in assistance for UNRWA. ...

"People are struggling daily to ensure one meal for the family. No one should be made to feel so desperate. ...

Gwyn Lewis, Director of UNRWA Operations in the West Bank, said 2020 was incredibly challenging, with the looming threat of annexation, leading to a breakdown in coordination between Israel and the Palestinian Authority early in the year. And then the pandemic hit. ...

These dire socio-economic conditions are occurring in parallel with issues related to the ongoing occupation of Palestinian territory, and the more than decade-long blockade on Gaza. ...

To read the full press release see

<https://news.un.org/en/story/2021/04/1089222>

TOP

Foreign Affairs

House of Lords Written Answer

European Institute of Human Sciences

Lord Pearson of Rannoch (Non-affiliated) [HL14455] To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the activities of the European Institute for Human Sciences in respect of any risk to (1) UK national security, and (2) the incidence of anti-Semitism.

Lord Greenhalgh: We do not comment on individual cases.

The Government is committed to tackling those who spread views that promote violence and hatred against individuals and communities in our society, and that radicalise others into terrorism.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2021-03-22/hl14455>

TOP

Other Relevant Information

European Commission against Racism and Intolerance (ECRI)

Statement of the European Commission against Racism and Intolerance (ECRI) on preventing and combating ultra-nationalistic and racist hate speech and violence in relation to confrontations and unresolved conflicts in Europe

ECRI is alarmed by the use of inflammatory rhetoric and the wide dissemination of hateful and dehumanising content, notably on the internet, as well as by reports of atrocities committed against persons or groups of persons on the grounds of their national, ethnic,

linguistic or religious background or of their citizenship in the context of confrontations and unresolved conflicts in Europe, including in the recent past.

ECRI reaffirms its condemnation of hate speech and hate-motivated violence in all its forms and at all times, considers that combating racism and intolerance is of utmost priority in times of crises or in areas where groups of concern to ECRI face extreme violence in the context of confrontations or conflicts, given that such phenomena may lead to the most serious crimes of concern to the international community as a whole, in particular crimes of genocide, crimes against humanity and war crimes, and expresses its full support to all victims of ultranationalistic and racist hate speech and violence. ...

Failure to prevent and combat ultra-nationalistic and racist hate speech and violence in this context further fuels hatred between communities, leading to discriminations on the grounds of national, ethnic, linguistic or religious background or of citizenship, which can entail other grave violations of the European Convention on Human Rights and is likely to result in retaliatory practices and the descent into an inexorable vortex of violence and tragedies.

In the context of confrontations and unresolved conflicts in Europe, ECRI therefore calls upon all stakeholders, in particular those at the highest political level:

- to prevent criminal offences motivated by hate or prejudice on the grounds of national, ethnic, linguistic or religious background or of citizenship, whether real or presumed, and refrain from any expression or action, in any form, which would qualify as the advocacy, promotion of or incitement to the denigration, hatred or vilification of a person or groups of persons on these grounds, as well as any harassment, insult, negative stereotyping, stigmatisation or threat in respect of such a person or groups of persons and any justification of all the preceding types of expression;
- to challenge and condemn in the strongest terms any such manifestations of hatred and ensure that anyone instigating, inflicting or condoning such speech and violence is held accountable ...

To read the full statement see

<https://rm.coe.int/statement-of-ecri-on-preventing-and-combating-ultra-nationalistic-and-/1680a20d58>

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>

TOP

Consultations

** new or updated today

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