



Political Affairs Digest

A daily summary of political events affecting the Jewish Community

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See also the House of Lords written answer to Baroness Sheehan "Israel: Palestinians" (HL14829), included in the Israel section below.

House of Commons Written Answers

Hospitals: Food

Bob Blackman (Conservative) [185859] To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to ensure that hospital patients from the Jewish community are being served fresh Kosher foods, particularly at breakfast, that allow a choice at mealtimes without compromising on the strict dietary laws that they must follow.

Edward Argar: The independent review of National Health Service hospital food was published on 20 October 2020 and is available at the following link:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/independent-review-of-nhs-hospital-food>

This includes steps to improve hospital food for patients, staff and visitors, including religious requirements. An expert group is being assembled to implement the recommendations of this report and this will have a sub-group to look at how food is best provided to patients given their medical conditions, personal or cultural preferences and religious requirements. This sub-group will include representatives from religious organisations.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2021-04-22/185859>

Discrimination

Tom Hunt (Conservative) [183300] To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what discussions officials in her Department are having with representatives of the College of Policing on removing the obligation on police forces to record non-crime hate incidents.

Victoria Atkins: Officials regularly meet College of Policing representatives to understand how practices and policies can improve.

The Home Secretary also recently wrote to the College of Policing on this important issue.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2021-04-19/183300>

House of Lords Written Answer

Metropolitan Police: Religious Buildings

Lord Patten (Conservative) [HL14805] To ask Her Majesty's Government whether specific training is given to Metropolitan Police Officers on procedures to be followed (1) before, and (2) upon entering, public places of worship.

Baroness Williams of Trafford: The Metropolitan Police Service is responsible for the training of individual officers. The Home Office does not hold this information.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2021-04-12/hl14805>

Scottish Government

Coronavirus (COVID-19): calculating physical distancing capacity in public settings: Guidance on how to work out the maximum number of people who can physically distance within a public setting including businesses, places of worship and public events

<https://www.gov.scot/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-calculating-physical-distancing-capacity-in-public-settings/>

Northern Ireland Assembly Debate

International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance's Working Definition of Antisemitism

12.30pm Alexander Easton (DUP): I beg to move: That this Assembly condemns antisemitism in all forms; notes with deep concern the findings of the Community Security Trust's (CST) 'Antisemitic Incidents Report 2020', which recorded 1,668 antisemitic incidents across the United Kingdom; stresses the need to tackle the scourge of antisemitism in every aspect of our society; and endorses the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance's (IHRA) working definition of antisemitism, including its examples, which states that "antisemitism is a certain perception of Jews, which may be expressed as hatred toward Jews. Rhetorical and physical manifestations toward Jewish or non-Jewish individuals and/or their property, Jewish community institutions and religious facilities". ...

Hatred of the Jewish people is ancient. Ideas that Jews are untrustworthy, manipulative and selfish are long-standing. Conspiracy theories claiming that Jews have some sort of national or global control over political and financial events and institutions have always been around, and we know that they are complete nonsense. The Institute for Jewish Policy Research compiled a report that concluded that approximately 30% of people in the UK held antisemitic views. According to the Community Security Trust, over 100 recorded incidents each month is now commonplace.

As the motion states, there were nearly 1,700 antisemitic incidents last year across the UK. Northern Ireland has its fair share of such incidents. It was only recently that Jewish gravestones were damaged in a cemetery on the Falls Road in Belfast. That abhorrent incident saw 10 graves damaged in a walled-off section of the cemetery. Some of the graves dated back to the 1870s. That was a sinister hate crime, which was rightly condemned across the political spectrum. The same cemetery was attacked a few years earlier, with 13 graves damaged. ...

In 2004, the blue plaque for Chaim Herzog, former president of Israel, who was born in

Belfast, had to be removed from a house on Cliftonpark Avenue following such attacks. What is particularly worrying about the statistic cited in the motion is that, in 2008, the number of such incidents stood at just over 500. That means that such incidents of hate have tripled in the past decade. ...

Only two years ago, a Jewish director came to Northern Ireland as part of a tour of the British Isles that he was filming. Some Members may recall the video that he filmed at a bar in the Bogside in Londonderry in which many antisemitic comments were made. Those included, "The Israelis are scum", "Jews are the scourge of the earth" and, worst of all, "The only thing Hitler did wrong was that he didn't kill enough Jews". That is quite shocking. When Mr Tenenbom finished his visit to Northern Ireland, he estimated that he had found antisemitic views in 70% to 80% of people whom he interviewed. He said that he had never seen such antisemitism as he had in Northern Ireland and that it was frightening ...

12.45pm There are therefore two key takeaways on antisemitism that should concern us as we move forward. The first is the ingenuity of those who are determined to spread their hate and make comments about antisemitic attacks. The targeting of online meetings between local Jewish communities and relevant supportive institutions demonstrates the ability of those offenders to adapt quickly to changing circumstances. Secondly, more awareness is needed of how the incidents reported often relate to our news cycles. The hatred of Jews can be worked into stories with no links to Jewish people. The very beginning of the pandemic saw a high number of incidents linking Jews in some form or other to COVID-19. That follows a pattern. ...

The real substance of the motion is to call on the Assembly to endorse the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance's working definition of antisemitism ...

The UK adopted the definition of antisemitism at a national level. It has been in place since 2016. It has also been adopted by the Scottish Parliament and the Welsh Parliament. ...

In Scotland, Jews remain 30 times more likely than others to be targeted for their religious beliefs. ...

Of particular concern is how mainstream antisemitism seems to have become, in our politics, in our universities and on our online platforms. Such views are being unacceptably legitimised, and I am deeply concerned about the lack of action being taken to tackle this growing problem. The IHRA definition of antisemitism and its examples have been adopted by many countries and organisations across the world. We remain the only devolved nation of the UK not to adopt them. Adopting the definition would clarify the meaning of antisemitism and what constitutes antisemitism; it would provide us with guidelines to assist in the recording these incidents. That would allow us to have a greater understanding of antisemitism in Northern Ireland. ...

Pat Sheehan (Sinn Féin): I beg to move the following amendment:

Leave out all after "society;" and insert:

"unambiguously condemns the most recent vandalism in Belfast City Cemetery of graves belonging to our Jewish community; recognises that antisemitism is a form of racism that is a certain perception of Jews, which may be expressed as hatred toward Jews, that rhetorical and physical manifestations of antisemitism are directed toward Jewish or non-Jewish individuals and/or their property and toward Jewish community institutions and religious facilities; agrees that antisemitism is unacceptable and is totally, unequivocally and loudly rejected by this Assembly; and commits to combating antisemitism, as part of our commitment to prevent hate crime and racism." ...

Antisemitism needs to be condemned in the strongest possible terms, wherever it comes from. ... Much in the motion is positive, which we can support, but we have difficulty with the IHRA definition of antisemitism and the examples used, for the simple reason that, if it were codified in law, that would prevent legitimate political criticism of the state of Israel. ...

The man who took the lead in drafting the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance's definition of antisemitism, Kenneth Stern, warned the incoming Biden Administration not to adopt it. In a sensational article in 'The Times of Israel', Stern claimed that pro-Israel

lobby groups have weaponised the definition in an attempt to silence critics of Zionism. He said: "Jewish groups have used the definition as a weapon to say anti-Zionist expressions are inherently anti-Semitic and must be suppressed. Reasonable people can have different opinions about when anti-Semitism is reflected in anti-Zionism. But is this — having the government label anti-Zionism anti-Semitism — the number one way we want to ask the new administration to fight the problem?" ...

William Humphrey (DUP): ... will Sinn Féin put some distance between itself and the attendance of its chairman, Mr Kearney, at a meeting in Ramallah at which the Palestinian president, Mahmoud Abbas, said that Jews had been persecuted because of their "usury and banking", not because of their religion? ...

Pat Sheehan: I have no knowledge of those remarks. I have been at meetings with Mahmood Abbas and other Palestinian leaders and also with many members of the Israeli community, including NGOs such as B'Tselem and Breaking the Silence, an organisation of former members of the military who oppose the Israeli occupation of Palestinian lands. When we talk about Jews, we are not talking about a homogenous group. There are many different perspectives, views and opinions, not only in Israel but globally and even here in Ireland. ...

There is controversy around the IHRA definition, and there is an alternative definition of antisemitism. I ask Members who are here today to bear that in mind. It is 'The Jerusalem Declaration on Antisemitism', developed by a group of Jewish and Israeli scholars ... These groups and individuals say that the IHRA definition: "has caused confusion and generated controversy, hence weakening the fight against antisemitism." ...

Sitting suspended

Debate resumed on amendment to motion [as above]:

2.45pm **Matthew O'Toole (SDLP):** ... Antisemitism has been a stain on civilisation for not just centuries but millennia. This form of prejudice has been not only durable but near-universal. ...

Jewish people have contributed to Ireland for centuries. They have weaved into our complicated story in fascinating ways. ...

It is not enough for us to condemn the Holocaust and pledge to remember it: we need to guard against incipient prejudice or stereotyping of Jews here and now, even when it seems mild or, perhaps, not worth calling out. Antisemitism is not a more acceptable form of intolerance than any other discrimination. It is distinct in its manifestations and expressions, which are often insidious and coded but are recognisable nonetheless. That is why attempts to define and characterise anti-Jewish prejudice are important. The International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance's definition is a useful tool in that regard. The EU, UN and many countries and institutions have signed up to that definition and the associated examples. However, there has been significant commentary to the effect that some of those examples are phrased in a way that could be read as limiting the capacity of those who passionately oppose many of Israel's actions in relation to the occupied territories and, particularly, it should be said, the current Government of Benjamin Netanyahu. That is an important but sensitive area. Let me say that, while my party and I recognise some of the concern over the wording as genuinely held, we believe that it is possible to support the intent of the IHRA and its examples without compromising the capacity to be robust in criticism of the actions of the Israeli Government. Part of the reason why we know that is that people are being robust in their criticism of Israel. The definition should not and must not chill speech on the unacceptable conduct, where it happens, of the current Israeli Administration. ...

Andrew Muir (Alliance): ... The Alliance Party fundamentally believes in a shared society that is free from intimidation, discrimination and fear and in which everybody is safe and can play their part and be treated fairly and with respect. That shared society absolutely

includes the Jewish community in Northern Ireland. ...

At its peak, the Jewish community around Belfast had roughly 1,500 members. ... The Jewish community in Northern Ireland is substantially smaller today, but it continues to play an active and important role in our society. ...

The Alliance Party has consistently endorsed the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance's definition of antisemitism. ... With regard to the Middle East, the Alliance Party continues to support a two-state solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. We condemn the Israeli Government's illegitimate use of force and their abuses of Palestinian rights, as well as the annexation of occupied Palestinian territories. All that is entirely consistent with our support for the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance's definition of antisemitism and will not in any way restrict us from speaking out on those issues. ...

Steve Aiken (UUP): ... The Jewish community here also has a strong connection to Israel and its proud history, with Chaim Herzog, the sixth president of Israel, being born in Belfast in 1918. It should be a point of pride for all of us that such a historic figure came from Belfast, but the mere fact that a commemorative plaque cannot be erected in the vicinity of his birthplace without being attacked, that the synagogue for our small Jewish community has been daubed with hate-driven and racist symbols and that the language of antisemitism seems to be pervasive among some shows that there is a real need to recognise that action must be taken.

3.00pm Many will be aware that, in recent years, there have been attempts to conflate the identity and religion of the Jewish people and the state of Israel. Although there are many views on Israel — we have heard some here today — and it would be disingenuous of me to say anything other than that I fully support the right of the Israeli state to exist, for others to say that the motion is in some way pro-Israel or supportive of any the policies of the current Israeli Government is just another attempt to disguise the very real problem of antisemitism that exists and that, regrettably, is so visibly manifest in Belfast and beyond. There is also a rise in what are clearly attempts at historical revisionism, coupled with downright denial of facts of history. Three quarters of a century later, the fact that some still question the Holocaust and the extent of its genocidal intent goes to show just how far we still have to travel. ...

Paul Frew (DUP): ... I had the privilege of visiting the concentration camps and death camps of Auschwitz and Birkenau. It rocks you to your core. If you go there with a mindset of understanding and learning, it will rock you to your core. It hits you like a ton of bricks when you realise that mankind can be so evil. That is more our default position than peace, tranquillity and comfort, so it needs to be worked at constantly.

It is not just the evils that are inflicted on the Jewish community; it is about all the races and peoples who have been tortured, even despised, throughout the ages. The Jewish people are one of those. If you treat one of us badly, you treat us all badly. ...

What strikes me about the debate is that victims will tell you about their lived experience and how they feel intimidated, discriminated against, excluded, undermined and victimised, but there is something fundamentally wrong when you do not listen to one of those victim groups, its definition, how it feels and its lived experience. ...

Who would dream of telling another race, colour or creed that how they live their lives, their experience of discrimination, or their definition of that discrimination, is wrong? That would not be tolerated. Why should it be tolerated with the Jewish community? ...

Liz Kimmins (Sinn Féin): ... The IHRA definition has been debated globally, and many groups from the Jewish community have stated that it does not go far enough and, in ways, actually weakens the fight against antisemitism. ... We must focus on tackling all forms of antisemitism as an important part of our wider approach to tackling all forms of racism and discrimination. ...

Linda Dillon (Sinn Féin): ... The hate crime legislation independent review concluded at the end of 2020. It reinforced how ineffective current hate crime laws are and made a

series of recommendations on how we can improve this. At present, there are no specific hate crime offences in law in the North, and the review recommended the creation of aggravated hate crime offences ...

3.15pm Whilst it was recognised that online hate speech is largely a reserved matter, the issue was, nonetheless, considered as part of the review, and it would be remiss not to mention the harm that is caused by online hate speech. Social media companies should be compelled, under legislation, to take steps to remove offensive material that is posted online. It is clear that self-regulation has failed. ...

... education will play a vital role on the issue. No one should be targeted because of their faith. Education plays a vital role in teaching our young people the art of acceptance and that we are all different. ...

My final point is that criticism of human rights abuses of the Palestinian people by the Israeli state should not be conflated with antisemitism. Let us not dilute the message that we want to go out from this House. We are united in our opposition to antisemitism in all its forms. ...

Gerry Carroll (People Before Profit Alliance): ... Antisemitism has a barbaric history. The onus is on all of us to challenge any form of antisemitism and stand in solidarity with our Jewish community when it experiences antisemitism, to challenge the rotten roots of all discrimination in society and to condemn all forms of antisemitism in my constituency, in other constituencies and across the world.

I find it disappointing, therefore, that the motion calls for support for the controversial and divisive IHRA definition of antisemitism. ... it wrongly conflates antisemitism with genuine and legitimate criticism of the state of Israel ...

... if the Assembly were to support adopting the IHRA definition, which hampers our ability to condemn ... the apartheid actions of Israel, the Assembly would be choosing to put itself on the wrong side of history and to see such a persecution buried. ...

Emma Sheerin (Sinn Féin): ... We have all heard the horror stories of the Holocaust and the terror that was imposed upon the Jewish people of Europe by the Nazi state. None of us should underestimate the intergenerational trauma that has been inherited by thousands of people from the Jewish community worldwide as a result. Your identity should not feel like baggage that you should be ashamed of, but that is what xenophobia, racism and antisemitism leads to.

The genocide of over 6 million Jewish people across Europe in the 1940s was harrowing. It has left a very real and lasting scar on our world. The ancestors of those survivors who fled from torture in concentration camps bear that hurt. They carry the pain and loss of their relatives, as well as the knowledge that, at one time across swathes of Europe, being Jewish was enough to make you a victim. Modern-day antisemitism, be it in the shape of graffiti on walls, online abuse or even just comedy based on untrue and hurtful stereotypes, further compounds that pain.

What unfolded in World War II was ethnic cleansing in preparation for domination; the eradication of an entire population driven by ignorance, intolerance and greed. Those same motives were at the heart of every colonising power that we can point to in our recent history. ...

Colonialism left us all a sad legacy of racism and xenophobia. That is where the IHRA definition of "antisemitism" is problematic. It prevents genuine and real criticism of an Israeli Government who, at present, are giving life to that same racism through discrimination and cultural supremacy. The definition conflates Zionism and Judaism. It cynically uses examples of antisemitism as cover for Israeli Government treatment of Palestinians today. The Palestinian people in 2021 are living under siege. They are denied their rights; they are unable to build homes, access basic utilities and travel freely. ...

William Humphrey: ... Antisemitism is the most appalling of hate crimes. In May 2019, I visited Yad Vashem in Jerusalem with colleagues from the Assembly and Westminster.

During that disturbing visit, I saw evidence of the scale of evil and the slaughter of innocents at the hands of Hitler's Nazis. The truth of what happened must continue to be told and forever highlighted not to only defeat the evil of antisemitism in today's society but to prevent a recurrence of such things in the future.

3.30pm Sadly, a survey in 2019 revealed that one in 20 adults in the United Kingdom did not believe that the Holocaust had taken place, which is a shocking and sad statistic about our nation. It must be stressed that antisemitism is racism and a hate crime. Today, across Europe and in other parts of our kingdom, the Jewish community feels threatened. Some attend worship in synagogues that have extra security around them, some worship in synagogues that have police or private security firms outside them, and some Jewish children attend schools that have huge security. That is no way for a community to live in 2021. ...

In this city, over the last decade, pro-Palestinian rallies have been organised, with people brought into the city centre. In 2019, when party colleagues and I visited Ramallah, I spoke to Dr Shaath, who was one of the advisers to the Palestinian president and a negotiator during the peace talks. What happens in Ramallah and Jerusalem should not manifest itself in this city. Members who represent constituencies in Northern Ireland need to be very careful of their language and their actions, given how those can feed into the public domain and lead to people breaking the law. After some of those rallies, there were attacks on Jewish members of the community. ...

You cannot say that the Jewish people are to blame for the policies and behaviours of a particular Israeli Government — I am not getting involved in the politics of Israel — any more than you can say that the American people are to blame for what Biden or Trump said. ...

Question, That the amendment be made, put and negatived.

Main Question put and agreed to.

To read the full transcript see

<http://aims.niassembly.gov.uk/officialreport/report.aspx?&eveDate=2021/04/27&docID=334490#3414146>

and

<http://aims.niassembly.gov.uk/officialreport/report.aspx?&eveDate=2021/04/27&docID=334490#3414349>

The hate crime review referred to above can be read at

<https://www.justice-ni.gov.uk/sites/default/files/publications/justice/hate-crime-review.pdf>

TOP

Holocaust

See the Northern Ireland Assembly Debate “International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance’s Working Definition of Antisemitism” in the Home Affairs Section above.

TOP

Israel

See also the Northern Ireland Assembly Debate “International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance’s Working Definition of Antisemitism” in the Home Affairs Section above.

Palestinians: Israel

Rupa Huq (Labour) [185445] To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps he will take to tackle the import to the UK of products from illegal settlements in the Palestinian Occupied Territories.

James Cleverly: In order to enable consumers to make a more fully informed decision concerning the products they buy, in December 2009, the UK introduced voluntary guidelines to enable produce from Israeli settlements in the OPTs to be specifically labelled as such.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2021-04-21/185445>

Israel: Palestinians

Hilary Benn (Labour) [182013] To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether he has made a recent assessment of the treatment of Palestinian children held in Israeli military detention.

James Cleverly: 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 treatment of Palestinian children.

We continue to stress the importance of the Israeli security forces providing appropriate protection to the Palestinian civilian population, in particular the need to protect children. We remain concerned about Israel's extensive use of administrative detention which, according to international law, should be used only when security makes this absolutely necessary rather than as routine practice and as a preventive rather than a punitive measure. We remain committed to working with Israel to secure improvements to the practices surrounding children in detention.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2021-04-16/182013>

The following two questions both received the same answer

Palestinians: Israel

Clive Betts (Labour) [185796] 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 121 per cent increase in Palestinian structures targeted for demolition or seizure by the Israeli authorities in the first quarter of 2021, compared to the same period in the previous year.

West Bank: Demolition and Humanitarian Aid

Clive Betts (Labour) [185797] To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, with reference to the finding by the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs of a more than doubling of the donor-funded aid items targeted for demolition or confiscation by the Israeli authorities in the first quarter of 2021, compared with the monthly average in 2020, what additional steps he will take to deter further demolitions and confiscations of humanitarian aid in the West Bank.

James Cleverly: The UK regularly raises the demolition of Palestinian property with the Government of Israel, including over the repeated confiscation and demolition of donor-funded assistance and structures. The Fourth Geneva Convention, which applies to all occupied territories, prohibits demolitions or forced evictions absent military necessity. 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 efforts to promote peace.

The UK urged the Government of Israel to end demolitions of property in the West Bank at the UN Security Council on 25 March 2021. On the same day, the British Ambassador in Tel Aviv raised ongoing demolitions with the Israeli authorities in a meeting alongside like-minded partners. I called on Israel to stop demolitions on 5

February 2021 and raised my concerns about the 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.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2021-04-22/185796>

and

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2021-04-22/185797>

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

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

House of Lords Written Answers

Israel: Palestinians

Baroness Sheehan (Liberal Democrat) [HL14829] To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment have they made of the decision by Pearson Education to pause the distribution of two textbooks by author Hilary Bash following allegations by academics that its text regarding the Israeli-Palestinian conflict had been altered.

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: The content and quality assurance of textbooks is a matter for individual publishers. Her Majesty's Government is aware that concerns have been raised and understand that Pearson will take action where necessary.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2021-04-12/hl14829>

Israel: Palestinians

Lord Hylton (Crossbench) [HL14872] To ask Her Majesty's Government what steps they are taking to support free and fair elections (1) in Palestine, and (2) in Israel.

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: We have welcomed 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, including encouraging the Government of Israel to allow elections in East Jerusalem, in keeping with the Oslo Accords. The Minister of State for the Middle East and North Africa spoke to the Israeli Ambassador to the UK on 19 April to reiterate the importance of Palestinians living in East Jerusalem being permitted to vote in Palestinian Legislative Council elections. We also look forward to maintaining excellent relations with the new Israeli government, when formed, and working closely together.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2021-04-13/hl14872>

Palestinians: Elections

Baroness Janke (Liberal Democrat) [HL14763] To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the reported decision by the government of Israel not to grant visas to EU delegates to monitor the forthcoming Palestinian elections because of restrictions in place to address the COVID-19 pandemic.

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: Independent election monitoring is vital for free and fair elections. We understand Covid-19 has prevented largescale international observation missions like those seen in 2006. However, we are also clear that the presence of international observers remains important to ensure elections are credible. We expect international observers to be granted visas where appropriate.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2021-04-12/hl14763>

Palestinians: Elections

Lord Oates (Liberal Democrat) [HL14800] To ask Her Majesty's Government what representations they have made to the Palestinian National Authority to ensure that Palestinian elections take place to the existing timetable.

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: We have welcomed President Abbas' announcement of 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 to this.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2021-04-12/hl14800>

Palestinians: Elections

Lord Oates (Liberal Democrat) [HL14801] To ask Her Majesty's Government what representations they have made to the government of Israel to ensure that Palestinian voters in occupied East Jerusalem are able to take part in elections to the Palestinian National Authority.

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: Minister James Cleverly spoke to the Israeli Ambassador to the UK on 19 April to reiterate the importance of Palestinians living in East Jerusalem being permitted to vote in Palestinian Legislative Council elections. The UK continues to work closely with the Palestinian Authority and international partners to support Palestinian elections.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2021-04-12/hl14801>

Palestinians: Elections

Lord Oates (Liberal Democrat) [HL14802] To ask Her Majesty's Government what (1) technical, and (2) financial, support they are providing to the Palestinian Central Elections Commission to help ensure free and fair elections are able to take place in the Occupied Palestinian territories.

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: The UK does not financially support the Palestinian Central Elections Commission. However, UK officials at the British Consulate General in Jerusalem will continue to work closely with the parties involved, including the Central Elections Commission and the UN.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2021-04-12/hl14802>

Palestinians: Elections

Lord Oates (Liberal Democrat) [HL14803] To ask Her Majesty's Government what representations they have made to the government of Israel to ensure free access to Gaza for campaigning in Palestinian elections.

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: We continue to encourage all parties to respect and facilitate the democratic process fully, including during the campaigning period.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2021-04-12/hl14803>

Israeli Settlements: Palestinians

Baroness Sheehan (Liberal Democrat) [HL14830] To ask Her Majesty's Government what steps they are taking to protect Palestinians living in the West Bank from violence from Israeli settlers.

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: We welcome the Government of Israel's decision to establish a special governmental unit and implement legislative changes to tackle settler violence. Nonetheless, we continue to urge the Israeli authorities to thoroughly investigate every instance and to bring those responsible to justice and end the culture of impunity. Our long-standing objective is a negotiated two-state solution which will allow Palestinians and Israelis to live in peace, lessening the

likelihood of politically driven violence and incitement to violence.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2021-04-12/hl14830>

Palestinians: Arrests

Baroness Janke (Liberal Democrat) [HL14762] To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the statement by the Palestinian Returns Centre to the UNHRC on 9 March about reports that Palestinians in East Jerusalem and the West Bank have been arrested by Israeli authorities under the pretext of illegal communication with foreign enemies when contacting friends and family abroad.

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: We have not made such an assessment. However we remain concerned about Israel's extensive use of administrative detention which, according to international law, should be used only when security makes this absolutely necessary rather than as routine practice and as a preventive rather than a punitive measure. 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/2021-04-12/hl14762>

The statement referred to above can be read at

<https://prc.org.uk/en/post/4240/prc-urges-israel-to-halt-arrest-sweeps-against-palestinians-for-communicating-with-arab-relatives>

Palestinians: Children

Baroness Janke (Liberal Democrat) [HL14761] To ask Her Majesty's Government what steps they are taking to protect children in the Palestinian Occupied Territories following reports that a child lost an eye after being hit by a rubber tipped steel bullet fired by Israeli Defence Forces on 9 April.

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: Whilst we have not made representations on this particular case, in instances where there have been accusations of excessive use of force, we continue to seek information from the Israeli authorities. We call on the Israeli security forces to provide appropriate protection to the Palestinian civilian population and urge restraint in the use of live fire. 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 treatment of Palestinian children.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2021-04-12/hl14761>

Israel: Palestinians

Baroness Sheehan (Liberal Democrat) [HL14831] To ask Her Majesty's Government what representations they have made to the government of Israel regarding the summons by Israeli forces of a 14-year-old Palestinian boy for interrogation.

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: 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 treatment of Palestinian children. We remain concerned about Israel's extensive use of administrative detention which, according to international law, should be used only when security makes this absolutely necessary rather than as routine practice and as a preventive rather than a punitive measure. We remain committed to working with Israel to secure improvements to the practices surrounding children in detention and regularly raise this with the Israeli Ministry of Justice.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2021-04-12/hl14831>

Abusive Israeli Policies Constitute Crimes of Apartheid, Persecution

The 213-page report, “A Threshold Crossed: Israeli Authorities and the Crimes of Apartheid and Persecution,” examines Israel’s treatment of Palestinians. It presents the present-day reality of a single authority, the Israeli government, ruling primarily over the area between the Jordan River and Mediterranean Sea, populated by two groups of roughly equal size, and methodologically privileging Jewish Israelis while repressing Palestinians, most severely in the occupied territory.

“Prominent voices have warned for years that apartheid lurks just around the corner if the trajectory of Israel’s rule over Palestinians does not change,” said Kenneth Roth, executive director of Human Rights Watch. “This detailed study shows that Israeli authorities have already turned that corner and today are committing the crimes against humanity of apartheid and persecution.” ...

The 1973 International Convention on the Suppression and Punishment of the Crime of Apartheid and the 1998 Rome Statute to the International Criminal Court (ICC) define apartheid as a crime against humanity consisting of three primary elements:

1. An intent to maintain domination by one racial group over another.
2. A context of systematic oppression by the dominant group over the marginalized group.
3. Inhumane acts. ...

To maintain domination, Israeli authorities systematically discriminate against Palestinians. The institutional discrimination that Palestinian citizens of Israel face includes laws that allow hundreds of small Jewish towns to effectively exclude Palestinians and budgets that allocate only a fraction of resources to Palestinian schools as compared to those that serve Jewish Israeli children. In the occupied territory, the severity of the repression, including the imposition of draconian military rule on Palestinians while affording Jewish Israelis living in a segregated manner in the same territory their full rights under Israel’s rights-respecting civil law, amounts to the systematic oppression required for apartheid. ...

“Denying millions of Palestinians their fundamental rights, without any legitimate security justification and solely because they are Palestinian and not Jewish, is not simply a matter of an abusive occupation,” Roth said. “These policies, which grant Jewish Israelis the same rights and privileges wherever they live and discriminate against Palestinians to varying degrees wherever they live, reflect a policy to privilege one people at the expense of another.” ...

To read the full press release see

<https://www.hrw.org/news/2021/04/27/abusive-israeli-policies-constitute-crimes-apartheid-persecution>

A Threshold Crossed: Israeli Authorities and the Crimes of Apartheid and Persecution

https://www.hrw.org/sites/default/files/media_2021/04/israel_palestine0421_web_0.pdf

Q&A: A Threshold Crossed

<https://www.hrw.org/news/2021/04/27/qa-threshold-crossed>

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Foreign Affairs

House of Lords Written Answer

UN World Conference Against Racism

Baroness Deech (Crossbench) [HL14866] To ask Her Majesty's Government what consideration they have given to their participation in the United Nations General Assembly's commemoration of the 20th anniversary of the World Conference Against Racism, held in Durban in 2001.

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: The United Kingdom is committed to combatting all forms of racism, both at home and abroad. We believe that one of the most effective ways to tackle injustices and advocate respect among different religious and racial groups is to encourage all states to uphold their human rights obligations. However, some of the anti-Semitic actions and speeches in and around the Third World Conference against Racism and its various follow-up events gave rise to serious concerns. Therefore we will consider UK attendance in the light of developments between now and the commemoration event, including the likelihood of any recurrence.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2021-04-13/hl14866>

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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>

Commons consideration of Lords amendments ('ping pong')

<https://hansard.parliament.uk/commons/2021-04-26/debates/05E7E125-ADAE-4293-A313-6694F2788EF4/DomesticAbuseBill>

Lords consideration of Commons amendments ('ping pong')

<https://hansard.parliament.uk/lords/2021-04-27/debates/072D024F-5334-4D37-AAE4-D490A390DBB6/DomesticAbuseBill>

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>

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Consultations

** new or updated today

New Plan for Immigration (closing date 6 May 2021)

<https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/new-plan-for-immigration>

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