



Political Affairs Digest

A daily summary of political events affecting the Jewish Community

Contents

Home Affairs

Israel

Relevant Legislation

Consultations

Back issues

Home Affairs

House of Commons Written Answers

Collective Worship: Coronavirus

Steve Baker (Conservative) [187208] To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, if he will issue guidance (a) for all religions to allow for outdoor group prayer to take place with the same criteria that applies to indoor places of worship before Step 3 of the covid-19 response Spring 2021 roadmap and (b) to facilitate communal Eid prayer in connection with Ramadan.

Eddie Hughes: We know that it will be disappointing that Eid will take place before Step 3 of the roadmap to reopening has been taken. However, we must remember that we are still living through a pandemic – every additional day of restrictions directly improves our ability to reduce transmission and control the virus.

Communal worship outdoors in the grounds of a Place of Worship is already possible. Outdoors each participating group can involve up to two households. Mosques will also be able to organise 'Eid in the Park' prayers, but will need to work with local councils and health officials to facilitate this. Because larger events inevitably carry risks around groups mingling we have advised anyone planning such an event to ensure they are modest in size and well stewarded to ensure social distancing guidelines are followed, consistent with our guidance on Outdoor Events.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2021-04-26/187208>

Weddings: Coronavirus

Catherine McKinnell (Labour) [187226] To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and the Minister for the Cabinet Office, when he plans to publish guidance for weddings and civil partnerships taking place in Step 3 of the Government's roadmap for the easing of covid-19 restrictions.

Penny Mordaunt: In the COVID-19 Response - Spring 2021, the Government has set out the gradual and cautious approach to reopening different sectors in England, guided by science and the data. It is important that we take a cautious approach in easing restrictions, so that we can see the impact of the steps we are

taking before moving to the next step.

For that reason, we will continue to keep guidance and restrictions under review, in line with the changing situation. Guidance on weddings at Step 3 will be updated at least a week in advance, taking into account developments in the pandemic.

At Step 3, no earlier than 17 May 2021, weddings and civil partnership ceremonies are permitted for up to 30 people in COVID-19 Secure venues. Receptions can also proceed with up to 30 people in a COVID-19 Secure indoor venue, or outdoors, which includes private gardens.

For further information, please refer to the guidance for small marriages and civil partnerships found here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-guidance-for-small-marriages-and-civil-partnerships/covid-19-guidance-for-small-marriages-and-civil-partnerships>

For further information, please refer to the guidance for for wedding and civil partnership receptions and celebrations:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-guidance-for-small-marriages-and-civil-partnerships/covid-19-guidance-for-wedding-and-civil-partnership-receptions-and-celebrations>

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2021-04-26/187226>

Welsh Government

Updated guidance for weddings and civil partnerships: receptions and celebration events

<https://gov.wales/guidance-weddings-and-civil-partnerships-receptions-and-celebration-events-html>

English Local Council Elections

After 140 of 143 councils declared:

Conservative	61 councils (+13)	2,313 councillors (+239)
Labour	44 councils (-8)	1,332 councillors (-317)
Liberal Democrat	7 councils (+1)	572 councillors (+3)
Green	–	143 councillors (+82)
Mebyon Kernow	–	5 councillors (+1)
Reform UK	–	2 councillors (+2)
Liberal	–	1 councillor (-1)
UK Independence Party	–	0 councillors (-48)
Independent Health Concern	–	0 councillors (-2)
Independent	–	248 councillors (+35)
Residents' Association	–	43 councillors (+6)
Other	–	3 councillors (no change)
No overall control	28 councils (-6)	

England local elections 2021 – full results

<https://www.bbc.com/news/topics/c481drqqzv7t/england-local-elections-2021>

Scottish Parliament Elections

Turnout	63%
SNP	64 seats (+1)
Conservative	31 seats (no change)
Labour	22 seats (-2)
Green	8 seats (+2)
Liberal Democrat	4 seats (-1)

Scottish Parliament election 2021 – full results

<https://www.bbc.com/news/topics/c37d28xdn99t/scottish-parliament-election-2021>

Scottish election 2021: First women of colour elected to Holyrood

<https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-scotland-scotland-politics-57038919>

Pam Duncan-Glancy first wheelchair user elected to Holyrood

<https://www.heraldscotland.com/news/19289252.pam-duncan-glancy-first-wheelchair-user-elected-holyrood/>

Welsh Senedd Elections

Turnout	47%
Labour	30 seats (+1)
Conservative	16 seats (+5)
Plaid Cymru	13 seats (+1)
Liberal Democrat	1 seat (no change)
UK Independence Party	0 seats (-7)

Welsh Parliament election 2021 – full results

<https://www.bbc.com/news/topics/cqwn14k92zwt/welsh-parliament-election-2021>

Welsh election 2021: First woman of colour elected to Welsh Parliament

<https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-wales-57041114>

TOP

Israel

House of Commons Written Answers

Middle East and North Africa: Overseas Aid

Anna McMorrin (Labour) [186212] To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what assessment he has made of the potential effect of the reduction in Official Development Assistance funding on non-governmental

organisations' (a) programming and (b) levels of in-country staff to deliver programmes in (i) Yemen, (ii) Syria, (iii) the Occupied Palestinian Territories, (iv) Lebanon, (v) Turkey, (vi) Egypt, (vii) Iraq, (viii) Libya and (ix) refugee settlements in Europe.

James Cleverly: The FCDO has prioritised our reduced Overseas Development Assistance funding in the Middle East and North Africa so that the UK remains a force for good across the region against the challenging financial climate created by COVID-19. We are prioritising essential humanitarian assistance to those worst affected by conflict and COVID-19, notably in Syria and Yemen. We are continuing to focus on education and getting vulnerable girls into school and will also continue to support conflict resolution and stabilisation, open societies. Alongside our current programmes, we will also begin new programming to tackle climate change.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2021-04-23/186212>

Palestinians: Elections

Sarah Champion (Labour) [187238] To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps his Department is taking to ensure that Palestinian elections can go ahead in May 2021 freely as planned.

James Cleverly: The UK is working closely with the Palestinian Authority and international partners to support Palestinian elections. The Foreign Secretary met Palestinian Foreign Minister Dr Riad Malki on 22 April and urged parties to continue towards free and fair elections. I 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 will continue to encourage the Palestinian leadership to work toward strong, inclusive, accountable and democratic institutions, based on respect for the rule of law and human rights.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2021-04-26/187238>

House of Lords Written Answers

Occupied Territories: War Crimes

Baroness Sheehan (Liberal Democrat) [HL15079] To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they made of the application of (1) international law, and (2) human rights principles, when making their decision to oppose an inquiry by the International Criminal Court into allegations of war crimes committed in the West Bank and Gaza since 2014.

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: As the Prime Minister said in his letter to the Conservative Friends of Israel, the UK is a strong supporter of the International Criminal Court (ICC) and we respect the independence of the Court. In this instance we do not consider that the ICC has jurisdiction. 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/2021-04-19/hl15079>

The letter referred to above can be read at

<https://www.facebook.com/conservativefriendsofisrael/posts/4017164808347260>

Occupied Territories: Coronavirus

Baroness Sheehan (Liberal Democrat) [HL15080] To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the availability of COVID-19 vaccines to people living in the Occupied Palestinian Territories.

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: We were pleased to note that the Palestinian National COVID-19 Vaccination Campaign began on 21 March following the first shipment of over 60,000 doses from the COVAX Advance Market Commitment (AMC) on 17 March. The UK is committed to global equitable access to effective vaccines as

demonstrated by our £548m contribution to the COVAX AMC. The second shipment of 72,000 doses also arrived on 19 April 2021.

We remain in close contact with the Palestinian Authority on their vaccination campaign and the Minister for the Middle East and North Africa most recently discussed this issue with the Palestinian Health Minister on 23 March 2021. We also continue to raise the importance of timely and appropriate access to COVID-19 vaccines with the Israeli Authorities, including through our Embassy In Tel Aviv.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2021-04-19/hl15080>

Palestinians: Coronavirus

Baroness Sheehan (Liberal Democrat) [15078] To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of reports that Palestinians were denied entry to the Al-Aqsa Mosque during Ramadan by Israeli forces on the basis that they had not been (1) tested for COVID-19, or (2) vaccinated against COVID-19; and what assessment they have made of the availability of COVID-19 (a) tests, and (b) vaccines, to Palestinians living in the West Bank.

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: The Haram Al-Sharif/Temple Mount and Jerusalem hold particular significance for many groups around the globe, especially the three Abrahamic faiths of Christianity, Islam and Judaism. We support the freedom of Muslims to worship at Al Haram Al Sharif. In meetings with the Israeli authorities we regularly raise the need to respect the status quo of the holy sites in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem.

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 remain in close contact with the Palestinian Authority on their vaccination campaign and ongoing response to the COVID-19 pandemic. Minister Cleverly most recently discussed this issue with the Palestinian Health Minister on 23 March 2021. We also continue to raise the importance of timely and appropriate access to COVID-19 vaccines with the Israeli Authorities, including through our Embassy in Tel Aviv.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2021-04-19/hl15078>

The following two questions both received the same answer

Mansour al-Shahateet

Baroness Janke (Liberal Democrat) [HL15099] To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of reports that Mansour Shahateet spent 10 years in solitary confinement during 17 years' incarceration in an Israeli prison; and what assessment they have made of the compatibility of long-periods of solitary confinement with human rights principles.

Israel: Palestinians

Baroness Janke (Liberal Democrat) [HL15100] To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the (1) physical, and (2) mental, health support available to Palestinians held in Israeli prisons; and what assessment they have made of the long-term health impact on Palestinians held for more than 10 years in Israeli prisons after their release.

Lord Goldsmith of Richmond Park: We are aware of reports concerning Mansour Shahateet's detention. 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 prisoners. We remain committed to working with Israel to secure improvements to prison conditions and detention practices, including the provision of essential healthcare services upon release. In instances where there have been accusations of ill-treatment, we

advocate swift, transparent investigation.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2021-04-20/hl15099>

and

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2021-04-20/hl15100>

West Bank: Schools

Baroness Janke (Liberal Democrat) [HL15049] To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the impact on the education of children in the West Bank of (1) restrictions on access to reliable (a) electricity, and (b) internet services, and (2) COVID-19 related restrictions on their physical attendance at schools.

Lord Goldsmith of Richmond Park: It is essential to have a strong and thriving Palestinian education system to provide opportunities for the next generation. UK aid works to support the Palestinian education system; in financial year 2020/21 we provided £20m in funding to the Palestinian Authority to support the salaries of education workers in the West Bank. Our ongoing programme support to UNRWA also helps to provide education to children across the Occupied Palestinian Territories (OPTs), including virtually since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic. UK aid also works to address the barriers to economic development in the OPTs, including through work to improve the quality and reliability of energy. We will continue to monitor the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the education of children in the OPTs but have not made a formal assessment.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2021-04-19/hl15049>

Palestinians: Refugees

Lord Hylton (Crossbench) [HL15046] To ask Her Majesty's Government what assistance they are providing in the current financial year to the UN Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees; and whether they will publicise the needs of Palestinian refugees in Syria, Lebanon and Jordan.

Lord Goldsmith of Richmond Park: The UK is a longstanding supporter of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA). We are clear that a fair settlement for Palestinian refugees must be agreed as part of a wider negotiated peace settlement. Until that time, the UK remains firmly committed to supporting UNRWA and Palestinian refugees across Gaza, the West Bank, Jordan, Lebanon and Syria. In Financial Year 2020/2021, the UK provided £63.6m to UNRWA, which includes £7m to the Syria Emergency Appeal and £3.8m to the OPTs Emergency Appeal. Decisions on UK aid to UNRWA in Financial Year 2021/2022 are currently being considered in the context of a temporary overall reduction in Overseas Development Assistance, as announced by the Foreign Secretary on 26 November.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2021-04-19/hl15046>

Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office

Statement by France, Germany, Italy, Spain and the United Kingdom on Israeli Settlements

We urge the Government of Israel to reverse its decision to advance the construction of 540 settlement units in the Har Homa E area of the occupied West Bank, and to cease its policy of settlement expansion across the Occupied Palestinian Territories. Settlements are illegal under international law, and threaten prospects for a peaceful resolution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

If implemented, the decision to advance settlements in Har Homa, between East Jerusalem and Bethlehem, will cause further damage to the prospects for a viable

Palestinian State, with Jerusalem as the capital of both Israel and a Palestinian State. This move, alongside settlement advancement in Givat HaMatos and continued evictions in East Jerusalem, including in Sheikh Jarrah, also undermines efforts to rebuild trust between the parties, following the positive resumption of Israeli-Palestinian cooperation. We call on both sides to refrain from any unilateral action and resume a credible and meaningful dialogue, to advance efforts for the two state solution and an end to the conflict. <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/statement-by-france-germany-italy-spain-and-the-united-kingdom-on-israeli-settlements>

Updated travel advice: Israel

<https://www.gov.uk/foreign-travel-advice/israel>

Updated travel advice: The Occupied Palestinian Territories

<https://www.gov.uk/foreign-travel-advice/the-occupied-palestinian-territories>

UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights

Press briefing notes on Occupied Palestinian Territory

Eight Palestinian refugee families residing in the Sheikh Jarrah neighbourhood of East Jerusalem are facing a risk of forced eviction due to a legal challenge by the Nahalat Shimon settler organization. For four of these families, the risk is imminent.

The evictions, if ordered and implemented, would violate Israel's obligations under international law. ... According to an OCHA survey in 2020, at least 218 Palestinian households in East Jerusalem, including the families in Sheikh Jarrah, have eviction cases filed against them. The majority of these have been initiated by 'settler organizations', placing 970 people, including 424 children, at risk of displacement.

Given the disturbing scenes in Sheikh Jarrah over the past few days, we wish to emphasize that East Jerusalem remains part of the occupied Palestinian territory, in which International Humanitarian Law applies. The occupying Power must respect and cannot confiscate private property in occupied territory, and must respect, unless absolutely prevented, the laws in force in the country. This means that Israel cannot impose its own set of laws in occupied territory, including East Jerusalem, to evict Palestinians from their homes. ...

In practice, the implementation of these laws facilitates the transfer by Israel of its population into occupied East Jerusalem. The transfer of parts of an occupying Power's civilian population into the territory that it occupies is prohibited under international humanitarian law and may amount to a war crime.

According to several Security Council resolutions all legislative and administrative measures and actions taken by Israel, the occupying Power, which have altered or purport to alter the character and status of East Jerusalem, including expropriation of land and properties, are null and void and must be rescinded. ...

We call on Israel to immediately halt all forced evictions, including those in Sheikh Jarrah, and to cease any activity that would further contribute to a coercive environment and lead to a risk of forcible transfer. ...

We further call on Israel to respect freedom of expression and assembly, including of those who are protesting against the evictions, and to exercise maximum restraint in the use of force while ensuring safety and security in East Jerusalem.

To read the full press release see

<https://www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=27067&LangID=E>

TOP

Relevant Legislation ** new or updated today

UK Parliament

**** Assisted Dying Bill**

The 2019-2021 session of Parliament has prorogued and this Bill will make no further progress.
<https://bills.parliament.uk/bills/2592>

**** Education (Assemblies) Bill**

The 2019-2021 session of Parliament has prorogued and this Bill will make no further progress.
<https://bills.parliament.uk/bills/2579>

**** Freedom of Speech (Universities) Bill**

The 2019-2021 session of Parliament has prorogued and this Bill will make no further progress.
<https://bills.parliament.uk/bills/2820>

**** Genocide Determination Bill**

The 2019-2021 session of Parliament has prorogued and this Bill will make no further progress.
<https://bills.parliament.uk/bills/2621>

**** Marriage Act 1949 (Amendment) Bill**

The 2019-2021 session of Parliament has prorogued and this Bill will make no further progress.
<https://bills.parliament.uk/bills/2608>

**** Marriage (Approved Organisations) Bill**

The 2019-2021 session of Parliament has prorogued and this Bill will make no further progress.
<https://bills.parliament.uk/bills/2537>

**** Marriage (Authorised Belief Organisations) Bill**

The 2019-2021 session of Parliament has prorogued and this Bill will make no further progress.
<https://bills.parliament.uk/bills/2795>

**** Marriage and Civil Partnership (Minimum Age) Bill**

The 2019-2021 session of Parliament has prorogued and this Bill will make no further progress.
<https://bills.parliament.uk/bills/2584>

TOP

Consultations ** new or updated today

Evidence for Equality National Survey (EVENS) (closing date 30 June 2021)
<https://evensurvey.co.uk/>

**** Protect Duty** (closing date 2 July 2021)
<https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/protect-duty>

Social Distance, Digital Congregation: British Ritual Innovation under COVID-19
(closing date not stated)
<https://bric19.mmu.ac.uk/take-the-survey/>

TOP