



Political Affairs Digest

A daily summary of political events affecting the Jewish Community

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House of Commons Written Answer

Jews: Safety

Andrew Rosindell (Conservative) [2904] To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps she is taking to ensure the safety of the British Jewish community during periods of heightened tensions between Israel and the Palestinian territories.

Victoria Atkins: The Government is clear that any criminal activity, including the incitement of violence or racial hatred, is completely unacceptable. We have robust laws to tackle such criminal offences.

In April the Home Secretary committed to continuation of the Jewish Community Protective Security Grant for 2021-22. This £14m funding supports the provision of security guarding and other measures at key community sites such as schools, colleges, nurseries and synagogues across the country.

We also routinely work with the Community Security Trust (CST) to understand and respond to the security needs of the Jewish community. This is in addition to the extensive efforts by the police to keep the Jewish and all our communities safe.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2021-05-18/2904>

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Israel

See also House of Commons written question 2904 "Jews: Safety", which is included in the Home Affairs section above.

House of Commons Oral Answer

Prime Minister's Questions

Zarah Sultana (Labour): Tala, 13, Rula, just five years old, her big sister Yara, aged nine:

three Palestinian children killed in an Israeli air-strike. The Israeli military murdered 63 other children and 245 Palestinians in its recent assault on Gaza. The call for Palestinian freedom has never been louder, but this Conservative Government are complicit in its denial. They have approved more than £400 million in arms to Israel since 2015, so can the Prime Minister look me in the eye and tell me that British-made weapons or components were not used in the war crimes that killed these three children and hundreds of other Palestinians? (900669) ...

The Prime Minister: I think that the whole House understands that nobody wants to see any more of the appalling conflict in Israel and Gaza, and that we are all glad that there is now a ceasefire and a de-escalation. As for the position of the British Government, it is probably common ground among most Members that we want a two-state solution. The UK Government have campaigned for that for many years and it continues to be our position.

<https://hansard.parliament.uk/commons/2021-05-26/debates/BE811BBD-D662-4121-8823-3A126BD3CE3F/Engagements#contribution-C4A0F39D-9633-4703-B76B-561B8B0B6C7D>

House of Commons Written Answers

Israel: Property Rights

Andrew Rosindell (Conservative) [2905] To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what discussions he has had with his Israeli counterpart on ensuring that due process is followed when dealing with disputes over property rights in that region.

James Cleverly: On 8 May I communicated our concern over tensions in Jerusalem linked to the threatened eviction of Palestinian families from their homes in Sheikh Jarrah. We continue to urge Israel to cease such actions, which in all but the most exceptional cases are contrary to International Humanitarian Law. We consistently call for an immediate end to all actions that undermine the viability of the two-state solution, including terrorism, anti-Semitic incitement, settlement expansion, and the demolition of Palestinian property in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2021-05-18/2905>

The communication referred to above can be read at

<https://twitter.com/JamesCleverly/status/1391028309618839557>

Israel: Defence

Andrew Rosindell (Conservative) [2906] To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what discussions he has had with his Israeli counterpart on the UK's policy on Israel's right to self-defence.

James Cleverly: The Foreign Secretary delivered a message of de-escalation in his calls to Israeli Foreign Minister Ashkenazi on 11 and 16 May, and with Palestinian Prime Minister Shtayyeh on 12 May. I spoke to the Israeli Ambassador, and to the Palestinian Head of Mission in London on 19 May, to urge them to de-escalate and restore calm. The UK is clear that Israel has a legitimate right to self-defence, and the right to defend its citizens from attack. In doing so, it is vital that all actions are proportionate, in line with International Humanitarian Law, and make every effort to avoid civilian casualties. The UK welcomes the announcement of a ceasefire in Israel and Gaza on 20 May, which is an important step to ending the cycle of violence and loss of civilian life.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2021-05-18/2906>

House of Lords Written Answers

Israel: Sanctions

Baroness Altmann (Conservative) [HL123] To ask Her Majesty's Government whether they oppose initiatives at the United Nations which promote boycotts, divestment and sanctions against the government of Israel.

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: The UK is strongly opposed to the Boycotts, Divestment and Sanctions Movement against Israel. While we do not hesitate to express disagreement with Israel whenever we feel it necessary, we are firmly opposed to boycotts/sanctions. We believe that open and honest discussions, rather than imposing sanctions or supporting anti-Israeli boycotts, best supports our efforts to help progress in the peace process and achieve a negotiated solution.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2021-05-12/hl123>

Jerusalem: Violence

The Lord Bishop of Southwark [HL192] To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the statement by the Patriarchs and Heads of Churches of Jerusalem on 11 May that the violence in Jerusalem "violates the sanctity of the people of Jerusalem and of Jerusalem as the City of Peace"; and what plans they have to call on relevant parties (1) to halt further violence, and (2) to ensure the safety of worshippers.

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: The UK is clear that the violence against peaceful worshippers and must stop. Respect for the historic Status Quo at the Holy Sites in Jerusalem is important at all times. We encourage all parties to maintain calm, avoid provocation and uphold the Status Quo to ensure the safety and the security of the Al Haram Al Sharif/Temple Mount and all who worship there.

The UK welcomes the announcement of a ceasefire in Israel and Gaza on 20 May, which is an important step to ending the cycle of violence and loss of civilian life. The UK worked actively to urge the parties to work with mediators towards an immediate ceasefire. We fully supported Egyptian, Qatari and UN efforts, working closely with the US. The Foreign Secretary visited Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territories on 25 and 26 May for talks with senior leaders following the ceasefire. During his visit the Foreign Secretary met Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas and reiterated the UK's firm commitment to the two-state solution as the best way to permanently end the occupation, deliver Palestinian self-determination and preserve Israel's Jewish and democratic identity.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2021-05-12/hl192>

The statement referred to above can be read at

<https://www.lpj.org/archives/patriarchs-and-heads-of-jerusalem-churches-concerned-about-alaqsa-mosque-worshippers-and-sheikh-jarrah-families.html>

Palestinians: Elections

The Lord Bishop of Southwark [HL193] To ask Her Majesty's Government what discussions they have had with the Palestinian Authority about that Authority's decision to postpone elections to the Palestinian Legislative Council.

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: We are disappointed that elections in the Occupied Palestinian Territories have been postponed. The Palestinian people should be allowed to enjoy their democratic rights - and Israel must allow voting for Palestinians in East Jerusalem, in line with the Oslo Accords. 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. Elections are long overdue and we urge the swift setting of a new date.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2021-05-12/hl193>

Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office

Dominic Raab: With Palestinian PM Shtayyeh, I emphasised the importance of all parties refraining from unilateral actions that damage prospects of peace. Also discussed how the UK can support stability in the OPTs and stressed UK opposition to settlements, demolitions and evictions.

<https://twitter.com/DominicRaab/status/1397595333811707905>

UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights

UN Child Rights Committee urges Israel and Palestine and the entire international Community to bring immediate support to the children and start building peace

The Committee on the Rights of the Child joins the declaration of the Secretary General of the United Nations that “*Israeli & Palestinian leaders have a responsibility beyond the restoration of calm to start a serious dialogue to address the root causes of the conflict.*”

Beyond the unacceptable and tragic loss of more than 60 children’s lives, the recent hostilities have had long-lasting material and mentally traumatic consequences on many children and their families. More than 600 children have been injured. The Committee considers that the first priority, beyond the consolidation of the ceasefire, is to provide children with protection, mental health support and meet their basic and urgent needs.

In the longer term, the Committee strongly urges Israel and Palestine, and the entire international community, to work with determination to seek a negotiated, balanced and sustainable peace. Both Israel and Palestine are States parties to the Convention on the Rights of the Child and have an obligation to uphold their commitments to the human rights of children. As such, Ms. Mikiko Otani, Chair of the Committee on the Rights of the Child emphasizes that “they must respect rules of international humanitarian law applicable to children in armed conflict and take all feasible measures to ensure protection and care of children who are affected by an armed conflict.”

<https://www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=27115&LangID=E>

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Foreign Affairs

House of Lords Written Answer

International Organisations: Antisemitism

Baroness Altmann (Conservative) [HL122] To ask Her Majesty's Government what steps they are taking to promote the adoption by international bodies of the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance's working definition of antisemitism.

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: The UK is an active member of the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA) and is represented by the UK's Post Holocaust Issues Envoy Lord Eric Pickles. The International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance cooperates closely with other intergovernmental bodies that include Holocaust-related issues as part of their mandate, including the United Nations, UNESCO, the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe's Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (OSCE/ODIHR) and actively encourages them and other international bodies to adopt the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance's working definition of antisemitism.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2021-05-12/hl122>

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Relevant Legislation ** new or updated today

UK Parliament

Animal Welfare (Sentience) Bill

<https://bills.parliament.uk/bills/2867>

**** Assisted Dying Bill**

<https://bills.parliament.uk/bills/2875>

Bill as introduced

<https://bills.parliament.uk/publications/41676/documents/322>

First Reading, House of Lords

[https://hansard.parliament.uk/lords/2021-05-26/debates/94E8B4BA-4164-4FCD-BA24-C1DC98585840/AssistedDyingBill\(HL\)](https://hansard.parliament.uk/lords/2021-05-26/debates/94E8B4BA-4164-4FCD-BA24-C1DC98585840/AssistedDyingBill(HL))

**** Charities Bill**

<https://bills.parliament.uk/bills/2877>

Bill as introduced

<https://bills.parliament.uk/publications/41672/documents/318>

Explanatory Notes

<https://bills.parliament.uk/publications/41673/documents/319>

Delegated Powers Memorandum

<https://bills.parliament.uk/publications/41674/documents/320>

First Reading, House of Lords

[https://hansard.parliament.uk/lords/2021-05-26/debates/1D04C97C-07C6-4DF2-8EF9-9681B6156386/CharitiesBill\(HL\)](https://hansard.parliament.uk/lords/2021-05-26/debates/1D04C97C-07C6-4DF2-8EF9-9681B6156386/CharitiesBill(HL))

Higher Education (Freedom of Speech) Bill

<https://bills.parliament.uk/bills/2862>

Online Safety Bill (Draft)

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/draft-online-safety-bill>

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Consultations ** new or updated today

Race Equality Action Plan: An Anti-racist Wales (closing date 17 June 2021)

<https://gov.wales/race-equality-action-plan-anti-racist-wales>

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>

Curriculum for Wales Religion, Values and Ethics (RVE) guidance (closing date 16 July 2021)

<https://gov.wales/sites/default/files/consultations/2021-05/consultation-document-curriculum-for-wales-religion-values-and-ethics-guidance.pdf>

Curriculum for Wales Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE) Statutory Guidance and Code (closing date 16 July 2021)

https://gov.wales/sites/default/files/consultations/2021-05/consultation-document-relationships-and-sexuality-education-guidance-and-code_0.pdf

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