



# Political Affairs Digest

A daily summary of political events affecting the Jewish Community

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## Home Affairs

### House of Commons Written Answers

#### Collective Worship: Coronavirus

**Tim Farron (Liberal Democrat) [19561]** To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, whether covid-19 guidance for places of worship will be updated to allow congregations to sing with masks on, similar to those provisions made in the Welsh Government's new covid-19 guidance, from 21 June 2021 as covid-19 restrictions are eased.

**Eddie Hughes:** Places of worship play an important role in providing spiritual leadership and bringing communities together, however their communal nature makes them particularly vulnerable to the spread of coronavirus.

Congregational singing is under restrictions due to the increased risk of transmission through small droplets and aerosols. This means that those partaking in these activities are at higher risk of transmitting the virus and thus, spreading infection even if the individual is vaccinated.

On 17 May we entered step 3 on the Prime Minister's roadmap, reintroducing indoor singing in a place of worship for a performance or rehearsal, for a group up to 6 amateur signers. This is in line with all amateur choirs and singing groups. Outdoors, the congregation may join in with singing in multiple groups of up to 30. Congregation members should continue to follow social distancing rules.

Public health is a devolved matter in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland and so many of the health measures implemented across the UK in response to Covid-19 fall within the competence of the devolved administrations. There are currently no plans to allow congregational singing with masks on to resume before Step 4 of the roadmap in England, which would be no earlier than 19 July.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2021-06-21/19561>

*The Welsh Government guidance referred to above can be read at*

<https://gov.wales/guidance-reopening-places-worship-coronavirus-html>

## Collective Worship: Coronavirus

**Tim Farron (Liberal Democrat)** [19560] To ask the hon. Member for South West Bedfordshire, representing the Church Commissioners, what recent discussions the Commissioners have had with the Government on the potential merits of reconsidering guidance on sung worship in churches from 21 June 2021 as covid-19 restrictions are eased.

**Andrew Selous:** The Bishop of London chairs the Church of England's Covid Recovery Group and issued a statement on 15<sup>th</sup> June in which she said: "While we look forward to restrictions on worship being lifted in the near future, I will continue to press for ongoing appraisal of choral and congregational singing." Also on 15<sup>th</sup> June the Bishop of Leeds raised concerns in a question in the House of Lords about inconsistencies on how restrictions are being applied.

Across our parishes live music is valued as integral to worship and for other well-being benefits that choral singing brings.

The Church continues to engage the Government through the Places of Worship Taskforce, and the Bishop of London has requested that the Taskforce reviews the future rules around singing before publication.

Meanwhile, singing under the current guidance remains possible within a very limited framework, both for indoor and outdoor singing.

The Church of England's own guidance on singing is available here:

[https://www.churchofengland.org/sites/default/files/2021-06/COVID%2019%20advice%20on%20conducting%20public%20worship%20v3.5\\_0.pdf](https://www.churchofengland.org/sites/default/files/2021-06/COVID%2019%20advice%20on%20conducting%20public%20worship%20v3.5_0.pdf)

The Government guidance is available here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-suggested-principles-of-safer-singing/covid-19-suggested-principles-of-safer-singing>

The Royal School of Church Music guidance is here:

<http://www.rscm.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/05/FAQs-re-Singing-19th-May-2021-1.pdf>

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2021-06-21/19560>

*The Bishop of London's statement referred to above can be read at*

<https://www.london.anglican.org/articles/coronavirus-restrictions-update-response-from-the-bishop-of-london/>

*The Bishop of Leeds' question referred to above can be read at*

<https://hansard.parliament.uk/lords/2021-06-15/debates/8BA55BED-E377-4018-BC0A-EE912C5DF90E/Covid-19Update#contribution-EF8C9D74-7C82-48EE-BE6C-8569CFD59358>

*The following two questions both received the same answer*

## Weddings: Coronavirus

**Andrew Rosindell (Conservative)** [18496] To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of removing all covid-19 restrictions on weddings pending a negative lateral flow test in line with large sporting events.

**Julian Lewis (Conservative)** [19473] To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, if he will introduce a scheme to remove the limit for attendees at weddings held indoors, provided that such attendees can produce verifiable evidence that they (a) have twice been vaccinated in time for the vaccine to have fully taken effect or (b) are not infected with covid-19, demonstrated by means of tests the results of which remain valid for the duration of the wedding celebrations.

**Penny Mordaunt:** From 21 June, there is no longer a maximum number of attendees at weddings set out in law. Instead, the number of attendees at weddings, civil partnerships and receptions will be determined by how many people

the venue or space can safely accommodate with social distancing measures in place.

The Government committed to explore whether and how COVID-status certification might be used to reopen our economy, reduce restrictions on social contact and improve safety. As set out in the 'COVID-19 Response - Spring 2021,' the Government will set out its conclusions on the COVID-status Certification Review in advance of Step 4 of the Roadmap, in order to inform the safe reopening of society and the economy.

An update on the Roadmap Reviews was published on 5 April and can be found here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-response-spring-2021-reviews-terms-of-reference/roadmap-reviews-update>

The Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster further updated via a Written Ministerial Statement on 29 April 2021, which can be found below:

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-statements/detail/2021-04-29/hcws947>

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2021-06-18/18496>

and

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2021-06-21/19473>

"COVID-19 Response - Spring 2021", referred to above, can be read at

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-response-spring-2021/covid-19-response-spring-2021>

### **Extracurricular Activities: Coronavirus**

**Theresa Villiers (Conservative)** [19512] To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether he has had discussions with the National Youth Agency on allowing youth summer camps run by (a) the scouts, (b) faith groups and (c) other organisations to resume.

**Nick Gibb:** The Department recognises the significant benefits that summer camps and other forms of education outside the classroom can have on children's academic development as well as their mental health and wellbeing.

Since 17 May 2021, out of school settings, including outdoor education centres, have been able to operate in groups of any size for both indoor and outdoor provision. It remains important to continue minimising mixing between children where possible.

Since 21 June, out of school settings have been able to undertake residential visits and overnight stays with groups of up to 30 children. The Department has provided updated guidance which sets out how this can be operated safely. This guidance can be found here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/protective-measures-for-holiday-or-after-school-clubs-and-other-out-of-school-settings-for-children-during-the-coronavirus-covid-19-outbreak/protective-measures-for-holiday-and-after-school-clubs-and-other-out-of-school-settings-during-the-coronavirus-covid-19-outbreak>

Throughout the COVID-19 outbreak, the Government has listened to the views of the scientific community, in particular the information from the Scientific Advisory Group for Emergencies and its sub-groups when taking decisions on the best way to tackle COVID-19.

Education and childcare settings continue to be supported with appropriate guidance on safety measures, and the Department is committed to ensuring that out of school settings are able to effectively manage risks, create an inherently safer environment and maximise face to face education wherever possible. As new evidence or data emerges, the Government will act accordingly to ensure that all out of school settings have the right safety measures in place and that measures remain proportionate to the threat posed by COVID-19. The advice on residential

visits and the need for protective measures will be reviewed again in advance of Step 4.

The Department is also working closely with the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) and the National Youth Agency to ensure we have full awareness of the effect the COVID-19 outbreak has had on the youth sector. In response to youth sector engagement, dedicated youth sector COVID-19 guidance has been developed by the National Youth Agency in collaboration with DCMS, the Department, youth sector organisations and public health experts.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2021-06-21/19512>

### **Schools: Racial Discrimination**

**Justin Madders (Labour)** [13988] To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what his Department's policy is on how school complaints relating to racism are (a) identified and (b) recorded.

**Nick Gibb:** Previous departmental guidance on Recording and Reporting Racist Incidents, published by the Department for Children, Schools and Families, encouraged state-funded schools to record, monitor, and report all racist incidents to their responsible body, informing local authorities at least annually of the pattern and frequency of any incidents. This changed with the introduction of the Equality Act 2010. Under section 149(1) of the Equality Act 2010 (the Public Sector Equality Duty), state-funded schools must, in the exercise of their functions, have due regard to the need to eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under the Act; advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it; and foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.

Under regulation 4 of the Equality Act 2010 (Specific Duties and Public Authorities) Regulations 2017, state-funded schools must publish information annually to demonstrate their compliance with the Public Sector Equality Duty. Identifying and reporting incidents of prejudice-related behaviour can help responsible bodies to identify any actions required to eliminate discrimination, evaluate whether actions taken are effective and demonstrate compliance with the Equality Act 2010.

Academies also have their own procedures by which they record complaints. The Education (Independent School Standards) (England) Regulations 2010, Part 7, section 25, paragraph j – 'provides for a written record to be kept of all complaints'. Complaints about racism in a school should first be made to the school itself. The Department may then be asked to consider them and does so on an individual basis, depending on the nature of the complaint and whether it falls within the scope of the Secretary of State's powers of intervention. These are set out under sections 496/7 of the Education Act 1996 for maintained schools and the funding agreements in place for academy and free schools.

The Department does not use a separate category to identify school complaints relating to racism. Depending on the level of detail provided by the complainant, some complaint handling teams may record that the nature of the complaint is linked to racism under a broader subject heading of behaviour (for incidents involving pupils), governance (if a school's policy or governance is deficient under the Equality Act 2010) or staff conduct (if an employee is accused of inappropriate conduct).

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2021-06-10/13988>

## Scottish Government

**Guidance: Coronavirus (COVID-19): wedding ceremonies and civil partnership registrations, receptions and celebrations**

<https://www.gov.scot/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-weddings-civil-partnerships-receptions-celebrations/>

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## Israel

### House of Commons Written Answers

#### **Palestinians: Textbooks**

**Lee Anderson (Conservative)** [17844] To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what recent discussions he has had with the European Commission on the publication date of the EU-funded review of the content of Palestinian Authority school textbooks.

**James Cleverly:** The Georg Eckert Institute, who were commissioned by the EU to undertake a review into Palestinian textbooks published the final report on 18 June 2021. The UK engaged closely with our European partners to urge publication. The review is publicly accessible on their website.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2021-06-17/17844>

*The review referred to above can be read at*

<https://owncloud.gei.de/index.php/s/FwkMw8NZgCAJgPW/download>

#### **Palestinians: Textbooks**

**Lee Anderson (Conservative)** [17845] To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what assessment he has made for the implications of his policies of the finding by the review commissioned by the EU of the content of Palestinian Authority school textbooks that those textbooks encourage and glorify violence against Israelis and Jews.

**James Cleverly:** We have been clear that incitement to hatred or violence is unacceptable from all parties and should have no place in education. This report on Palestinian textbooks highlights progress in key areas, but also indicates that anti-Israel content remains. We will continue to raise concerns about this with the Palestinian Authority, and continue to urge all parties to condemn incitement wherever and whenever it occurs.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2021-06-17/17845>

*The review referred to above can be read at*

<https://owncloud.gei.de/index.php/s/FwkMw8NZgCAJgPW/download>

### House of Lords Written Answers

#### **UNRWA**

**Baroness Deech (Crossbench)** [HL934] To ask Her Majesty's Government what was the value of the UK contribution to the UN Relief and Works Agency in the last 12 months; and what steps have they taken to ensure that school books for children supplied by the UN Relief and Works Agency do not (1) glorify terrorism, and (2) incite violence and hatred.

**Lord Goldsmith of Richmond Park:** In Financial Year 2020/2021, the UK provided

£63.6m to UNRWA, which includes £7million to the Syria Emergency Appeal and £3.8million to the Occupied Palestinian Territories Emergency Appeal. On 20 May, Minister Cleverly announced that the UK is providing an initial £3.2million to UNRWA's emergency flash appeal, which launched on 19 May.

The UK Government strongly condemns all forms of violence and incitement to hatred and will continue to monitor UNRWA's implementation of its curriculum framework to ensure lessons taught by UNRWA are in line with UN values. We accompany our support for UNRWA with stringent attention to implementation of their neutrality policy, including how they apply this to textbooks.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2021-06-09/hl934>

*The announcement referred to above can be read at*

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/uk-aid-package-to-help-provide-emergency-relief-for-civilians-in-gaza--2>

### **Jerusalem: Palestinians**

**Lord Foster of Bath (Liberal Democrat)** [HL991] To ask Her Majesty's Government what discussions, if any, they have had with the government of Israel regarding reports of the forced displacement of Palestinian families in Silwan.

**Lord Goldsmith of Richmond Park:** The UK regularly raises the issue of forced evictions from their homes with the Government of Israel. 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, evictions are contrary to International Humanitarian Law. The practice causes unnecessary suffering to Palestinians and is harmful to efforts to promote peace. We monitor the situation in Silwan closely, and officials regularly visited and attend related court hearings. We continue to urge Israel to cease such actions.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2021-06-10/hl991>

## **United Nations**

### **One Month into 'Fragile' Ceasefire in Gaza, Maximum Restraint Remains Crucial, Special Coordinator Tells Security Council, Citing New Israeli Government**

... **Tor Wennesland, Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process**, briefing the Council on the Secretary-General's latest report on the implementation of resolution 2334 (2016) (document S/2021/584), said the cessation of hostilities reached in May between Israel and Hamas remains fragile and stressed that "everyone must do their part ... to avoid another devastating escalation in Gaza". Acknowledging the new Israeli coalition Government sworn in on June 13, he detailed other recent developments, including the continuing threat of eviction facing Palestinians in East Jerusalem, settlement-related clashes in the West Bank, violent rallies held by both sides and the launching of incendiary balloons and retaliatory airstrikes between 15 and 17 June.

Turning to the implementation of resolution 2334 (2016), he expressed concern over continued Israeli settlement expansion in the occupied West Bank, particularly the approval of a plan to expand the Har Homa settlement in East Jerusalem. ... he called for the immediate cessation of all settlement activity, which constitutes a flagrant violation of international law and a major obstacle to a two-State solution. He also called on the Israeli authorities to end the demolition and displacement of Palestinian property and people. ... he expressed particular concern over attempts to exploit the sensitive status of Jerusalem to justify a broader armed conflict. Hamas and other Palestinian militants must cease the indiscriminate launching of rockets and mortars towards Israeli civilian population centres, and Israeli authorities must take all feasible precautions to spare

civilians and civilian objects in the conduct of military activity. ...

Turning to the situation in Gaza, he said the United Nations continues to coordinate the delivery of urgent humanitarian assistance to the population ... “who have suffered for far too long”. ...

**Linda Thomas-Greenfield (United States)**, welcoming the recent cessation of hostilities, stressed that ending violence is only the first necessary step, but “not the end of the story”. It is therefore essential for both sides to avoid provocative actions. ... Calling for a mechanism to prevent Hamas from diverting resources, and urging all Council members to coordinate efforts to prevent such diversion, she emphasized that relief aid must reach its designated beneficiaries. ...

**Geraldine Byrne Nason (Ireland)** ... [welcomed] the new Israeli Government, she said her delegation looks forward to constructive engagement, and urged Israel to take steps to address the root causes of conflict by ending the expansion of illegal settlements, demolitions and the threat of forced evictions, and by allowing for legal construction by Palestinians. ...

**Alexander V Repkin (Russian Federation)** expressed concern over Israel’s continued, illegal settlement activities, which present one of the main obstacles to achieving peace through a two-State solution ... He called on all parties to exercise maximum restraint, and on the new Israeli Government to reject unilateral steps that exacerbate tensions. Further, it must work to solidify the fragile ceasefire and respect the status quo of holy sites monitored by Jordan. ...

**To read the full press release see**

<https://www.un.org/press/en/2021/sc14560.doc.htm>

**Implementation of Security Council resolution 2334 (2016) (S/2021/584)**

<https://undocs.org/S/2021/584>

**Resolution 2334 (2016)**

[https://undocs.org/en/S/RES/2334\(2016\)](https://undocs.org/en/S/RES/2334(2016))

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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>

#### **Charities Bill**

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

#### **Education (16 to 19 Academies) (Religious Character) Bill**

<https://bills.parliament.uk/bills/2946>

#### **Education (Assemblies) Bill**

<https://bills.parliament.uk/bills/2878>

## Higher Education (Freedom of Speech) Bill

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

## Marriage and Civil Partnership (Minimum Age) Bill

<https://bills.parliament.uk/bills/2900>

## Online Safety Bill (Draft)

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

## Palestine Statehood (Recognition) Bill

<https://bills.parliament.uk/bills/2942>

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## Consultations

\*\* new or updated today

**\*\* closes in 5 days**

**Evidence for Equality National Survey (EVENS)** (closing date 30 June 2021)

<https://evensurvey.co.uk/>

**\*\* closes in 7 days**

**Protect Duty** (closing date 2 July 2021)

<https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/protect-duty>

**Strategy on combating antisemitism and fostering Jewish life in the EU** (closing date 5 July 2021)

[https://ec.europa.eu/info/law/better-regulation/have-your-say/initiatives/13068-Strategy-on-combating-antisemitism-and-fostering-Jewish-life-in-the-EU\\_en](https://ec.europa.eu/info/law/better-regulation/have-your-say/initiatives/13068-Strategy-on-combating-antisemitism-and-fostering-Jewish-life-in-the-EU_en)

**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>

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The Scottish Council of Jewish Communities (SCoJeC) is Scottish Charitable Incorporated Organisation SC029438