



# Political Affairs Digest

A daily summary of political events affecting the Jewish Community

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## Home Affairs

### House of Commons Written Answers

*The following two questions both received the same answer*

#### **Festivals and Special Occasions: Coronavirus**

**Duncan Baker (Conservative)** [17854] To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, if he will (a) update the guidance for significant life events including christenings and Bar/Bat Mitzvahs as part of Step 3 of the covid-19 roadmap and (b) clarify limits on the number of guests permitted to attend those events; and what assessment he has made of the potential merits of aligning that guidance with the removal of the cap on maximum guest limits for weddings, civil partnerships, receptions, wakes, funerals and other commemorative events.

#### **Baptism: Coronavirus**

**Gill Furniss (Labour)** [19649] 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 easing covid-19 restrictions on christenings on 21 June 2021 in line with weddings and funerals.

**Penny Mordaunt:** Guidance on significant life events, such as baptisms and bar mitzvahs, is available on [gov.uk](https://www.gov.uk) as part of the guidance for the safe use of places of worship. This guidance is kept under continual review, and the government continues to work with its Places of Worship Taskforce and faith leaders to review and amend this guidance, as necessary.

If significant life events take place as part of communal worship, participation is limited by the capacity of the venue, in line with the wider rules on communal worship. If significant life events take place as standalone events, there is a limit of up to 30 people (indoors or outdoors, excluding inside private homes). Anyone working is not included in this limit.

From 21 June, there is no longer a maximum number cap for attendees at wedding or civil partnership ceremonies and receptions set out in law. Many people have planned for wedding or civil partnership ceremonies and receptions a long time in advance, and these types of events can be difficult to book and to cancel. They often require aligning multiple businesses, sometimes years in advance, and can

have a significant social and economic cost. The exact number of attendees will be based on the COVID-19 risk assessment of each venue or outdoor space, and measures put in place to limit the spread of COVID-19.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2021-06-17/17854>

and

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2021-06-21/19649>

*The following three questions all received the same answer*

### **Weddings: Coronavirus**

**Rachael Maskell (Labour Co-op)** [13131] To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, whether, from 21 June 2021, weddings of any size will be able to take place, providing social distancing measures are put in place.

**Andrew Rosindell (Conservative)** [13869] To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, what assessment he has made of the potential effect on rates of covid-19 transmission of easing covid-19 restrictions on weddings on 21 June 2021 to allow more than 30 guests.

**Lisa Cameron (SNP)** [13980] To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, whether covid-19 social distancing restrictions will remain in place for weddings after 21 June 2021.

**Penny Mordaunt:** The Government announced a four-week pause at Step 3 of the roadmap following an assessment of the data against the four tests.

After carefully considering the potential impacts, on 14 June the Government announced that there will no longer be a maximum number cap for attendees at wedding and civil partnerships, and receptions set out in law. From 21 June, 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 changes allow people to celebrate their union with their families and loved ones, and aligns the wedding sector with the way most other COVID Secure venues operate - such as restaurants and pubs - where social distancing determines a venue's capacity. Additionally, changes also bring commemorative events, such as wakes, in line with existing rules on funerals so people can say goodbye to those they have lost. This change does not enable a wedding of any size to take place. To manage the risks around the virus the exact number of attendees will be based on the COVID-19 risk assessment of each venue or outdoor space, and measures put in place to limit the spread of COVID-19.

At Step 3, social distancing and COVID-secure rules apply to all businesses, venues and workplaces. While we feel it is safe to make some easements, we have not made the decision to move to Step 4. We will only lift remaining restrictions on weddings, civil partnerships and commemorative events when the decision is taken to move to the next stage of the roadmap. We know this pause will be disappointing to many people, including those planning weddings and other events, but we hope that these cautious changes will enable some more people to attend these special events.

We have published extensive guidance on wedding and civil partnership ceremonies, receptions and celebrations on GOV.UK, which can be found here

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/coronavirus-covid-19-wedding-and-civil-partnership-ceremonies-receptions-and-celebrations>

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2021-06-09/13131>

and

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2021-06-10/13869>

and

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2021-06-10/13980>

## House of Lords Written Answer

### Universities: Freedom of Speech

**Viscount Waverley (Crossbench)** [HL1279] To ask Her Majesty's Government what plans they have to ensure freedom of speech in British universities.

**Lord Parkinson of Whitley Bay:** Ministers are working to ensure that lawful freedom of speech in higher education is supported to the fullest extent. The Higher Education (Freedom of Speech) Bill was introduced on 12 May 2021 in the House of Commons and will strengthen existing freedom of speech duties in England. It will directly address gaps within the existing law and extend the duties to cover students' unions as well as higher education providers. The changes will introduce clear consequences for breaches of the new duties. This will ensure that freedom of speech and academic freedom are protected and promoted within higher education.

A copy of the Bill as introduced can be found here:

<https://bills.parliament.uk/publications/41479/documents/212>

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2021-06-21/hl1279>

## Public Health England and Department of Health and Social Care

**COVID-19: updated guidance for arranging or attending a funeral or commemorative event during the coronavirus pandemic**

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-guidance-for-managing-a-funeral-during-the-coronavirus-pandemic/covid-19-guidance-for-managing-a-funeral-during-the-coronavirus-pandemic>

## Department for Education

**Religious character designation: updated guide to applying**

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/religious-character-designation-guide-to-applying>

## Welsh Senedd Oral Answer

### Equality in the Public Sector Workforce

**Altaf Hussain (Conservative):** ... Minister, as one of a very small number of Members in this Senedd from the black, Asian and minority ethnic community, I'm all too aware of the challenges that many people face in this workplace, because of their ethnicity, gender and sexual orientation. Recently, the British Medical Association published a charter for medical schools to prevent and address racial harassment. The charter addresses four specific areas: supporting individuals to speak out; ensuring robust processes for reporting and handling complaints; mainstreaming equality, diversity and inclusion across the learning environment; addressing racial harassment on work placement. What discussions has the Minister had with our medical schools to ensure that racism is not to be tolerated? And will you support the BMA charter to give medical students confidence to speak out when needed? Thank you.

**Jane Hutt:** Well, I very much welcome the Member's experience and evidence in drawing attention to the charter for medical students. Indeed, I have mentored BAME medical students, who have drawn attention to some of the issues that they faced in terms of prejudice and discrimination. It is vital that our higher education institutions respond to our race equality action plan, currently out to consultation,

and that we can incorporate all of the measures, including this charter for medical students, in that response to the race equality action plan. And I was very grateful for your positive response last week, when I tabled a statement on the race equality action plan. It is to seek an anti-racist Wales, and we want to be an exemplar, don't we? So, our medical school needs to be at the forefront of that, but it will result—successful implementation—in a fairer employment market, and a fairer education and training system, and it will also ensure we get those outcomes in terms of health and social services and the workforce in health and social care. But, also, the Hate Hurts Wales campaign, which we launched in March of this year, does raise awareness and understanding of hate crime and encouraging reporting, but airing it today is another message and voice that's been expressed, which I do welcome.

<https://record.senedd.wales/Plenary/12320#C371019>

The BMA Charter referred to above can be read at

<https://www.bma.org.uk/media/2030/bma-med-school-charter-implementation.pdf>

The race equality action plan referred to above can be read at

[https://gov.wales/sites/default/files/consultations/2021-03/race-equality-action-plan-an-anti-racist-wales\\_2.pdf](https://gov.wales/sites/default/files/consultations/2021-03/race-equality-action-plan-an-anti-racist-wales_2.pdf)

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## Israel

### House of Commons Written Answers

*The following two questions both received the same answer*

#### **Israel: Palestinians**

**Lisa Nandy (Labour)** [21896] To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what discussions he has had with his international counterparts at the G7 Summit in Cornwall on re-establishing a peace process to secure a negotiated two-state solution between Israel and Palestine.

#### **International Fund for Israeli-Palestinian Peace**

**Lisa Nandy (Labour)** [21897] To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what discussions he has had with his international counterparts at the G7 Summit in Cornwall on the establishment of an international fund for Israeli-Palestinian peace.

**James Cleverly:** The UK remains committed to making progress towards a two-state solution. The Foreign Secretary regularly discusses this issue with international counterparts. Peace will only come through negotiations between the parties, but international action has a role in facilitating progress.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2021-06-24/21896>

and

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2021-06-24/21897>

*The following two questions both received the same answer*

#### **Islam Wael Fahmi Dar Nasser**

**Caroline Lucas (Green)** [20363] To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, if he will make representations to his Israeli counterpart (a) on the death of 16-year-old Islam Wael Fahmi Dar Nasser in the West Bank on 18 May 2021, (b) on reports that Islam Wael Fahmi Dar Nasser was struck in the head with Israeli-fired live ammunition and (a) to seek assurances that there will be a criminal investigation into his death.

### **Mohammad Said Hamayel**

**Caroline Lucas (Green)** [20364] To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, if he will make representations to his Israeli counterpart (a) on the death of 16-year-old Mohammad Said Mohammad Hamayel in the West Bank on 11 June 2021, (b) on reports that he was shot with live ammunition by Israeli forces and (c) to seek assurances that there will be a criminal investigation into his death.

**James Cleverly:** We are aware of the reports surrounding the deaths of Islam Wael Fahmi Dar Nasser and Mohammad Said Mohammad Hamayel. In instances where there have been accusations of excessive use of force, we urge the Government of Israel to conduct swift and transparent investigations. 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, and urge restraint in the use of live fire.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2021-06-22/20363>

and

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2021-06-22/20364>

## House of Lords Written Answer

### **Universal Rights Group**

**Lord Austin of Dudley (Non-affiliated)** [HL909] To ask Her Majesty's Government what steps they have taken to ensure their support for the Universal Rights Group non-governmental organisation based in Geneva, Switzerland is contingent on that organisation's support for the UK's policy priorities in the Middle East region; and in particular, the UK's priorities in respect of the conflict between Israel and Palestine.

**Lord Goldsmith of Richmond Park:** HM Government respects the independence of civil society organisations. While HMG ensures objectives of projects it funds are clear and value for money, it is not contingent on support for other UK policy priorities.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2021-06-09/hl909>

## United Nations

### **Security Council Renews Mandate of United Nations Disengagement Observer Force for Six Months, Unanimously Adopting Resolution 2581 (2021)**

The Security Council today renewed the mandate of the United Nations Disengagement Observer Force (UNDOF) for six months, until 31 December, as it continues to monitor the 1974 Disengagement of Forces Agreement between Israel and Syria in the Golan.

Unanimously adopting resolution 2581 (2021), the Council called upon the parties concerned to implement resolution 338 (1973) — which called for a ceasefire in the Yom Kippur war — and stressed their obligation to respect the terms of the Disengagement of Forces Agreement.

By other terms, the Council called on the parties to exercise maximum restraint and prevent any breaches of the ceasefire and the area of separation, where there should be no military activity of any kind, including military operations by Syria's armed forces.

It further called on all parties to cooperate fully with UNDOF operations, to respect its privileges and immunities and to ensure its freedom of movement, and for all groups other than UNDOF to abandon all UNDOF positions and to return peacekeeper vehicles, weapons and other equipment. ...

**To read the full press release see**

<https://www.un.org/press/en/2021/sc14564.doc.htm>

Resolution 2581 (2021) is not yet available online, but in due course, will probably be at [https://undocs.org/S/RES/2581\(2021\)](https://undocs.org/S/RES/2581(2021))

**Resolution 338 (1973)**  
[https://undocs.org/S/RES/338\(1973\)](https://undocs.org/S/RES/338(1973))

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## Foreign Affairs

### House of Commons Written Answer

#### UN World Conference against Racism

**Christian Wakeford (Conservative)** [19738] To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, if he will make a statement on events marking the 20th anniversary of the 2001 World Conference Against Racism in Durban at the United Nations in September 2021.

**Nigel Adams:** The UK is committed to combatting all forms of racism, including antisemitism, 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. Following historic concerns regarding antisemitism, the UK has decided not to attend the UN's Durban Conference anniversary event later this year.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2021-06-21/19738>

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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>

*Following the appointment of Sajid Javid as Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, this Bill is now sponsored by Pauline Latham (Conservative).*

## **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 today**

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

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

### **\*\* closes in 2 days**

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

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

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

**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