



# Political Affairs Digest

A daily summary of political events affecting the Jewish Community

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## Home Affairs

### House of Commons Written Answers

#### **Marriage: Age**

**Jim Shannon (DUP)** [24179] To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, if he will hold discussions with Cabinet colleagues on increasing the legal age of marriage to 18 years old.

**Alex Chalk:** The Government in principle supports raising the legal age of marriage to 18 years of age by removing the ability to marry at age 16 or 17 with parental consent. We will do so when a suitable legislative opportunity arises. In that context, the Marriage and Civil Partnership (Minimum Age) Bill was introduced by the hon. member for Bromsgrove on 16 June as a Private Members' Bill. The hon. member for Mid Derbyshire is now sponsoring that Bill and Ministers will meet with her shortly to discuss its provisions. The Government will make its further intentions clear in due course.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2021-06-29/24179>

Information about the Bill referred to above can be read at

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

*The following two questions both received the same answer*

#### **Meat: Labelling**

**Andrea Jenkyns (Conservative)** [24280] To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps his Department has taken to ensure that labels on meat products state the method by which the animal was killed.

#### **Meat: School Meals**

**Andrea Jenkyns (Conservative)** [24281] To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps his Department has taken to ensure that parents whose children attend schools are given information in relation to the method by which meat in school meals is slaughtered.

**Victoria Prentis:** The Government expects the industry, whether food producer or food outlet, to provide consumers with all the information they need to make

informed choices about the food they eat. We plan to consult later this year on what can be done through labelling to promote high standards of animal welfare across the UK market. A review into food labelling presents an opportunity to examine this whilst also addressing some other consumer concerns, such as method of slaughter labelling.

The Government sets out required minimum standards for school food in the School Food Standards to ensure that children are served healthy, nutritious meals at school. The standards do not specify food requirements in terms of cultural and religious needs. Head teachers, governors and their caterers are best placed to make decisions about their school food policies. We expect schools to act reasonably providing choices that take account of cultural, religious and special dietary needs and to work with parents in making appropriate arrangements. In particular, schools should consult with parents when making changes to school food provision and ensure parents have access to information on the food provided. If parents are not happy with the food provided by the school they can take it up with the school and consider using the schools complaints policy.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2021-06-29/24280>

and

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2021-06-29/24281>

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## Israel

### House of Commons Written Answers

#### Israel: Diplomatic Relations

**Kevan Jones (Labour) [24111]** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps the Government is taking to increase UK diplomatic cooperation with Israel as part of the Integrated Review 2021.

**James Cleverly:** The Integrated Review was published on 16 March and can be found on gov.uk. The review is the most comprehensive articulation of security, defence, development and foreign policy published by a British Government in decades. We are proud to enjoy an excellent bilateral relationship with Israel. We welcome the formation of a new government, and look forward to working together closely to ensure the relationship goes from strength to strength. We engage frequently with the Government of Israel, and will continue to do so.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2021-06-29/24111>

*The Integrated Review, referred to above, can be read at*

[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/975077/Global\\_Britain\\_in\\_a\\_Competitive\\_Age- the\\_Integrated\\_Review\\_of\\_Security\\_Defence\\_Development\\_and\\_Foreign\\_Policy.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/975077/Global_Britain_in_a_Competitive_Age- the_Integrated_Review_of_Security_Defence_Development_and_Foreign_Policy.pdf)

#### Israel: Overseas Aid

**Stephen Morgan (Labour) [24303]** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what the total UK aid spend in Israel was in each of the last 10 years; and what the budget headings were for that expenditure.

**James Cleverly:** Israel is not eligible for Overseas Development Assistance (ODA) as per the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) guidelines. The UK therefore provides no ODA to Israel.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2021-06-29/24303>

## Palestinians: Overseas Aid

**Ben Lake (Plaid Cymru)** [24301] To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what proportion of UK financial assistance to the Palestinian Authority has been spent on the Palestinian National Security Forces in the last three years.

**James Cleverly:** The UK has not provided financial assistance to the Palestinian Authority National Security Forces in the last three years. UK financial assistance has helped to deliver essential health and education services in the West Bank. The UK does provide technical assistance to support the development of capable, accountable, sustainable, and inclusive Palestinian security forces.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2021-06-29/24302>

*The following three questions all received the same answer*

### Ebrahim Raisi

**Kevan Jones (Labour)** [24108] To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what assessment he has made of the effect on the level of threat to Israel of the election of Ebrahim Raisi as president of Iran.

**Kevan Jones (Labour)** [24109] To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what discussions he has had with his Iranian counterpart on the election of Ebrahim Raisi as president.

**Kevan Jones (Labour)** [24110] To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what discussions he has had with his Israeli counterpart on the election of Ebrahim Raisi as president of Iran.

**James Cleverly:** The Foreign Secretary most recently engaged with his Israeli counterparts during a visit to Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territories on the 25-26 May. We regularly discuss regional issues with international partners, and continue to support the security of our allies.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2021-06-29/24108>

and

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2021-06-29/24109>

and

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2021-06-29/24110>

## House of Lords Oral Answers

### Palestine

**Lord Campbell of Pittenweem (Liberal Democrat):** To ask Her Majesty's Government what plans they have to recognise Palestine as a state.

**The Minister of State, Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon):** My Lords, the United Kingdom will recognise a Palestinian state at a time when it best serves the objective of peace, as we have stated before. We of course continue to encourage progress towards a negotiated settlement between the parties, and my right honourable friend the Foreign Secretary reinforced that position during his visit to both Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territories from 25 to 26 May.

**Lord Campbell of Pittenweem:** My Lords, if for this Government recognition of Palestine requires a peaceful solution, do they now accept that every rocket fired from Gaza into Israel and every additional illegal settlement on the West Bank undermines the government policy of a two-state solution? Are the Government content to allow their own policy to wither on the vine and hence provide an obstacle to the recognition of Palestine, or are they now willing to step up to their historical and moral obligations, not only to the Israelis but to the Palestinians?

**Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon:** The My Lords, I assure the noble Lord that we remain very much committed to a two-state solution: a secure and safe Israel and a safe and secure and viable Palestinian state. I am sure the noble Lord acknowledges that bilateral recognition will not end occupation, but we remain very much committed to engagement. That is why my right honourable friend the Foreign Secretary in his most recent visit after the current conflict—[*Inaudible.*]

**The Lord Bishop of Ely:** With little prospect of negotiations resuming, will the Minister accept that the continued settlement building programme amounts to an incremental and de facto annexation of the West Bank? The international community needs to promote the rights of all Palestinians, including the Christian community. Does the Minister agree that a strong endorsement of Palestinian aspirations by the Government would demonstrate to the Palestinian public the possibility of international political process and show that Her Majesty's Government are committed to active peacemaking rather than merely to conflict management?

**Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon:** The My Lords, I agree that it is important that we restate and re-emphasise the importance of the two-state solution. On the issue of the OPTs, we remain committed to ensuring that we lead towards a process which leads to an independent and viable Palestinian state. I also endorse the right reverend Prelate's point about the different communities within the Holy Land; of course, the Arab Christian community is an important voice in the peace process.

**Lord Grade of Yarmouth (Conservative):** Does the Minister agree that our Government cannot consider recognising a territory while it is controlled by proscribed terrorists whose only stated purpose is to wipe their neighbour Israel off the face of the earth, no matter what the cost to their own people?

**Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon:** The My noble friend refers of course to the situation in Gaza and the role of Hamas. We do not engage with Hamas, and I agree with my noble friend that for anyone to come to the table it is important that they recognise the other party's right to exist. Hamas does not, and if it wants to be a party to peace, it needs to ensure that that recognition is extended.

**Baroness Meacher (Crossbench):** My Lords, the UK certainly should recognise Palestine as a state, but as important is the need to introduce economic incentives to induce Israel to end its illegal building of settlements on Palestinian land. Are the Government giving consideration to such economic incentives with our western allies and, if not, will the Minister raise this issue with his colleagues?

**Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon:** The My Lords, on the issue of economic incentives, we believe that it is important that we progress our economic relationship with both Israel and the Palestinian Territories. We do not hesitate to express our disagreement with Israel whenever necessary. However, on the specific issue of sanctions against the State of Israel, which the noble Baroness may be alluding to, we stand very firmly opposed to such boycotts or sanctions.

**Baroness Blower (Labour):** I refer your Lordships to my interests as recorded in the register. Recognition of the state of Palestine is an internationally significant concern. I would like to ask the Minister today about an urgent concern. What representations have Her Majesty's Government made to the Government of Israel about the house evictions and demolitions in Sheikh Jarrah and Silwan, which appear designed to change the demography of the holy city?

**Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon:** The My Lords, I agree with the noble Baroness and we have been very clear on our position on the evictions in Sheikh Jarrah. It is a threat to the communities currently in Sheikh Jarrah and we urge the Government of Israel to cease such actions permanently. Indeed, these points were very much raised and discussed during my right honourable friend's visit to Israel and the OPTs.

**Baroness Northover (Liberal Democrat):** Is the noble Lord aware that this morning,

Israeli forces demolished more structures in the Jordan Valley? Does he agree that that the time really has come to move beyond that old phrase that he has used once again and to recognise Palestine, and that this must be for a viable, sovereign and independent state and not a splintered, semi-sovereign version, as, for example, in the Trump plan?

**Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon:** The My Lords, on the Trump plan, as I have said before in your Lordships' House, that was a first step. However, I totally recognise the picture that the noble Baroness paints and we agree as a Government that we must have a viable, functioning Palestinian state. On the important issue of the demolitions, we have made our position absolutely clear to the Israeli authorities. They should not be taking place. The settlements in the OPTs are illegal and they, and indeed the evictions, go against international humanitarian law.

**Lord Polak (Conservative):** I refer the House to my interest as president of Conservative Friends of Israel, as set out in the register. It seems that some noble Lords are failing to experience and comprehend the winds of change in the region: the Abraham Accords, and a NATO drill this week which included Egypt, Morocco, Tunisia and the UAE, alongside Israel. Does the Minister agree that the most helpful contribution towards peace and prosperity would be for noble Lords to use their influence with the Palestinians to urge them to sit around the table with the Israelis and create that peace and prosperity?

**Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon:** The My Lords, I agree with my noble friend; I think we all welcome the important progress made with the Abraham Accords, and we pay tribute to all those who have come forward. However, it is also important, as my noble friend rightly articulates, that there can be no solution to the challenges and the conflicts in the region until we see meaningful progress on the peace talks. For that to occur, Israel and the Palestinian Authority need to sit down and agree a way forward and progress. We all desire peace in the Holy Land, and the talks between those two sides are essential to make that happen.

**Lord Collins of Highbury (Labour):** My Lords, the Opposition share the Government's commitment to the two-state solution, and with the new Administrations in the US and Israel, there are opportunities. Can the Minister tell us what steps the Government are taking to help address the drivers of insecurity and injustice in the region, especially if they will not accept the recognition of Palestine?

**Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon:** The My Lords, we continue to work with key partners, including the US, which is of course very important for progress. We continue to engage with both sides, as I have articulated, but, equally, we are supporting efforts such as the work being done with UNRWA in supporting education and skills in the Palestinian Territories. It is important that we continue in that respect to provide hope for the future and the basis of a future independent and viable Palestinian state.

**Baroness Deech (Crossbench):** Does the Minister agree with the opinion of our two most distinguished international lawyers, the late James Crawford and Professor Malcolm Shaw, in whose opinion Palestine is not a state under international law because it does not begin to conform to the criteria set out in the Montevideo convention? It does not have the right requirements to be a functioning lawful state.

**Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon:** The Government's position is very clear. We believe that the best and the only way to ensure peace in the region is to have two states side by side, and a Palestinian state must be viable. We continue to invest our efforts in making that issue a reality but, ultimately, it needs both sides to sit down and begin the negotiations so that we can see those two states living side by side in peace.

<https://hansard.parliament.uk/Lords/2021-07-07/debates/78EA46C4-078A-4A81-A142-4DE5560674E7/Palestine>

## House of Lords Written Answer

### **Palestinians: Recognition of States**

**Lord Stone of Blackheath (Non-affiliated)** [HL1361] To ask Her Majesty's Government, further to the Written Answer by Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon on 21 June (HL820) and their position that they will "recognise a Palestinian state at a time when it best serves the objective of peace", what assessment they have made of the case for recognising Palestine as a state now in order to facilitate negotiations between the government of an internationally-recognised state of Palestine and the government of Israel on an agreed border; and whether they will now recognise the state of Palestine.

**Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon:** Any decision to recognise a Palestinian state will rest on an assessment of the prospects for peace, and what best supports progress towards a two-state solution. Bilateral recognition in itself cannot end the occupation. Without a negotiated settlement the occupation and the problems that come with it will continue. The UK priority is working with the parties and other international actors to encourage a durable ceasefire and to urge them to address the drivers of conflict.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2021-06-23/hl1361>

*The answer referred to above can be read at*

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2021-06-07/hl820>

## United Nations

### **Speakers Stress Need to Address Root Causes of Terrorism, Violent Extremism amidst Fallout from Pandemic, as General Assembly Continues Debate on Global Strategy**

... Speakers emphasized that the Global Strategy must react appropriately to these emerging threats, demonstrated by rising terrorist activity motivated by xenophobia, racism and intolerance. Many also urged the international community to tackle the documented link between terrorism and organized crime and to counter terrorist narratives with messages of peaceful coexistence. Others highlighted the importance of national ownership of counter-terrorism measures, detailing national efforts on the domestic and international levels to tackle this phenomenon, while still others spotlighted the challenges facing the global counter-terrorism response. ...

Gilad Menashe Erdan (Israel) said that for his country, the adoption of the resolution "The United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy: seventh review" (document A/75/L.105) was neither a theoretical nor an academic exercise. Negotiations on that text coincided with relentless terrorist attacks by Hamas, backed by Iran, which saw Israeli civilians in bomb shelters and Palestinians being used as human shields in Gaza. Israel is pleased that several issues it raised during negotiations are reflected in the text, including the acknowledgement of an uptick in hate speech targeting religious and ethnic communities. However, it is extremely disappointing that some provisions in "L.015" could be interpreted as excusing or justifying acts of terrorism and the killing of innocents. "Terrorism is terrorism is terrorism" and it can never be explained away, he said, adding that Israel hopes that the General Assembly will adopt a zero-excuses and zero-tolerance policy when the Strategy next comes up for renewal in 2022. ...

**To read the full press release see**

<https://www.un.org/press/en/2021/ga12344.doc.htm>

**The United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy: seventh review (A/75/L.105)**

[https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/3930201/files/A\\_75\\_L.105-EN.pdf](https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/3930201/files/A_75_L.105-EN.pdf)

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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>

Committee Stage, House of Lords

[https://hansard.parliament.uk/lords/2021-07-07/debates/F09E7E75-B3C1-4913-87ED-4EF83E840271/CharitiesBill\(HL\)](https://hansard.parliament.uk/lords/2021-07-07/debates/F09E7E75-B3C1-4913-87ED-4EF83E840271/CharitiesBill(HL))

#### **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 Act 1949 (Amendment) Bill**

<https://bills.parliament.uk/bills/3017>

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

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

#### **Nationality and Borders Bill**

<https://bills.parliament.uk/bills/3023>

#### **Online Safety Bill (Draft)**

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

#### **Palestine Statehood (Recognition) Bill**

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

### **Northern Ireland Assembly**

#### **Organ and Tissue Donation (Deemed Consent) Bill**

<http://www.niassembly.gov.uk/assembly-business/legislation/2017-2022-mandate/primary-legislation---bills-2017---2022-mandate/organ-and-tissue-donation-deemed-consent-bill/>

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## Consultations

\*\* new or updated today

**\*\* closes in 8 days**

**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>

**\*\* Animal welfare [EU legislation]** (closing date 3 August 2021)

[https://ec.europa.eu/info/law/better-regulation/have-your-say/initiatives/12950-Animal-welfare-revision-of-EU-legislation\\_en](https://ec.europa.eu/info/law/better-regulation/have-your-say/initiatives/12950-Animal-welfare-revision-of-EU-legislation_en)

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