



Political Affairs Digest

A daily summary of political events affecting the Jewish Community

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Counter-terrorism: Religious Buildings

Richard Fuller (Conservative) [35592] To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what recent assessment she has made of the impact on places of worship of the requirements of the Protect Duty; and what assessment she has made of the potential merits of mitigation measures for people in voluntary positions in places of worship and other organisations potentially required to comply with the Protect Duty.

Kevin Foster: The responses to the Protect Duty consultation, which closed on 2nd July, provides a basis for Government to consider the scope and requirements of the Protect Duty, alongside assessing the impacts on those parties potentially within scope. These considerations will also consider the potential for unintended consequences and indirect implications of introducing the Duty.

The Government is mindful places of worship differ significantly in the nature of their function and operation from other locations potentially within the scope of the Protect Duty proposals. This is balanced against the threat posed by terrorism, and a need to ensure there are effective security measures at public places, regardless of their nature.

The Government will be carefully considering the issues raised within the consultation and our engagement events, including those discussed with representatives of different faith communities, before considering next steps.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2021-07-19/35592>

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House of Commons Written Answers

Israel: Palestinians

Jonathan Lord (Conservative) [35617] To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what diplomatic steps he is taking to support peace between Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territories.

James Cleverly: Following the ceasefire announcement, the Foreign Secretary visited Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territories on 25 and 26 May for talks with senior leaders. The Foreign Secretary met former Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas and reiterated the UK's firm commitment to the two-state solution. We have a regular dialogue with the Government of Israel and the Palestinian Authority. The Foreign Secretary and Ministers have also engaged regional partners, including with Egypt, Jordan and Turkey. The Foreign Secretary made it clear that the UK would continue to work with the parties, and other actors, to encourage a durable ceasefire and to urge them to address the drivers of conflict.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2021-07-19/35617>

Israel: Gaza

Jim Shannon (DUP) [35646] To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what recent discussions he has had with his Egyptian and Israeli counterparts on a permanent ceasefire in the Gaza Strip.

James Cleverly: During the recent conflict, the UK urged the parties to engage with mediators. We fully supported Egyptian, Qatari and UN efforts towards a ceasefire, working closely with the US. As the Prime Minister has made clear, leaders in the region must now work to find a durable solution to the Israeli Palestinian conflict that prevents terrorism, ends the cycle of violence, and delivers a sustainable and just peace based on a two state solution.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2021-07-19/35646>

House of Lords Written Answers

Palestinians: Education

Baroness Sheehan (Liberal Democrat) [HL1920] To ask Her Majesty's Government what steps they intend to take to protect the education of Palestinian children in areas occupied and controlled by Israel.

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: Access to a quality education for all, especially girls, remains a key priority for the UK Government. It is essential to have a strong and thriving Palestinian education system to provide opportunities for the next generation. UK education funding to the Palestinian Authority has contributed to the salaries of carefully vetted teachers and education workers. Our continued support to UNRWA (the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East) will also help provide basic education to over 533,000 children a year (half of whom are girls).

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2021-07-12/hl1920>

Palestinians: Females

Baroness Sheehan (Liberal Democrat) [HL1921] To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the treatment of Palestinian girls under Israeli interrogation and imprisonment.

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: 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 children. The UK continues to engage with the Israeli Government on human rights issues in the context of the occupation and 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.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2021-07-12/hl1921>

Israel: Palestinians

Baroness Janke (Liberal Democrat) [HL1957] To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of reports that the Israel Defence Forces have used Ruger semi-automatic rifles against Palestinian protestors in the West Bank.

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: We are aware of these reports. 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. We urge restraint in the use of live fire.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2021-07-13/hl1957>

Israel: Palestinians

Baroness Janke (Liberal Democrat) [HL1959] To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of reports of the destruction by the Israeli army of the Jenin Al-Tafawk children's centre.

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: The UK opposes Israel's demolitions of Palestinian schools and we continue to urge Israel to cease such policies. The Foreign Secretary raised ongoing evictions, demolitions and settlement activity with the Israeli Authorities during his visit to the region on 26 May. The UK is clear that in all but the most exceptional of circumstances, demolitions are contrary to International Humanitarian Law.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2021-07-13/hl1959>

Mohammed Hassan

Baroness Janke (Liberal Democrat) [HL1960] To ask Her Majesty's Government what discussions they have had with the government of Israel regarding the circumstances of the death of Mohammed Hassan in the village of Qusra in the West Bank in July; and in particular, the reports that (1) the Israeli army denied medical professionals access to Mr Hassan, and (2) Israeli authorities refused to release his body to his family.

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: Our Embassy in Tel Aviv regularly raises the importance of the Israel security force's adherence to the principles of necessity and proportionality when defending its legitimate security interest. We regularly raise the issue of the high numbers of Palestinians killed and injured by Israel Defense Forces in the West Bank and Gaza with the Israeli authorities, encouraging them to carry out transparent investigations into whether the use of live fire had been appropriate. The wounded or critically ill should be able to access the urgent medical care they need. We urge all sides to treat the dead with respect and return any bodies they are holding.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2021-07-13/hl1960>

UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights

Palestinian election: Free, fair, democratic and credible vote must include East Jerusalem – UN experts

UN human rights experts ... called upon the Palestinian Authority and Israel, the occupying power, to take all steps necessary within their respective powers to re-schedule the elections for the Palestinian presidency, the legislature and municipalities within a reasonably short timeframe and to ensure that these elections are free, fair, democratic, peaceful and credible. ...

“We are deeply concerned by the postponement of the scheduled elections in Palestine,” the experts said.

“The Palestinian elections present a monumental opportunity to renew the democratic process, to address the long-standing internal political divisions, to strengthen accountable institutions and to take an important step towards achieving the fundamental national and individual rights of the Palestinian people.

“We call upon Israel to clearly state that it will allow the full democratic participation of Palestinians in East Jerusalem in the planned elections. As the occupying power in East Jerusalem, it must interfere as little as possible with the rights and daily lives of the Palestinians.

“Given the advances in technology and in remote and electronic voting, a variety of means to enable full democratic participation are available,” the experts stated. ...

“The international community has repeatedly stated, through the UN Security Council and the General Assembly, that all Israeli alterations to East Jerusalem’s demography and to its political and legal status are null and void,” they said. “Here is a golden opportunity for the world to affirm these commitments in the name of democracy and international law.” ...

Finally, the human rights experts called upon the Palestinian authorities who have established the rules for the upcoming elections to remove any legal barriers that inhibit the full and free participation of Palestinians in the democratic process.

“We are disturbed by some aspects of the eligibility rules for individuals and political lists who would wish to become active in the Palestinian elections. In particular, the requirement that each political list pay a \$20,000 (US) registration fee and that candidates working in the broad public sector, for international organizations and in civil society must resign from their current jobs in order to run appear to create unjustified obstacles to ensuring a democratic process,” the experts said. ...

“As well, we call upon the international community and Israel to respect the outcome of the Palestinian elections when they are held, and to call upon all parties to act in accordance with international law.” ...

To read the full press release see

<https://www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=27338&LangID=E>

Human Rights Watch

Gaza: Apparent War Crimes During May Fighting

<https://www.hrw.org/news/2021/07/27/gaza-apparent-war-crimes-during-may-fighting>

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Relevant Legislation ** new or updated today

UK Parliament

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>

Israel Arms Trade (Prohibition) Bill

<https://bills.parliament.uk/bills/3025>

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 6 days**

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

Higher Education (Freedom of Speech) Bill (closing date not stated, but no later than 23 September 2021)

<https://www.parliament.uk/business/news/2021/july/have-your-say-on-the-higher-education-freedom-of-speech-bill/>

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