



Political Affairs Digest

A daily summary of political events affecting the Jewish Community

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Scottish Parliament Written Answer

Places of Worship: Face Masks

Stephen Kerr (Conservative) [S6W-01556] To ask the Scottish Government whether it is a legal requirement to wear a face mask in places of worship when COVID-19 restrictions are at level zero.

Christina McKelvie: Through [The Health Protection \(Coronavirus\) \(Restrictions and Requirements\) \(Local Levels\) \(Scotland\) Regulations 2020](#) face coverings remain a mandatory legal requirement at all protection levels including at level zero, in most indoor public places and indoor communal spaces, including places of worship.

On 13 July 2021, the First Minister said that the mandatory wearing of face coverings will remain in place for some time to come, stressing that they provide added protection to the population and assurance to those who are at the highest risk.

Further guidance and information on the wearing of face coverings can be found at [Coronavirus \(COVID-19\): face coverings guidance](#)

Since 31 May 2021, congregational singing and chanting has been permitted in places of worship at protection levels one and zero, subject to a risk assessment and mitigations including use of face coverings and physical distancing. From 19 July 2021, the whole of the Scotland moved to level zero.

Details of all the measures intended to help places of worship operate safely can be found at [Coronavirus \(COVID-19\): guidance for the safe use of places of worship](#)

Scottish Government officials continue to work with faith and belief groups as we prepare to move beyond level zero.

<https://www.parliament.scot/chamber-and-committees/written-questions-and-answers/question?ref=S6W-01556>

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Israel

British Consulate-General Jerusalem

Following increased Israeli settler violence in the West Bank, Heads of Mission and likeminded countries visit Beita Village near Nablus

... The visit took place in response to increasing concerns – across the West Bank and in Beita in particular – about the rising levels of settler violence. The visit also touched upon the worrying establishment of an illegal settlement outpost on top of Jabal Sabih, on the outskirts of the village, which is causing regular clashes between Palestinian residents, Israeli settlers and the Israeli Security Forces ...

Palestinian residents told attendees how they feared losing further land and being exposed to more settler violence. ...

According to UN OCHA, the total number of settler attacks across the West Bank that have resulted in injury and/or property damage in 2021 has increased by 46 percent compared to the same period in 2020. Meanwhile, Yesh Din report that 96 percent of investigations by Israeli authorities into alleged acts of settler violence do not lead to the filing of an indictment.

All participants reiterated their continued strong opposition to Israel's settlement policy and actions taken in this context. They recalled how Israel, as the occupying power, was obliged to protect the Palestinian population from attack. ... Settlers and others who are responsible for crimes against Palestinians must be held accountable, criminal activity must be thoroughly investigated and reports brought to the attention of Israeli authorities by Palestinians followed up on. ...

... British Consul General Diane Corner said: "We condemn any incidence of violence by settlers against Palestinians. We urge the Israeli authorities to address settler violence and to thoroughly investigate every incident to bring those responsible to justice and end the culture of impunity." Corner added "The UK's position on settlements is clear: They are illegal under international law, present an obstacle to peace, and threaten the physical viability of a two-state solution." ...

To read the full press release see

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/following-increased-israeli-settler-violence-in-the-west-bank-heads-of-mission-and-likeminded-countries-visit-beita-village-near-nablus>

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Other Relevant Information

CST

New CST report shows highest-ever half-year total for antisemitic hate incidents

CST's *Antisemitic Incidents Report January-June 2021*, published today, shows that CST recorded 1,308 anti-Jewish hate incidents nationwide in the first half of this year. This is a 49% increase from the 875 incidents recorded in the first six months of 2020, and is the highest total CST has ever recorded in the first half of any year. CST recorded 911 antisemitic incidents in the first half of 2019, 810 in the first half of 2018 and 786 in the first six months of 2017. The total of 1,308 antisemitic incidents from January to June 2021 is higher than every full-year incident total prior to 2016. CST has recorded antisemitic incidents since 1984. ...

The record total of 1,308 antisemitic incidents in the first six months of 2021 is due to the spike in anti-Jewish hate reported during and following the escalation in violence in Israel

and Gaza. In May 2021, the month when the conflict in the Middle East intensified, CST recorded a monthly record of 639 antisemitic incidents. This accounts for 49% the 1,308 antisemitic incidents recorded in the first half of 2021, and would, on its own, constitute a record half-year tally in every year prior to 2017. It exceeds the second and third highest monthly totals combined, which were reported in July and August 2014 during the previous comparable escalation in Israel-related hostilities, when there were 317 and 229 incidents respectively.

The most common type of language or imagery used in antisemitic incidents over the first six months of 2021 referenced the conflict in the Middle East, demonstrated anti-Zionist political motivation, or both. ... Forty-three incidents directly compared Israel with Nazi Germany, while the terms “Zionism” or “Zionist” were employed in 68 incidents, often as euphemisms for “Jewishness” and “Jew”. There were 277 incidents in which offenders used far right or Nazi-related discourse, of which 59 incidents evidenced far right political motivation. ...

The pandemic has led those who wish to spread anti-Jewish hate to find new ways of doing so. In the first half of 2021, CST received 13 reports of video conferencing events being hijacked with antisemitic material. These ‘Zoombombings’ were unheard of prior to the COVID-19 outbreak, but quickly became a method by which antisemites could take advantage of the new social reality; there were ten such incidents between January and June 2020. CST recorded 41 incidents containing antisemitic rhetoric alongside reference to the pandemic, rising from the 26 such cases reported over the same period in 2020. These range from conspiracy theories about Jewish involvement in creating and spreading COVID-19 (or the ‘myth’ of COVID-19) for malevolent and financial benefit; to simply wishing and hoping that Jewish people catch the virus and die from it; to offensively misappropriating Holocaust-era imagery. ...

There were 130 anti-Jewish hate incidents involving schools, school students and teachers, the most reported in the first half of any year and a sharp increase of 491% from the 22 such incidents recorded in the first six months of 2020. ...

CST recorded 89 violent antisemitic incidents from January to June 2021, the highest ever recorded in the first six months of a year and an increase of 68% from the 53 violent incidents in the first half of 2020. ...

Online antisemitic incidents fell slightly, from 364 incidents in the first six months of 2020 to 355 in the first six months of 2021. This is the second year in a row in which online incidents have fallen during the January to June period, but is still the second-highest total that CST has recorded during the first six months of any year. ...

HM Government’s Independent Adviser on Antisemitism, Lord Mann, said: “The scale and intensity of this rise in antisemitism will shock and abhor people across Britain. Many parents will worry about the dramatic increase in hate in educational settings. Please be reassured that my office will continue to work tirelessly to see antisemitism more widely understood and relentlessly opposed, be it on campus or off. I will continue to work with CST which acts as a model for the world in recording, analysing and acting upon this vile racism.”

DCC Mark Hamilton, the National Policing Lead for hate crime, said: “A huge rise in antisemitic hate crime in the UK at a time of conflict in the Middle East is shocking, but sadly not surprising, as we saw a similar response in 2014. ... The Community Security Trust is an invaluable ally of the police at a local and national level and we quickly gathered together as tensions rose in 2021, seeking to reassure affected communities and to prevent hate crime. ...

It should not be necessary for UK Jewish citizens to demand that their security and peace is protected - it is our collective responsibility. ...”

CST Chief Executive Mark Gardner said: “This year British Jews have suffered levels of hatred that were worse than anything seen in recent decades. Some of the abuse and harassment targeting young people in particular was disgraceful. Looking ahead, CST will

keep doing everything that we can to protect our Jewish communities, and to give them the security and comfort that they need.”

To read the full press release see

<https://cst.org.uk/news/blog/2021/08/05/antisemitic-incidents-report-january-june-2021>

Antisemitic Incident Report January – June 2021

<https://cst.org.uk/public/data/file/f/c/Incidents%20Report%20Jan-Jun%202021.pdf>

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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

Domestic Abuse Act statutory guidance (closing date 14 September 2021)

<https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/domestic-abuse-act-statutory-guidance>

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/>

Dispute Resolution in England and Wales (closing date 30 September 2021)

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1008174/dispute-resolution-call-for-evidence.pdf

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