



Political Affairs Digest

A daily summary of political events affecting the Jewish Community

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Jeremy Balfour (Conservative): It is a fundamental right to be able to worship freely without intervention by the state. It is not a fundamental right to go to a crowded nightclub or bar. Yet, here in Scotland, people can attend a rugby match with 60,000 and sing and shout, or go to a crowded dance hall or club and shout and sing. Meanwhile, religious communities partaking in communal worship are forced to wear masks. Can the cabinet secretary tell me what the scientific basis is for such a disparity, given that it is far more important that people are able to worship freely than attend a sports event or nightclub? When will that double standard be rectified?

Humza Yousaf: We recognise the importance of the fundamental right of people to come together to worship, which is one of the reasons why we never applied the certification scheme to places of worship. The other events that the member mentioned, such as large-scale football or rugby matches, large-scale concerts and late-night venues, all come under the eligibility criteria for the certification scheme, so there is an additional element of protection.

On the member's question about face coverings, we review regularly—we are required to do so by law—all the protective measures that are in place, such as the mandatory requirement to wear face coverings in most indoor settings, including, as the member rightly said, places of worship.

The measure will continue to be monitored and kept under review. After a recent review, during which there was careful consideration of all the current evidence and all the available options, ministers determined that the regulations on face coverings remain proportionate and should not change at present.

At this stage of the pandemic, many of the more intrusive restrictions have been lifted, but the virus and the harms that it causes have not gone away. Although vaccination has significantly weakened the link between cases and serious health harms, that link has not been completely broken. Therefore, it is important that places of worship, alongside many other indoor settings, continue their good practice to reduce the spread of the virus.

We are grateful to faith and belief communities for their important role in protecting their congregations and enabling everyone, particularly those at higher risk, to access worship safely. However, I take the member's point, and I give him an absolute guarantee that the measures are kept under regular review.

<https://archive2021.parliament.scot/parliamentarybusiness/report.aspx?r=13379&i=121393&c=2352854#ScotParlOR>

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Israel

Downing Street

PM meeting with the Prime Minister of Israel, Naftali Bennett: 2 November 2021

The Prime Minister met with Naftali Bennett, the Prime Minister of Israel, at COP26 today for their first in-person meeting.

The leaders noted the long-standing friendship between the UK and Israel and committed to deepen our partnership across security, trade and innovation.

The Prime Minister welcomed Israel's progress on climate ahead of COP, including the government's recent commitment to net zero and revised nationally determined contribution.

He hoped to see further regional cooperation on expanding access to clean and renewable energy, to support decarbonisation and help to foster peace and stability.

They also discussed wider political and security issues and agreed to continue working closely together.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/pm-meeting-with-the-prime-minister-of-israel-naftali-bennett-2-november-2021>

Scottish Government

First Minister First Minister @NicolaSturgeon welcomed @PalestinePMO @DrShtayyeh to #COP26. They discussed ways Scotland and Palestine can share knowledge on tackling the climate emergency, including on loss and adaptation.

<https://twitter.com/ScotGovFM/status/1455610695303766016>

UN Office for the High Commissioner for Human Rights

UN experts say Israeli settlement expansion 'tramples' on human rights law

UN human rights experts* today sharply condemned the recent announcement by the Israeli Government that it is advancing plans to build thousands of new housing units in its West Bank and East Jerusalem settlements.

"The United Nations has repeatedly stated that the Israeli settlements in occupied Palestinian territory are a 'flagrant violation under international law', and it has demanded that Israel cease its settlement expansion and remove its settlements," said the experts. The illegality of the Israeli settlements is one of the most widely-accepted issues in modern international law.

"As well, the Israeli settlements are a presumptive war crime under the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court, and should be treated as such by the international community." ...

"The very raison d'être of the Israeli settlements in occupied territory – the creation of

demographic facts on the ground to solidify a permanent presence, a consolidation of alien political control and an unlawful claim of sovereignty – tramples upon the fundamental precepts of humanitarian and human rights law,” the experts said.

They said there are now close to 700,000 Israeli settlers living in illegal settlements in East Jerusalem and the West Bank. “The Israeli settlements are the engine of the occupation,” the experts said. “They are responsible for a wide range of human rights violations against the Palestinians, including land confiscation, resource alienation, severe restrictions on freedom of movement, mounting settler violence, and racial and ethnic discrimination. “Most seriously, the purpose of settler implantation – rupturing the relationship between a native people and its territory – is the denial of the right to self-determination, which is at the very core of modern human rights law.” ...

“However, criticism without consequences means little in these circumstances,” they said. “Israel has paid a miniscule cost over the past five decades for building its 300 settlements and defying international law.”

The experts called upon the international community to support the current investigation into the Israeli settlements by the Office of the Prosecutor at the International Criminal Court. They also called upon UN member states to ensure that corporations and institutions under their respective jurisdiction have no involvement in aiding, assisting or investing in the settlements.

“An occupying power that initiates and expands civilian settlements in defiance of international law and the Rome Statute cannot be serious about peace,” the experts said. “Equally, an international community that does not impose accountability measures on a defiant occupying power contrary to international law cannot be serious about its own laws.”

To read the full press release see

<https://www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=27758&LangID=E>

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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 (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>

Public Bill Committee

[https://hansard.parliament.uk/commons/2021-11-02/debates/e7e1e23d-2ccb-4057-969e-b47314497e6f/NationalityAndBordersBill\(ThirteenthSitting\)](https://hansard.parliament.uk/commons/2021-11-02/debates/e7e1e23d-2ccb-4057-969e-b47314497e6f/NationalityAndBordersBill(ThirteenthSitting))

and

[https://hansard.parliament.uk/commons/2021-11-02/debates/0046e655-b97d-47db-be9d-8b004f955ebf/NationalityAndBordersBill\(FourteenthSitting\)](https://hansard.parliament.uk/commons/2021-11-02/debates/0046e655-b97d-47db-be9d-8b004f955ebf/NationalityAndBordersBill(FourteenthSitting))

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

Labelling for Animal Welfare (closing date 6 December 2021)

<https://consult.defra.gov.uk/animal-welfare-market-interventions-and-labelling/labelling-for-animal-welfare/>

Proposed Assisted Dying for Terminally ill Adults (Scotland) Bill (closing date 22 December 2021)

<https://www.parliament.scot/bills-and-laws/bills/proposals-for-bills/proposed-assisted-dying-for-terminally-ill-adults-scotland-bill>

Animal Welfare – revision of EU legislation (Food Safety) (closing date 21 January 2022)

https://ec.europa.eu/info/law/better-regulation/have-your-say/initiatives/12950-Animal-welfare-revision-of-EU-legislation/public-consultation_en

Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission Strategic Plan 2022-2025

(closing date not stated)

<https://nihrc.org/news/detail/we-want-to-hear-from-you-about-our-strategic-planning-2022-2025>

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