



Political Affairs Digest

A daily summary of political events affecting the Jewish Community

Contents

Home Affairs

Holocaust

Israel

Relevant Legislation

Consultations

Back issues

Home Affairs

Charity Commission

Proposed new and reworded classification codes

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/charity-classifications/proposed-new-and-reworded-classification-codes>

Annex A – proposed new what, how and who classification codes

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1066109/Classification_codes_odt

TOP

Holocaust

House of Lords Written Answer

Cultural Heritage: Museums and Galleries

The Earl of Clancarty (Crossbench) [HL7540] To ask Her Majesty's Government what plans they have to establish an independent expert panel to (1) deliberate, and (2) make recommendations, on (a) restitution, and (b) repatriation, claims on cultural objects (excepting Nazi-looted objects) held in public collections.

Lord Parkinson of Whitley Bay: HM Government has no plans to establish such a panel.

Museums and galleries in the UK operate independently of HM Government. Decisions relating to their collections are a matter for the trustees of each museum. National museums are prevented by law from "deaccessioning" objects in their collections unless, broadly, they are duplicates or unfit for retention. The two exceptions to this are when the objects are human remains that are less than 1,000 years old, and objects that were spoliated during the Nazi era.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2022-03-31/hl7540>

TOP

House of Commons Written Answer

Department for International Trade: Aviation

Emily Thornberry (Labour) [149195] To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, pursuant to the Answer of 28 January 2022 to Question 107507, whether the published £2,898.61 cost of her predecessor's visit to Israel from 28th June to 1st July 2021 included (a) first class or (b) business class air tickets; and what the stand-alone cost of those tickets were.

Penny Mordaunt: The stand-alone cost of tickets was £1,909.22. This comprised a return business class ticket from London to Tel Aviv.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2022-03-29/149195>

The answer referred to above can be read at

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2022-01-19/107507>

House of Lords Oral Answers

Palestine: Recognition

Lord Hylton (Crossbench): To ask Her Majesty's Government what plans they have to recognise Palestine as a state; and whether any such recognition is conditional on the holding of free, fair, and independently monitored elections throughout the Occupied Palestinian Territories.

The Minister of State, Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon): My Lords, the United Kingdom's position on the Middle East peace process is clear: we support a negotiated settlement leading to a safe and secure Israel living alongside a viable and sovereign Palestinian state. We believe that a just and lasting solution that delivers peace is long overdue. The United Kingdom will recognise a Palestinian state at a time when it best serves the objective of peace. We also urge further work towards genuine and democratic national elections, and call on all Palestinian factions to work together to pursue a positive path towards democracy.

Lord Hylton: My Lords, I am slightly encouraged by that reply, but why is self-determination seen as essential for Israelis but denied to Palestinians? Will our Government seek to secure elections, which have been completely missing for 16 years, in the Occupied Territories? If such elections prove free and fair, will they be respected here and will any Government that may emerge be recognised?

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: My Lords, I am sure I speak for every country that we are partners and friends with when I say that our view of the global world is that we want free, open and transparent elections everywhere. We support the Palestinian people's genuine desire to be able to express their opinion at the ballot box. It was extremely disappointing that last year's elections did not take place for a variety of reasons, but we urge further work towards inclusive elections, which are crucial to the establishment of a whole and sovereign Palestinian state and equally crucial in providing the basis for a reliable and sustainable partner for peace.

Lord Singh of Wimbledon (Crossbench): My Lords, numerous illegal Israeli settlements in Palestinian areas—some of them the size of small or medium towns—make the existence of a Palestinian state unviable. In any event, dividing people on the basis of religion creates suffering and lasting enmity. We see this between India and Pakistan, where more than half a million people died during the partition; we also see it closer to home, in Ireland. Does the Minister agree that it is much better to work towards equal civil

and political rights for both Jews and Palestinians in the one land that is both Israel and Palestine, as was promised in the original Balfour Declaration?

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: My Lords, the United Kingdom's position on settlements is clear: they are illegal under international law. We regularly call on Israel to halt the settlements, because they are an obstacle towards the two-state solution. On the sentiments the noble Lord expressed about inclusivity and respecting all communities, I have visited the Palestinian territories as well as Israel. Israel in itself and the current Government represent and seek to represent the whole of Israel in its diversity of communities, which are present and very much brought together in the city of Jerusalem.

Baroness Eaton (Conservative): My Lords, the United Kingdom has rightly long maintained that recognition of a state of Palestine should take place in the context of a final status agreement negotiated by Israel and the Palestinians. However, a credible peace process with active dialogue between parties has been absent for years. Given the UK Government's strong ties with Israel and the Palestinian leadership, can the Minister tell me what steps the UK Government are taking to bring all parties together to establish a lasting two-state solution?

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: My Lords, we continue to engage with Israel and the Palestinian leadership, who were invited to and represented at the COP at the end of last year. My right honourable friend the Foreign Secretary met the Prime Minister of the Palestinian Administration, so we do engage with both sides. I share my noble friend's view that it is important that we bring both communities together. The United Kingdom stands as a partner and friend of all communities to ensure that we see lasting peace in the Holy Land.

Lord Collins of Highbury (Labour): My Lords, at the end of January, the Israeli Defence Minister, Benny Gantz, told the Knesset: "The years-long weakening of the Palestinian Authority and the concealment of relations strengthened Hamas, harmed Israeli security, and failed in terms of results".

President Mahmoud Abbas of the PA had talks with US Secretary of State Antony Blinken at the same time. The US State Department said that discussions focused on the importance of strengthening US relations with the Palestinian Authority and the Palestinian people, as well as improving the quality of life of the Palestinians "in a tangible way". They also discussed the need for the Palestinian Authority to reform. Can the Minister tell us whether we are following the US's example?

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: My Lords, as I indicated in my original Answer to the noble Lord, Lord Hylton, yes, we are. We want reliable partners for peace in the Middle East. What is required now is fair, open and transparent elections within the Palestinian Authority, which are long overdue, as the noble Lord reminded us, to allow for that sustainable partner for peace that is so desperately needed.

Lord Purvis of Tweed (Liberal Democrat): The Minister will be aware of the report of the Human Rights Council's rapporteur into the situation of human rights in the Palestinian territories, occupied since 1967. That report has this very worrying conclusion: "With the eyes of the international community wide open, Israel had imposed upon Palestine an apartheid reality in a post-apartheid world."

What is the Government's response to the Human Rights Council's special rapporteur and what practical steps are they taking to remove the barriers in order to make a two-state situation viable?

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: My Lords, the United Kingdom Government do not agree with the use of that terminology. Any judgment on whether serious crimes have occurred under international law is very much a matter for judicial decision. I can speak directly. I visited Israel in my capacity as Human Rights Minister. I assure the noble Lord that we had a very candid and constructive exchange on issues of human rights, including rights of representation. In doing so, I welcome the recent

easing of restrictions in the holy month of Ramadan to allow people who wish to do so to go to holy sites and worship. That is a positive step forward.

Lord Cormack (Conservative): My Lords, should we not remind ourselves that Israel is at least a democracy? It may be criticised for many things—I would like to see a two-state solution—but we sometimes lose sight of the fact that since the end of the war and the foundation of the State of Israel it has been a proper democracy.

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: My Lords, I share my noble friend's view. As I have said right from the start, in answer to the original Question, it is the United Kingdom Government's position—and, I am sure, the position of Her Majesty's Opposition—that we want to see open, flourishing, pluralistic democracies everywhere across the world.

Lord McDonald of Salford (Crossbench): My Lords, the Montevideo convention of 1933 stipulated three requirements for a state: control of a defined territory, a permanent population, and a Government whom the bulk of the population habitually obey. Does the Minister agree that as long as the Palestinians do not fulfil the first and third criteria, sadly they do not qualify as a state?

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: My Lords, the basis of the criteria the noble Lord outlined is directly relevant. That is why, as I said in my original Answer, the United Kingdom will recognise a Palestinian state when it is conducive to ensuring lasting peace in the Middle East.

Lord Grocott (Labour): Desirable as I think most of us agree it is to achieve a two-state solution, is it not a matter of obvious fact that such a solution is not possible so long as the illegal settlements remain?

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: My Lords, I believe I have already addressed that question. As I said, we believe—it is a long-standing position—that settlements are an obstacle to peace.

The Earl of Sandwich (Crossbench): My Lords, does the Minister consider that the Abraham Accords bring any message of hope and peace to the Palestinians, given that they ignore the settlements and do nothing for the well-being of the Palestinians?

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: My Lords, this is my personal view as well as the Government's: I really welcome the Abraham Accords. By definition, Abraham was all about bringing people, communities and faiths together. At this time, the Abraham Accords should not be looked at as something between nations that are ever expanding. We welcome the recent meeting of Foreign Ministers. Any steps forward that bring peace and reconciliation between partners and the people of the wider region are welcome. At this time, in the holy month of Ramadan and with Easter and Passover imminent, the Abraham Accords are perhaps more relevant today than ever before.

<https://hansard.parliament.uk/lords/2022-04-06/debates/45F93A57-220F-4151-9E79-83AA962413C4/PalestineRecognition>

The report of the Human Rights Council's rapporteur referred to above can be read at https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/2022-03/A_HRC_49_87_AdvanceUneditedVersion.docx

House of Lords Written Answer

Palestinians: Human Rights

Baroness Anelay of St Johns (Conservative) [HL7245] To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the report by the UN Special Rapporteur on the human rights situation in the Palestinian Territories that was published on 22 March.

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: We are aware of the report. Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territories is a human rights priority for the FCDO. As a friend of Israel, we have a regular dialogue on human rights. This includes encouraging the

Government of Israel to abide by its obligations under international law.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2022-03-23/hl7245>

The report referred to above can be read at

https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/2022-03/A_HRC_49_87_AdvanceUneditedVersion.docx

Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office

Updated travel information: Israel

<https://www.gov.uk/foreign-travel-advice/israel>

Updated travel information: Occupied Palestinian Territories

<https://www.gov.uk/foreign-travel-advice/the-occupied-palestinian-territories>

TOP

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>

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>

Lords consideration of Commons amendments

<https://hansard.parliament.uk/lords/2022-04-04/debates/D26CD065-8F0A-4F98-9641-D2A7C7CA2AF5/NationalityAndBordersBill>

Online Safety Bill

<https://bills.parliament.uk/bills/3137>

Palestine Statehood (Recognition) Bill

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

TOP

Consultations

** new or updated today

**** closes in 2 days**

CPS: Public interest guidance for suicide pact and 'mercy killing' type cases

(closing date 9 April 2022)

<https://www.cps.gov.uk/consultation/consultation-public-interest-guidance-suicide-pact-and-mercy-killing-type-cases-0>

**** Independent Review of Social Cohesion and Resilience** (closing date 2 June 2022)

<https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/independent-review-of-social-cohesion-and-resilience-call-for-evidence/independent-review-of-social-cohesion-and-resilience-call-for-evidence>

TOP

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