



# Political Affairs Digest

A daily summary of political events affecting the Jewish Community

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## Home Affairs

### House of Commons Point of Order

**Ben Bradshaw (Labour):** ... You may have heard that today the Church of England bishops have recommended no substantial change to the Church's current ban on same-sex couples being married in church in England, although of course it is already possible in Scotland and will soon be possible in Wales. Many Members across the House—the majority, I would judge—believe that by continuing to exclude lesbian and gay people from its full rites, the Church is no longer compatible with its established status, which confers the duty to serve the whole nation. Has the Second Church Estates Commissioner indicated to you whether he will come to this House and make a statement on this very serious state of affairs and its potential constitutional consequences?

**Mr Speaker:** The answer is no—nobody has come to speak to me—but the Second Church Estates Commissioner is here with us and may wish to answer ...

**The Second Church Estates Commissioner (Andrew Selous):** Further to that point of order, Mr Speaker. I hear exactly what the right hon. Gentleman says. He will know that I will be answering questions in this House next Thursday, and I will willingly take questions on that. I should also point out that the Church of England has not yet made a formal, full statement on the matter. That will happen on Friday; I myself am only being fully briefed on it tomorrow. I am available to this House next Thursday and at any time at your discretion, Mr Speaker.

**Mr Speaker:** Unless the right hon. Member for Exeter (Mr Bradshaw) can get a question, he may not be able to get in as easily, so it may be appropriate for the Second Church Estates Commissioner to come forward with a statement rather than waiting for Church Commissioners' questions. It would be helpful to have that statement on Monday; I would encourage that, because it is a topic that the House will wish to know about. ...

<https://hansard.parliament.uk/commons/2023-01-18/debates/19A82D1A-DEF0-4AE7-A764-30645997A602/PointsOfOrder>

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# Holocaust

## House of Commons Oral Answer

### Prime Minister's Question Time

**Bob Blackman (Conservative):** As we approach Holocaust Memorial Day, colleagues can sign the early-day motion and the book of commitment, and they can attend the various commemorative services. I have to report some very sad news to the House. The well-known holocaust survivor Zigi Shipper died at the age of 93 in the early hours of this morning. *[Interruption.]* He was a survivor of Auschwitz-Birkenau and Stutthof concentration camps. He spent his life in this country spreading his message of hope to young people. Will my right hon. Friend join me in thanking Zigi for his life and for his message? It is vitally important as we sit here today: do not hate.

**The Prime Minister:** I am very sorry to learn that Zigi has passed away, and my thoughts are of course with his family. I know he was a man with wonderful energy and humanity. I pay tribute to him for his work, and indeed to all holocaust survivors who have so bravely shared their testimonies. We must never forget the holocaust. As my hon. Friend rightly said, I know the whole House will join us in echoing Zigi's poignant and accurate message: do not hate.

<https://hansard.parliament.uk//commons/2023-01-18/debates/A0883E8B-B7BD-4861-89DB-849C2E219861/Engagements#contribution-040A9AAB-E207-4797-A5C1-F1525846D194>

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# Israel

## Downing Street

### PM call with Prime Minister Netanyahu of Israel: 19 January 2022

The Prime Minister spoke to Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu this morning to congratulate him on his re-appointment.

The leaders looked forward to working together to advance the UK-Israel relationship, including on trade where the UK is already Israel's most important partner in Europe. They agreed the UK-Israel Free Trade Agreement, currently being negotiated, could unlock further opportunities for both our countries, building on our shared leadership in areas like technology and services.

The Prime Minister and Prime Minister Netanyahu also discussed cooperation between the UK and Israel on security issues, where both countries have an interest in promoting regional stability.

The Prime Minister outlined the steps the UK has taken to respond to abuses of human rights and breaches of international law by the Iranian regime, including sanctioning Iran for illegally supplying military drones to Russia. The Prime Minister thanked Prime Minister Netanyahu for his support to Ukraine.

The Prime Minister reaffirmed the UK's longstanding position on the Middle East Peace Process. The leaders agreed that the Abraham Accords had the potential to bring about a permanent step change in relations between Israel and its neighbours, with far reaching benefits.

The leaders looked forward to meeting in person soon and to marking Israel's 75th anniversary later this year.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/pm-call-with-prime-minister-netanyahu-of-israel-19-january-2022>

## Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office

### **The UK opposes all unilateral actions that will make Israeli-Palestinian peace harder to achieve: Statement delivered by Political Coordinator Fergus Eckersley at the UN Security Council briefing on MEPP**

... Last year saw large numbers of Palestinians and Israelis killed, worsening rates of settler violence, and the emergence of new Palestinian militant groups. Unfortunately, 2023 has also started with violence and instability. In this context, the UK Minister of State, Lord Ahmad, visited Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territories earlier this month. There, he underlined the UK's support for a two-state solution and urged the parties, supported by the international community, to do all they can to de-escalate, restore calm, and rebuild trust.

To this end, Mr President, first, the parties must demonstrate through their statements and their policies a genuine commitment to peace and security for both Israelis and Palestinians and to a two-state solution. This is the only way to end the conflict, preserve Israel's Jewish and democratic identity and realise Palestinian national aspirations. The UK opposes all unilateral actions that will make peace harder to achieve, whether taken by the Palestinian or Israeli side, including the Government of Israel's measures against the Palestinian Authority, announced on 6 January.

Second, the UK calls upon all parties to continue to uphold the historic Status Quo at Jerusalem's holy sites. During his visit, Lord Ahmad visited Haram Al Sharif/Temple Mount. He emphasised the UK's unwavering commitment to the Status Quo and to working with the parties to ensure the safety of all who visit. We value Jordan's important role as custodian of the holy sites in Jerusalem.

Third, we urge the leaders on both sides to promote a culture of peaceful coexistence. The desecration of 30 Christian graves in a Protestant cemetery on Mount Zion this month speaks to the dangers of increasing division along ethnic and religious lines. We are grateful to all sides for their swift condemnation of these shocking acts. As a defender of freedom of religion or belief for all, the UK urges respect for all burial and holy sites, which must be treated with dignity.

Finally, Israel must exercise maximum restraint in the use of live fire when protecting its legitimate security interest. In the first three weeks of this year, 14 Palestinians have been killed by Israeli security forces, including 3 children.

Restoring stability and securing peace is still possible, but requires effort from all sides in a process towards a two state solution. The UK stands ready to support these important objectives.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/the-uk-opposes-all-unilateral-actions-that-will-make-israeli-palestinian-peace-harder-to-achieve-uk-statement-at-the-un-security-council>

## United Nations

### **With 2022 Deadliest Year in Israel-Palestine Conflict, Reversing Violent Trends Must Be International Priority, Middle East Coordinator Tells Security Council**

... **Tor Wennesland, Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process**, said a dangerous cycle of violence persists amidst increased political tensions and a stalled peace process in the Occupied Palestinian Territory ... "The violent trends that dominated the last months of 2022 continue to take a devastating human toll," he said, adding: "Preventing more loss of life and reversing negative trends on the ground must be our collective priority." At the same time, the global community must not lose sight of the ultimate goal — to end the occupation, resolve the conflict and realize a two-State solution. ...

Reiterating the United Nations steadfast support to both sides in achieving a sustainable

peace, he outlined recent developments on the ground, noting that a total of 14 Palestinians were killed between 8 December 2022 and 13 January 2023, and another 117 were injured by Israeli security forces. Israeli settlers or other civilians perpetrated 63 attacks against Palestinians resulting in 28 injuries, including six children. According to Israeli sources, five Israeli civilians and four security forces personnel were injured by Palestinians in attacks, clashes, the throwing of stones and Molotov cocktails, and other incidents. Palestinians perpetrated a total of 89 attacks against Israeli civilians during the reporting period. ...

Emphasizing that the perpetrators of all acts of violence must be held accountable and swiftly brought to justice, he added that security forces must exercise maximum restraint and use lethal force only when strictly unavoidable in order to protect life. Children must never be the targets of violence or put in harm's way.

Turning to settlement-related developments, he said that, on 2 January, the Israeli Government informed the High Court of Justice that it intends to legalize, under Israeli law, the outpost of Homesh — which is built on private Palestinian land — by repealing part of the 2005 Disengagement Law. On the same day, the Court issued a decision giving the State 90 days to explain why the outpost should not be evacuated and the Palestinian rights holders not allowed to exercise their rights. Reiterating that all settlements are illegal under international law and remain a substantial obstacle to peace, he said demolitions and seizures of Palestinian-owned property also continued through the reporting period, and remain a serious concern. ...

In addition, on 1 January, some 30 gravestones were desecrated at the Protestant Cemetery on Mount Zion in Jerusalem. Two Israelis, aged 14 and 18, were arrested for the act, and according to a statement issued by Israeli police following an investigation, a formal indictment is expected.

He went on to recall the 3 January visit by Israel's new Minister for National Security to the holy sites in Jerusalem, which was condemned by the Palestinian Authority and Jordanian officials, among others, calling it was a provocation and violation of the status quo. ...

He also recalled that, on 30 December 2022, the General Assembly adopted a resolution containing a request to the International Court of Justice for an advisory opinion relating to the Israeli occupation of Palestinian territory. In response, on 6 January, the Israeli security cabinet approved a series of measures against the Palestinian Authority, including the withholding of Palestinian tax funds to pay damages to the families of Israelis killed in Palestinian attacks. A directive was also issued to the Israeli police to increase enforcement of the removal of Palestinian flags from public spaces in Israel and occupied East Jerusalem.

Turning to the Gaza Strip, he said the United Nations continues to deliver vital humanitarian and development assistance, while also engaging in diplomatic efforts to further ease restrictions on the movement of people and goods. Nevertheless, Gaza's socioeconomic situation remains of grave concern. ...

**Riyad Mansour, Permanent Observer for the State of Palestine**, noting that 15 Palestinians — including 4 children — have already been killed in 2023, underscored that “peace is still possible”, albeit less probable with every day that passes. ... Spotlights the impunity enjoyed by those who violate the law and the collective punishment endured by those entitled to its protection, he said that Israel shows no respect, consideration or regard for anyone, and yet, demands it from everyone, even when breaching fundamental rules of international law. Questioning whether the problem lies in the international community's positions or in the impunity that Israel enjoys, he asked who was held accountable for Israeli settlements; the killing and maiming of Palestinians; mass arbitrary arrests; and the withholding of hundreds of Palestinians bodies, preventing their families from burying their loved ones in dignity, sometimes for decades. “Give me one name,” he implored.

At the end of the Second World War, the international community decided to build an

international law-based order, with two principles — the right of peoples to self-determination and the prohibition against the acquisition of land by force — at its heart, he continued. “Palestine exemplifies the denial of the former and the breach of the latter,” he said ... [Israel] does not recognize Palestinian rights anywhere but proclaims rights for its settlers everywhere. Further, it denies the Palestinian people’s very existence as a nation, banning the Palestinian flag in public spaces as the latest manifestation of this denial. Peace will not come from the negation of Palestinians’ existence, but from recognition of their plight and rights. ...

**Gilad Menashe Erdan (Israel)** said the statement just delivered by the Permanent Observer of Palestine is yet another award-winning, dramatic charade of false victimization. Over and over again, the Council has heard that 2022 was the deadliest year ever for Palestinians. However, those number and statistics are not facts, but are instead based on a fundamentally flawed methodology of discrimination. Indeed, they vastly exaggerate Palestinian statistics, while minimizing and distorting Israeli numbers. Stressing that no steps are taken to verify or fact-check such information, he said such data also lack any context, and therefore result in a compilation of lies and half-truths. Outlining some examples, he said one of the civilians killed by Israeli security forces and listed today by the Palestinian delegate was in fact a terrorist who was openly targeting Israelis. Indeed, the vast majority of Palestinian fatalities and casualties are not civilians, but, instead, terrorists who were “neutralized in the midst of their acts of violence”. ... Turning to another misleading and harmful statement, he said the representative alluded to a seemingly “innocent, non-toxic resolution” adopted recently in the General Assembly, requesting an advisory opinion from the International Court of Justice. In reality, that was a poisonous and one-sided text — one of more than a dozen adopted at the United Nations every year — whose aim is to destroy the Israeli State. Israel’s guilt was predetermined in the resolution’s language, and all that remains is for the Court to hand down a sentence. ... Only the Palestinians’ constant rejectionism stands in the way of peace, he stressed, warning: “Supporting the Palestinians’ lies only serves to further escalate and inflame the situation on the ground.” ...

**Linda Thomas-Greenfield (United States)** ... expressed concern over the situation in the West Bank and condemned the recent terrorist attack, calling for urgent, tangible measures. Despite the challenges in the region, she spotlighted the Negev Forum Working Groups meeting, which brought together 150 representatives from across the Middle East. ... She went on to urge the return of the remains of the two captive Israelis held in Gaza, as well as the remains of others, including that of the Goldin family. ...

**Fergus John Eckersley (United Kingdom)**, noting that 2023 started with violence and instability, recalled the visit of his country’s Minister for the Middle East to Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territory where he underlined support to a two-State solution. ... Leaders of both sides must promote a culture of peaceful coexistence. Turning to the desecration of 30 Christian graves on Mount Zion, he welcomed the swift condemnation by all sides of these acts. ... [\[click here to read this speech in full\]](#)

**Nicolas De Rivière (France)** said the Council must mobilize to avoid an escalation on the ground. Calling on the parties to exercise restraint, he voiced concern about the visit of the Israeli Minister for National Security to the holy sites on 3 January. ... Calling on the new Israeli authorities to take measures to end violence perpetrated by settlers, he urged Israel to cease its legalization of outposts in the West Bank. In addition, he also expressed his deep concern about recent Israeli measures against the Palestinian population and institutions — in particular the withholding of funds owed to the Palestinian Authority — and called on the international community to urgently relaunch the peace process ...

**Pascale Christine Baeriswyl (Switzerland)** called on all parties to take the necessary measures to protect civilians and non-combatant persons. Also calling for investigations into allegations of disproportionate use of force by the Israeli security forces, she noted the high number of violent incidents by settlers and called on Israel to respect its

international legal obligations towards the occupied population. ... She welcomed the willingness of the new Government of Israel to pursue normalization agreements with Arab States, stressing that Palestinians must also be able to benefit from that dynamic. ...

**Vassily A. Nebenzia (Russian Federation)**, reaffirming Israel's right to security, pointed out that the country continues to increase unilateral economic sanctions and measures to expand its settlement policy, including the 243 illegal settlements built between 1967 and 2022. Expressing concern over the reform of the country's legal system by the new Israeli leadership, he said that such provocative measures undermine the two-State solution. ...

**Osama Mahmoud Abdelkhalek Mahmoud (Egypt)**, condemning the provocative visit of the Israeli Interior Minister to Haram al-Sharif earlier in January, called for all parties to refrain from any steps that could lead to a further escalation of the conflict. ... The Council should assume its responsibility vis-a-vis the legitimate rights of the Palestinian people. To that end, he called for a stop to all unilateral measures in the Occupied Palestinian Territory; the preservation of the legal status quo of holy sites; the lifting of all movement restrictions in Gaza, and funding for its reconstruction; international protection for the Palestinian people; and accountability for those responsible for violations against them. In addition, he called for the establishment of an independent State of Palestine with East Jerusalem as its capital ...

**Mahmoud Daifallah Hmoud (Jordan)** said that Israel's pursuit of illegal settlement practices is pushing the Middle East into conflict and threatening international peace and security. Further, Israel continues to arouse the anger of Muslims due to its attacks on the Aqsa Mosque compound, which leads to religious conflict with serious regional repercussions. This, in addition to the expulsions of Palestinians from their homes, constitutes an attempt to change the identity of Jerusalem in violation of international humanitarian law and Israel's responsibility as an occupying Power. The international community must cooperate to end these violations. ...

**Amir Saeid Jalil Irvani (Iran)** said the Israeli regime's oppressive, expansionist and apartheid practices against Palestinians continued unabated in 2022. The Israeli regime's recent incursion into the Aqsa Mosque compound on 3 January violated the mosque's sanctity and worship rites and was a brazen provocation of Muslim feelings. "This illegality and recklessness have serious consequences that should not be underestimated," he said, noting that, if not properly addressed, it can further destabilize an already fragile situation and endanger regional and international peace and security. The Israeli regime has committed atrocities in the Occupied Palestinian Territory without accountability for more than 70 years, and Palestinian self-determination must be fully recognized, upheld and protected. "But as long as the Security Council remains silent, this is impossible to do," he stressed ...

**To read the full press release see**

<https://press.un.org/en/2023/sc15179.doc.htm>

*The full text of Tor Wennesland's briefing can be read at*

[https://unsc.unmissions.org/sites/default/files/security\\_council\\_briefing -  
18 january 2023 0.pdf](https://unsc.unmissions.org/sites/default/files/security_council_briefing_-_18_january_2023_0.pdf)

*The Resolution referred to above can be read at*

<https://undocs.org/en/A/77/400>

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## Foreign Affairs

### House of Commons Written Answer

#### **Germany: Synagogues**

**Stephen Hammond (Conservative)** [119959] To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether he has had recent discussions with his German counterpart on reports that the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps carried out terror attacks on synagogues in Germany.

**Leo Docherty:** The Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs regularly engages with his German opposite on a variety of issues, including security matters, most recently on 5 January for the UK-Germany Strategic Dialogue. Germany is a likeminded and capable security partner with whom we enjoy a strong relationship.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2023-01-10/119959>

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## Other Relevant Information

### Community Security Trust (CST)

#### **CST report shows 22% increase in campus antisemitism**

... CST's new report reveals 150 university related antisemitic incidents were reported to CST in the last two academic years across 30 towns and cities in the UK. ...

Most Jewish students will not encounter any antisemitism during their studies, but anti-Jewish hatred can still present a significant challenge for Jewish staff and students. ...

In 2020/2021, CST recorded 95 university related antisemitic incidents; the highest total recorded for a single academic year. Fifty-five of these incidents took place in a single month, May 2021, when there was a significant escalation of conflict in Israel and Gaza. This was a period when national levels of anti-Jewish hate crimes increased, and university campuses were disproportionately affected. ...

The 150 incidents reported to CST during the past two academic years included seven threats, three of which were death threats sent to Jewish students, and three physical assaults. The remaining 140 incidents were in the category of Abusive Behaviour, which includes verbal abuse, antisemitic graffiti on non-Jewish property, and online or offline written abuse. Eighty-two incidents took place online, 47 incidents occurred on campus, and 21 took place off campus.

This report shows the challenges faced by students when universities, who have a duty of care to protect all students at university, do not always provide robust support to Jewish students or staff. This is sometimes seen in how some academic institutions handle complaints of antisemitism. In some cases, CST found that investigations into complaints of antisemitism have been marred by slow responses, a breakdown in communication, a lack of impartiality or objectivity from investigating officers, and a failure to use the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA) working definition of antisemitism in an appropriate way.

#### **CST's recommendations for universities:**

- Maintain a fair, independent and impartial complaints process that consults external advisors with specialist expertise in the type of discrimination or bigotry being alleged
- Offer a timely response to students and update them on any progress made, delays

- that may be unavoidable and when they can expect an outcome to the investigation
- Allow for anonymity for students in the reporting of a hate crime and the involvement of third party representation
- Ensure that adoption of the IHRA definition of antisemitism is accompanied by training for staff who will be investigating the complaint so that they know how to use the definition, and have a wider understanding of the nature, language and impact of antisemitism on British campuses

In response to CST's new report, CST Chief Executive Mark Gardner said: "Antisemitism at our universities has been a running sore for decades and these new findings show that far too many Jewish students suffer hatred and bias. This study also reinforces last week's National Union of Students' own report into antisemitism, including the link between anti-Israel hatred and racist treatment of British Jews. Students' Unions and university authorities need to better support their Jewish students, taking concerns seriously and acting against antisemitism, whether it comes from students or academics."

HM Government's Independent Adviser on Antisemitism, Lord Mann, said: "Antisemitism on campus has long been a concern for parents and students, and the reported rise in university-related antisemitic incidents over the past few years is both worrying and unacceptable. It is imperative that more is done to protect Jewish students and staff from the scourge of antisemitism ..."

Union of Jewish Students President Joel Rosen said: "Jewish students living away from home for the first time have the right to be who they are and to feel safe where they live and study. These incidents have a detrimental impact on the community, leading some to hide their identity and disengage from parts of university life. ..."

**To read the full press release see**

<https://cst.org.uk/news/blog/2023/01/19/cst-report-shows-22-increase-in-campus-antisemitism>

**Campus Antisemitism in Britain 2020-2022**

<https://cst.org.uk/public/data/file/4/a/Campus%20Antisemitism%202020-2022.pdf>

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## Relevant Legislation \*\* new or updated today

### UK Parliament

#### **Bill of Rights Bill**

<https://bills.parliament.uk/bills/3227>

#### **Education (Non-religious Philosophical Convictions) Bill**

<https://bills.parliament.uk/bills/3186>

#### **Higher Education (Freedom of Speech) Bill**

<https://bills.parliament.uk/bills/2862>

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

<https://bills.parliament.uk/bills/3325>

#### **\*\* Online Safety Bill**

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

First Reading, House of Lords

<https://hansard.parliament.uk/lords/2023-01-18/debates/D88FDB02-87FA-4655-8284-493E9BF61E85/OnlineSafetyBill>

Bill as brought to the Lords

<https://bills.parliament.uk/publications/49376/documents/2734>

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

<https://bills.parliament.uk/bills/3217>

### **Private Burial Grounds and Cemeteries Bill**

<https://bills.parliament.uk/bills/3188>

### **Universal Credit (Removal of Two Child Limit) Bill**

<https://bills.parliament.uk/bills/3163>

### **Schools Bill**

<https://bills.parliament.uk/bills/3156>

## **Scottish Parliament**

### **Charities (Regulation and Administration) (Scotland) Bill**

<https://www.parliament.scot/bills-and-laws/bills/charities-regulation-and-administration-scotland-bill>

### **\*\* Gender Recognition Reform (Scotland) Bill**

<https://www.parliament.scot/bills-and-laws/bills/gender-recognition-reform-scotland-bill>

UK Parliament, House of Lords: Scotland Act 1998: Section 35 Power

<https://hansard.parliament.uk/lords/2023-01-18/debates/27EECCF9-B604-4C5B-8166-DDE2DD23AB0C/ScotlandAct1998Section35Power>

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## **Consultations**

\*\* new or updated today

**\*\* closes tomorrow**

**Assisted dying/assisted suicide** (closing date 20 January 2023)

<https://committees.parliament.uk/committee/81/health-and-social-care-committee/news/174845/mps-launch-new-inquiry-on-assisted-dyingassisted-suicide/>

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

**NUS UK Antisemitism Action Plan** (closing date 27 January 2023)

[https://assets.nationbuilder.com/nus/pages/108/attachments/original/1673471793/NUS\\_Antisemitism\\_Action\\_Plan\\_Jan2023.pdf](https://assets.nationbuilder.com/nus/pages/108/attachments/original/1673471793/NUS_Antisemitism_Action_Plan_Jan2023.pdf)

**Draft guidance: charities use of social media** (closing date 14 March 2023)

<https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/draft-guidance-charities-use-of-social-media>

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