



# Political Affairs Digest

A daily summary of political events affecting the Jewish Community

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## Home Affairs

### Office for National Statistics

**Religion by age and sex, England and Wales: Census 2021**

<https://www.ons.gov.uk/releases/religionbyageandsexenglandandwalescensus2021>

### Church of England

*In December 2022 the Revd Dr Stephen Sizer, was found guilty by the Bishop's Disciplinary Tribunal for the Diocese of Winchester of "conduct ... unbecoming to the office and work of a clerk in Holy Orders, in that he provoked and offended the Jewish community, and ... in that he engaged in antisemitic activity". He has now received a Penalty Judgment that prohibits him from serving as a Clerk of Holy Orders until December 2030.*

*The Penalty Judgement is not currently available online.*

*The Tribunal Decision (December 2022) can be read at*

<https://www.churchofengland.org/sites/default/files/2022-12/Tribunal%20Determination%20%28Sizer%29%206%20December%202022.pdf>

#### **Statement from the Acting Bishop of Winchester, the Rt Revd Debbie Sellin**

The Acting Bishop of Winchester, the Rt Revd Debbie Sellin, has received the penalty judgment of the Bishop's Disciplinary Tribunal for the Diocese of Winchester following the finding that the Revd Dr Stephen Sizer has committed misconduct under the Clergy Discipline Measure. The Tribunal follows a complaint made to the Diocese of Winchester in 2018 by Mrs van der Zyl, President of the Board of Deputies of British Jews.

It is the Church of England's task to lead in the work of enabling mutual understanding and strong, peaceable inter-faith relationships for the common good of society, and its ministers must take very seriously their role in initiating positive relationships between communities, locally, at diocesan and regional level, as well as nationally and internationally.

Moreover, as a report from the Church of England's Faith and Order Commission affirms,

the Christian-Jewish relationship should be viewed as a 'gift of God to the Church' to be received with care, respect and gratitude. As Archbishop Justin Welby said in 2018, in a joint letter with other Christian and Jewish leaders, antisemitism has no place in our society and those in positions of power and influence must listen to concerns about it. The penalty of prohibition until December 2030 reflects the seriousness of the misconduct found by the Tribunal.

<https://winchester.anglican.org/press-statement-stephen-sizer-penalty-judgment/>

*The report referred to above can be read at*

<https://www.churchofengland.org/sites/default/files/2019-11/godsunfailingwordweb.pdf>

*The letter referred to above can be read following a series of Brexit-related letters at*

<https://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/times-letters-postponement-of-the-brexit-meaningful-vote-zt3m03bss>

### **Archbishop of Canterbury statement on Stephen Sizer Penalty Judgment**

Following today's penalty judgment of the Bishop's Disciplinary Tribunal for the Diocese of Winchester regarding the Revd Dr Stephen Sizer, the Archbishop of Canterbury said: "I note the findings of the Bishop's Disciplinary Tribunal for the Diocese of Winchester regarding the Revd Dr Stephen Sizer and his subsequent prohibition from licensed ministry in the Church of England. It is clear that the behaviour of Stephen Sizer has undermined Christian-Jewish relations, giving encouragement to conspiracy theories and tropes that have no place in public Christian ministry and the church. I renew my call for the highest possible standards among ordained ministers of the Church of England in combatting antisemitism of all kinds."

<https://www.archbishopofcanterbury.org/news/news-and-statements/archbishop-canterbury-statement-stephen-sizer-penalty-judgment>

## **Board of Deputies of British Jews**

### **Stephen Sizer banned for 12 years by Church of England Tribunal**

A Church of England Tribunal has banned disgraced minister Stephen Sizer from serving as a Clerk of Holy Orders for 12 years, including time served. He will be unable to act as a minister until 2030.

Board of Deputies President Marie van der Zyl said: "I am pleased that the Tribunal has made an unambiguous statement in banning Stephen Sizer from being able to act as a Clerk in Holy Orders for 12 years. Given that he indulged in 'antisemitic activity' and caused grievous offence to the Jewish community over a number of years, this is the correct decision. I am grateful to the Tribunal for hearing our evidence and look forward to a continued strong and close relationship with the Church of England in the coming years. Many thanks to my predecessor as President, Jonathan Arkush, who also worked tirelessly on this case with me."

<https://bod.org.uk/bod-news/stephen-sizer-banned-for-12-years-by-church-of-england-tribunal/>

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## House of Commons Written Answers

### **Israel: Defence Equipment and Arms Trade**

**Claire Hanna (SDLP)** [128724] To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, if he will make it his policy to ban the (a) sale of arms to and (b) import of military technology from Israel.

**David Rutley:** The UK takes its defence export responsibilities very seriously and operates one of the most robust arms export control regimes in the world. We consider all our export applications thoroughly against a strict risk assessment framework and keep all licences under careful and continual review as standard. We continue to monitor the situation in Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territories closely and keep relevant licences under review. We will not grant an export licence if to do so would be inconsistent with the Strategic Export Licensing Criteria. The UK also does not believe that imposing a blanket arms embargo would lead to progress in the peace process.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2023-01-20/128724>

*The Criteria referred to above can be read at*

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-statements/detail/2021-12-08/hcws449>

### **Palestinians: West Bank**

**Claire Hanna (SDLP)** [128723] To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether he has had recent discussions with his Israeli counterpart on (a) the ruling of the Israeli high court on evictions in Masafer Yatta and (b) the displacement of Palestinians in the West Bank.

**David Rutley:** The UK is clear that in all but the most exceptional of circumstances, demolitions and evictions are contrary to International Humanitarian Law. Our opposition to the demolition of Palestinian property and the evictions of Palestinians from their homes is long-standing. The practice causes unnecessary suffering to Palestinians and is harmful to efforts to promote peace. 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. The Minister for the Middle East, Lord Ahmad, reinforced this message during a visit to a UK donor funded school facing demolition on 12 January in Masafer Yatta and raised Masafer Yatta with the Israeli ambassador to the UK on 26 January.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2023-01-20/128723>

### **Hebron: Israel**

**Jessica Morden (Labour)** [127716] To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what discussions he has had with his Israeli counterparts on recent deaths of activists and civilians in Hebron.

**David Rutley:** We have called upon the Government of Israel to fully respect the fundamental rights and freedoms of human rights defenders and organisations and to allow them to freely operate in Israel and Occupied Palestinian Territories. We regularly raise the issue of the high numbers of Palestinians killed and injured by Israeli Defence Forces in the West Bank and Gaza with the Israeli authorities. We encourage them to carry out swift, transparent and thorough investigations and, if wrongdoing is found, that those responsible be held to account. We will continue to stress the importance of the Israeli security forces providing appropriate protection to the Palestinian civilian population and urge restraint in the use of live fire. The UK remains committed to a two-state solution, as the Minister for the Middle East,

Lord (Tariq) Ahmad of Wimbledon, made clear during his visit to Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territories on 10-13 January.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2023-01-19/127716>

## House of Lords Written Answers

### Jerusalem: Religious Buildings

**Baroness Deech (Crossbench)** [HL4765] To ask His Majesty's Government what discussions they have had with the government of Jordan to ensure safe visits by Jews to the Temple Mount (Haram al-Sharif).

**Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon:** The UK values and supports Jordanian Custodianship of Christian and Muslim Holy Sites in Jerusalem. We engage with the Jordanian Waqf in Jerusalem frequently about access and movement to the Haram al Sharif/Temple Mount. The UK continues to be supportive of the Status Quo arrangements which enable all three Abrahamic faiths to worship in the Old City of Jerusalem. I reiterated this position during my recent visit to the Occupied Palestinian Territories.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2023-01-16/hl4765>

### Israel: Palestinians

**Baroness Janke (Liberal Democrat)** [HL4569] To ask His Majesty's Government, further to the formation of the new government of Israel on 29 December 2022, what assessment have they made of the compliance of the government of Israel with the Fourth Geneva convention of 1949 for those living within the Occupied Territories.

**Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon:** The Prime Minister spoke to the new Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, to congratulate him on his election victory and are already working with the new government of Israel on the next chapter of UK-Israel relations. We continue to call on Israel to abide by its obligations under international law and we have a regular dialogue with Israel on legal issues relating to the occupation of the Palestinian territories. I reinforced this message during my visit to Israel and the OPTs on 10-13 January.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2023-01-09/hl4569>

### Israel: Palestinians

**Baroness Janke (Liberal Democrat)** [HL4570] To ask His Majesty's Government what discussions they have had with the government of Israel regarding the killing of (1) Shireen Abu Akleh, (2) Jana Majdi Issam, (3) Adam Nasser Ayyad, (4) Dia Mohammad Rimawi, and (5) Fulla Maslama.

**Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon:** We regularly raise the issue of Palestinians killed and injured by Israeli Defence Forces in the West Bank and Gaza with the Israeli authorities. We encourage them to carry out swift, transparent and thorough investigations and, if wrongdoing is found, that those responsible be held to account. We will continue to stress the importance of the Israeli security forces providing appropriate protection to the Palestinian civilian population, particularly the need to protect children, and urge restraint in the use of live fire. The UK remains committed to a two-state solution, as I made clear during my visit to Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territories on 10-13 January.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2023-01-09/hl4570>

### Israel: Palestinians

**Baroness Janke (Liberal Democrat)** [HL4573] To ask His Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the report by the Defence for Children International

(Palestine) Year-in-review: A deadly year for Palestinian children, published on 23 December 2022.

**Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon:** The UK continues to engage with the Israeli government on human rights issues in the context of the occupation, including the treatment of children. In instances where there have been accusations of excessive use of force, we have advocated for swift, transparent and thorough investigations and, if wrongdoing is found, that those responsible be held to account. We will continue to stress the importance of the Israeli security forces providing appropriate protection to the Palestinian civilian population, particularly the need to protect children, and urge restraint in the use of live fire. The UK remains committed to a two-state solution, as I made clear during my visit to Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territories on 10-13 January.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2023-01-09/hl4573>

*The report referred to above can be read at*

[https://www.dci-palestine.org/year\\_in\\_review\\_2022](https://www.dci-palestine.org/year_in_review_2022)

### **Gaza: Medical Equipment**

**Lord Hylton (Crossbench)** [HL4774] To ask His Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of reports that Israeli authorities refused permission for medical equipment to enter the Gaza Strip; and what representations, if any, they have made to the government of Israel about the matter.

**Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon:** We urge access into and out of Gaza, in accordance with International Humanitarian Law, for humanitarian actors, reconstruction materials and those, including Palestinians, travelling for medical purposes. We are in close contact with UN agencies and key partners on the ground to assess the situation and will monitor closely. Officials from our Embassy in Tel Aviv and our Consulate-General in Jerusalem frequently urge the Israeli and Palestinian authorities to take steps to improve conditions in Gaza, including easing movement and access restrictions. The wounded and ill in Gaza and the West Bank should be able to access the urgent medical care they need.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2023-01-16/hl4774>

## **British Consulate General Jerusalem**

### **Diplomatic Missions Visit Khan Al Ahmar Palestinian Community Threatened with Demolition**

Representatives of Belgium, Brazil, Denmark, the EU, France, Germany, Ireland, Italy, Japan, Mexico, the Netherlands, Norway, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland the UK and like-minded missions today visited the Palestinian community of Khan Al Ahmar to express their concern at the threat of demolition facing the village. Finland is also supportive of the below statement. ...

Legal avenues to prevent the demolition of the village have been exhausted and we understand that the Israeli Government is due to submit its plans on 1 February in response to a court petition demanding its demolition.

Khan Al Ahmar is home to 38 Palestinian families and is also the location of a donor-funded school which serves five communities in the local area. The demolition of the village and the subsequent eviction of its residents could amount to forcible transfer in violation of Article 49 of Geneva Convention IV.

The international community has for many years worked to discourage the Israeli authorities from taking forward the proposed demolitions. Today's visit was an opportunity to restate our concerns. Evictions and demolitions cause unnecessary suffering. We urge Israel to cease such actions.

To read the full press release see

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/diplomatic-missions-visit-khan-al-ahmar-palestinian-community-threatened-with-demolition>

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## Foreign Affairs

### House of Lords Written Answer

#### **Pakistan: Jews**

**Baroness Deech (Crossbench)** [HL4762] To ask His Majesty's Government what discussions they have had with the government of Pakistan, if any, about the (1) safety, and (2) well-being, of around two hundred Jews living in that country.

**Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon:** Protecting religious minorities is central to the UK Government's human rights engagement in Pakistan. We regularly raise the treatment of minority communities at a senior level with the Government of Pakistan. Most recently, on 14 December, I discussed freedom of religion or belief and the need to promote respect for all religions with Foreign Minister Bilawal Bhutto Zardari.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2023-01-16/hl4762>

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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>

House of Lords Library Briefing

<https://researchbriefings.files.parliament.uk/documents/LLN-2022-0046/LLN-2022-0046.pdf>

#### **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>

#### **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>

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## **Consultations**

\*\* new or updated today

### **Equality and Human Rights Commission Statutory Review** (closing date 1 March 2023)

<https://www.equalityhumanrights.com/en/our-statutory-review>

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