



Political Affairs Digest

A daily summary of political events affecting the Jewish Community

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House of Commons Written Answer

Trade Agreements: Drugs

Priti Patel (Conservative) [137777] To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, what recent steps she has taken to include the mutual recognition of pharmaceutical products in trade agreement negotiations.

Nigel Huddleston: The UK has secured a number of Mutual Recognition Agreements (MRAs) on Good Manufacturing Practices for pharmaceutical products in recent years. They comprise standalone MRAs with the US, Australia and New Zealand, with similar commitments contained in our Free Trade Agreements with Japan, Switzerland, Israel and Canada. New Free Trade Agreement negotiations are ongoing with Israel and Canada.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2023-02-01/137777>

House of Lords Written Answers

Jerusalem: Religious Buildings

Baroness Deech (Crossbench) [HL5304] To ask His Majesty's Government, further to the Written Answers by Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon on 30 January (HL4764 and 4765), what assessment they have made of the Jewish right to visit, as distinct from worship at, the Temple Mount (Haram al-Sharif); and the significance of this right for the peace process.

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: The UK believes in the importance of upholding the 'Status Quo' arrangements, which enable all three Abrahamic faiths to worship in the Old City of Jerusalem. In the view of the UK, the Status Quo is clear that those of other faiths are able to visit the Haram al-Sharif/Temple Mount, but that only Muslims are permitted to worship there. A final determination of the status of Jerusalem should be sought as part of a negotiated settlement between Israelis and Palestinians. Until then, the Status Quo preserves the safety and security of the holy sites and those who visit and worship there.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2023-02-01/hl5304>

The answers referred to above can be read at

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2023-01-16/hl4764>

and

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

Israel: Palestinians

Baroness Janke (Liberal Democrat) [HL5314] To ask His Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the effects of the Israeli blockade of Gaza on people living there; and in particular, what assessment they have made whether the treatment needs for cancer patients in Gaza are being met.

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. The wounded and ill in Gaza and the West Bank should be able to access the urgent medical care they need. 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.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2023-02-01/hl5314>

West Bank: Palestinians

Baroness Janke (Liberal Democrat) [HL5315] To ask His Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the expulsion of Palestinian residents from the Masafer Yatta area of the West Bank; and what discussions they have had with the government of Israel about protecting the rights of those individuals, including the 500 children already expelled.

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: 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 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. I 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/2023-02-01/hl5315>

Israel: Palestinians

Baroness Janke (Liberal Democrat) [HL5316] To ask His Majesty's Government, further to the formation of a new government in Israel, what assessment they have made of the prospects for the human rights of (1) Palestinians living in Israel, (2) Palestinians living in the Occupied Territories including East Jerusalem, and (3) the Palestinian diaspora.

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: Human Rights are a crucial element underpinning the UK's foreign policy. The UK continues to engage with the Israeli government on human rights issues where they exist. We 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 UK remains committed to a two-state solution, as I made clear in my meetings with Israeli Foreign Minister Eli Cohen, Palestinian Prime Minister Mohammed Shtayyeh and Palestinian Foreign Minister Riad Malki, during my visit to Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territories on 10-13 January.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2023-02-01/hl5316>

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Foreign Affairs

House of Commons Written Answers

Jordan and Saudi Arabia: Religious Freedom

Baroness Deech (Crossbench) [HL5301] To ask His Majesty's Government what discussions they have had with the governments of (1) Jordan, and (2) Saudi Arabia, on the admission and freedom of worship of Jews in those countries.

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: We have not raised the freedom of worship of Jews as a standalone issue in either Saudi Arabia or Jordan. However the UK discusses Freedom of Religion or Belief (FoRB) and wider human rights on a regular basis with the Saudi and Jordanian authorities. Promoting the right to FoRB is a longstanding human rights priority for the UK and we will continue to engage with governments, civil societies and human rights groups to ensure that people of all faiths, including Jews, are able to practice their religion without persecution or fear.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2023-02-01/hl5301>

Iraq: Jews

Baroness Deech (Crossbench) [HL5302] To ask His Majesty's Government what discussions they have had with the government of Iraq on compensation for property deprived of the Iraqi Jewish community in the 1940s and 1950s.

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: The UK has not specifically discussed compensation for property deprived of the Iraqi Jewish community in the 1940s and 1950s with the Government of Iraq. However, the UK is firmly committed to protecting ethnic and religious minorities in Iraq, including the Jewish community. We regularly discuss the importance of the rights of minority communities with the government of Iraq and Kurdistan Regional Government and we will continue to press these issues.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2023-02-01/hl5302>

Iraq: Cultural Heritage

Baroness Deech (Crossbench) [HL5303] To ask His Majesty's Government what discussions they have had with the government of Iraq on the preservation of Jewish heritage sites in that country.

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: The UK is firmly committed to protecting ethnic and religious minorities in Iraq, including the Jewish community. We regularly discuss the importance of the rights of minority communities with the government of Iraq and Kurdistan Regional government. We recognise the importance of protecting and preserving religious heritage sites for groups and through British Council and HMG funding we have delivered eight cultural heritage projects in Iraq. We will continue to highlight the importance of the preservation of heritage sites with the government of Iraq and Kurdistan Regional Government.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2023-02-01/hl5303>

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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>

Notice of amendments

<https://bills.parliament.uk/publications/49846/documents/2951>

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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