



# Political Affairs Digest

A daily summary of political events affecting the Jewish Community

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## Home Affairs

### UK Parliament Ministerial Statement

#### **Commencement of the Marriage and Civil Partnership (Minimum Age) Act 2022**

#### **The Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Justice (Lord Bellamy) [HLWS572]**

Today the Marriage and Civil Partnership (Minimum Age) Act 2022 comes into force.

The Act makes two key changes:

1. It raises the legal age of marriage and civil partnership to 18 in England and Wales. This means that 16-17-year-olds are no longer able to marry or enter a civil partnership under any circumstances, including with parental or judicial consent.
2. It expands the criminal offence of forced marriage in England and Wales to make it an offence in all circumstances to do anything intended to cause a child to marry before they turn 18. For the forced marriage offence to apply, it is no longer necessary to prove that a form of coercion was used to bring about the marriage of a child. The expanded offence will continue to include ceremonies of marriage which are not legally binding, for example in community or traditional settings.

This important piece of legislation helps deliver on the Government's commitment to tackle violence against women and girls. It also delivers on our pledge in the UN sustainable development goals to end child marriage by 2030. This Government is keen to make sure that children and young people are protected and supported as they grow and develop. Child marriage can deprive them of important life chances, and that is why we have taken action to stop it. The age of 18 is widely recognised as the age at which one becomes an adult and gains full citizenship rights.

These changes apply to England and Wales only. Whilst marriage is a devolved matter, Northern Ireland are considering this issue and we hope that Scotland will also follow suit. I am grateful to Hon. Member for Mid Derbyshire, Pauline Latham OBE MP for sponsoring this Private Member's Bill, as well as to the campaigners with whom she has worked. The Act and all of its supporting documentation is available at [Marriage And Civil Partnership \(Minimum Age\) Act 2022](#).

The Government's statutory guidance and multi-agency practice guidelines on forced marriage have also been updated to reflect this legislation, and are available at [The right to choose: government guidance on forced marriage](#).

## Ministry of Justice

### Legal age of marriage in England and Wales rises to 18

... The Marriage and Civil Partnership (Minimum Age) Act 2022, which gained Royal Assent in April last year, has come into force ... It means that 16 and 17 year olds will no longer be allowed to marry or enter a civil partnership, even if they have parental consent. It is now illegal and a criminal offence to exploit vulnerable children by arranging for them to marry, under any circumstances whether or not force is used. ...

Deputy Prime Minister, Lord Chancellor and Secretary of State for Justice, Dominic Raab MP, said: This law will better protect vulnerable young people, by cracking down on forced marriage in our society.

Those who act to manipulate children into marrying under-age will now rightly face the full force of the law. ...

Pauline Latham MP said: This is a landmark day for the campaigners who have worked relentlessly for over 5 years to ban child marriage in this country.

Child marriage destroys lives and through this legislation we will protect millions of boys and girls over the coming years from this scourge.

Minister for Safeguarding, Sarah Dines MP, said: Forced marriage is an abuse of human rights which denies vulnerable children the freedom to learn, grow and thrive. Like all other forms of abuse, I'm committed to stamping out this exploitative practice.

In addition to this welcome new legislation, we are also continuing to provide training and guidance to equip the police, social workers and other frontline professionals to support and safeguard victims. ...

Previously forced marriage was only an offence if the person uses a type of coercion, for example threats, to cause someone to marry.

It is now an offence to cause a child under the age of 18 to enter a marriage in any circumstances, without the need to prove that a form of coercion was used. This includes non-legally binding 'traditional' ceremonies which would still be viewed as marriages by the parties and their families. ...

The Act does not change the age of marriage in Scotland or Northern Ireland as marriage is a devolved matter. ...

**To read the full press release see**

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/legal-age-of-marriage-in-england-and-wales-rises-to-18>

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## Holocaust

### Scottish Parliament Motion

**Paul O'Kane (Labour) [S6M-08030] Wishing Henry Wuga Best Wishes on His 99th Birthday** – That the Parliament recognises that Holocaust survivor and educator, Henry Wuga, has turned 99 years old; understands that Henry was born in Nuremberg in 1924, but that, due the rise of antisemitism under Nazi rule, he was forced to flee his homeland and come to Scotland on the Kindertransport in 1939, when he was only 15 years old; further understands that, when Mr Wuga arrived in Glasgow, he found it welcoming and made it, in his own words, "home"; celebrates the fact that Henry went on to have a very successful catering business, and was awarded an MBE in 1999 for his important

work with limbless ex-servicemen; further celebrates the fact that Henry was determined to build Holocaust education and awareness in Scotland and across the UK, alongside his late wife, Ingrid Wuga BEM; considers that Henry and Ingrid have made an immense contribution to ensuring that generations of children and young people understand what the Holocaust was and, crucially, never forget that it happened, and wishes Henry a very happy birthday and the strength to continue his selfless work for many more years to come.

<https://www.parliament.scot/chamber-and-committees/votes-and-motions/S6M-08030>

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## Israel

### House of Commons Written Answers

#### **Chad: Israel**

**Matthew Offord (Conservative)** [142666] To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what assessment has the Department made of the potential impact of the establishment of the Chad embassy in Israel.

**David Rutley:** The UK welcomes the establishment of the Chadian embassy in Israel. We continue to encourage cooperation between those countries with whom Israel does not yet have diplomatic relations to recognise the economic, cultural and security benefits of cooperation with Israel.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2023-02-08/142666>

#### **Israel: Sudan**

**Matthew Offord (Conservative)** [142667] To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what assessment his Department has made of the proposed peace treaty between Israel and Sudan.

**David Rutley:** The UK welcomes reports of a proposed peace treaty between Israel and Sudan. The UK is a firm supporter of Israel's normalisation agreements, including the Abraham Accords. We continue to encourage close regional cooperation in order to tackle regional challenges and we encourage those countries with whom Israel does not yet have diplomatic relations to recognise the economic, cultural and security benefits of cooperation with Israel.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2023-02-08/142667>

#### **West Bank: Palestinian Islamic Jihad**

**Nicola Richards (Conservative)** [143916] To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what recent discussions he has had with his Israeli counterpart on the security threat presented by Palestinian Islamic Jihad in the West Bank.

**David Rutley:** We continue to closely monitor the security situation in Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territories (OPTs). The UK has proscribed Palestinian Islamic Jihad (PIJ) as a terrorist entity since March 2001. PIJ and other terrorist groups must cease all actions that are violent or provocative, or that put civilian lives at risk. The UK continues to provide the Palestinian Authority (PA) with professional support in helping develop its security institutions. This provision includes training and other technical assistance to the PA Ministry of Interior and PA security forces, to support the development of capable, responsible security forces that respect human rights and are accountable to the Palestinian people.

The Minister for the Middle East, Lord (Tariq) Ahmad of Wimbledon, reinforced the UK's support for a two-state solution in his meetings with Israeli Foreign Minister Eli Cohen, and with Palestinian Prime Minister Mohammad Shtayyeh and Foreign Minister Riad Malki, during his visit to Israel and the OPTs on 10-13 January.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2023-02-09/143916>

### Israeli Settlements

**Munira Wilson (Liberal Democrat)** [147234] To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether he has had recent discussions with his Israeli counterpart on the legalisation of nine settlement outposts on 12 February 2023.

**David Rutley:** The UK's position on settlements is clear, as set out in a statement made by the Foreign Ministers of France, Germany and Italy, the Foreign Secretary of the UK, and the Secretary of State of the US on 14 February. They are illegal under international law, present an obstacle to peace and threaten the physical viability of a two-state solution. We urge Israel to halt its settlement expansion. The Minister for the Middle East, Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon, set out this message during a call with the Israeli Ambassador to the UK on Thursday 16 February.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2023-02-17/147234>

*The statement referred to above can be read at*

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/joint-statement-on-announcement-of-further-settlements-in-the-occupied-palestinian-territories>

## Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office

**Lord (Tariq)Ahmad of Wimbledon** Shocked by scenes of settler violence against Palestinians this evening in #Huwara in the OPTs. This deadly cycle of violence must end - it achieves nothing but the continuing and tragic loss of lives with Israelis & Palestinians living in fear. #PeaceSalaamShalom must prevail

<https://twitter.com/tariqahmadbt/status/1629968228008034305>

**Lord (Tariq)Ahmad of Wimbledon** I am deeply saddened to hear of another terrorist attack which has killed two Israelis today. The UK condemns all forms of terror. The family of the victims is in my thoughts and prayers.

<https://twitter.com/tariqahmadbt/status/1629890761746423810>

## United Nations

### Statement by UN Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process, Tor Wennesland, on the situation in the occupied West Bank

I am gravely concerned by the deteriorating security situation in the occupied West Bank, particularly the violence we have witnessed in the past 24 hours in Huwwara, near Nablus. My condolences to the family of the two Israeli brothers killed in a shooting attack yesterday by a Palestinian perpetrator and to the family of the Palestinian killed during a rampage by vigilante settlers in retaliatory attacks, which resulted also in many Palestinians injured and homes in Huwwara set ablaze. Security forces have the responsibility to maintain security and prevent individuals from taking the law into their own hands. There can be no justification for terrorism, nor for arson and acts of revenge against civilians. All perpetrators of violence must be held accountable. Violence, provocations, and incitement must stop immediately and be unequivocally condemned by all. I am encouraged by the commitments reaffirmed by the parties in the final Communique of the

Aqaba meeting, including on efforts to de-escalate the situation on the ground. I urge both sides to make all efforts to address the core issues driving the conflict in line with UN resolutions, international law and previous agreements, including the principles of Oslo. The United Nations remains committed to supporting Palestinians and Israelis to achieve a just and lasting peace. There are no shortcuts to peace.

[https://unsco.unmissions.org/sites/default/files/statement\\_by\\_un\\_special\\_coordinator\\_wennesland\\_on\\_the\\_situation\\_in\\_the\\_occupied\\_west\\_bank\\_-\\_27\\_february\\_2023.pdf](https://unsco.unmissions.org/sites/default/files/statement_by_un_special_coordinator_wennesland_on_the_situation_in_the_occupied_west_bank_-_27_february_2023.pdf)

*The communique referred to above can be read at*  
<https://www.state.gov/aqaba-joint-communique/>

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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>

#### **Holocaust Memorial Bill**

<https://bills.parliament.uk/bills/3421>

#### **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/49991/documents/3029>

#### **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

**\*\* closes tomorrow**

**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