



Political Affairs Digest

A daily summary of political events affecting the Jewish Community

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House of Lords Written Answers

The following two questions both received the same answer

Marriage

Lord Kilclooney (Crossbench) [HL6000] To ask His Majesty's Government how many marriages took place in England for the most recent year for which figures are available; and how many of those were secular.

Marriage: Churches

Lord Kilclooney (Crossbench) [HL6001] To ask His Majesty's Government, what percentage of religious marriages in England were solemnised in (1) Anglican churches, (2) Reformed Evangelical churches, and (3) Roman Catholic churches, in the most recent year for which figures are available.

Baroness Neville-Rolfe: The information requested falls under the remit of the UK Statistics Authority. ...

The Office for National Statistics (ONS) publishes 'Marriages data for England and Wales'^[1] with the most recent being for 2019. The total number of marriages in England in 2019 (including both civil and religious marriages) was 208,151^[2]. Of these, the total number of civil marriages in England was 170,634.^[3,4]

The total number of religious marriages in England in 2019 was 37,517. 72.5 per cent of these were Church of England. Marriages in Reformed Evangelical churches are included in 'Other Christian denominations' which accounted for 11.4 per cent of religious marriages^[5]. 10.4 per cent of religious marriages in England in 2019 were Roman Catholic. ...

[1] <https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/birthsdeathsandmarriages/marriagecohabitationandcivilpartnerships/bulletins/marriagesinenglandandwalesprovisional/2019>

[2] Figures include marriages to both same-sex and opposite-sex couples.

[3] Civil marriages are those which are carried out at either a register office or approved premises by or in the presence of a registrar, and do not include any religious content.

[4] Marriage statistics by manner of solemnisation (either civil or religious) can be misleading as some religious marriages (such as Muslim and Sikh) can take place at

unregistered premises. To be registered as a legal marriage the couple have a further marriage ceremony in a register office or approved building. Such weddings are coded as civil marriages because only the civil marriage certificate is received.

^[5] 'Evangelical Reformed churches' are included in 'Other Christian denominations' which also include Methodist, Calvinistic Methodist, United Reformed Church, Congregationalist, Baptist, Presbyterian, Society of Friends (Quakers), Salvation Army, Brethren, Mormon, Unitarian and Jehovah's Witnesses'.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2023-02-28/hl6000>

and

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2023-02-28/hl6001>

Home Office

Home Secretary ramps up security measures to protect Jewish communities

Synagogues and faith schools will be given £15 million for protective security measures in 2023 to 2024 as part of the Jewish Community Protective Security grant, a £1 million increase on last year. This will fund increased protective security, including security guards and other security measures such as CCTV and alarm systems to protect against persistent hate crime, anti-social behaviour, terrorism and state threats.

In addition, senior policing leaders, ministers, the Community Security Trust (CST), and other stakeholders will form a new Jewish Community Police, Crime and Security Taskforce. The taskforce will strengthen accountability and enhance efforts to combat antisemitic crime and violence against Jewish communities. It will provide a regular forum to discuss with operational partners, communal security concerns relating to policing, terrorism, state threats, hate crime, and public order matters. Chaired by the Home Secretary, it will meet for the first time in late spring, and 3 times a year thereafter.

The first meeting is likely to consider whether it is necessary to review operational policing guidance in light of concerns shared by the Jewish community. This could include guidance on specific chants, banners and emblems which are antisemitic, and ensuring that the police and Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) are using their powers to arrest and charge criminals who pose a threat to the Jewish community.

The measures follow the latest Home Office hate crime statistics which show that despite making up less than 1% of the population, almost a quarter of recorded religiously-motivated hate crimes in the UK were against Jewish people in 2021 to 2022.

The Home Secretary announced new measures in a speech at the Community Security Trust's annual dinner on 29 March.

Home Secretary Suella Braverman said: Antisemitism is one of the great evils in the world. It is vital that all people, but especially political leaders, challenge antisemitism whenever and wherever they encounter it.

Attacks on the Jewish community are abhorrent. I applaud the police's efforts to tackle these crimes, but we must go further to ensure the vile criminals who threaten the peace and safety of Jewish communities feel the full force of the law.

I am proud to be working closely with the Community Security Trust and colleagues in policing and beyond to help protect the UK's Jewish community, go after antisemitic offenders, and stamp out racism in all its forms.

Minister for Security, Tom Tugendhat said: Antisemitism is abhorrent and I stand hand in hand with the Jewish community against all its manifestations.

We must continue to strive to ensure that every community can live and worship in safety, free from threat.

CST Chief Executive Mark Gardner MBE said: This announcement by the Home Secretary is hugely welcome, given the continuing threats of terrorism and antisemitism that are faced by British Jews. CST will continue to do everything we can in partnership with the

Home Office so as to ensure the best possible security for Jewish schools, synagogues and communities throughout the country.

National Police Chiefs' Council (NPCC) Lead for Hate Crime, Deputy Chief Constable Mark Hamilton, said: It is vital that all citizens are able to live their lives free from targeted abuse, and the NPCC supports this funding to help reduce antisemitic hostility suffered by Jewish people in the UK.

The right to live free from targeted abuse is a fundamental right that we all share and we will continue to work to bring offenders to justice. I would encourage anyone who suffers such a crime to report it, either to the police or to the CST. In an emergency, always call 999.

The Home Secretary has also pledged to write to all Home Office public bodies and every chief constable and police and crime commissioner, as well as the National Police Chiefs' Council, the College of Policing and the Crown Prosecution Service, to reaffirm the government's support for the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance's (IHRA) definition of antisemitism, and encourage its further adoption.

The new funding will bring the total amount allocated through the Jewish Community Protective Security Grant to £122 million since 2015.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/home-secretary-ramps-up-security-measures-to-protect-jewish-communities>

Welsh Senedd Oral Answers

Race-hate Messaging

Jenny Rathbone (Labour) [OQ59356] What discussions has the Counsel General had with other law officers about any legal mechanisms available to the Welsh Government to prevent the promotion of race-hate messaging?

Mick Antoniw (Counsel General and Minister for the Constitution): ...The Welsh Government is committed to ending racism, as demonstrated through our anti-racist Wales action plan, which aims to build an anti-racist Wales by 2030. Racism and all forms of hate and bigotry have no place in Wales.

Jenny Rathbone: The police in the Vale of Glamorgan have recently had to deal with a small group of people descending on the area in the hope of persuading local residents that accommodating refugees in their community is in some way a risk to their well-being. It hasn't worked; on the contrary, the people in Llantwit Major, at all levels of the community, have loudly proclaimed that they support Wales as a nation of sanctuary. But disinformation is the stock-in-trade of the far-right groupuscule involved in persuading other people to come into Wales and protest about anything to do with refugees. They've had serious form up in the north of England in disinformation to ordinary people who had thought that in some way this was going to impact on them. So, what can the Welsh Government do to ensure that the law against race hate is being upheld?

Mick Antoniw: Firstly, can I recognise the tremendous support that was given by the local community, in the events that you refer to in the Vale of Glamorgan, in standing up to those far-right individuals—those racists that attended? I'm particularly impressed by the position that was taken by the local football club, which have a number of refugees who actually play for them. I think it really does such credit to a community when it comes together to stand by standards and by rights.

What I would say, of course, is that there is a lot of misinformation and there is a lot of rather unpleasant messaging that takes place on social media. Of course, race hate is a criminal offence, as is incitement to racial hatred, and I think where such messages appear that may contribute to provoking those sorts of incidents or provoking racial hatred, then such incidents should be reported to the police or to

the relevant authorities.

I have to say that some of the comments and some of the messaging that has been coming out from the UK Government recently, playing what I would call the 'race card' for political advantage, has not been helpful in this situation and has contributed, I think, to that misinformation and to that growth of those far-right groups.

<https://record.senedd.wales/Plenary/13268#C496150>

Anti-racist Wales Action Plan

Jayne Bryant (Labour) [OQ59359] Will the Minister provide an update on the progress of the Anti-racist Wales Action Plan?

Jane Hutt (Minister for Social Justice): ... Since we published our anti-racist Wales action plan we have established our governance structure and the external accountability group are now in place to review and monitor implementation and reporting of the plan. I am hosting a summit in May to review progress and next steps on implementing the plan. ...

<https://record.senedd.wales/Plenary/13268#C496160>

Northern Ireland Executive

Northern Ireland Racial Equality Indicators Report: 2014 - 2021

The Executive Office today published 'Northern Ireland Racial Equality Indicators Report: 2014 - 2021'. The report presents data measuring the progress of the Racial Equality Strategy 2015 – 2025 on four key outcome areas: equality of service provision; combating prejudice, racism and hate crime; participation, representation, and belonging; and, respecting cultural diversity. ...

In 2021 the proportion of respondents reporting they were prejudiced against people from minority ethnic communities had increased significantly since the baseline. (2014: 24%; 2021: 30%).

In 2022 a significantly higher proportion of respondents reported they had witnessed racist bullying or harassment in their school than in the baseline year (2014: 39%; 2022: 54%). ...

Since baseline there was a significant increase in the percentage of respondents who agreed that the culture and traditions of the minority ethnic community added to the richness and diversity of Northern Ireland (2014: 59%; 2021: 66%).

In 2021, the percentage of people with friends from minority ethnic communities (57%) was significantly higher than the baseline position (2014: 42%). ...

To read the full press release see

<https://www.executiveoffice-ni.gov.uk/news/northern-ireland-racial-equality-indicators-report-2014-2021#skip-link>

Racial Equality Indicators Report: 2014 - 2021

<https://www.executiveoffice-ni.gov.uk/publications/racial-equality-indicators-report-2014-2021>

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Israel

House of Commons Written Answers

Israel: Foreign Relations

Alistair Carmichael (Liberal Democrat) [172996] To ask the Secretary of State for

Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, to what territory the 2030 roadmap for UK-Israel bilateral relations, signed on 21 March, applies.

David Rutley: The 2030 Roadmap for UK-Israel Bilateral relations was signed on 21 March between the British Government and the Government of Israel. It is a living document reflecting the elevation, in November 2021 of our bilateral relationship to a strategic partnership. The Roadmap does not apply to the Occupied Palestinian Territories.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2023-03-24/172996>

The Roadmap referred to above can be read at

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/2030-roadmap-for-uk-israel-bilateral-relations/2030-roadmap-for-uk-israel-bilateral-relations>

The following seven questions all received the same answer

Trade Agreements: Israel

Marsha De Cordova (Labour) [148790] To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, whether her Department has made an assessment of whether (a) Israeli settlements and (b) other Occupied Palestinian Territories could be excluded from the territorial application of the UK-Israel Free Trade Agreement.

Marsha De Cordova (Labour) [148791] To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, whether she plans to exclude (a) Israeli settlements and (b) other Occupied Palestinian Territories from the territorial application of the UK-Israel Free Trade Agreement.

Marsha De Cordova (Labour) [148792] To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, what steps her Department is taking to ensure that the UK-Israel Free Trade Agreement will (a) be compatible with the UK's international obligations and (b) not apply to Israeli settlements in the Occupied Palestinian Territories.

Marsha De Cordova (Labour) [148858] To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, if her Department will make an assessment of the feasibility of excluding (a) Israeli settlements and (b) other Occupied Palestinian Territories from the territorial application of a new UK-Israel Free Trade Agreement.

Marsha De Cordova (Labour) [170718] To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, whether she has made an assessment of the potential impact of the inclusion of a clause in the proposed free trade agreement between the UK and Israel permitting Israel to unilaterally apply that agreement to the Occupied Palestinian Territories on securing an Israeli-Palestinian peace settlement.

Marsha De Cordova (Labour) [170719] To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, whether the territorial provisions of the UK-Israel Free Trade Agreement entitle Israel to apply that agreement to the Occupied Territories.

Imports: Israel

Ben Lake (Plaid Cymru) [160361] To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, with reference to the next round of negotiations on the UK-Israel Free Trade Agreement, what steps she plans to take to help ensure that goods imported from illegal settlements will not be entitled to the benefits of trade preferences.

Nigel Huddleston: The UK's position on settlements is clear. The UK does not recognise the Occupied Palestinian Territories (OPTs) as part of Israel.

This has been long established policy since 1967 and was reconfirmed recently at the UN security council.

Under the existing UK-Israel trade agreement, goods originating from Israeli settlements in the West Bank, are not entitled to tariff and trade preferences under either the agreement between the UK and Israel, or the agreement between the UK and the Palestinian Authority.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2023-02-20/148790>

and

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2023-02-20/148791>
and
<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2023-02-20/148792>
and
<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2023-02-20/148858>
and
<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2023-03-21/170718>
and
<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2023-03-21/170719>
and
<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2023-03-07/160361>
Information about the proposed Agreement referred to above can be read at
https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1091812/uk-israel-free-trade-agreement-the-uk-strategic-approach.pdf

UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights

Human Rights Council Concludes General Debate on the Human Rights Situation in Palestine and Other Occupied Arab Territories, and Begins General Debate on the Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action

... Many speakers ... expressed grave concern at the continuing Israeli settlements and related activities, including the expansion of settlements, the expropriation of land, the demolition of houses, and the confiscation and destruction of property, which changed the physical character and demographic composition of the occupied Palestinian territories and the occupied Syrian Golan. Many speakers underlined that there was a high level of support for the need to maintain agenda item seven as part of the Council's mandate, which served as a constant reminder of the long overdue fulfilment of the rights of the Palestinian people.

The report clearly showed that the expansion of settlements in the West Bank and East Jerusalem was causing discrimination and systematic violations of the human rights of Palestinians. ... They jeopardised the viability of the two-State solution and contributed to fuelling the cycle of violence. Settler violence had reached the highest level ever recorded by the United Nations in 2022 and the report showed that most of this violence was directly linked to the expansion of settlement outposts. ...

It was noted that more than 90 Palestinian civilians had been killed since the beginning of 2023; home demolitions and evictions of families in occupied Jerusalem had increased, in addition to raids on the Al-Aqsa Mosque; and the unjust siege of the Gaza Strip, which had been ongoing for 16 years, continued. ... One speaker maintained that the continued systematic oppression of Palestinians through racist and discriminatory policies, denial of basic civil rights, imposition of harsh conditions, large-scale land confiscation, and inhumane acts committed by the occupying power, amounted to apartheid. ...

Many speakers reiterated their unwavering support for the Palestinian people, for their self-determination, freedom, and independence, while condemning the flagrant and systematic violations of human rights and of international humanitarian law committed by Israel. ... Speakers also reaffirmed support and solidarity with the Syrian just demand and right to restore its full sovereignty over the occupied Syrian Golan.

Some speakers conveyed concern about the ineffectiveness of agenda item seven, which had a disproportionate, inequitable, and biased designation of one State and generated a significant cost upon the Council. It was the only agenda item in which one country was singled out for condemnation and was a symbol of the unfair and biased treatment of the State of Israel entrenched in the United Nations system. One speaker noted that the mandates of the Special Rapporteur and the permanent Commission of Inquiry were both

highly problematic, as they were conceived to investigate the actions of only one side, Israel, turning a blind eye to all the numerous failings of the other side, the Palestinians. The Council was called on to eliminate agenda item seven promptly and uphold its mandate for the promotion and protection of human rights for all, without favouritism, politicisation and double standards. The use of the death penalty within Palestine was cited as a concern; the State of Palestine was urged to cease the trying of civilian crimes in military tribunals and abolish the death penalty.

Many speakers said they wanted a just, comprehensive and lasting solution to the conflict in the Middle East. They fully supported the legitimate rights of the Palestinians for an independent State of Palestine, based on the two-State solution and the pre-1967 borders, with East Jerusalem as its capital. ... Speakers called on the international community to render its full support to Palestine, and endeavour for an advisory opinion from the International Court of Justice on the legal consequences of the Israeli occupation. While generations of Palestinians had had to endure this oppression, it was time to give the younger generation a better future. ...

To read the full press release see

<https://www.ohchr.org/en/news/2023/03/human-rights-council-concludes-general-debate-human-rights-situation-palestine-and>

The reports referred to above can be read at

<https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/documents/hrbodies/hrcouncil/sessions-regular/session52/advance-version/A-HRC-52-76-AdvanceEditedVersion.docx>

and

https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/documents/hrbodies/hrcouncil/sessions-regular/session52/A_HRC_52_77_AdvanceEditedVersion.docx

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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>

Notice of amendments

https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/bills/cbill/58-03/0279/amend/highered_cclm_rm_0330.pdf

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/3243>

Palestine Statehood (Recognition) Bill

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

Private Burial Grounds and Cemeteries Bill

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

Same Sex Marriage (Church of England)

<https://bills.parliament.uk/bills/3438>

Schools Bill

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

Universal Credit (Removal of Two Child Limit) Bill

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

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

Prospective Scheme of Delegation for the Charity Commission for Northern Ireland (closing date 15 May 2023)

<https://www.communities-ni.gov.uk/consultations/consultation-prospective-scheme-delegation-charity-commission-northern-ireland>

Review of the Race Relations (NI) Order 1997 (closing date 18 June 2023)

<https://www.executiveoffice-ni.gov.uk/consultations/consultation-review-race-relations-ni-order-1997>

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