



# Political Affairs Digest

A daily summary of political events affecting the Jewish Community

## Contents

Home Affairs

Israel

Relevant Legislation

Consultations

Back issues

## Home Affairs

### House of Lords Written Answer

#### Religious Buildings

**The Lord Bishop of Bristol** [HL10137] To ask His Majesty's Government whether they have figures on the number of places of worship open in the UK.

**Lord Murray of Blidworth:** The Registrar General for England and Wales has a statutory duty to maintain a list of all places of worship in England and Wales which is available for the public to view on Places of worship registered for marriage.

[Places of worship registered for marriage](#)

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2023-09-13/hl10137>

### Scottish Parliament Written Answer

#### Marriage and Funeral Celebrants

**Kevin Stewart (SNP)** [S6W-20924] To ask the Scottish Government whether it has any plans to allow people who are currently funeral celebrants to officiate at weddings.

**Siobhian Brown:** The current arrangements for religious and belief celebrants, and civil registrars, to solemnise marriage and register civil partnership allow couples to choose from a wide range of options for their ceremony to satisfy both the requirements of the law, and of any religion or belief.

These arrangements were broadened under the Marriage and Civil Partnership (Scotland) Act 2014 (the Act). Couples can now have their marriage solemnised by a celebrant from a belief body as an alternative to having a civil or a religious ceremony. Intended civil partners also have the same options as those who wish to marry.

The Policy Memorandum that accompanied the Marriage and Civil Partnership (Scotland) Bill in the Parliament set out the Government's reasons for rejecting the option of opening the solemnisation of marriage to celebrants with no link to a religious or belief body at paragraph 28.

This remains our position and we have no plans to change the law.

<https://www.parliament.scot/chamber-and-committees/questions-and-answers/question?ref=S6W-20924>

The Marriage and Civil Partnership (Scotland) Act 2014, referred to above, can be read at <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/asp/2014/5/contents/enacted>

The Policy Memorandum referred to above can be read at [https://archive2021.parliament.scot/S4\\_Bills/Marriage%20and%20Civil%20Partnership%20\(Scotland\)%20Bill/b36s4-introd-pm.pdf](https://archive2021.parliament.scot/S4_Bills/Marriage%20and%20Civil%20Partnership%20(Scotland)%20Bill/b36s4-introd-pm.pdf)

TOP

## Israel

### House of Lords Written Answers

#### **Armed Conflict: Bank Services**

**Baroness Bennett of Manor Castle (Green)** [HL10131] To ask His Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the reliance upon, and the success of, "hawala" banking systems in conflict zones such as Afghanistan, Yemen, Sudan and Gaza and the Occupied Palestinian Territories; and what steps they have taken to ensure these systems are protected as vital tools for local humanitarian actors and ordinary citizens to safely and securely transfer funds.

**Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon:** Money Service Businesses (MSBs), including *Hawala*, play an important role in conflict zones such as Afghanistan, Yemen, Sudan, Gaza and the Occupied Palestinian Territories. MSBs are often the only way of transmitting money, including remittances, to remote communities where formal banking services are limited. International standards on MSBs are set by the Financial Action Task Force (FATF) which are implemented in full by the UK. Government guidance sets out clearly that hawala banking in the UK is legal and that many are regulated. In some cases, hawala are the only means of transferring funds into high-risk jurisdictions but the risks associated with their use need to be appropriately managed. Overall, we recognise that hawalas are an important tool for tackling poverty and promoting financial inclusion during conflict and humanitarian crises.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2023-09-13/hl10131>

#### **Palestinians: Development Aid**

**Baroness Deech (Crossbench)** [HL10140] To ask His Majesty's Government what audit reports have been carried out on payments they have made to the Palestinian Recovery and Development Programme.

**Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon:** Following official development assistance (ODA) prioritisation exercises undertaken in March 2021, the UK no longer provides direct financial aid to the Palestinian Authority. All UK support to the Palestinian Authority is provided through technical advice, procured through commercial suppliers. The audits relate to UK funding provided through the World Bank's Palestinian Recovery and Development Programme, which has now closed, to the Palestinian Authority.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2023-09-13/hl10140>

*The following two questions both received the same answer*

#### **Palestinians: Development Aid**

**Baroness Deech (Crossbench)** [HL10141] To ask His Majesty's Government what checks have been carried out by auditors to ensure that their payments to the Palestinian

Authority do not go towards the so called "Martyrs Fund".

**Baroness Deech (Crossbench)** [HL10142] To ask His Majesty's Government what safeguards they have put in place to ensure that no UK funds go directly or indirectly through the Palestinian Authority's so called "Martyrs Fund" to those responsible for murdering Lucy Dee, Maia Dee and Rina Dee in April.

**Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon:** The Government was appalled by the horrific murder of Lucy, Maia, and Rina Dee in a terrorist attack earlier this year. I [Lord (Tariq) Ahmad of Wimbledon] and the Foreign Secretary also passed on their condolences to Rabbi Leo Dee when they met him in person in June. Our thoughts continue to be with Rabbi Dee and his family in the wake of this tragedy. Following Official Development Assistance (ODA) prioritisation exercises undertaken in March 2021, the UK no longer provides direct financial aid to the Palestinian Authority. All UK support to the Palestinian Authority is provided through technical advice, procured through commercial suppliers. No UK aid is used for payments to Palestinian prisoners, or their families or the Martyrs Fund, nor has it ever been. We continue to deliver a clear and long-standing message to the highest levels of the Palestinian Authority that the prisoner payments system should be reformed so that it is needs based, transparent and affordable. Officials maintain a regular dialogue with international partners on this issue.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2023-09-13/hl10141>  
and

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2023-09-13/hl10142>

## Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office

### **The UK calls for a de-escalation of tensions between Israel and Palestine: Statement by Ambassador Barbara Woodward at the UN Security Council meeting on Middle Eastern Peace Process.**

... September 15 marked the third anniversary of the signing of the Abraham Accords. The UK celebrates the success of the accords and we are unabashed in encouraging more countries to normalise their relations with Israel and seize the opportunities it presents. We are also committed to making sure that normalisation delivers concrete benefits for the Palestinian people.

Second, from 11 to 13 September, the British Foreign Secretary visited Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territories.

The Foreign Secretary spoke with Israeli and Palestinian leaders where he called for a de-escalation of tensions, emphasised the importance of holding long-overdue elections in the OPTs, and made crystal clear the UK's commitment to a two-state solution as the only way to a safe and secure Israel living alongside a viable and sovereign Palestinian state. The 30th anniversary of the Oslo Accords is a poignant reminder that we must work together to achieve lasting and sustainable peace in the region. ...

We have previously discussed the funding crisis that UNRWA faces. The UK was proud to announce an additional ten million pounds during the visit to help address the crisis. ...

Separately, I want to highlight a UN OCHA report published last week showing that 1,105 Palestinians were displaced from their communities since 2022. A major and rising concern is the increasing settler violence in the OPTs, largely unchallenged, renders Palestinians at risk of forcible transfer. We call on the Israeli government to tackle this threat.

Tragically, 2023 has already seen at least 193 Palestinians killed by Israeli security forces in the West Bank and 31 Israelis have died at the hands of terrorists. We must end the cycle of violence.

***To read the full transcript see***

<https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/the-uk-calls-for-a-de-escalation-of-tensions-between-israel-and-palestine-uk-statement-at-the-security-council>

*The Abraham Accords, referred to above, can be read at <https://www.state.gov/the-abraham-accords/>*

*The Oslo Accords, referred to above, can be read at <https://www.un.org/unispal/document/auto-insert-180015/>*

*The UN OCHA report referred to above can be read at <https://www.ochaopt.org/content/displacement-palestinian-herders-amid-increasing-settler-violence>*

## United Nations

### **Settlement Expansion in Occupied Palestinian Territory Violates International Law, Must Cease, Many Delegates Tell Security Council**

... **Tor Wennesland, Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process**, reporting on the implementation of Security Council resolution 2334 (2016) for the period from 15 June to 19 September 2023, detailed ongoing settlement activity by Israeli authorities who advanced plans for 6,300 housing units in Area C and approximately 3,580 housing units in East Jerusalem. He reported that on 18 June, the Israeli Government removed the requirement for ministerial approval at interim stages of settlement planning and delegated this authority to the Additional Minister in the Ministry of Defense, likely expediting settlement expansion. Moreover, Israeli authorities, citing the lack of Israeli-issued building permits, which are almost impossible for Palestinians to obtain, demolished, seized or forced people to demolish 238 structures, including 32 donor-funded ones, displacing 183 people, including 46 women and 91 children. Fifty-nine schools, serving some 6,500 Palestinian students, are at risk of demolition, he added.

“In a continuing trend, many Palestinians, including children, left from their communities citing violence by settlers and shrinking grazing land,” he continued, adding that 68 Palestinians, including 18 children, were killed by Israeli security forces during demonstrations, security operations and other incidents. Meanwhile, 10 Israelis, including one woman, two children and three Israeli security forces personnel, were killed, and 122 Israelis, including six women, six children and 33 Israeli security forces personnel, were injured by Palestinians in attacks and other incidents. Israeli security forces’ 1,042 search-and-arrest operations in the West Bank have resulted in 1,504 Palestinians arrested, including 88 children, he added, highlighting that Israel currently holds 1,264 Palestinians in administrative detention — the highest number in over a decade. ...

He went on to say that, unfortunately, acts of provocation and inflammatory rhetoric continued, recalling such statements made by Israeli ministers and a senior Palestinian Authority official. ... On 17 September, the Erez crossing was closed for exits due to Jewish holidays and has remained closed due to the violence near the security fence ... He pointed out that the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) urgently needs \$75 million to maintain food assistance through year-end for 1.2 million Palestinians in Gaza, while the World Food Programme (WFP) requires \$32 million to restore social assistance to priority families across the Occupied Palestinian Territory. ...

**Linda Thomas-Greenfield (United States)** said the ongoing violence between the Israelis and Palestinians sets back prospects for peace and is responsible for “so much needless suffering”. She expressed deep concern over the situation in Israel, the West Bank and Gaza and called on all parties to refrain from actions and rhetoric that further inflame the tensions. She called deeply alarming “the sharp rise in violence by Israeli settlers against Palestinians” and called to hold accountable all perpetrators of violence against civilians

whether Israeli or Palestinian. The United States opposes the advancement of settlements ... emphasizing it undermines “the geographic viability of a two-State solution, exacerbates tensions and further harms trust between the two parties”. ...

**Nicolas De Rivi re (France)** condemned that, 30 years after the Oslo I Accord, Israeli settlement construction in the occupied Palestinian territories is increasing. ... Declaring that France will never recognize those illegal activities and their legalization, he called on Israel to halt them, as they prevent conflict resolution. He went on to denounce acts of terrorism, reiterating France’s commitment to Israel’s security and protection of civilians. The only solution lies in two States living peacefully side by side, both having Jerusalem as their capital. ...

**Barbara Woodward (United Kingdom)**, recalling that 15 September marks the third anniversary of the Abraham Accords, encouraged more countries to normalize their relations with Israel. ... Reporting that 1,105 Palestinians were displaced from their communities since 2022, she pointed out that the increase of settler violence in the occupied territories renders a risk of forced transfer. ... [[click here](#) to read this speech in greater detail]

**Vassily A. Nebenzia (Russian Federation)**, recalling Israel’s increasing steps to create irreversible facts on the ground, said that the ongoing explosive situation is a direct result of aggressive Israeli abuses in the Occupied Palestinian territories, the legalization of settlement outposts and the violation of the status quo of the holy sites of Jerusalem. Referring to Israel’s plans to increase the number of Israelis in the north of the West Bank from 170,000 people to 1 million by 2050, with \$200 million allocated for that, he condemned such breach of the relevant Security Council decisions and international law. “The increase in violence against Palestinian minors and the demolition of educational institutions, including those built with donor funds, are of particular concern,” he said, adding that the United States continues to promote Arab-Israeli normalization, circumventing the logic of the Arab Peace Initiative. ...

**Mohamed Issa Abushahab (United Arab Emirates)** stressed the need for intensified diplomatic efforts at the regional and international level to reduce escalation and build trust in the Occupied Palestinian Territory. He called for restraint and dialogue, emphasizing that direct negotiations between Israel and Palestine are the only way to ensure security and stability for both sides. ... Referring to the Security Council resolution 2686 (2023), he called on the sides to stop extremism and hate speech and urged the international community to fund UNRWA. ... he reaffirmed the commitment by his country to the two-State solution. ...

**To read the full press release see**

<https://press.un.org/en/2023/sc15424.doc.htm>

*The Security Council Resolutions referred to above can be read at*

<https://www.un.org/webcast/pdfs/SRES2334-2016.pdf>

and

<http://unscr.com/en/resolutions/doc/2686>

TOP

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

### **UK Parliament**

#### **Economic Activity of Public Bodies (Overseas Matters) Bill**

<https://bills.parliament.uk/bills/3475>

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

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

## **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>

## **Nakba Commemoration Bill**

<https://bills.parliament.uk/bills/3461>

## **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>

## **Terrorism (Protection of Premises) Draft Bill**

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/terrorism-protection-of-premises-draft-bill-overarching-documents>

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

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

## **Universal Jurisdiction (Extension)**

<https://bills.parliament.uk/bills/3454>

## **Scottish Parliament**

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

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

[TOP](#)



## Consultations

\*\* new or updated today

**\*\* closes in 7 days**

**A Human Rights Bill for Scotland** (closing date 5 October 2023)

<https://consult.gov.scot/equality-and-human-rights/a-human-rights-bill-for-scotland-consultation/>

**The future of population and migration statistics in England and Wales** (closing date 26 October 2023)

<https://consultations.ons.gov.uk/ons/futureofpopulationandmigrationstatistics/>

**Management of burial grounds, application for burial, exhumation, private burial and restoration of lairs: regulation in Scotland** (closing date 17 November 2023)

<https://consult.gov.scot/burial-cremation/regulation-burial-scotland/>

**Statutory inspection of burial authorities, cremation authorities and funeral directors** (closing date 17 November 2023)

<https://consult.gov.scot/burial-cremation/statutory-inspection-burial-authorities/>

**Funeral director licensing scheme for Scotland** (closing date 17 November 2023)

<https://consult.gov.scot/burial-cremation/licensing-funeral-directors-scotland/>

**Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE) [Northern Ireland]** (closing date 24 November 2023)

<https://www.education-ni.gov.uk/consultations/relationships-and-sexuality-education-rse-consultation>

**TOP**

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