



# Political Affairs Digest

A daily summary of political events affecting the Jewish Community

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## Home Affairs

### House of Commons Point of Order

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

**Crispin Blunt (Conservative):** On a point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. I distinctly remember that during last week's Second Reading of the Economic Activity of Public Bodies (Overseas Matters) Bill, when the Communities Secretary was asked in an intervention whether there had been any advice against the Bill from diplomatic posts, he replied that he was not aware—that he knew of no such advice. It has now become clear that a senior official in the Foreign Secretary's own office sent a letter to No. 10 expressing such concerns about the consequences of the Bill. I wonder whether, Madam Deputy Speaker, you have had any notice that the Foreign Secretary intends to correct the record, or whether he will rely on the fact that the Foreign Secretary's office is not a diplomatic post in any formal sense.

**Madam Deputy Speaker (Rosie Winterton):** I thank the hon. Gentleman for his point of order. He did not give me notice of it, so I have not been able to get any other information. There were two parts to his point of order: first, that the Foreign Secretary answered by saying that he was not aware, and then that there had been no such representations. The hon. Gentleman has raised the issue; if any correction is necessary, I am sure it will be made, and I am confident that those on the Government Front Bench will pass back his comments. However, it was a little difficult to work out whether the hon. Gentleman was saying that there was no awareness, or that there had been no representations.

**William Wragg (Conservative):** Further to that point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. I think my hon. Friend the Member for Reigate (Crispin Blunt) hon. Friend misspoke; it was the Communities Secretary.

**Madam Deputy Speaker:** I am sorry—that is probably my fault. At first we had the Communities Secretary, then we had the Foreign Secretary. Whoever it is, I am sure they will be on this immediately, unless Mr Blunt wants to be more specific.

**Crispin Blunt:** Further to that point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. The Communities Secretary gave the assurance to the House that he was unaware of any such advice in the context of diplomatic posts. It appears that that advice did exist, and that it came from the Foreign Secretary's own office.

**Madam Deputy Speaker:** I am sure that between those points of order, we can sort out the various channels that need to be fed back to. The hon. Gentleman has raised the issue, and I am sure it will be taken back.

<https://hansard.parliament.uk/commons/2023-07-11/debates/DF6E2074-61DB-40E0-BCDC-769D75A833C1/PointsOfOrder#contribution-E3FA5E14-BBF8-4B91-8D41-6AFD1094765E>

## House of Commons Library

**Letter from Michael Gove MP to Alicia Kearns MP and others regarding clarification to a response made during the Second reading debate on the Economic Activity of Public Bodies (Overseas Matters) Bill about the advice from diplomatic posts relating to commitments under UN Security Resolutions**

... During my speech, you asked a specific question relating to advice from diplomatic posts relating to our commitments under UN Security Resolutions, and I wished to clarify the response I gave you in the Chamber.

The UK believes very strongly in the importance of complying with international obligations under the UN charter and legal compliance with Security Council resolutions. The final legal advice my officials have received from FCDO is that the Bill is compliant with international law and our obligations under UN Security Council Resolution 2334. I am sure you will agree that addresses the substance of your question.

Of course, there were deliberations and views expressed to inform such matters, as there is in the preparation of all legislation. Such deliberations are rightly for the consideration of the Government only, and are strictly privileged and confidential. As section 2.3 of the Ministerial Code makes clear, the internal process through which a decision has been made should not be disclosed, neither should advice provided by civil servants as part of that internal process be disclosed. In line with the longstanding principle of collective agreement, the Government's position was agreed by the FCDO, as indeed it was by all government departments. ...

[https://data.parliament.uk/DepositedPapers/Files/DEP2023-0538/Letter to Alicia Kearns MP.pdf](https://data.parliament.uk/DepositedPapers/Files/DEP2023-0538/Letter_to_Alicia_Kearns_MP.pdf)

*The question and response referred to above can be read at*

[https://hansard.parliament.uk/commons/2023-07-03/debates/CF82F174-BC12-452A-B9B0-F67B7940CCCC/EconomicActivityOfPublicBodies\(OverseasMatters\)Bill#contribution-D514D915-258B-4758-829F-0D1A437518FA](https://hansard.parliament.uk/commons/2023-07-03/debates/CF82F174-BC12-452A-B9B0-F67B7940CCCC/EconomicActivityOfPublicBodies(OverseasMatters)Bill#contribution-D514D915-258B-4758-829F-0D1A437518FA)

## HM Prison and Probation Service

**Updated Guidance: Faith and Pastoral Care for Prisoners**

[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/1169681/faith-pastoral-care-prisoners-psi-05-2016-july-2023.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1169681/faith-pastoral-care-prisoners-psi-05-2016-july-2023.pdf)

## Office of the Chief Rabbi

**Chief Rabbi Sir Ephraim Mirvis** Today, His Majesty The King invested the Chief Rabbi as a Knight Commander of the Order of the British Empire, at a moving ceremony held at Windsor Castle. *[photo]*

<https://twitter.com/chief Rabbi/status/1678789766945406977>

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## Israel

**See also the *Point of Order*, and the letter from Michael Gove that are included in the *Home Affairs* section above.**

### House of Commons Written Answers

#### **Israel: Palestinians**

**Cat Smith (Labour)** [192111] To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what assessment he has made of the implications for his policies of the adequacy of the treatment of Palestinian children detained by the Israeli military.

**David Rutley:** 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, including the treatment of Palestinian children. We continue to monitor Israel's extensive use of administrative detention which, according to international law, should be used only when security makes this absolutely necessary rather than as routine practice and as a preventive rather than a punitive measure. We remain committed to working with the Israeli Government to secure improvements to the practices surrounding children in detention and continue to raise this with the Israeli Ministry of Justice through our embassy in Tel Aviv. The Minister of State for the Middle East, Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon, also frequently meets with charities and NGOs regarding issues relating to the occupation. He most recently discussed child detention in a meeting with representatives of Save The Children, Oxfam GB, Medical Aid for Palestinians, and Christian Aid on 4 July.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2023-07-03/192111>

#### **Palestinians: Health Services**

**Nadia Whittome (Labour)** [192734] To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps his Department is taking to help support Palestinian health workers in the West Bank, in the context of recent violence.

**David Rutley:** We strongly condemn all forms of violence and incitement to violence. Israel must abide by its obligations under international humanitarian law, including the principles of proportionality, distinction and necessity. The British Embassy in Tel Aviv regularly raises the importance of regularised access to healthcare with the Israeli authorities. Israel, as the occupying power, has a duty to ensure and maintain public health to the fullest extent possible. During his call on 4 July with the Israeli chargé d'affaires in London, the Minister of State for the Middle East, Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon, urged Israel to safeguard access to healthcare and take proactive steps to guarantee the safety of civilians during Israeli operations in the West Bank. The Foreign Secretary also emphasised the importance of the proactive protection of civilians during his call with Israeli Foreign Minister Eli Cohen on 5 July. The wounded and ill in Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territories should be able to access the urgent medical care they need.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2023-07-05/192734>

### House of Lords Library

**Letter from Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon to Lord Polak regarding correction to an answer given during an urgent question repeat on violence in the West Bank**

... I am writing to follow-up on the question you raised during the urgent question repeat yesterday on violence in the West Bank. In my answer to your question, I misspoke by criticising Israel for its destabilising influence in the region. This was clearly an error and

the country I meant to refer to was Iran. ...

[https://data.parliament.uk/DepositedPapers/Files/DEP2023-0564/Lord Ahmad to Lord Polak.pdf](https://data.parliament.uk/DepositedPapers/Files/DEP2023-0564/Lord_Ahmad_to_Lord_Polak.pdf)

*The answer referred to above can be read at*

<https://hansard.parliament.uk/lords/2023-07-06/debates/054A0BF6-2DCB-4FBD-B35D-136751271883/ViolenceInTheWestBank#contribution-3A2158D8-427C-40DC-A892-B2F509E7C380>

## Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office

### Updated Travel Advice: Israel

<https://www.gov.uk/foreign-travel-advice/israel>

### Updated Travel Advice: The Occupied Palestinian Territories

<https://www.gov.uk/foreign-travel-advice/the-occupied-palestinian-territories>

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## Other Relevant Information

### UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights

#### **High Commissioner for Human Rights Tells Urgent Debate of the Human Rights Council that Speech and Inflammatory Acts against Muslims and Others Are Offensive, Irresponsible and Wrong**

... **Volker Türk, United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights**, said that beyond words, human beings communicated through symbols. Religious symbols went so much deeper. A crescent, a star, a cross, a seated figure: for some, these might mean little, but for millions of people they had deep significance and were the essence of their identity and core beliefs. The abuse or destruction of the manifestations of innermost beliefs could polarise societies and aggravate tensions. ...

The vandalism of religious sites and destructions of icons, texts that were sacred to their believers, and religious items, had been used to insult and provoke people for centuries. The High Commissioner said that it was clear to him that speech and inflammatory acts against Muslims; Islamophobia; anti-Semitism; and actions and speech that targeted Christians – or minority groups such as Ahmadis, Bahá'ís or Yazidis – were manifestations of utter disrespect. They were offensive, irresponsible and wrong. ...

International law was clear on these kinds of incitement. Article 20 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights stated: States parties must, without exception, prohibit “any advocacy of national, racial or religious hatred that constitutes incitement to discrimination, hostility or violence”. ...

Advocacy of hatred that constituted incitement to violence, discrimination and hostility should be prohibited in every State. Other forms of expression could amount to hate speech, if they used pejorative or bigoted language towards a person or group on the basis of their sex, belief, race, migration status, sexual orientation or any other factor inherent to their person or identity, seeking to diminish their dignity and demean their value in the eyes of others. ...

Many societies were struggling with the weaponisation of religious differences for political purposes. ... Societies ... whatever their religious and cultural backgrounds – must strive to become magnets of respect, dialogue and cooperation among different peoples ...

**Nazila Ghanea, Special Rapporteur on freedom of religion or belief** ... said religions, beliefs or their followers should not be instrumentalised to incite hatred and violence, including for electoral purposes or political gains. ... Acts which manifested intolerance and were intentionally aimed at stirring up hatred, such as some recent instances of the public burning of the holy Quran or desecration of places of worship, were objectionable and risked drawing societies backwards, reversing positive educational and social investments towards understanding and diversity. They raised concern regarding tolerance, civility, and respect for the rights of others. ...

... many speakers said the values of tolerance and dialogue must be reaffirmed, and hatred rejected. Burning copies of the Holy Quran could not be justified, as they were incitements to discrimination and hatred, running counter to international efforts, and undermining the respect between peoples and countries. ...

Some speakers said the United Nations General Assembly had spoken with one voice in condemnation of Islamophobia. Unfortunately, the deliberate desecration of the Holy Quran had continued under government sanction and with the sense of impunity. Increasingly, these acts were designed to maximise provocation. This was incitement to religious hatred and discrimination, and attempted to provoke violence. ...

At a time when the whole world was facing great challenges, the Council had to select standards. Anti-Semitism was an issue that it was required to address. ...

No sacred book should ever be disrespected ... and such acts were a contemporary form of racism, requiring meaningful prevention. ... Silence was no longer tenable. ...

Some speakers said that hate speech that could initially seem harmless could lead to tragedies. Religious hatred fortified discrimination and stigma: if left unchecked, it could harm peace and development, laying the ground for tensions and widespread human rights violations. ...

The fight against radicalisation, extremism, obscurantism and violence must in no way be selective: these demonstrations must be unequivocally condemned. ... States must take clear and urgent action to ensure that such acts were not repeated, and all statements that expressed dismay at these acts were welcomed. ...

One speaker pointed out that human rights protected individuals, not religions or religious systems. It was not up to the United Nations to determine what was holy or not, it was up to individuals to determine their beliefs, and to live up to them up to the limits of the law - this was a requirement for living in tolerant societies. Exercising freedom of expression required self-discipline, not incitement to war, hatred, or distinction. Hatred bred hatred, and violence bred violence - they should not have a place in the global village. ...

Some speakers said that the “desecration” of religious books and symbols in and of itself was not an act of incitement. Context was vital when assessing whether a particular expression reached the prohibited threshold under article 20 of the International Convention on Civil and Political Rights and ignoring that with blanket bans like anti-blasphemy or religious defamation laws paved the way for mass censorship and the silencing of legitimate expression and dissent. ...

**To read the full press release see**

<https://www.ohchr.org/en/news/2023/07/high-commissioner-human-rights-tells-urgent-debate-human-rights-council-speech-and>

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

### **UK Parliament**

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

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

Point of Order

<https://hansard.parliament.uk/commons/2023-07-11/debates/DF6E2074-61DB-40E0-BCDC-769D75A833C1/PointsOfOrder#contribution-E3FA5E14-BBF8-4B91-8D41-6AFD1094765E>

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#### **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

### 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 in 8 days**

**Charities tax compliance** (closing date 20 July 2023)

<https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/charities-tax-compliance/consultation-charities-tax-compliance>

**Economic Activity of Public Bodies (Overseas Matters) Bill** (closing date not specified – no later than 14 September 2023 but may be earlier)

<https://www.parliament.uk/business/news/2023/july-2023/economic-activity-of-public-bodies-overseas-matters-bill-call-for-evidence/>

**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/>

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