



# Political Affairs Digest

A daily summary of political events affecting the Jewish Community

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## Israel

### UK Parliament Early Day Motion

**Richard Burgon (Labour) [1685] Protecting civilians in Gaza and Israel** – This House utterly condemns the massacre of Israeli civilians and taking of hostages by Hamas; agrees with the United Nations Secretary-General that these horrific acts do not justify responding with the collective punishment of the Palestinian people; expresses its deep alarm at the Israeli military bombardment and total siege of Gaza and the resulting deaths and suffering; believes that the urgent priority must be to stop the deaths and suffering of any more civilians in Gaza and Israel; welcomes the joint statement from 12 leading aid agencies, including Oxfam, Christian Aid, CAFOD, Medical Aid for Palestinians and Islamic Relief, calling for the Government to use its influence to help protect civilians, to ensure adherence to international humanitarian law and to guarantee civilians have access to critical life-saving humanitarian support; and to this end supports their call for the Prime Minister and Foreign Secretary to urgently press all parties to agree to an immediate de-escalation and cessation of hostilities, to ensure the immediate, unconditional release of the Israeli hostages, to end to the total siege of Gaza and allow for unfettered access of medical supplies, food, fuel electricity and water, to guarantee that international humanitarian law is upheld and that civilians are protected in accordance with those laws.

<https://edm.parliament.uk/early-day-motion/61430>

### Downing Street

**Rishi Sunak** We are all shocked by the scenes at the al-Ahli Arab Hospital. Our intelligence services are rapidly analysing the evidence to independently establish the facts. [plus video]

<https://twitter.com/RishiSunak/status/1714622673827885300>

## Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office

### **The UK supports Israel's right to self-defence in line with the UN Charter: UK statement at the UN Security Council: Explanation of vote by Ambassador Barbara Woodward at the UN Security Council meeting on the Middle East.**

... The draft resolution on which we have just voted rightly condemns the appalling Hamas terrorist attacks on Israel on the 7th October. It also makes clear that all actions need to be taken in line with international humanitarian law. It stresses the importance of ensuring humanitarian access and protecting civilians, and emphasises this Council's shared priority of preventing regional escalation of the conflict.

We welcome and support the draft resolution's attempts to set out the Council's view on these critical points.

But the draft resolution needed to be clearer on Israel's inherent right to self-defence in line with the UN Charter after Hamas' attacks killed over 1,400 people and took almost 200 people hostage.

The draft resolution also ignored the fact that Hamas are using innocent Palestinian civilians as human shields.

They have embedded themselves in civilian communities and made the Palestinian people their victims too.

For these reasons, the United Kingdom abstained on this resolution.

My Prime Minister has been clear that the UK stands with Israel in the face of these atrocities.

We support Israel's right to defend itself against Hamas, take back the hostages, deter further incursions, and strengthen its security for the long term.

In so doing, we will continue to call on Israel to take all feasible precautions to avoid harming Palestinian civilians and to act in line with international humanitarian law.

We will continue to work closely with Israel and our partners in the region to respond to the humanitarian crisis in Gaza. To ensure that civilians are protected and have access to food, water, medicine, and shelter. And to work towards the peace and stability promised by the Two State Solution. ...

**To read the full transcript see**

<https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/the-uk-supports-israels-right-to-self-defence-in-line-with-the-un-charter-uk-statement-at-the-un-security-council>

**James Cleverly** Pointing fingers prematurely only fuels regional instability. The devastating loss of human life at Al Ahli hospital is profoundly disturbing. We will not rush to judgement. [plus video]

<https://twitter.com/JamesCleverly/status/1714630793610309902>

**James Cleverly** Last night, too many jumped to conclusions around the tragic loss of life at Al Ahli hospital. Getting this wrong would put even more lives at risk. Wait for the facts, report them clearly and accurately. Cool heads must prevail.

<https://twitter.com/JamesCleverly/status/1714573399635140798>

**James Cleverly** The destruction of Al Ahli hospital is a devastating loss of human life. The UK has been clear. The protection of civilian life must come first. The UK will work with our allies to find out what has happened and protect innocent civilians in Gaza.

<https://twitter.com/JamesCleverly/status/1714391673483022808>

**Lord (Tariq)Ahmad of Wimbledon** Our thoughts and prayers are for all those who have tragically lost their lives, the injured, their families and loved ones and all those associated with #AlAhliarabhospital in #Gaza

<https://twitter.com/tariqahmadbt/status/1714665452817777018>

**Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office** We've brought 900+ people from Israel to the UK. Given reduced demand, we will close the booking portal tomorrow at noon Israel time. Remaining British nationals wanting government-organised flights should be prepared to travel immediately.

<https://twitter.com/FCDOGovUK/status/1714343015941083626>

## Scottish Government

**Humza Yousaf** In the past, people in Scotland and across the UK have opened our hearts and our homes. Scotland is ready to play her part. To be the first country in the UK to offer safety and sanctuary to the people of Gaza. To treat the injured men, women and children, where we can. [plus video]

<https://twitter.com/HumzaYousaf/status/1714372367592394969>

**Humza Yousaf** There can be no justification for this. None whatsoever. If people can not be safe in a hospital, where can they? This attack must be unequivocally condemned in the strongest possible manner Ceasefire is needed now. Innocent men, women & children must be allowed to leave Gaza

<https://twitter.com/HumzaYousaf/status/1714367512710660117>

## United Nations

### **Statement attributable to the Spokesperson for the Secretary-General - on the situation in Gaza**

The Secretary-General condemns the strike this evening on Al Ahli Anglican Episcopal Hospital in Gaza, with preliminary reports of hundreds killed and many others wounded, including women and children.

He also condemns the attack on an UNRWA school earlier today in Al-Maghazi refugee camp in Gaza which killed at least six people.

The Secretary-General extends his sincere condolences to the families of the victims and wishes a swift recovery to those injured.

He emphasizes that hospitals, clinics, medical personnel, and UN premises are explicitly protected under international law.

<https://www.un.org/sg/en/content/sg/statement/2023-10-17/statement-attributable-the-spokesperson-for-the-secretary-general-the-situation-gaza>

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### **Secretary-General's remarks at the 3rd Belt and Road Forum for International Cooperation**

... I feel, as Secretary-General of the United Nations, the obligation to say a few words about the catastrophe unfolding in the Middle East.

The region is on the precipice.

Immediately before departing for Beijing, I made two urgent humanitarian appeals:

To Hamas, for the immediate and unconditional release of the hostages.

To Israel, to immediately allow unrestricted access of humanitarian aid to respond to the most basic needs of the people of Gaza - the overwhelming majority of whom are women and children.

I am fully aware of the deep grievances of the Palestinian people after 56 years of occupation. But, as serious as these grievances are, they cannot justify the acts of terror against civilians committed by Hamas on October 7 that I immediately condemned.

But those attacks cannot justify the collective punishment of the Palestinian people.

Each of my two humanitarian appeals have a value in themselves.

They are not bargaining chips. They are simply the right thing to do.

And I am horrified by the hundreds of people killed at Al Ahli hospital this same day, in Gaza, by a strike that I strongly condemned earlier today.

I call for an immediate humanitarian ceasefire to provide sufficient time and space to help realize my two appeals and to ease the epic human suffering we are witnessing.

Too many lives - and the fate of the entire region - hang in the balance.

May the spirit of this meeting help those that need to find peace. ...

**To read the full transcript see**

<https://www.un.org/sg/en/content/sg/statement/2023-10-18/secretary-general's-remarks-the-3rd-belt-and-road-forum-for-international-cooperation>

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### **Third Committee Spotlights Human Rights Abuses in Conflicts, Stressing Need to End Terrorist Attacks, Genocide, Illegal Hostage-Taking, Enforced Displacement**

**Björn Olof Skoog, representative of the European Union** ... condemned the multiple and indiscriminate attacks and loss of lives across Israel by Hamas. He reiterated Israel's right to defend itself in line with international law. His bloc calls for an immediate release of all hostages, condemns all attacks against civilians and underscores the importance of protecting civilians, he said, underscoring the need for humanitarian access to affected areas. ...

**Katherine Anas Ahmad Al-Halique (Jordan)** ... said that when the international community adopted the Universal Declaration of Human Rights guaranteeing political and other rights, Palestinians were not exempt. These laws and treaties also stipulate minimum rights during times of conflict and war, and they do not exclude Palestinians either, she added. Israel is waging a terrible war on the Gaza Strip, which has resulted in more than 3,000 civilian deaths, including more than 1,000 children, and more than 9,000 injured people in only 10 days of aggression against Palestine, she said. She added that this is a flagrant violation of humanitarian principles on Israel's part, especially international humanitarian and human rights law, she said. The Israeli occupation is also destroying civilian infrastructure through the targeting of homes and destruction of roads. It is also preventing humanitarian and medical assistance as well as targeting hospital and medical personnel, she said.

Noting that more than 1 million Palestinians are being forcibly displaced, she expressed solidarity with Palestinians, whose rights are constantly being violated, emphasizing the importance for Israel to immediately cease the war in Gaza. She called for self-restraint, warning about catastrophic results that will come from the continued escalation of hostilities. She also called for the immediate allowance of food, fuel and medical assistance to reach Gaza via UN entities, especially the United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA). Concluding, she called on Israel to stop preventing food and electricity from reaching Gaza and refrain from forcibly displacing Palestinians from the region. ...

**Richard Croker (United Kingdom)** condemned terrorist acts committed by Hamas against Israeli and international citizens, expressing support for Israel's right to defend itself proportionately. "Hamas is the enemy, not the Palestinian people and we support Israel in taking action against terrorism," he said, adding that any action must be in accordance with international humanitarian law, including the protection of civilians. He called for the opening of the Rafah crossing to Egypt for the exit of foreign nationals and entrance of humanitarian aid. ...

**Hadi Hachem (Lebanon)**, said the current situation in the Middle East reflects the absence of humanity and violation of international law. Israel deliberately targeted journalists wearing press vests at the southern border of Lebanon last Friday, he said.

Issam Abdallah was killed and five other journalists were wounded. This direct attack by Israel is a flagrant attack on the press, running counter to international humanitarian law, he stressed. It is unacceptable to continue to violate international human rights law with impunity. Questioning why Palestinians are deprived of their rights, he recalled their right to determination and establishment of a State along 1967 lines, with Jerusalem as the capital. Expressing grave concern and condemnation over events in Gaza, he called on the international community act to end brutal attacks and prevent violence from broadening. "Everyone will pay the price," he said.

**Zhang Jun (China)** said the latest round of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict has sparked widespread concern. The imperative now is to put in place an immediate ceasefire, protect civilians and prevent a more serious humanitarian disaster. The fundamental way out is the two-State solution, he said. ...

**Almaha Mubarak F. J. Al-Thani (Qatar)** expressed deep concern over developments in Gaza, calling on all parties to stop the fighting and exercise the utmost self-restraint, which will also protect the region from slipping into a broader cycle of violence. She warned against collective punishment, including all calls to vacate the northern area of the Gaza Strip. Forcing the displacement of civilians is a violation of international law, which might prolong the conflict going on in the Occupied Palestinian Territory and exacerbate the suffering of Palestinians, she added. She urged the international community to act urgently to open passages that will allow for the humanitarian delivery of food and medical supplies and the evacuation of injured civilians....

**Osama Mahmoud Abdelkhalek Mahmoud (Egypt)** ... noting that the Palestinian people are deprived of their enjoyment of human rights, condemned Israel's brutal aggression against them, which has resulted in 3,000 killings, including 1,000 children, and the destruction of thousands of houses and civilian infrastructure. Denying the civilian population in Gaza their basic human rights, including the right to life, while blocking humanitarian access, represents a human disaster of the gravest magnitude. Accordingly, he categorically rejected Israel's calls to forcibly displace Palestinians from their homeland. He also warned against the attempt to transfer the dire humanitarian crisis in Gaza, which is due to the illegal Israeli occupation and blockade, to neighbouring countries in the region. He called on Israel to immediately stop the ongoing aggression and collective punishment in the Gaza strip and ensure immediate opening of humanitarian corridors. It is essential to hold Israel fully accountable for acts of aggression under international law. ...

**Philippe Kridelka (Belgium)** condemned unequivocally terrorist acts committed by Hamas and the Islamic Palestinian Jihad. He urged each party to allow creation of humanitarian corridors, de-escalate the conflict and launch a political dialogue to satisfy the aspirations of both the Israeli and the Palestinian peoples. ...

**Mr. Lebédel (France)** reiterated his country's solidarity with Israel, underscoring the country's right to defend itself against Hamas. ...

**Jonathan Shrier (United States)** spoke of the brutality of Hamas terrorists, condemning the slaughter of more than 1,300 civilians in Israel and taking of scores of hostages, including American citizens. Israel has the right to defend its country and its people, he said, adding that Hamas bears responsibility for sparking the current war. He said President Joe Biden will demonstrate steadfast support for Israel in a visit ... Then in Jordan, he will reiterate that Hamas does not stand for the Palestinian people's right to dignity and self-determination and discuss the humanitarian needs of civilians in Gaza. ...

**Elie Altarsha (Syria)** ... condemned Israel's occupation and stressed that the country has been committing genocide and crimes against humanity. Through a new cycle of aggression, human rights violations, murder of children and displacement of millions, the atrocities committed by Israel are unimaginable - one hour ago, they bombed a hospital, killing 500 people. "What is the threat that a hospital can pose to an Israeli occupation?" he asked. "Who said that some are allowed to defend their people while it is allowed to



leave the Palestinian people to be slaughtered through ethnic cleansings and genocide?" he continued. He also criticized collective Western support, noting the blindness of those countries to Israel's crimes. "We also have the legitimate right to retrieve the occupied Syrian Golan and stand in the way of Israeli racism and to end Israeli crimes and massacres," he said. ...

**Muhammad Abdul Muhith (Bangladesh)** said the Palestinian people have been denied their fundamental human rights, including the right to self-determination, with the current aggression by Israel aimed at the obliteration of the Palestinian people. He called for immediate de-escalation, protection of all civilians, unhindered humanitarian access to the population in Gaza and full respect for international humanitarian law by all parties to the conflict. ...

**The representative of Syria** said the European Union, with its unfounded accusations, has made a "recyclable statement" from three years back. ... As for the United States' comments, Syria's delegate said that, assuming all crimes and violations of human rights committed by that country throughout history were magically erased, what it has done in the past couple of days in assisting Israel in its war of genocide against the Palestinians is enough to "leave them in shame for the next 200 years". ...

**Israel's representative** said Syria's representative's blatant comments that the State of Israel should cease to exist should not be tolerated "in these halls". She said Syria's "ceaseless and cruel abuse of human rights against its own population", including the use of chemical weapons on women and children have deemed its regime's standing ground as illegitimate. As for the hospital incident in Palestine, she said the Palestinian Islamic Jihad terror organization fired a missile salvo towards Israel, one of which misfired and landed on the al-Ahli hospital in Gaza, resulting in many casualties and severe damage. "The barbaric terrorists in Gaza are the ones who attacked the Gaza hospital, not the IDF. Those who cruelly murder our children, murder their children as well," she said. She further admonished the Syrian representative to condemn terror unequivocally and condemn Hamas, adding that "Israel is at the forefront of the war on terror. Stand with us." ...

**The representative of Syria** said the occupying authority of Israel mentioned Syria and his delegation has a rule that it replies to some Member States that try to target it. But he will not reply to the occupying authority. It is a murderous and racist regime. ...

**To read the full press release see**

<https://press.un.org/en/2023/gashc4385.doc.htm>

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### **Delegates Condemn Hamas Terrorist Attacks, Israeli Strikes, as Second Committee Concludes Debate on Sovereignty of Palestinians over Their Natural Resources**

... **Boris A. Meschchanov (Russian Federation)** condemned the policy of Israel in continuing illicit settlement activity, as the lack of access to sovereign territory "needs to be in the focus" of the United Nations and the donor community. The current tragic events in the region were the result of systematic violations by Israel of Security Council and General Assembly decisions, leading to massive civilian casualties among Israelis and Palestinians — and the desire of the United States to monopolize the Middle East settlement process. He called for the end of indiscriminate bombings killing civilians in the Gaza Strip, unobstructed humanitarian access to those in need in the Palestinian enclave, freeing hostages and opening humanitarian corridors to assist the civilian population.

**Richard Arbeiter (Canada)** voiced concern over the continued use of this agenda item and other discussions in the United Nations that do not reflect the full range of threats to Israelis and Palestinians. Underlining Canada's unequivocal condemnation of the brutal terrorist attacks perpetrated by Hamas against Israel, he noted they saw more Israeli deaths in one day than any since the country was founded — while more Palestinians

have been killed in 10 days than in any other conflict since that same time. He affirmed that the unbalanced focus on Israel in Assembly resolutions does not help the cause of peace, with no consideration taken of the negative impact of Hamas' actions on the natural resources of the West Bank and Gaza, or the loss of life they have instigated.

**Islam Abdullah Hassan Al-amri, speaking for the League of Arab States**, said that after 75 years of Israel's occupation, the situation is worsening, with the occupying Power still confiscating land and unlawfully continuing to build settlements — adding that Israel has confiscated over one third of the West Bank since 1967 and violates the sacred nature of Christian and Muslim holy sites. Further, the occupying Power pumps water from Palestinian and Syrian land and sells the excess back to its owners, a stark violation of their rights. He called on Israel to stop the campaign of genocide against Gaza, and for the international community to establish an independent Palestinian State and compensate people for what happened during the occupation.

**... the observer for the State of Palestine ...** said the Israeli delegate on 16 October failed once again to recognize the root cause of the conflict — denying the reality of the brutal occupation and crimes on a daily basis against the entire Palestinian population for more than 56 years. Through 11 days of Israeli strikes, 3,000 overwhelmingly civilian Palestinians have been killed, including 1,000 children, as well as medical and UN personnel and journalists. “No one is spared,” she stressed, with the UN describing it as an unprecedented humanitarian catastrophe. “What is the right to self-defence that allows massacre of civilians?” she asked, insisting that Palestinians are not lesser human beings and calling for rejection of collective punishment and war crimes against her people.

**The representative of Israel** said that for the observer to criticize Israel without condemning Hamas means that they support armed terrorists breaking into innocent people's homes, massacring them in their beds, and abducting children and mothers into Gaza. “I did not hear her mention Hamas once,” he stated; “where was her cry when my people were butchered?” he continued, adding that he has not heard any condemnation of Hamas which had taken hostage over 190 innocent civilians. “Israel is subject to international law and is unique — unique — in the emphasis it places on warning civilians to evacuate before an attack,” he stressed. Gazan civilians do have places to go which aren't targeted, while “it is Hamas who blocks roads, prevents civilians from moving to safe places and uses them as human shields,” he said.

**To read the full press release see**

<https://press.un.org/en/2023/gaef3593.doc.htm>

## UNRWA

### **Statement of UNRWA Commissioner-General Philippe Lazzarini to the participants of the 18th Extraordinary Session of the Council of Foreign Ministers of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation**

... At the time of writing these lines, harrowing images are still coming out of the [Al-Ahli Hospital](#) in Gaza where more than 500 people were reportedly killed last night. An [UNRWA school](#) sheltering 4,000 internally displaced persons was also hit yesterday, with at least six people killed and dozens injured.

An unprecedented catastrophe is unfolding before our eyes. Gaza is being strangled and the world seems to have lost its humanity. Every hour we receive more and more desperate calls for help from people across the Gaza Strip. Thousands of civilians were killed over the last 12 days, including women and children.

At least one million people were forced to flee their homes in just one week. Over half a million displaced persons are sheltering in our schools and other premises in the south of Gaza. An unknown number of people, whom UNRWA is no longer able to assist, remain on our premises in the northern part of the Strip.

UNRWA has tragically lost 14 staff members until now and most of our 13,000 staff in Gaza are displaced.

Not one shipment of aid has been allowed into the Gaza Strip since the start of this conflict due to the full siege imposed. People are forced to drink water that is not suitable for consumption, as clean potable water is simply not available. Stocks of food, hygiene material and medicine are rapidly dwindling. We are on the brink of a major health and sanitation crisis.

UNRWA, the largest aid agency in the Gaza Strip, finds itself unable to protect and assist civilians as they face the most tragic and dangerous escalation. ...

First, we must reiterate that international humanitarian law must prevail, with an immediate cessation of attacks targeting civilians and civilian objects, including UN and humanitarian personnel and premises. ...

Second, there is an urgent need to ensure humanitarian access. This can be achieved through an immediate humanitarian ceasefire ...

Third, UNRWA must receive adequate resources. The Agency is short of US\$ 100 million for its core budget for this year ...

**To read the full transcript see**

<https://www.unrwa.org/newsroom/official-statements/statement-unrwa-commissioner-general-philippe-lazzarini>

## UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights

### **UN Human Rights Chief Volker Türk on horrific killings at Al Ahli Arab Hospital in Gaza**

“Words fail me. Tonight, hundreds of people were killed – horrifically – in a massive strike at Al Ahli Arab Hospital in Gaza City, including patients, healthcare workers and families that had been seeking refuge in and around the hospital. Once again the most vulnerable. This is totally unacceptable.

At least six people were also killed this afternoon when an UNRWA school was hit in al-Maghazi refugee camp, in Gaza’s middle area. The school had been serving as a shelter for some 4,000 seeking refuge.

Hospitals are sacrosanct, and they must be protected at all cost.

We don’t yet know the full scale of this carnage, but what is clear is that the violence and killings must stop at once.

All States with influence must do everything in their power to bring an end to this horrendous situation. Civilians must be protected, and humanitarian aid must be allowed to reach those in need as a matter of urgency.

Those found responsible must be held to account.”

<https://www.ohchr.org/en/statements/2023/10/un-human-rights-chief-volker-turk-horrific-killings-al-ahli-arab-hospital-gaza>

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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>



## **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>

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## Consultations

\*\* new or updated today

**\*\* closes in 8 days**

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

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

**The UK's engagement with the Middle East and North Africa** (closing date 31 October 2023)

<https://committees.parliament.uk/call-for-evidence/3205/>

**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>

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