



# Political Affairs Digest

A daily summary of political events affecting the Jewish Community

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### House of Commons Written Answers

#### Community Relations

**Andrew Bowie (Conservative)** [5349] To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, with reference to the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs' oral statement of 2 September 2024, Official Report, column 37, if she will make an assessment of the potential impact of suspending some arms exports to Israel on levels of community cohesion.

**Alex Norris:** Government is alert to the damage to community relations caused by the attack on Israel by Hamas on 7 October last year and the subsequent conflict in Gaza, and that there remains potential for events to cause this to become heightened. For this reason, my Department constantly monitors trends relating to community tensions based on information from local government, the police and civil society partners including, since 2 September, representatives of a range of Jewish community organisations. Communities have expressed a wide range of responses to the announcement on 2 September, and we understand the concerns that have been raised by some Jewish communities. We continue to engage closely with our partners across communities to provide reassurance, reduce tensions and encourage cohesion.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2024-09-11/5349>

*The statement referred to above can be read at*

<https://hansard.parliament.uk/commons/2024-09-02/debates/F5A06C09-84E1-4788-AF6F-E1560E2B25D3/MiddleEastUpdate#contribution-78DA6459-BB53-4645-8872-CB7C4F535069>

#### BBC: Political Impartiality

**Luke Evans (Conservative)** [5370] To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, what assessment she has made of the implications for her policies of the Asserson report into the BBC, published in September 2024.

**Stephanie Peacock:** The BBC has a duty, outlined in its Charter, to provide accurate and impartial news and information. That is particularly important when it

comes to coverage of highly sensitive issues such as the conflict in Gaza. However, the BBC is independent from the Government and its editorial decisions are rightly not something for the Government to interfere with.

Responsibility for ensuring the BBC fulfils its obligations to audiences as outlined in its Charter falls with Ofcom, the independent regulator.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2024-09-11/5370>

The Asserson report, referred to above, into “The Israel-Hamas war and the BBC”, can be accessed from

<https://asserson.co.uk/assersonreport/>

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## Holocaust

### Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government

#### **Extra funding committed to support Holocaust Memorial Day**

... The Government has announced additional funding for the Holocaust Memorial Day Trust to support the 80th anniversary of the liberation of Auschwitz-Birkenau.

Holocaust Memorial Day, marked each year on January 27th, is a day of reflection, remembrance, and education.

2025 will mark the 80th anniversary of the liberation of Auschwitz-Birkenau, which will be a particularly poignant occasion, highlighting the significance of remembering the atrocities of the past while fostering a future of understanding and unity.

Holocaust Memorial Day 2025 also marks the 30th anniversary of the genocide in Srebrenica, sending a strong reminder that hatred and intolerance have continued long after the Holocaust.

Faith Minister Lord Khan said: We are absolutely committed to ensuring the lessons of the Holocaust are never forgotten. The 80th anniversary is a time for deep reflection, and to remember the six million Jewish men, women and children murdered by the Nazis.

This funding will enable the Holocaust Memorial Day Trust to stage an event and ensure it is broadcast to millions – matching the significance of the moment. It will enable communities across the country to take part in this moment for reflection – and to hear directly from survivors who can bear witness to the appalling crimes committed by the Nazis.

The Holocaust Memorial Day Trust’s Chief Executive, Olivia Marks-Woldman, said: We are delighted that the Government’s commitment to Holocaust Memorial Day Trust means that we can reach even further in this significant year. The Holocaust Memorial Day 2025 commemorations will be engaging millions of people across the UK, in local communities, on social and traditional media, and at the UK Ceremony. ...

Last month, in his speech to the Holocaust Education Trust, the Prime Minister set out a new “national ambition” to ensure that every young person has the opportunity to hear recorded Holocaust survivor testimony.

Ahead of its curriculum review, the Government has also committed to ensure that the Holocaust remains on the curriculum and that state schools which are not currently required to follow the national curriculum also teach the Holocaust.

**To read the full press release see**

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/extra-funding-committed-to-support-holocaust-memorial-day>

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## Israel

See also Commons written answer 5370 “BBC: Political Impartiality” and 5349 “Community Relations” that are included in the Home Affairs section above.

### House of Commons Written Answers

#### Israel: Military Intelligence

**Andrew Bowie (Conservative)** [5345] To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what assessment he has made of the potential impact of the UK’s decision to suspend some arms exports licenses with Israel on intelligence-sharing with that country.

**Luke Pollard:** It is a long-standing policy that we do not discuss detailed intelligence matters and so I regret I am unable to provide any additional detail.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2024-09-11/5345>

#### F-35 Aircraft: Israel

**Andy McDonald (Labour)** [5323] To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, if he will make it his policy to negotiate an end-use agreement with F-35 programme supply chain and electronic stockpile management system counterparts to end the re-export of F-35s to Israel.

**Luke Pollard:** The UK Government has made an amendment to the F-35 Open General Export Licence (F-35 OGEL) in relation to F-35 items manufactured in the UK, which now cannot be directly exported to Israel. The US Government manages the sale of F-35 aircraft to Israel and the F-35 Global Supply Chain.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2024-09-11/5323>

### Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office

**Hamish Falconer** UNIFIL’s role is crucial given the escalating situation in the region. Alongside allies and partners we condemn the recent attacks on its peacekeepers. These attacks must stop immediately and international humanitarian law must be respected. See our statement below:

*Republic of Armenia, Republic of Austria, People’s Republic of Bangladesh, Federative Republic of Brazil, Kingdom of Cambodia, People’s Republic of China, Republic of Cyprus, Republic of El Salvador, Republic of Estonia, Republic of Fiji, Republic of Finland, Republic of France, Republic of Ghana, Republic of Guatemala, Hungary, Republic of Indonesia, Ireland, Republic of Italy, Republic of Kazakhstan, Republic of Korea, Republic of Latvia, Malaysia, Republic of Malta, Mongolia, Nepal, Kingdom of Netherlands, Republic of Poland, State of Qatar, Republic of Sierra Leone, Kingdom of Spain, Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka, Republic of Türkiye, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, United Republic of Tanzania*

As the countries contributors to the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon we reaffirm our full support for UNIFIL’s mission and activities, whose principal aim is to bring stabilisation and lasting peace in South Lebanon as well as in the Middle East, in line with relevant resolutions of the UN Security Council.

We consider UNIFIL’s role as particularly crucial in light of the escalating situation in the region.

We therefore strongly condemn recent attacks on the UNIFIL peacekeepers. Such actions must stop immediately and should be adequately investigated.

We urge the parties of the conflict to respect UNIFIL’s presence, which entails the obligation to guarantee the safety and security of its personnel at all times, so that

they can continue to implement its mandate and continue their work of mediation and support for peace and stability in Lebanon and the entire region.

We reiterate our commitment to multilateral cooperation with the UN at its core. We call for respect for the international law, in particular the Charter of the United Nations as well as the relevant resolutions of the Security Council.

<https://x.com/HFalconerMP/status/1845170585246003496>

## Scottish Parliament Motion

**James Dornan (SNP) [S6M-14882] Public Bodies Urged to Boycott Israeli Government** – That the Parliament recognises the rights of Israel and every other country to defend its citizens, but abhors what it believes is the recent behaviour by the Israeli government in its ongoing behaviour in Gaza, which it considers as genocidal, with reports of record numbers of media representatives having been killed and hospitals, schools and places of worship being bombed and shelled with countless women and children being indiscriminately murdered, its illegal campaign of forced removal of residents from the West Bank and its latest attacks on the innocent people of Lebanon, including, amazingly, UN peacekeepers, and urges all public bodies, including governments, to boycott any dealings with the Israeli Government until such times as it agrees to stop what it sees as the indiscriminate killings and begin an immediate ceasefire to allow talks to start around a two-state solution, which fully recognises the rights of the people of Palestine.

<https://www.parliament.scot/chamber-and-committees/votes-and-motions/S6M-14882>

## UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights

**‘The international order is breaking down in Gaza’: UN experts mark one year of genocidal attacks on Palestinians**

Marking one year since the start of Israel’s genocidal offensive in Gaza, a group of independent human rights experts issued the following statement:

“The world faces the most profound crisis since the end of World War II. The atrocities which the world witnessed in World War II resulted in a collective determination to say ‘Never Again’ and to create the United Nations to achieve that goal. However, one year since the 7 October attack by Hamas and other Palestinian armed groups against Israel, the world has seen a brutal escalation of violence, resulting in genocidal attacks, ethnic cleansing and collective punishment of Palestinians, which risks breaking down the international multilateral system.

The Israeli military assault that commenced immediately after the October 7 attack, was accompanied by genocidal statements by Israeli leaders. On October 9, the Israeli Defense Minister Gallant ordered a “*complete siege, no electricity, no food, no water, no fuel*” and a full-on assault against the biggest open-air prison of our time. On 28 October, following weeks of air strikes on Gaza, just as the ground invasion began amid violent anti-Palestinian rhetoric by Israeli officials, public figures and others, Prime Minister Netanyahu issued the command: “*Remember what Amalek has done to you, we have been commanded. And we do remember.*” In so doing, he invoked the Biblical reference: “*Now go, attack Amalek, and destroy all that they have, and spare no one; but kill both man and woman, infant and suckling, ox and sheep, camel and ass.*”

One year later, the promise by Israeli leaders to destroy Gaza has been fulfilled. The Strip is now a wasteland of rubble and human remains, where survivors – men and women, children and the elderly – struggle to hold on to life amid deprivation and disease. Israeli bombs have spared no one – not journalists, students, scholars, doctors, nurses, babies, pregnant women, persons with disabilities, civil servants, people seeking food and safety

or humanitarian workers, including UN staff. Entire families have been exterminated and generations erased, with millions of lives torn apart.

Nearly all those surviving are displaced, trapped in ever-shrinking parts of the tiny territory, corralled into crowded camps and shelters with nowhere to flee. Constant bombing has turned humanitarian zones into killing fields.

The enhanced siege, restrictions on aid and relentless targeting of homes and key civilian infrastructure have led to starvation at an unprecedented pace. The decimation of health infrastructure has made preventable diseases incurable and accelerated the spread of illness and epidemics, while the massive destruction of educational, cultural and heritage institutions and the land itself deeply jeopardises Palestinian culture, national identity and existence on the land.

Meanwhile, as the world watches the people of Gaza live in constant terror of impending annihilation, broadcast and shared on social media, a deliberate pattern of conduct threatening the extinction of Palestinians through mass displacement, death, destruction and annexation of land is emerging in the West Bank, including east Jerusalem.

Nothing can justify these acts. For a year, we have implored States to intervene, in line with their moral and legal obligations to prevent these atrocities and preserve the international legal system, human rights and humanity. Our calls have gone largely unheeded, together with those of millions of people worldwide who have used their platforms to advocate for an end to the violence, and who continue to face repressive tactics to silence and punish their voices, in several countries.

The international legal order is breaking down in the face of these atrocities. The International Criminal Court Prosecutor's [application for arrest warrants](#) remains outstanding without a timely decision by the Court while a genocidal campaign rages. [Provisional measures](#) ordered by the International Court of Justice (ICJ) to prevent genocidal acts and preserve evidence of crimes committed in Gaza remain unfulfilled. The ICJ [Advisory Opinion](#) declaring Israel's occupation unlawful, and amounting to racial segregation and apartheid, followed by a widely-supported [General Assembly resolution](#), remains to be implemented. Defiant in the face of overwhelming public sentiment across the international community, Israel continues to act with brazen disregard for international law and order.

The international community's failure to secure a ceasefire and hold accountable all those responsible for or complicit in heinous crimes, has not only enabled the continuation of unprecedented brutality but widened it to the broader region, setting Lebanon ablaze with violence and destruction.

This spiral of destruction must end. The international community must act with utmost urgency to change the trajectory of violence if we are to avert a full-scale conflagration with unthinkable consequences – most egregiously for the children.

We call on all leaders to move beyond dehumanising and polarising narratives, and actively work for an [immediate cessation of all hostilities and crimes](#) in Palestine/Israel and the region, for the immediate release of all persons arbitrarily detained, both Israelis held in Gaza and Palestinians held by Israel.

We call for immediate provision of life-saving humanitarian assistance to all affected people and for such access to be guaranteed by the international community.

We honour all victims, recent and past. Our societies must allow space to process the immense toll of collective grief and trauma, within those peoples most deeply affected by this, and in communities across the globe who have borne witness and taken action. We must try to move forward together. We extend a heartfelt appeal to the Israeli people, acknowledging their deep trauma and pain, and seeking their support in fostering change and working together to bring an end to the violence against and suffering of the Palestinian people.

We demand that everyone, state actors and individuals alike, prioritise respect for international law and human rights without discrimination and double standards.



The world must swiftly reorient its moral compass toward justice and freedom for all and recommit to international peace, which will never be achieved until everyone, including Palestinians and Israelis, are afforded the chance to live in equal dignity and freedom.”  
<https://www.ohchr.org/en/statements/2024/10/international-order-breaking-down-gaza-un-experts-mark-one-year-genocidal>

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### **Middle East: Situation for civilians getting worse by the day**

The situation for civilians on the ground in Lebanon, Gaza, Israel and Syria is getting worse by the day. The densely populated capital Beirut is increasingly being hit by Israeli air strikes, hundreds are dead, and over a million people have fled their homes throughout the country. Hezbollah and other armed groups continue to fire rockets into Israel, resulting in the first civilian fatalities in the north since the most recent escalation of hostilities between Israel and Lebanon last month.

Just last night, Beirut was bombed again, in the heaviest strike yet on the central part of the city. At least 22 people were killed, and over 100 injured, according to the Ministry of Public Health.

The High Commissioner, Volker Türk, reminds all parties of their obligation to adhere to international humanitarian law, or the rules of war, with respect to the protection of civilians, civilian objects and infrastructure. Any alleged violations must be subjected to a prompt and thorough investigation, and those responsible where violations are found to have taken place must be held to account.

The Lebanese people are bearing the brunt of this latest phase of conflict. The Ministry of Public Health says almost 400 children and women are among over 2,000 people killed since October 2023. There are recurring reports of essential civilian infrastructure having been struck, including hospitals, clinics, ambulances and schools – along with destruction of housing. In all, over 100 medical and emergency workers have been killed across Lebanon since October last year.

Many of those displaced have fled to Syria. From 23 September to 9 October, it has been reported that over 310,000 Syrians and nearly 110,000 Lebanese citizens have crossed the border.

On 9 and 10 October, Hezbollah said it had launched at least 360 missiles from southern Lebanon into Israel. Two people were killed in a rocket attack on the border town of Kiryat Shmona on 9 October, a day after five others were injured in a rocket attack on Haifa.

Amidst this escalating violence, we are appalled by sweeping inflammatory language on multiple sides. Recent language threatening Lebanese people as a whole and calling on them to either rise up against Hezbollah or face destruction like Gaza, risks being understood as encouraging or accepting violence directed against civilians and civilian objects, in violation of international law. Ongoing denigration of the UN, in particular UNRWA, is unacceptable. This kind of toxic rhetoric, from any source, must stop.

It is important that we also keep the spotlight on the frightful human suffering continuing in Gaza. Over the last week, the Israeli military has intensified operations in North Gaza, further severing the area from the rest of the Gaza Strip and risking afresh the lives of civilians in the area. Intense strikes, shelling, quadcopter shootings and ground incursions have occurred over the past few days, hitting residential buildings and groups of people, causing numerous casualties and – once again - mass displacement of Palestinians in the area.

Attacks on hospitals also continue. One strike on Al-Yaman Al-Saeed Hospital, serving as an IDP shelter, in Jabalya Camp, killed 17 Palestinians including children and women. On 9 October, the Israeli military ordered the evacuation within 24 hours of Kamal Adwan Hospital in Beit Lahiya – the largest operating hospital in North Gaza – impacting hundreds of injured, other patients, and medical workers as well as residents that rely on the hospital.

Meanwhile, in other parts of Gaza, a strike on Rufaydah School sheltering IDPs in west of Deir Al-Balah on 10 October, reportedly killed 28 Palestinians, including children and women, according to the Gaza Ministry of Health. We have recorded at least 14 schools struck this October alone – at a rate of more than one school a day.

While the Israeli military continues to order Palestinians in North Gaza to leave, many are trapped and cannot safely move. Our Office has received reports that those most vulnerable, including people with disabilities and their families, are especially struggling to evacuate.

The High Commissioner says now -- more than ever -- political courage, leadership and compassion are needed. The killing, destruction, as well as bellicose posturing by those in positions of power, must end. There is no alternative to resolution of this conflict than the negotiating table. Widening conflict and progressive escalation put the lives and wellbeing of potentially millions of people across the region at risk.

<https://www.ohchr.org/en/press-briefing-notes/2024/10/middle-east-situation-civilians-getting-worse-day>

## World Food Programme

### **Critical food aid lifelines into northern Gaza severed**

The UN World Food Programme today warned that escalating violence in northern Gaza is having a disastrous impact on food security for thousands of Palestinian families, noting that the main crossings into the north have been closed and no food aid has entered since 1 October.

Food distribution points, as well as kitchens and bakeries in North Gaza, have been forced to shut down due to airstrikes, military ground operations and evacuation orders. The only functioning bakery in North Gaza, supported by WFP, caught fire after being hit by an explosive munition.

“The north is basically cut off and we’re not able to operate there,” said Antoine Renard, WFP Country Director for Palestine. “WFP has been on the ground since the onset of the crisis. We are committed to delivering life-saving food every day despite the mounting challenges, but without safe and sustained access, it is virtually impossible to reach the people in need.”

WFP’s last remaining food supplies in the north -- including canned food, wheat flour, high-energy biscuits, and nutrition supplements -- have been distributed to shelters, health facilities and kitchens in Gaza City and three shelters in North Gaza. If the conflict continues to escalate at the current scale, it is unclear how long these limited food supplies will last and the consequences for fleeing families will be dire. ...

In southern and central Gaza, the situation is also at a breaking point due to insecurity surrounding the crossing points. There are no food distributions, and bakeries are struggling to secure wheat flour, which puts them at risk of shutting down any day. A few hot meal kitchens are still providing one meal for those fortunate enough to access them. ...

**To read the full press release see**

<https://www.wfp.org/news/critical-food-aid-lifelines-northern-gaza-severed>

## UNIFIL

### **UNIFIL statement (13 October 2024)**

Early this morning, peacekeepers at a UN position in Ramyah observed three platoons of IDF soldiers crossing the Blue Line into Lebanon.

At around 4:30 a.m., while peacekeepers were in shelters, two IDF Merkava tanks

destroyed the position's main gate and forcibly entered the position. They requested multiple times that the base turn out its lights. The tanks left about 45 minutes later after UNIFIL protested through our liaison mechanism, saying that IDF presence was putting peacekeepers in danger.

At around 6:40 a.m., peacekeepers at the same position reported the firing of several rounds 100 metres north, which emitted smoke. Despite putting on protective masks, fifteen peacekeepers suffered effects, including skin irritation and gastrointestinal reactions, after the smoke entered the camp. The peacekeepers are receiving treatment.

In addition, yesterday, IDF soldiers stopped a critical UNIFIL logistical movement near Meiss ej Jebel, denying it passage. The critical movement could not be completed.

For the fourth time in as many days, we remind the IDF and all actors of their obligations to ensure the safety and security of UN personnel and property and to respect the inviolability of UN premises at all times.

Breaching and entering a UN position is a further flagrant violation of international law and Security Council resolution 1701 (2006). Any deliberate attack on peacekeepers is a grave violation of international humanitarian law and resolution 1701. UNIFIL's mandate provides for its freedom of movement in its area of operations, and any restriction on this is a violation of resolution 1701.

We have requested an explanation from the IDF from these shocking violations.

<https://unifil.unmissions.org/unifil-statement-13-october-2024>

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#### **UNIFIL statement (12 October 2024)**

Last night, a peacekeeper at UNIFIL's headquarters in Naqoura was hit by gunfire due to ongoing military activity nearby. He underwent surgery at our Naqoura hospital to remove the bullet and is currently stable. We do not yet know the origin of the fire.

Also last night, buildings in our UN position in Ramyah sustained significant damage due to explosions from nearby shelling.

We remind all actors of their obligations to ensure the safety and security of UN personnel and premises, including avoiding combat activities near UNIFIL positions.

<https://unifil.unmissions.org/unifil-statement-12-october-2024>

## **Amnesty International**

### **Lebanon: Israel's evacuation 'warnings' for civilians misleading and inadequate**

Evacuation warnings issued by the Israeli military to residents of the southern suburbs of Beirut and south Lebanon were inadequate, and in some cases also misleading, said Amnesty International ... highlighting that these warnings do not absolve Israel of its obligations under international humanitarian law to never target civilians and to take all possible measures to minimize harm to them. ...

"The warnings issued by the Israeli military to residents of *Dahieh*, the densely populated southern suburbs of Beirut, were inadequate. Our analysis shows that not only did the warnings issued by the Israeli military include misleading maps, but they were also issued at short notice – in one instance less than 30 minutes before strikes began – in the middle of the night, via social media, when many people would be asleep, offline or not following media reports," said Agnès Callamard, Amnesty International's Secretary General.

"Furthermore, instructing the residents of entire towns and villages in south Lebanon to evacuate is an overly general warning that is inadequate and raises questions around whether this is intended to create the conditions for mass displacement. Regardless of the efficacy of the warnings, they do not mean that Israel can treat any remaining civilians as targets. People who choose to stay in their homes or are unable to leave because



members of their household have limited mobility, due to disability, age or other reasons, continue to be protected by international humanitarian law. Israel must at all times abide by its obligations under international law, including by taking all feasible precautions to minimize harm to civilians, wherever they are." ...

**To read this very lengthy press release in full see**

<https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2024/10/lebanon-israels-evacuation-warnings-for-civilians-misleading-and-inadequate/>

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

### **UK Parliament**

#### **Assisted Dying for Terminally Ill Adults Bill**

<https://bills.parliament.uk/bills/3741>

#### **Education (Assemblies) Bill**

<https://bills.parliament.uk/bills/3769>

#### **Holocaust Memorial Bill**

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

#### **Palestine Statehood (Recognition)**

<https://bills.parliament.uk/bills/3771>

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

<https://bills.parliament.uk/bills/3765>

### **Scottish Parliament**

#### **Assisted Dying for Terminally Ill Adults (Scotland) Bill**

<https://www.parliament.scot/bills-and-laws/bills/assisted-dying-for-terminally-ill-adults-scotland-bil>

#### **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

#### **Northern Ireland Assembly: Inquiry into Relationship and Sexuality Education (RSE) in Schools** (closing date 29 October 2024)

<https://www.niassembly.gov.uk/assembly-business/committees/2022-2027/education/inquiries/inquiry-into-relationship-and-sexuality-education-rse-in-schools/>

#### **Northern Ireland Executive: Draft Programme for Government 2024-2027** (closing date 4 November 2024)

<https://www.northernireland.gov.uk/PfG-consultation>

**Curriculum and Assessment Review [England]** (closing date 22 November 2024)  
<https://consult.education.gov.uk/curriculum-and-assessment-team/curriculum-and-assessment-review-call-for-evidence/>

**Equality and Human Rights Commission Code of practice for services, public functions and associations** (closing date 3 January 2025)  
<https://www.equalityhumanrights.com/equality/equality-act-2010/code-practice-services-public-functions-and-associations-consultation>

**Burial and Cremation [Law Commission]** (closing date 9 January 2025)  
<https://lawcom.gov.uk/project/burial-and-cremation/>

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