



# Political Affairs Digest

A daily summary of political events affecting the Jewish Community

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## Home Affairs

### UK Parliament Early Day Motions

*The following is an amendment to an existing Motion, the text of which is copied below*  
**Keith Vaz (Labour) (1967A1) Parliamentary prayers** – "Line 1, leave out from "House" to end and insert "recognises the importance of prayer to the work of Members, whatever their faith or beliefs; understands that prayers have been a central part of the work of this House since 1558, and that it has followed its present form since the reign of Charles II; commends the way in which the Speaker's Chaplain leads prayers, which provide a time for reflection, perspective and calm ahead of the important work of the House; and recognises that Members are under no obligation to participate, should they object to such proceedings.""

<https://edm.parliament.uk/early-day-motion/52465/parliamentary-prayers>

*Original Motion:*

**Crispin Blunt (Conservative) (1967) Parliamentary Prayers** – *That this House recognises that religious worship should not play any part in the formal business of the House of Commons; believes that parliamentary meetings should be conducted in a manner equally welcoming to all attendees, irrespective of their personal beliefs; further believes that Parliamentary Prayers are not compatible with a society which respects the principle of freedom of and from religion; urges that prayers should not form part of the official business of Parliament; and calls on the Procedure Committee to consider alternative arrangements.*

<https://edm.parliament.uk/early-day-motion/52446>

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# Holocaust

## House of Commons Oral Answer

### Business of the House

*col 1325* **Ian Mearns (Labour):** ... I thank the Leader of the House for ... announcing that next Thursday will be Backbench Business Committee business, with the Holocaust Memorial Day debate ... That will free up the time in Westminster Hall that we had put aside for the Holocaust Memorial Day debate ...

I really welcome the House's debating Holocaust Memorial Day. Members might not be aware that I represent and live in the midst of a large orthodox Haredi Jewish community in Gateshead. They are my neighbours and friends. Many of them come from families that fled to Gateshead in the 1920s and the 1930s, and that is obviously something that hits home when we remember the Holocaust on that day. I also remind the Government that the Haredi Jewish community, being very orthodox and having its own particular way of living within its culture and creed, has been hit rather hard by the two-child limit on benefits. That is something that we should be aware of across this House, because that limit is having an impact on culturally religious communities. ...

**Andrea Leadsom:** I totally respect the hon. Gentleman, and I thank him for his remarks about the Jewish community in his constituency. I think all hon. Members appreciate the contribution that they make to our society. I would certainly encourage him to seek an Adjournment debate so that he can discuss the specific issues and problems. ...

<https://hansard.parliament.uk/commons/2019-01-17/debates/57F5368F-458B-4743-A8D3-32F46F3D3291/BusinessOfTheHouse#contribution-E7F9AC6B-1278-4D4F-8EB3-FE908EDC2C73>

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# Israel

## House of Commons Written Answers

### Palestinians: Overseas Aid

**Alex Sobel (Labour Co-op) [205410]** To ask the Secretary of State for International Development, whether her Department intends to publish audit reports on Overseas Development Assistance to the Palestinian Authority.

**Alistair Burt:** DFID is acutely aware that transparency over UK Aid is vital. We currently do not release these reports, but take concerns relating to our funding to the Palestinian Authority very seriously. I personally will be meeting with a member of the PA cabinet to discuss these issues next week.

<https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Commons/2019-01-04/205410/>

### Israel: Arms Trade

**Lloyd Russel-Moyle (Labour Co-op) [208345]** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, whether UK-supplied military equipment has been used by Israel in the Occupied Palestinian Territories since February 2018.

**Stuart Andrew:** Military items sold to other countries by the UK require export licences. Export licence applications are rigorously assessed on a case-by-case basis against the Consolidated EU and National Arms Export Licensing Criteria,

taking account of all prevailing circumstances at the time of the application. Signed end user undertakings from the intended recipient, about the intended end use, form part of our consideration but we do not rely solely on these when making our assessment.

Following events in 2018 on the Israel/Gaza border the Government reviewed all extant military export licences for Israel. We have no information to indicate that UK-supplied equipment has been used in a way that is inconsistent with the Consolidated EU and National Arms Export Licensing Criteria. The Government continues to monitor the situation in Israel and Gaza very closely.

<https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Commons/2019-01-14/208345/>

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## Foreign Affairs

### House of Commons Oral Answers

#### Persecution of Christians

3. **Jeremy Lefroy (Conservative):** To ask the right hon. Member for Meriden, representing the Church Commissioners, what (a) steps the Church of England is taking and (b) recent discussions the Church of England has had with the Foreign and Commonwealth Office on tackling the persecution of Christians throughout the world. [908608]

4. **Henry Smith (Conservative):** To ask the right hon. Member for Meriden, representing the Church Commissioners, what (a) steps the Church of England is taking and (b) recent discussions the Church of England has had with the Foreign and Commonwealth Office on tackling the persecution of Christians throughout the world. [908609]

6. **Desmond Swayne (Conservative):** To ask the right hon. Member for Meriden, representing the Church Commissioners, what recent discussions the Church of England has had with the Foreign and Commonwealth Office on the persecution of Christians overseas. [908611]

8. **Bob Blackman (Conservative):** To ask the right hon. Member for Meriden, representing the Church Commissioners, what (a) steps the Church of England is taking and (b) recent discussions the Church of England has had with the Foreign and Commonwealth Office on tackling the persecution of Christians throughout the world. [908613]

9. **Kevin Foster (Conservative):** To ask the right hon. Member for Meriden, representing the Church Commissioners, what (a) steps the Church of England is taking and (b) recent discussions the Church of England has had with the Foreign and Commonwealth Office on tackling the persecution of Christians throughout the world. [908614]

12. **Diana Johnson (Labour):** To ask the right hon. Member for Meriden, representing the Church Commissioners, what (a) steps the Church of England is taking and (b) recent discussions the Church of England has had with the Foreign and Commonwealth Office on tackling the persecution of Christians throughout the world. [908617]

**The Second Church Estates Commissioner (Caroline Spelman):** I do realise that the grouping of these questions will make it sound rather like Foreign Office questions for Christianity—but then, the Anglican Communion is the third largest global organisation in the world, after the United Nations and the Catholic Church. The Church of England has regular discussions with the Foreign and Commonwealth Office on freedom of religion and belief. I am pleased to announce to the House that the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, my

right hon. Friend the Member for South West Surrey (Mr Hunt), invited the Bishop of Truro, before Christmas, to lead an independent review of UK Government support for persecuted Christians.

**Jeremy Lefroy:** The number of Members who attended the meeting in the House yesterday about the Open Doors report shows just what huge interest there is in this issue. It was very disturbing to hear about the significant increase in the persecution of Christians, and indeed of people of other faiths, in the past year or two. Will my right hon. Friend ensure that as the report is compiled, the bishop will talk with as many Members as possible? We hear from our constituents and from around the world about individual cases of persecution.

**Caroline Spelman:** I am delighted to give my hon. Friend that assurance. I, too, was really shocked by the report presented in Parliament yesterday, which shows that 40 countries out of the 50 on the Open Doors watch list are places where Christians experience very high or extreme levels of persecution. I shall go from this place to a meeting at the Foreign Office with the Foreign Secretary, as well as the bishop, and I will make that request directly to him.

**Henry Smith:** I am grateful to my right hon. Friend. I echo the remarks of my hon. Friend the Member for Stafford (Jeremy Lefroy) in welcoming the Open Doors “World Watch List” report, launched here in Parliament yesterday.

With regard to Commonwealth countries on the list, we heard, for example, some very harrowing reports of abuse against Christian communities in Nigeria. What effort can the Commonwealth side of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office make in helping to mitigate such persecution?

**Caroline Spelman:** Nigeria is high up the Open Doors watch list of countries where Christians suffer persecution. I am sorry to say that in the past year 3,731 Christians were reported killed by the activity of extremists in Nigeria. As it is a former dependency of the United Kingdom, the Government ought to have some way of having greater influence. I know that the Archbishop of Canterbury, who is knowledgeable about Nigeria, uses every endeavour to bring pressure on the Government of Nigeria to better protect the Christians in their country.

**Desmond Swayne:** What estimate has my right hon. Friend made of the willingness of International Development and Foreign Office Ministers to actually do something about the persecution of Christians and put it at the top of their priorities?

**Caroline Spelman:** I am delighted to be able to tell the House that since the last set of Church Commissioners questions, the hon. Member for Bishop Auckland (Helen Goodman) and I have paid a joint visit to a Minister of State at the Foreign Office to impress on him the importance of officials in the Foreign Office, the Department for International Development and other Government Departments, such as the Home Office, taking up the course for a better understanding of religious literacy. We were given assurances by the Minister that this would be impressed on officials.

**Bob Blackman:** I thank my right hon. Friend for her answers thus far. One area of the world where persecution is at its highest is Pakistan, where there have been a number of high profile cases. What is the Church doing to combat these terrible attacks on Christians, who just want to celebrate their religion?

**Caroline Spelman:** Pakistan is very high up on the Open Doors watch list of countries where Christians suffer persecution. I am sure that like me, my hon. Friend will have heard the case of Asia Bibi raised with the Prime Minister yesterday in the House. It is important not only that we look for a solution for her and her family that assures her protection, but that we remember that what we do on behalf of Christians in other countries can impact others around the world in the same way. The persecution of Christians in Pakistan is high on our agenda.

**Kevin Foster:** As has already been mentioned, yesterday saw the launch of the Open

Doors “World Watch List 2019” here in Parliament. Can my right hon. Friend advise me of what use the Church of England makes of the analysis of the trends in the persecution of Christians across the globe in its discussions with the Foreign and Commonwealth Office?

**Caroline Spelman:** Obviously the watch list is a useful guide to where the focus needs to be. The bishops take special interest in particular countries that are high up on that watch list. Bishops regularly pay visits to countries where Christians are persecuted. In fact, the bishop responsible for the plight of Christians in the middle east and Palestine is currently paying his regular annual visit to look at the decimation of the Christians in that region.

**Diana Johnson:** I was interested to hear that the right hon. Lady is about to meet the Secretary of State. He wrote over Christmas in *The Daily Telegraph*: “It is not in our national character to turn a blind eye to suffering”, and that the issue is about “our deeds as well as our words.”

Will the right hon. Lady say something about the deeds she would like to see from the Foreign Secretary?

**Caroline Spelman:** The Foreign Secretary has acted by bringing in a bishop—an independent person—to review the work of the Foreign Office in relation to the persecution of Christians abroad. Three areas will be assessed: the level of interaction between Churches and organisations overseas with British or foreign diplomatic missions in the protection of Christians; the experience of staff at the FCO, the Department for International Development and the Home Office, who may have been on the receiving end of approaches from Churches and other organisations seeking help for persecuted Christians; and the feedback of international organisations on British activities and an assessment of the approaches of other countries’ diplomatic missions to the persecution of Christians.

<https://hansard.parliament.uk/commons/2019-01-17/debates/58FA09C4-A14D-4CDB-927B-9A5850627249/PersecutionOfChristians>

*The report referred to above can be read at*

<https://www.opendoorsuk.org/persecution/resources/wwl-advocacy-report-2019.pdf?ns=uk-190117&nst=download%20the%20report&nsp=1>

## House of Commons Written Answer

### Members: Correspondence

**Alex Sobel (Labour Co-op) [208346]** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, with reference to the letter to him of 27 September 2018 from Marom UK on Marom Budapest and its community centre Aurora, what response he has made to that letter.

**Mark Field:** FCO officials met the Board of Deputies of British Jews on 9 January. The Board of Deputies made representations on behalf of the Marom organisation about the Aurora building in Budapest. A substantive response reflecting the outcome of the meeting was sent on 15 January 2019, that underlined that the UK remains committed to strengthening international co-operation across Europe to tackle antisemitism and ensure that the lessons of the Holocaust are never forgotten.

We welcome Hungary's stated commitment to address and eliminate antisemitism and all forms of racism.

<https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Commons/2019-01-14/208346/>

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

### UK Parliament

#### **Holocaust (Return of Cultural Objects) (Amendment) Bill**

<https://services.parliament.uk/Bills/2017-19/holocaustreturnofculturalobjectsamendment.html>

#### **International Development Assistance (Palestinian National Authority Schools) Bill**

<https://services.parliament.uk/Bills/2017-19/internationaldevelopmentassistancepalestiniannationalauthoritieschools.html>

#### **Marriage Act 1949 (Amendment) Bill**

<http://services.parliament.uk/bills/2017-19/marriageact1949amendment.html>

#### **Online Forums Bill**

<https://services.parliament.uk/Bills/2017-19/onlineforums.html>

#### **Organ Donation (Deemed Consent) Bill**

<http://services.parliament.uk/bills/2017-19/organdonationdeemedconsent.html>

#### **Palestinian Statehood (Recognition) Bill**

<https://services.parliament.uk/Bills/2017-19/palestinianstatehoodrecognition.html>

### Scottish Parliament

#### **Human Tissue (Authorisation) (Scotland) Bill**

<http://www.parliament.scot/parliamentarybusiness/Bills/108681.aspx>

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## Consultations \*\* new or updated today

#### **Extremism in England and Wales** (closing date 31 January 2019)

<https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/extremism-in-england-and-wales-call-for-evidence>

#### **Racial harassment in higher education** (closing date 15 February 2019)

<https://www.equalityhumanrights.com/en/inquiries-and-investigations/racial-harassment-higher-education-our-inquiry>

#### **Draft guidance to challenge bullying in schools** [Wales only] (closing date 15 February 2019)

<https://beta.gov.wales/draft-guidance-challenge-bullying-schools>

#### **One Scotland: Hate Has No Home Here** (closing date 24 February 2019)

<https://consult.gov.scot/hate-crime/consultation-on-scottish-hate-crime-legislation/>

**Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission – Draft Strategic Plan 2019-22**

(closing date 15 March 2019)

<http://www.nihrc.org/news/detail/ni-human-rights-commission-draft-strategic-plan-2019-2022-consultation>

**Scottish charity law** (closing date 1 April 2019)

<https://tinyurl.com/y9ln88df>

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