

# Political Affairs Digest

A daily summary of political events affecting the Jewish Community

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## Home Affairs

### House of Commons Written Answers

*The following three questions all received the same answer*

#### **Hate Crime**

**Chris Ruane (Labour) [4283]** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, pursuant to the Answer of 21 October 2019 to Question 433, on Hate Crime, what assessment she has made of the reasons for the increase in hate crimes recorded by the police on the grounds of (a) race, (b) religion, (c) sexual orientation, (d) disability and (e) transgender identity from 2011-12 to 2018-19; and if she will make a statement.

**Chris Ruane (Labour) [4284]** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps her Department is taking to reduce hate crime.

**Chris Ruane (Labour) [4285]** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what recent estimate she has made of rates of hate crime recorded by each territorial police force in each year for which data is available.

**Victoria Atkins:** Police recorded hate crime has increased since these figures were first collected by the Home Office in 2011-12. This is largely due to improvements in police recording practices and more victims coming forward to report, but also recognising spikes following incidents like terrorist attacks. Increased reporting is a key theme of the Hate Crime Action Plan, to help ensure that victims receive the support they need, and offenders are brought to justice.

Information on hate crime offences recorded by the police forces in England and Wales can be found in Appendix Table 1 of the Hate Crime, England and Wales, 2018/19 statistical bulletin available here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/hate-crime-england-and-wales-2018-to-2019>

In contrast, the Crime Survey for England and Wales (published last year) shows a downward trend in hate crime, which has fallen by 40% over the past decade.

We do however recognise that this might not be the experience within some communities, and that is why this Government remains committed to tackling all forms of hate crime.

The cross-Government Hate Crime Action Plan (Action Against Hate: The UK Government's plan for tackling hate crime) was published in 2016 and refreshed in

October last year. This plan has improved the response to all forms of hate crime and the refreshed publication ensures a renewed commitment that victims remain at the heart of our work.

Some commitments within the Action Plan include just over £1.5 million for projects to tackle racially and religiously motivated hatred, launch of a public awareness campaign and asking the Law Commission to review hate crime legislation, among other important initiatives.

Following the attacks in Christchurch, the former Home Secretary increased the funding for the Places of Worship Protective Security Funding Scheme to £1.6m for 2019/20, double the amount awarded last year, announced a new £5m security training scheme for places of worship and committed to a public consultation to understand what more could be done to protect faith institutions. In September, the Chancellor announced a further £3.2m for the fifth year of the Places of Worship Protective Security Funding Scheme for 2020/21.

<https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Commons/2019-10-23/4283/>

and

<https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Commons/2019-10-23/4284/>

and

<https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Commons/2019-10-23/4285/>

*The Action Plans referred to above can be read at*

[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/543679/Action\\_Against\\_Hate\\_-\\_UK\\_Government\\_s\\_Plan\\_to\\_Tackle\\_Hate\\_Crime\\_2016.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/543679/Action_Against_Hate_-_UK_Government_s_Plan_to_Tackle_Hate_Crime_2016.pdf)

*and*

[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/748175/Hate\\_crime\\_refresh\\_2018\\_FINAL\\_WEB.PDF](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/748175/Hate_crime_refresh_2018_FINAL_WEB.PDF)

*Information about the Places of Worship Protective Security Funding Scheme, referred to above, can be read at*

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/places-of-worship-security-funding-scheme>

### **Universities: Racial Discrimination**

**Jim Cunningham (Labour)** [4262] To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps he is taking to ensure that universities investigate all complaints made by students and staff about racism at universities.

**Chris Skidmore:** Racial harassment is unacceptable and we cannot tolerate staff and students being victims of it at our world-leading universities. There is no place in our society - including within higher education (HE) – for hatred or any form of harassment, discrimination or racism. Universities have clear responsibilities in this regard.

HE providers in England are independent and autonomous. They are responsible for addressing student complaints and for meeting their responsibilities under the Equality Act 2010. The government expects providers to discharge their responsibilities fully and have robust policies and procedures in place to handle student complaints, comply with the law and to investigate and swiftly address incidents reported to them.

Where a student complaint cannot be resolved through the institution's complaint processes, the student can ask for their complaint to be reviewed by the Office for the Independent Adjudicator (OIA) for HE in England. As a result of the government's recent HE reforms, all HE providers on the HE Regulator's register,

the Office for Students (OfS), are required to join the OIA.

The government will continue to work closely with partners, including Universities UK and the OfS, to drive progress on matters of racial harassment in HE.

<https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Commons/2019-10-23/4262/>

### **Universities: Racial Harassment**

**Paul Farrelly (Labour)** [4286] To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what assessment he has made of the implications for his policies of the Equality and Human Rights Commission's report entitled, Tackling harassment: universities challenged; and what steps he is taking to ensure that university staff receive adequate training to deal effectively with racial harassment.

**Chris Skidmore:** Racial harassment is unacceptable and we cannot tolerate staff and students being victims of it at our world-leading universities. There is no place in our society - including within higher education (HE) – for hatred or any form of harassment, discrimination or racism. Universities have clear responsibilities in this regard.

As independent institutions, HE providers are responsible for training and development opportunities available for their staff. We encourage providers to make use of tools such as the Race Equality Charter and the Race at Work Charter to identify and address institutional and cultural barriers that affect minority ethnic staff and students.

We will continue to work closely with partners, including Universities UK and the Office for Students on matters of harassment and hate crime in HE.

The Concordat to Support the Career Development of Researchers recognises the need to create and develop positive environments and cultures in which all researchers can flourish and achieve their full potential. This includes having effective policies and practice for tackling discrimination, bullying and harassment and providing appropriate support for those reporting issues.

By improving the representation, progression and success of minority ethnic staff within HE we can ensure that everyone who has the potential to thrive at university, both as a student and as a member of staff, does so.

<https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Commons/2019-10-23/4286/>

*The Charters referred to above can be read at*

<https://www.ecu.ac.uk/equality-charters/race-equality-charter/>

*and*

<https://race.bitc.org.uk/issues/racecharter>

*The Concordat referred to above can be read at*

[https://www.vitae.ac.uk/policy/concordat/Download\\_Concordat\\_Print-Ready/@@download/file/Researcher-Development-Concordat\\_PrintReady.pdf](https://www.vitae.ac.uk/policy/concordat/Download_Concordat_Print-Ready/@@download/file/Researcher-Development-Concordat_PrintReady.pdf)

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## **Israel**

### **House of Commons Written Answers**

#### **Imports: Occupied Territories**

**Matt Western (Labour)** [3812] To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, if she will bring forward legislative proposals to prohibit the import of goods produced in illegal

Israeli settlements in the occupied Palestinian territories.

**Conor Burns:** The Government has no plans to bring forward legislation on this subject.

<https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Commons/2019-10-22/3812/>

### **Egypt: Zionism**

**Jim Shannon (DUP)** [2727] To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, what discussions he has had with (a) the Secretary of State for Defence and (b) his Egyptian counterpart on that country's military objectives to defeat Zionism.

**Andrew Murrison:** The Foreign Secretary has not discussed this subject with the Secretary of State for Defence or his Egyptian counterpart. Egypt has had diplomatic relations with Israel since the signing of the Egypt-Israel Peace Treaty in 1979.

<https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Commons/2019-10-21/2727/>

## **House of Lords Written Answers**

### **Palestinians: Travel Restrictions**

**Baroness Tonge (Non-affiliated)** [HL58] To ask Her Majesty's Government what representations they have made to the government of Israel concerning Palestinians who live on the Jerusalem side of the separation barrier, are denied entry into Jerusalem without permits and have no freedom of movement in and out of the West Bank.

**Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon:** We remain deeply concerned about restrictions on freedom of movement and the severe difficulties of access to Jerusalem for Palestinians from the West Bank and residents of Jerusalem who live beyond the Separation Barrier. It remains difficult for Palestinians to enter East Jerusalem for work, education, medical treatment, or religious worship. Through our Embassy in Tel Aviv we have lobbied the authorities on this issue of movement and access and we will continue to lobby the Government of Israel at the highest level.

<https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Lords/2019-10-14/HL58/>

### **Palestinians: Prisoners**

**Baroness Tonge (Non-affiliated)** [HL60] To ask Her Majesty's Government what representations they will make to the government of Israel regarding allegations of torture of Palestinian prisoners in Israeli Administrative Detention including the case of Samer Arbeed.

**Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon:** The British Government has concerns about mistreatment of Palestinian detainees in Israeli prisons, and about Israel's respect of its obligations in this regard, as an Occupying Power, under applicable international law. We remain concerned about Israel's extensive use of administrative detention which, according to international law, should be used only when security concerns makes this absolutely necessary rather than as routine practice and as a preventive rather than a punitive measure. We continue to call on the Israeli authorities to comply with their obligations under international law and either charge or release detainees.

<https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Lords/2019-10-14/HL60/>

### **Gaza: Fisheries**

**Baroness Tonge (Non-affiliated)** [HL61] To ask Her Majesty's Government what steps they will take to protect fishermen in Gaza from nonproportional force being used against them by the Israeli navy for transgressing the Israeli imposed fishing zone.

**Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon:** The UK remains concerned about the use of live ammunition and excessive force by the Israel Defense Forces. While Israel has the right to self-defence, it is vital that its actions are proportionate and seek to avoid civilian casualties. We regularly raise with the Government of Israel the urgent need to ease all access and movement restrictions on Gaza, including fishing limits. This would help to restore the fishing industry as regular alterations to the zone, often as a punitive measure, cause uncertainty and insecurity. The UK would like to see a permanent increase in the size of the fishing zone off the coast of Gaza in line with the limit of 20 nautical miles stipulated in the Oslo accords.

<https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Lords/2019-10-14/HL61/>

### **Palestinians: Christianity**

**Baroness Tonge (Non-affiliated)** [HL62] To ask Her Majesty's Government what is their assessment of the prospects for Palestinian Christians living in East Jerusalem and the West Bank.

**Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon:** Our Embassy in Tel Aviv and Consulate General in Jerusalem raise issues of religious freedom with the Israeli government and Palestinian Authority. The UK recognises that Jerusalem holds particular significance for many groups, especially the three Abrahamic faiths.

<https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Lords/2019-10-14/HL62/>

### **Israel: Bedouin**

**Baroness Tonge (Non-affiliated)** [HL63] To ask Her Majesty's Government what is their assessment of the plan by Israeli authorities to relocate 36,000 Israeli Bedouin into camps.

**Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon:** We are aware of the Israeli Government's plan to relocate Bedouin into towns in the south of Israel. The UK calls on the Israeli authorities and Bedouin community to work together to find a solution that meets the needs and respects the rights of the people affected. This should include a robust planning process that adequately consults and addresses the needs of Israel's Bedouin communities.

<https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Lords/2019-10-14/HL63/>

## **Foreign and Commonwealth Office**

### **Moving towards viable peace in the Middle East: Statement by Ambassador Jonathan Allen, UK Deputy Permanent Representative to the UN, at the Security Council briefing on the Middle East**

Madam President, the UK remains concerned by the negative trends in Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territories. We continue to be deeply concerned by ongoing Israeli settlement advancements in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, in violation of international law. We urge Israel to fulfill its obligations as an occupying power under the Fourth Geneva Convention.

I would also reiterate here the United Kingdom's position that annexation of any part of the West Bank would be destructive to peace efforts and could not pass unchallenged. Annexation of territory by force is prohibited under international law.

Madam President, we are troubled by the increase in settler violence. Many recent incidents - including assaults on Palestinian farmers, the setting fire to olive trees and stealing of produce - have coincided with the Palestinian olive harvest, which began earlier this month. The Israeli authorities have a responsibility to provide appropriate protection to the Palestinian civilian population.

We are also extremely concerned that the number of structures demolished this year has increased by almost 40 percent compared to the same period last year. We condemn the demolition of Palestinian property and evictions of Palestinians from their homes.

Ongoing and periodic tensions on Haram al-Sharif, or Temple Mount, are a further source of concern. We recognize that Jerusalem holds huge significance and holiness for Jews, Muslims and Christians and reiterate the fundamental necessity of maintaining the status quo at the holy sites.

Turning to Gaza, Madam President, the reduction in violence at the border fence is welcome and we urge continued calm. Indiscriminate attacks against civilians are unacceptable and unjustifiable. Hamas and other terrorist groups must cease all actions which are violent or provocative. The United Kingdom fully supports Israel's right to defend its citizens from such acts of terror.

I would also like to echo the concern relayed by the special coordinator that Hamas is putting children at risk of violence at the demonstrations at the Gaza fence. Children should never be the target of violence. They must never be put at the risk of violence or encouraged to participate in violence. It is totally unacceptable that Hamas and their operatives have been cynically exploiting the protests for their own benefit. Hamas must cease all actions which proactively encourage violence or which put civilian lives at risk.

The United Kingdom underlines the damage that Israeli restrictions are doing to the living standards of ordinary Palestinians in Gaza. We call on Israel, the Palestinian Authority and Egypt to work together to ensure a durable solution.

In more positive developments, Madam President, we welcome the agreement between Israel and the Palestinian Authority on the transfer of tax revenues. We urge Israel and the Palestinian Authority to continue to work together to meet their obligations under the Oslo Accords. And we continue to urge the Palestinian Authority to make reforms to prisoner payments, ensuring it is needs-based, transparent and affordable.

Madam President, we welcome the work by the Palestinian leadership towards genuine and democratic national elections for all Palestinians.

Madam President, we need a viable Israeli-Palestinian peace agreement, which addresses the legitimate concerns of both parties. That means we need genuine and committed engagement from both Israelis and Palestinians, including the end of actions which undermine trust and threaten the viability of the two-state solution.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/moving-towards-viable-peace-in-the-middle-east>

## United Nations

### **Preventive Diplomacy Urgently Needed to Ensure Lasting Peace amid Dangerous Emerging Flashpoints, Special Coordinator Tells Security Council**

**Nickolay Mladenov, Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process ...**

[described] the Israeli-Palestinian conflict as “a multi-generational tragedy for the peoples of this land”, he emphasized the importance of settling it “as new dangerous flashpoints emerge in the region”. Recalling the announcement by Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas during the General Assembly that he intends to set a date for elections soon, he said “the international community should support this process if it strengthens national unity and not division”. For that to happen, agreement is needed across the Occupied Palestinian Territory, in accordance with relevant legislation, international best practices and an agreed national political platform based on existing agreements, he

affirmed. ...

Citing Israel's approval of additional settlement housing units, he reiterated that settlements are illegal under international law. Demolitions and seizures of Palestinian-owned structures also continue across the West Bank, he noted, calling upon Israel to stop such practices. However, there was a welcome reduction of violence in the Gaza Strip ...

He went on to reiterate concerns over the impact of such demonstrations on children, stressing Israel's responsibility for restraint and that of Hamas to ensure their safety by preventing them from being "used and exposed to the risk of violence". Six rockets were launched from Gaza during the reporting period, but no fires were caused by incendiary balloons, he said. In the West Bank, meanwhile, two Palestinians, including one infant, died after inhaling tear gas and 88 were injured in various incidents, including violence by settlers. ... Expressing particular concern over settler violence during the olive harvest, he described an alarming incident on 16 October in which Palestinian, Israeli and foreign volunteers were injured. ...

As for the situation in Gaza, he ... welcomed the Palestinian Cabinet's 21 October decision to advance civil status laws in favour of women, while expressing concern over its blocking of websites deemed critical of the Palestinian Authority. ...

**Riyad H. Mansour, Permanent Observer for the State of Palestine**, noted the monthly reports of the worsening situation as Israel, the occupying Power, intensifies its illegal occupation and colonization. ... International law is clear, the parameters of a just solution are clear and there is no alternative to the vision of two States based on the 1967 lines ... In the absence of serious action, however, the alternative is rapidly unfolding, he said, describing it as an apartheid State in control of the lives of millions who are violently and unjustly deprived of their fundamental human rights. The occupying Power has been led to believe it has carte blanche to act as a State above the law, he added, noting that it goes so far as to openly threaten to annex land in flagrant breach of the universal prohibition on the acquisition of territory by force ...

Should Israel continue to defy the Council and the will of the international community, it must bear the consequences of its violations, he continued, stressing that all legitimate tools must be used, including sanctions and court prosecutions, to ensure accountability. ...

**Danny Danon (Israel)**, outlining major recent events in the Middle East, recalled that in a shocking recent aggression, President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan of Turkey launched a military operation in northern Syria ... the President not only massacres Kurds in his own country, but is now doing so in neighbouring countries ... those actions have allowed members of Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL/Da'esh) to break out of prison ... Against that backdrop, it is a disgrace that the Council continues to target Israel, recycling old arguments, rather than focusing on the devastation and ethnic cleansing currently being caused by Turkey ...

The international community must come together to restore stability to the Middle East, he added ...

**Naledi Pandor, Minister for International Relations and Cooperation of South Africa** and Council President for October ... [said] the failure to resolve the plight of the Palestinians is a "profound mark" against the Council. Noting that South Africa's own struggles were advanced by United Nations action and determination to end a crime against humanity, she emphasized the need for similar vigorous international solidarity, indignation and commitment for Palestine. ...

... South Africa is gravely concerned about the continued disregard for the long-standing Middle East peace process through the systematic foreclosing of the final status issues, particularly the borders, the return of refugees, the status of Jerusalem and the "ever-expanding illegal settlements". ...

**Kelly Craft (United States)** said ... the matter before the Council today receives a

disproportionate amount of attention, and the relevant debates are unfairly negative and one-sided. Hamas continues to commit and incite violence, posing one of the largest obstacles to peace and prosperity for the Palestinians, she said. ... Urging all Member States to condemn the group's behaviour, she said its members blindly fire hundreds of unguided rockets into Israel that are just as likely to hit a child as an adult. Every Friday, Hamas encourages minors to join protests at the security fence, hoping that one will be injured, in order to feed its propaganda campaign ...

**Nicolas De Rivière (France)**, condemning all who violate Israel's security, warned the parties to avoid escalating the situation and diminishing the viability of a two-State solution. ... Welcoming plans to hold free and fair elections across the Occupied Palestinian Territory, he said that process should be part of an intra-Palestinian reconciliation process. He also welcomed the recent initial agreement between Israel and the Palestinian Authority on the payment of revenues, but expressed worry about the former's continuing settlement activities and its announcement of plans for a future annexation of parts of the West Bank. ...

**Vassily A. Nebenzia (Russian Federation)** warned against recent attempts to distract the Council's attention from the Israeli-Palestinian conflict in favour of "artificially inflated subjects" ... He went on to describe recent United States policies — including its recognition of Israel's sovereignty over the Golan Heights — as a gross breach of international law. ...

**Jonathan Guy Allen (United Kingdom)** called upon Israel to desist from settlement construction and annexation and to address violence by settlers. He also called for maintaining the status quo governing religious sites. Reiterating the need to refrain from injuring civilians at the Gaza security fence, he said it is unacceptable for Hamas to expose children to violence there. He went on to welcome Israel's transfer of tax revenues to the Palestinian Authority and urged continued efforts to meet all requirements of the Oslo Accords in that area. ...

**To read the full press release see**

<https://www.un.org/press/en/2019/sc13997.doc.htm>

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

### **UK Parliament**

#### **Divorce, Dissolution and Separation Bill**

<https://services.parliament.uk/Bills/2019-20/divorcedissolutionandseparation.html>

#### **Domestic Abuse Bill**

<https://services.parliament.uk/Bills/2019-20/domesticabuse.html>

### **Scottish Parliament**

#### **Civil Partnership (Scotland) Bill**

<https://www.parliament.scot/parliamentarybusiness/Bills/112997.aspx>

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## Consultations

\*\* new or updated today

**Welsh Government Strategic Equality Objectives 2020-24** (closing date 19 November 2019)

<https://gov.wales/sites/default/files/consultations/2019-09/strategic-equality-objectives-2020-2024-consultation.pdf>

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