



Political Affairs Digest

A daily summary of political events affecting the Jewish Community

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Universities: Antisemitism

Baroness Deech (Crossbench) [HL914] To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the decision by the Vice-Chancellor of the University of Warwick not to adopt the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance definition of antisemitism following reports of antisemitic incidents at that University and the call by the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government for cuts to funding of those universities that fail to adopt the definition.

Viscount Younger of Leckie: There is no place in our society - including within higher education – for hatred or any form of harassment, discrimination or racism, including antisemitism.

In October this year the Communities Secretary wrote to all universities to urge them to adopt the IHRA definition of antisemitism. This followed a letter from the Universities Minister in May regarding antisemitism in higher education.

We expect all Higher Education Providers to discharge their responsibilities fully and to have robust policies and procedures in place to comply with the law, to investigate and swiftly address hate crime, including any antisemitic incidents that are reported. We will continue to work with universities to ensure we stamp out antisemitism in all its forms.

That is why we will be providing an additional £500,000 of government funding to allow 200 university students each year to visit Auschwitz-Birkenau, to hear from the last Holocaust survivors and to help educate students on the importance of continuing to tackle antisemitism on campuses.

<https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Lords/2020-01-29/HL914/>

Faith Schools: Peterborough

Lord Watson of Invergowrie (Labour) [HL730] Her Majesty's Government what discussions they had with Peterborough Council prior to that authority's decision to plan to open the first fully religiously selective Government-funded faith school since 2010.

Lord Agnew of Oulton: It has always been possible to establish new schools that can prioritise up to 100% of admissions on the basis of faith criteria and a number of these have opened since 2010. It is for a schools admissions authority to decide whether they will use faith-based admissions criteria or not. Regarding Peterborough City Council's decision to approve the proposals for a new Catholic voluntary aided school on 6 January 2020, we gave approval in principle in June 2019 to provide funding to the Roman Catholic Diocese of East Anglia (RCDEA) for a new Catholic primary school. The department publishes guidance on how to take these decisions in the opening and closing maintained schools guidance. Local authorities are best placed to decide whether a proposed school meets the needs of its local community. Guidance is attached and available from: https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/school-organisation-maintained-schools/HL730_guidance

<https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Lords/2020-01-22/HL730/>

Welsh Government Fol Release

Fol 13684: re: 'ensuring access to the full curriculum'

<https://gov.wales/sites/default/files/publications/2020-02/ATISN%2013684%20%20-%20Doc%201.pdf>

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Holocaust

See the House of Lords written answer "Universities: Antisemitism" which has been included in the "Home Affairs" section above.

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Israel

House of Commons Written Answers

Israel: Bedouin

Anneliese Dodds (Labour Co-op) [12371] To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, pursuant to the Answer of 28 January 2020 to Question 5527 on Israel: West Bank, how many of the cases funded through the Government's legal aid programme to Bedouin communities and Palestinians facing demolition or eviction have been (a) successful and (b) unsuccessful in preventing demolition or eviction.

Andrew Murrison: Of those cases provided with legal representation through our legal aid programme, 97 per cent have resulted in suspension of demolitions and evictions, allowing Palestinians to remain in their homes.

<https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Commons/2020-02-04/12371/>

The answer referred to above can be read at

<https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Commons/2020-01-20/5527/>

Israel: Palestinians

Anneliese Dodds (Labour Co-op) [12372] To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, pursuant to the oral contribution of 30 January 2020 of the Minister for the Middle East and North Africa, Official Report column 935, on Middle East Peace Plan, what steps in addition to condemnation he plans to take in the event that annexation occurs.

Andrew Murrison: As the Foreign Secretary set out in Parliament on 4 February, any move to unilaterally annex territory would be contrary to international law, damaging to peace efforts, and could not pass unchallenged. Although we will not discuss possible responses to hypothetical situations, we call on all parties to refrain from actions that would imperil the viability of a two-state solution, based on the 1967 lines, and make it harder to achieve a just and lasting peace.

<https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Commons/2020-02-04/12372/>

The oral contribution referred to above can be read at

<https://hansard.parliament.uk/commons/2020-01-30/debates/EECA3331-80B3-45C5-B823-95564EE73495/MiddleEastPeacePlan#contribution-28E36DB8-69C3-499D-844F-431C4BBBD43B>

Israel: West Bank

Anneliese Dodds (Labour Co-op) [12373] To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, pursuant to the Answer of 28 January 2020 to Question 5527 on Israel: West Bank, to what essential infrastructure the UK has allocated that funding for vulnerable Palestinians in Area C.

Andrew Murrison: The UK has allocated funding towards supporting around 124 Palestinian communities in Area C and East Jerusalem through needs-based and emergency services. This helps provide pre-fabricated residential, livelihood and agricultural structures. Funding has also been used to provide off grid energy to 50 households in Area C through the installation of 30 renewable energy systems.

<https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Commons/2020-02-04/12373/>

The answer referred to above can be read at

<https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Commons/2020-01-20/5527/>

Israel: Palestinians

Anneliese Dodds (Labour Co-op) [12374] To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, pursuant to the Answer of 28 January 2020 to Question 5529 on Israel: Palestinians, whether the Government plans to replicate the provisions of the Russia (Sanctions) (EU Exit) Regulations 2019 in relation to Israel in the event that part of the Occupied Palestinian Territories is annexed.

Andrew Murrison: We have made clear our deep concern about the suggestion that any parts of the Occupied Palestinian Territories should be annexed. As the Foreign Secretary set out in Parliament on 4 February, any move to unilaterally annex territory would be contrary to international law, damaging to peace efforts, and could not pass unchallenged. Although we will not discuss possible responses to hypothetical situations, we call on all parties to refrain from actions that would imperil the viability of a two-state solution, based on the 1967 lines, and make it harder to achieve a just and lasting peace.

<https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Commons/2020-02-04/12374/>

The answer referred to above can be read at

<https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Commons/2020-01-20/5529/>

The Foreign Secretary's statement referred to above can be read at <https://hansard.parliament.uk/commons/2020-02-04/debates/9F34A0FA-A2FE-4390-B7DA-723A9B2EAC88/MiddleEastPeacePlan>

Israel: Palestinians

Afzal Khan (Labour) [12451] To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, what steps he is taking to support a two-state solution for Israel and Palestine.

Andrew Murrison: The UK is committed to making progress towards a two-state solution. We consistently call for an immediate end to all actions that undermine the viability of the two-state solution, including terrorism, anti-Semitic incitement, settlement expansion, and the demolition of Palestinian property in the West Bank. Steps to transform the situation in Gaza are also needed. We have a regular dialogue with both the Palestinian Authority and the Government of Israel at all levels. We are encouraging both sides to maintain calm and avoid taking actions which make peace more difficult to achieve. We continue to work closely with international partners strongly advocating a two-state solution and encouraging a return to meaningful negotiations between both parties.

<https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Commons/2020-02-04/12451/>

House of Lords Written Answers

Gaza: Armed Conflict

Baroness Tonge (Non-affiliated) [HL816] Her Majesty's Government what estimate they have made of (1) the number of civilian deaths, and (2) the amount of damage to civilian structures, in Gaza caused by bombing by the Israel Defence Force in 2020 to date.

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: We are very concerned at the numbers of Palestinians killed by Israel Defense Forces in the West Bank and Gaza. We have raised the issue with the Israeli authorities, encouraging them to carry out transparent investigations into whether the use of live fire had been appropriate. We have also stressed the importance of the Israeli security forces providing appropriate protection to the Palestinian civilian population. Any attacks targeted against civilians are unlawful and unjustifiable. While Israel has a legitimate right to self-defence, it is vital that all its actions are proportionate, in line with International Humanitarian Law, and are calibrated to avoid civilian casualties.

<https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Lords/2020-01-27/HL816/>

Gaza: Floods

Baroness Tonge (Non-affiliated) [HL817] Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the damage caused to (1) crops, and (2) livestock, in Gaza following the release of water from rainwater collection dams by the government of Israel.

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: While we have not made an assessment of this situation, we remain concerned about the quality and quantity of water available to residents of Gaza and the West Bank. The fair and effective distribution of shared water resources across the Middle East is of great concern to us. These resources are limited and therefore require the effective co-operation of all parties to manage them in such a manner that ensures there will be enough for all. The UK continues

to encourage Israel to lift its restrictions and take appropriate steps in order to ease the suffering of ordinary Palestinians.

<https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Lords/2020-01-27/HL817/>

Khalida Jarrar

Baroness Tonge (Non-affiliated) [HL818] Her Majesty's Government what representations they have made to the government of Israel about the treatment of Khalida Jarrar during her recent detention by that government.

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: While we have not made any representations to the Government of Israel on this specific case, we have concerns about mistreatment of Palestinian detainees in Israeli prisons, and about Israel's respect of its obligations as an occupying power, under applicable international law. Officials from our Embassy in Tel Aviv have raised the treatment of Palestinians in Israeli prisons with the Israeli authorities, most recently on 16 December 2019. We emphasise the importance of treating prisoners and detainees humanely and in accordance with international law.

<https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Lords/2020-01-27/HL818/>

West Bank: Schools

Baroness Tonge (Non-affiliated) [HL819] Her Majesty's Government what representations they plan to make to the government of Israel about reports of a raid on a school in Deir Nizam on 19 January.

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: While we have not raised this case specifically, we regularly raise our concerns with the Israeli authorities about Israel's use of force in the Occupied Palestinian Territories. We have stressed the importance of the Israeli security forces providing appropriate protection to the Palestinian civilian population, in particular the need to protect children.

<https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Lords/2020-01-27/HL819/>

Israel: Bedouin

Baroness Tonge (Non-affiliated) [HL820] Her Majesty's Government what representations they are making to the government of Israel about the stopping of school buses serving villages in the southern Negev region by that government.

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: We are following the issue of unresolved Bedouin land claims, unrecognised Bedouin villages in the Negev and lack of or interruption to basic services. We continue to encourage the Israeli authorities and Bedouin communities to engage in dialogue to find satisfactory solutions.

<https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Lords/2020-01-27/HL820/>

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Relevant Legislation ** new or updated today

UK Parliament

Assisted Dying Bill

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

Divorce, Dissolution and Separation Bill

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

Education (Assemblies) Bill

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

Genocide Determination Bill

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

Marriage Act 1949 (Amendment) Bill

<https://services.parliament.uk/Bills/2019-20/marriageact1949amendment.html>

Marriage and Civil Partnership (Minimum Age) Bill

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

Scottish Parliament

Civil Partnership (Scotland) Bill

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

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Consultations

** new or updated today

Harassment and sexual misconduct in higher education (closing date 27 March 2020)

<https://www.officeforstudents.org.uk/media/76f6bdd3-bb14-4956-b089-cd1598323d55/consultation-on-harassment-and-sexual-misconduct-in-higher-education.pdf>

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