



Political Affairs Digest

A daily summary of political events affecting the Jewish Community

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House of Commons Oral Answers

Covid-19

Robin Millar (Conservative): ... Will [the Minister] please offer some guidance to the large number of religious communities—churches, mosques, gurdwaras—on what actually constitutes a large gathering of people?

Matt Hamncock: We address that in the advice, and this is a very important point. We have taken advice on how to respond to the crisis, including from our ethics committee, which includes representatives of the major religious faiths. It is true that we include religious groups in our advice about social contact. We have seen from elsewhere in the world how sometimes it is through religious gatherings that the virus can spread so, with the deepest regret and the heaviest of heart, we include faith groups and gatherings of faith within the advice.

<https://hansard.parliament.uk/commons/2020-03-16/debates/235689EC-0A18-4488-BFCF-9F012A1A0C1B/Covid-19#contribution-0C812EED-E27C-41E7-8983-DD345ADE8949>

Covid-19

Naz Shah (Labour): Lots of my constituents in Bradford West in the Muslim and Jewish communities have concerns about burials because they want to bury as soon as somebody dies. Given that we might sadly lose people to the virus, what conversations has the Secretary of State had with religious institutions across the country in that regard?

Matt Hancock: The Communities Secretary leads on that question, because ultimately local authorities have an incredibly important role to play in making sure that such things happen smoothly. There are further powers in the Bill. The detail of those will be published tomorrow to try to make sure we have what we need to address that difficult situation.

<https://hansard.parliament.uk/commons/2020-03-16/debates/235689EC-0A18-4488-BFCF-9F012A1A0C1B/Covid-19#contribution-26C5E139-4D28-43E1-B09D-8BD7E15BC1EF>

House of Commons Written Answer

Meat: Ritual Slaughter

Christian Wakeford (Conservative) [27039] To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps the Government is taking to ensure that religious exemptions for the slaughter of meat and poultry are (a) maintained and (b) protected.

Victoria Prentis: The Government accepts the right of Muslims and Jews to eat meat killed in accordance with their religious beliefs.

Since 1933 there have been provisions in UK law that permit the slaughter of animals without prior stunning in order to meet Jewish and Islamic religious requirements.

The Government has adopted stricter national regulations over the years which ensure extensive protections for animals slaughtered without stunning in accordance with religious rites. These are set down in the Welfare of Animals at Time of Killing (England) Regulations 2015. These regulations continue to ensure that religious exemptions are maintained and protected.

<https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Commons/2020-03-09/27039/>

House of Lords Written Answer

Religious Hatred: Islam

Lord Bourne of Aberystwyth (Conservative) [HL2044] To ask Her Majesty's Government what progress they have made in respect of their commitment to publish a definition of Islamophobia.

The Earl of Courtown: This Government remains committed to stamping out anti-Muslim hatred and all forms of hate crime. It is unacceptable for anyone to feel unsafe while practicing their religion and we continue to take a zero-tolerance approach to Islamophobia.

The definition proposed by the APPG is not in line with the Equality Act 2010 and could have consequences for freedom of speech. We recognise the importance of this matter and will interrogate the issue in further detail.

<https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Lords/2020-03-02/HL2044/>

Information about the APPG definition can be read at

<https://static1.squarespace.com/static/599c3d2febbd1a90cffdd8a9/t/5bfd1ea3352f531a6170ceee/1543315109493/Islamophobia+Defined.pdf>

Charity Commission

Decision: Charity Inquiry: Chabad UK (1118547) and seven other charities

... On 13 June 2014, the Commission opened a class statutory inquiry under section 46 of the Charities Act 2011 ('the Act'), following the receipt of information from the Metropolitan Police London Regional Asset Recovery Team ('RART') that they were conducting an investigation into the eight charities, as there was suspicion that they were being used as a conduit to launder the financial proceeds of crime. ...

The inquiry did not include the investigation of any criminal offences that may have been committed, these were investigated by the police. ...

Bank records showed that over £9million had passed through the charities' bank accounts

between January 2012 and May 2014. However, these sums had not all been accurately disclosed to the Commission in the charities' annual returns for the relevant periods. Pikuach Nefesh Limited declared an income of £312,198 and expenditure of £283,702 for the financial year ending 31 May 2012 and all the other charities either stated nil income and expenditure or did not submit an annual return for these years.

The inquiry established that the Commission had been provided with false or misleading information about the charities' annual returns as a result of the discrepancy between some of the information provided to the Commission and the charities' bank account statements. This was a clear breach of the trustees' duties and was mismanagement and/or misconduct. ...

The trustees' failure to comply with other statutory requirements also amounted to a breach of the trustees' duties and was also mismanagement and/or misconduct. ...

Analysis of the charities' bank accounts revealed that payments totalling £60,850 had been made to a trustee between 2007 and 2014. The inquiry has seen no evidence in the charities' records to justify these payments, and no record of any repayment of these funds to the charities by the trustee. This may therefore have been in breach of the charities' own governing documents and a breach of trust. ...

As a result of their involvement in mismanagement and/or misconduct, in 2016 two trustees (who at some stage had been trustees for each of the eight charities) were removed as trustees of Chabad UK under section 79(2)(a) of the Act. Consequently, under section 178 of the Act, they are disqualified from acting as a charity trustee or trustee of any charity (or acting in a role involving senior management functions) in the future.

The inquiry was then placed on hold from 27 April 2016 pending the outcome of the police investigation. ...

On 21 June 2019, the manager of the charities (who was also connected to a former trustee) was convicted of an offence under section 60 of the Act for providing false or misleading information to the Commission, two charges of money laundering, theft (of approximately £165,000) and fraud, for which he received a total prison sentence of nine years and nine months, including fifteen months for the section 60 offence.

The inquiry closed with the publication of this report. However, the Commission is still considering its options in relation to the recovery of charitable funds, including those held in a number of the charities' bank accounts and currently restrained by a court order under section 41 of the Proceeds of Crime Act 2002. The Commission will ensure that, where possible, any charitable donations recovered are transferred to another charity to be spent in accordance with the charitable objects to which they were initially given. The Commission will consider removing the charities from the register once this has concluded. ...

The charities were used for a non-charitable purpose and as a conduit to launder the proceeds of crime. The inquiry found that the trustees had failed to meet their statutory reporting requirements, as false or misleading information had been provided, and this was serious mismanagement and/or misconduct by the trustees in the governance and administration of the charities. ...

To read the full report see

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/charity-inquiry-chabad-uk-and-seven-other-connected-charities/charity-inquiry-chabad-uk-and-seven-other-charities>

Tell MAMA

The Impact of Christchurch Terror Attack | Tell MAMA Interim report 2019

... Key Findings

- In the week following the terror attacks in Christchurch, incidents reported to Tell MAMA increased by 692%, with 12 incidents recorded in the previous week (March

8 – 14) and 95 the following week (March 15 – 21).

- The terror attacks at two mosques in Christchurch, New Zealand had a significant effect in the UK, resulting in a rapid but long-lasting increase in anti-Muslim hatred and Islamophobia. ...

Communities Secretary Robert Jenrick said: “I am appalled that reported incidents of hatred aimed at Muslims in Britain have increased. All hate crime is completely unacceptable and I am determined to tackle this problem at its root.

“This Government has put millions into protecting all places of worship and we will continue to fund projects that help to challenge prejudice and discrimination.

“As we mark the anniversary of the terrible tragedy in Christchurch, let me be clear that there is no place for anti-Muslim hatred in Britain. As Communities Secretary, I will do everything in my power to stamp out hatred in all its forms, wherever it appears.”

To read the full press release see

<https://tellmamauk.org/the-impact-of-the-christchurch-terror-attack/>

The Impact of Christchurch Terror Attack | Tell MAMA Interim report 2019

<https://www.tellmamauk.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/The-Impact-of-the-ChristChurch-Attack-Tell-MAMA-Interim-Report-2019-PP.pdf>

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Holocaust

House of Lords Written Answer

Genocide

Lord Bourne of Aberystwyth (Conservative) [HL2040] To ask Her Majesty's Government what steps they are taking to ensure the appropriate remembrance of genocide.

The Earl of Courtown: Since 2001, the Government has supported and promoted Holocaust Memorial Day which commemorates the six million Jewish men, women and children murdered during the Holocaust as well as all victims of Nazi persecution, and victims of the genocides in Cambodia, Rwanda, Bosnia and Darfur.

The Government continues to support the Remembering Srebrenica charity in all that it does to commemorate the victims of the Srebrenica genocide, particularly as this year marks the 25th anniversary of the tragedy. Our plans for a new Memorial next to Parliament will provide a powerful focal point for national Holocaust remembrance and education, and the learning centre will educate visitors about the Holocaust and subsequent genocides.

<https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Lords/2020-03-02/HL2040/>

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House of Lords Written Answers

Israel: Palestinians

Baroness Tonge (Non-affiliated) [HL2103] To ask Her Majesty's Government, further to the Written Answer by Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon on 24 February (HL1545), what representations they have made to the government of Israel about the killing of a Palestinian policeman on 6 February who was on duty inside a police station in Jenin.

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: The UK is very concerned at the high numbers of Palestinians killed by Israel Defense Forces in the West Bank and Gaza. We have raised this issue with the Israeli authorities, encouraging them to carry out transparent investigations into whether the use of live fire had been appropriate. We call on Israel to adhere to the principles of necessity and proportionality when defending its legitimate security interest.

<https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Lords/2020-03-02/HL2103/>

The answer referred to above can be read at

<https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Lords/2020-02-11/HL1545/>

Israel: Palestinians

Baroness Tonge (Non-affiliated) [HL2105] To ask Her Majesty's Government what representations they intend to make to the government of Israel about reports that Israeli forces fired at a car containing Palestinian youths and wounded a 16 year old, because those forces believed that the car was being driven in a suspicious manner.

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: While we have not made any representations on this specific incident, we are aware of these reports. The UK has repeatedly made clear to Israel our longstanding concerns about the manner in which the Israel Defense Forces operate in the Occupied Palestinian Territories, including the use of live ammunition, encouraging them to carry out transparent investigations into whether the use of live fire had been appropriate.

<https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Lords/2020-03-02/HL2105/>

Gaza: Poverty

Baroness Tonge (Non-affiliated) [HL2106] To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the situation in Gaza following reports that 5,000 factories have been shut due to the Israeli blockade and that 85 per cent of those living in Gaza are now living below the poverty line.

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: The UK remains deeply concerned about the dire economic and humanitarian situation in Gaza. We continue to stress to the Israeli authorities the damage that their restrictions are doing to the living standards of ordinary Palestinians in Gaza. Ultimately, Gaza's immense challenges can only be resolved through a settlement of the conflict.

<https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Lords/2020-03-02/HL2106/>

Latin Patriarchate of Jerusalem

Baroness Tonge (Non-affiliated) [HL2107] To ask Her Majesty's Government what representations they have made to the government of Israel about reports that Israeli settlers have (1) intruded in, and (2) damaged, private land and property belonging to the

Latin Patriarchate in Tayasir in the northern West Bank.

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: While we have not made representations on this specific issue, we condemn all settler violations of private property rights in the Occupied Palestinian Territories. We have also stressed the importance of Israeli security forces providing appropriate protection to the Palestinian civilian population.

<https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Lords/2020-03-02/HL2107/>

Israel: Palestinians

Baroness Tonge (Non-affiliated) [HL2192] To ask Her Majesty's Government what representations they have made to the government of Israel about reports that the Israel Defence Forces pushed concrete blocks at speed towards Palestinian protestors using a bulldozer through a Palestinian village.

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: While we have not made representations on this specific issue, we have repeatedly made clear to Israel our longstanding concerns about the manner in which the Israel Defense Forces police non-violent protests, including the use of live ammunition. We did so most recently at the UN Security Council on 21 January. We call on Israel to adhere to the principles of necessity and proportionality when defending its legitimate security interest.

<https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Lords/2020-03-03/HL2192/>

The statement to the Security Council, referred to above, can be read at

<https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/peace-for-both-israelis-and-palestinians-is-long-overdue>

Israel: Palestinians

Baroness Tonge (Non-affiliated) [HL2193] To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of reports that 19 Palestinians have lost one or both eyes as a result of being fired at by Israeli forces.

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: While we have not made representations on these reports, we have repeatedly made clear to the Israeli authorities our longstanding concerns about the manner in which the Israel Defense Forces police non-violent protests and the border areas, including the use of live ammunition. We encourage them to carry out transparent investigations into whether the use of live fire had been appropriate and call on Israel to adhere to the principles of necessity and proportionality when defending its legitimate security interest.

<https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Lords/2020-03-03/HL2193/>

Israeli Settlements: Palestinians

Baroness Tonge (Non-affiliated) [HL2194] To ask Her Majesty's Government what representations they have made to the government of Israel about reports that settler-only roads have been created in the West Bank.

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: While we have not made representations on this specifically, we continue to oppose settlement expansion in the OPTs. Our policy is clear: settlements are illegal under international law. On 24 February, the Minister for the Middle East and North Africa condemned the advancement of 1,077 housing units in East Jerusalem, reiterating settlement construction undermines the viability of a future Palestinian State. On 28 February a Foreign and Commonwealth Office spokesperson expressed concern over the advancement of 1,737 housing units in settlements across the West Bank. Officials from our Embassy in Tel Aviv have

also raised our concerns about restrictions on freedom of movement in the West Bank with the Israeli authorities, most recently on 17 December 2019.

<https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Lords/2020-03-03/HL2194/>

The statements referred to above can be read at

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/israeli-settlements-february-2020-uk-statement>
and

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/israel-and-opts-uk-expresses-concern-over-announcement-of-new-israeli-settlements>

Israeli Settlements: Palestinians

Baroness Tonge (Non-affiliated) [HL2195] To ask Her Majesty's Government what representations they have made to the government of Israel about the protection of Palestinian property from Israeli settlers in the West Bank.

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: We condemn any incidents of destruction of Palestinian property by settlers. We welcome the efforts of Israeli authorities to address settler attacks, and urge them to thoroughly investigate every instance to bring those responsible to justice and end the culture of impunity. We have also stressed the importance of Israeli security forces providing appropriate protection to the Palestinian civilian population. Officials from our Embassy in Tel Aviv last raised the issue of settler violence with the Israeli authorities on 17 December 2019.

<https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Lords/2020-03-03/HL2195/>

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Other Relevant Information

European Commission against Racism and Intolerance (ECRI)

Report on Germany

<https://rm.coe.int/ecri-report-on-germany-sixth-monitoring-cycle-/16809ce4be>

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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>

Hate crime legislation in Northern Ireland: an independent review (closing date 31 March 2020)

<https://www.hatecrimereviewni.org.uk/sites/hcr/files/media-files/Consultation%20Paper%20Feb%202020.pdf>

Electing a more diverse Assembly (closing date 22 April 2020)

<http://www.senedd.assembly.wales/mgConsultationDisplay.aspx?ID=389>

Amendments to the organ donation regulations (Wales) (closing date 30 April 2020)

<https://gov.wales/amendments-organ-donation-regulations>

Regulating Independent Educational Institutions (closing date 8 May 2020)

<https://consult.education.gov.uk/school-frameworks/regulating-independent-education-institutions/>

Protecting places of worship (closing date 10 May 2020)

<https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/protecting-places-of-worship-consultation>

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