



Political Affairs Digest

A daily summary of political events affecting the Jewish Community

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Ministry of Housing, Communities, and Local Government

Government sets out plans to ensure bereaved families can attend funerals during pandemic

Local Government Minister Simon Clarke ... wrote to all councils in England to ensure that family members can attend the funerals of their loved ones and that the wishes of the deceased are respected during this pandemic.

The government has consistently been clear that it is important that funerals are not delayed and take place in line with social distancing guidelines – to protect both those attending and staff.

In a letter to councils Local Government Minister Simon Clarke MP asked all local authorities to work with faith groups and funeral directors to develop safe, sensitive and innovative ways for funerals to take place. ...

Secretary of State Robert Jenrick MP said: It is only right that families have a final opportunity to pay their last respects to those they love at this incredibly difficult time.

Close family must be able to attend funerals in person during this pandemic and can safely do so by following in line with social distancing guidelines. We will continue to work closely with councils to ensure that safe and sensitive measures are put in place all across the country.

Local Government Minister Simon Clarke MP said: Nobody wants to have to consider funeral plans for a loved one at this difficult time - but it's important that funerals are not delayed.

Many councils have already put in place innovative arrangements so funerals can take place in a safe and sensitive fashion. I want all councils to consider how best to facilitate funerals so close family can attend and mourn their loved ones in an appropriate way. This will help to ensure that people can be laid to rest with dignity, and that their final wishes and beliefs are respected while we protect the public from the spread of coronavirus.

The government has also published new guidance for councils which outlines contingency measures as set out in Schedule 28 of the Coronavirus Act.

These powers allow councils to issue direction if required on whether to bury or cremate someone, to direct crematoria to operate longer hours and to direct funeral directors to

have shorter services.

The government has always been clear that these will only be triggered in exceptional circumstances if there is a public health risk.

The government has worked closely with faith groups to ensure religious requirements and wishes are considered when making funeral arrangements, including the need for burial or cremation. ...

To read the full press release see

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/government-sets-out-plans-to-ensure-bereaved-families-can-attend-funerals-during-pandemic>

Coronavirus (COVID-19): letter to local authorities to work with faith groups and funeral directors

... Losing a loved one is difficult and painful at any time, but during this pandemic it is even more so. Families should have the opportunity to pay their final respects to those they love, and it is important that people can be laid to rest with dignity and that their final wishes are respected. Funerals are an important part of the grieving process for the bereaved to allow families and loved ones to say goodbye and respect the wishes, religion and beliefs of the deceased. ... By working in partnership with the bereaved and local partners, including faith groups where relevant, you can identify ways to deliver services in a safe, practical and meaningful way, allowing the bereaved to mourn their loved ones while maintaining the safety of staff. ...

To read the full letter see

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/880108/Letter_from_Minister_Simon_Clarke.pdf

Section 58 and Schedule 28 to the Coronavirus Act 2020: Local death management Statutory guidance for local authorities on Schedule 28 and the Powers in Relation to Transportation, Storage and Disposal of the Deceased

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/880047/Schedule_28_local_death_management_guidance.pdf

Public Health England

Guidance: COVID-19: guidance for managing a funeral during the coronavirus pandemic

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-guidance-for-managing-a-funeral-during-the-coronavirus-pandemic/covid-19-guidance-for-managing-a-funeral-during-the-coronavirus-pandemic>

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Israel

House of Lords Written Answer

Palestinians: Arrests

Baroness Tonge (Non-affiliated) [HL2896] To ask Her Majesty's Government what representations they have made to the government of Israel about the reported arrest of Palestinian volunteers on 16 March who were sterilising public facilities and areas in East Jerusalem.

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: Whilst we have not made representations regarding these reports, the British Embassy in Tel Aviv and the British Consulate-General in

Jerusalem are in regular contact with the Israeli and Palestinian authorities respectively. Both report good co-operation between the two entities in response to COVID-19.

<https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Lords/2020-03-24/HL2896/>

Foreign and Commonwealth Office

Updated Travel Advice: Israel

<https://www.gov.uk/foreign-travel-advice/israel>

Updated Travel Advice: The Occupied Palestinian Territories

<https://www.gov.uk/foreign-travel-advice/the-occupied-palestinian-territories>

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Other Relevant Information

UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights

Rise in antisemitic hatred during COVID-19 must be countered with tougher measures, says UN expert

Antisemitic hate speech has risen alarmingly since the outbreak of the COVID-19 crisis and must be rejected, said the UN Special Rapporteur on freedom of religion or belief, Ahmed Shaheed.

"I am extremely concerned to see that certain religious leaders and politicians continue to exploit the challenging times during this pandemic to spread hatred against Jews and other minorities," Shaheed said. "We must collectively reject antisemitism and other forms of intolerance and discrimination now."

He said that 'conspiracy' theory prevails in claiming that Jews or Israel are responsible for developing and spreading COVID-19 virus to reduce the non-Jewish population and to control the world. The UN expert presented his [report](#) on combatting antisemitism to eliminate discrimination and intolerance based on religion or belief to the UN General Assembly in October 2019.

Antisemitism threatens stability and security and hate crimes require unequivocal responses from leaders, the Special Rapporteur said. "It is necessary to invest in preventive security measures and enact appropriate hate crime legislation. I also reiterate my call to for endorsement by States of the Working Definition on Antisemitism and for its use in compliance with international human rights law."

He urged States to work with Jewish communities and organisations to strengthen monitoring of hate speech or crimes, and to develop strategies to support victims of antisemitism. "It is imperative for the civil society organisations and faith-based actors to signal a zero-tolerance policy towards antisemitism online and offline."

The Special Rapporteur said the COVID-19 crisis highlighted the need to establish collaborative networks to foster mutual understanding, promote dialogue and inspire solidarity.

"Countering online hate speech also will not succeed if the mainstream or social media do not take seriously the reports of cyberhate targeting Jews and other minorities," he said. "They must remove any posts that incite to hatred or violence in addition to identifying and reporting fake news."

"At this deeply challenging time, ensuring that all individuals are able to exercise their right to freedom of religion or belief without fear and to the greatest extent feasible while safeguarding public health is more essential than ever," said Shaheed. ...

To read the full press release see

<https://www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=25800&LanglD=E>

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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

**** closes in 3 days**

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