



Political Affairs Digest

A daily summary of political events affecting the Jewish Community

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House of Commons Written Answers

Places of Worship Security Funding Scheme

Carla Lockhart (DUP) [89879] To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many applications have been made to the Places of worship protective security funding scheme; and how much funding has been awarded in each year since the creation of the scheme.

James Brokenshire: Over the last four years of the Places of Worship Protective Security Funding Scheme, 807 eligible applications have been received. For the 2020/2021 round of the scheme, which closed on 9 August, we have received 243 eligible applications.

In the 2016/2017 round we awarded £435,446, in 2017/2018 we awarded £440,203, in 2018/2019 we awarded £806,281, and in the 2019/2020 we awarded £1,718,763. For the 2020/2021 round, the available funding is £3.2 million.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2020-09-14/89879>

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

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

Muslim Brotherhood

Ian Paisley (DUP) [906289] To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what discussions he has had with Cabinet colleagues on the activities of the Muslim Brotherhood.

James Brokenshire: Work in relation to the Muslim Brotherhood is a matter for the Home Office, so we are responding on behalf of the Ministry of Defence.

There has not been formal inter-Ministerial engagement on the Muslim Brotherhood. The Government keeps under review the activities of those associated with the Muslim Brotherhood in the UK in accordance with the five commitments included in the former Prime Minister's statement to Parliament.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2020-09-17/906289>

House of Lords Written Answer

Religion: Coronavirus

Baroness Cox (Crossbench) [HL7964] To ask Her Majesty's Government what action they are taking to support religious and minority belief communities which have been negatively affected by COVID-19.

Reply from Lord Greenhalgh: In May we launched a Places of Worship Taskforce, chaired by the Secretary of State and the Faith Minister. The Taskforce covered a wide variety of issues relating to Covid-19 and plans to safely reopen places of worship. Since 4 July, places of worship have been able to reopen for communal worship with Covid-Secure measures.

Ministers and officials have continued to engage widely with faith and belief leaders on a range of issues, including preparations for religious festivals. In addition, we appointed FaithAction to support smaller faith groups and denominations through the pandemic.

Faith and belief organisations have been able to access a range of government-backed financial support measures. Including the Coronavirus Community Support Fund which helped organisations providing essential services to vulnerable people affected by the current crisis.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2020-09-09/hl7964>

Information about the taskforce referred to above can be read at

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/new-taskforce-developing-plan-to-reopen-places-of-worship>

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House of Commons Written Answers

Israel: Arab States

Robert Halfon (Conservative) [91005] To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what discussions he has had with his Israeli counterpart on helping Israel develop further diplomatic ties with Arab states following its normalisation agreements with the UAE and Bahrain.

James Cleverly: During his visit to Israel on 24 August, the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs met Prime Minister Netanyahu, Alternate Prime Minister and Defence Minister Gantz, and Foreign Minister Ashkenazi. They discussed normalisation of relations in the region, alongside a range of other bilateral, regional, security issues. We warmly welcome the agreement between Israel, Bahrain and the United Arab Emirates. This is an historic step which sees the normalisation of relations between three great friends of the UK.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2020-09-16/91005>

Israel and West Bank: Religious Freedom

John Hayes (Conservative) [88819] To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps his Department is taking to secure religious freedom for Arab Christians in (a) Israel and (b) the West Bank.

James Cleverly: Freedom of Religion or Belief is a human rights priority for the UK Government. 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://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2020-09-11/88819>

Lebanon: Palestinians

Rushanara Ali (Labour) [85044] To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what recent assessment his Department has made of the humanitarian needs of Palestinian refugees in Lebanon.

James Cleverly: Palestinian refugees are amongst the most vulnerable and marginalized communities in Lebanon. The deteriorating economic conditions have further increased the risk that limited job opportunities will push the most vulnerable, including women, girls and young people, into harmful survival strategies.

Managing the spread of coronavirus is a top priority, with currently over 230 recorded cases amongst Palestinian refugees and active transmission in the wider Lebanese population. UNRWA is working with partners to balance continuity of care with provision of support to education and primary health care facilities.

This financial year the UK has provided £34.5m to UNRWA in addition to the over £710 million of UK humanitarian, development and stability funding to Lebanon since 2011, including to Palestinian camps.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2020-09-04/85044>

House of Lords Written Answers

Israel: Palestinians

Baroness Tonge (Non-affiliated) [HL7897] To ask Her Majesty's Government what representations they have made to the government of Israel about reports of violence by border police towards workers from Palestine with permits seeking to enter Israel to reach their place of employment.

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: The UK has repeatedly made clear to Israel our longstanding concerns about the manner in which the Israel Defense Forces police the border areas. We will continue to do so.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2020-09-07/hl7897>

Gaza: Coronavirus

Baroness Tonge (Non-affiliated) [HL7899] To ask Her Majesty's Government what steps they plan to take to support people living in Gaza during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: The UK Government remains deeply concerned by the situation in Gaza. Our recent £840,000 funding contribution has enabled the World Health Organisation (WHO) and UNICEF to purchase and co-ordinate the delivery of medical equipment, treat critical care patients, train frontline public health personnel and scale up laboratory testing capacity. The Foreign Secretary also recently announced a further £2.7 million funding to UN agencies to provide food assistance, medical supplies and personal protection for the most vulnerable Palestinians.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2020-09-07/hl7899>

Gaza: Energy and Water

Baroness Tonge (Non-affiliated) [HL7900] To ask Her Majesty's Government what action they plan to take following reports that families living in Gaza are living in conditions which are (1) unsafe, and (2) at imminent risk of fire, due to a reported lack of (a) safe means of energy, and (b) water.

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: We are deeply concerned by the situation in Gaza. Officials from our Embassy in Tel Aviv and our Consulate-General in Jerusalem frequently urge the Israeli and Palestinian authorities to take steps to improve conditions for ordinary Palestinians in Gaza. We are a leading donor to United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA) and our economic development programme aims to lift the overall standard of those living in Gaza by increasing trade and job creation, enabling greater movement and access for people and goods, and enhancing the supply of electricity and clean water.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2020-09-07/hl7900>

Khairi Hanoun

Baroness Tonge (Non-affiliated) [HL7898] To ask Her Majesty's Government what representations they have made to the government of Israel about the treatment of Khairi Hanoun.

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: Whilst we have not made representations on this particular incident, we have repeatedly made clear to Israel our longstanding concerns about the manner in which the Israel Defense Forces police non-violent protests. We encourage them to deploy security measures which minimises tension and use appropriate force. In instances where there have been accusations of excessive use of force, we have advocated swift, transparent investigations.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2020-09-07/hl7898>

Welsh Assembly Oral Answer

Business Statement and Announcement

Darren Millar (Conservative): Trefnydd, can I call for a statement on public sector procurement advice that the Welsh Government issues? Your response to a recent written question on this matter gives me a great deal of cause for concern in that you've suggested that you might be issuing a new procurement advice notice to the public sector in Wales, and in that answer that you issued, you specifically referred to it being potentially targeted at the nation of Israel, because you referred to it dealing with places where there are territorial disputes.

Now, of course, of the countless places around the world where there are territorial disputes, that answer that you issued specifically mentioned the Jewish state. Now, you'll be aware that the Welsh Government has accepted and adopted the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance definition of antisemitism. That refers to not doing anything that could result in double standards being applied to the nation of Israel. But, in singling out Israel in your answer to a question on procurement advice, it suggests that that might well be the case should you issue that particular piece of advice.

So, I'm very concerned about the message that that sends to the Jewish community in Wales. I know that the Welsh Government does not want to send hostile messages to the Jewish community and wants to address the antisemitism that is out there. So, I would urge you to look again at the procurement advice notice that you are preparing, to make sure that your proposals do not impinge on the good work that's been done here in Wales to deal with the rise of antisemitism in our country.

Minister for Finance and Trefnydd (Rebecca Evans): I'd like to reassure Darren Millar that there's absolutely no intention to single out any nation and the response related to occupied territories anywhere in the world. However, I do understand that there are some significant concerns about this, so we are taking some further legal advice before any further action is taken on that procurement advice note, and I know that the First Minister had a very good meeting with the board of deputies, where this was discussed again. But just to reassure Darren Millar and everybody

else, there is no intention to single out any particular nation in terms of the procurement advice note, but we are taking further advice, and nothing will be published until that advice has been received and considered.

<https://record.assembly.wales/Plenary/6565#C310042>

The written answer referred to above can be read at
<https://record.assembly.wales/WrittenQuestion/80889>

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Other Relevant Information

European Commission

A Union of equality: EU anti-racism action plan 2020-2025

https://ec.europa.eu/info/sites/info/files/a_union_of_equality_eu_action_plan_against_racism_2020_-2025_en.pdf

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Relevant Legislation ** new or updated today

UK Parliament

Assisted Dying Bill

<https://bills.parliament.uk/bills/2592>

Education (Assemblies) Bill

<https://bills.parliament.uk/bills/2579>

Genocide Determination Bill

<https://bills.parliament.uk/bills/2621>

Marriage Act 1949 (Amendment) Bill

<https://bills.parliament.uk/bills/2608>

Marriage and Civil Partnership (Minimum Age) Bill

<https://bills.parliament.uk/bills/2584>

Scottish Parliament

Hate Crime and Public Order (Scotland) Bill

<https://beta.parliament.scot/bills/hate-crime-and-public-order-scotland-bill>

Post-mortem Examinations (Defence Time Limit) (Scotland) Bill

<https://beta.parliament.scot/bills/post-mortem-examinations-defence-time-limit-scotland-bill>

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Consultations ** new or updated today

Getting Married: A Consultation Paper on Weddings Law (closing date 3 December 2020)
<https://www.lawcom.gov.uk/project/weddings/#weddings-consultation-paper>

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