



Political Affairs Digest

A daily summary of political events affecting the Jewish Community

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House of Commons Written Answers

Hate Crime

Stella Creasy (Labour Co-op) [49672] To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, when the Law Commission will publish its consultation paper on hate crime; and whether the review has been delayed from its original time frame of 18 months.

Alex Chalk: The Law Commission continues to make good progress on the Hate Crime Consultation Paper, although some delay is inevitable given the impact of Covid-19.

The Law Commissioners are considering when to publish consultations on a case-by-case basis, based on whether they will be able to undertake sufficiently open and transparent consultation during the current circumstances. That is an essential aspect of the way they work. It is particularly important in relation to the Hate Crime project.

The Commissioners are keeping the situation under review and they will announce their decision on publication as soon as they can.

<https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Commons/2020-05-20/49672/>

Information about the review referred to above can be read at

<https://www.lawcom.gov.uk/project/hate-crime/>

Religious Freedom: Employment

Jeffrey M Donaldson (DUP) [49887] To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what assessment he has made of the implications for his policies of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe Resolution 2318 (2020) on the protection of freedom of religion or belief in the workplace.

Luke Hall: Freedom of religion or belief is a fundamental human right, and one which underpins many of the others. Britain has a proud tradition of religious tolerance, within the law. The UK is committed to defending Freedom of Religion or Belief and promoting respect between communities of different religions and those of no religion. Promoting the right to Freedom of Religion or Belief is one of the UK's human rights policy priorities. In the UN, OSCE, Council of Europe and

other multilateral fora, the UK works with like-minded partners on Freedom of Religion or Belief.

The Government is committed to ensuring that people are protected against discrimination because of religion or belief, and that they are able to exercise the right to hold and manifest their beliefs in a reasonable manner.

Resolution 2318 concerns the protection of freedom of religion or belief in the workplace. Domestic anti-discrimination provisions covering religion or belief are contained in the Equality Act 2010. Anyone who feels that they have suffered discrimination because of religion or belief can contact either The Advisory, Conciliation and Arbitration Service (ACAS), for issues related to the workplace, or the Equality Advisory and Support Service (EASS) for non-employment matters. Both services provide free advice to members of the public.

ACAS and the EASS refer appropriate cases to the Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC), which is the country's national equality and enforcement body. Both the EHRC and ACAS have published guidance for employers and employees about religion or belief and the workplace.

The UK Government thanks the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE) for its recent debate, report, and Resolution 2318 (2020) on the protection of freedom of religion or belief in the workplace. Working with partners and key stakeholders, the UK Government will continue to consider actively, and across departments, the important topics raised by Resolution 2318 (2020).

<https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Commons/2020-05-20/49887/>

The report referred to above can be read at

<https://tinyurl.com/yavfnh9n>

The debate referred to above can be read at

<https://pace.coe.int/en/verbatim/2020-01-29/am/en#theme-586>

The resolution referred to above can be read at

<http://assembly.coe.int/nw/xml/XRef/Xref-XML2HTML-EN.asp?fileid=28556&lang=en>

The following two questions both received the same answer

Marriage: Coronavirus

Diana Johnson (Labour) [48959] To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, if the Government will make an assessment of the potential merits of easing covid-19 restrictions to allow weddings to take place with a limited number of attendees.

Andrew Gwynne (Labour) [49614] To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, when the Government plans to release updated guidance on marriages during the covid-19 outbreak.

Penny Mordaunt: As stated in '[Our Plan To Rebuild](#)', the Government's COVID-19 Recovery Strategy, the Government is examining how to enable people to gather in slightly larger groups to better facilitate small weddings.

<https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Commons/2020-05-19/48959/>

and

<https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Commons/2020-05-20/49614/>

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Israel

House of Commons Written Answer

Israel: West Bank

Colum Eastwood (SDLP) [48669] To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, what discussions he has had with his Israeli counterpart since the formation of the new Israeli Government on the illegal occupation of the West Bank and the proposed annexation of territory.

James Cleverly: We made clear our concerns about reports that the new Israeli Government coalition has reached an agreement, which may pave the way for annexation of parts of the West Bank, at the UN Security Council remote meeting on the Middle East Peace Process on 20 May. The Foreign Secretary reiterated this message during a call with Israeli Alternate Prime Minister Gantz on 20 May. The UK position is clear: any unilateral moves towards annexation of parts of the West Bank by Israel would be damaging to efforts to restart peace negotiations and contrary to international law. We will continue to press Israel and the Palestinians strongly on the need to refrain from taking actions which make peace more difficult.

<https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Commons/2020-05-18/48669/>

The British contribution at the UN Security meeting referred to above can be read at <https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/securing-a-peaceful-future-for-israelis-and-palestinians>

House of Lords Written Answers

West Bank: Bank Services

Baroness Tonge (Non-affiliated) [HL4617] To ask Her Majesty's Government what representations they have made to the government of Israel about the Israeli military order that forbids banks in the occupied West Bank from processing payments that the Palestinian Authority distributes to the families of Palestinians who have spent time in Israeli jails.

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: We are aware of the Military Order and have discussed with the Israeli authorities. We continue to call on the Palestinian Authority to reform the prisoner payments system so that it is needs based, transparent and affordable.

<https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Lords/2020-05-18/HL4617/>

Israel: Palestinians

Baroness Tonge (Non-affiliated) [HL4618] To ask Her Majesty's Government what representations they have made to the government of Israel about reports that a Palestinian man was shot dead by hospital guards in front of Sheba hospital on 13 May.

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: We understand from reporting that this was a criminal matter which would be a matter for the Israeli Government.

<https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Lords/2020-05-18/HL4618/>

Israel: Palestinians

Baroness Tonge (Non-affiliated) [HL4619] To ask Her Majesty's Government what representations they have made to the government of Israel about reports that an unarmed 15 year old Palestinian was shot dead by Israeli forces during a raid on Fawwar refugee camp.

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: As we made clear at the UN Security Council remote meeting on the Middle East Peace Process on 20 May, we remain deeply concerned by the ongoing cycle of violence. We continue to stress the importance of the Israeli security forces providing appropriate protection to the Palestinian civilian population, in particular the need to protect children, and urge restraint in the use of live fire. In instances where there have been accusations of excessive use of force, we have advocated swift, transparent investigations.

<https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Lords/2020-05-18/HL4619/>

The British contribution at the UN Security meeting referred to above can be read at <https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/securing-a-peaceful-future-for-israelis-and-palestinians>

West Bank: Sanitation

Baroness Tonge (Non-affiliated) [HL4620] To ask Her Majesty's Government what representations they have made to the government of Israel about reports that mobile latrines have been demolished and water tanks have been damaged by Israeli forces in Palestinian and Bedouin communities in the West Bank in March and April.

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: The UK is seriously concerned by the continued demolition of Palestinian property by Israeli authorities. In all but the most exceptional of circumstances demolitions are contrary to International Humanitarian Law. The practice causes unnecessary suffering to ordinary Palestinians and is harmful to the peace process. We have also previously stressed the need to take immediate and practical measures to ensure fair distribution of water in the West Bank.

<https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Lords/2020-05-18/HL4620/>

West Bank: Agriculture

Baroness Tonge (Non-affiliated) [HL4621] To ask Her Majesty's Government, further to the report by United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs West Bank Demolitions and Displacement: An Overview, published in March, what representations they have made to the government of Israel about the creation of a closed firing zone for military training, displacing a Palestinian herding community; and what assessment they have made of reports that Israeli forces requisitioned equipment provided through humanitarian aid in use by that community.

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: While we have not made representations on this specific issue, we continue to be concerned by the impact of military firing zones in the Occupied Palestinian Territories, as well as the continued demolition of Palestinian property by Israeli authorities and evictions of Palestinians from their homes.

<https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Lords/2020-05-18/HL4621/>

The report referred to above can be read at

<https://www.un.org/unispal/document/west-bank-demolitions-and-displacement-an-overview-feb-2020-ocha-publication/>

West Bank: Roads

Baroness Tonge (Non-affiliated) [HL4622] To ask Her Majesty's Government what representations they have made to the government of Israel about reports that roads in the West Bank to Palestinian communities have been blocked by Israeli forces.

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: While we have not made representations on this specific issue, we have lobbied the authorities on the issue of movement and

access through our Embassy in Tel Aviv. We remain concerned about restrictions on freedom of movement within the West Bank, including to and from East Jerusalem, and between Gaza and the West Bank.

<https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Lords/2020-05-18/HL4622/>

West Bank: Demolition

Baroness Tonge (Non-affiliated) [HL4720] To ask Her Majesty's Government what representations they have made to the government of Israel about the use of Military Order 1797 on Palestinian property and the demolition of unlicensed structures deemed as new in Area C within 96 hours of such an order being issued.

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: Officials from our Embassy in Tel Aviv have repeatedly raised our concerns about the increase in demolitions of Palestinian properties in Area C of the West Bank and in East Jerusalem. We call on them to cease the policy of demolitions and provide a clear, transparent route to construction for Palestinians in Area C.

<https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Lords/2020-05-19/HL4720/>

Hebron: Religious Buildings

Baroness Tonge (Non-affiliated) [HL4721] To ask Her Majesty's Government what discussions they have had with the government of Israel and the Palestinian Authority about the preservation of the Ibrahimi Mosque in Hebron.

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: In our meetings with the Israeli authorities we regularly raise the need to respect the status quo of the holy sites in East Jerusalem and the West Bank. We continue to urge the Israeli and Palestinian leadership to avoid actions that make it more difficult to achieve a negotiated solution to the conflict.

<https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Lords/2020-05-19/HL4721/>

Hebron: Religious Buildings

Lord Hylton (Crossbench) [HL4685] To ask Her Majesty's Government what plans they have to propose a joint UK–EU initiative to protect the Ibrahimi Mosque, following reports that the government of Israel is planning renovations and improvements to the building, without prior consultation or agreement and which could involve some expropriation of Palestinian land.

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: The holy sites of East Jerusalem and the West Bank hold particular significance for many groups around the globe, especially the three Abrahamic faiths of Christianity, Islam and Judaism. In our meetings with the Israeli authorities we regularly raise the need to respect the status quo of the holy sites in East Jerusalem and the West Bank. We continue to urge the Israeli and Palestinian leadership to avoid actions that make it more difficult to achieve a negotiated solution to the conflict.

<https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Lords/2020-05-19/HL4685/>

Israel: Palestinians

Lord Hylton (Crossbench) [HL4686] To ask Her Majesty's Government what representations they are making to the government of Israel following the recent judgment handed down by the Israeli Central Court to deduct 450 million Israeli shekels from Palestinian tax revenues

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: We are aware of this case and are following

developments as the legal process is still ongoing. It is important that economic and fiscal agreements between Israel and the Palestinian Authority to continue to be fully implemented.

<https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Lords/2020-05-19/HL4686/>

Coronavirus: Israel

Lord Turnberg (Labour) [HL4725] To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the research into COVID-19 by the MIGAL Research Institute in Israel and the potential effectiveness of their orally-administered vaccine Migvax.

Lord Callanan: The Vaccines Taskforce is working with experts, as appointed by Kate Bingham as Chair, to assess the range of SARS-CoV-2 vaccine candidates being developed around the world. As part of this assessment, Government will evaluate the MIGAL Research Institute's orally-administered, viral vector-based vaccine.

Companies and research institutes are welcome to submit proposals to UK Research and Innovation (UKRI) and the National Institute for Health Research (NIHR) research calls. Government support is available to prioritise, coordinate and deliver studies which qualify as urgent public health research.

<https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Lords/2020-05-19/HL4725/>

UK Parliament Early Day Motion

Tommy Sheppard (SNP) (529) Eviction of Palestinian family from East Jerusalem – That this House strongly condemns the ongoing attempts of the Jewish National Fund (KKL-JNF) to evict the Sumarin family from their home in East Jerusalem; recognises this within a broader context of the Israeli government's efforts to demographically alter the population of Jerusalem, and the controversial use of Israel's Absentee Property Law to dispossess Palestinians of their land; notes the Sumarin family have lived at their property, with deeds of ownership, for over fifty years; reiterates that ethnic cleansing is one of the most serious crimes, and that the UK is committed to upholding international law; urgently requests the Government to intervene on behalf of the Sumarin family, and calls on the Charity Commission to review the charitable status of JNF UK.

<https://edm.parliament.uk/early-day-motion/57037/eviction-of-palestinian-family-from-east-jerusalem>

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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>

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

Protecting places of worship (closing date 28 June 2020)

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

Hate Crime and Public Order (Scotland) Bill (closing date 24 July 2020)

<https://www.parliament.scot/parliamentarybusiness/CurrentCommittees/115038.aspx>

Legislative proposals for religion, values and ethics [Wales] (closing date 28 July 2020)

<https://gov.wales/legislative-proposals-religion-values-and-ethics>

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