



Political Affairs Digest

A daily summary of political events affecting the Jewish Community

Contents

Home Affairs

Israel

Relevant Legislation

Consultations

Home Affairs

House of Commons Written Answer

Marriage: Ceremonies

Kevin Brennan (Labour) [55664] To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, if he will bring forward legislative proposals to enable faith venues that are approved for the registration of marriages to hold small wedding ceremonies with only the couple, celebrant and witnesses in attendance.

Luke Hall: We want to allow people to hold small weddings as soon as we can, but this must be done safely. Working with other departments, we will consider how small wedding ceremonies could take place safely in due course. We are working in partnership with faith leaders, through our Places of Worship Taskforce, to develop guidance that will enable the phased and safe reopening of places of worship.

<https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Commons/2020-06-05/55664/>

Scottish Parliament Oral Answers

Hate Crime and Public Order (Scotland) Bill (Sectarianism)

John Mason (SNP): To ask the Scottish Government how the Hate Crime and Public Order (Scotland) Bill could impact on sectarianism, in the light of that not being specifically mentioned in it as a characteristic that might attract expressions of hatred. (S5O-04405)

The Cabinet Secretary for Justice (Humza Yousaf): We remain committed to tackling all forms of sectarianism. We continue to invest in community work to address the issue, having invested an unprecedented £14.5 million in that work since 2012.

In line with Lord Bracadale's findings in his independent review of hate crime legislation in Scotland, we consider that sectarian behaviour can be captured using the race and religious aggravations provisions. That is what happens at the moment. Where appropriate, both aggravations can be used together. Our public consultation found that a majority of respondents—almost 60 per cent—

did not think there was a need to address and define sectarianism in hate crime legislation, primarily citing the reason that they believed that sectarianism was already adequately covered in existing legislation. Therefore, although the Hate Crime and Public Order (Scotland) Bill does not provide for a specific statutory aggravation of sectarianism, or for a stirring-up of hatred offence, it will be possible for its provisions to be applied in respect of sectarian-based offending.

John Mason: I agree with a lot of what the cabinet secretary has said. Sectarianism is a particularly toxic mix, because it brings together religion, race, culture and other issues. That sets it apart from a situation when just one issue on its own—such as race—is being looked at. Would the cabinet secretary reconsider whether sectarianism needs some extra examination?

Humza Yousaf: I agree with John Mason's general point. The Government does focus on sectarianism: I have just given a couple of examples of where we have invested heavily in anti-sectarian projects. The issue deserves a focus. The question is whether a sectarian prejudice aggravator would be the best way to deal with that offending behaviour. I assure John Mason that there was very careful consideration, but it was my view that the bill would not be the best place to deal with that particular offending behaviour.

I look forward to seeing the submissions that come in following the Justice Committee's call for evidence and to the parliamentary debate. As I always do when I introduce legislation, I will keep an open mind. ...

Donald Cameron (Conservative): Part 2 of the Hate Crime and Public Order (Scotland) Bill has been seen in many quarters as a direct attack on freedom of speech. We all wish to stamp out hate crime, but with religious groups, the National Secular Society and academics lining up against the bill, will the cabinet secretary reconsider the part 2 provisions?

Humza Yousaf: As I said in my previous answer, I will listen to the debate, but I do not agree with the premise of Donald Cameron's question. I met faith groups. I met the Catholic Church, the Church of Scotland, the Scottish Council of Jewish Communities and the Muslim Council of Scotland, the Ahl Al Bait society and many others. I would not characterise them as opposing the bill, including part 2. They raised some concerns, but they understood that this is not an attack on freedom of speech because part 2 of the bill sets a very high threshold. Behaviour would have to be not only abusive and threatening but likely to stir up, or having the intention of stirring up, hatred. ...

<http://www.parliament.scot/parliamentarybusiness/report.aspx?r=12689&i=114804#ScotParlOR>

Information about the Hate Crime and Public Order (Scotland) Bill, referred to above, can be read at

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

Lord Bracadale's review, referred to above, can be read at

<https://tinyurl.com/y8of8le6>

Crown Office and Procurator Fiscal Service

Lord Advocate welcomes publication of hate crime figures

... The data published today shows there has been an increase in the number of charges reported in 2019-20 for all categories of hate crime compared to the previous year.

Following the publication of the figures, the Lord Advocate, James Wolffe QC, said: "Tackling crime motivated by hatred and prejudice has never been more important, and Scotland's prosecutors take seriously their responsibility to protect the public from such

offending.

"I am grateful to all of the victims of hate crime who have had the courage and confidence to report their experience, and I encourage anyone who is the victim of such crime to come forward.

"These crimes do not just impact on individuals, but erode the fabric of our society. That is why it is so important for Scotland's independent prosecution service to continue to respond robustly and fairly, using all of the tools at our disposal. ..."

There were 3,038 charges reported for racial hate crime in 2019-20, an increase of 4% since 2018-19. Despite this increase, it is still the second lowest annual figure since 2003-04. ...

To read the full press release see

<https://www.copfs.gov.uk/media-site/media-releases/1888-lord-advocate-welcomes-publication-of-hate-crime-figures-4>

Hate Crime in Scotland 2019-20

<https://www.copfs.gov.uk/images/Documents/Statistics/Hate%20Crime%20in%20Scotland%202019-20/Hate%20Crime%20in%20Scotland%202019-20.pdf>

TOP

Israel

House of Commons Oral Answers

Palestinian Authority Funding

Andrew Percy (Conservative): What steps she is taking to ensure that funding to the Palestinian Authority is used to support her Department's objectives in that region. [903056]

The Minister for the Middle East and North Africa (James Cleverly): The UK remains determined to work for peace in the region, and that means supporting a stable Palestinian Authority that can deliver essential public services to Palestinians and act as an effective partner for peace with Israel. In 2018-19, UK support helped the Palestinian Authority provide education for 26,000 children, half of whom were girls, and deliver 3,000 more immunisations and 111,000 medical consultations. I recently announced £20 million in new funding to help Palestinian health workers battle the coronavirus on the frontline.

Andrew Percy: ... There has been some excellent working between the Palestinian Authority and Israel in response to covid. However, an investigation has shown that groups funded by the OHCA—the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs—and the World Health Organisation have links to the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine, which is a proscribed terrorist organisation. Can the Minister assure me that no UK aid money has been channelled in that way?

James Cleverly: The UK has provided £840,000 to the WHO and UNICEF in response to covid-19. We maintain robust measures to ensure that aid is not diverted. We are determined to continue to play our responsible part in cross-Government approaches to support the Palestinian people and to work towards peace in the region.

<https://hansard.parliament.uk/commons/2020-06-10/debates/DD24A12C-6752-4CFF-82E4-839F68309749/PalestinianAuthorityFunding>

House of Commons Written Answers

Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine

John Howell (Conservative) [55931] To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, for what reasons the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine is not proscribed as a terrorist organisation.

James Brokenshire: The Government does not routinely comment on intelligence matters, including whether an organisation is or is not under consideration for proscription.

<https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Commons/2020-06-08/55931/>

Israel: Palestinians

Matthew Offord (Conservative) [54900] To ask the Secretary of State for International Development, pursuant to the Answer of 30 April 2020 to Question 38897 on Israel: Palestinians, what criteria her Department used to determine the implementing partner for that programme; and what mechanisms she has put in place to ensure open and competitive funding bids.

James Cleverly: Our people to people programme aimed to build understanding between Israelis and Palestinians, helping build support for a peaceful, negotiated resolution. During the design phase of the programme, Search for Common Ground (SFCG) approached DFID with a proposal for a comprehensive programme. While many organisations are performing excellent work in different fields, it was judged more effective to fund one partner to focus on a few specific thematic areas rather than funding several grants in a broad range of sectors through a wide call for bids. With this focused approach we were able to add to the research on what works in people to people programming.

SFCG delivered some activities directly and worked through partners in areas requiring specialist expertise. A Committee consisting of SFCG, DFID and FCO officials agreed a robust set of criteria for SFCG's assessment of potential downstream partners and approved the final selection.

<https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Commons/2020-06-04/54900/>

The answer referred to above can be read at

<https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Commons/2020-04-22/38897/>

Israeli Settlements

Mark Hendrick (Labour Co-op) [55876] To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, what representations he has made to the Government of Israel on its proposed annexation of the West Bank.

James Cleverly: The Foreign Secretary reiterated our opposition to the unilateral annexation of territory during a call with Alternate Israeli Prime Minister Gantz on 20 May and Israeli Foreign Minister Ashkenazi on 2 June. As we made clear at the UN Security Council remote meeting on the Middle East Peace Process on 20 May, we are concerned by reports that the new Israeli Government coalition has reached an agreement which may pave the way for annexation of parts of the West Bank. The UK position is clear: any unilateral moves toward annexation of parts of the West Bank by Israel would be damaging to renewed efforts to restart peace negotiations, and contrary to international law.

<https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Commons/2020-06-08/55876/>

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

Israeli Settlements

Mark Hendrick (Labour Co-op) [55877] To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, what recent discussions he has had with his EU counterparts on taking economic steps in response to the Government of Israel's proposed annexation of the West Bank.

James Cleverly: We continue to work closely with international partners to advocate a two-state solution and encourage a return to meaningful negotiations between both parties. I reiterated, at the virtual meeting of the Ad Hoc Liaison Committee with Israel, the Palestinians, the EU, and the wider international community on 2 June, 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. 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.

<https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Commons/2020-06-08/55877/>

Israeli Settlements: Companies

Mark Hendrick (Labour Co-op) [55878] To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, what assessment he has made of the implications for his policies of the finding of the United Nations Human Rights Office report on business activities related to settlements in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, published on 12 February 2020, reference A/HRC/43/71.

James Cleverly: The UK, along with a number of other European countries, opposed the creation of the UN Human Rights Office's database. Ultimately it is the decision of an individual or company whether to operate in settlements in the Occupied Palestinian Territories. The British Government neither encourages nor offers support to such activity.

<https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Commons/2020-06-08/55878/>

The report referred to above can be read at <https://undocs.org/A/HRC/43/71>

The following two questions both received the same answer

Trade Promotion: Occupied Territories

James Murray (Labour Co-op) [56195] To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, pursuant to the Answer of 12 May to Question 42243 on Overseas Trade: Israel, what processes her Department has put in place to exclude from the trade and investment promotion activities, businesses (a) operating and (b) investing in illegal settlements in the Occupied Palestinian Territories.

Imports: Israeli Settlements

James Murray (Labour Co-op) [56196] To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, pursuant to the Answer of 12 March 2020 to Question 26894 on Imports: Israeli Settlements, whether goods imported into the UK that originate in Israeli settlements in the Occupied Palestinian Territories are excluded from (a) import duty relief and (b) other preferential benefits under (i) the EU-Israel Association Agreement and (ii) the UK-Israel Trade and Partnership Agreement.

Ranil Jayawardena: The United Kingdom does not treat the Occupied Palestinian Territories as part of Israel. The settlements are not covered by the EU-Israel

Association Agreement nor by the United Kingdom-Israel Trade and Partnership Agreement. Products produced in the settlements are, therefore, not entitled to benefit from preferential tariff treatment.

The Department for International Trade does not provide direct support to business activity in the settlements and my officials work closely with the Foreign and Commonwealth Office to encourage companies to put rights and responsibilities at the centre of everything they do.

<https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Commons/2020-06-08/56195/>

and

<https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Commons/2020-06-08/56196/>

The answers referred to above can be read at

<https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Commons/2020-05-01/42243/>

and

<https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Commons/2020-03-09/26894/>

Foreign and Commonwealth Office

James Cleverly: Today is my 1st virtual visit to [Israel]. It's important that despite #coronavirus we continue to engage with our colleagues overseas. Looking forward to hearing more about the different strands of Israeli society, and hearing directly from NGOs on their efforts to advance peace

<https://twitter.com/JamesCleverly/status/1270985444071784449>

TOP

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>

TOP

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>

TOP

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