



# Political Affairs Digest

A daily summary of political events affecting the Jewish Community

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## Home Affairs

### House of Commons Oral Answers

#### Religious Education: Maintained Schools

**Janet Daby (Labour):** What steps he is taking to ensure maintained schools comply with requirements to teach religious education. [907364]

**The Minister for School Standards (Nick Gibb):** Maintained schools are required to teach religious education to all five to 18-year-olds. Any concerns that a maintained school is not meeting that duty should first go through the school's complaints procedure, and if the complaint is not resolved, the issue can be escalated to the Department's school complaints unit.

**Janet Daby** Religious education helps children to grow up with an understanding of and respect for people from different religious, ethnic and cultural backgrounds. It is also a statutory requirement, but the Religious Education Council tells me that 40% of all schools give no hours to RE in year 11. Does the Minister agree that the Department needs to better support schools to ensure that they are meeting their obligations to teach RE?

**Nick Gibb:** I agree with the hon. Member. Good quality religious education can help to develop children's knowledge of the values and traditions of Britain and other countries, and foster understanding among different faiths and cultures. At a national level, the proportion of time secondary schools spend teaching RE has actually remained broadly stable. It was 3.2% of all teaching hours in 2010 and 3.3% in 2019.

<https://hansard.parliament.uk/commons/2020-10-12/debates/D4C4FA2A-9950-4149-B266-6CAEEA74DFFC/ReligiousEducationMaintainedSchools>

### House of Commons Written Answers

#### Religious Buildings: Coronavirus

**Robert Halfon (Conservative):** To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what the scientific basis is for the decision to require face masks to be worn in places of worship.

**Christopher Pincher:** Places of worship play an important role in providing spiritual

leadership for many individuals, and in bringing communities and generations together. However, their communal nature also makes them places that are particularly vulnerable to the spread of coronavirus (COVID-19).

- UK advice on face covering follows advice from SAGE.
- SAGE advised that using cloth masks as a precautionary measure could be at least partially effective in enclosed spaces where social distancing is not always possible, creating a risk of close social contact with multiple parties the person does not usually meet.
- This advice does not replace or change existing advice on other measures – such as hand washing, social distancing and self-isolation – which remain more important (because of stronger evidence and larger effects).
- The Government is committed to following the evidence and will keep reviewing evidence from around the world and update our position as and when needed.

Guidance around using places of worship safely during the pandemic can be found online at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-guidance-for-the-safe-use-of-places-of-worship-during-the-pandemic-from-4-july/covid-19-guidance-for-the-safe-use-of-places-of-worship-during-the-pandemic-from-4-july>

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2020-09-09/87536>

### **Religious Buildings: Coronavirus**

**Anne Marie Morris (Conservative)** [97581] To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, for what reason places of worship are not allowed to serve food and drink while businesses are allowed to do so during the covid-19 outbreak.

**Luke Hall:** In a place of worship, where food or drink are essential to the act of worship, they can be served and consumed. If it is necessary to handle food or drink as a part of a faith practice, those giving and receiving these items should wash their hands thoroughly before and after consumption, or wear gloves

If a place of worship provides hospitality spaces, such as cafes, these are permitted to open but should be limited to table-service, social distancing should be observed, and with minimal staff and customer contact in line with the [hospitality guidance](#).

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2020-09-30/97581>

## **House of Lords Written Answer**

### **Census: Coronavirus**

**Baroness Scott of Needham Market (Liberal Democrat):** To ask Her Majesty's Government whether the Census planned in England and Wales for 21 March 2021 will still take place in the light of the COVID-19 pandemic.

**Lord True:** The 2021 Census will take place as planned in England and Wales on 21 March 2021. We regret the timing of the decision from Scottish Government.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2020-09-28/hl8551>

## **Home Office**

### **Hate Crime, England and Wales, 2019/20**

#### **Report**

[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/925968/hate-crime-1920-hosb2920.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/925968/hate-crime-1920-hosb2920.pdf)

## Data tables

[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/925257/hate-crime-1920-hosb2920-tables.ods](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/925257/hate-crime-1920-hosb2920-tables.ods)

## Appendix tables

[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/925258/hate-crime-1920-hosb2920-appendix-tables.xlsx](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/925258/hate-crime-1920-hosb2920-appendix-tables.xlsx)

## Annex: Provisional trends in racially or religiously aggravated offences to July 2020 under COVID-19 restrictions

[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/925969/annex-hate-crime-1920.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/925969/annex-hate-crime-1920.pdf)

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## Israel

### House of Commons Written Answers

#### Arab States: Israel

**Caroline Ansell (Conservative)** [99063] To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, what discussions she has had with her (a) Emirati, (b) Bahraini and (c) Israeli counterparts on helping those countries expand their commercial ties following the normalisation agreement between those countries.

**Ranil Jayawardena:** The United Kingdom has strong bilateral trading relationships in the Middle East. In the year ending March 2020, bilateral trade stood at £43.7 billion with the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries and £5.1 billion with Israel. The United Kingdom-Israel Trade and Partnership Agreement was one of the first agreements to be signed by my Department, and we are now exploring opportunities to deepen this further.

In the Gulf, we have launched a Joint Trade and Investment Review with the GCC that will help broaden our trade relationships and realise opportunities in sectors such as education, healthcare, and food and drink.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2020-10-05/99063>

#### Israel: Palestinians

**Bell Ribeiro-Addy (Labour)** [99122] To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what recent diplomatic steps he has taken on Israel's plans to annex parts of Palestine.

**James Cleverly:** We welcome the announcement, on 13 August, of the suspension of Israel's plans to annex parts of the West Bank. The UK has consistently made clear our firm opposition to annexation, which would be contrary to international law, counterproductive to securing peace in the region, and a severe blow to the prospects of the two-state solution. We therefore profoundly hope that suspension of these plans can be used as a step towards dialogue between Israel and the Palestinians. There can be no substitute for direct talks in order to reach a two-state solution and a lasting peace. The Foreign Secretary visited Israel and the OPTs on 24-25 August and encouraged the leaders of Israel and the Palestinians to build on this momentum. We urge the Palestinian Authority to resume co-operation with Israel, which is in the interests of the Palestinian people. We also call on both parties to make constructive and open steps towards a return to dialogue.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2020-10-05/99122>

## House of Lords Written Answers

### Palestinians: Elections

**Baroness Tonge (Non-affiliated)** [HL8559] To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of reports that Fatah and Hamas have agreed to hold elections in Palestine within the next six months.

**Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon:** Genuine and democratic national elections for all Palestinians, are crucial to the establishment of a viable and sovereign Palestinian State. We are supportive of Hamas-Fatah reconciliation attempts, and of the PA returning to resume government functions in Gaza, helping to improve the dire humanitarian and economic situation and restore effective and accountable governance. We continue to encourage the Palestinian leadership to work toward strong, inclusive, accountable and democratic institutions, based on respect for the rule of law and human rights.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2020-09-28/hl8559>

### Palestinians: Children

**Baroness Tonge (Non-affiliated)** [HL8564] To ask Her Majesty's Government what representations they have made to the government of Israel about reports that Palestinian children have been interrogated by the government of Israel in (1) the West Bank, and (2) East Jerusalem.

**Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon:** We remain committed to working with Israel to secure improvements to the practices surrounding children in detention and their treatment. We continue to call on the Israeli authorities to comply with their obligations under international law.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2020-09-28/hl8564>

*The following two questions both received the same answer*

### Palestinians: Schools

**Baroness Tonge (Non-affiliated)** [HL8561] To ask Her Majesty's Government what estimate they have made of the number of Palestinian schools which have been demolished in the West Bank in each of the last five years.

**Baroness Tonge (Non-affiliated)** [HL8562] To ask Her Majesty's Government how many Palestinian schools operated by the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East have been demolished by the government of Israel in each of the last five years.

**Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon:** Whilst we are unable to provide these exact figures, the UK is seriously concerned by the continued demolition of Palestinian property, including schools, by Israeli authorities. In all but the most exceptional of circumstances demolitions are contrary to International Humanitarian Law. The right to education is a basic right, and it is essential to have a strong and thriving Palestinian education system in order to provide opportunities for the next generation. The UK is a long-term supporter of UNRWA and we recognise UNRWA's unique mandate from the UN General Assembly, to protect and provide protection and core services to Palestinian refugees across the Middle East. This is why the UK is committed to providing support to education workers in the West Bank, and UNRWA education in the West Bank and Gaza.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2020-09-28/hl8561>

and

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2020-09-28/hl8562>

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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

#### **Human Tissue (Authorisation) (Specified Type B Procedures) (Scotland) Regulations** (closing date 20 November 2020)

<https://consult.gov.scot/population-health/consultation-specified-type-b-procedures/>

#### **Getting Married: A Consultation Paper on Weddings Law** (closing date 3 December 2020)

<https://www.lawcom.gov.uk/project/weddings/#weddings-consultation-paper>

#### **Hate crime laws** (closing date 24 December 2020)

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

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