



Political Affairs Digest

A daily summary of political events affecting the Jewish Community

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House of Commons Oral Answer

Prime Minister's Questions: Coronavirus

Bambos Charalambous (Labour): A recent study of 18 million people in *The Lancet* shows that black, Asian and minority ethnic people are twice as likely as white people to catch coronavirus and more likely to go into intensive care. Lead researchers have suggested that structural inequalities, not genetics, are the key differential, so how will the Prime Minister redress structural inequalities as the vaccine is rolled out? [909055]

The Prime Minister: The hon. Gentleman raises a very important point, and we are thinking about this issue in government right now. As he knows, in response to the early data that we saw about the impact on black and minority ethnic groups, we brought forward enhanced testing procedures for particularly vulnerable groups—those who are exposed to a heavy viral load, perhaps in the course of their work. There are other factors at play in the prevalence of the disease among black and minority ethnic groups. I am sure that the point he makes will be among the considerations that the Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation takes into account in the course of deciding how to roll out the vaccine and where it should go first. He makes an important point.

<https://hansard.parliament.uk/commons/2020-11-18/debates/9674CA7A-A00C-4C9F-973F-61C7C9B01152/Engagements#contribution-396F0289-AAE9-4FC6-972C-7E1C5A5BF7AF>

The study referred to above can be read at

<https://www.thelancet.com/action/showPdf?pii=S2589-5370%2820%2930374-6>

House of Commons Written Answers

Visas: Ministers of Religion

Lisa Cameron (SNP) [114240] To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what discussions she has had with faith leaders on the effect of changes to tier 2 and tier 5 visas on ministers of religion and religious workers.

Kevin Foster: This Government recognises the unique value members of religious institutions overseas bring to our communities in the UK. This is reflected in the two

dedicated immigration arrangements which exist for Ministers of Religion and Religious Workers.

Faith leaders have a dedicated point of contact within the Department, with whom they regularly engage, and I have met with representatives of different faiths on a number of occasions to discuss these topics.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2020-11-11/114240>

Churches: Community Development

Chris Green (Conservative) [114222] To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what assessment his Department has made of the economic benefit of the contribution made by church buildings used for community purposes.

Nigel Huddleston: Many places of worship do accommodate additional uses, including those for community purposes, alongside worship. These buildings provide economic and social positive externalities to the country as a whole, and at a local level, they provide a thriving community asset. Places of worship forge social capital by strengthening community cohesion and belonging, alongside providing significant social benefits in times of need. Social action at places of worship is equally prevalent and valuable, such as food banks, blood donation centres and night shelters.

The Government has set out its vision and strategy to protect the historic environment, including England's places of worship, in the 2017 Heritage Statement. The DCMS-funded Taylor Review Pilot, and its subsequent evaluation, published in October 2020, underlines the importance of a strategic approach, based on understanding the gaps in local community provision, when considering additional uses of places of worship.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2020-11-12/114222>

The Heritage Statement referred to above can be read at

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/664657/Heritage_Statement_2017_final_-_web_version_.pdf

The Taylor Review, referred to above, can be read at

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/669667/Taylor_Review_Final.pdf

The evaluation referred to above can be read at

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/923678/Taylor_Review_Pilot_report_-_Oct20-FINAL-c.pdf

Churches: Repairs and Maintenance

Chris Green (Conservative) [113567] To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, whether he plans to allocate funding to churches for the maintenance of church buildings as a result of their contribution to the provision of public services.

Nigel Huddleston: Many places of worship do accommodate additional uses, including those for community purposes, alongside worship. These buildings provide economic and social positive externalities to the country as a whole, and at a local level, they provide a thriving community asset. Places of worship forge social capital by strengthening community cohesion and belonging alongside providing significant social benefits in times of need. Social action at places of worship is equally prevalent and valuable, such as food banks, blood donation centres and night shelters.

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The Government has supported the maintenance of historic churches throughout the UK since 2001 through the Listed Places of Worship Grant Scheme. The Scheme, which is currently funded until the end of March 2021, provides grants towards VAT paid on repairs and maintenance. It presently handles around 7000 claims per annum, is open to all faiths and denominations and is delivered UK wide. In addition, in response to the Covid-19 pandemic, the Government has announced significant cross-sector support. This includes a £1.57 billion Cultural Recovery Fund announced earlier this summer, aimed at helping key cultural organisations, including places of worship, through the pandemic. The fund represents the biggest ever one-off investment in UK culture, complementing the Covid-19 support schemes launched earlier in the year by Historic England and the National Lottery Heritage Fund.

Any extension to the existing funding is subject to the Spending Review, which is due to conclude later this month.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2020-11-10/113567>

The Taylor Review, referred to above, can be read at

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/669667/Taylor_Review_Final.pdf

The evaluation referred to above can be read at

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/923678/Taylor_Review_Pilot_report_-Oct20-FINAL-c.pdf

Information about the Listed Places of Worship Grant Scheme, referred to above, can be read at
<http://www.lpwscheme.org.uk/>

Information about the Culture Recovery Fund, referred to above, can be read at
<https://www.artscouncil.org.uk/culture-recovery-fund-grants/information-applicants-offered-funding#section-1>

Religious Buildings: Coronavirus

Mark Hendrick (Labour Co-op) [113497] To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, to what extent were religious leaders involved in the Government's discussions on the closure of places of worship during the second covid-19 lockdown in England.

Kelly Tohurst: The Places of Worship Taskforce met on 2 November following the Prime Minister's announcement on the new national restrictions that came into effect on 5 November. This gave us the opportunity to share information with our faith groups, as well as hearing their concerns.

The Government has worked closely with the Taskforce and representatives from our major faiths throughout the pandemic.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2020-11-10/113497>

UK Parliament Early Day Motion

Apsana Begum (Labour) [1164] Global Islamophobia – That this House draws attention to Islamophobia in the UK and worldwide; supports Islamophobia Awareness Month; draws attention to the fact that Rohingya Muslims have been driven out of Myanmar and now seek refuge in Bangladesh; that two mosques were simultaneously attacked in New Zealand in 2019; that Uyghur Muslims are being persecuted in Xinjiang, China; that German Muslims were killed in a far right attack in February 2020; that two women were

stabbed in a racially-aggravated attack in Paris in October 2020, in a country that in 2010 banned the wearing of niqab in public spaces; recognises that Islamophobia is prevalent in the UK, with year on year figures for racially or religiously aggravated hate crimes rising by 34 per cent in June 2020; that the UK Government's Prevent programme is viewed by many to foster discrimination against Muslims; recognises that these incidents together illustrate the global nature of Islamophobia, and are only the most high profile examples of it; believes that the Government must stand up to Islamophobia in the UK and abroad; that it must support those countries and groups that are victims of racism; that it must seek to diversify curriculums in our schools to reflect the lived experience of all pupils, in order to combat racism at as early a stage as is possible; and calls on the Government to investigate the cause of rising hate crime, in order to instigate new policy to tackle it.

<https://edm.parliament.uk/early-day-motion/57744>

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Israel

House of Commons Written Answers

The following two questions both received the same answer

Palestinians: Foreign Relations

Steve McCabe (Labour) [114058] To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what assessment he has made of any potential breach of the commitments made by the Palestinian Authority in the 2019-20 Memorandum of Understanding between His Department and the Palestinian Authority.

Steve McCabe (Labour) [114059] To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what assessment he has made of any potential breach in the commitments made by the Palestinian Authority in the 2018-19 Memorandum of Understanding between his Department and the Palestinian Authority.

James Cleverly: No UK Aid is used for payments to prisoners or their families. Our financial support to the Palestinian Authority (PA) health and education sectors goes into a dedicated bank account and is only paid to individual workers who have been carefully vetted through the PEGASE mechanism (Palestinian-European Socio-Economic Management Assistance Mechanism). Each payment is independently audited to ensure it has been received by the intended recipient. This rigorous process means we are confident no UK aid is being diverted.

Our partnership with the PA is underpinned by a Memorandum of Understanding and our 'partnership principles'. We continue to judge that the PA is demonstrating a credible commitment to the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office's partnership principles. Our partnership works to improve the lives of Palestinians and support the UK's commitment to maintain the viability of a two-state solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2020-11-11/114058>

and

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2020-11-11/114059>

The Memoranda of Understanding referred to above can be read at

http://iati.fcdo.gov.uk/iati_documents/51855975.odt

and

<https://tinyurl.com/y57tmc49>

Turkey: Hamas

Robert Langan (Conservative) [113686] To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign,

Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what assessment he has made of the potential effect on regional stability of recent reports that Turkey has granted citizenship to senior Hamas operatives.

Wendy Morton: We are aware of reports about the granting of Turkish citizenship to Hamas figures. Hamas continues to pose a threat to Israel and Israeli civilians. The UK is clear that Hamas' failure to renounce violence and recognise Israel remains a significant barrier to peace. We continue to call upon Hamas to end permanently their incitement and indiscriminate attacks against Israel. The UK retains a policy of no contact with Hamas, in its entirety. Hamas' military wing has been proscribed as a terrorist organisation by the UK since 2001.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2020-11-10/113686>

Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office

Settlements in Givat HaMatos

James Cleverly, Minister for the Middle East and North Africa, said: Israel's decision to advance the construction of 1,257 settlement buildings in the Givat HaMatos area of the occupied West Bank, would violate international law, and risks causing serious damage to the prospects for a viable Palestinian State.

We condemn this decision, which is incompatible with Israel's declared goal of peace, and call for both the tender process and the advancement of other settlements in East Jerusalem and elsewhere in the West Bank to be suspended immediately.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/ministerial-statement-on-settlements-in-givat-hamatos>

Putting the needs and security of Israelis and Palestinians first: Statement by Ambassador Jonathan Allen, UK Chargé d'Affaires to the UN, at the Security Council briefing on the situation in the Middle East

... I would like to start by reflecting on the tragic passing of Saeb Erekat. I echo the words of my Prime Minister and Foreign Secretary in offering our condolences to the family of Saeb Erekat, to President Abbas, and to the Palestinian people. Dr Erekat dedicated his life to dialogue, to Palestinian rights, and to advancing the cause of peace. He will be sorely missed. ...

Madam President, as we made clear repeatedly in this Council, the United Kingdom opposed annexation and welcomed its suspension. Other unilateral action which jeopardises the physical viability of a future Palestinian state is also unacceptable. The United Kingdom condemns the Government of Israel's publication of tenders for construction in the East Jerusalem settlement of Givat Hamatos, an extremely sensitive area of the West Bank. ...

The United Kingdom also expresses our serious concern following the demolition of Humsa Al-Baqai'a by the Israeli Authorities on 3 November. This act caused the displacement of vulnerable Palestinians, including 41 children, and it caused unnecessary suffering. ...

We continue to urge the parties to prioritise progress towards reaching a durable solution for Gaza and to take the necessary practical steps to ensure Gaza's reconstruction and economic recovery. ... We call upon Hamas and other terrorist groups to permanently end their incitement and rocket fire against Israel.

With dialogue in mind, my government therefore welcomes reports that the Palestinian Authority and the Government of Israel will return to cooperation and abide by signed agreements. ...

73 years ago this month, the United Nations decided on the partition of Palestine. Piece by painful piece, over many years, progress was made towards an agreed partition – a

two-state solution. As the region takes strides towards dialogue, it is time, too, for the parties to the Israel-Palestine conflict to stop dismantling peace, and start building it again.

To read the full transcript see

<https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/putting-the-needs-and-security-of-israelis-and-palestinians-first>

United Nations

More Demolitions, New Settlement-Expansion Plans Form Backdrop to Spiking COVID-19 Infections, Top Middle East Peace Official Tells Security Council

Increasing demolitions of Palestinian property — and the announcement of 1,200 new construction projects in East Jerusalem — are now the backdrop for a worrying spike in COVID-19 cases in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, the senior United Nations official for Middle East peace told a Security Council videoconference ...

Outlining recent developments, Nickolay Mladenov, Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process, said that after weeks of declining COVID-19 cases, the number of infections is rising once again in the Occupied Palestinian Territory. ...

While welcoming the Palestinian Authority's decision to restart civilian and security coordination with Israel, he expressed concern that some 121,000 Palestinians lost their jobs in the wake of the first COVID-19 lockdown and that food insecurity rates have soared. ...

Temporary arrangements brokered by the United Nations and the World Health Organization (WHO) are facilitating the transfer of medical patients out of Gaza and the import of humanitarian supplies, he continued. Reiterating the Secretary-General's call for Israeli and Palestinian officials to re-examine and improve the nature of their economic relationship, he said both sides can take immediate steps to move goods into and out of Gaza and to increase trade between that enclave, Israel and the occupied West Bank.

He went on to spotlight a worrying incident on 3 November, when Israeli authorities carried out the most extensive demolitions in the occupied West Bank in a decade, destroying 70 structures in Area C ... In another concerning development, on 15 November, Israeli authorities opened a bidding process for the construction of more than 1,200 housing units in the Givat Hamatos settlement between Jerusalem and Bethlehem ...

Militants in Gaza fired two rockets and released incendiary balloons towards Israel, though no injuries were reported. ...

All the while, he noted, the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) is still suffering a \$115 million funding shortfall for November and December. For the first time, the Agency finds itself unable to pay salaries and expenses in full ...

He went on to underline the responsibility borne by both Israeli and Palestinian leaders to explore every opening that may restore hope in a two-State solution. ...

The United Kingdom's representative, rejecting Israel's recent announcement of construction tenders in an "extremely sensitive" area, emphasized that Gaza's reconstruction and economic recovery is more urgent than ever in the face of rebounding COVID-19 cases. Meanwhile, Hamas must permanently end its attacks against Israel, he stressed. ...

Germany's representative expressed regret that negative trends on the ground are "increasingly entrenching a one-State reality" ...

The Russian Federation's representative said lasting peace in the Middle East is impossible without a resolution of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict based on international law and through direct negotiations between the relevant parties. ...

France's representative ... [expressed] alarm at Israel's proliferating settlement expansion and record demolitions of Palestinian structures ... Israel's suspension of its annexation

project must be definitive and not replaced by *faits accomplis* on the ground, he emphasized. ...

The representative of the United States noted that the recently-concluded Abraham Accords — which normalized relations between Israel and the United Arab Emirates, Bahrain and Sudan — have brought peace within reach and triggered a wave of unprecedented interactions across the Middle East. Calling upon the Palestinians to seize that momentum, she declared: “We are putting decades of diplomatic failure behind us.” ...

To read the full press release see

<https://www.un.org/press/en/2020/sc14360.doc.htm>

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Relevant Legislation ** new or updated today

UK Parliament

Animal Welfare (Sentencing) Bill

<https://bills.parliament.uk/bills/2622>

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 (Approved Organisations) Bill

<https://bills.parliament.uk/bills/2537>

Marriage (Authorised Belief Organisations) Bill

<https://bills.parliament.uk/bills/2795>

Marriage and Civil Partnership (Minimum Age) Bill

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

Scottish Parliament

Domestic Abuse (Protection) (Scotland) Bill

<https://beta.parliament.scot/bills/domestic-abuse-protection-scotland-bill>

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

**** closes tomorrow**

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/>

Ethnic disparities and inequality in the UK (closing date 30 November 2020)

<https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/ethnic-disparities-and-inequality-in-the-uk-call-for-evidence/ethnic-disparities-and-inequality-in-the-uk-call-for-evidence>

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

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

Independent Faith Engagement Review (closing date 11 December 2020)

<https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/independent-faith-engagement-review-call-for-evidence/independent-faith-engagement-review-call-for-evidence>

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