Political Affairs Digest
A daily summary of political events affecting the Jewish Community

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House of Commons Written Answers

Islam: Religious Hatred
Ruth Jones (Labour) [83477] To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, when he last discussed tackling Islamophobia with the leaders of the devolved Administrations.

Kemi Badenoch: The Government remains committed to tackling Islamophobia and recognises the discrimination and intolerance faced by Muslim communities. Criminal Justice is a fully devolved issue in Scotland and Northern Ireland. In Wales, we maintain a dialogue and the Welsh Government has been consulted on our forthcoming Hate Crime Strategy.
https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2021-11-29/83477

Religious Hatred: Islam
Afzal Khan (Labour) [83460] To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, what steps the Anti-Muslim Hatred Working Group has taken to tackle Islamophobia.

Kemi Badenoch: The Cross-Government Working Group to Tackle Anti-Muslim Hatred has played an important role as the Government’s forum for discussing issues of concern around Islamophobia and anti-Muslim hatred. The group has been instrumental in a number of achievements; regional workshops to empower communities and educate them in how to respond to hate crime, conducting research into the drivers of Islamophobia and running educational events such as those during the pandemic focusing on how Islamophobia spreads on social media.
https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2021-11-29/83460

Religious Hatred: Islam
Afzal Khan (Labour) [83461] To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, when officials in his Department last met with the Anti-Muslim Hatred Working Group.

Kemi Badenoch: Officials have been in regular contact with the chair of the working
Muslim Council of Britain

Ruth Jones (Labour) [83476] To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, on which date the Prime Minister last met the Secretary General of the Muslim Council of Britain.

Michael Ellis: Formal Ministerial meetings with external organisations are published each quarter on GOV.UK.

The Government, under successive administrations, has a long-standing policy of non-engagement with the Muslim Council of Britain. Previous MCB leaders have taken positions that contradict our fundamental values and these have not been explicitly retracted.

Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities and Cabinet Office

Updated Guidance: Coronavirus (COVID-19): Wedding and civil partnership ceremonies, receptions and celebrations

Law Commission

Hate crime laws: Final report

Holocaust

United Nations

Escalating Violence, Rights Violations ‘Alarming Warning Signs’ That Should Prompt Action to Prevent Future Genocide, Secretary-General Says on International Day

… On this day, every year, we honour the memory of the victims of genocide and other atrocity crimes, and we rededicate ourselves to preventing these horrendous acts. The Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide has given us a better understanding of early warning signs and risk factors. Yet, today, genocide remains a very real threat. The international community has repeatedly failed to respond collaboratively, swiftly and decisively to prevent genocide and related atrocity crimes. Today, we face the highest number of violent conflicts since 1945. They are lasting longer and are increasingly complex. Impunity is rife and human rights and the rule of law are regularly ignored. Identity-based hate speech, incitement and discrimination continue to spread and are increasingly being used for political manipulation and gain. These are all alarming warning signs that should prompt action.
We know what is needed. We must eliminate identity-based discrimination and recognize diversity as a strength. We must respect human rights and the rule of law. We must ensure accountability and reparations for past atrocity crimes. And we must reconcile and restore broken communities.

States have the primary responsibility for preventing genocide, but this cannot be achieved without the participation of society as a whole. Young people, religious and community leaders, the private sector and the media — especially social media platforms — all have a responsibility to become champions of prevention. By working together, we can avoid the egregious mistakes of the past.


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**Israel**

**House of Commons Written Answers**

**West Bank: Water**

**Clive Betts (Labour)** [84299] To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps she will take to help ensure that the Government of Israel ceases its destruction of (a) the main water pipeline serving multiple communities in Massafer Yatta and (b) other water infrastructure in the West Bank.

**James Cleverly:** The UK has raised the issue of access to water in the Occupied Palestinian Territories with the Israeli authorities, including stressing the urgent need for Israel to take immediate and practical measures to improve the current situation and ensure fair distribution of water in the West Bank. The UK is clear that in all but the most exceptional of circumstances, demolitions and evictions are contrary to International Humanitarian Law. The UK regularly raises the issue of demolitions, confiscations and forced evictions of Palestinians from their homes with the Government of Israel, most recently with Israel's Ministry of Defence on 19 October.

https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2021-11-30/84299

**Palestinians: Health Services**

**Philippa Whitford (SNP)** [85290] To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, pursuant to the Answer of 15 November 2021 to Question 75008 on Occupied Territories: Health Services, what steps the Government has taken since January 2021 to help ensure access to essential healthcare services for Palestinians.

**James Cleverly:** The UK is a longstanding supporter to the UN Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA). Our annual contribution to UNRWA's core programme budget helps UNRWA provide basic education to more than 533,000 children a year (half of which are girls), access to health services for 3.5 million Palestinian refugees and social safety net assistance for around 255,000 of the most vulnerable across the region. The UK Embassy in Tel Aviv also regularly raises the importance of access to essential services with the Israeli authorities.

https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2021-12-01/85290

*The answer referred to above can be read at* [https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2021-11-15/75008](https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2021-11-15/75008)
West Bank: Israeli Settlements
Baroness Janke (Liberal Democrat) [HL4336] To ask Her Majesty's Government what discussions they have had with the government of Israel regarding reports that Palestinian land in the West Bank has been confiscated by Israeli settlers and Palestinians expelled from it.

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: The UK regularly raises the issue of demolitions, confiscations and forced evictions of Palestinians from their homes with the Government of Israel, most recently with Israel's Ministry of Defence on 19 October. We regularly call on Israel to halt such counterproductive activity and instead urgently commit to creating a better environment for a just and lasting peace.

https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2021-11-23/hl4336

Israel: Palestinians
Baroness Janke (Liberal Democrat) [HL4337] To ask Her Majesty's Government what representations they have made, if any, to the government of Israel concerning reports that Israel is holding 482 Palestinians in administrative detention, including 4 minors, without charge or trial.

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: We continue to call on the Israeli authorities to comply with their obligations under international law and either charge or release detainees. We remain committed to working with Israel to secure improvements to the practices surrounding children in detention and regularly raise this with the Israeli Ministry of Justice. We also fund projects providing legal aid to assist children with legal representation and capacity building to local lawyers.

https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2021-11-23/hl4337

Israel: Palestinians
Baroness Janke (Liberal Democrat) [HL4338] To ask Her Majesty's Government what plans they have, if any, to make representations to the government of Israel concerning (1) the actions taken by Israeli forces and settler communities which have prevented Palestinian farmers from tending to their land in at-Tabaga village, Hebron and (2) the sealing off of agricultural roads by the Israeli Civil Authority preventing access to the Masafer Yatta hamlets.

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: We continue to stress to the Israeli authorities the damage that their restrictions on access and trade are doing to the living standards of ordinary Palestinians. We regularly call on Israel to halt such counterproductive activity and instead urgently commit to creating a better environment for a just and lasting peace.

https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2021-11-23/hl4338

Jerusalem: Palestinians
Baroness Janke (Liberal Democrat) [HL4335] To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made, if any, of reports regarding (1) Israeli settlement activity at holy sites in Jerusalem’s Old City, (2) the displacement of Palestinians from their homes in the area, and (3) the restriction of Palestinian cultural activities.

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: The UK is committed to working with all parties to maintain calm, avoid provocation and uphold the historic Status Quo to ensure the safety and the security of the Al Haram Al Sharif / Temple Mount and all who worship there. We remain opposed to the eviction of Palestinians from their homes, and regularly make this clear to the Israeli authorities and the Municipality of Jerusalem, both bilaterally and in co-operation with like-minded diplomatic partners. We also continue to support the Palestinian cultural presence and identity.
United Nations

Outraged over Israel's Designation of Six Civil Society Groups as Terrorists, Speakers Tell Palestinian Rights Committee Harassment against Human Rights Defenders Must End

... Michelle Bachelet, United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, highlighting acute concerns regarding the human rights situation in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, said that the most significant escalation in hostilities since 2014 occurred in Gaza in May, resulting in the killing of 261 Palestinians, including 67 children. That escalation was directly linked to protests and violent responses by Israeli security forces — first in East Jerusalem, then spreading to the entire Occupied Palestinian Territory and to Israel. ...

In addition to recurring cycles of hostilities, she said the people of Gaza also continue to suffer from a 15-year land, sea and air blockade that has deeply damaged the human rights and humanitarian situation. With vital infrastructure crumbling, the decaying sewer system constitutes a threat to health. Noting the severe movement restrictions and obstructions to people's access to essential goods and services, including specialized healthcare, she said Palestinians are systematically deprived of the fundamental rights and freedoms due to every human being. ...

Turning to the issue of civic freedoms, she said that on 19 October, Israel designated six Palestinian civil society organizations as “terrorist organizations” under Israel’s Counter-Terrorism Law of 2016, and later declared unlawful in the occupied territory. Pointing out that those designations appear to have been based on vague or unsubstantiated reasons, she said all six organizations have worked with the international community, including the United Nations for decades, collectively defending human rights and providing humanitarian assistance for thousands of people. “Without adequate substantive evidence, these decisions appear arbitrary, and further erode the civic and humanitarian space in the Occupied Palestinian Territory,” she said.

Expressing regret that actions by the Palestinian Authority have also contributed to restricting the civic space for Palestinians, she said the rights to freedom of expression and peaceful assembly are increasingly curtailed. Since June 2021, her Office has documented cases of assaults of journalists and human rights defenders, as well as intimidation; gender-based violence and harassment; excessive use of force; arbitrary arrests and censorship. In Gaza, the de facto authorities have also restricted Palestinians’ rights to freedom of expression and peaceful assembly, with targeting of journalists through raids, arrests and harassment.

Underscoring the numerous killings and injuries of Palestinians across the Occupied Palestinian Territory by Israeli forces, as well as by armed settlers, she said the use of excessive or unwarranted force by Israeli forces appears in many instances to be a measure of first — rather than last — resort, as required under international law. ...

Turning to settler-related violence, she noted that in the past year, there have been 490 incidents resulting in deaths, injury and/or significant property damage — the highest incidence of settler violence ever recorded by the United Nations. ...

... she said that currently 160 Palestinian children are detained by Israel, some of them without charge, under administrative detention regulations. Stressing that under international law, administrative detention is permitted only in exceptional circumstances and must be subject to strict safeguards to prevent arbitrariness, she said her Office also continues to receive reports of the ill-treatment of children during their arrest, transfer,
interrogation and detention by Israeli authorities. …

The Permanent Observer for the State of Palestine questioned how important the database of settlements-related businesses is, noting that its continued update could pressure Israel to cease its settlement activities. He expressed hope that the Office of the High Commissioner would publish updates for the database as well as the newly established Commission of Inquiry.

The representative of Turkey said Israeli policies are not aimed at achieving peace, adding that additional efforts are needed to ensure accountability for actions counter to international law. Israel’s actions to classify six non-governmental organizations as “terrorist” are contrary to human rights and international law …

Responding, Ms. Bachelet said Israel’s … decision to outlaw six non-governmental organizations has restrained the work of the Human Rights Commission, she added, which knows they provide essential services to countless Palestinians. In addition to restricting space for Palestinian civil society, she said the designation violates their rights of human expression and peaceful assembly.

Regarding the database of settlements-related businesses, she said the most recent report was issued in February 2021, but updating it annually has been hindered by budgetary restraints. …

The Committee then held a virtual event titled “Supporting Human Rights Defenders in the Occupied Palestinian Territory: Reality, Challenges, and Obligations”. …

Riyad Mansour [Permanent Observer for the State of Palestine to the United Nations] said it is timely to have the opportunity to listen to the representatives of civil society organizations and unite with them in rejecting Israel’s characterization of those organizations. Noting that Israel, the occupying authority, is trying to silence everyone both in the Occupied Palestinian Territory and inside Israel, he stressed the importance of giving those organizations the necessary space to do their honourable work and of supporting not only them, but all civil society organizations operating in the Occupied Palestinian Territory and in Israel who are working to defend the human rights of Palestinians. …

Saleh Hijazi [Head of the Jerusalem Office for Israel and Palestine and Deputy Regional Director of the Middle East and North Africa at Amnesty International] said “shrinking space” became the term used to describe Israel’s policies toward Palestinian civil society organizations — policies that restrict and punish those who aim to expose Israel’s systematic human rights violations and advocate for Israel to be held accountable. The term has also been used to encompass how Palestinian authorities have increased crackdowns on Palestinian civil society organizations. As a result, human rights activities have faced repression from both Israel and Palestinian authorities for years. …

Michael Sfard [human rights lawyer] said Israel has failed to provide a shred of evidence for its watershed allegations against six civil society organizations almost seven weeks ago. … he said silencing organizations sparking investigations against it has become a strategic Israeli Government aim. Under Israeli law, designating a civil society entity as a terrorist organization is equivalent to the death penalty, as it invokes criminal powers forcing that body into seclusion. …

Relevant Legislation  ** new or updated today

** UK Parliament

Animal Welfare (Sentience) Bill  
https://bills.parliament.uk/bills/2867

Assisted Dying Bill  
https://bills.parliament.uk/bills/2875

Charities Bill  
https://bills.parliament.uk/bills/2877

Education (Assemblies) Bill  
https://bills.parliament.uk/bills/2878

Higher Education (Freedom of Speech) Bill  
https://bills.parliament.uk/bills/2862

Israel Arms Trade (Prohibition) Bill  
https://bills.parliament.uk/bills/3025

Marriage Act 1949 (Amendment) Bill  
https://bills.parliament.uk/bills/3017

Marriage and Civil Partnership (Minimum Age) Bill  
https://bills.parliament.uk/bills/2900

** Nationality and Borders Bill  
https://bills.parliament.uk/bills/3023

Report Stage, House of Commons  
https://hansard.parliament.uk/commons/2021-12-07/debates/E3398434-EA4E-4717-9BF5-92B8962F82D1/NationalityAndBordersBill

Online Safety Bill (Draft)  
https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/draft-online-safety-bill

Palestine Statehood (Recognition) Bill  
https://bills.parliament.uk/bills/2942

** Northern Ireland Assembly

Organ and Tissue Donation (Deemed Consent) Bill  
Consultations ** new or updated today

**Proposed Assisted Dying for Terminally ill Adults (Scotland) Bill** (closing date 22 December 2021)

**Animal Welfare – revision of EU legislation (Food Safety)** (closing date 21 January 2022)

**Marriage Law (Northern Ireland)** (closing date 18 February 2022)

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