



Political Affairs Digest

A daily summary of political events affecting the Jewish Community

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House of Lords Written Answer

Marriage

Baroness Cox (Crossbench) [HL5231] To ask Her Majesty's Government, further to the Integrated Communities Strategy Green Paper published on 14 March 2018, whether they can provide an update on their progress in exploring "the legal and practical challenges of limited reform relating to the law on marriage and religious weddings."

Lord Wolfson of Tredegar: This is a difficult issue which requires careful consideration. The Law Commission are looking at aspects of the problem through their review of the law governing legal marriage ceremonies. This review will present options for reforms to modernise marriage law, including in relation to who can solemnise a marriage and ways of ensuring that fewer weddings conducted according to religious rites result in a marriage that the law does not recognise at all. The Government will consider the case for more comprehensive and enduring reform to marriage law once the Law Commission's recommendations have been received.

A separate Nuffield Foundation study, launched in September 2020 and due to report shortly, is investigating why marriage ceremonies occur outside of the legal framework for weddings in England and Wales, and the findings of this report will also be carefully considered. Any proposals affecting how religious groups are permitted to conduct marriages must be thoroughly assessed for their fairness.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2022-01-10/hl5231>

The Green Paper referred to above can be read at

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/696993/Integrated_Communities_Strategy.pdf

Information about the Law Commission review referred to above can be read at

<https://www.lawcom.gov.uk/project/weddings/>

Information about the Nuffield Foundation study referred to above can be read at

<https://www.nuffieldfoundation.org/project/wedding-not-marriage-exploring-non-legally-binding-ceremonies>

Department of Health and Social Care and UK Health Security Agency

Coronavirus (COVID-19): updated guidance for funerals and commemorative events during the coronavirus pandemic

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-guidance-for-managing-a-funeral-during-the-coronavirus-pandemic/covid-19-guidance-for-managing-a-funeral-during-the-coronavirus-pandemic>

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Holocaust

House of Commons Oral Answers

Topical Questions: Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities The Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities and Minister for Intergovernmental Relations (Michael Gove): On Thursday this week, it is, as the House knows, Holocaust Memorial Day. My hon. Friend the Minister for Levelling Up Communities will lead a debate on that day. It is important that we all recognise that the work of the Holocaust Memorial Day Trust and the Holocaust Educational Trust are absolutely invaluable, not just in challenging the unique evil of the holocaust and the poison of antisemitism but in reminding us that we need to be vigilant against prejudice of all kinds: anti-Muslim hatred, the persecution of Christians and any prejudice that is based on religion, ethnicity or any of our protected characteristics.

Paul Blomfield (Labour): I certainly endorse the comments by the Secretary of State in relation to Holocaust Memorial Day. ...

<https://hansard.parliament.uk/commons/2022-01-24/debates/08317C14-29DA-4920-9FF2-F9A6350A5DB0/TopicalQuestions>

Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office

Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office: Today we held a joint virtual reception with @IsraelinUK to remember and honour the 6 million Jewish Men, women & children murdered during the Holocaust. Watch the Foreign Secretary @TrussLiz 's remarks #HMD22

To watch the video referred to above see

<https://twitter.com/FCDOGovUK/status/1485977912482353158>

Liz Truss: I joined our Israeli friends marking Holocaust Memorial Day to pay tribute to the six million Jewish individuals murdered and all other victims of Nazi persecution.

We continue to stand up to antisemitism in all its forms #HMD2022 #neverforget

<https://twitter.com/trussliz/status/1485991187219681290>

European Parliament

European Parliament to commemorate International Holocaust Remembrance Day
... 77 years after the liberation of the Auschwitz Nazi concentration camp on 27 January 1945, MEPs will honour the International Day of Commemoration in memory of the victims of the Holocaust.

The ceremony will be opened at 12.30 with a speech by the President of the European Parliament Roberta Metsola, followed by a musical interlude.

100-year old Holocaust survivor Margot Friedländer will then address MEPs. ...

You can follow the ceremony live on Parliament's [webstreaming](#) and on [EbS+](#).

Margot Friedländer was born in 1921 in Berlin. In 1943, her mother and brother were deported to Auschwitz, where they were both murdered. At the age of 21 she went into hiding, but was tracked down in 1944 and deported to the concentration camp Theresienstadt. She was the only member of her family to survive. ... [she said] I'm speaking in the name of those who cannot speak. And not just the six million Jews. I'm speaking on behalf of all who were murdered and who suffered."

To read the full press release see

<https://www.europarl.europa.eu/news/en/press-room/20220120IPR21416/european-parliament-to-commemorate-international-holocaust-remembrance-day>

United Nations

United Nations Marks International Day of Commemoration in Memory of Holocaust Victims under Theme, 'Memory, Dignity and Justice'

The United Nations annual ceremony marking the International Day of Commemoration in Memory of the Victims of the Holocaust will take place virtually this year, and will be livestreamed worldwide on 27 January at 11 a.m. Under the theme "Memory, Dignity and Justice", the ceremony is an expression of the United Nations unwavering commitment to promoting human rights, countering anti-Semitism and racism, and to preventing future genocide. ...

The ceremony will include testimonies from the Holocaust survivors from Canada, Israel, South Africa and the United States; children and grandchildren of Jewish and Romani Holocaust survivors; and speakers from diverse regions, age, gender and ethnicity, who will share how their values, choices and commitments to advancing human rights have been shaped by their encounters with the history of the Holocaust. ...

The ceremony can be watched on UN Web TV, the United Nations YouTube channel or the Twitter and Facebook pages of UN WebTV. Guests are invited to register and receive links and updates about the ceremony, or follow the conversation on social media with the hashtag #HolocaustRemembrance. ...

To read the full press release see

<https://www.un.org/press/en/2022/note6545.doc.htm>

The media channels referred to above are available at

<https://media.un.org/en/webtv>

and

<https://www.youtube.com/UNITEDNATIONS>

and

<https://twitter.com/UN>

and

<https://www.facebook.com/unitednations/>

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House of Commons Written Answers

Schools: Publications

Paul Girvan (DUP) [102752] To ask the Secretary of State for Education, if he will take steps to ensure that the Pikku Publishing children's book entitled, Amazing Women of the Middle East: 25 Stories from Ancient Times to Present Day, which deletes Israel from the map, will be denied authorisation for use in schools in the UK.

Robin Walker: The content of textbooks is a matter for individual publishers. The department does not play a role in prescribing or authorising the books that schools can use. It is a matter for schools themselves to determine what curriculum resources they use, and we trust them to use their judgement in assessing their quality.

We understand from the publisher that Palestine was included on the map to signify the origin of one of the women in the book, born in the 19th century. The publisher has made clear no offence was intended, and if a new edition is published, they would omit or update the map to address the criticisms. Additionally, the publisher has stated that only a selection of countries from the area are included on the map.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2022-01-12/102752>

Human Rights: Non-governmental Organisations

Jim Shannon (DUP) [103554] To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what recent assessment she has made of the (a) viability and (b) operational capabilities of human rights organisations around the world in the context of recent closures or restrictions on established organisations in Russia and Israel.

Amanda Milling: The UK's Integrated Review of Security, Defence, Development and Foreign Policy outlines our commitment to defending human rights. Civic freedom is under threat around the world and human rights organisations - as well as other actors within civic space - increasingly face restrictions and even threat of physical violence. Our annual Human Rights and Democracy Report tracks this trend and details how the UK has responded.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2022-01-13/103554>

The most recent Integrated Review, referred to above, can be read at

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/975077/Global_Britain_in_a_Competitive_Age-the_Integrated_Review_of_Security_Defence_Development_and_Foreign_Policy.pdf

The most recent Human Rights and Democracy Report, referred to above, can be read at

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/999607/Human_Rights_and_Democracy_the_2020_Foreign_Commonwealth_Development_Office_report.pdf

House of Lords Written Answers

Israel: Palestinians

Baroness Sheehan (Liberal Democrat) [HL5265] To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of recent reports that 2021 saw the highest number of Palestinians killed by Israeli forces since 2014; and that demolitions by Israeli forces reached a five-year high, making nearly 900 Palestinians homeless.

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: We raise the issue of the high numbers of Palestinians killed and injured by Israeli Defence Forces in the West Bank and

Gaza with the Israeli authorities, encouraging them to carry out swift, transparent and thorough investigations. We continue to stress the importance of the Israeli security forces providing appropriate protection to the Palestinian civilian population and urge restraint in the use of live fire. The UK also 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 Foreign Affairs on 9 December.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2022-01-10/hl5265>

Israel: Palestinians

Baroness Sheehan (Liberal Democrat) [HL5266] To ask Her Majesty's Government what representations they have made to the government of Israel concerning the treatment of Palestinians and their property during night raids by Israeli forces.

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: While we recognise Israel's legitimate need to deploy security measures, we encourage them to deploy these in a way which minimises tension. We repeatedly call on Israel to abide by its obligations under international law and have a regular dialogue with Israel on legal issues relating to the occupation. We continue to stress the importance of the Israeli security forces providing appropriate protection to the Palestinian civilian population.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2022-01-10/hl5266>

Israel: Palestinians

Baroness Sheehan (Liberal Democrat) [HL5267] To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of recent reports that the Israeli military has revised its open-fire policies for the West Bank.

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: Our Embassy in Tel Aviv raises cases of alleged excessive use of force with the Israeli Defence Forces directly. We raise the issue of the high numbers of Palestinians killed and injured by Israeli Defence Forces in the West Bank and Gaza with the Israeli authorities, encouraging them to carry out swift, transparent and thorough investigations.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2022-01-10/hl5267>

Israel: Palestinians

Baroness Janke (Liberal Democrat) [HL5242] To ask Her Majesty's Government what representations they have made to the government of Israel concerning the increasing number of injuries to Palestinians by Israeli settlers supported by Israeli forces.

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: The UK regularly raises the issue of settler violence with the Government of Israel, most recently with Israel's Ministry of Defence on 4 January. We welcome discussion by the Israeli authorities' on how to address this issue, and urge Israel to bring those responsible to justice and end the culture of impunity. We continue to stress the importance of the Israeli security forces providing appropriate protection to the Palestinian civilian population.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2022-01-10/hl5242>

Israel: Palestinians

Baroness Janke (Liberal Democrat) [HL5244] To ask Her Majesty's Government what representations they have made to the government of Israel concerning the destruction of Palestinian olive trees and crops in the Occupied Territories by Israeli settlers.

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: We understand the particular significance of olive trees given their status as a national symbol and the sole source of income for many Palestinian farmers. We have repeatedly raised the issue of incidents of settler violence, including the destruction of olive trees, with the Israeli authorities. We continue to urge them to investigate thoroughly every instance to bring those

responsible to justice and of the Israeli security forces providing appropriate protection to the Palestinian civilian population.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2022-01-10/hl5244>

Jerusalem: Palestinians

Baroness Janke (Liberal Democrat) [HL5245] To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of recent reports that in December 2021 in East Jerusalem (1) 92 Palestinians lost their homes after 14 residential units were demolished by Israeli forces, and (2) 21 non-residential structures, including 18 commercial structures, were demolished.

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: 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 Foreign Affairs on 9 December.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2022-01-10/hl5245>

Muhannad Misk

Baroness Janke (Liberal Democrat) [HL5243] To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of recent reports of the detention by Israeli forces of the Palestinian child Muhannad Misk in Hebron on 16 December 2021.

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: We repeatedly call on Israel to abide by its obligations under international law and have a regular dialogue with Israel on legal issues relating to the occupation, including the treatment of Palestinian children. 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 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.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2022-01-10/hl5243>

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Other Relevant Information

University of Birmingham

University of Birmingham survey reveals Islamophobia is the posh person's prejudice

A survey led by the University of Birmingham says people from middle and upper-class occupational groups are more likely to hold prejudiced views of Islam than people from working class occupational groups.

The survey, which was carried out in conjunction with YouGov, found that 23.2% of people who come from the social group ABC1 harbour prejudiced views about Islamic beliefs compared with only 18.4% of people questioned from the C2DE group. However, when asked their views about Muslims, or most other ethnic or religious minority groups, older people, men, working class people and Conservative and Leave voters are consistently more likely to hold prejudiced views. ...

Other key notable findings in the survey are:

1. *Muslims are the UK's second 'least liked' group, after Gypsy and Irish Travellers: 25.9% of the British public feel negative towards Muslims (with 9.9% feeling 'very negative').* This

compares with 8.5% for Jewish people, 6.4% for black people, and 8.4% for white people. Only Gypsy and Irish Travellers are viewed more negatively by the British public, with 44.6% of people viewing this group negatively.

2. *More than one in four people, and nearly half of Conservative and Leave voters, hold conspiratorial views about Sharia 'no-go areas' ...*

3. *Support for prohibiting all Muslim migration to the UK is 4-6% higher for Muslims than it is for other ethnic and religious groups ...*

4. *The British public is almost three times more likely to hold prejudiced views of Islam than they are of other religions: 21.1% of British people wrongly believe Islam teaches its followers that the Qur'an must be read 'totally literally'. The figure for Islam compares with 7.5% for Judaism and the Hebrew Bible, 3.9% for Sikhism and the Guru Granth Sahib, and 4.8% for Christianity and the Bible.*

5. *British people are more confident in making judgements about Islam than other non-Christian religions but are much more likely to make incorrect assumptions about it: British people acknowledge their ignorance of most non-Christian religions, with a majority stating they are 'not sure' how Jewish (50.8%) and Sikh (62.7%) scriptures are taught. In the case of Islam, however, people feel more confident making a judgement, with only 40.7% being unsure. ...*

To read the full press release see

<https://www.birmingham.ac.uk/news/latest/2022/01/university-of-birmingham-survey-reveals-islamophobia-is-the-posh-person's-prejudice.aspx>

The Dinner Table Prejudice: Islamophobia in Contemporary Britain

<https://www.birmingham.ac.uk/documents/college-artslaw/ptr/90172-univ73-islamophobia-in-the-uk-report-final.pdf>

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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>

**** Online Safety Bill (Draft)**

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/draft-online-safety-bill>

Digital, Culture, Media and Sport Committee Report: The Draft Online Safety Bill and the legal but harmful debate

<https://committees.parliament.uk/publications/8608/documents/86960/default/>

Palestine Statehood (Recognition) Bill

<https://bills.parliament.uk/bills/2942>

Northern Ireland Assembly

Organ and Tissue Donation (Deemed Consent) Bill

<http://www.niassembly.gov.uk/assembly-business/legislation/2017-2022-mandate/primary-legislation---bills-2017---2022-mandate/organ-and-tissue-donation-deemed-consent-bill/>

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Consultations

** new or updated today

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

<https://www.finance-ni.gov.uk/consultations/public-consultation-marriage-law>

Human Rights Act Reform: A Modern Bill of Rights (closing date 8 March 2022)

<https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/human-rights-act-reform-a-modern-bill-of-rights>

CPS: Public interest guidance for suicide pact and 'mercy killing' type cases

(closing date 9 April 2022)

<https://www.cps.gov.uk/consultation/consultation-public-interest-guidance-suicide-pact-and-mercy-killing-type-cases-0>

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