



# Political Affairs Digest

A daily summary of political events affecting the Jewish Community

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## Home Affairs

### House of Commons Oral Answers

#### Topical Questions: Levelling Up, Housing and Communities

**Christian Wakeford (Labour):** Reported cases of antisemitism continue to rise, with the Community Security Trust recording a record 2,255 cases in 2021. The Government have funded the security at Jewish locations, including synagogues and schools, and this, unfortunately, is vital to ensuring the safety of the Jewish community. Will the Secretary of State commit to the continuation of this funding next year, as well as ensuring that it is adjusted for the increased cost associated with inflation?

**Michael Gove:** The hon. Gentleman makes an important point. As the Minister who, as Secretary of State for Education, initiated that scheme, I will do everything I can to ensure it continues. But I would make one additional point: one of the things we can all do across this House in order to tackle the evil of antisemitism is stand against the boycott, divestment and sanctions campaign, and that is why when we bring forward legislation to outlaw BDS at local government level I hope we can count on the hon. Gentleman's formidable voice pressing on those on his Front Bench the importance of supporting that legislation and not, as they did in the past, abstaining.

<https://hansard.parliament.uk/commons/2022-03-07/debates/82251EA5-B04F-4290-AC04-343B184D27D5/TopicalQuestions#contribution-DA59E812-85BE-4CF9-8681-9BBA23B32F90>

#### Islamophobia

**Afzal Khan (Labour):** What recent discussions [the Minister] has had with the anti-Muslim hatred working group on the rise in Islamophobic attitudes. (905904)

**The Minister for Levelling Up Communities (Kemi Badenoch):** The anti-Muslim hatred working group has played a valuable role as the Government's forum for discussing and advising on anti-Muslim hatred and the challenges faced by Britain's Muslim communities. While the group was paused during the pandemic they continued their important work through a series of webinars, including an event addressing the fears and myths about the covid-19 vaccination programme. The Secretary of State and I will be meeting the leadership of the group in the next few

weeks to discuss the current issues facing Muslim communities and the best way for us to support the group's work.

**Afzal Khan:** Islamophobia remains in all elements of our society, and that includes our major political parties. The difference is that while the Labour party has taken decisive and swift action, the Government have not delivered on any of their promises. The anti-Muslim hatred working group's own Qari Asim has been critical of the Government's failure to take tangible action. Will the Minister now follow in the footsteps of the Labour party and take steps to tackle Islamophobia in the UK, starting with a truly independent investigation into the Conservative party? Will she outline when the UK last submitted a report to the UN's International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination, as required of all signatories to the convention?

**Kemi Badenoch:** The Government do remain committed to stamping out anti-Muslim hatred and all forms of religious prejudice. I have had conversations with the hon. Gentleman and I am due to meet the all-party parliamentary group on British Muslims very shortly. We will outline our next steps in due course but we are actively working on this.

**Imran Hussain (Labour):** I have listened to the Minister, but the tragic reality is that Islamophobia is on the rise and is rife in our society today. If anyone is in any doubt, they should speak to the Muslim communities up and down this country who have to face this evil on a daily basis. How can my constituents have any confidence in a Government who cannot even tackle Islamophobia in their own ranks?

**Kemi Badenoch:** I completely reject the accusation made by the hon. Gentleman—it is completely untrue. We are doing everything we can to tackle not just anti-Muslim hatred but all forms of prejudice in our society. On this issue, we have supported Tell MAMA with just over £4 million between 2016 and 2022 to monitor and combat anti-Muslim hatred. Over the past five years of the places of worship grant scheme we have awarded 241 grants worth approximately £5 million to places of worship. In November 2020 we awarded £1.8 million through the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government's faith, race and hate crime grant scheme.

<https://hansard.parliament.uk/commons/2022-03-07/debates/61686F01-0F8B-4D98-BBC0-761078F481BF/Islamophobia>

## House of Commons Written Answer

### Antisemitism

**Christian Wakeford (Labour) [905911]** To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, what assessment he has made of trends in the levels of anti-Semitism in the last 12 months.

**Kemi Badenoch:** The most recent official Hate Crime statistics, for the year ending March 2021, show that 22% of religious hate crime was targeted at Jewish people, or those perceived to be Jewish. This represents an increase to 1288 reported incidents from 1205 the previous year.

Research published by the Community Security Trust also indicates a significant rise in incidents reported to them in 2021. Antisemitism has absolutely no place in our society, which is why we condemn it and are taking a strong lead in tackling it in all its forms.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2022-03-07/905911>

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## House of Lords Written Answers

### Israel: Social Media

**Lord Hylton (Crossbench)** [HL6255] To ask Her Majesty's Government what representations they have made to the government of Israel (1) to withdraw, or (2) to introduce safeguards to, the "Facebook Law" allowing Israeli courts to remove from social media platforms content perceived as harming security.

**Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon:** We recognise Israel's legitimate need to deploy security measures and we encourage them to deploy these in a way that minimises tension. We continue to reiterate the importance of freedom of expression to both the Government of Israel and Palestinian Authority.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2022-02-21/hl6255>

### Israel: Palestinians

**Lord Hylton (Crossbench)** [HL6256] To ask Her Majesty's Government what representations they have made to the Palestinian Authority not to ban or disrupt funerals of Palestinian citizens who have been killed by Israeli forces.

**Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon:** We continue to urge all sides to demonstrate respect for human rights and respect for the dead.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2022-02-21/hl6256>

### Israel: Palestinians

**Baroness Janke (Liberal Democrat)** [HL6259] To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the government of Israel's proposed plan to introduce a new Citizenship Law to ban Palestinian family unification.

**Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon:** As a friend to Israel, we have expressed our concern in cases where Israeli laws could undermine the equality of members of minority groups. We encourage the Israeli Government to abide by its obligations under international law and do all it can to uphold the values of equality for all enshrined in its laws.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2022-02-21/hl6259>

### Israel: Palestinians

**Baroness Janke (Liberal Democrat)** [HL6260] To ask Her Majesty's Government what representations they are making to the government of Israel concerning reports of Palestinian woman being subjected to intimate body searches by Israeli forces in 2015.

**Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon:** We expect any such allegations to be thoroughly investigated by the Israeli authorities. 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/2022-02-21/hl6260>

### Jerusalem: Palestinians

**Baroness Janke (Liberal Democrat)** [HL6261] To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the Joint Statement of the Humanitarian Country Team on the imminent eviction of the Salem Family in Sheikh Jarrah in East Jerusalem, published on 18 February.

**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. On 19 January, the former Minister for the Middle East, James Cleverly, urged the Government of Israel to stop these practices. The UK is committed to working

with all parties to maintain calm and avoid provocation.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2022-02-21/hl6261>

*The Joint Statement referred to above can be read at*

[https://www.ochaopt.org/content/statement-humanitarian-country-team-imminent-  
eviction-salem-family-sheikh-jarrah-east-jerusalem](https://www.ochaopt.org/content/statement-humanitarian-country-team-imminent-<br/>eviction-salem-family-sheikh-jarrah-east-jerusalem)

*The statement referred to above can be read at*

<https://twitter.com/jamescleverly/status/1483866915613388810>

### **Israel: Palestinians**

**Baroness Janke (Liberal Democrat)** [HL6262] To ask Her Majesty's Government what representations they are making to the government of Israel about reports of violence towards Palestinians protesting against the demolition of homes in the Masafer Yatta region of the South Hebron Hills.

**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 Defense on 20 January. We welcome discussion by the Israeli authorities on how to address this issue, and urge Israel to bring those responsible to justice.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2022-02-21/hl6262>

### **Israeli Settlements**

**Baroness Sheehan (Liberal Democrat)** [HL6315] To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of (1) the government of Israel's settlement policy, and (2) the reported harming of civilians protesting against new settlements in the Occupied Palestinian Territories.

**Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon:** The UK's position on settlements is clear. They are illegal under international law. The former Minister for the Middle East, James Cleverly, raised UK opposition to settlement expansion with the Government of Israel on 9 November. 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/2022-02-21/hl6315>

### **Gaza: Health Services**

**Baroness Sheehan (Liberal Democrat)** [HL6316] To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the data from the Gaza Sub-National Health Cluster and WHO that indicate that (1) in December 2021 Gaza only had 40 per cent of the essential medicines it needs, amounting to just one month's supply, and (2) in some months as many as 50 per cent of permits for treatment outside Gaza are denied or delayed by the Israeli authorities.

**Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon:** The UK continues to monitor closely the ongoing humanitarian situation in Gaza. We are a longstanding supporter to the UN Relief and Works Agency, which provides core services, including healthcare to Palestinian refugees in Gaza. The UK Embassy in Tel Aviv regularly raises the importance of access to healthcare with the Israeli authorities.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2022-02-21/hl6316>

*The data referred to above can be read at*

[https://www.un.org/unispal/wp-content/uploads/2022/02/HEALTHCLUSTERBUL4thQ21  
020222.pdf](https://www.un.org/unispal/wp-content/uploads/2022/02/HEALTHCLUSTERBUL4thQ21<br/>020222.pdf)

### **Ahmad Mteir**

**Baroness Sheehan (Liberal Democrat)** [HL6314] To ask Her Majesty's Government what representations they are making to the government of Israel concerning the reported assault of Ahmad Mteir, a resident of Qalandiya Refugee Camp, by Israeli border police officers.

**Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon:** The UK continues 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/2022-02-21/hl6314>

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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>

#### **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>

#### **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

**\*\* closes today**

**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>

**Hate Crime Legislation in Northern Ireland** (closing date 28 March 2022)

<https://www.justice-ni.gov.uk/consultations/consultation-hate-crime-legislation-northern-ireland>

**Trade with Israel** (closing date 30 March 2022)

<https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/trade-with-israel-call-for-input>

**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