

# Political Affairs Digest

*A daily summary of political events affecting the Jewish Community*

Scottish Council of Jewish Communities

SCoJeC

## Contents

[Home Affairs](#)

[Relevant Legislation](#)

[Israel](#)

[Consultations](#)

## Home Affairs

### House of Commons Written Answer

#### Mass Media: Complaints

**Nusrat Ghani** [60964] To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, with reference to the progress update to the All-Party Parliamentary Group against Anti-Semitism Inquiry into the rise in the number of anti-Semitic incidents following the Gaza conflict in 2014, published by the Department for Communities and Local Government in December 2016, what the evidential basis is for the statement that there are clear ways to register complaints regarding media content.

**Matt Hancock:** The press self-regulators, the Independent Press Standards Organisation (IPSO) and the Independent Monitor for the Press (IMPRESS) each have a clear process for making complaints regarding the publications they regulate. Information about IPSO's complaints process is available here: <https://www.ipso.co.uk/make-a-complaint/>. Information about IMPRESS's complaints process is available here: <http://www.impress.press/complaints/>.

Ofcom's process for complaints covers content on television, radio and on demand programme services. The Broadcasting code includes rules designed to protect viewers and listeners from harm and offence – such as what can be screened on TV before the 9pm watershed. Other areas of the Broadcasting Code address issues such as impartiality and accuracy, sponsorship and commercial references as well as fairness and privacy. Information about Ofcom's complaints process is available here <https://www.ofcom.org.uk/tv-radio-and-on-demand/how-to-report-a-complaint>

In addition, Government expects social media providers to have robust process in place and act promptly when abuse is reported. The UK has strict laws governing such content, which apply equally online and offline.

<http://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Commons/2017-01-20/60964/>

*The progress update referred to above can be read at*

[https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/576563/16\\_1212\\_APPG\\_-\\_Progress\\_Update.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/576563/16_1212_APPG_-_Progress_Update.pdf)

# UK Parliament Home Affairs Committee: Inquiry into hate crime and its violent consequences

## Oral evidence session

### First panel: hate crime against women

#### Second panel: Senior Police Officers

**Q344 Assistant Chief Constable Hamilton:** ... All police forces around the world are struggling just to catch up speed with the level of criminality that now occurs online. I think that we all probably know that you are more likely to be a victim of attempted or actual crime online than in your home. ...

... we are seeing, particularly over the last 24 to 36 months, is a real expansion of online abuse—particularly towards females, celebrities and politicians—of a highly offensive nature. ... we have done a lot of work with the CPS, but in these areas it is difficult to prosecute, difficult to establish where the crime has occurred and difficult to bring people to justice. ... If it is an international incident and there are posts being made from other countries, it is almost impossible to carry out a criminal justice investigation, except in the most extreme circumstances. Certainly in the lower levels of hate crime it is almost impossible to bring a perpetrator to justice. ...

Where the police are hopefully getting better is in understanding their needs and not just trying to pursue the criminal to the nth degree, because that won't always get us the outcome that everyone wants, but also trying to produce some sort of outcome for victims that helps them to deal with the situation and restore some part of their dignity to them. ...

**Paul Giannasi:** ... European countries tend to have some incitement to hatred legislation or Holocaust denial legislation in place, but the US, where most of these intermediaries are based and headquartered, has the first amendment, which says that Congress shall pass no law that restricts, among other things, freedom of expression. ...

One of the problems is that there was a real change, in terms of the public harm that I believe it did, from the internet to social media and Web 2.0. Before that, if I wanted to post material, I had to have my own space that I was responsible for, or I had to ask you if I wanted to post on your space, and you would have the editorial control. Web 2.0 changed that, and I could suddenly be anonymous and post on anybody's website; I could post on the comments page of the newspapers. ...

International jurisdiction was eased for us somewhat with the Sheppard and Whittle case, which went to the Supreme Court. They argued that because they were posting on an American website, they were subject to US jurisdiction. The court rejected that and said, effectively, that where you press the send button is where you commit the offence. ...

**Q345 Assistant Chief Constable Hamilton:** ... We know that with hate crimes the satisfaction levels with police response are lower than they are for other areas of crime; that's a fact and one we fully admit. ...

We believe there was also a correlation between the investigation of hate crime and people's general confidence in the police. ...

**Q347 Paul Giannasi:** ... there is often a consequence to action as well. You will know of examples of Members of Parliament who have been abused, and when somebody has been prosecuted, the abuse has multiplied in response to what is seen by detractors as a breach of their right to free speech. It can have unintended consequences in terms of increasing the problem for action. ...

The one thing that I would suggest is a challenge for us ... is the link between physical offending and online threats. That is a real issue. We do not necessarily understand that in the way that we would want. Testimony from victims' groups says that there is a link. When we look at some people who use extreme violence, we know that they have been exposed to hate material as a precursor, but what we do not know is whether that was a cause or an effect. ...

**Q350 James Berry:** ... If you take—I will not use the word—a racist word used about black people, for instance, in any court of law that would amount to racism, but I could type it into Twitter now and find lots of references to people using that word in a derogatory way. Obviously assuming you could identify them as UK citizens, they would have committed an offence. ...

**Assistant Chief Constable Hamilton:** When there is a crime attached to the derogatory word. So there is a lot of stuff on the internet that is deeply insulting or offensive, but it does not reach a criminal threshold. This has also been recognised by the CPS. ...

**Paul Giannasi:** ... When we talk to police officers in training about this, we talk about it being 5% content and 95% context. ... There was a time when Stan Collymore, the football commentator, was receiving lots and lots of online abuse. He would get something sent to him on Twitter that was an abusive message and he would immediately retweet it to show the horrors of racism. So a search for the content does not give you the context of that—not many people would suggest that Stan Collymore should be prosecuted because the 140 characters that he sent were exactly the same as the 140 characters sent to him. Sometimes the actual content belies the circumstances, which makes it slightly more difficult. ...

**Q357 Mr Umunna:** ... It seems to me that the ultimate way that we will be able to reduce the incidence of hate crime online is if people have the same fear that there will be consequences if they do it online as there would be if they did it in person to someone. The extraordinary thing is that when people are arrested and they do not know why, and it is then explained to them that they have been arrested because they have threatened to commit an injury to someone else, they express surprise and say, “I didn’t really mean it.”

Is that not an argument for making as many examples as possible of people who engage in this stuff? People will see, on a daily basis, that if you engage in this kind of behaviour online, the strong arm of the law will come down on you and it could result in you having a custodial sentence. ...

**Assistant Chief Constable Hamilton:** ... I would not be convinced, from my experience of policing, that it would have the effect that you think it might have. ... it is a bit like having CCTV in the town centre—it doesn’t stop lots of people from getting drunk at night and fighting with each other. It is only afterwards, when you show them the footage of it, that they can’t dispute that they have committed the crime. Generally, it doesn’t necessarily stop them doing it. ...

Most people in their lifetime have experienced some sort of verbal abuse or threats and never reported it to the police. The online space is a kind of extension of that for people.

...

**Q368 Assistant Chief Constable Hamilton:** ... we are not attributing the rise in hate crime to any voting demographic; we are purely reflecting to society the facts of reporting that occurred in that period. Between June and September there was an overall 28% increase on the previous year. In the week after the referendum there was a 41% spike in religious and racially motivated hate crime. During the year 2015-16 there was an overall 19% increase in hate crime, and then we saw this spike.

Spikes have occurred at other times in relation to other international incidents, such as Charlie Hebdo and the Gaza conflict. ...

**Q369 Assistant Chief Constable Hamilton:** ... What we do not want to do is routinely go out to people and say, “Something is about to happen in the political or community sphere and you might become the victim of hate crime.” ...

The police services are aware of these trigger events. The hate crime leads around the country are aware of these trigger events. ...

**Q371 Assistant Chief Constable Hamilton:** ... I commented quite a bit publicly at the time that hate was not born the day we had a referendum. People’s views on these things did not happen that day, so you cannot blame any single incident. ...

What we cannot deny is that in the immediate aftermath of the June referendum there was an increased level of reporting. We have diagnosed that in three ways: first, increased awareness; secondly, people reporting stuff that they would not have reported pre-referendum because they were not aware or did not have the courage to do it; and thirdly, the prevalence of increased actual offending. ...

**Q379 Nusrat Ghani:** I want to open a discussion on under-reporting and over-reporting. How do you report a hate crime if you can't speak English?

**Paul Giannasi:** ... We are about to refresh True Vision to make that more available. Access can be through telephone lines and third parties, like Tell MAMA and CST. ...

**Q380 Nusrat Ghani:** ... one of the big issues, which Tell MAMA has raised and in the evidence we have taken, is that, if someone is the victim of a hate crime on social media and it is not taken down, it just creates more hate crime and makes the victim feel even more vulnerable. ...

**Paul Giannasi:** ... One really horrible example is of a lady who is a holocaust survivor and who does fantastic work with us to raise awareness in schools and to promote positive relationships in schools. When you Google search her name, the first thing that comes up is some holocaust denial material that says she is a liar. Every time a child or family member searches for her, they see that. Those are the sorts of things that we can maybe start to impact on the availability of through the counter-narrative. ...

**Q398 Paul Giannasi:** ... work through relationships with organisations such as Tell MAMA is really important. We have a data-sharing agreement where we share information. That gives us swift information that it would take us some time to get through analysis. ...

One of the other things that we have not talked about with anti-Muslim hate crime is the situational risk. Somebody who works as a doctor in a hospital probably faces less risk than somebody who drives a taxi picking up drunken people on a Friday night. Also, the level of acceptance is much lower. Somebody who is abused every Friday and Saturday night by somebody who runs off from the taxi and shouts racist abuse knows that it happens and they almost accept it—they shouldn't, but they do. That situational risk is really important to understand when you look at anti-Muslim hate crime. ...

**Q404 Naz Shah:** Is there an issue about intersectional or sectarian violence among Muslim communities internally, and would you classify that as a hate crime?

**Assistant Chief Constable Hamilton:** Yes, sectarian crime is hate crime. It is a burgeoning issue in the Muslim community and we are being alerted to it frequently, particularly in the Shi'a and Sunni communities. We also saw that with the Ahmadiyya community last year, with the murder in Edinburgh of Mr Shah, the shopkeeper. There is a correlation between local and international events. When things happen in Syria and Iraq and so forth, we see a correlation with interfaith hate crime here in the UK. ...

**Q406 Paul Giannasi:** I am a pessimist. I see positives, and the point that Claire raised about the indignation from decent people standing up when before they would just have observed is a real positive. But I think the narrative around some major world events has really polarised views, not just here but around the world. ...

**Superintendent Antill:** ... There are mounting threats that have been alluded to, but to offset those, there is the growing condemnation of those types of behaviour within communities. ...

**To read the full transcript see**

<http://data.parliament.uk/writtenevidence/committeeevidence.svc/evidencedocument/home-affairs-committee/hate-crime-and-its-violent-consequences/oral/47454.html>

## Police Service of Northern Ireland

Hate incidents and crimes in Northern Ireland, period ending 31 December 2016

<https://www.psni.police.uk/globalassets/inside-the-psni/our-statistics/hate-motivation-statistics/2016-17/q3/quarterly-hate-motivations-bulletin-period-ending-dec16.pdf>

[TOP](#)

## [Israel](#)

### House of Commons Oral Answer

#### Topical Questions: International Development

**T4. Tommy Sheppard:** On Sunday, the Israeli military authorities issued 40 demolition notices on the Bedouin village of Khan al-Ahmar in the occupied Area C of the west bank. If this happens tomorrow, it will mark a dramatic escalation of the demolitions and will compromise DFID's actions in the region. Can I ask the Government to call on the Israeli authorities to cease— [908785]

**Rory Stewart:** This is an issue that the hon. Gentleman and I have discussed on a number of occasions. We remain absolutely clear, as the British Government, that it is necessary both to protect the security of the Government of Israel and to ensure that the legitimate rights of the Palestinian people are protected. We will continue to work carefully to monitor illegal demolitions.

<https://hansard.parliament.uk/commons/2017-02-22/debates/4E27D2E3-54AF-49FB-BE83-3711F5E67B29/TopicalQuestions#contribution-F28F4E51-8E4D-46A7-A2B4-EF825D8E7F49>

### House of Lords Written Answer

#### Israeli Settlements

**The Marquess of Lothian [HL5373]** To ask Her Majesty's Government whether the Prime Minister raised with the Prime Minister of Israel during his visit to the UK on 6 February (1) the government of Israel's recent announcement of plans for new settlement building in the West Bank, and (2) the law recently passed by the Knesset to allow the retroactive expropriation of private Palestinian land in the West Bank for settlements, in the light of UK policy that continuing Israeli settlement expansion in the West Bank erodes the viability of the two-state solution.

**Baroness Anelay of St Johns:** When the Prime Minister, my Rt Hon. Friend the Member for Maidenhead (Mrs May), met the Prime Minister of Israel on 6 February they discussed the Middle East Peace Process and the UK's firm commitment to a two-state solution as the best way to bring stability and peace to the region. The Prime Minister reiterated the UK's concerns about settlement activity and our strong opposition to the land regularisation bill which paves the way for significant growth in settlements deep in the West Bank, threatening the viability of the two state solution.

<http://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Lords/2017-02-08/HL5373/>

[TOP](#)

## Relevant Legislation \*\* new or updated today

### UK Parliament

#### **Arbitration and Mediation Services (Equality) Bill**

<http://services.parliament.uk/bills/2016-17/arbitrationandmediationservicesequality.html>

#### **Assisted Dying Bill**

<http://services.parliament.uk/bills/2016-17/assisteddying.html>

#### **Cultural Property (Armed Conflicts) Bill**

<http://services.parliament.uk/bills/2016-17/culturalpropertyarmedconflicts.html>

#### **Lobbying (Transparency) Bill**

<http://services.parliament.uk/bills/2016-17/lobbyingtransparency.html>

#### **Organ Donation (Deemed Consent) Bill**

<http://services.parliament.uk/bills/2016-17/organdonationdeemedconsent.html>

#### **Promotion of Israeli-Palestinian Peace (United Kingdom Participation)**

<http://services.parliament.uk/bills/2016-17/promotionofisraelipalestinianpeaceunitedkingdomparticipation.html>

[TOP](#)

## **Consultations** \*\* new or updated today

#### **\*\* closes in 4 days**

#### **Racism at work** (closing date 27 February 2017)

<https://www.surveymonkey.co.uk/r/RacismAtWork>

#### **Organ and Tissue Donation and Transplantation: increasing numbers of successful donations (Scotland)** (closing date 14 March 2017)

<http://www.gov.scot/Resource/0051/00511160.pdf>

#### **The UK's policy towards the Middle East Peace Process** (closing date 30 March 2017)

<http://www.parliament.uk/business/committees/committees-a-z/commons-select/foreign-affairs-committee/news-parliament-2015/middle-east-peace-process-inquiry-16-17/>

#### **Adoption and Children (Northern Ireland) Bill** (closing date 10 April 2017)

<https://www.health-ni.gov.uk/consultations/adoption-and-children-northern-ireland-bill>

#### **Workplace Diversity (Wales)** (closing date not stated)

<https://www.surveymonkey.co.uk/r/wtucdiversity>

[TOP](#)