

Political Affairs Digest

A daily summary of political events affecting the Jewish Community
Scottish Council of Jewish Communities
SCoJeC

Contents

[Home Affairs](#)

[Israel](#)

[Relevant Legislation](#)

[Consultations](#)

Home Affairs

House of Commons Oral Answers

Prime Minister's Questions

Q11. **Tim Loughton:** Today is the Ides of March—and, yet again, Brutus opposite missed badly—so will the Prime Minister take the opportunity to stick the knife into the ridiculous Court of Justice of the European Union, which ruled yesterday that employers can ban their staff from wearing signs of religious or political belief, and reiterate that reasonable freedom of expression should never be snuffed out by insidious political correctness? [909267]

The Prime Minister: We have, as my hon. Friend knows, a strong tradition in this country of freedom of expression. It is the right of all women to choose how they dress and we do not intend to legislate on this issue. He raised the broader issue of symbols, but this case came up particularly in relation to the wearing of the veil. There will be times when it is right to ask for a veil to be removed, such as at border security or, perhaps, in court. Individual institutions can make their own policies, but it is not for Government to tell women what they can and cannot wear. We want to continue that strong tradition of freedom of expression.

<https://hansard.parliament.uk/commons/2017-03-15/debates/F595F1FC-1019-429D-BE9D-116BA280D219/Engagements#contribution-2ABC9BFC-8328-44A0-AF92-AA256B54B276>

House of Commons Written Answers

Social Networking: Harassment

Anna Turley [67255] To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, if she will bring forward legislative proposals to require operators of social media platforms to report communications sent via their service which could reasonably be interpreted as containing content which would constitute an offence under section 1 of the Malicious Communications Act 1988 or section 127 of the Communications Act 2003 to a relevant police force.

Brandon Lewis: We expect social media companies, and internet platforms, to have robust processes in place and to act promptly when abuse is reported. The Government continues to work closely with social media companies and other relevant actors and experts to make sure they are committed to protecting those who use their platforms.

The Government is absolutely clear that harassment and abuse in whatever form and whoever the target is totally unacceptable, and that this should be reported to the police. This includes harassment committed in person, or using phones or the internet. The Crown Prosecution Service published guidance to prosecutors in October on crimes involving social media.

The Criminal Justice Act 2015 strengthened two existing communications offences: section 1 of the Malicious Communications Act 1988, and section 127 of the Communications Act 2003 which can now be used to prosecute misuse of social media. The police now have longer to investigate either offence, and the maximum penalty for the former has been increased to two years imprisonment.

In addition, the Home Office has allocated £4.6m of the Police Transformation Fund specifically to begin the critical work of setting up a comprehensive and joined up programme of digital transformation across policing. This money will help provide a step-change in digital capability, funding police led programmes that will work to equip forces with the tools to effectively police a digital age and protect victims of digital crime.

<http://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Commons/2017-03-09/67255/>

House of Lords Oral Answers

Social Media: Online Abuse

Baroness Nye: To ask Her Majesty's Government whether they plan to create statutory guidance to ensure that social media sites address online abuse.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Department for Culture, Media and Sport and Home Office (Baroness Shields) My Lords, the growth of the internet has brought us many opportunities but unfortunately, all too often, it has been exploited by those who seek to use it as a tool to spread hatred and to target individuals and communities because of who they are or what they believe. The Government are determined to do everything possible to stamp out hate crime. The UK already has some of the strongest legislation on hate crime anywhere in the world, and these laws apply online. We will continue working with a broad range of stakeholders both nationally and globally as we seek to eradicate the threats and harms that we face. ...

Baroness Howe of Idlicote: My Lords, does the Minister accept that it is far too easy to access abusive and explicit content on social media services, including Facebook, Twitter, Snapchat, Instagram, Yik Yak, Vine, Kik and doubtless many others, and that such companies need to do more to help parents in their parenting so that children can take advantage of technology in a safe and responsible way.

Baroness Shields: The noble Baroness is absolutely correct. It is indeed important that companies should take responsibility for their actions. The majority of internet platforms are based overseas and provide global services, and as the House is fully aware, there is significant complexity around introducing any regime that governs online activity, including keeping any such obligation current given the speed of the evolution of technology, the global nature of the internet and the extraterritorial nature of the jurisdiction that applies.

Lord Elton: My Lords, are the laws enforced by the authorities both online and offline the same? If not, why not, and will that be rectified in the legislation presently going through this House?

Baroness Shields: Yes. I should say to my noble friend that we are clear that what is illegal offline is also illegal online. Legislation is in place to deal with internet trolls, cyberstalking, harassment, revenge porn and the perpetrators of grossly offensive, obscene or menacing behaviour.

Lord Cashman: My Lords, the reality of online harassment and bullying has resulted in some teenagers taking their own lives. I accept the Minister's point that statutory guidance is not the only answer, but it is a part of it. Given that, will she listen to the House and agree to bring forward statutory guidance on online abuse so that we can end the bullying, harassment and intimidation which is costing young lives?

Baroness Shields: I thank the noble Lord and acknowledge the importance of the tragedies that have affected a lot of young people online. I shall take forward his thoughts and come back to him. Realistically, we have in place a strong regime of recommended guidance for companies ...

Lord St John of Bletso: My Lords, surely one of the major challenges is that of looking at what measures can be taken to address online anonymity.

Baroness Shields: Online anonymity is a particular problem. Online abuse is abhorrent and its consequences can be devastating, but oftentimes people are anonymous and it is difficult to track them. Unfortunately, while online abuse is always harmful it is not always illegal, so the goal of the Government is to equip people with the knowledge and the tools they need in order to be digitally resilient. That is why last week the Government announced a new duty on all schools to provide education on online relationships as part of the PSHE curriculum and have announced a cross-government internet safety strategy with a Green Paper that is due out before the summer.

To read the full transcript see

<https://hansard.parliament.uk/lords/2017-03-15/debates/8B78D2F8-97B9-43FB-935B-D82C9CB52B9F/SocialMediaOnlineAbuse>

House of Commons Ministerial Statement and Q&A

Visible Religious Symbols: European Court Ruling

col 409 **The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Women and Equalities (Caroline Dinenage):** ... The Government are completely opposed to discrimination, including on grounds of gender or religion, or both. It is the right of all women to choose how they dress, and we do not believe that the judgments change that. Exactly the same legal protections apply today as applied before the rulings.

In both the Achbita case and the Bougnaoui case, the judgment was that there was no direct discrimination, but that there was some discrimination. A rule is directly discriminatory if it treats someone less favourably because of their sex, race, religion or whatever. A rule is indirectly discriminatory if, on the face of it, it treats everyone the same, but some people, because of their race, religion, sex and so on, find it harder to comply than others do. Indirect discrimination may be justifiable if an employer is acting in a proportionate manner to achieve a legitimate aim.

The judgments confirm the existing long-standing position of EU and domestic law that an employer's dress code, where it applies to and is applied in the same way to all employees, may be justifiable if the employer can show legitimate and proportionate grounds for it. Various cases show that such an employer needs to be prepared to justify those grounds in front of a court or tribunal if need be. That will remain the case and that is the case with these judgments, which will now revert to the domestic courts.

I am aware of some concern that the judgments potentially conflict with the judgments of the European Court of Human Rights, particularly in the case of Nadia Eweida, the British Airways stewardess banned from wearing a small crucifix but whose case the ECHR upheld. We do not believe that the different judgments are in conflict. Both the CJEU and the ECHR were trying to assess the balance in each case between the religious needs of the employee and the needs of the employer. In Eweida, the assessment favoured the employee; in another ECHR case, and also in the Achbita case, the assessment favoured the employer. We will still take action to ensure that the

current legal position is set out. We will be working with the Equality and Human Rights Commission to update guidance for employers on dealing with religion or belief in the workplace. The guidance will be revised to take account of the CJEU judgments, too. We will make it absolutely clear to all concerned that the Equality Act 2010 and the rights of women and religious employees remain unchanged.

Like any judgment of the CJEU, for the time being, *Achbita* and *Bouagnaoui* need to be taken into account by domestic courts and tribunals as they consider future cases. The law is clear and remains unchanged. However, because of our absolute commitment to ensuring that discrimination and prejudice are never encouraged or sanctioned, we will keep the issue under very close review.

col 410 Mrs Miller: In this country, we have a long tradition of respecting religious freedom and, frankly, many people will listen in disbelief to the Court's ruling that a corporate multinational such as G4S risks having its corporate neutrality undermined by a receptionist in Belgium wearing a headscarf. At what point did the law decide that expressing religious belief through a cross, a turban or a headscarf is a threat to organisational neutrality? Here in the House of Commons, our staff pride themselves on their neutrality, but will such organisations be forced to consider this new ruling? If not, in what circumstances could an organisation legitimately require such neutrality from its workers? Surely there are serious potential implications for those who deliver public services.

One group is specifically affected—Muslim women, who already experience twice the unemployment rate of the general population. The Government need to monitor the situation carefully to ensure that employers do not use the ruling to effectively exclude thousands of Muslim women from the workplace.

Caroline Dinéage: Dress codes are a matter for individual employers and will depend on the particular type of work involved, the environment and the safety considerations, above all. The CJEU has found that these cases would constitute indirect discrimination and has referred them back to the national courts to consider whether, based on the specifics, they would be unlawful. The UK's legal position has not changed. The EHRC has already published guidance for employers on religion and belief in the workplace, and we will work with it to update that guidance to take account of these rulings and to carefully explain how they should be interpreted in UK workplaces. ...

col 411 We are dealing with two cases here. The first, *Achbita*, was about whether a dress code banning the outward expression of personal belief was directly or indirectly discriminatory against a female Muslim who was sacked for wearing a headscarf. The second, *Bouagnaoui*, concerned the same point, but it also raised the issue of whether a customer's request not to be served by an employee wearing a headscarf can be a genuine occupational requirement. The ruling confirmed the current position under EU and domestic discrimination law: that a dress code that applies and is applied in the same way to all employees does not constitute direct discrimination but may constitute indirect discrimination. However, importantly, an employer's willingness to take account of a customer's wishes about staff wearing religious dress does not constitute a genuine occupational requirement. ...

col 412 Eric Pickles: I am very pleased to hear that the Government are going to issue new guidelines. I hope that they will reflect British values, which demand that Muslim women should be able to wear the hijab, that Sikhs should be able to wear the turban, that Jewish people should be able to wear a kippah and that Christians can wear a cross.

...

col 413 Caroline Dinéage: Multiculturalism and the multiplicity of different faiths and religions in this country is one of our great strengths. We should recognise that many people follow their faith and that some people follow none, but we want a society that treats people equally and with respect, whatever their faith happens to be, or if they have none. ...

col 415 Chuka Umunna: I do not like this word "tolerate." In this country, we do not

tolerate people; we respect and embrace all cultures. Despite that, we know that Islamophobia is not only widespread but rampant. ... My worry is that those who read the reports on the CJEU decision will see it as a green light to engage in further discrimination in the workplace. ...

col 416 Yasmin Qureshi: A person's ability to do 99.9% of jobs, including that of security guard, is not affected by whether they wear a skull cap, headscarf, turban, cross, mangalsutra or tilaka. Can this ECJ judgment be rejected in domestic law to prevent confusion among employers about its having any bearing on this country? ...

col 417 Caroline Dinéage: Domestic equality legislation is very clear. Employers do not need to change any legitimate policies on dress code in the workplace, but it is vital that employers and employees understand what the law allows them to do, and that is what this is about. We do not want any employers mistakenly thinking that this ruling gives them any authority to sack public-facing staff who wear headscarves or any other religious symbols. Those protections are already clear in domestic law, and we will always make sure that they are most strongly enforced. ...

To read the full transcript see

<https://hansard.parliament.uk/commons/2017-03-15/debates/599884E8-6E05-41C0-8FD3-B6F5A6E1F45F/VisibleReligiousSymbolsEuropeanCourtRuling>

House of Lords Ministerial Statement and Q&A

EU Court of Justice Ruling: Religious Signs

The above statement was repeated by Baroness Williams of Trafford

col 1869 Baroness Gale: My Lords, I thank the Minister for her Statement. The court ruling, however, raises some real concerns about religious freedom in the workplace, including those of Muslim women who choose to wear the hijab. Although I think the Minister has been quite clear in her Statement, will she say positively that people can express their faith at the workplace, and in a professional manner, as they choose? Can she confirm that the Government believe that preventing women wearing the hijab, as exemplified in this case, is simply and unconditionally wrong? ...

col 1870 Baroness Williams of Trafford: ... we will protect and uphold the freedoms that have been allowed in this country, as we always have done. It will not affect our domestic law. ... As far as this country is concerned, nothing changes. ...

col 1871 Baroness Warsi: ... The Minister may be aware of a YouGov poll that was done immediately after this ruling which showed that 42% of Brits would support such a ban in the workplace, or at least employers having the ability to impose such a ban in the workplace. ...

Baroness Williams of Trafford: My noble friend makes an encouraging point—that 58% of people would not want such a ban imposed. ...

To read the full transcript see

<https://hansard.parliament.uk/lords/2017-03-15/debates/41DE7DC9-11C6-4BFB-9BD0-81C3A4AE1D89/EUCourtOfJusticeRulingReligiousSigns>

Home Affairs Committee Inquiry into Hate crime and its violent consequences

Oral evidence session

Q407 Chair (Yvette Cooper): ... We recognise that you do more than many social media companies to address issues around hate crime. However, we also recognise that you are the biggest companies and have, between you, millions of UK users on your platforms every day. ...

As part of your community standards, you say, “we don’t permit hate speech”, which is “content that promotes violence or hatred against individuals or groups based on certain attributes”, such as race, religion and gender. You also say that it is “not acceptable to post malicious, hateful comments about a group of people solely based on their race.” And yet, until yesterday, when we raised concerns with you, you still had a whole load of neo-Nazi videos on YouTube. Why?

Peter Barron (Vice President, Communications and Public Affairs, Google Europe, the Middle East and Africa): There are three videos that you sent us. One related to David Duke and two related to organisations in this country, including National Action. Of those three videos, we have removed two. One was on the grounds of our hate speech policy, because it was clearly condoning or promoting violence against a particular group, so that was removed. In another case, the video related to National Action, which is a proscribed organisation; it was removed because it was representing a proscribed organisation and was therefore illegal content. Whether the content of the video itself, which was a rally, would have counted as hate speech is uncertain.

The third video related to David Duke. I am not here to defend the content of the video; it was anti-Semitic, deeply offensive and shocking. Our teams looked at all three videos in exactly the same way that they would look at content that is flagged within our systems. I saw the email debate that went on among our legal and policy teams to make a decision about that video. The decision they took was that that video should stay up. David Duke is obviously a well-known figure and has made many videos in this area, and we of course have removed many videos that do veer into hate speech and promoting violence against particular groups. In this particular case, the judgment of our team was that the video did not cross the line into hate speech. It was extremely offensive and shocking material, but it did not veer into the category of hate speech and therefore stayed on the platform. ...

Q408 Peter Barron: The way that our system works is on notice and takedown. We rely on our community of more than 1 billion people around the world to flag videos to us that they think may break our guidelines. ...

Q409 Chair: But National Action is proscribed by the Government. Not many organisations are proscribed by the Government. You did not have any system in place to ensure that you, as an organisation, were taking off your platform content that had been set up there by an organisation that was proscribed for terrorist links by the Government.

Peter Barron: When drawn to our attention, that material comes down very quickly. We get something like 200,000 flags a day, and we are hitting a target of about 98% reviewed within 24 hours. ...

Q411 Chair: But there are not that many proscribed organisations. Do you not even feel any sense of responsibility, as a multibillion pound organisation, to at least check that you are not distributing material from proscribed organisations?

Peter Barron: We have 400 hours of video uploaded on to YouTube every minute, which is an extraordinary amount of content. ...

Q412 Chair: I will take that as a no—you don’t feel you have any responsibility to do your own searches, even of proscribed organisations. ...

Q413 Chair: Let me ask you about the video called “Jews admit organising white genocide”. In what circumstances is “Jews admit organising white genocide” not a statement of hate speech?

Peter Barron: There is no clear definition of hate speech in British law. We have our own guidelines around hate speech. The guideline that we follow, which is very close to the law, is that a general expression against a country, for example, wouldn’t qualify as hate speech, but if you are promoting or advocating violence against a particular group based on their race or ethnicity, that would constitute hate speech. ...

Q416 Chair: But your own guidelines say that it is “not acceptable to post malicious,

hateful comments about a group of people solely based on their race” or religion or so on. How on earth is the phrase, “Jews admit organising white genocide”, as well as being clearly false, not a statement that is a malicious or hateful comment about a group of people solely based on race, religion or the other protected characteristics that your own guidelines and community standards say are unacceptable?

Peter Barron: The test that our legal and policy experts are looking at is whether there is an incitement to violence against a particular identified group. ... The conclusion in this case was that it didn't break our policy guidelines. ...

Q417 Chair: ... You have the phrase in your community standards, “it is not acceptable to post malicious, hateful comments about a group of people solely based on their race”, and yet you allow David Duke to upload an entire video that is all about malicious and hateful comments about Jewish people. How is that not a breach of your own guidelines?

Peter Barron: I am not sure that you have the guideline that is exactly the one that we use. ... It is: “Our products are platforms for free expression. But we don't support content that promotes or condones violence against individuals or groups based on race or ethnic origin, religion, disability, gender, age, nationality, veteran status, or sexual orientation/gender identity, or whose primary purpose is inciting hatred on the basis of these core characteristics. This can be a delicate balancing act, but if the primary purpose is to attack a protected group, the content crosses the line.”

Q418 Chair: And you don't think that a video entitled “Jews admit organising white genocide” is one whose primary purpose is inciting hatred against a group of people?

Peter Barron: Ultimately, our lawyers, having looked at it and had a principled debate, ruled that that one did not break our guidelines. ...

Q423 Chair: ... Let me turn to Facebook. On your website, in your community standards, you say: “Facebook removes hate speech, which includes content that directly attacks people based on their...race...religious affiliation...sexual orientation”—you then refer to other protected groups—“Organisations and people dedicated to promoting hatred against these protected groups are not allowed a presence on Facebook.” You still have on Facebook a couple of the pages that we raised with you. One is called “Ban Islam” and the other is called “The Truth About the Talmud”, both of which have some deeply offensive and racist things on them.

Simon Milner (Policy Director for the UK, Middle East and Africa, Facebook): Actually, all four of the pages that you notified to us are still on Facebook. ... These pages, in and of themselves, do not violate, because we make it clear that you can criticise religions, but you cannot express hate against people because of their religion. “Ban Islam” is a page that is designed to criticise Islam as a religion; it is not expressly, in and of itself, designed to attack Muslims. That is also true of “The Truth About the Talmud” and the other two pages, regarding the Holocaust, that you also notified to us.

Q424 Chair: But you say as part of this: “Organisations and people dedicated to promoting hatred against these protected groups are not allowed a presence on Facebook.”

Simon Milner: That is correct. None of these pages are expressly run by hate organisations. ...

Q437 Chair: We will move on to Twitter. We raised a series of images with you, most of which have been taken down. There is one that has not been taken down. Do you want to explain why? ...

Q438 Chair: ... despite the fact that it includes a hashtag—“#DeportallMuslims”—with a very disturbing graphic cartoon that is clearly designed to alarm and distress, it does not breach your community standards?

Nick Pickles (Senior Public Policy Manager for UK and Israel, Twitter): In this context, we reviewed that particular tweet and image and found that it was not in breach

of our hateful conduct policy. ... While hashtags are offensive in themselves, often the conversation that happens around them is where people's bigotry and intolerance is challenged. ...

Q458 Mr Umunna: ... Money was being made from videos peddling hate on your platform.

Peter Barron: Very small amounts of money. ...

Q459 Mr Umunna: But you don't dispute the fact that you and these hate peddlers have made money out of ads appearing alongside those videos? ...

Peter Barron: I don't dispute that, on occasions, of course that will happen. ...

Q460 Mr Umunna: The point is that you are providing a platform that has acted as a money-making machine for the peddlers of hate and extremism ...

Peter Barron: It has happened. We work very hard to make sure that it does not happen, and we work with advertisers to give them more transparency and control so that they don't appear next to political content. It is worth pointing out that some of the videos that you are referring to were not ones that would break our guidelines. ...

Q470 Nick Pickles: Let us be absolutely clear: we are never going to get to a point where internet companies pre-moderate content for the 400 hours of YouTube going up every day and for the 500 million tweets that go up every day. If you want pre-moderation of internet platforms, there may well be no internet platforms. ...

Q471 Peter Barron: This is, of course, uncomfortable territory in the area of free expression; there is no question about that. The point I was making to the Chair was that these are principled decisions and sometimes extremely borderline decisions, but as an organisation we have a bias towards free expression ...

Q473 Mr Winnick: Would it be more correct to say that this deeply obnoxious and racist propaganda and incitement to race hatred—there is no other way to describe it—goes on, and it is only under public pressure that you take any action, but the internal policing is minimal?

Simon Milner: That is simply not true. ...

May I give you an example of counter-speech? One of the pages you identified for us—a Holocaust denial page—only has nine followers. It was posted in 2013, but the second comment on the page is, "I have relatives who were there and saw everything you thick"—I won't use the expletive—"It happened whether you like it or not. Go away and spread your hatred somewhere else where there are small-minded people like you." You see that all the time on Facebook—people who want to try and divide us, and other people who say, "No, that is simply not true. I have friends from that community. I have family who were there at the Holocaust. You are talking nonsense." That is much of what you see in response to this material that does not breach our hate standards because it is trying to suggest an alternative view of history—you actually get lots of content from people saying it is nonsense.

Mr Winnick: Mr Milner, Holocaust denial is not a matter of debate; it happened. Therefore to say, in effect, "Well, it leads to a debate. Did it or did it not happen? Were millions of people murdered because of their racial origin?"—that is a not a subject of some sort of debate; it is a fact. If you give a platform to racists, and it leads to that type of debate that you are taking, it minimises one of the worst atrocities that has ever taken place in Europe. ...

Q474 James Berry: Mr Pickles, using the phrase "Filthy Jew bitch" face to face would be unacceptable and in most circumstances would be unlawful, wouldn't it?

Nick Pickles: ... That is a question for a police officer.

Q475 Nick Pickles: I imagine that the answer would be that it depends on context.

James Berry: So in some circumstances it would be unlawful.

Nick Pickles: Perhaps.

James Berry: Okay. Using that phrase on Twitter would be equally unacceptable,

wouldn't it?

Nick Pickles: Again, it depends on context. You could be condemning it.

Q478 James Berry: Can you confirm that you are aware that this Committee has raised concerns about that phrase being used on your platform? You are aware of that, yes? So you would be disappointed if that phrase was still being used on your platform, wouldn't you?

Nick Pickles: Yes, I would.

Q479 James Berry: So are you aware that that phrase, or variants of it, have been appearing on your platform since 2014 and are still there today? ...

Q480 James Berry: I did a bit of searching about an hour and a half ago without the help of any technology that you might have or any staff, and from 11 March there is a tweet, "Filthy kike bitch. Burn in hell, you fake Jew." That would breach your community terms?

Nick Pickles: I expect so.

Q487 James Berry: I found these and many other tweets in a matter of seconds with no resources. How many staff does Twitter have looking for this kind of material, performing even the very simple searches that I just did?

Nick Pickles: One of the things to highlight is that we don't proactively look for tweets. We don't have people sat searching Twitter. ...

Q502 Chair: ... Do you do proactive searches and investigations on child abuse, on terrorism and on particular targeted hate crime phrases or attacks like "#FilthyJewBitch", which Mr Berry referred to? ...

Peter Barron: As I explained, we use technology proactively where it is effective. We do not proactively search for—

Q504 Chair: So you don't proactively search for any of those three things.

Peter Barron: Because of the underpinning of the e-commerce directive.

Q505 Chair: Sorry, the e-commerce directive stops you from doing those proactive searches?

Peter Barron: The principle of notice and take down is extremely important, because the way that the rules were designed was that as long as the platforms have a responsibility to take down when given notice, they do not have a liability for all the stuff that might appear on them. ...

Q506 Peter Barron: We don't proactively search for this content. ...

Q536 Naz Shah: ... Earlier, the Chair read from a piece of paper the line about Jewish people—with particular reference to Jews. In the law of this country, that would be anti-Semitic. Does our law have precedence over the law that you create to govern your sites? Which one takes precedence: the law of the land or—

Simon Milner: Local law, if local law goes beyond our standards. ...

Q53 Naz Shah: Coming back to the statement the Chair referred to, about inciting hatred towards Jews, would you consider that anti-Semitic? ...

Q538 Naz ... if you would consider that statement anti-Semitic, why does it not breach your standards?

Peter Barron: We comply with the law in all the countries we operate in— ...

Q539 Peter Barron: And actually on YouTube, our community guidelines go above and beyond the law. Anything that was covered by UK law would be removed, either from Google Search or from YouTube. There is a legal requests form, easily found online, and if a user or anyone thinks that something that appears on YouTube is against the law, they can fill in that form and send it through, and our legal teams and policy experts will look at that and take a decision based on it. But if there was a court order saying that something was illegal, defamatory or copyright infringing, of course that would also come down.

Q540 Naz Shah: Mr Barron, for the final time—a yes or no answer—do you consider the following statement anti-Semitic? "Jews admit organizing White Genocide". Yes or no?

Peter Barron: Of course it is.

Q541 Naz Shah: Right, but when the Chair asked you earlier whether that breached your standards, you suggested it did not, so which law do you actually apply?

Peter Barron: We apply the law of the country—

Q542 Naz Shah: Well, in this instance you clearly haven't. ...

Q553 Nusrat Ghani: If the Knesset has declared that your content is anti-Semitic and it is going to fine you to take it down, surely you have to accept that you need to put more resources in place. ...

Simon Milner: I have had the pleasure of appearing before two Knesset committees on not dissimilar topics. The parliamentarians there have provided an interesting experience. ...

Q556 Simon Milner: ... We are very actively engaged with Israeli policymakers to understand their concerns and to offer our views about their draft legislation. We have a concern that it may, indeed, impede free speech.

Q557 Nusrat Ghani: So, Mr Milner, you have presented twice to the Knesset and we have read out anti-Semitic content to you but you have just said that you need to understand what their concerns are. Do you just not accept the concerns that the content you have is anti-Semitic and can lead to more violent activity, and that there is some responsibility? Do you still need that to be explained to you by the Knesset?

Simon Milner: Absolutely not. We recognise we have a responsibility to engage with the nation's lawmakers and to understand their concerns and, hopefully, to help them to understand our companies better and to address their issues. ...

Q562 Nusrat Ghani: ... We took so much evidence in our previous anti-Semitism report from people who talked about content on Twitter that they had reported, and you still had not taken it down, even while they were giving evidence to us and you knew they were going to come and give evidence to us.

Nick Pickles: As Simon says, that might be because we have taken a view that it did not breach our rules. ...

Q563 Nick Pickles: ... One of the challenges we see is that, when we change our rules, people change their behaviour to get around the rules, so we are constantly having to try to stay one step ahead. We get people who we have banned from our platform who try to return, and they are very determined to do so, so we invest in technology to catch those people. ...

Q565 Chair: If people tweet a link to something that is a problem, will you delete the tweet?

Nick Pickles: Yes, if the tweet breaches our terms of service, but not if the content of the link does.

Q566 Chair: So if people tweet links to things that are clearly hate crimes, you will not delete the tweet?

Nick Pickles: For the simple reason that—context is everything and hypotheticals are very hard—it could be someone condemning it. If someone shares a condemnation and a link to news article, which happens a lot, we would not remove that. ...

Q608 Stuart C. McDonald: But it is not the same thing as something that users could click if they felt threatened.

Nick Pickles: One thing we have changed is that if a user reports a violent threat to us, they now have the option to say, "Please provide me with an email I can take to law enforcement." That email will detail the specifics. ... It contains the URL, so a police officer can type in the URL of the specific example, and it also contains a link for the police officer to contact us about our guidelines for requesting user data. ...

Chair: ... There is a general feeling that, for all the things you have said and all the things you say you are working on, in the end it is still not enough. In terms of YouTube, frankly, Mr Barron, your answers on how you are implementing community standards felt a bit of

a joke. It does not feel as if you are taking your own community standards seriously enough and playing even by your own rules in terms of what counts as hate crime and what should be removed. For both Facebook and Twitter, there is still considerable concern about the pace at which you respond and are able to update your systems or deal with things that have been raised with you over a long period about the safety of users on your platforms. ...

To read the full transcript see

<http://data.parliament.uk/writtenevidence/committeeevidence.svc/evidencedocument/home-affairs-committee/hate-crime-and-its-violent-consequences/oral/48836.html>

Scottish Parliament Oral Answers

Anti-Semitism

Jackson Carlaw: To ask the Scottish Government what the outcome was of the discussions between it and the Scottish Council for Jewish Communities regarding the adoption of the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance's definition of anti-Semitism. (S5O-00791)

The Cabinet Secretary for Communities, Social Security and Equalities (Angela Constance): Scottish Government officials are due to meet the Scottish Council for Jewish Communities and the Community Security Trust on 23 March 2017 to discuss these issues. I refer the member to my written answer S5W-05829, which indicated that the Scottish Government agrees with the definition that has been adopted by the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance.

Jackson Carlaw: I still receive regular inquiries from constituents in Eastwood, which is where the largest Jewish community in Scotland resides, and they are very grateful for the personal support of the First Minister, who recently attended an event in the community. I am grateful to the cabinet secretary for what she has said. I hope that we can achieve an early outcome in which Scotland can join the other Governments that have adopted the resolution.

Angela Constance: I am grateful to Mr Carlaw for the tone and tenor of his supplementary point. I also point out that, just a few days ago, in a written answer to Ross Thomson on the same issue, I replied:

"We agree with the definition produced by the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance, and consider the resolution they have adopted to be a helpful guide to the different manifestations of anti-Semitism."—[Written Answers, 14 March 2017; S5W-07668.]

<http://www.parliament.scot/parliamentarybusiness/report.aspx?r=10841&i=99298#ScotParlOR>

The written answers referred to above can be read at

<http://www.parliament.scot/parliamentarybusiness/28877.aspx?SearchType=Advance&ReferenceNumbers=S5W-05829>

and

<http://www.parliament.scot/parliamentarybusiness/28877.aspx?SearchType=Advance&ReferenceNumbers=S5W-07668>

Scottish Parliament Motion

S5M-04639 Anas Sarwar: European Court of Justice Ruling and its Impact on Religious Hatred – That the Parliament expresses its disappointment at the European Court of Justice's decision that it believes allows employers to ban their workers from wearing items at work that they regard as religious symbols, including headscarves, skull caps and turbans; considers that this ruling will make it even more difficult for people

from religious communities, including Muslim women who wear a headscarf, Jewish men who wear and skull cap and Sikhs who wear a turban, to enter the job market in the future; agrees with Amnesty International that this will open a backdoor to prejudice at a time when identity and appearance have become a political battleground and when people need more protection against prejudice, not less; considers that this is part of a worrying trend of increasing religious prejudice, particularly Islamophobia and anti-Semitism, across mainland Europe; expresses concern at the rising support for parties and politicians who it considers openly incite religious hatred, such as Geert Wilders in the Netherlands and Marine Le Pen in France; believes that everyone must redouble their efforts to confront all forms of religious discrimination, and calls on the Scottish Government to set out what implications this ruling will have for employees in Scotland and its courts.

<http://www.parliament.scot/parliamentarybusiness/28877.aspx?SearchType=Advance&ReferenceNumbers=S5M-04639>

Equality and Human Rights Commission

Religious symbols ruling does not mean staff can be targeted for dismissal

Following a ruling from the Court of Justice of the European Union which found that employers could ban staff from wearing visible religious symbols, but must have a relevant policy in place before doing so, Equality and Human Rights Commission Chief Executive Rebecca Hilsenrath said: "This Court of Justice ruling does not mean businesses can target women wearing the hijab for dismissal, or introduce policies which ban religious dress from customer-facing roles.

We believe our laws do not need to change and the guidance we issued to employers on religion or belief includes advice on this issue. Any employer thinking of changing policy should consult that guidance before making rash decisions."

<https://www.equalityhumanrights.com/en/our-work/news/religious-symbols-ruling-does-not-mean-staff-can-be-targeted-dismissal>

[TOP](#)

Israel

House of Commons Written Answers

Israel: Demolition

Richard Burden [67392] To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, what assessment he has made of the implications for his policies of the representations he has received from the Israeli Government on the threatened demolition of Khan al-Ahmar.

Tobias Ellwood: We have not received any representations from the Israeli government on Khan al-Ahmar. But the Foreign Secretary, my Rt Hon. Friend the Member for Uxbridge and South Ruislip (Mr Johnson) highlighted the UK's grave concern about demolitions, including with regards the village of Khan al-Ahmar, with Prime Minister Netanyahu during his visit to Israel on 8 March.

<http://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Commons/2017-03-10/67392/>

Israel: Demolition

Richard Burden [67393] To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, whether he raised the threatened demolition of the village of Khan al-Ahmar with

the Israeli Government during his recent visit to that country.

Tobias Ellwood: The Foreign Secretary, my Rt Hon. Friend the Member for Uxbridge and South Ruislip (Mr Johnson) raised the UK's grave concerns about demolitions, including the village of Khan al - Ahmer, with Prime Minister Netanyahu during his visit to Israel on 8 March.

<http://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Commons/2017-03-10/67393/>

UK Parliament Ministerial Statement

Foreign Affairs Council

The Minister for Europe and the Americas (Alan Duncan): ... Foreign Ministers discussed issues relating to the middle east peace process. The Council discussed preparations for the next EU-Israel Association Council. The HRVP suggested the Council consider holding a similar high-level meeting with the Palestinians. ...

To read the full statement see

<https://hansard.parliament.uk/commons/2017-03-15/debates/1703156800010/ForeignAffairsCouncil>

[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>

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 7 days**

Reforming GCSEs, AS and A levels in biblical Hebrew (closing date 23 March 2017)

<https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/reforming-gcse-as-and-a-levels-in-biblical-hebrew>

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](#)

The Scottish Council of Jewish Communities (SCoJeC) is Scottish Charitable Incorporated Organisation SCO29438