

Political Affairs Digest

A daily summary of political events affecting the Jewish Community

Scottish Council of Jewish Communities

SCoJeC

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House of Commons Oral Answer

Prime Minister's Questions

Q3. John Mann (Labour): For almost 400 years, this country, almost uniquely in the world, has been a place of safety and security, and a place where Jewish communities have thrived. In 2018, many in the Jewish community are questioning whether that will be the case into the future. A disturbingly large number of young Jewish people are questioning whether they should remain in this country. Does the Prime Minister agree that 2019 has to be a year when we all stand up and be counted, to ensure that those young Jewish people believe in and stay in this country, wishing to contribute and no longer fearing for their future? [908281]

The Prime Minister: I absolutely agree with the hon. Gentleman. Jewish people should be able to feel safe and secure in this country. I never thought I would see the day when Jewish people living in this country questioned whether they should stay in this country. This is a terrible state of affairs that we have come to. There is no place for racial hatred in our society and it is important that we all take every step to tackle it. I was very pleased to host the reception for the recent groundbreaking Sara conference, organised by the hon. Gentleman and the all-party group on antisemitism, along with the Antisemitism Policy Trust, which looked at the twin evils of misogyny and antisemitism. The hon. Gentleman is absolutely right to talk about the need for us all—every one of us—to stand up as we go into the new year and say that 2019 will be the year when we stand up and say there is no place for antisemitism or racial hatred in our society.

<https://hansard.parliament.uk/commons/2018-12-19/debates/95198CCA-FCDA-43FD-958B-B9BCD567C0DE/Engagements#contribution-D3ACE96E-39BD-4D4A-8246-FBF0A1D9DC0B>

House of Commons Written Answer

Census: Sikhs

Preet Kaur Gill (Labour Co-op) [202833] To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, with reference to paragraph 3.107 Census 2021 White Paper, what proportion of Gurdwaras surveyed expressed agreement with a Sikh ethnic group tick-box.

Chloe Smith: The information requested falls within the responsibility of the UK Statistics Authority. I have asked the Authority to reply. ...

The recommendations on the content and conduct of the 2021 Census, published by the government in the White Paper, fully recognise the need for good data on the Sikh community, both in terms of the necessity for high-quality data from the Census and also more widely across all public services.

The survey of Gurdwaras referenced in paragraph 3.107 of the 2021 Census White Paper (Help Shape Our Future: The 2021 Census of Population and Housing in England and Wales¹) was a survey undertaken by the All-Party Parliamentary Group for British Sikhs, and not the Office for National Statistics (ONS). The covering letter put a strong case for the inclusion of the tick-box. This would not be considered conducive to the collection of independent statistical evidence. It is also not clear how each Gurdwara completed the form or whether they consulted their congregations in the short timescale for the survey. From the information supplied to ONS, 112 Gurdwaras responded. Nevertheless, the survey results formed a part of the information used to make the final recommendations, as was the case for all information we received and research undertaken. Independent research was also undertaken to understand the acceptability of the Sikh response option (within the ethnic group question) to the wider Sikh population. This is published on the Kantar website "Focus groups to consider the addition of possible new tick boxes."² It showed a specific Sikh ethnic tick-box was not acceptable to all participants involved in the research, particularly amongst younger, second-generation participants, who felt it was unfair to include Sikh without also including all other religions within the ethnic group question. It also added respondent burden, with some respondents being confused on whether to identify as Indian, Sikh or to write in another identity such as Punjabi. The final topics and questions to be included in the 2021 Census will be put before Parliament for approval, in the form of a Census Order in 2019 and Regulations in 2020.

¹ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-2021-census-of-population-and-housing-in-england-and-wales>

² <http://www.kantar.com/public/download/documents/227/ONS+Ethnicity+Focus+Groups+Report.pdf>

<https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Commons/2018-12-17/202833/>

House of Lords Written Answers

Religious Hatred

Lord Pearson of Rannoch (UKIP) [HL12195] To ask Her Majesty's Government, further to the Written Answer by Lord Bourne of Aberystwyth on 5 December (HL11727), what support they will give to Nissar Hussain and his family and others who have left the Islamic faith and are facing persecution in the UK.

Lord Bourne of Aberystwyth: The Government reiterates that everyone in Britain has the right to feel safe and at ease in the place where they live. Any individual or group is free to express views and beliefs, but have a duty to behave responsibly and to respect other people's rights as defined by the law. Freedom of speech, freedom of worship, democracy, the rule of law, and equal rights define us as a society, and the Government is determined to promote these values. Britain has a strong legal framework in place to deal with hate crimes, and these must be reported to the police.

<https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Lords/2018-12-11/HL12195/>

The answer referred to above can be read at

<https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Lords/2018-11-22/HL11727/>

Football: Racial Discrimination

Lord Taylor of Warwick (Non-affiliated) [HL12169] To ask Her Majesty's Government what steps they are taking to work with sports authorities to help reduce discriminatory abuse in UK soccer following several recent reports of alleged racial abuse.

Lord Ashton of Hyde: Tackling discrimination is at the heart of the cross-government sport strategy "Sporting Future" and we want sport to be at the forefront of equality. We fully support a zero tolerance stance and we will continue to work with National Governing Bodies of Sport and organisations such as Kick It Out, Stonewall and Women in Football to tackle discrimination in local, national and international sport.

<https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Lords/2018-12-10/HL12169/>

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Holocaust

House of Lords Written Answers

National Holocaust Memorial Centre and Learning Service

Baroness Deech (Crossbench) [HL12142] To ask Her Majesty's Government whether the sites considered for the National Holocaust Memorial and Learning Centre meet the specifications in the paper by the UK National Holocaust Memorial Foundation National Memorial and Learning Centre: Search for a Central London Site, published in September 2015, in particular that the site should provide (1) a place where people can pay their respects, contemplate, think and offer prayer, (2) a lecture theatre and classrooms, (3) offices for holocaust educational organisations, and (4) space for gatherings of up to 500 people for commemorative events.

Lord Bourne of Aberystwyth: The document, National Memorial and Learning Centre: Search for a Central London Site, was published by the UK Holocaust Memorial Foundation as part of extensive efforts to identify a suitable location for the Memorial and Learning Centre, which also included a thorough search of Central London by property experts CBRE.

More than 50 locations were considered; detailed information supporting the assessment of each site is commercially confidential. The Foundation identified Victoria Tower Gardens as the most fitting site in terms of its historical, emotional and political significance and its ability to offer the greatest potential impact and visibility for the project. The Government accepted the Foundation's advice and the Prime Minister announced in January 2016 that Victoria Tower Gardens was the chosen location, Hansard 27 January 2016 col 259. An international design competition was launched in September 2016, seeking proposals for a Memorial and Learning Centre in Victoria Tower Gardens.

<https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Lords/2018-12-10/HL12142/>

The paper referred to above can be read at

<https://docplayer.net/13902192-National-memorial-and-learning-centre.html>

The announcement referred to above can be read at

<https://hansard.parliament.uk/Commons/2016-01-27/debates/1601274900025/Engagements#contribution-16012749000124>

Information about the design competition referred to above can be read at <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/international-design-competition-opens-for-new-uk-holocaust-memorial-beside-parliament>

and

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/adjaye-associates-and-ron-arad-architects-win-uk-holocaust-memorial-international-design-competition>

National Holocaust Memorial Centre and Learning Service

Lord Turnbull (Crossbench) [HL12171] To ask Her Majesty's Government what is the current area of the Victoria Tower Gardens; what area will be taken up by the Holocaust Memorial and associated works; and what area will remain for recreational use.

Lord Bourne of Aberystwyth: The current area of Victoria Tower Gardens is 18,848m². The Memorial will take up 1387m² which is approximately 7 per cent of the park; the remaining area will be publicly accessible.

<https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Lords/2018-12-10/HL12171/>

Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government and UK Holocaust Foundation

Planning application submitted for Holocaust Memorial proposed for next to Parliament

Yesterday (19 December 2018) a planning application for the UK's new Holocaust Memorial and Learning Centre has been submitted to Westminster city council.

A fundraising effort for the Memorial will be led by philanthropist Gerald Ronson CBE, who will set up a new charity to support its delivery.

The Holocaust Memorial and Learning Centre has been proposed for Victoria Tower Gardens next to Parliament.

The design for the UK Holocaust Memorial and Learning Centre has been developed over the past year. It has been done in consultation with Holocaust and other genocide survivors, communities of a range of faiths and backgrounds, local residents, businesses and key experts from landscape design to Holocaust education. ...

By setting history's worst example of the disintegration of democratic values against the greatest emblem of Britain's aspirations for democracy, it will stand as a permanent reminder of the responsibilities of citizens to be vigilant and responsive whenever and wherever those values are threatened.

Communities Secretary Rt Hon James Brokenshire MP said: "The Memorial will be a place of reflection and education in the exceptional setting of Victoria Tower Gardens, and act as a commitment for all of us to stand up whenever our shared values are threatened.

The planning application submitted today is a key milestone in this important national programme that will deliver a national Holocaust Memorial and Learning Centre at the heart of our civic and democratic life." ...

It is expected that consultation letters on the proposal will be sent out from Westminster city council in the new year.

To read the full press release see

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/planning-application-submitted-for-holocaust-memorial-proposed-for-next-to-parliament>

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Israel

House of Commons Written Answer

Gaza: Israel

Richard Burden (Labour) [201109] To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, what discussions he has had with his Israeli counterpart on allegations that Israeli security forces impersonated humanitarian workers while conducting a military operation inside the Gaza Strip in November 2018; and if he will make a statement.

Alistair Burt: Whilst we have not discussed this specific issue, officials from our Embassy in Tel Aviv are in regular discussions with the Israeli authorities on the situation in Gaza, most recently on 4 December.

<https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Commons/2018-12-11/201109/>

House of Lords Written Answer

EU External Trade: Trade Agreements

Lord Teverson (Liberal Democrat) [HL12205] To ask Her Majesty's Government which nations that have trade agreements with the EU have (1) agreed, and (2) refused to allow the UK to continue to benefit from those agreements during the implementation period.

Baroness Fairhead: Discussions with all partner countries have demonstrated a commitment to finding a pragmatic way to ensure continuity of our existing international agreements.

Alongside the Withdrawal Agreement, the EU agreed to notify its treaty partners that the UK is to be treated as a Member State for the purposes of EU international agreements during the IP. This includes trade agreements.

A number (including Canada, Chile, Israel, Switzerland, and groupings such as the Southern African Customs Union and Eastern and Southern Africa EPA States) have already publicly welcomed this approach (Library deposit of 13 September DEP2018-0926 provides a list of countries). Others are, understandably, waiting for the notification to be issued before responding formally. We are working closely with our trading partners to ensure that there would be no disruption to trade as we move into the Implementation Period.

Notwithstanding our expectation that there will be an Implementation Period, the government will continue to do the responsible thing and prepare for all eventualities with partner countries, including a 'no deal' scenario.

<https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Lords/2018-12-11/HL12205/>

The Library deposit referred to above can be read at
[http://data.parliament.uk/DepositedPapers/Files/DEP2018-0926/Baroness Fairhead to Lord Purvis Trade Bill second reading.pdf](http://data.parliament.uk/DepositedPapers/Files/DEP2018-0926/Baroness%20Fairhead%20to%20Lord%20Purvis%20Trade%20Bill%20second%20reading.pdf)

Foreign and Commonwealth Office

Updated Travel Advice: Israel

<https://www.gov.uk/foreign-travel-advice/israel>

Updated Travel Advice: The Occupied Palestinian Territories

<https://www.gov.uk/foreign-travel-advice/the-occupied-palestinian-territories>

European Commission

EU reaffirms strong commitment to support for Palestine refugees and for Palestine's socio-economic development

The EU mobilised €20 million additional financial assistance in support of the work of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA), and €73.3 million to improve the living conditions for the people in East Jerusalem and to foster economic development in the occupied Palestinian territory.

The funding provided to UNRWA supports the Agency's efforts to ensure the provision of essential services to vulnerable Palestine refugees in the Middle East. This will bring the EU's total contributions to UNRWA in 2018 to €153 million. Moreover, the EU made available an additional €73.3 million to support living conditions in East Jerusalem and strengthen resilience of Palestinians, as well as to promote economic development in all of the occupied Palestinian territory. This brings the EU support to Palestinians to a total of €350 million.

Commissioner for European Neighbourhood Policy and Enlargement Negotiations, Johannes Hahn, said: "We are confirming our strong commitment to support Palestinians. The EU additional financial support to UNRWA, which is a factor of stability in the region, will allow the Agency to continue to provide essential services to vulnerable Palestine refugees. In parallel, the EU is working with the Agency to intensify fundamental reforms and tackle its recurrent financial deficit. In addition, we are investing in socio-economic development including by moving ahead on the critical project '[Gaza Central Desalination Plant](#)' and improving living conditions in East Jerusalem in line with our support to the two-state solution, with Jerusalem as the future capital of both Israel and a future state of Palestine." ...

To read the full press release see

http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_IP-18-6854_en.htm

United Nations

Tunnels under 'Blue Line' between Lebanon, Israel Violate Resolution 1701 (2006), Peacekeeping Chief Says, Urging Calm in Briefing to Security Council

... Jean-Pierre Lacroix, Under-Secretary-General for Peacekeeping, recounted that Israel Defense Forces announced on 4 December that they were conducting "Operation Northern Shield" to uncover and disable tunnels believed to cross the Blue Line from Lebanon into Israel. Two weeks later, that operation is ongoing. Meanwhile, the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL) carried out technical visits and confirmed, based on its own findings, the existence of four tunnels south of the Blue Line, with two of these tunnels — in the vicinity of Metula and Zarit — crossing the Blue Line and constituting serious violations of resolution 1701 (2006).

From the outset, he said, UNIFIL's Head of Mission, in coordination with the Acting Special Coordinator for Lebanon, has consistently engaged authorities in Lebanon and Israel to maintain calm and accurately assess the situation. Explaining the difficulties of a thorough examination of the tunnels, he said they do not thus far appear to have exit points on the Israeli side. The Mission will complete the investigations and work with both parties to ensure that tunnels in violation of the resolution are disabled decisively and safely. He added that Lebanese authorities have been requested to ensure urgent follow-up and to work with the Mission in those efforts. "This is a matter of serious concern," he stressed.

Commending both the Israeli and Lebanese armed forces on their stated commitment to avoid escalation and coordinate through UNIFIL, he said the parties have been reminded that provocative activities along the Blue Line and heightened rhetoric will increase risks. "The potential for miscalculation, however, cannot be underestimated," he

stressed. Since the announcement of the tunnels' existence, UNIFIL has observed groups of individuals in civilian clothes protesting near Meis al-Jabal on the Lebanese side, with some led by a Lebanese Parliament member and some crossing the Blue Line. Also in that area, as work was being carried out by the Israel Defense Forces south of the line, a Lebanese soldier cocked his weapon and aimed it towards the Israelis, causing a stand-off between the two militaries. UNIFIL staff intervened and were able to de-escalate the situation, he stated.

The Mission, he said, has deployed additional troops and liaison teams to assist the parties to maintain calm and meet their obligations under the resolution. The Council will continue to be apprised of relevant developments, he added.

Rodney M. Hunter (United States), noting that the recent discovery of tunnels constructed by Hizbullah constitute a violation of resolution 1701 (2006), stressed that "we can only speculate how many more [tunnels] will be uncovered" in the coming weeks. There is no doubt on who is responsible, he said, noting that the Council's longstanding divisions over Hizbullah are undermining the region's peace and stability. It is both regrettable and incomprehensible that some Council members still ignore Hizbullah's role as a serious spoiler for peace between Israel and Lebanon. "What further proof do we need?" he asked, describing the group as "a serious and real threat". Expressing strong support for Israel's right to defend itself, he called for efforts to halt Hizbullah's tunnelling into Israel. ...

François Delattre (France) ... underscored his serious concerns following the discovery of tunnels into Israeli territory that have been dug by Hizbullah from Lebanon, the existence of which has been confirmed by UNIFIL. These tunnels represent a clear violation of Security Council resolution 1701 (2006). "These activities must cease," he said ...

Mansour Ayyad Sh. A. Alotaibi (Kuwait) ... said that [Lebanon] has long been living with threats and violations by Israel's army. Unfortunately, calls by the international community and attempts by UNIFIL have failed to end the attacks by the Israeli Air Force. Indeed, violations of Lebanon's sovereignty happen daily, but no calls were heard for the Council to meet to address those crimes. Noting that Israel's violations have reached a new level, with monitoring and spying devices now spread across Lebanese territory and its telecommunications network, he reiterated Kuwait's support for Lebanon's sovereignty and security and called for the full implementation of resolution 1701 (2006) by ending Israel's threats. "We must distinguish between terrorism and legitimate resistance" against Israel's ongoing violations and occupation of Lebanese territory, he said ...

Karen Pierce (United Kingdom), condemning Hizbullah's building of tunnels into Israel as a threat to the security of both Israel and Lebanon, said Israeli authorities have the right to defend themselves. For too long, Hizbullah has blatantly violated Council resolutions, including through its attempts to acquire dangerous new missile technology and its deeply alarming statements against Israel. While the issue of private property complicates the full investigation of the tunnels, it is not impossible, she said, calling on the Lebanese armed forces — that country's only legitimate armed group — to neutralize the tunnels as a matter of urgency. Meanwhile, Israel must share with UNIFIL any information that could assist in taking action. ...

Vladimir K. Safronkov (Russian Federation) ... said ... while the Russian Federation understands concerns about the discovered tunnels, it hopes ... that the parties will refrain from "emotional polemics" and work to overcome any disagreements. ...

Amal Mudallali (Lebanon), recalling that her country witnessed four devastating Israeli invasions over the last four decades resulting in thousands of civilian deaths, said today its people are witnessing another volatile situation unfold with the discovery of tunnels into Israel. Lebanon takes the matter very seriously and has said clearly that it is not interested in a new conflict, having immediately reaffirmed its commitment to resolution 1701 (2006). ... However, she said, both the President and the Prime Minister have cited Israel's daily violations of the same resolution by land, sea and air, which also represent

a violation of the Charter of the United Nations.

“The Lebanese State did not commit any violations,” she insisted, noting that the number of Israeli violations amount to some 1,800 = incidents annually. Outlining some examples, she said the Lebanese people are concerned about double standards in which reports of Israeli violations are “buried in the archives” and go unpunished, while that country’s complaints quickly result in Council meetings. “We all know too well how the so-called Israeli right of pre-emptive self-defence [...] is used to justify illegal aggressive acts and invasions,” she said. ...

Danny Ben Yosef Danon (Israel) said the tunnels that had been confirmed by UNIFIL were built so that Hizbullah could invade Israel after first surrounding the town of Metula and killing all its civilians, as part of its known plan called “Conquering the Galilee”. Those attacks would be followed by a full-scale missile assault and ground invasion of his country. “But we will not allow it to happen,” he avowed. ... Israel monitored the situation and took action on its own side of the Blue Line, relaying the information to UNIFIL, which contacted the Lebanese Army. Instead of that army destroying the tunnels, however, it relayed information directly to Hizbullah, which then sealed the tunnels in an effort to hide the evidence. ...

Arguing that Hizbullah’s activities are a flagrant violation of not only resolution 1701 (2006) but also the United Nations Charter, he expressed hope that UNIFIL’s new commander will not repeat mistakes of the past and ignore its activities. Israel’s numerous complaints, he said, have not appeared in any one of the 38 reports the Mission submitted, which often state that the situation is calm and nothing needs to be done. ... Showing photographs of a village in which he said Hizbullah has built bunkers, weapons installations and tunnel entrances in houses and next to schools, he said the organization is using civilians as human shields. “Imagine what will happen to that village if Israel had to defend itself,” he said, given the thousands of rockets stockpiled in the area. ... After wreaking havoc in Syria, he maintained Iran and Hizbullah are now turning their war machine towards Israel. Hizbullah’s terror tunnels and missiles were created for that purpose. He warned that, if attacked, Israel must act with its full might to defend its people and destroy Hizbullah. “We will bury it in the rubble of Lebanon,” he warned, appealing to the Council to prevent that tragedy.

To read the full press release see

<https://www.un.org/press/en/2018/sc13634.doc.htm>

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Foreign Affairs

House of Commons Written Answer

Hungary: Antisemitism

Jim Shannon (DUP)b [201630] To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, what discussions he has had with his Hungarian counterpart on threats to Jewish people by far right groups in that country.

Alan Duncan: The Foreign Secretary has not discussed with his Hungarian counterpart threats to Jewish people by far right groups in the country. We welcome the Hungarian Government’s stated commitment to address and eliminate anti-Semitism and all forms of racism. The UK remains committed to strengthening international co-operation across Europe to tackle anti-Semitism. Our Embassy in Budapest maintains regular dialogue with Jewish organisations in Hungary.

<https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Commons/2018-12-12/201630/>

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Other Relevant Information

Policy Exchange

Defining Islamophobia

<https://policyexchange.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2018/12/Defining-Islamophobia.pdf>

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Relevant Legislation ** new or updated today

UK Parliament

Holocaust (Return of Cultural Objects) (Amendment) Bill

<https://services.parliament.uk/Bills/2017-19/holocaustreturnofculturalobjectsamendment.html>

Marriage Act 1949 (Amendment) Bill

<http://services.parliament.uk/bills/2017-19/marriageact1949amendment.html>

Online Forums Bill

<https://services.parliament.uk/Bills/2017-19/onlineforums.html>

Organ Donation (Deemed Consent) Bill

<http://services.parliament.uk/bills/2017-19/organdonationdeemedconsent.html>

Palestinian Statehood (Recognition) Bill

<https://services.parliament.uk/Bills/2017-19/palestinianstatehoodrecognition.html>

Scottish Parliament

Human Tissue (Authorisation) (Scotland) Bill

<http://www.parliament.scot/parliamentarybusiness/Bills/108681.aspx>

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Consultations ** new or updated today

**** closes tomorrow**

The future of civil partnership in Scotland (closing date 21 December 2018)

<https://consult.gov.scot/family-law/the-future-of-civil-partnership-in-scotland/>

2021 Census: Outputs Strategy Consultation for Northern Ireland (closing date 9 January 2019)

<https://www.finance-ni.gov.uk/sites/default/files/consultations/dfp/2021-census-outputs-strategy-consultation-for-northern-ireland-document.pdf>

Islamophobia (closing date 11 January 2018)

<https://www.parliament.uk/business/committees/committees-a-z/commons-select/home-affairs-committee/news-parliament-2017/islamophobia-call-for-further-evidence-17-19/>

Connected communities – Tackling loneliness and social isolation (Wales) (closing date 15 January 2019)

<https://beta.gov.wales/connected-communities-tackling-loneliness-and-social-isolation>

The Macpherson Report: Twenty Years On (closing date 16 January 2019)

<https://www.parliament.uk/business/committees/committees-a-z/commons-select/home-affairs-committee/inquiries/parliament-2017/macpherson-report-twenty-years-on-inquiry-17-19/>

Extremism in England and Wales (closing date 31 January 2019)

<https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/extremism-in-england-and-wales-call-for-evidence>

Racial harassment in higher education (closing date 15 February 2019)

<https://www.equalityhumanrights.com/en/inquiries-and-investigations/racial-harassment-higher-education-our-inquiry>

Draft guidance to challenge bullying in schools [Wales only] (closing date 15 February 2019)

<https://beta.gov.wales/draft-guidance-challenge-bullying-schools>

One Scotland: Hate Has No Home Here (closing date 24 February 2019)

<https://consult.gov.scot/hate-crime/consultation-on-scottish-hate-crime-legislation/>

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