



Political Affairs Digest

A daily summary of political events affecting the Jewish Community

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Religion: Discrimination

Lord Singh of Wimbledon (Crossbench) [HL12940] To ask Her Majesty's Government, further to the answer by Lord Bourne of Aberystwyth on 14 January (HL Deb, col 7), what measures they have put in place to ensure equal consideration of all faiths in the development and implementation of policy relating to discrimination on the grounds of religion or belief.

Lord Bourne of Aberystwyth: The Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG), as a public authority, has a duty under Section 149 of the Equality Act 2010 to have due regard to the need to assess the impact of our policies on people with protected characteristics, and to consider whether it is possible to mitigate or avoid any negative impacts. This includes people with a faith or belief. For each policy, we complete an Equality Impact Assessment. To assist with completing these assessments, in addition to formal consultations, MHCLG Ministers and officials regularly meet with a range of partners, from across faiths and beliefs, to discuss policy considerations. This engagement includes our quarterly Sikh stakeholder roundtable and Lord Bourne's England-wide Faith Tours.

<https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Lords/2019-01-17/HL12940/>

The answer referred to above can be read at

<https://hansard.parliament.uk/lords/2019-01-14/debates/5AAEA536-F95C-434E-9331-529C93639C53/Islamophobia>

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Holocaust

House of Commons Oral Answer

Topical Questions: Department for Housing, Communities and Local Government
The Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government (James Brokenshire): ... Yesterday, Members across the House remembered Holocaust Memorial Day. I had the privilege to attend the incredibly moving national commemoration of those who lost their lives in the holocaust and subsequent genocides. Those dark events of the past call on us all to confront racism, bigotry and hatred wherever it may occur and to stand up for tolerance, reconciliation and stronger communities.

<https://hansard.parliament.uk/commons/2019-01-28/debates/FF3E6F30-7EA8-45B2-A1E3-705C324543A6/TopicalQuestions#contribution-EF36F334-9FB6-459F-9A0C-2349F985A769>

Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government

Speech given by the Secretary of State the Rt Hon James Brokenshire MP at the UK Commemorative Ceremony for Holocaust Memorial Day 2019

Last Sunday, I had the privilege to join mourners from around the world to pay my respects to 6 unknown victims of the Shoah – including a child.

It was an incredibly moving moment, not just for the Jewish community, but for our entire country.

These holy souls or Kedoshim, were “torn from home” – somewhere that should have been a place of safety, comfort and security.

They lived and died through one of the darkest chapters in human history, but rest today in the loving embrace of our Jewish community here in the UK.

As I reflected on this, I was reminded of my father-in-law, who escaped Nazi Germany and came to Britain with the help of the MI6 agent, Frank Foley, who’s actions also saved the lives of thousands of other Jews.

But as we honour the millions of victims of the Shoah today, we remember those families who weren’t so lucky.

Those who never made it home.

Those who were brutalised and murdered.

Those whose lives were cut short and whose loss provides a stark and powerful legacy to us all.

A legacy that demands we challenge hatred and bigotry wherever it exists.

A legacy that requires that we say “never again” we really mean it.

Sadly, this is a lesson that we are still learning.

40 years ago, the Khmer Rouge claimed the lives of one quarter of the population through mass murder and starvation.

25 years ago, almost one million Rwandans were murdered in 100 days.

And horror returned to our continent as we witnessed the murder of over 8,000 mostly Muslim men and boys in Srebrenica.

We still imagine that these barbarities belong in the history books.

And yet today – 74 years since the Nazi death camps were liberated – antisemitism is on the rise, here and abroad.

And Jewish communities are once again living in fear.

This troubles me deeply and must trouble us all.

I want to reassure our Jewish community that you are an intrinsic part of what makes Britain Great and the government will always stand by you to challenge bigotry and intolerance... and reaffirm our commitment to ensuring that future generations never forget where hatred

can lead, and that we will not walk by on the other side where it is present. Our new National Holocaust Memorial and Learning Centre will help us do that - a permanent reminder at the heart of our democracy. Because we all know: tolerance and reconciliation begins at home and that we all have our part to play to ensure home is truly a place of safety, security and of strength. <https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/holocaust-memorial-day-2019>

United Nations

Pillars of Humanity Weakened with Each Broken Norm, Secretary-General Stresses during United Nations Holocaust Memorial Ceremony

... We are here together to remember the victims of the Holocaust — the 6 million Jews and many others murdered during a period of unprecedented, calculated cruelty, when human dignity was cast aside for a racial ideology. ...

As we remember, we also reaffirm our resolve to fight the hatred that still plagues our world today. In fact, it is necessary — more and more — that we sound an alarm. It is just three months since a man armed to the teeth entered the Tree of Life synagogue in Pittsburgh shouting “all Jews must die”. ...

Last month at a Jewish cemetery near Strasbourg, in France, vandals smeared swastikas on dozens of tombstones and defaced a monument to Holocaust victims. And just days ago in Bulgaria, stones were thrown through the window of Sofia’s central synagogue.

I would like to be able to say that these incidents were aberrations, or that they are only the last gasps of a prejudice that deserves to die. But, sadly, what we are instead seeing is the flame of a centuries-old fire gaining in intensity. Not only is anti-Semitism still strong, it is getting worse. We must rise up against rising anti-Semitism.

According to the Anti-Defamation League, anti-Semitic incidents in the United States increased by 57 per cent in 2017. The European Union’s Fundamental Rights Agency reported last year that 28 per cent of Jews had experienced some form of harassment just for being Jewish. Many added that fears for their safety have led them to stay away from Jewish events — or even to contemplate emigrating. Another poll in Europe by CNN revealed the strong persistence of classic anti-Semitic motifs.

In fact, the old anti-Semitism is back. At the same time, we are seeing attempts to rewrite the history of the Holocaust, to distort its magnitude and to sanitize the wartime records of leaders, citizens and societies. Meanwhile, neo-Nazi groups are proliferating. ...

Inevitably, where there is anti-Semitism, no one else is safe. Across the world, we are seeing a disturbing rise in other forms of bigotry. Attacks on Muslims in several societies are on the rise, sometimes even outpacing other forms of hatred. ...

Perhaps most disturbingly, hate is moving into the mainstream — in liberal democracies and authoritarian systems alike. ...

One urgent challenge today is to heed the lessons of history and the Holocaust. First, by keeping memory alive. A recent poll in Europe found that one third of people say they know little or nothing about the Holocaust. Among millennials, some two thirds had no idea Auschwitz was a death camp. As the number of survivors dwindles, it falls to us all to carry their testimony to future generations. This is our duty and we must make sure that what the memory of survivors is able to tell will persist forever. ...

We had, just last Saturday in Park East Synagogue, a very moving testimony from Rabbi Schneier proposing that we should gather Ministers of Education all over the world to make sure that in schools these questions are clearly introduced in the curricula and that students will never be able to deny these facts. Because indeed, countering hate speech is essential to preventing hate crimes. That means rejecting hate in schools and workplaces, at sporting events and on the street. And it means reaffirming universal values and equal rights. ...

One of the great shocks of the Second World War was how a society of such high attainment proved so ripe for Hitler's venom. In his diaries of the years from 1933 to 1945, Victor Klemperer wrote, and I quote: "Curious: at the very moment modern technology annuls all frontiers and distances... the most extreme nationalism is raging." This was said in the [1930s].

We are not immune to the same risks today. Our response must be clear: to strengthen all we do to build the defences, the laws and the mindsets that will uphold the dignity of all, for all time, having the fight against anti-Semitism in the front lines. ...

To read the full transcript see

<https://www.un.org/press/en/2019/sgsm19447.doc.htm>

'Humiliation was the worst'; Holocaust survivor at UN, asks world to act with 'empathy and compassion'

More than seven decades ago in Auschwitz, Jewish teenager Marian Turski felt he "had no name, he had nothing, but a number" tattooed on his body. Speaking on Monday, at the [annual Holocaust Memorial Ceremony](#), at United Nations Headquarters in New York, the 92-year-old called on the world to express renewed "empathy and compassion".

Sharing his extraordinary story, he said that the worst part of surviving the Nazi death camps was not the extreme hunger, the coldness or the deteriorating living conditions, but "the humiliation, just because you were Jewish, you were treated not like a human being, you were treated like a louse, a bed bug, like a cockroach", he told those who had gathered to commemorate. ...

His story followed testimony from Inge Auerbacher [who lamented] the rising wave of anti-Semitism today, Ms. Auerbacher pleaded for everyone across the world to "make good choices".

"My hope, wish, and prayer, is for every child to live in peace without hunger and prejudice. The antidote to hatred is education, no more genocides, no more anti-Semitism", she added. ...

The role of education and history was emphasized by Sara Bloomfield, Director of the powerful United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, in Washington DC, who added that "after 2000 years of various forms of anti-Semitism, it doesn't seem to be an eradicable disease, nor does hate". ...

To read the full press release see

<https://news.un.org/en/story/2019/01/1031502>

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House of Commons Written Answers

Malaysia: Paralympic Games

Lee Rowley (Conservative) [210726] To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, what representations he has made to his Malaysian counterpart since that country's decision to ban Israeli swimmers from participating in the Tokyo 2020 Paralympic Qualifiers it is due to host in July 2019.

Mark Field: We do not agree with Malaysian Government's position on the banning of Israeli athletes. It is fundamentally wrong. Israeli athletes should not be banned from competing. The UK government strongly supports the principle of inclusiveness of the Olympic movement.

I raised our concerns with the Malaysian Minister for Education, Dr Maszlee bin Malik on the 22 January. The British High Commissioner in Kuala Lumpur has done

likewise with the Malaysian Foreign Minister. We will continue to raise our strong objection with the Malaysian authorities.

<https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Commons/2019-01-21/210726/>

Palestinians: Overseas Aid

Joan Ryan (Labour) [211626] To ask the Secretary of State for International Development, with reference to the business case for her Department's Programme 300667 entitled Supporting Economic Empowerment and Development in the Occupied Palestinian Territories and the statement by PwC that it was not required to consider whether funds had been transferred to persons implicated in terrorism, whether she plans to alter the terms of engagement for the auditors of this programme.

Harriett Baldwin: The UK has a zero-tolerance approach to fraud and robust controls against the diversion of aid to ensure that funds are used only for their intended purpose. These include due diligence assessments of our partners, mapping of funds through the delivery chain, regular programme monitoring and annual audits.

DFID's programme *Supporting Economic Empowerment and Development in the Occupied Palestinian Territories (SEED OPTs)* has several components, working on trade facilitation and customs, water and energy, and helping the PA and Israel to abide by their obligations under the Paris Protocol. Work with the Palestinian Authority in the water and energy sectors will be channelled through The World Bank Partnership for Infrastructure Development in the West Bank and Gaza Multi Donor Trust Fund. Through this framework, funds will flow from the trust fund to dedicated accounts that will be managed by the PA in accordance with rules established by the World Bank. Alongside a range of other safeguards, all components will be subject to financial audits. The terms of reference of the audits will vary depending on the component, however all independent financial audits provide assurance to DFID that the expenditure of funds will only be on agreed programme activities. The overall DFID OPTs portfolio is also subject to the regular audit cycle of DFID's Internal Audit Department and the National Audit Office.

<https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Commons/2019-01-23/211626/>

Palestinians: Schools

Joan Ryan (Labour) [211628] To ask the Secretary of State for International Development, pursuant to the Answer of 21 January 2019 to Question 209284 on Palestinians: Schools, and with reference to the meeting between the Minister of State and the Palestinian Authority (PA) Minister for Education in the week beginning 21 January, what steps the PA Minister plans to take to address UK Government concerns on the Palestinian curriculum.

Harriett Baldwin: The UK Government is concerned by allegations of incitement in the Palestinian Authority (PA) curriculum, and Minister of State Alistair Burt raised these issues with the PA Minister for Education again, on 21 January 2019. The PA Minister confirmed that he was willing to take into account the findings of an expert textbook review. This review remains a priority for DFID and will be completed by September 2019.

<https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Commons/2019-01-23/211628/>

The answer referred to above can be read at

<https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Commons/2019-01-16/209284/>

Israel: Palestinians

Paul Sweeney (Labour Co-op) [211933] To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, what recent steps he has taken towards a lasting peace between Israel and Palestine.

Harriett Baldwin: The British Government believes a negotiated two-state solution is in the firm interests of both Israel and the Palestinians. We regularly press both parties to resume direct negotiations towards two-state solution. Most recently at the Security Council Open Debate on the Middle East on 22 January the UK's Permanent Representative to the UN reiterated our belief that negotiations will only succeed when they are conducted between Israelis and Palestinians, supported by the international community.

<https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Commons/2019-01-23/211933/>

House of Lords Written Answers

Gaza: Young People

Baroness Tonge (Non-affiliated) [HL12814] To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the World Bank's findings in October 2018 that there is 70 per cent youth unemployment in Gaza; and what discussions they have had with the government of Israel about what action can be taken to support young people who live there into employment.

Lord Bates: The UK remains gravely concerned about the economic and humanitarian situation in Gaza. 54 per cent of the total population is estimated to be unemployed, including over 70 per cent of young people. Until the blockade of Gaza is eased and its economy allowed to grow unemployment will continue to rise. HMG officials regularly propose measures to improve the situation in Gaza with Government of Israel officials. These include the adoption of a more transparent process for allowing goods into Gaza and permitting greater exports from the strip. The UK is supporting direct measures to support job creation in Gaza. We will more than double the amount of UK aid spent on economic development in the Occupied Palestinian Territories (OPTs) to around £38 million over the next five years (2018-2023). This will include support to addressing the water and electricity crisis in Gaza and seek to address movement and access restrictions. The Chevening Scholarship Programme, funded by the UK government, brings talented young people from Gaza to study in the UK, helping to provide educative opportunities and develop employment skills.

<https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Lords/2019-01-14/HL12814/>

The findings referred to above can be read at

<https://www.worldbank.org/en/country/westbankandgaza/overview>

Palestinians: Travel Restrictions

Baroness Tonge (Non-affiliated) [HL12815] To ask Her Majesty's Government what representations they have made to the government of Israel regarding the closure of a checkpoint south of Jenin, following reports that the closure prevented students from attending school exams.

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: While we have not raised this particular case, we remain deeply concerned about restrictions on freedom of movement within the West Bank. Through our Embassy in Tel Aviv we have lobbied the Israeli authorities on the issue of movement and access.

Arms Trade: Israel

Baroness Tonge (Non-affiliated) [HL12816] To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they had made of the use of military goods sold to Israel by the UK; and whether they have sought any assurances that such goods are used for defence purposes only.

Baroness Fairhead: Military items sold to other countries by the UK require export licences. Export licence applications are rigorously assessed on a case-by-case basis against the Consolidated EU and National Arms Export Licensing Criteria, taking account of all prevailing circumstances at the time of the application. Signed end user undertakings from the intended recipient, about the intended end use, form part of our consideration but we do not rely solely on these when making our assessment.

Following events in 2018 on the Israel/Gaza border the Government reviewed all extant military export licences for Israel. We have no information to indicate that UK-supplied equipment has been used in a way that is inconsistent with the Consolidated EU and National Arms Export Licensing Criteria. The Government continues to monitor the situation in Israel and Gaza very closely.

<https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Lords/2019-01-14/HL12816/>

Israel: Palestinians

Baroness Tonge (Non-affiliated) [HL12817] To ask Her Majesty's Government what representations they have made to the government of Israel regarding the continued imprisonment of 19 Palestinian journalists.

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: The UK maintains that freedom of the media is an important part of respecting human rights. The Minister for the Middle East and North Africa met Leaders of the Palestinian Journalists' Syndicate in London on 4 July 2018 where they discussed the situation facing Palestinian journalists and the constraints on their work

<https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Lords/2019-01-14/HL12817/>

Israel: Gaza

Baroness Tonge (Non-affiliated) [HL12818] To ask Her Majesty's Government what discussions they have had with the government of Israel about the location of the buffer zone in Gaza; and whether there are plans to make the location of such a zone clearer.

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: We have not had discussions on this issue with the Government of Israel as there is no official Israeli policy on the matter.

<https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Lords/2019-01-14/HL12818/>

Israel: Palestinians

Baroness Tonge (Non-affiliated) [HL12819] To ask Her Majesty's Government what discussions they have had with the government of Israel regarding the protection of Palestinian prisoners from any deterioration in prison conditions.

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: We have not made recent representations to the Government of Israel on this issue but note Israel's commitment that prisoners and detainees are treated humanely and in accordance with international law.

<https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Lords/2019-01-14/HL12819/>

West Bank: Agriculture

Baroness Tonge (Non-affiliated) [HL12867] To ask Her Majesty's Government what discussions they have had, if any, with the government of Israel about (1) the number of Palestinian farmers in the West Bank who are allowed to farm between the separation barrier and the Green Line, and (2) the protection of those farmers.

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: While we have not raised this specific issue with the Israeli authorities, we have repeatedly raised our concerns about freedom of movement within the West Bank. In that context, the British Consulate General in Jerusalem actively supports a range of interventions to help Palestinians access their land. For example, its annual "olive harvest campaign" which helps landowners secure permits to access their land as well as providing a protective presence to farmers during harvest time.

<https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Lords/2019-01-15/HL12867/>

Foreign and Commonwealth Office

Jeremy Hunt: @Paralympics are absolutely right. We were proud to host the Israeli team here for London 2012 alongside many other countries that have profound disagreements with Israel - but the ability to bring countries together is part of the magic of the Olympics and Paralympics

https://twitter.com/Jeremy_Hunt/status/1089876470795853825

Jeremy Hunt: Israeli athletes should not have been, and should never be banned from competing.

https://twitter.com/Jeremy_Hunt/status/1089876471915692032

UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights

Press briefing note on Israel/Occupied Palestinian Territory

We are deeply concerned about the protracted and extremely violent attack on Palestinians in the West Bank village of Al Mughayyir last Saturday (26 January), during which a 38-year-old Palestinian father of four, Hamdi Taleb Na'asan, was shot in the back and killed.

The monitoring by our staff in the West Bank suggests that the killing took place after a group of up to 30 Israelis – some of them armed – from the nearby Israeli outpost of Adei Ad first of all attacked Palestinian farmers in their fields, and then descended on the village itself where they used live ammunition to shoot at the villagers and their houses.

The confrontation led to six villagers being shot with live ammunition, leaving three of them in a serious condition. It is unclear whether any settlers were also injured, and if so how many.

Although Israeli security forces were stationed near the village and were immediately alerted to the attack, witnesses informed our staff – who visited the village yesterday – that it took some two hours before they intervened.

When Israeli security forces did finally intervene, the main focus of their action appears to have been to disperse the Palestinian villagers using teargas. Three more Palestinians were injured by live ammunition after the intervention of the security forces. However it is not clear at this point whether they were shot by settlers or by soldiers. In total, 20 villagers were injured during the course of the day.

This violence took place in the context of a surge in settler violence in the West Bank, which has reached its highest levels since 2015. According to OCHA, the average number

of violent incidents instigated by settlers per month increased by 57% in 2018 compared to 2017, and by 175% in comparison to 2016.

Israel as the occupying power, is obliged under international humanitarian law to protect the Palestinian population from such attacks. Those responsible for settler violence must be brought to account.

The Israeli security forces have opened an initial probe into the killing of Mr. Na'asan, and we welcome this. We urge the authorities to ensure there is a full investigation into his killing and the injuries caused to others, and that it is independent, transparent and effective.

<https://www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=24124&LanglD=E>

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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>

International Development Assistance (Palestinian National Authority Schools) Bill

<https://services.parliament.uk/Bills/2017-19/internationaldevelopmentassistancepalestiniannationalauthoritieschools.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 in 2 days**

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/>

Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission – Draft Strategic Plan 2019-22

(closing date 15 March 2019)

<http://www.nihrc.org/news/detail/ni-human-rights-commission-draft-strategic-plan-2019-2022-consultation>

Scottish charity law (closing date 1 April 2019)

<https://tinyurl.com/y9ln88df>

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