



# Political Affairs Digest

A daily summary of political events affecting the Jewish Community

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## Home Affairs

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7. **Liz Twist (Labour):** What steps the Government are taking to ensure that social media platform providers identify and remove online hate speech. [908932]

#### **The Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport (Jeremy Wright):**

In the digital charter we set out our ambition for everyone to access the opportunities of the internet and to feel safe in doing so. Our forthcoming White Paper will set out measures to ensure platforms take adequate steps to protect their users from online abuse, including hate speech, and as part of the Government's internet safety strategy we have asked the Law Commission to conduct a review of the current law around abusive and offensive online communications.

**Anna Turley:** ... I hear the Minister's words and look forward to the forthcoming report, but I am afraid this just seems like too little too late. Does he not agree with the Science and Technology Committee, which has published a report today, that an existing regulator such as Ofcom could start work on a harm reduction strategy as soon as October, as I already put forward in a private Member's Bill two years ago? This is urgent.

**Jeremy Wright:** I am grateful to the hon. Lady and am familiar with her private Member's Bill and the report to which she refers; both are extremely valuable additions to this consideration. I am sure she will understand, however, that the most important thing we can do ... is make sure that our response is effective and properly thought through and will work in the long term. It is no good getting good headlines for a day or two and then finding that the structures we set up have holes in them that mean they cannot deliver. What that means is that the Government are taking time to get this right. It is also worth pointing out that we are the first country that will do this; if we produce a holistic approach to online harms and internet regulation, we will be the first country to do it. We should be proud of that, but we should make sure we get it right. We will do it and the hon. Lady will see the White Paper soon, but it needs to be got right.

**Liz Twist:** On 8 January the Petitions Committee produced its report on its inquiry into internet trolling of people with disabilities. Will the Minister commit to our recommendation to ensure that the internet is no more dangerous for disabled people than for everyone else, and will he include people with disabilities in his consultation?

**Jeremy Wright:** The answer to the last question is yes, and the hon. Lady is right to highlight again this report and the issues that surround the abuse that can be directed to disabled people. This is absolutely fundamental. What we must get across, not just in regulatory structures and Government action but in what we all say, is that there is no special rule that applies to the online world that means people can engage in abuse or behaviour that would be unacceptable in any other forum. That is not the case, and we all have to say it with clarity.

**Michael Fabricant (Conservative):** Nick Clegg seems to have landed on his feet since leaving this place and is now the government affairs officer or director or vice-president of Facebook ... Nick Clegg seemed startled at the idea that Facebook has any responsibility in this area when asked about it on television recently. Does my right hon. and learned Friend have any plans to speak with Mr Clegg about this ...

**Jeremy Wright:** I of course would wish to say that I am sure that my hon. Friend is being unfair to our former colleague, but I can tell him that I spoke to Sir Nick last week and I am happy to tell the House what I told him, which is that when the White Paper is published he and everyone else, including Facebook, will see that the Government's intent is to set out with clarity what the responsibilities of online companies like Facebook are, how they should meet those responsibilities and what will happen to them if they do not.

**Tom Watson (Labour):** I agree with the Secretary of State that the White Paper should provide remedies for dealing with hate speech; the real test will be whether it protects our children. Last week, we heard of the tragic case of a young girl taking her own life after being exposed to harmful material about depression and suicide online. This week, we have learned that online bullying has doubled. If I got to talk to Nick Clegg, I would tell him that, rather than focusing on protecting children, Facebook and others are focused on profiting from children. This morning, the Science and Technology Committee has called for a legal duty of care on social media companies, and we support that important report. Will Secretary of State confirm that he supports that call, and will he state explicitly that it has to be underpinned and enforced by a regulator that has teeth?

**Jeremy Wright:** ... On the point about a duty of care, the hon. Gentleman knows, because we have discussed it, that this is something we are considering carefully. We are also keen to ensure that whatever structures the White Paper sets up can be enforced. Although it is right to point out that some social media companies have done some things in this space that we should applaud, it is clear that there has been nowhere near enough activity yet, and it would be wrong to assume that this House or this Government can sit back and allow the social media companies to do this voluntarily, so there will be further action, and the hon. Gentleman will see it set out in the White Paper. I look forward to his comments and the House's reassurance on this; we will want to hear what everyone in the House and beyond has to say. As I said earlier, this is ground-breaking stuff and the UK should be proud to be able to do it first, but we must do it right. That means that the views, opinions, knowledge and expertise of many more must be included in the process.

<https://hansard.parliament.uk/commons/2019-01-31/debates/90B8E52A-807C-4FEA-9864-6F515CF31055/SocialMediaPlatformsAndHateSpeech>

*The Digital Charter referred to above can be read at*

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/digital-charter/digital-charter>

*The Science and Technology Committee report referred to above can be read at*

<https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201719/cmselect/cmsctech/822/822.pdf>

The Petitions Committee report referred to above can be read at <https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201719/cmselect/cmcompetitions/759/759.pdf>

## House of Commons Written Answer

### Slaughterhouses: Animal Welfare

**Thelma Walker (Labour)** [211937] To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps are being taken to develop and enforce clear standards in the humane slaughter of animals in UK abattoirs.

**David Rutley:** The Government cares highly about the welfare of animals and this includes their welfare at the point of slaughter. The Welfare of Animals at the Time of Killing (England) Regulations 2015 (WATOK) implements and enforces Council Regulation 1099/2009 (EU Regulation) on the protection of animals at time of killing as well as maintaining our stricter national rules that provide greater welfare protection than the EU Regulation.

These requirements are monitored and enforced in slaughterhouses in England by Official Veterinarians (OVs) of the Food Standards Agency (FSA) to ensure that animals are spared avoidable pain, suffering or distress. The FSA operates a zero tolerance policy towards animal cruelty and OVs take a prompt and proportionate approach to enforcement action where breaches are identified.

The Government has delivered on the manifesto commitment to make CCTV recording in slaughterhouses mandatory. This legislation came into force last year and requires slaughterhouse operators to install and operate a CCTV system in their premises that provides a clear and complete view of all areas where live animals are present. This legislation followed several well publicised cases of animal abuse in slaughterhouses. As an important complement to existing physical observation, CCTV should help maintain and improve animal welfare standards in all slaughterhouses and provide assurance to consumers that this is the case.

<https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Commons/2019-01-23/211937/>

## Welsh Government

### Developing a new international strategy for Wales

... Speaking at one of her first engagements as the new Minister for International Relations Eluned Morgan will say: "... Over the next few months the Welsh Government will reach out to the public and in particular those engaged in international roles to ask them to help shape the image and message that Wales should be presenting to the world. The Government is anxious to build on the strong international links that have been developed over past decades which will help to enrich the country economically socially and culturally." The International Strategy will be founded on a clear set of values which will help to present Wales' face internationally – including a commitment to sustainability and future generations, the promotion of the principles of Fair Work and a fundamental belief in the fact that we will achieve more to tackle some of the major challenges of our age - digital technology, tackling poverty and inequality, taking on environmental challenges and climate change, through working together across territorial boundaries.

**To read the full press release see**

<https://gov.wales/newsroom/international/2019/190131-developing-a-new-international-strategy-for-Wales/?lang=en>

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# Holocaust

## United Nations

### **'Leaders who sanction hate speech' encourage citizens to do likewise, UN communications chief tells Holocaust remembrance event**

The Holocaust illustrates how easily “people can move from condoning brutality, to committing genocide” and shows that “leaders who sanction hate speech or make anti-Semitic or xenophobic slurs” are encouraging their own citizens “to do the same”, the UN’s head of Global Communications told leading members of the Jewish community at UN Headquarters in New York ...

Under the theme: “Holocaust Remembrance: Demand and Defend your Human Rights”, it was one of the main events marking International Holocaust Remembrance Day throughout this week of reflection on the industrial-scale genocide of approximately six million European Jews during World War Two. ...

“Rescuers made the brave choice to help in full knowledge of the grave consequences they, their families and community would face should they have been found helping Jewish people” ...

“Today, we witness populism, xenophobia, Neo-Nazism and hate groups on the rise, fueling anti-Semitism and other forms of hatred around the world”, [Angela Smale, Under-Secretary-General for Global Communications] explained, stressing the role of civil society in documenting hate speech and hate crimes as “critical” to learn how to effectively address hatred, challenge its root causes and build resilient and just communities. ...

“It reminds us that we are all responsible for each other. We all have a role to play in demanding and defending human rights,” concluded the head of UN Global Communications.

**To read the full press release see**

<https://news.un.org/en/story/2019/01/1031742>

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# Israel

## House of Lords Written Answers

### **Egypt: Gaza**

**Lord Turnberg (Labour)** [HL12970] To ask Her Majesty's Government what representations they have made to the government of Egypt about the closure of the Rafah crossing from Gaza.

**Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon:** The Minister for the Middle East and North Africa discussed the situation in Gaza with the Egyptian Foreign Minister in October, and officials in Cairo regularly raise the issue of Rafah crossing with the Egyptian Foreign Ministry, most recently on 10 January. The Minister also raised the issue of Palestinian Authority staff being withdrawn from the Rafah crossing with the Palestinian Head of Mission to London on 23 January. We continue to urge Israel, the Palestinian Authority and Egypt to work together to ensure a durable solution for Gaza.

<https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Lords/2019-01-18/HL12970/>

*The following two questions both received the same answer*

**Gaza: Drugs**

**Lord Turnberg (Labour)** [HL12971] To ask Her Majesty's Government what representations they have made to the Palestinian Authority about the restrictions that have been imposed on the supply of medicines to Gaza.

**Gaza: Health Services**

**Lord turnberg (Labour)** [HL12972] To ask Her Majesty's Government whether they have made representations to the Palestinian Authority about the restrictions that have been imposed on the healthcare budget for the population of Gaza.

**Lord Bates:** A senior UK Government official discussed a range of challenges facing the Palestinian healthcare system with the Palestinian Authority's (PA) Minister of Health in June last year, including the PA's healthcare budget, the quality of healthcare available, and shortages of drugs and medical supplies in Gaza. Restrictions in Gaza were most recently raised with the PA earlier this month by a UK Government official.

<https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Lords/2019-01-18/HL12971/>

and

<https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Lords/2019-01-18/HL12972/>

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## Foreign Affairs

### House of Lords Written Answer

**Religious Freedom: Databases**

**Lord Alton of Liverpool (Crossbench)** [HL13052] To ask Her Majesty's Government what progress they are making in developing a database which tracks freedom of religion or belief violations and other data about religious or belief minorities.

**Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon:** It is important that we have the best possible information about the situation members of minorities face in asserting their right to Freedom of Religion or Belief. It is certainly something that I have been looking at very closely since my appointment last summer as the Prime Minister's Special Envoy. We currently use many sources of information to determine the level of discrimination of different communities around the world. In addition, we have strong partnerships with representatives and leaders of different communities around the world. We are looking at how we can verify and use the data provided by non-governmental organisations and others to inform our work and help us provide the right support.

<https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Lords/2019-01-23/HL13052/>

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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>

Letter from Jackie Doyle-Price MP to Marie van Der Zyl, President, Board of Deputies of British Jews

[http://data.parliament.uk/DepositedPapers/Files/DEP2019-0117/Letter\\_Jackie\\_Doyle-Price\\_to\\_Board\\_of\\_Deputies\\_of\\_British\\_Jews.pdf](http://data.parliament.uk/DepositedPapers/Files/DEP2019-0117/Letter_Jackie_Doyle-Price_to_Board_of_Deputies_of_British_Jews.pdf)

#### **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>

Health and Sport Committee: Stage 1 Report

[https://www.parliament.scot/S5\\_HealthandSportCommittee/Human\\_Tissue\\_Stage\\_1\\_Report.pdf](https://www.parliament.scot/S5_HealthandSportCommittee/Human_Tissue_Stage_1_Report.pdf)

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## Consultations \*\* new or updated today

**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