

Political Affairs Digest

A daily summary of political events affecting the Jewish Community

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Westminster Hall Debate

Human Rights in the UK

col 374WH Jim Shannon (DUP): ... There are also cases that show us that one person's human rights should not be laid on the altar of someone else's perceived rights. An example was the case of Ashers Bakery in Northern Ireland, when the question was raised as to whether we still have the right to refuse to serve based on a message that directly contradicts a sincerely and dearly held faith. After much legal wrangling, the case upheld the right to refuse a message, but not a customer. The idea that you cannot be forced to advocate something that you do not believe in is fundamental, and the decision was very important. The case was taken to the UK Supreme Court and in a unanimous decision five of the UK's most senior judges upheld Ashers' appeal against claims of discrimination.

col 375WH They agreed: "The objection was to being required to promote the message on the cake. The less favourable treatment was afforded to the message not to the man...Nobody should be forced to have or express a political opinion in which he does not believe."

That is what the court said, and it is very important to have that decision when it comes to human rights in the United Kingdom.

Although the case was ostensibly about a message on a cake, a section of Christian people were fearful that it was also about an impact on their right to hold their belief and to live their belief out. We are so good at protecting the rights of everyone to live their beliefs inasmuch as they are not harmful or destructive, and yet increasingly we have a section of the UK beginning to fear what can be said or not said when it comes to their Christian beliefs.

A 78-year-old preacher in Northern Ireland was questioned and tried for preaching from his pulpit regarding a biblical story and hell and the fact that if someone does not have faith in Jesus Christ they cannot go to heaven. He was found not guilty. That is another example of human rights. We have registrars who have lost their jobs as they cannot oversee the marriage ceremony of same-sex couples, which is against their held beliefs. Other people are happy to do it, and yet registrars have lost their employment. It is little wonder that Christians question their human rights when all seem to say, "Believe anything you want, tolerate everything possible, except for something based on the word of God

and personal and heartfelt beliefs.” The court cases have proven that that is not the case. We must question how such cases get to court. There is a real fear within Christian circles at this time.

I have heard more than one Christian preacher warn his congregation that a time is coming when all will be persecuted for their faith, and many people believe that will happen in the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland. I want a message sent today, very clearly and specifically, that that will not happen in this country while we are still a democracy—that we will allow people to hold on to their belief and live by it as long as there is no harm to others around them. This nation was founded on biblical principles from the time of Alfred the Great, and it is time that we reminded people that, whether we personally believe or not, Christians will not be persecuted for living their faith, in the same way as we do not allow the persecution of other religions. ...

To read the full transcript see

<https://hansard.parliament.uk/commons/2019-02-13/debates/D3018F3E-4DAB-4D0C-B9D7-CF1B84DBD204/HumanRightsInTheUK>

House of Commons Written Answers

Schools: Antisemitism

Jim Cunningham (Labour) [218172] To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps his Department is taking within schools to tackle antisemitism.

Anne Milton: Any form of intolerance or bullying, including antisemitism is unacceptable. Schools must promote our shared values, which includes mutual respect and tolerance for those with different faiths and beliefs. The department supports schools to implement this requirement through a range of resources, such as those included on the Educate Against Hate website, as well as by working with networks of experts on the ground who provide direct support to schools on this. Every state-funded school, maintained and academy, must also teach religious education to all pupils up to the age of 18.

Schools must comply with the requirements of the Equality Act and must also have a behaviour policy which includes measures to prevent bullying. Recent research commissioned by the department details common strategies that schools have found to be effective for combating bullying.

The department is funding a number of projects to help schools tackle bullying, including hate-related bullying. This includes funding the Anne Frank Trust to develop their ‘Free to Be’ debate programme, which encourages young people to think about the importance of tackling prejudice, discrimination and bullying. We also recently published the ‘Respectful Schools Communities’ toolkit; a self-review and signposting tool to support schools to develop a whole-school approach which promotes respect and discipline.

The department is fully committed to educating pupils about the Holocaust and is the only topic that is compulsory in the national curriculum for history. We fund the Centre for Holocaust at University College London to train trainee and serving teachers to teach this important subject and to set up a network of Beacon schools to share good practice. We also fund the Holocaust Education Trust’s ‘Lessons from Auschwitz’ programme, which enables teachers and sixth form students to visit Auschwitz.

Schools can also address intolerance and bullying as part of non-statutory personal, social, health and economic education. We are also making relationships education compulsory in all primary schools and relationships and sex education compulsory in all secondary schools. We have completed a public consultation on draft guidance which is clear that pupils will be taught about the importance of building

respectful relationships including, for example, understanding the impact of bullying and how stereotypes can be damaging.

Subject to making the regulations, schools will be required to teach these new subjects from September 2020, but they will be encouraged and supported to start teaching them from September 2019 on a voluntary basis.

<https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Commons/2019-02-07/218172/>

The Educate Against Hate website, referred to above, can be read at <https://educateagainsthate.com/>

The toolkit referred to above can be read at <http://educateagainsthate.com/download/37/>

Religion: Education

Graham Jones (Labour) [218805] To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what assessment he has made of the implications for his Department's policies of the recommendations of the September 2018 Commission on Religious Education Religion and Worldviews report entitled The Way Forward.

Nick Gibb: My right hon. Friend, the Secretary of State decided that accepting the Commission's main proposals would be incompatible with his commitment to make no changes to the curriculum, other than those already announced, during the remaining lifetime of this Parliament.

He did however announce improvements to bursaries for initial teacher training and new funding for religious education subject knowledge enhancement courses. His full response to the Commission is set out in a letter of 6 December 2018 which can be found at:

www.religiouseducationcouncil.org.uk/news/government-response-to-the-commission-on-re/.

<https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Commons/2019-02-08/218805/>

The report referred to above can be read at

<https://www.commissiononre.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2018/09/Final-Report-of-the-Commission-on-RE.pdf>

House of Lords Written Answer

Schools: Hate Crime

The Lord Bishop of Newcastle: HL13531

To ask Her Majesty's Government what steps they are taking to tackle hate crime in schools; and what assessment they have made of the recent incident of vandalism at Bahr Academy.

Lord Agnew of Oulton: Hate crime has no place in our society and no child should live in fear of racism or bullying. Schools must promote our shared values, which include mutual respect and tolerance for those with different faiths and beliefs, and they must comply with the requirements of the Equality Act. Schools must also have a behaviour policy which includes measures to prevent bullying.

Recent research commissioned by the Department for Education details common strategies that schools have found to be effective for combating bullying. The department is funding a number of projects to help schools tackle bullying, including hate-related bullying, and recently published the attached 'Respectful Schools Communities' toolkit, a self-review and signposting tool to support schools to develop a whole-school approach which promotes respect and discipline.

The department is also taking forward a number of commitments in the government's attached 'Hate Crime Action Plan' to support the sector to tackle and prevent prejudice and hate-related issues, as well as in the attached 'Integrated Communities Strategy' to support integration and community cohesion.

Vandalism of any kind is unacceptable, and where a school is vandalised, the welfare of pupils and staff is paramount. We are aware of the incident at Bahr Academy. We have liaised with the local authority and stand ready to work with partners and assist the school in any way we can.

[HL13531_Respectful_schools_signposting_tool](#)

[HL13531_Integrated_Communities_Strategy_Government](#)

[HL13531_Hate_crime_action_plan_2018](#)

<https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Lords/2019-02-06/HL13531/>

Employment Appeal Tribunal

Gan Menachem Hendon Ltd v Ms Zelda De Groen

The Employment Appeal Tribunal has held that a Jewish worker at a Chabad nursery in Hendon who was dismissed when it became known that she was cohabiting with her boyfriend, did not suffer direct or indirect discrimination on the ground of religion or belief.

To read the full judgement see

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/5c62a958e5274a3187450a19/Gan_Menachem_Hendon_Ltd_v_Ms_Zelda_De_Groen_UKEAT_0059_18_OO.pdf

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Israel

House of Commons Oral Answer

Topical Questions: Department for International Development

Alistair Carmichael (Liberal Democrat): ... there are few parts of the world that see more vulnerable people than Gaza. Medical Aid for Palestinians reports that since March last year at least 250 Palestinians have been killed as part of Israel's use of force against the Great March of Return protests. Among them were three health workers, killed by Israeli forces while trying to reach, treat and evacuate wounded demonstrators. A further 600 health workers have been injured. What are our Government doing to ensure the safety of health workers in Gaza and to hold the Israeli Government to account for these actions? ...

Penny Mordaunt: The right hon. Gentleman will know that my right hon. Friend the Minister for the Middle East does as he asks on a regular basis. With regard to the humanitarian work that we are doing, he will know that we have stepped up our offer—in particular, looking at providing additional medical support. We will continue to do that.

<https://hansard.parliament.uk/commons/2019-02-13/debates/7E1ACA25-6095-48D5-A82E-B8F620C041FC/TopicalQuestions#contribution-07A87FBB-AE43-4BB3-AF30-2F1CB585C80E>

House of Commons Written Answers

Jerusalem: Palestinians

Richard Burden (Labour) [216925] To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, what representations he has made to his Israeli counterpart on the eviction order issued to the Sabbagh family in East Jerusalem.

Alistair Burt: Our Ambassador to Israel raised our concerns about evictions in Sheikh Jarrah in East Jerusalem with the Israeli authorities on 29 January. On 21 January, our Consul General in Jerusalem and other EU Heads of Mission visited the home of the Sabbagh family. In a follow-up statement, the EU repeated its strong opposition to Israel's settlement policy and related actions, including evictions and demolitions, and made clear how such measures were illegal under international law and continued to undermine the viability of a two-state solution. In her intervention at the UN Security Council's open debate on the Middle East on 22 January, the UK Permanent Representative to the UN encouraged Israel not to enforce the eviction notice.

<https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Commons/2019-02-05/216925/>

The statement referred to above can be read at

https://eeas.europa.eu/delegations/palestine-occupied-palestinian-territory-west-bank-and-gaza-strip/56865/eu-heads-mission-jerusalem-and-ramallah-visit-sabbagh-family-east-jerusalem-sheikh-jarrah_en

The intervention referred to above can be read at

<https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/durable-peace-in-the-middle-east>

Jerusalem and West Bank: Palestinians

Richard Burden (Labour) [216926] To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, what recent assessment he has made of trends in the number and frequency of eviction orders issued to and the forced displacement of Palestinians in (a) East Jerusalem and (b) the West Bank.

Alistair Burt: Whilst we have not made any recent assessment of this issue, the Government supports Bedouin communities and Palestinians in Area C of the West Bank and Palestinian communities in East Jerusalem facing demolition or eviction through our legal aid programme. This helps residents challenge decisions in the Israeli legal system. We have repeatedly made clear to the Israeli authorities our serious concern at the increase in demolitions of Palestinian properties in Area C of the West Bank and in East Jerusalem.

<https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Commons/2019-02-05/216926/>

Israeli Settlements

Richard Burden (Labour) [216927] To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, what recent estimate he has made of the number of Israeli settlers in (a) East Jerusalem and (b) the West Bank.

Alistair Burt: There are an estimated 622,670 settlers in the West Bank. This figure is derived from two sources: According to data provided by Israel's Central Bureau of Statistics, at the end of 2017, 413,400 people were living in the settlements of the West Bank, excluding East Jerusalem. According to data provided by the Jerusalem Institute for Israel Studies, the population of the Israeli neighbourhoods in East Jerusalem numbered 209,270 people at the end of 2016.

<https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Commons/2019-02-05/216927/>

Middle East: Human Rights

Richard Burden (Labour) [217453] To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, what assessment he has made of the challenges facing human rights defenders and rights-focused organisations operating in (a) Israel and (b) the occupied Palestinian territories.

Alistair Burt: The UK remains concerned about the challenges facing human rights defenders and human rights organisations operating in Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territories. We continue to urge the Israeli Government to fully respect the fundamental rights and freedoms of human rights defenders and organisations. We have also raised concerns with the Palestinian Authority about the narrowing of space for civil society to operate in the West Bank.

<https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Commons/2019-02-06/217453/>

House of Lords Written Answers

Israeli Settlements: Palestinians

Lord Hylton (Crossbench) [HL13396] To ask Her Majesty's Government whether they intend to make representations to the government of Israel about (1) the violence between Israeli settlers and Palestinians in the Ramallah-area village of Mughayyir in January, and (2) the death of Hamdi Naasan.

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: The Minister for the Middle East and North Africa issued a tweet on 27 January condemning the violence in the West Bank on 26 January in which Hamdi Nassan was killed. We have urged the Israeli Government to thoroughly investigate this incident and bring those responsible to justice. We have also stressed the importance of the Israel security forces providing appropriate protection to the Palestinian civilian population.

<https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Lords/2019-02-04/HL13396/>

The tweet referred to above can be read at

<https://twitter.com/AlistairBurtUK/status/1089566921710813186>

Hebron

Lord Hylton (Crossbench) [HL13398] To ask Her Majesty's Government who will observe and report on breaches of the agreements between the Palestinian Authority and Israel on Hebron, following Israel's decision to suspend the mandate of the Temporary International Presence in Hebron; and what assessment they have made of this decision.

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: We are concerned by Israel's decision not to extend the mandate for Hebron's international monitoring mission. The mission has been in Hebron for over 20 years and fulfilled an important role in reducing tensions in the city between Israeli settlers and Palestinian communities. Our Ambassador to Israel raised our concerns over this decision with the Israeli authorities on 29 January. The Minister for the Middle East discussed our concerns with the Israeli Ambassador to the UK on 31 January and also expressed these concerns in a Tweet on the 2 February.

<https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Lords/2019-02-04/HL13398/>

The tweet referred to above can be read at

<https://twitter.com/AlistairBurtUK/status/1091681894721376256>

Jerusalem: Palestinians

Lord Hylton (Crossbench) [HL13399] To ask Her Majesty's Government what representations, if any, they are making to the government of Israel about the extension of the closure of Orient House in East Jerusalem.

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: While we have not raised this specific issue with the Government of Israel, we regularly make clear our serious concerns about the situation in East Jerusalem to the Israeli authorities.

<https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Lords/2019-02-04/HL13399/>

Gaza: Chevening Scholarships Programme

Baroness Tonge (Non-affiliated) [HL13479] To ask Her Majesty's Government, further to the Written Answer by Lord Bates on 28 January (HL12814), how many students have left Gaza on Chevening Scholarships in the last five years.

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: The following information reflects the number of scholars who attended their Chevening interview in Gaza and whose pre-award address lists Gaza. The total number of scholars from Gaza who, in the past five years, completed a Chevening award is 23.

Breakdown by year:

2014- 3

2015- 3

2016- 4

2017- 6

2018- 7

<https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Lords/2019-02-05/HL13479/>

The answer referred to above can be read at

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

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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 tomorrow**

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/>

Racial harassment in higher education (closing date 28 February 2019)

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

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