

Political Affairs Digest

A daily summary of political events affecting the Jewish Community

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House of Commons Oral Answers

Right-wing Extremism

Alex Sobel (Labour Co-op): What discussions he has had with Cabinet colleagues on the increase in right-wing extremism. [910127]

The Secretary of State for the Home Department (Sajid Javid): As Home Secretary, I have been clear that far-right extremism has no place in Britain. The Government take this issue very seriously, and it is routinely discussed by Ministers. Earlier this month, the inter-ministerial group on safe and integrated communities, which I chair along with the Communities Secretary, discussed the threat we faced from extremism, including the far right.

Alex Sobel (Labour Co-op): On Friday, outside many of our offices, on a specially erected stage, Stephen Yaxley-Lennon addressed crowds, while many parliamentary staff were trying to get home. Staff were told to leave but at times that put them directly into that crowd. At the rally, there were Generation Identity activists and organisations that had received money from the Christchurch killer and a convicted leader of the Ulster Defence Association, and the media were physically attacked. Will the Home Secretary urgently investigate with the Met police how a convicted far-right leader and such groups were allowed to whip up hate right outside Parliament?

Sajid Javid: Sadly, as the hon. Gentleman points to, there have been many instances of abuse and intimidation of Members, especially in recent weeks. All Members should be able to go about their business with complete confidence— [Hon. Members: “Staff.”] Of course, all staff as well—everyone who works in the cradle of our democracy. It is important that the police, both the Met police and local police forces, and the House authorities work together, which they are doing. I had a meeting just last week with police, officials and others to see what more we could do.

Michael Fabricant (Conservative): Extremism in all its forms is often whipped up by social media. To what extent can the Home Office engage with social media to try to counter that?

Sajid Javid: We are already engaging with social media companies, especially the US giants that dominate the sector. I have met their representatives both here and

abroad to discuss, in particular, terrorists and terrorism-related extremist content. However, the Government recognise that more needs to be done, which is why we will shortly publish the online harms White Paper.

Diane Abbott (Labour): The Home Secretary will be aware of recent reports that right-wing extremists are gaining access to ISIS-related terrorist training materials. The House should be aware that just as there is a terrorist threat from supporters of grotesque organisations such as ISIS and al-Qaeda, there is also a growing threat from the far right, which includes the threat of acts of terrorism. It has been reported that senior Home Office officials, Scotland Yard and the security agencies have met senior representatives of both the Muslim and Jewish communities. Will the Home Secretary confirm that those meetings have taken place, and will he tell us what reassurances he was able to provide?

As my hon. Friends have said, there is grave concern in the Muslim community in the light of the Christchurch massacre and the subsequent attacks on mosques in Birmingham. Can the Home Secretary assure us that funds will be available for the security of mosques and other Muslim places of worship, in the same way as they are available through the Community Security Trust for the security of synagogues? Is he aware that there are many Muslim community centres like my own North London Muslim Community Centre, which is next door to the mosque and forms part of the same complex of buildings? The people there feel very threatened. Is the Home Secretary prepared to consider helping them with funds for their necessary security?

Sajid Javid: I share the concerns that the right hon. Lady has expressed. Everyone in the House will understand why there are heightened concerns in our British Muslim communities, and why we need to do more. Soon after the Christchurch massacre, I sent “Dear colleague” messages to all Members about the immediate action that we are taking in increasing the funding for places of worship.

The right hon. Lady rightly raised the issue of Muslim community centres. I want to work with Muslim community leaders and others and to listen to what they say about what needs to be done. I think that all Members are united in their wish to ensure that our Muslim community in Britain, whom we cherish, feel hugely valued and receive the protection that they deserve. No one should feel intimidated in any way whatsoever.

<https://hansard.parliament.uk/commons/2019-04-01/debates/FF17565D-F1BE-4665-974D-A22A81FE48A8/Right-WingExtremism>

House of Lords Written Answer

Voluntary Schools

Baroness Whitaker (Labour) [HL14759] To ask Her Majesty's Government what steps they will be taking to ensure that local authorities adhere to the duty to conduct a comprehensive equality impact assessment when deciding whether or not to approve applications to open new voluntary-aided faith schools which are legally permitted to select all of their pupils on religious grounds.

Lord Agnew of Oulton: Alongside the launch of the capital scheme for new voluntary-aided schools, the department published updated statutory guidance for proposers and decision makers on opening and closing maintained schools. This guidance is attached. The guidance sets out the requirements for the decision maker to adhere to the Public Sector Equality Duty. They are also required to consider the impact of any proposals on the relevant protected characteristics and any issues that may arise from the proposals.

[Opening_and_closing_maintained_schools_guidance](#)

<https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Lords/2019-03-21/HL14759/>

Welsh Government Fol Release

The former Synagogue building in Merthyr Tydfil

<https://gov.wales/sites/default/files/publications/2019-04/ATISN13025.pdf>

and

<https://gov.wales/sites/default/files/publications/2019-04/ATISN13025doc1.pdf>

and

<https://gov.wales/sites/default/files/publications/2019-04/ATISN13025doc2.pdf>

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House of Commons Written Answers

Israel: Palestinians

Andrew Percy (Conservative) [236490] To ask the Secretary of State for International Development, what assessment she has made of the implications for the Middle East Peace Process of Chief Palestinian Negotiator Saeb Erekat's reported assertion that Palestinians who have murdered Israelis are paid higher salaries.

Harriett Baldwin: No UK aid is used for payments to Palestinian prisoners or their families. The UK government continues to press the Palestinian Authority (PA) to reform the prisoner payments system to become more needs-based, transparent and affordable. DFID officials most recently raised this at a 21 March 2019 meeting with PA Minister for Finance and Planning Shukri Bishari. The UK Government deplores any act of violence or incitement to violence, and our partnership with the PA includes a commitment from the Palestinian leadership to adhere to the principle of non-violence and to tackle language and avoid actions that could incite violence or hatred. We continue to urge the PA to uphold this principle. UK aid to support a stable PA which can act as an effective partner for peace with Israel is essential to UK efforts to prepare the ground for a two-state solution.

<https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Commons/2019-03-25/236490/>

Israel: Golan Heights

Nicholas Soames (Conservative) [236977] To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, what representations he has made to the Government of (a) the United States and (b) Israel on sovereignty of the Golan Heights.

Mark Field: On 26 March officials from our Embassy in Washington raised our concerns with US counterparts about the US Presidential Proclamation recognising that the Golan Heights are part of the State of Israel. We are clear that the UK views the Golan Heights as territory occupied by Israel. Annexation of territory by force is prohibited under international law, including the UN Charter. The decision by the US to recognise Israeli sovereignty over the Golan Heights is in contravention of UN Security Council Resolution 497. The UK did not recognise Israel's annexation in 1981 and we have no plans to change our position. On 26 March we joined Belgium, France, Germany and Poland at the UN Security Council in reiterating this position.

<https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Commons/2019-03-26/236977/>

A summary of the UN Security Council meeting referred to above can be read at <https://www.un.org/press/en/2019/sc13745.doc.htm>

House of Lords Written Answer

Israel: Palestinians

Baroness Tonge (Non-affiliated) [HL14634] To ask Her Majesty's Government what representations they will make to the government of Israel about the arrest of two Palestinian children who were taken to an illegal Israeli settlement during a raid by Israeli forces on al-Bireh City.

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: We continue to make representations to the Israeli authorities on this issue and we remain committed to working with Israel to secure improvements to the practices surrounding Palestinian children in detention in Israel.

<https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Lords/2019-03-18/HL14634/>

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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>

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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