



Political Affairs Digest

A daily summary of political events affecting the Jewish Community

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Westminster Hall Debate

Non-stun Slaughter of Animals

col 430WH **Laurence Robertson (Conservative):** ... Like many other people I am a consumer of meat and an animal lover, and I do not believe those two positions are mutually exclusive. A discussion of the non-stun slaughter of animals must be based not on strength of feeling, but on evidence. Having considered some of the evidence, I feel that there is a strong case to be made for the banning of non-stun slaughter. The BVA believes “that slaughter without pre-stunning unnecessarily compromises animal welfare and that animals should be stunned before slaughter.” ...

Jim Shannon (DUP): Like the hon. Gentleman, I eat red meat regularly and I am also an animal lover. However, I do believe we can accommodate people. If we had the labelling to indicate whether stunning was used, people would have the opportunity to choose whether to buy that meat.

Laurence Robertson: ... Pre-stunning renders animals immediately unconscious and insensible to pain before they are slaughtered. In the absence of stunning, animals can feel the pain of the neck cut, experience a delay to loss of consciousness and experience the pain and distress of aspirating blood into the respiratory tract. While there is no nice way to end an animal’s life, many would agree that that is a particularly distressing account of the last moments of an animal’s life.

John Howell (Conservative): ... unfortunately, it does not always work. Something like 26,000 cattle, 100,000 pigs and 9.5 million chickens are mis-stunned each year. ...

col 431WH **Laurence Robertson:** ... I do not pretend for one moment that the practice is absolutely perfect. It does need to be improved, but the objective should be to go down that road, rather than have animals slaughtered without stunning. ...

Yasmin Qureshi (Labour): Is the hon. Gentleman aware that on many occasions stunning involves sending a very strong electric shock to the animal, which can suffer for about 20 or 25 minutes while it is being made unconscious, causing excruciating pain?

Laurence Robertson: That should not be the case, but if it is, that practice needs outlawing as well. ...

Mike Gapes (Independent): ... Does the hon. Gentleman agree that the traditional

methods of slaughter, which are used in the Muslim and Jewish religions, are in fact more humane than some of the modern practices, which either do not work properly or do not give due consideration to the welfare of the animal?

Laurence Robertson: ... Perhaps the hon. Gentleman has seen appendix one to the briefing from the BVA, which gives quite a bit of distressing evidence about the non-stun slaughter of animals. ...

col 432WH I do accept and understand that this is an emotive and sensitive issue, because it can overlap with religious belief. However, this debate is not about preventing people from practicing their faith. I do not want to incorrectly conflate non-stun slaughter with religious slaughter.

There are some misconceptions. For example, many people think that halal meat is all non-stunned. It is difficult to get exact figures, but I am advised that less than half of halal meat falls under that practice. However, shechita, the Jewish religious method of slaughter is solely non-stun. I am not concerned about expressions of religious belief, though I do think that our beliefs sometimes have to be tempered by the fact that we should not cause another living thing harm when that can be mitigated.

Giles Watling (Conservative): Are we not aiming for a civilised society in which we honour the meat that feeds us by giving it a good a life and as painless an end as possible? ...

Laurence Robertson: ... This topic is just one element of a wider debate we should be having on animal welfare at slaughter, including ensuring that the existing animal welfare standards that we have in place are met. ...

I therefore suggest that the Government look at banning non-stun slaughter, if they feel that the evidence points that way and that it would be appropriate. That is a position based on scientific evidence and supported by the BVA, the Federation of Veterinarians of Europe, the Farm Animal Welfare Committee and the Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals.

Naz Shah (Labour): I am not suggesting that the hon. Gentleman is saying this, but does he agree that the truth is that the debate about banning slaughter has an impact on, and is correlated with, the rise in Islamophobia and antisemitism? It is used as a tool by Tommy Robinson et al. and by newspapers to propagate headlines such as “Halal secret of Pizza Express” and “Brit kids forced to eat Halal school dinners”. ...

col 433WH **Laurence Robertson:** ... If anybody takes up the issue on that basis, they are completely wrong and ignorant of the debate ...

Slaughter without pre-stunning has been banned in Iceland, Norway, Sweden, Switzerland and Denmark. Other countries such as Austria, Estonia, Finland and Slovakia require post-cut stunning immediately after the incision if the animal has not already been stunned. ...

Naz Shah: Does the hon. Gentleman agree that while we are having the debate, we must ensure—I cannot speak for the other countries that he named—the religious freedom that our democracy is so proud of? In this instance, we are talking about two religious communities, the Jewish community and the Muslim community, which are directly affected by the debate and what he is proposing. ...

Laurence Robertson: I made it clear at the beginning that the debate is about animal welfare, and I certainly do not want to suggest what is right and wrong with regard to religion ...

while some slaughter practices do not allow pre-stunning, in accordance with religious rites, some halal authorities consider that pre-stunning is permissible, provided that the stun does not kill the animal and that the animal could have theoretically regained consciousness. That is an important point, because many consumers of meat may not buy it if it is signified as halal because they believe it is from an animal that was not stunned. That represents an unnecessary loss to the market. ...

col 434WH In the absence of a ban, we could move forward in other ways. The first way forward is to look at over-production. If non-stun slaughter is to continue, I ask that we

ensure that supply only meets demand and does not exceed it. ...

A second way forward is to ensure that the supply of non-stunned meat is for domestic demand. I ask the Government to examine export patterns and consider whether the export of non-stunned meat from the UK reflects the intentions of the derogation from EU law. ...

A third way forward relates to the important issue of labelling ... It is essential for a number of reasons, including the misconceptions that people may have about certain products such as halal, and on the basis that consumers have a right to know where their meat comes from, how it was reared and how it was slaughtered. ...

There is a divergence of opinion on the issue, so I ask the Minister to consider holding a number of roundtable meetings with stakeholders, such as religious groups, farmers, vets and anybody else who has something useful to contribute ... No matter what people's backgrounds, religions, or anything else, they do not want to see the unnecessary suffering of animals. ...

col 435WH Imran Hussain (Labour): ... Will the Minister confirm that, regardless of the outcome of the ongoing Brexit negotiations, the rights of the Jewish and Muslim faiths to have meat prepared in accordance with their beliefs will always be protected?

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (David Rutley): ... Yes, I can confirm that, but it is important that we have a discussion about these issues and I will come on to say how we can do that. However, since the 1930s we have had a tradition of respecting the religious rights of both the Jewish community and the Muslim community, and we will honour that tradition. ...

... the fact is that we have some of the highest standards of animal welfare in the world, and as we leave the EU we will improve them further. ...

col 436WH Let me come back to the point about religious slaughter. On non-stun slaughter in particular, I restate that it is the Government's preference that all animals are stunned before slaughter. However, as I said in answer to the hon. Member for Bradford East (Imran Hussain)—this relates to the comments made by the hon. Member for Bradford West (Naz Shah)—the Government respect the rights of Jews and Muslims to eat meat prepared in accordance with their beliefs. Therefore, we allow religious slaughter of animals by Muslims and Jews intended for consumption by Muslim and Jewish communities, in keeping with their traditions.

The Government believe that this is an important religious freedom. There is a long history of upholding it in legislation, dating back to the Slaughter of Animals Act 1933. We remember from our history books what was going on at that time in the '30s. Important decisions were made in relation to that Act, which contained an exception from stunning for religious slaughter for Jews and Muslims. Since then, the rules governing religious slaughter have developed to provide additional protections to animals that are slaughtered in accordance with religious rites, while still permitting non-stun slaughter for Jews and Muslims.

When we discuss religious slaughter, it is worth bearing in mind that often in the case of halal meat the relevant Muslim authorities are content that the animal is stunned. Although we produce a significant amount of halal sheepmeat in this country, two thirds of it is from sheep that are stunned before slaughter.

Today there are both EU and domestic regulations that protect the welfare of animals at the time of killing. Within that legislation, there are additional rules for those animals slaughtered in accordance with religious rites, specifically for the production of halal or kosher meat. ...

The Welfare of Animals at the Time of Killing (England) Regulations 2015—WATOK—imposed stricter national rules for religious slaughter and provided greater protections than those contained in the EU regulation, which sets baseline Europe-wide standards. For instance, we prohibit the inversion of cattle for religious slaughter, which some member

states, such as France, still allow. This ban followed the 1985 report of the Farm Animal Welfare Council, which recommended that inversion be banned.

col 437WH The hon. Member for Bolton South East (Yasmin Qureshi) raised concerns about mis-stunning. The official veterinarians of the Food Standards Agency will take enforcement action against mis-stunning. ...

Yasmin Qureshi: I thank the Minister for mentioning mis-stunning. Will he ensure that if there is going to be labelling, we are told on the label exactly the methodology adopted in the stunning?

David Rutley: That is an important point. ...

The hon. Member for Morley and Outwood (Andrea Jenkyns) talked about animals being imported into the UK and asked whether they should be slaughtered to UK standards. Yes, they should; it is a legal requirement. ...

col 438WH We know that concerns have been voiced about meat from animal slaughter without stunning being sold to consumers who do not require their meat to be prepared in that way. The Government are clear that we want people to have the information they need to make informed choices about the food that they buy. The Government believe that consumers should have the necessary information available to them to make an informed choice about their food, and the issue of revised labelling is something that the Government are considering in the context of the UK's exit from the EU ...

It is important to note that there are other groups that want to know not only whether the meat is from a stunned or non-stunned animal, but what method of slaughter has been used. That will need to be considered in the wider review of labelling. ...

... it is important to recognise that the labelling of meat is something that we want to take a closer look at. I set out earlier that that will be part of a much wider review of labelling, which will include consideration of welfare standards, sustainability and, of course, safety for consumers. I also highlight that we want to go on respecting the rights of Jews and Muslims to eat meat that is prepared in accordance with their beliefs. However, in seeking to address the welfare standards and issues that have been discussed today, we will continue to explore ways to further improve the welfare standards for all animals, including when they are slaughtered. ...

Our next step ... will be further discussion with a range of interested parties across the debate at a forthcoming roundtable meeting to talk through many of the issues that have been raised today. I think that that is the way we need to do things: talk about the issues and see what we can do to improve welfare, but at the same time respect religious rights. Labelling will be key, but we will continue to encourage an active dialogue with all interested parties as part of our wider objective to enhance our already world-leading animal welfare standards. ...

To read the full transcript see

<https://hansard.parliament.uk/commons/2019-04-03/debates/A6B3FD52-7243-4573-9580-48CD6C9A110A/Non-StunSlaughterOfAnimals>

House of Commons Oral Answer

Prime Minister's Questions

Q3. Afzal Khan (Labour): This afternoon there will be a reception in Parliament to honour the 51 Muslims killed in Christchurch. In the wake of that horrific terror attack, mosques were targeted in Birmingham and Newcastle. There is a global rise in Islamophobia, including in the ranks of the Tory party. In an article for *The Times* this week, their party chairman could not even utter the word "Islamophobia". How can they deal with a problem they cannot even name? I ask the Prime Minister, for the third time, when will the Conservative party conduct an inquiry and adopt the all-party parliamentary group on

British Muslims definition of Islamophobia? [910197]

The Prime Minister: As I believe I have said to the hon. Gentleman before, when any allegations of Islamophobia are made, against elected Conservatives or members of the Conservative party, we take them very seriously and action is taken in relation to those individuals. He referred to the attacks on mosques. I absolutely condemn any attacks against mosques, or indeed against any place of worship. I am pleased to say that my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary has increased the funding available to help protect places of worship against attacks. This has no place in our society and we should all be working to ensure that people can go to their place of worship and feel safe and secure in this country.

<https://hansard.parliament.uk/commons/2019-04-03/debates/1CB635BC-0163-4565-AC03-A0F62066442A/Engagements#contribution-D7425400-B3F5-4D8B-B1D3-5B92880DE22A>

House of Commons Written Answer

Religious Buildings: Security

Stephen Doughty (Labour Co-op) [235771] To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what assessment he has made of the adequacy of advice his Department provides on safety protocols to maintain public safety and security at places of worship.

Ben Wallace: The police routinely monitor the threats faced by all communities and ensure that there are appropriate protective security measures in place to keep people safe.

In addition, as places of worship are recognised as crowded places there is a range of protective security advice and guidance, which is regularly reviewed and revised, from the National Counter Terrorism Security Office (NaCTSO), a unit within Counter Terrorism Policing. This is developed and assured through engagement with policing experts, academia and the Centre for the Protection National Infrastructure (CPNI). It is internationally recognised and many organisations in the UK and overseas reference or replicate the advice for the protection of their crowded places.

There is a range of awareness raising and communications activities undertaken by Counter Terrorism Policing, such as 'Run, Hide, Tell' which has been created to outline the key steps for keeping safe in the event of a firearms or weapons attack. We have also recently announced an increase in funding for the Places of Worship Protective Security Fund to £1.6 million for 2019-20. This is double the amount awarded last year. In addition, we have committed £5 million over three years for the provision of security training to places of worship. We will be consulting with communities and faith groups to develop and deliver this new scheme as well as review what more should be done.

<https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Commons/2019-03-22/235771/>

The Guidance referred to above can be read at

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/701910/170614_crowded-places-guidance_v1a.pdf

The announcement referred to above can be read at

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/places-of-worship-to-get-security-funding-boost>

House of Lords Written Answer

Hate Crime

The Lord Bishop of St Albans [HL14708] To ask Her Majesty's Government how many people have been arrested as a result of a speech they have made in each year since 2010; in each case, what were those individuals' (1) religious, and (2) political affiliations; and how many such arrests resulted in a successful prosecution.

Baroness Williams of Trafford: The Home Office does not hold centrally the information requested.

The Home Office collects and publishes data on the number of arrests for notifiable offences on a financial year basis, however, specific details about the offence are not collected so it is not possible to separately identify those made as a result of a speech.

Data on the number of arrests, by offence group, are published in the 'Police Powers and Procedures, England and Wales' statistical bulletin, which can be accessed here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/police-powers-and-procedures-england-and-wales>

The Home Office does not hold information on the political affiliation or religious beliefs of those arrested.

Information on prosecutions and convictions is the responsibility of the Ministry of Justice.

[Police Powers and Procedures Eng & Wales](https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Lords/2019-03-20/HL14708/)

<https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Lords/2019-03-20/HL14708/>

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Israel

House of Lords Written Answers

Israel: Palestinians

The Marquess of Lothian (Conservative) [HL14699] To ask Her Majesty's Government whether the purpose of President Trump's senior advisor Jared Kushner's visit to Bahrain, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Turkey, and the United Arab Emirates on 25 to 28 February was discussed with them in advance; and whether they have received any subsequent debriefs on the visit.

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: The Foreign Secretary spoke to Jared Kushner on 13 March when they discussed his recent visit to the region. We are aware that the purpose of the trip was to discuss the US' peace plan. We have encouraged our American counterparts to bring forward detailed proposals for a viable Israel-Palestinian peace agreement that addresses the legitimate concerns of both parties. We continue to believe the best way to achieve this is through substantive peace talks between the parties leading to a two-state solution with Jerusalem as a shared capital.

<https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Lords/2019-03-20/HL14699/>

Israel: Palestinians

Baroness Tonge (Non-affiliated) [HL14802] To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the number of Palestinian children who are, or have been,

detained by Israeli forces in circumstances that break human rights and international laws; whether they intend to take action in response to that assessment; if so, what; and if not, why not.

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: We continue to have strong concerns about reports of ill-treatment of Palestinian minors in Israeli military detention. We remain committed to working with Israel to secure improvements to the practices surrounding the treatment of Palestinians in Israeli detention, with a particular focus on minors. British ministers and officials continue to make repeated representations to the Israeli Government about detention practices. We advocate for the mandatory use of audio-visual recording of interrogations, a reduction in the use of single hand ties, alternatives to night arrests and for the Israeli authorities to inform more consistently detained children of their legal rights. We also continue to fund projects providing legal aid to minors and capacity building to local lawyers.

<https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Lords/2019-03-25/HL14802/>

Palestinians: Wells

Baroness Tonge (Non-affiliated) [HL14804] To ask Her Majesty's Government what representations they will make to the government of Israel about the demolition by Israeli forces of a water well in Umm Al-Nir.

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: While we have not made any representations on this specific matter, the UK has raised concerns over access to water in the Occupied Palestinian Territories with the Israeli authorities, including stressing the urgent need for Israel to take immediate and practical measures to improve the current situation and ensure fair distribution of water in the West Bank and Gaza. 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. We call on them to cease the policy of demolitions and provide a clear, transparent route to construction for Palestinians in Area C.

<https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Lords/2019-03-25/HL14804/>

Palestinians: Water Supply

Baroness Tonge (Non-affiliated) [HL14806] To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the statement by the UN Special Rapporteur for the situation of human rights in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, made on 18 March, that Israel is depriving Palestinians access to a regular supply of clean water.

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: The fair and effective distribution of shared water resources across the Middle East is of great concern and we remain concerned about the quality and quantity of water available to residents of Gaza and the West Bank. We have made clear to Israel our ongoing concerns about its conduct of the occupation, including its impact on the distribution of natural resources. These resources are limited and therefore require the effective co-operation from all parties to manage them in such a manner that ensures there will be enough for all.

<https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Lords/2019-03-25/HL14806/>

The statement referred to above can be read at

<https://www.un.org/unispal/document/israels-exploitation-of-palestinian-resources-is-human-rights-violation-says-un-special-rapporteur-for-the-situation-of-human-rights-in-the-opt-press-release/>

Palestinians: Schools

Baroness Tonge (Non-affiliated) [HL14805] To ask Her Majesty's Government, following reports of the demolition of a school annex in Shufat Refugee Camp, what steps they will take to uphold the rights of Palestinian children to education.

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: The right to education is a basic right, and every Israeli and Palestinian has the right to live in peace and security. That is why the UK continues to support education through our funding to the Palestinian Authority and the UN Relief and Works Agency for Palestinian refugees. Last year, UK support contributed towards the salaries of approximately 33,000 public servants under the Ministry of Education and Higher Education, including teachers, helping 25,000 young Palestinians to receive an education. We have repeatedly made clear to the Israeli authorities our serious concern at the increase in demolitions of Palestinian properties and we call on them to cease the policy of demolitions.

<https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Lords/2019-03-25/HL14805/>

Jerusalem: Religious Buildings

Baroness Tonge (Non-affiliated) [HL14839] To ask Her Majesty's Government what representations they intend to make to the government of Israel about reports that Israeli police refused to remove their shoes when walking on prayer mats and brought alcohol onto Temple Mount.

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: While we have not raised the specific case in question, the UK is committed to working with all parties to maintain calm, avoid provocation and uphold the status quo to ensure the safety and the security of the Al Haram Al Sharif/Temple Mount and all who worship there.

<https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Lords/2019-03-26/HL14839/>

United Nations

UN chief pays tribute to Egypt's role in avoiding 'dramatic' escalation in conflict across the Gaza-Israel border

... As well as avoiding escalation in the Gaza Strip, Mr. Guterres said that Egypt's commitment has created the conditions for more effective humanitarian aid to the region, and is playing an 'integral part' in forging unity between the two main Palestinian factions – the extremist group Hamas, which controls Gaza, and Fatah, which runs the Palestinian National Authority, in the occupied West Bank. ...

The UN chief – who arrived in the region at the weekend, addressing the Arab League in Tunis - said that everything must be done to guarantee that there will be two States side-by-side, Palestine and Israel, living together in peace and security, adding that Egypt and the UN see "eye to eye" on this issue, and that the UN will continue working with Egypt to achieve that objective. ...

To read the full press release see

<https://news.un.org/en/story/2019/04/1036021>

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