

# Political Affairs Digest

A daily summary of political events affecting the Jewish Community

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## Home Affairs

### House of Commons Ministerial Statement and Q&A

#### Discrimination in Football

**The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport (Mims Davies):** ... The Government are concerned about the recent rise in racist abuse in football which threatens to overshadow everything we love about our national sport. Last weekend, the English Football League said that it was “saddened, disappointed and angered” after a weekend of fixtures was blighted by four separate incidents of alleged racism against players. At the same time, in the Premier League, Crystal Palace’s Wilfried Zaha re-posted an online tweet calling him “a diving monkey”. This all happened on the very same weekend that the Premier League’s new “No Room for Racism” campaign was visible at grounds up and down the country.

Late last year, the unthinkable occurred—a banana skin was thrown on the pitch in the direction of a player during the north London derby. At the same time, we saw the abuse that Manchester City forward Raheem Sterling suffered at Stamford Bridge. We all witnessed the appalling scenes of racism directed at several of our England players in Montenegro. Homophobic and anti-semitic chanting, both here and abroad, has been prevalent in recent times. English football is revered across the globe for its excitement and passion. No other sport or country opens its doors and embraces so many different nationalities. We simply cannot have millions of people, particularly our young people, tuning into or witnessing at first hand the type of vile abuse that has been apparent of late—abuse directed at our players and our managers by opposing fans.

Wilfried Zaha, Raheem Sterling, and Danny Rose deserve our respect for speaking out about the abuse that is happening now, but ultimately they deserve our support. They need clear demonstrations that zero tolerance of this behaviour means just that. Be it player, manager or supporter—whether playing or attending—nobody who goes to games should have to tolerate discrimination of any kind. We welcomed the Football Association’s call for UEFA to take strong and swift action following events in Montenegro. However, if this country is going to show the rest of the world that this behaviour is intolerable, we need to ensure that we are making every effort to combat discriminatory behaviour domestically. ... The Government are determined to help in tackling this problem. On 25 February, I brought many of the various administrators, campaign bodies, fan group representatives, players,

managers and organisations together for a summit to discuss this issue and collectively decide on what steps they must take to help to eradicate it. At that summit, it was agreed that a number of areas needed to be examined further.

There were six initial areas: first, to review whether football's current sanctioning regime goes far enough and, if not, what more is needed to act as a deterrent to this type of behaviour; secondly, to ensure that the partnership between football authorities and the police is close enough to improve the identification and sanctioning of offenders at matches; thirdly, to ask whether we give enough support to stewards and whether we can improve their capacity to deal with discrimination consistently throughout the leagues; fourthly, whether football can improve the information flow of incident reporting on the pitch, and support players; fifthly, how we can double down on efforts to ensure that match officials, stewarding operations and coaching and academy staff are all fully able to engage in their responsibilities to maintain an open and inclusive sporting environment; and finally, initiatives to help to increase the numbers of people from black and minority ethnic backgrounds into football professions beyond playing, with transparency and opportunities in the recruitment process absolutely central to this.

The Government will work with those key groups to deliver clear, tangible actions in the areas I have just described. My intention is to announce these in partnership with football before the end of the summer. If we are able to deliver them before, even better. I want to see change ready for the next season. ...

*col 500* **Tom Watson (Labour):** ... We were all shocked by the blatant racism during the game against Montenegro last month. Hearing Danny Rose say after that match that he cannot wait to see the back of football because of racism is deeply depressing, but sadly not surprising. When young players face abuse time and again, who can blame them for wanting to walk away? ...

We should also be aware that the problem is not only on the pitch and in the stands but online and in the media. ... Given that so much of the racist abuse directed at players is online, will the Minister explicitly include hate crimes aimed at sporting figures in the online harms consultation? ...

It is not just racism. Other types of bigotry, such as homophobia and sectarianism, plague the game. The Scottish Parliament has united in committing £14 million since 2012 to tackle sectarianism on the terraces. Can the Minister match that for English football? ...

**Mims Davis:** ... We need to support the bravery of players to do their jobs and to speak out in this day and age, but they should not feel they have to do that. It is right that players should take action and we are working with the police to make sure that we support them. ...

*col 501* **Gavin Newlands (SNP):** ... The recent high-profile instances of racism in the game fly in the face of the fantastic work done over the years by groups such as Show Racism the Red Card and Kick It Out. Sadly, however, although football in England at any rate is swimming in money, a relatively small amount is spent by the game on such initiatives. I very much welcome the Minister's tone and the actions she has set out. I think we can all agree that it is time for footballing authorities and top-level clubs to take the issue more seriously and invest in resources appropriately, and not just invest but make proper policy and disciplinary decisions. ...

***To read the lengthy question and answer session in full see***

<https://hansard.parliament.uk/commons/2019-04-11/debates/53CBC73F-CFE0-49A3-8E73-21AE5A9CD7E2/DiscriminationInFootball>

## House of Lords Ministerial Statement and Q&A

### Discrimination in Football

**Lord Ashton of Hyde read the statement made in the House of Commons by Mims Davies (see above).**

**col 587 Lord Griffiths of Burry Port (Labour):** ... We hear that some football club fans are using closed Facebook groups to promote racist ideology. With the publication of the *Online Harms* White Paper this week, will the use of this type of technology be looked at as it applies to football? ...

A culture in the support of our national game permits and encourages these subversive activities. ... How do we change a culture and allow a diverse population to feel that it has ownership of this game, rather than it being in the hands of multimillionaires from other places? Seriously, how do we stop black players on the pitch being used, in a sense, as icons, heroes or puppets for people's own prejudices? ...

**Lord Addington (Liberal Democrat):** ... We are not talking about a new thing; we are talking about something that many of us hoped was at least in terminal decline. In fact, we are hearing an unpleasant echo of the culture of abuse in football that was a regular part of the cheering of the crowds when I was growing up. I remember being in Scotland when the first black player played in the Old Firm game and Glasgow market sold out of bananas. There is nothing new here—which is probably one of the most worrying things. ...

**col 589 Lord Ashton of Hyde:** ... BAME players make up 30% of the playing population, and yet coaches represent 7.6% of the population. We want also to look at new ideas about data collection; at more challenging targets being set; and at having more transparency in recruitment practices and other incentives, to encourage under-represented groups into careers—not just as players but in running the game as well.

Another issue that will be considered is that there is an even smaller BAME proportion among journalists, who are one of the ways in which culture is spread. People who are interested in the game learn about it and consider it through journalism. ...

**Baroness Bull (Crossbench):** ... Does the Minister agree that there is indeed an issue of institutional racism to be addressed? If so, what steps are being taken on that? ...

**Lord Ashton of Hyde:** I agree with the noble Baroness that institutional bias is often present. It is easy to tackle the overt and obvious instance of racism, but institutional bias is more complicated and insidious. ...

**To read the lengthy question and answer session in full see**

<https://hansard.parliament.uk/lords/2019-04-11/debates/236555C6-619C-444D-A9B0-757058F6C738/DiscriminationInFootball>

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## Israel

### House of Lords

**Letter from Baroness Goldie to Baroness Northover regarding a question on Occupied Palestinian Territories: Government response to the conclusions of the UN Commission of Inquiry into Palestinian deaths in Gaza.**

[http://data.parliament.uk/DepositedPapers/Files/DEP2019-0477/letter\\_Baroness\\_Goldie\\_to\\_Baroness\\_Northover\\_deaths\\_189\\_Palestinians.pdf](http://data.parliament.uk/DepositedPapers/Files/DEP2019-0477/letter_Baroness_Goldie_to_Baroness_Northover_deaths_189_Palestinians.pdf)

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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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## Consultations \*\* new or updated today

#### **Online Harms White Paper** (closing date 1 July 2019)

<https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/online-harms-white-paper>

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