

Political Affairs Digest

A daily summary of political events affecting the Jewish Community

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Westminster Hall Debate

Jain Community: Contribution to the UK

col 155WH Gareth Thomas (Labour Co-op): ... Jainism is a major and ancient religion of Indian origin that is recognised in the UK and globally, including by the United Nations, yet the cultural, economic, social and religious contribution that Jains make to our country has received little or no attention from public policy makers. ...

There is ... confusion about the true number of Jains in the UK, but the UK is certainly a significant centre for Jainism, and studies indicate that it has almost 65,000 Jains—a figure far in excess of the 20,000 identified in the 2011 census ...

col 157WH ... the UK's collection of Jain works of scholarship, arts and literature is the most important outside India. ...

col 158WH The Jain community has made huge contributions to charity in recent years by donating to a variety of causes in the UK and across the world, including tackling poverty, environmental issues, animal welfare and disaster relief. ...

As I have said, the 2011 census did not get close to recording accurately the number of Jains. They had to self-identify on the census and will have to do so again on the printed return for 2021, unless the Government change course. Some 20% are expected to fill out a paper census form, and how to identify their religion is likely to lead to confusion for many Jains who do not have access to a computer.

Although it is true that Jains who complete their 2021 census return online will be able to tick a "Jain" box when they get to the question on religion, the procedure is not as simple as one might hope. They will have to tick the "Other" box and then type the letter "J" to bring up a list of religions starting with "J". I fear that the failure simply to offer a "Jain" box in the religion question on the main census form will once again lead to significant under-representation of the true number of Jains in our country.

In 2011, many Jains who did not note their specific religion ticked the "Hindu" box. They did so because many Jain families in the UK have links with India, which was known as Hindustan before the British came along. For many Jains, being a Hindu is a geographical description—they are very comfortable with it—of where their family are from. Confusion and misidentification of people's religion was therefore inevitable in 2011, and we risk the

same mistake happening again. ...

col 159WH Using data from Jain temples, we know there are an estimated 60,000 to 70,000 Jains in the UK, but just 20,000 or so identified as such in the previous census. The Office for National Statistics has been lobbied by the all-party parliamentary group and representatives of the Jain community, but it is refusing to budge. I look to Ministers to give a stronger steer to the ONS to put that omission right. ...

With inaccurate data, public services such as NHS trusts have more of an excuse for not planning appropriately for their local community. The need for a Jain crematorium is particularly urgent. The traditional custom in Jainism is to cremate the body within 48 minutes of death ... The belief is that a delayed cremation would cause a great deal of violence and potentially spread disease. There are no Jain crematoriums in the UK, which means there is usually a one-week period between death and cremation while arrangements are made. ...

... a particular challenge for Jain organisations is getting stonemasons to build, repair or extend their temples. ... Similarly, Jain religious leaders visiting the UK temporarily often have difficulties. ...

col 160WH **The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government (Rishi Sunak):** ... We must of course pay tribute to the Jain community for its incredible contribution to British life ... The Jain community comprises hard-working individuals and families, and is entrepreneurial in spirit. It is economically successful and continues to make a positive difference in our local communities. I know very well how faith groups and people from ethnic minorities can make our communities better, safer and stronger. Britain is stronger for her diversity. The Jains' views of tolerance, respect and ahimsa help us to forge stronger and safer communities. ...

col 161WH One topic I would particularly like to highlight is the work of the Jain community to promote organ donation and increase the number of donors across the Asian community. I applaud Jains and Hindus for bringing that important and often difficult subject to the fore. ...

To read the full transcript see

<https://hansard.parliament.uk/commons/2019-05-01/debates/93A69D0F-11C9-4428-857E-097031BC4B98/JainCommunityContributionToTheUK>

House of Commons Oral Answer

Prime Minister's Questions: Visas

Paul Masterton (Conservative): A number of faith leaders and individuals across East Renfrewshire, particularly from the Catholic community, have raised concerns about recent changes to the immigration rules for preachers coming to the UK on short-term supply placements. The new tier 2 visa is double the cost, making it unaffordable for many parishes. Given the huge benefits that congregations and wider communities derive from these placements, can the Prime Minister look again to make sure that we are not putting up unnecessary barriers to continuing these long-standing and very positive opportunities? [910628]

The Prime Minister: I agree with my hon. Friend in his recognition of the valuable part that ministers of religion from all faiths play in their local communities. We want to continue to be able to welcome those who want to come to the UK in accordance with our immigration rules. I understand that, as part of its extensive programme of engagement around the future borders and immigration system, the Home Office will talk to representatives of a range of faiths and community groups, and those discussions will include the future visa arrangements for ministers of religion.

<https://hansard.parliament.uk/commons/2019-05-01/debates/4E0CBE7C-4573-4382-A2FB-62B096213653/Engagements#contribution-7130DDCF-88F9-4043-9500-E4E5FE6AC0A6>

House of Commons Written Answer

Visas: Clergy

Matthew Offord (Conservative) [247671] To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, if he will make an assessment of the potential merits on introducing a specific category of visa for recognised religious clergy.

Caroline Nokes: We recognise the value Ministers of Religion and Religious Workers bring to our communities. This is reflected in our dedicated routes under Tier 2 and Tier 5 of the Points Based System.

In December 2018, we published a White Paper on the future immigration system. This sets out our intention to continue to attract those who bring a range of skills, including those who make valuable contributions to the enjoyment of faith and community across the UK.

<https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Commons/2019-04-25/247671/>

House of Lords Written Answer

Street Preachers

The Lord Bishop of St Albans [HL15288] To ask Her Majesty's Government, further to the Written Answer by Baroness Williams of Trafford on 3 April (HL14707), whether the Home Office provides any particular guidance to police officers in relation to freedom of speech and street preachers; whether police officers receive training on religious literacy; and if so, whether any such training is mandatory.

Baroness Williams of Trafford: The Home Office has not issued guidance to the police in relation to freedom of speech and street preachers. The training of police officers is an operational matter for the police.

<https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Lords/2019-04-24/HL15288/>

House of Commons Library

Briefing: Sharia law courts in the UK

<http://researchbriefings.files.parliament.uk/documents/CDP-2019-0102/CDP-2019-0102.pdf>

Charity Commission

Decision: Chabad Lubavitch UK

On 31 July 2017 the Charity Commission ('the Commission') opened a statutory inquiry ('the inquiry') into Chabad Lubavitch UK ('the charity'). The charity had defaulted in its statutory obligations to meet reporting requirements by failing to file its annual accounting information to the Commission by the due date for several consecutive years. This failure to comply with statutory obligations demonstrated a persistent pattern of behaviour and evidence of mismanagement in the administration of the charity.

The regulatory issues that were addressed in the inquiry were:

- the extent to which the charity was complying with its legal duties in respect of the administration, governance and management of the charity ...
- the extent to which the charity had complied with previously issued regulatory guidance.

The inquiry found:

- no evidence of fraud or misappropriation of charity assets
- the charity's branches were often late in submitting financial information to the Charity's head office ... meaning that the accounts, when they were finally prepared were not as accurate as they could have been
- in previous years the budgeting, administration and financial controls procedures were inadequate for a Charity of this size and complexity
- that the charity had not complied with its duty to submit accurate accounts in a timely fashion ...

The Commission concluded that there was mismanagement in the administration of the charity prior to the Commission's intervention ...

To read the full decision see

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/conclusion-of-statutory-inquiry-chabad-lubavitch-uk/chabad-lubavitch-uk>

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Holocaust

Scottish Parliament Motion

S5M-17150 Jackson Carlaw (Conservative): Hungary's Annual March of the Living Dedicated to the Scot, Jane Haining – That the Parliament acknowledges that the 2019 Annual March of the Living, Hungary's annual Holocaust Memorial Day, was held in Budapest on 14 April and was dedicated to the Scottish missionary, Jane Haining, who paid the ultimate sacrifice for protecting Jewish children during the Second World War; remembers the courage and bravery of Jane, who first ignored warnings to return to Scotland in 1940, and then again in 1944 after Hungary was invaded; recalls that she famously wrote that she would not leave the children in her care during days of darkness; acknowledges that Jane was arrested in March 1944 and was subsequently murdered at Auschwitz-Birkenau, aged just 47; recognises that she is the only Scot to be honoured as "righteous among the nations" at the Yad Vashem Holocaust Memorial Centre in Jerusalem, which is a title bestowed on non-Jewish people who risked their own lives to protect Jews during the Second World War, and that her name is rightly inscribed on the walls of honour at the Garden of the Righteous, and agrees that the decision to dedicate the 2019 annual march to her memory was a fitting tribute to the personal self-sacrifice that Jane made to protect Jewish children.

<https://www.parliament.scot/parliamentarybusiness/28877.aspx?SearchType=Advance&ReferenceNumbers=S5M-17150>

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Israel

House of Commons Oral Answers

Occupied Palestinian Territories

8. **Richard Burden (Labour):** What assessment her Department has made of the effect of restricted humanitarian space on the work of non-governmental organisations in the Occupied Palestinian Territories. [910648]

The Secretary of State for International Development (Penny Mordaunt): DFID recognises that restrictions on humanitarian space can impede the work of NGOs in the Occupied Palestinian Territories, particularly Gaza.

Richard Burden: I think the Secretary of State will be aware that the Government of Israel are attempting to deport Omar Shakir, the country director of Human Rights Watch, for highlighting the impact on the welfare of Palestinians of doing business with illegal Israeli settlements. I welcome the fact that the UK is a party to a statement made to the UN Security Council on Monday asking Israel to allow Human Rights Watch and Mr Shakir to carry on their work unimpeded. Will she echo that call?

Penny Mordaunt: I am happy to echo it. The UK did sign and endorse that statement at the United Nations Security Council, and, as a friend of Israel, we continue to make it clear that a strong, vibrant civil society is in its own interest.

Philip Hollobone (Conservative): Hamas recently launched a crackdown on dissent against its regime in the Gaza strip. How can we ensure that the human rights of human rights defenders in Gaza are protected?

Penny Mordaunt: Both my Department and, in particular, the Foreign Office do a tremendous amount of work to support human rights defenders. At the recent Bonn conference, DFID published a paper on how we can support civil society and the governance that surrounds it.

<https://hansard.parliament.uk/commons/2019-05-01/debates/154222A7-8310-4B0F-848E-3B5107552D4F/OccupiedPalestinianTerritories>

The UN has not issued a formal statement on this subject, but the reference above is probably to

<https://www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=24516&LangID=E>

House of Commons Written Answers

Occupied Territories: Humanitarian Aid

Karen Lee (Labour) [910649] What recent assessment she has made of the humanitarian situation in the Occupied Palestinian Territories.

Penny Mordaunt: We continually monitor the humanitarian situation in the Occupied Palestinian Territories, and in particular the major pressure on Gaza's health sector. Last month DFID announced a new aid package of £2 million to the International Committee for the Red Cross to support delivery of vital medicines, equipment and rehabilitation services.

<https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Commons/2019-05-01/910649/>

The announcement referred to above can be read at

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/uk-aid-to-support-struggling-hospitals-near-breaking-point-in-gaza>

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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>

Notice of amendments

[https://www.parliament.scot/S5_Bills/Human%20Tissue%20\(Authorisation\)%20\(Scotland\)%20Bill/SPBill32MLS052019.pdf](https://www.parliament.scot/S5_Bills/Human%20Tissue%20(Authorisation)%20(Scotland)%20Bill/SPBill32MLS052019.pdf)

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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>

Opt-out organ donation: organs and tissues excluded from the new system (closing date 22 July 2019)

<https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/opt-out-organ-donation-organs-and-tissues-excluded-from-the-new-system>

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