

Political Affairs Digest

A daily summary of political events affecting the Jewish Community

Contents

Home Affairs

Holocaust

Israel

Other Relevant Information

Relevant Legislation

Consultations

Home Affairs

House of Commons Oral Answer

Prime Minister's Questions

Khalid Mahmood (Labour): A recent YouGov poll on Islamophobia in the Conservative party revealed an astounding level of racism. Nearly 50% of those polled would not want a Muslim Prime Minister, while only 8% would be proud if there was one; 67% believe racist myths about Muslim communities, yet eight out of 10 do not think that it is a problem. In the light of that, and as one of the final acts of her premiership, will the Prime Minister finally agree to commission an external inquiry into Islamophobia within her increasingly “nasty party”? [911577]

The Prime Minister: We take any allegations of Islamophobia very seriously in the Conservative party. Every allegation is properly investigated. We have seen my right hon. Friend the Member for Great Yarmouth (Brandon Lewis), the chairman of the Conservative party, take swift action. We have seen people suspended from the party; we have seen people excluded from the party. I would just say to the hon. Gentleman that that is in direct contrast to the way in which the Labour party deals with antisemitism. Indeed it is easier to be kicked out of the Labour party for voting Liberal Democrat than for being antisemitic.

<https://hansard.parliament.uk/commons/2019-06-26/debates/671AA192-FBB2-4FAC-9723-53C8AF5F0D01/Engagements#contribution-FE1CA426-2700-4783-A8D7-DA44FBC2B336>

House of Commons Written Answers

Hate Crime: Victim Support Schemes

Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi (Labour) [267778] To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps the Government is taking to improve the support services available to victims of hate crime.

Victoria Atkins: In October 2018 the Government published Action Against Hate: the Government's plan for tackling hate crime – two years on. Two key themes of the action plan are encouraging reporting and increasing support to victims.

The Action Plan includes a number of commitments that are addressing all forms of hate crime, including a review of hate crime legislation by the Law Commission which commenced earlier this year, a public awareness campaign which has run twice, and the current Online Harms White Paper consultation.

There are also a number of specific commitments addressing homophobic, biphobic and transphobic hate crime, which have been informed by the Government's 2018 LGBT Action Plan. These include: the Crown Prosecution Service working with partners to improve the recording and monitoring of equalities data for LGBT victims of hate crime and reviewing and refreshing its LGBT Hate Crime Schools Pack; further Government Equalities Office funding for anti-bullying interventions in schools from March 2019 to March 2020; support from the Home Office to the police to improve training in responding to victims; multiple Home Office funded projects aimed at tackling homophobic, biphobic and transphobic hate crime; and continued engagement with LGBT stakeholders.

<https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Commons/2019-06-21/267778/>

The Action Plan referred to above can be read at

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/748175/Hate_crime_refresh_2018_FINAL_WEB.PDF

Marriage: Humanism

Ruth Jones (Labour) [267789] To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, whether the Government plans to bring forward legislative proposals on humanist marriages.

Paul Maynard: The Government announced in last year's Budget that it would ask the Law Commission to undertake a wider review of marriage ceremonies. We want to make marriage more accessible and meaningful and give couples greater choice in how they can celebrate their commitment. This includes greater flexibility for different faiths and for non-religious belief organisations.

We have been finalising the terms of reference for the review and will announce these shortly.

<https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Commons/2019-06-21/267789/>

Visas: Ministers of Religion

Mhairi Black (SNP) [266843] To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what discussions his Department has had with (a) representatives of the Scottish Government, (b) Scottish local authorities (c) the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities (d) other Scottish local authority organisations, (e) Scottish Clergy and (f) other religious organisations in advance of the implementation of changes to the Immigration Rules in relation to Tier (i) 2 and (ii) 5 religious workers visas.

Caroline Nokes: The Government values the contributions made by religious institutions, to communities across the UK and my officials remain in regular contact with representatives from a range of faith and community groups.

I recognise the importance of hearing directly from religious leaders to ensure that the immigration system works for all. Therefore, I am hosting a meeting next month with representatives of a broad-range of faith communities to provide an opportunity to listen to their concerns and share ideas on the future system.

<https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Commons/2019-06-19/266843/>

Cabinet Office

Guidance: The Civil Service faith and belief toolkit

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/faith-and-belief-toolkit/the-civil-service-faith-and-belief-toolkit>

Welsh Assembly Culture, Welsh Language and Communications Committee

Teaching of Welsh history, culture and heritage: evidence session with diversity history groups

288 Ginger Wiegand (Ethnic Minorities and Youth Support Team Wales): ... EYST Wales did engagement with pupils, with 32 pupils, in four different locations last year, and, especially in terms of representation of racial diversity in the curriculum, and people seeing their own identities and a range of identities represented, there is no change, and pupils feel that they're underrepresented in the curriculum and that this affects their self-esteem and the way that other pupils view them. ...

290 Gaynor Legal (Heritage and Cultural Exchange): ... There needs to be a fundamental change, and that fundamental change must come from the Welsh Government, in the way that it looks at the curriculum, in the way that it looks to develop its citizens of Wales, and recognises that the citizens of Wales are not all white skinned, that we have a history that was about contribution to Wales and that history has to be reflected throughout the curriculum. ...

296 Ginger Wiegand: ... 11 per cent of pupils in Wales today have ethnic minority heritage. If we look at Cardiff, 33 per cent of those pupils have ethnic minority heritage—that's a third; a third of our students in Cardiff. Going to Newport, we're looking at nearly 25 per cent and, in Swansea, nearly 15 per cent. ...

297 So, I think that, if we talk about culture as being something that's emerging, that intersects and is constantly changing and negotiating, this new curriculum must reflect dynamic Welsh cultures, cultures in plural, a multi-racial society, and it has to be transformative and progressive. But it's not going to happen by accident. ...

320 Ginger Wiegand: ... there's a lot of evidence that teachers, sometimes, don't feel equipped to present histories that they're not very familiar with. ...

323 Carwyn Jones (Labour): ... I think sometimes we in Wales have been guilty of convincing ourselves that, somehow, Wales doesn't have a history of discrimination or racism, when in fact it does. ... We're recognising the 100 years since the Cardiff race riots in 1919. There were anti-Irish riots in Tredegar a few years before that. ...

324 ... the curriculum offers greater flexibility, which is an opportunity in terms of being able to teach more about the racial diversity of Wales and Wales as a tapestry of people and not one version of the history of Wales, but is there also a danger that, with flexibility, there will be some schools that will focus on particular aspects of history in their own areas, rightly so, and other parts of Wales will say, 'Well, Black History Month—it's very interesting, but, actually, it doesn't affect us, because we've got very, very few people from a black and minority ethnic background', but it is of relevance to them because it affects the whole of Wales? So, how can we balance up that flexibility to be able to teach locally relevant history, rightly so, while at the same time, ensuring that that doesn't mean that that history is also not taught in the rest of Wales? ...

334 Ginger Wiegand: ... the pupils brought into sharp focus the critical role of schools and teachers and how they respond to racism. It illuminated the way in which a whitewashed curriculum distorts the ethnic minority pupils' sense of self-worth, but also

their white peers' understanding of their place and value in the world. ...

To read the full transcript see

<http://record.assembly.wales/Committee/5515#C208513>

Scottish Government

Consultation on amending Scottish hate crime legislation: analysis of responses

... International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance's working definition of antisemitism

9.14 Among those who answered 'no' or 'unsure' at Question 18 (both organisations and individuals), there was a recurring concern voiced about the Scottish Government's endorsement of the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA) working definition on antisemitism. Those who raised this issue were not concerned about the working definition itself (i.e. 'words or actions expressed as hatred towards Jews'), but about the examples of 'antisemitism' which accompany it. These respondents saw the examples as problematic because, in their view, they equated criticism of the State of Israel with 'hatred towards Jews'.

9.15 This group saw the IHRA working definition as causing confusion in the effort to tackle antisemitism and racism. They also believed it posed a threat to freedom of expression and freedom of political protest, and they suggested that the definition had been used to restrict campaigns in support of human rights for Palestinians.

9.16 This group asked the Scottish Government (i) to withdraw its endorsement of the IHRA working definition and (ii) not refer to this working definition in any hate crime legislation or related guidance. Alternatively, 'as an absolute minimum', they asked that the illustrative examples attached to the definition should be disregarded. ...

To read the full document see

<http://tinyurl.com/yxk64p2x>

TOP

Holocaust

House of Lords Written Answer

National Holocaust Memorial Centre and Learning Service

Lord West of Spithead (Labour) [HL16366] To ask Her Majesty's Government, further to the Written Answer by Baroness Williams of Trafford on 4 June (HL15866), whether they will now answer the question put; whether they have conducted a risk assessment for the proposed Holocaust Memorial and Learning Centre; and if so, whether they will publish any such assessment.

Baroness Williams of Trafford: Police Counter Terrorism Security Advisers have provided advice and guidance to the developers of the proposed Holocaust Memorial and Learning Centre, regarding terrorist threats and their mitigation, as they do nationally for significant new buildings and refurbishments. It would not be appropriate to publish assessments of threats and their mitigation.

National Planning Policy in England requires the consideration of malicious risks to higher risk sites, and steps that can be taken to reduce vulnerability and increase resilience. Associated planning practice guidance provides greater detail on proportionate security measures, which are a central consideration to the planning and delivery of appropriate new developments and substantive retrofits.

<https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Lords/2019-06-13/HL16366/>

The answer referred to above can be read at
<https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Lords/2019-05-20/HL15866/>

TOP

Israel

House of Commons Written Answers

Israel: Arms Trade

Ben Lake (Plaid Cymru) [266244] To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, what assessment he has made of the effect of UK arms exports to Israel on peace talks between Israel and Palestine.

Andrew Murrison: The Government takes its defence exports responsibilities extremely seriously and operates some of the most robust export controls in the world. We only approve equipment which is for Israel's legitimate self-defence, when we are satisfied that this would be consistent with the Consolidated EU and National Arms Export Licensing Criteria and other relevant commitments. We will not issue a licence if there is a clear risk that the equipment might be used for internal repression, or if there is a clear risk that it would provoke or prolong conflict. 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/Commons/2019-06-18/266244/>

Palestinian Authority: Pay

Joan Ryan (Change UK) [268347] To ask the Secretary of State for International Development, pursuant to the Answer of 20 June 2019 to Question 265408 on Palestinian Authority: Pay, whether his Department's disbursements to the Palestinian Authority (PA) been reduced to reflect the PA's partial salary payments.

Andrew Murrison: DFID has not reduced its funding to the Palestinian Authority's (PA) health and education sectors for financial year 2019/20. While PA salaries have recently been reduced, our contribution still comprises only a proportion of the PA's total health and education sector wage bill. UK aid to the PA's health and education sectors is used exclusively to pay the salaries of vetted health and education public servants, including teachers, doctors and nurses, in the West Bank. The PA's decision to make partial salary payments to public sector officials does not affect the robust financial safeguards that ensure UK financial aid reaches its intended beneficiaries.

<https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Commons/2019-06-24/268347/>

The answer referred to above can be read at
<https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Commons/2019-06-17/265408/>

House of Lords Written Answers

Gaza: Fisheries

Baroness Tonge (Non-affiliated) [HL16438] To ask Her Majesty's Government what

representations they have made to the government of Israel about that country's control over the use of the coastal waters off Gaza by fishermen living there.

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: We regularly raise with the Government of Israel the urgent need to ease all access and movement restrictions on Gaza, including fishing limits.

<https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Lords/2019-06-17/HL16438/>

West Bank: Demolition

Baroness Tonge (Non-affiliated) [HL16439] To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the demolition by the government of Israel of Palestinian facilities, including commercial shops, in the Qalandia refugee camp.

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: Whilst we have not made any assessment on this issue, we are gravely concerned by continued demolition of Palestinian property by the Israeli authorities.

<https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Lords/2019-06-17/HL16439/>

West Bank: Demolition

Baroness Tonge (Non-affiliated) [HL16440] To ask Her Majesty's Government what representations they plan to make to the government of Israel about reports of the destruction of 530 Palestinian-owned olive trees and four water wells by the Israel Defense Forces east of Tammun town while legal efforts are ongoing to prevent the area being turned into a nature reserve.

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: While we have not made any representations on this specific incident, we are gravely concerned by continued demolition of Palestinian property by the Israeli authorities. We are aware of the difficulties facing Palestinian olive growers. We have expressed our serious concerns to the Israeli Government and security officials about the destruction of olive trees on a number of occasions.

<https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Lords/2019-06-17/HL16440/>

Palestinians: Electric Cables

Baroness Tonge (Non-affiliated) [HL16441] To ask Her Majesty's Government what representations they are making to the government of Israel about reports that that country has prohibited the setting up of high-voltage power lines in the Berin area to supply Palestinian residents with electricity.

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: While we have not made any representations on this specific matter, we recognise the need for improvements in infrastructure, employment, energy and water supply to improve living conditions in the Occupied Palestinian Territories.

<https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Lords/2019-06-17/HL16441/>

UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights

Any peace plan for Israel and Palestine will fail without framework of international law: UN expert

The international community must insist that any proposal for an end to the Israeli occupation of Palestine and the just and durable settlement of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict has to be firmly anchored in human rights and international law, a UN expert said. "Without the framework of international law, any peace plan, including the forthcoming

proposal from the United States, will crash upon the shoals of political realism,” said Michael Lynk, the UN Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Palestinian Territory occupied since 1967.

“Prior plans for Middle East peace over the past five decades have all failed, in large part because they did not seriously insist upon a rights-based approach to peace between Israelis and Palestinians,” Lynk said after a two-day workshop in Bahrain focusing on the economic aspects of a possible peace plan.

The Special Rapporteur said that international law – built upon the principles of humanitarian protection, human rights, equality and justice – has been expressed in hundreds of United Nations resolutions on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

“Animating these resolutions is the vision that the law, when purposively applied, can offset a lopsided power relationship between two parties and ensure that all are equal before the law,” he said. “What matters is not the might of one’s army or economy, but the grounding of one’s vision in recognised rights and freedoms.”

The Special Rapporteur said that six principles were particularly central to the peace process:

- **Human rights.** Palestinians and Israelis are entitled to the full range of individual and collective human rights enshrined in international law, including the rights to equality, movement, expression and association, as well as freedom from discrimination.
- **Self-determination.** This can mean that each is entitled to their own state within the boundaries of Mandate Palestine, or it can mean a voluntary agreement to live together within a common form of government. The present international consensus supports a two-state solution, which requires a viable, contiguous and fully sovereign Palestinian state, based on the June 1967 boundaries, with East Jerusalem as its capital, and a meaningful transportation link between the West Bank and Gaza.
- **Annexation.** Israel annexed East Jerusalem in two stages, in 1967 and 1980, condemned by the United Nations as unlawful on numerous occasions. Negotiations on the Jerusalem conundrum must start with the premise that East Jerusalem is Palestinian territory.
- **Settlements.** The 240 Israeli settlements across East Jerusalem and the West Bank are a ‘flagrant violation’ of international law, according to the United Nations Security Council. They are also a primary source of systemic human rights violations. The settlements would have to be removed, both to comply with international law and to enable a viable and sovereign Palestinian state to emerge.
- **Palestinian Refugees.** International law guarantees refugees the right to select among three choices: (i) the right to return home; (ii) the right to integrate in their land of asylum; or (iii) the right to resettle in a third country. Palestinian refugees from the 1947-9 and 1967 wars, and their descendants, who wish to return to their homeland are entitled to do so, a right that the UN General Assembly has endorsed over seven decades.
- **Security.** Both Israelis and Palestinians have the right to live in security and peace, free from alien rule, terrorism and threats to their well-being, such as blockades, rockets and missiles.

Lynk reiterated that these principles are the litmus test to judge the possibilities of success of the forthcoming American peace plan. “If the peace plan fails to integrate these principles, it will inevitably suffer the same fate as its predecessors and leave the conflict more entrenched and more bereft of hope than ever,” he said. ...

To read the full press release see

<https://www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=24760&LangID=E>

TOP

Other Relevant Information

United Nations

World at ‘Acute Moment’ as Anti-Semitic Violence Rises, Hatred Thrives in Digital Space, Secretary-General Warns General Assembly, Urging Focus on Social Unity

Following are UN Secretary-General António Guterres’ remarks to the informal meeting of the General Assembly on “Combating Anti-Semitism and Other Forms of Racism and Hate — the Challenges of Teaching Tolerance and Respect in the Digital Age,” ...

Recently I viewed an exhibition at the Museum of Jewish Heritage here in New York that is called “Auschwitz. Not long ago. Not far away”. It is an apt title. The Holocaust was indeed not long ago — only as far back as a single average human lifespan. And it is indeed not far away — it happened at the heart of Europe, and it remains at the centre of our awareness as we fight anti-Semitism and other forms of intolerance today.

The exhibition documents the propaganda, pseudoscience and vile caricatures that were among the signatures of Hitler’s rule and worldview. Hitler was defeated. Yet anti-Semitism has not been extinguished. Far from it.

A study released last month by Tel Aviv University reported that the number of violent anti-Semitic incidents rose by 13 per cent in 2018 over the year before. In the United States, Europe and elsewhere, attacks on synagogues, graveyards and individuals continue to make many Jews feel insecure. This age-old hatred is showing grim staying power. Moreover, intolerance is a multi-headed monster.

In recent months alone, and in different parts of the world, beyond the attacks on synagogues, we have seen massacres at mosques and bombings at churches. Refugees and migrants continue to face hostility. White supremacists and neo-Nazis are emboldened by elections showing the appeal of their racist messages.

And in today’s digital realm, we have new vectors of venom, algorithms that accelerate the spread of bigotry, and new platforms where far-flung extremists can find each other and spur each other on. The United Nations fights these ills as a matter of our very identity, founded as we were in response to genocide. Today we have reached an acute moment in this struggle.

One week ago, I launched a United Nations system-wide strategy to combat hate speech. Bigoted words can provide the kindling for bigger fires, as we have seen from Rwanda to Myanmar and so many places in between. Hatred left unopposed can erode democratic values, social stability and peace.

We need to treat hate speech as we treat every malicious act: by condemning it and refusing to amplify it. That does not mean limiting freedom of speech; it means keeping hate speech from escalating into something more dangerous, particularly incitement to discrimination, hostility and violence, which is prohibited under international law. ...

Our efforts need to step up most urgently in the digital space, where hatred is thriving. Social media provides a conduit for hatred on an enormous scale, with virtually no cost and no accountability, making them particularly appealing to those with evil intent. And indeed, social media are being used to polarize societies and demonize people, often targeting women, minorities and the most vulnerable. ...

We need to invest in social cohesion so that all members of society can feel that their identities are respected and that they have a stake in the future. I guarantee you that I will continue to call out anti-Semitism, racism and other forms of hatred — loudly and unapologetically. ...

To read the full transcript see

<https://www.un.org/press/en/2019/sgsm19646.doc.htm>

TOP

Relevant Legislation ** new or updated today

UK Parliament

Divorce, Dissolution and Separation Bill

<https://services.parliament.uk/Bills/2017-19/divorcedissolutionandseparation.html>

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>

TOP

Consultations ** new or updated today

****closes today**

Scottish Human Rights Commission Draft Strategic Plan (closing date 28 June 2019)

<http://www.scottishhumanrights.com/media/1860/strategic-plan-consultation-vfinal-eh.docx>

****closes in 3 days**

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>

Regulation of pre-paid funeral plans (closing date 25 August 2019)

<https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/regulation-of-pre-paid-funeral-plans-consultation-on-a-policy-proposal>

TOP