



Political Affairs Digest

A daily summary of political events affecting the Jewish Community

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Westminster Hall Debate

Religious Slaughter of Farm Animals

col 469WH **George Eustice (Conservative):** ... My key contention is that religious slaughter should be made a free-vote issue by every party in the House.

Whitehall feels awkward about dealing with this complex issue and it is not sure what to recommend to Ministers. Governments of all shades have tended to leave the issue in the "Too difficult to address" box and have talked themselves into a stance that says, "Now is not the time to deal with it." If we made it a free-vote issue for the House, we would liberate the Government of that burden of responsibility and, more importantly, liberate Parliament to address the issue.

Jim Shannon (DUP): ... In my council area of Ards, there was an abattoir that carried out some of the ritual killings and stunned and so on. It created jobs and stability and there was a system in place, which seemed to be acceptable. Is he looking for changes in the methodology of killing or does he want to stop it entirely? ...

George Eustice: ... I would stop short of banning it altogether, but we could make major improvements ...

In 1904, a committee of the Admiralty considered in some depth the right methods of slaughter to deliver humane outcomes for animals and recommended that, without exception, all animals should be stunned. Subsequently, however, the Local Government Board issued a circular that ... recommended that, as a general rule, all animals should be stunned prior to slaughter, but it created what has become a long-standing religious derogation for Jewish and Muslim communities.

David Simpson (DUP): ... The 2017 Food Standards Agency report revealed that 84% of Halal-slaughtered animals were stunned prior to slaughter. That means that when the speed of production is important, people will stun them. ...

George Eustice: ... It is worth recognising how animals die in a non-stun slaughter situation. For sheep, most of the evidence suggests ... that they typically lose consciousness in somewhere between 10 and 15 seconds. It takes slightly longer for chickens, which lose consciousness in between 15 and 18 seconds.

The greatest concern, however, is always the impact on bovine animals—cattle—although they are small in number, because their physiology is complicated by the fact that they have a third artery that goes to the back of the head that continues to supply blood even after the cut has taken place. ... For cattle, it typically takes 40 to 45 seconds for the animal to collapse—not to become unconscious, but to fall off its legs due to the lack of blood supply—and between one minute 20 seconds and two minutes for the animal to lose consciousness. ...

I often hear from representatives of organisations such as Shechita UK that the cut is so precise and clean that it all happens very quickly, but there is not really any evidence to support that. In fact, in the shechita slaughter process, if the blood starts to clot in the throat cut, it is permitted for the slaughterman to push his hand into the wound and disturb the clotted blood to resume the flow. ...

col 471WH Neil Parish (Conservative): ... With shechita, I wonder whether we could not at least have post-stunning of bovine animals. What my hon. Friend has described is horrendous and we need to do more to relieve the suffering of those animals. ...

George Eustice: ... There are a wide range of definitions of halal. ... The key requirement for halal is that animals receive an Islamic blessing and that any stun should be recoverable ... It is very hard to define what is halal, because it ranges from simply playing a recording of an Islamic blessing, right through to non-stun slaughter.

In the case of kosher meat, there is a further problem. The hind quarters of an animal are not deemed kosher, even if the animal was slaughtered under kosher methods. That means that the rump of cattle and sheep ends up going into the mainstream market ... where unwitting customers in restaurants in London and other parts of the country buy the meat not knowing it has been slaughtered by kosher methods. ...

Jonathan Djanogly (Conservative): ... my hon. Friend ... has acknowledged that, as far as Jewish koshering laws are concerned, the animal has to be killed in a certain way, and certain parts of the animal are not allowed. He started by saying that he would stop short of banning it altogether ... How can he reconcile those two things? If we were to have stunning, it would in effect be a ban. ...

George Eustice: ... Even within the kosher community, there is not a universal view on whether post-cut stunning should be permitted.

col 472WH A couple of years ago, I visited Kuwait and talked to a meat importer about the issue of halal production. He explained to me that the main requirement in Muslim countries in the middle east is that there is no pork contamination in the food they eat, which is why all their protocols focus predominantly on not sharing machinery between pork production and lamb, chicken or beef ... That is their primary concern, alongside ensuring that there has been an Islamic blessing of the food. When I explained to him that the issue of non-stun slaughter was contentious, he said it is predominantly a western cultural interpretation of the Muslim faith. Interestingly, non-stun slaughtered meat is not a particular requirement in middle eastern countries. ...

The other point about kosher meat is that Shechita UK insists that it is most certainly not a religious ritual, and a Hebrew blessing is not given. It is simply the case that the ancient holy books describe a method of slaughter that they believe remains the most humane approach. The principal concern for Shechita is that there should be no injury to an animal before it is presented for slaughter. They regard stunning as an injury to the animal—that is their particular concern—but that is not a universal view. There has been some rabbinical support for the idea of post-cut stunning, and we know that some abattoirs producing kosher meat allow post-cut stunning of bovine animals. ...

The simplest way would be to label meat as un-stunned, because that is a clearly definable legal definition. That causes some concerns for Jewish communities. They argue that if we did do that, we should also list whether an animal has been killed through anaesthetic gas or electrocution, or all manner of other things. Farmwell, which is a leading charity in this

area, established a system that all religious groups are willing to buy into: a coded approach of numbers from one to 10, denoting the method of slaughter. However, it does not deal with the problem of food entering the service trade, where unwitting customers would buy it.

There are a number of other things that we could do, including increasing the standstill time on bovine animals ... to at least one minute and 30 seconds or two minutes, to ensure that there is no movement of a bovine animal while it is still conscious. In conjunction, we could require a post-cut stun on all bovine animals ... I do not believe that a post-cut stun would violate the religious beliefs of either the Halal Food Authority or Shechita UK.

col 473WH As an alternative, we could simply ban the non-stunned slaughter of bovine animals ...

We could introduce more formal quotas for abattoirs ... It is already the law that only food destined for Muslims and Jews is permitted to be slaughtered under our current religious derogation, but we know that there is a real problem with the mainstreaming of religious slaughter. ... if somebody maintains that they thought that the animal was destined for a religious community when they committed the slaughter, that is sufficient to satisfy the requirement, so it is entirely unenforceable. ...

Giles Watling (Conservative): It is known that in many cases stunning fails during the process. Should we not clean up our act on stunning, as well as taking on the issue of labelling? ...

col 474 WH **George Eustice:** So-called mis-stunning is also an issue. ... Another area of concern ... is the make-up of the gas mixture used in the slaughter of pigs ... The point about mis-stunning is that even if they get it wrong, they are there immediately afterwards with a second stun, which can resolve the issue. ...

Ivan Lewis (Independent): ... Does the Minister agree that there is no conclusive scientific evidence to suggest that shechita is any less acceptable than other forms of slaughter? Does he also agree that this country's unwritten constitution has always made religious freedom a high priority? The changes that the hon. Member for Camborne and Redruth (George Eustice) suggests risk undermining the central tenet of our unwritten constitution, which is that religious freedom is important in our society.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (David Rutley): I completely agree that religious freedom is essential. ...

On religious slaughter, I restate that the Government's preference is that all animals should be stunned before slaughter. However, we respect the right of Jews and Muslims to eat meat prepared in accordance with their beliefs. We therefore allow the religious slaughter of animals by Muslims and Jews for intended consumption by them. The Government believe that that is an important religious freedom, and there is a long history of upholding it in legislation, dating back to the Slaughter of Animals Act 1933 ...

When I spoke about religious slaughter in the debate in this Chamber just a couple of months ago, I said that the Secretary of State and I would be holding a roundtable with a number of interested parties, including religious groups, animal welfare organisations ... and industry representatives. That meeting took place in May, and was a positive and open discussion, with helpful contributions from all who attended. ...

I strongly believe that the way to make progress ... is through a roundtable and ongoing constructive dialogue. It is important to remind ourselves that in EU and domestic regulations that protect the welfare of animals at the time of killing, there are additional rules for animals slaughtered in accordance with religious rites ... The primary aim of the welfare at slaughter regulations, which are based on a body of scientific evidence and advice from the European Food Safety Authority, is to ensure that animals are spared any avoidable pain, distress or suffering at the time of killing. It would be wrong to assume that the legal requirements for religious slaughter have not changed in the past 25 years.

col 475WH There are sensitivities on both sides — from a welfare perspective and a

respecting religious freedom perspective ...

Mention was made of whether immediate post-cut stunning should be introduced to improve the welfare of animals killed without prior stunning, but when we look at that we must respect religious views. ... The area that we should focus on, because it brings most people together, is labelling.

col 476WH Ivan Lewis: ... there is a great deal of insecurity in the British Jewish community as a consequence of institutional antisemitism in the Opposition party. Will he reassure that community, which feels insecure and anxious, that the Government will under no circumstances ban shechita, which is a central tenet of the Jewish faith, in the United Kingdom?

David Rutley: ... I assure Muslim and Jewish communities that we respect their freedoms. Through this debate and the roundtable process that we have put in place, we want to balance those religious freedoms with what more can be done to improve the welfare of animals. ... Through dialogue, we can move forward and learn from what has taken place in other countries around the world. It must be done in the unique spirit of co-operation in this country. ...

We can focus more on labelling. We must engage with the communities and the industry to see how we can take this further forward. Our exit from the EU will provide an opportunity to do that with more conviction and at greater pace. ...

To read the full transcript see

<https://hansard.parliament.uk/commons/2019-07-02/debates/2935A085-3810-472A-BD60-9AD027C31A3D/ReligiousSlaughterOfFarmAnimals>

House of Commons Written Answers

Education: Judaism

Luciana Berger (Independent) [269714] To ask the Secretary of State for Education, how many (a) children and (b) schools have covered the Battle of Cable Street at Key Stage 3 in the 2018-19 academic year.

Nick Gibb: The information requested is not held centrally.

The history curriculum gives teachers and schools the freedom and flexibility to use specific examples from history to teach pupils about the history of Britain and the wider world. Schools and teachers themselves can determine which examples and topics to use to stimulate and challenge pupils and reflect key points in history.

Additionally, there is scope within the citizenship curriculum to highlight relevant key historical events. A high-quality citizenship education helps to provide pupils with knowledge, skills and understanding to prepare them to play a full and active part in society. The Department expects schools to go beyond the core knowledge set out in the shorter programmes of study to deliver other aspects of citizenship.

Schools themselves are best placed to determine the most effective way of including these challenges within the school curriculum.

<https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Commons/2019-06-26/269714/>

Hate Crime

Chris Ruane (Labour) [264339] To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, which 30 local authorities have recorded the highest incidence of hate crime in each of the last five years.

Nick Hurd: The Home Office collects and publishes statistics on the number of hate crimes recorded by the police in England and Wales at the Police Force Area level only. Data for Police Force Areas can be found in the Home Office Open Data

tables for hate crime, available here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/police-recorded-crime-open-data-tables>
<https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Commons/2019-06-13/264339/>

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Israel

House of Commons Written Answer

Double Taxation Relief and International Tax Enforcement (Israel) Order 2019

Anneliese Dodds (Labour Co-op) [270418] To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, when negotiations on the Double Taxation Relief and International Tax Enforcement (Israel) Order 2019 began.

Jesse Norman: The Government originally began negotiating the updated treaty in July 2008, with a second round of talks in March 2009. However, those negotiations stalled for a variety of reasons. Discussions about the updated treaty restarted in late 2015, and the Government recommenced formal negotiations in January 2017.

<https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Commons/2019-06-27/270418/>

House of Lords Written Answers

Jerusalem: Orthodox Church

Baroness Tonge (Non-affiliated) [HL16479] To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the sale of Greek Orthodox Church property in East Jerusalem and reports that the sale is being conducted illegally.

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: We are aware of sales of Greek Orthodox Church property in East Jerusalem, but have not made any assessment of their legality. The British Government does not routinely comment on private property matters. The British Government continues to view settlements in East Jerusalem as illegal under international law and an obstacle to peace.

<https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Lords/2019-06-18/HL16479/>

Lama Khater

Baroness Tonge (Non-affiliated) [HL16480] To ask Her Majesty's Government what representations they have made to the government of Israel about the arrest and imprisonment of the Palestinian journalist Lama Khater.

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: Whilst we are aware of this case, we have not made any specific representations to the Israeli authorities. The Government is committed to the promotion of media freedom and the protection of journalists, as an essential element of democracy and an important attribute of human rights. The former Minister for the Middle East and North Africa, Rt Hon Alistair Burt MP, met leaders of the Palestinian Journalists' Syndicate in London on 4 July 2018 where they discussed the situation facing Palestinian journalists and the constraints on their work, while officials from the British Consulate in East Jerusalem and our Embassy in Tel Aviv hosted a roundtable in April this year with foreign journalists serving in Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territories to discuss media freedom.

Jerusalem: Cemeteries

Baroness Tonge (Non-affiliated) [HL16481] To ask Her Majesty's Government what representations they are making to the government of Israel about the destruction by the the Israel Defense Forces of graves of Muslim leaders in East Jerusalem in order to build a national park.

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: While we have not raised this specific issue with the Israeli authorities, we continue to view East Jerusalem as part of the Occupied Palestinian Territories. We remain concerned about actions which further entrench the Israeli occupation, and regularly make representations to the Israeli government about such actions, such as settlement expansion and the destruction of Palestinian property.

<https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Lords/2019-06-18/HL16481/>

Israel: Arms Trade

Baroness Tonge (Non-affiliated) [HL16442] To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the letter from European researchers and academics on 4 June asking the European Union to impose a comprehensive military embargo on Israel as long as that country continues to violate human rights; whether they have responded to that letter; and if so, what was that response.

Baroness Goldie: We are aware of the letter that was sent to Federica Mogherini in June. Israel faces very real security threats. All countries, including Israel, have a legitimate right to self-defence, and the right to defend their citizens from attack. We do not believe that imposing a blanket arms embargo would lead to progress in the peace process. The British Government takes its defence exports responsibilities extremely seriously and operates some of the most robust export controls in the world. All applications for export licences are assessed on a case-by-case basis against strict criteria. We only approve equipment which is for Israel's legitimate self-defence.

<https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Lords/2019-06-17/HL16442/>

Israel: West Bank

Baroness Tonge (Non-affiliated) [HL16443] To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the statement by the ambassador of the USA in Jerusalem that Israel has the right to retain parts, but not all, of the West Bank.

Baroness Goldie: Our position is well-known and has not changed. In line with international law, and relevant UN Security Council resolutions, notably Resolutions 242 and 497, we do not recognize Israel's sovereignty over the territories occupied by Israel since June 1967. Annexation of territory by force is prohibited under international law. The UK has also reiterated our position at the UN Security Council, including with our Belgian, French, German and Polish colleagues on 26 March, and in the UN Security Council Chamber on 27 March. On 2 April, the Foreign Secretary also made clear the UK's position in the House of Commons confirming we view the annexation of territory by force as prohibited under international law.

<https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Lords/2019-06-17/HL16443/>

The speech at the UN referred to above can be read at

<https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/latest-rocket-attacks-in-israel-humanitarian-situation-in-gaza-and-the-status-of-the-golan-heights>

The Commons statement referred to above can be read at

<https://hansard.parliament.uk/commons/2019-04-02/debates/FF68A8CD-7496-4EBA-A4E9-F8337A523B08/Rules-BasedInternationalOrder#contribution-AF05649A-2261-49DA-908E-E95053358FB5>

Palestinians: Cemeteries

Lord Judd (Labour) [HL16412] To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of reports that the government of Israel's Nature and Parks Authority is annexing land in the Palestinian Bab Al-Rahma cemetery and is digging up Palestinian graves in preparation for building a national park; and what representations they have made to the government of Israel about this.

Baroness Goldie: Whilst we have not made any assessment and have not raised this specific issue with the Israeli authorities, we continue to encourage all parties to work together to uphold the status quo at the holy sites in Jerusalem, including Bab Al-Rahma.

<https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Lords/2019-06-17/HL16412/>

Home Office

Home Secretary visits Israel and Occupied Palestinian Territories

Home Secretary Sajid Javid visited Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territories earlier this week to discuss the region's security, tackling extremism and the importance of freedom of religion.

On Sunday 30 June, Mr Javid visited Ramallah where he met the Palestinian Authority Prime Minister Mohammad Shtayyeh. They discussed bilateral cooperation in the security sector, the current political and fiscal challenges facing the Palestinian Authority and the impact of the occupation. Mr Javid reaffirmed the UK's commitment to the two-state solution, based on 1967 borders with Jerusalem as a shared capital as the path to unlocking the peace, prosperity and freedom desired by Israelis and Palestinians.

On Monday 1 July he visited the Old City of Jerusalem – one of the most sacred and holy sites in the world for Christians, Jews and Muslims alike, becoming the first British Cabinet Minister to say a prayer at the Al Aqsa Mosque, and visit the Haram Al Sharif/Temple Mount. He also paid his respects at the Western Wall and the Church of the Holy Sepulchre.

Mr Javid later met Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, where he praised the strength of the 2 countries' bilateral relationship, and discussed Iran, the concerning rise of antisemitism and prospects for peace with the Palestinians.

He also discussed strengthening security cooperation with Israeli Minister for Public Security, Strategic Affairs and Information, Gilad Erdan.

Mr Javid also visited the Holocaust Memorial Centre of Yad-Vashem where he heard moving stories of bravery and compassion in the most tragic and horrifying of circumstances. He emphasised that we must ensure such abhorrent crimes never happen again and fight religious intolerance wherever it arises.

Home Secretary Sajid Javid said: It was an honour to meet our friends in Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territories to discuss our continued commitment to security and the pursuit of peace.

The importance of the political progress needed to unlock a just and lasting peace is inescapable in the Old City of Jerusalem. With sites sacred to Christians, Muslims and

Jews, all believers need to be able to practise their faith freely, peacefully and without fear. As Home Secretary, I'm committed to working with friends at home and abroad to tackle all forms of religious hatred – including antisemitism, anti-Muslim hatred, and the persecution of Christians.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/home-secretary-visits-israel-and-occupied-palestinian-territories>

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Other Relevant Information

European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA)

FRA's antisemitism survey dataset now available

The dataset contains a wealth of information from over 16,000 Jews in 12 EU Member States about their perceptions and experiences of antisemitism.

The dataset provides invaluable evidence of how Jews perceive and experience antisemitism, discrimination, violence and harassment in different areas of life. It also provides an insight into what Jews think is needed to improve their feelings of safety and security.

Researchers can carry out their own detailed analysis of the survey results. Academia can also use the data for teaching.

The dataset is stored with the [GESIS Data Archive](#), a certified trusted digital repository.

The GESIS Data Archive contains a description of the antisemitism survey dataset and accompanying documents. In order to request access, users have to fill in a data usage contract. The data are released once FRA grants permission in writing.

The accompanying [privacy notice](#) outlines FRA's data protection policies concerning access to the data through the GESIS Data Archive.

FRA carried out the survey across 12 EU Member States: Austria, Belgium, Denmark, France, Germany, Hungary, Italy, the Netherlands, Poland, Spain, Sweden and the United Kingdom between May and June 2018. These Member States are home to over 96% of the EU's estimated Jewish population. ...

To read the full press release see

<https://fra.europa.eu/en/news/2019/fras-antisemitism-survey-dataset-now-available>

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Relevant Legislation ** new or updated today

UK Parliament

**** Divorce, Dissolution and Separation Bill**

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

Public Bill Committee

[https://hansard.parliament.uk/commons/2019-07-02/debates/4599b1c5-9b6d-43c8-b8cc-67e1ee3d6c46/DivorceDissolutionAndSeparationBill\(FirstSitting\)](https://hansard.parliament.uk/commons/2019-07-02/debates/4599b1c5-9b6d-43c8-b8cc-67e1ee3d6c46/DivorceDissolutionAndSeparationBill(FirstSitting))

and

[https://hansard.parliament.uk/commons/2019-07-02/debates/9a9e276f-003d-4123-b7ee-28767df582fe/DivorceDissolutionAndSeparationBill\(SecondSitting\)](https://hansard.parliament.uk/commons/2019-07-02/debates/9a9e276f-003d-4123-b7ee-28767df582fe/DivorceDissolutionAndSeparationBill(SecondSitting))

**** Holocaust (Return of Cultural Objects) (Amendment) Bill**

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

Third Reading, House of Lords

Bill Passed

[https://hansard.parliament.uk/lords/2019-07-02/debates/63A36930-640E-4479-A7EA-DCE8CB6D4812/Holocaust\(ReturnOfCulturalObjects\)\(Amendment\)Bill](https://hansard.parliament.uk/lords/2019-07-02/debates/63A36930-640E-4479-A7EA-DCE8CB6D4812/Holocaust(ReturnOfCulturalObjects)(Amendment)Bill)

International Development Assistance (Palestinian National Authority Schools) Bill

[https://services.parliament.uk/Bills/2017-](https://services.parliament.uk/Bills/2017-19/internationaldevelopmentassistancepalestiniannationalauthoritieschools.html)

[19/internationaldevelopmentassistancepalestiniannationalauthoritieschools.html](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>

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Consultations

** new or updated today

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>

Islamophobia in Scotland (closing date 26 August 2019)

<https://forms.ncl.ac.uk/view.php?id=13027>

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