

Political Affairs Digest

A daily summary of political events affecting the Jewish Community

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House of Commons Written Answers

The following two questions both received the same answer

Universities: Racial Discrimination

Gordon Marsden (Labour) [275679] To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what assessment he has made of trends in the level of reports of racism against students and staff in UK universities in the last five years.

Gordon Marsden (Labour) [275680] To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what discussions (a) he and (b) Ministers in his Department have had with representatives from (i) Universities UK, (ii) other education sector bodies, (iii) trades unions representing staff, (iv) student unions and (v) NUS on the effect of incidences of racism directed at their members in the last 12 months.

Chris Skidmore: The government takes all forms of hate crime extremely seriously. There is no place in our society - including within higher education - for hatred or for any form of harassment, discrimination or racism.

The government is working closely with Universities UK (UUK) and the Office for Students (OfS) to support work to address racism and other forms of harassment in higher education, including the implementation of UUK's Taskforce recommendations. The government has also tasked the OfS to support this work, and over £2 million has been invested in projects tackling hatred and harassment.

The department regularly meets stakeholders and representative bodies about student experience issues including racism, hate crime and harassment. Officials hold quarterly meetings with the OfS and UUK to discuss how to make progress on harassment and hate crime, including racism within the sector. In addition, I have recently held meetings with the Union of Jewish Students and Jewish student representatives about antisemitism on campus.

The government expects providers to keep records of incidents disclosed to them and to act swiftly to investigate and address them. It is important to recognise that under-reporting is common. Higher education providers should look at how they can continue to break down barriers to reporting, in spite of the potential for it to lead to spikes in disclosures, and to make sure that students and staff feel safe and

able to disclose racist incidents.

Evaluation to date has shown that progress has been made but that there is still more to do. On 7 January 2019; I wrote to the Equality and Human Rights Commission to welcome their Inquiry into Racial Harassment in Higher Education Institutions. I look forward to the new evidence that this inquiry will bring and will review its findings carefully.

<https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Commons/2019-07-10/275679/>

and

<https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Commons/2019-07-10/275680/>

Universities: Racial Discrimination

Gordon Marsden (Labour) [276161] To ask the Secretary of State for Education, with reference to the article in the Guardian entitled A demeaning environment: stories of racism in UK universities, published 5 July 2019, if he will hold discussions with the Office for Students on their assessment of the scale and nature of racism in UK universities.

Chris Skidmore: There is no place in our society, including within higher education (HE) for hatred or any form of harassment, discrimination or racism.

The government is working closely with the Universities UK (UUK) and the Office for Students (OfS) to support work to address racism and other forms of harassment in HE, including implementation of UUK's Sexual Violence and Harassment Taskforce's recommendations.

Ministers and officials in the department meet regularly with the OfS, stakeholders and representative bodies about a range of student experience issues including racism, hate crime and harassment in HE. This includes specific quarterly meetings with the OfS to discuss how to tackle harassment and hate crime, including racism within the sector.

In its ministerial guidance, the government has asked the OfS to support this work and to make campuses places of tolerance for all students, and over £2 million has been invested in projects addressing hatred and harassment in HE.

The government will continue to work closely with the OfS to prioritise tackling of all forms of harassment and hate crime in higher education.

<https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Commons/2019-07-11/276161/>

The article referred to above can be read at

<https://www.theguardian.com/education/2019/jul/05/a-demeaning-environment-stories-of-racism-in-uk-universities>

Higher Education: Equality

Gordon Marsden (Labour) [275681] To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what assessment he has made of the adequacy of equality and diversity training provided by higher education institutions; and if he will make an assessment of the potential merits of making that training mandatory.

Chris Skidmore: The government is committed to tackling inequalities. That is why, in October 2018, my right. hon. Friend, the Prime Minister, launched measures to tackle barriers facing ethnic minorities in the workplace, including a new Race at Work Charter and a consultation on ethnicity pay reporting.

Like all employers, higher education providers have responsibilities under the Equality Act (2010) in relation to their staff. The government expects providers to comply fully with their obligations. As autonomous and independent institutions, it is for individual providers to ensure that the training they provide is appropriate.

The Equality Challenge Unit (part of Advance HE) has published guidance for higher education providers on embedding equality and diversity into HR policies. The Race Equality Charter also helps higher education providers to identify and address institutional and cultural barriers standing in the way of minority ethnic staff and students. The Athena SWAN Charter recognises work undertaken to address gender equality. The regulator, the Office for Students (OfS), and its predecessor, have provided over £4.7 million in funding for projects tackling sexual harassment, online harassment and hate-based harassment. This includes projects with a focus on developing and providing training for both staff and students on matters such as bystander intervention and handling of reports and disclosures.

In guidance to the OfS, the government has asked the regulator to positively engage with work to counter harassment and hate-crime and to make campuses places of tolerance for all students, and work with providers on equalities issues.

<https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Commons/2019-07-10/275681/>

The Race at Work Charter, referred to above, can be read at <https://race.bitc.org.uk/issues/racecharter>

The Race Equality Charter, referred to above, can be read at <https://www.ecu.ac.uk/equality-charters/race-equality-charter/>

Anti-Muslim Hatred Working Group

Seema Malhotra (Labour Co-op) [273792] To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, whether he plans to publish the minutes of the Anti-Muslim Hatred Working Group meetings.

Heather Wheeler: The Working Group does not plan to publish the minutes of its meetings. Communities and stakeholders are regularly kept up to date on the Groups' work.

<https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Commons/2019-07-05/273792/>

Anti-Muslim Hatred Working Group

Seema Malhotra (Labour Co-op) [273793] To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, how many meetings the Anti-Muslim Hatred Working Group has held.

Heather Wheeler: The Working Group holds quarterly meetings. The membership of the Anti-Muslim Hatred Working Group has recently been refreshed. The first meeting of the refreshed Group was held in April 2019. A second meeting is scheduled to take place in July 2019.

<https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Commons/2019-07-05/273793/>

Anti-Muslim Hatred Working Group

Wes Streeting (Labour) [276245] To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, which (a) persons and (b) organisations the Anti-Muslim Hatred Working Group has met with in the last 12 months.

Heather Wheeler: The Anti-Muslim Hatred Working Group was established to consider and take forward proposals to tackle anti-Muslim hatred. Members are expected to interact regularly with a broad range stakeholders at an individual and organisational level. This includes Muslim communities, key partners, government departments, local service providers, police and interfaith groups.

<https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Commons/2019-07-11/276245/>

Anti-Muslim Hatred Working Group

Wes Streeting (Labour) [276246] To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, when the terms of reference of the Anti-Muslim Hatred Working Group (a) were last and (b) are next due to be reviewed.

Heather Wheeler: The terms of reference of the Anti-Muslim Hatred Working Group were last reviewed during the process to refresh the membership this year. The terms of reference are reviewed regularly.

<https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Commons/2019-07-11/276246/>

UK Parliament Ministerial Statement

Office for Tackling Injustices

The Minister for Women and Equalities (Penny Mordaunt): [HCWS1723] On Friday 12 July, the Prime Minister announced the creation of the Office for Tackling Injustices. This is a new organisation that will hold the Government and wider society to account for tackling key social injustices.

Despite the great progress we have made in promoting fair treatment for all in the UK, we know that too many of our citizens are still held back by the injustice of unequal treatment on the grounds of their socio-economic background, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation or disability.

The Prime Minister has spoken of her determination to tackle these “burning injustices”. But all Governments should work to end the injustices that continue to characterise our country for too many. The Office for Tackling Injustices (OfTI) will focus minds on how to create a fairer country in the decades to come.

By shining a light on data on injustices and monitoring change, the OfTI will provide evidence-based challenge to future Governments and wider society to tackle disparities in social and economic outcomes. Data is a hard, sometimes uncomfortable fact, but publishing it and communicating it clearly forces Government and others to hold a mirror up to their own performance and challenge themselves to do better.

The OfTI will have a remit covering social injustices relating to ethnicity, gender, disability, socioeconomic background and LGBT. As well as annually delivering a data-driven report on progress to Parliament, the OfTI will also publish thematic studies into issues relevant to its mandate. It will make use of relevant published data from various public authorities, monitoring trends and considering the underlying causes and drivers for them.

<https://hansard.parliament.uk/commons/2019-07-15/debates/19071511000017/OfficeForTacklingInjustices>

House of Commons Library

Briefing: Humanist marriage ceremonies

<http://researchbriefings.files.parliament.uk/documents/SN05864/SN05864.pdf>

Welsh Assembly

First Minister's Questions

Mark Reckless (Brexit): First Minister, you spoke last week about your desire to commence the first part of the Equality Act in Wales, so this week I'll ask you about section 20 and Schedule 2 of that Act. They provide for statutory investigation by the Equality and Human Rights Commission when an organisation is believed to have unlawfully

discriminated against people because of their ethnicity and religious beliefs. It's happened once before in politics for the BNP. Is the EHRC right now to investigate the Labour Party, and do you agree with Alun Davies when he says he is deeply ashamed of what your party has become?

Mark Drakeford: Llywydd, let me deal with the substantive issue, rather than the peripheral ones, first. The substantive issue is to do with anti-Semitism, and I say here again on the floor of the Assembly, as I've said regularly whenever I've had the opportunity, that anti-Semitism has no part in the Labour Party in Wales and no part in Welsh life, and we will continue to work with Jewish organisations to make sure that the contribution that Jewish communities have made to Wales is properly understood and recognised, and where there are instances of anti-Semitism of any sort, then those must be dealt with, and dealt with rapidly.

The Member asks me about the EHRC inquiry, and he'll be pleased to know, I'm sure, that the Welsh Labour Party is not within the scope of that inquiry.

Mark Reckless: Thank you for that answer. I wonder why that is thought not to be within the scope. One Labour staffer who bravely spoke to BBC *Panorama* said investigators were undermined, when given cases, by people wanting leniency on anti-Semitism, then taking those cases away. Often, that was people from Jeremy Corbyn's office, but isn't it also what you did, First Minister? I hear the previous First Minister muttering, but when one of your Assembly Members made what were widely considered to be anti-Semitic remarks, she was suspended from your group and your predecessor referred her to the Labour Party for investigation. Yet, according to *The Jewish Chronicle*, once you took over as First Minister, and I quote, 'No consideration was given to the fact that UK Labour had yet to conclude their investigation into her remarks', since, and I quote, 'she might have been a bit stupid', but this was 'our Jenny'. The *Jewish Chronicle* continued: 'Mark (Drakeford) and almost the entire group, barring Alun, Lynne and Vaughan seemed determined to get her back as quickly as they could.'

First Minister, many of your AMs oppose Jeremy Corbyn becoming your leader, and seem none too keen on him becoming Prime Minister, but you were one of his original supporters. Did you know then that he had complained when his council took down a grotesque anti-Semitic mural? Do you agree with him that Hobson's anti-Semitic book, *Imperialism*, was 'brilliant'? And what do you think Jeremy Corbyn meant when he said Zionists 'don't understand English irony'? First Minister, for how much longer will you and your party and your Government tolerate what your deputy leader rightly describes as anti-Jewish racism?

Mark Drakeford: Well, Llywydd, I'm not going to be drawn into answering questions that have nothing to do with my responsibilities on the floor of this National Assembly. I have set out here my views on anti-Semitism and the way in which these matters are conducted here in Wales. Nothing will deflect me from standing up to those values and those principles, and nothing that the Member wishes to draw me into will be used to try and deflect me from my determination that the rights of all communities here in Wales are respected. Wherever they come from, whatever their heritage, their contribution here in Wales is valued, recognised and celebrated, and that's the sort of culture that I want to see, politically and socially, across the whole of our nation.

<http://record.assembly.wales/Plenary/5674#C215433>

The *Panorama* programme referred to above can be read at

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/iplayer/episode/m0006p8c/panorama-is-labour-antisemitic>

Welsh Government

Funding to improve awareness of organ donation in black, Asian and ethnic minority communities

While the latest statistics show understanding and support for organ donation is growing among black and Asian communities, 20% of respondents still say they would not donate organs and 43% said they didn't know.

The main barrier is the belief that organ donation is against their culture or religion. However, all the major religions in the UK support organ donation and transplantation. ... Community and faith-based groups from across Wales are now being invited to apply for funding from a £20,000 pot, to help break down myths and barriers and increase support for organ donation among black, Asian and ethnic minority communities. ...

Health Secretary, Vaughan Gething said: There has been a big increase in consent rates for organ donation in Wales recently, but there are still people dying waiting for a transplant so we need as many people as possible, from all ethnic backgrounds to agree to donate. This latest research highlights the many misconceptions people still have about organ donation. We want to make sure people are fully informed when making their decision, which is why we are offering funding to help community groups talk to people from black, Asian and ethnic minority backgrounds about organ donation and the positive impact a decision to donate can have. ...

To read the full press release see

<https://gov.wales/funding-improve-awareness-organ-donation-black-asian-and-ethnic-minority-communities>

NHS Blood and Transplant

Black, Asian and minority ethnic funding call (England and Wales)

Deadline for applications: 1 September 2019

Invitation to apply for funding to promote deceased organ donation within black, Asian, mixed race and minority ethnic (BAME) communities

NHS Blood and Transplant has launched a funding call to enable organisations to apply for funding to positively engage local communities in organ donation, address myths and barriers, and increase support for organ donation among black, Asian, mixed race and minority ethnic communities. ...

The maximum amount organisations can apply for is £10,000. ...

For full information and to apply see

<https://www.nhsbt.nhs.uk/how-you-can-help/get-involved/bame-funding-call/>

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Holocaust

House of Commons Written Answer

National Holocaust Memorial Centre and Learning Service

Edward Leigh (Conservative) [274442] To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, pursuant to the Answers of 16 June 2017 and 19 June 2019 to Questions 106178 and 263702 on the National Holocaust Memorial Centre and Learning Service, who raised the possibility of Victoria Tower Gardens as a location for the Holocaust Memorial and Learning Centre in early autumn 2015 on behalf of the UK Holocaust Memorial Foundation; and for what reason that possibility was not discussed

first by that Foundation's board.

Heather Wheeler: In November 2015 the property sub-committee of the UK Holocaust Memorial Foundation was asked to undertake a search of Government sites. The property sub-committee raised Victoria Tower Gardens as a possible site at the Foundation meeting on 13 January 2016.

<https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Commons/2019-07-08/274442/>

The answers referred to above can be read at

<https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Commons/2017-10-06/106178/>

and

<https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Commons/2019-06-12/263702/>

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Israel

House of Commons Written Answers

Occupied Territories: Health Services

Tom Brake (Liberal Democrat) [276132] To ask the Secretary of State for International Development, what steps he is taking to help ensure that (a) health workers in the Occupied Palestinian Territories are protected from attack and (b) perpetrators of such attacks are held accountable.

Andrew Murrison: The UK is clear that no health workers or aid workers should be at risk of violence, that they must have the protection they need from the responsible authorities to allow them to do their jobs in safety, and that the rule of law must prevail to deal with perpetrators.

<https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Commons/2019-07-11/276132/>

Gaza: Patients

Tom Brake (Liberal Democrat) [276133] To ask the Secretary of State for International Development, what recent assessment his Department has made of the effect of permit restrictions imposed by the Government of Israel on (a) medical patients and (b) companions of those medical patients seeking to exit Gaza.

Andrew Murrison: Restrictions on movement and access imposed by the Israeli authorities on Gaza have resulted in a worsening of the already poor humanitarian situation. In May, 2,206 permit applications were made to the Government of Israel to enter Israel at the Erez crossing for healthcare, with 61% approved, 8% denied and 31% delayed. In the same month, 2,426 patient companion applications were made with 47% approved, 13% denied and 40% pending. The UK regularly raises and will continue to call on the Israeli government to ease access restrictions further and for Israel and the Palestinian Authority to work together to ensure a durable solution for Gaza. In addition to our diplomatic efforts, we have recently announced a new £1.6 million package of support to be delivered through the World Health Organisation which will help to provide life-saving treatment to more than 380,000 people in Gaza, including a new limb unit.

<https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Commons/2019-07-11/276133/>

House of Lords Written Answers

Israeli Settlements

Baroness Tonge (Non-affiliated) [HL16851] To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of whether settlement expansion on Palestinian lands in the West Bank is higher than population growth in Israel; and what assessment they have made of the impact of any such increase on the viability of a two-state solution using land swaps.

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: We are aware of media and UN reports that settlement expansion in the Occupied Palestinian Territories has surpassed population growth in Israel. At the UN Security Council on 20 June, the UK Permanent Representative to the UN expressed concern about continuing Israeli settlement activity in the West Bank, which is contrary to international law and makes a two-state solution harder to achieve. We regularly raise our grave concerns on this issue with the Government of Israel and urge it to reverse its policy of settlement expansion.

<https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Lords/2019-07-01/HL16851/>

The statement to the Security Council referred to above can be read at

<https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/middle-east-peace-processcall-to-reduce-the-risk-of-violence>

Israel: Palestinians

Baroness Tonge (Non-affiliated) [HL16853] To ask Her Majesty's Government what representations they have made to the government of Israel about reports that a seven month old Palestinian infant was shot whilst sitting on her mothers' lap by an Israeli sniper near Ramallah.

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: Whilst we are aware of media reports, we have not raised this specific issue with the Israeli authorities. We are concerned by any reports of Palestinian children being killed or injured in the West Bank and Gaza. We regularly raise our concerns over use of live fire, particularly against children.

<https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Lords/2019-07-01/HL16853/>

Gaza: Recycling

Baroness Tonge (Non-affiliated) [HL16854] To ask Her Majesty's Government what support they intend to provide to Palestinians in Gaza to create the means to recycle materials in order to reduce the amount of waste and increase the viability of industry.

Baroness Sugg: The UK does not currently intend to provide direct support in this area. We remain committed to alleviating the humanitarian situation in Gaza and our assistance continues to be focused on meeting the basic needs of Gazans. To that end, DFID have recently provided £5m to UNRWA's Occupied Palestinian Territories (OPTs) emergency appeal which will help UNRWA provide food aid to one million people in Gaza. Through our support to UNRWA's programme budget, the UK also supports UNRWA's delivery of core services, including health services and basic education, to Palestinian refugees across the Middle East, and the collection of solid waste.

In the medium term, DFID are working to address the underlying causes of humanitarian need in Gaza through an economic development programme which aims to lift the overall standard of living in Gaza and the West Bank by increasing trade and job creation, enabling greater movement and access for people and goods, and enhancing the supply of electricity and clean water, especially in Gaza.

<https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Lords/2019-07-01/HL16854/>

Gaza: Poisoning

Baroness Tonge (Non-affiliated) [HL16855] To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the dangers of lead poisoning for children living in Gaza.

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: While we are aware of reports, which are worrying, we have not made an assessment of this issue. We regularly stress our concern about the humanitarian situation in Gaza.

<https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Lords/2019-07-01/HL16855/>

UK Parliament Early Day Motion

Alex Sobel (Labour Co-op) (2604) Health workers in Gaza –That this House condemns the killing of healthcare workers in Gaza and in particular the recent killing of Gaza paramedic Mohammed al-Jedaili, the fifth Palestinian health worker to be killed by Israeli forces in just over a year; notes that according to the World Health Organisation more than 750 health workers in Gaza were also injured between 30 March 2018 and 31 May 2019; and calls on the Government to take diplomatic steps to ensure that medical workers in Gaza can perform their humanitarian functions without risk of attack and to request an investigation which complies with international standards of independence, impartiality, promptness, thoroughness, and transparency into those deaths.

<https://edm.parliament.uk/early-day-motion/53148/health-workers-in-gaza>

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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>

**** Domestic Abuse Bill**

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

Bill as introduced

<https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/bills/cbill/2017-2019/0422/19422.pdf>

Explanatory Notes

<https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/bills/cbill/2017-2019/0422/en/19422en.pdf>

First Reading, House of Commons

<https://hansard.parliament.uk/commons/2019-07-16/debates/E3137BAB-45E8-4762-AEE3-D0438EA4AC2B/DomesticAbuse>

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 in 6 days**

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>

Civil Partnerships: Next Steps Conversion (closing date 20 August 2019)

<https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/civil-partnerships-next-steps-and-consultation-on-conversion>

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