



Political Affairs Digest

A daily summary of political events affecting the Jewish Community

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T5. **Bob Blackman (Conservative):** I have been working with a group of parents in my constituency to set up an Islamic faith school as a free school. Sadly, Harrow Council has been obstructing them. Will my right hon. Friend set out what the Government are doing to encourage and enable parents to have faith-based schools on a free school basis if they so wish? [900268]

Gavin Williamson: On both sides of the House, we all recognise the important role that religious and faith organisations play in our education system. It is saddening to see the political ideology of Harrow Council getting in the way of opportunities for young people. It is shocking to think that the council wants to deprive young people in Harrow of the opportunity to get the very best, and I will certainly write to the chief executive to get assurances that the council is not letting political ideology get in the way of opportunities for the young people of Harrow.

<https://hansard.parliament.uk/commons/2020-01-20/debates/81DD0912-F819-4943-89E5-7EF778CCBC96/TopicalQuestions#contribution-F31962FC-18B0-4246-8CA2-DAB5A3B21112>

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Holocaust

House of Lords Oral Answers

UK Holocaust Memorial

Lord Hylton (Crossbench): To ask Her Majesty's Government what plans they have, if any, to substitute the proposed UK Holocaust Memorial with a national memorial commemorating all victims of extermination or genocide.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Ministry of Housing,

Communities and Local Government (Viscount Younger of Leckie): My Lords, the Government are firmly committed to establishing a new national Holocaust memorial. The memorial will be dedicated to the 6 million Jewish men, women and children and all victims of Nazi persecution, including Roma, gay and disabled people murdered in the Holocaust. This memorial, at the heart of our democratic institutions, will provide a striking reminder to Parliament and to the whole nation of the need to tackle persecution in all its forms.

Lord Hylton: I thank the noble Viscount for his reply. I wonder whether we could all agree that all attempts to kill a whole group, whether ethnic, religious, national or other, are equally odious and ought to be prevented. Is it not therefore important that any British memorial to victims of genocide or extermination, certainly if it is to be sited next to Parliament, should commemorate all victims rather than one particular group?

Viscount Younger of Leckie: I take note of what the noble Lord says, but there can be no more powerful symbol of our commitment to remembering the Holocaust than placing a memorial in Victoria Tower Gardens. As I said earlier, the Holocaust is one of the darkest chapters in human history, which saw the systematic state-sponsored killing of human beings. To pick up on what the noble Lord said, there will be a focus in the memorial centre on the Jewish population, obviously, but particularly on other atrocities, including in Cambodia, Rwanda and Bosnia.

Baroness Deech (Crossbench): My Lords, does the Minister agree that the Question fails to recognise the intrinsic difference of the Jewish genocide in its length and comprehensive nature and the fact that anti-Semitism is still going on today not so far from here? It also reveals that we do not really know what is to be achieved by a Holocaust memorial. There are hundreds of them, but they have not proved effective in stopping anti-Semitism and we do not really know what this one will achieve.

Viscount Younger of Leckie: I take issue with the noble Baroness—a lot of work has gone into this centre so far. The Holocaust memorial will stand as a reminder that the central role of democracy is to encourage tolerance of ethnic, religious and racial differences and to foster religious freedom, individual rights and civil responsibility. The learning centre is a stark reminder, next to Parliament, of the work that needs to be done to be sure that these dreadful atrocities do not happen again.

Lord Pickles (Conservative): My Lords, on the uniqueness of the Holocaust, does my noble friend share the assessment of the late Professor David Cesarani, who said that the Holocaust was unprecedented because never before in history had a leader decided that within a conceivable timeframe an ethnic religious group could be physically destroyed and that equipment would be devised and created to achieve that? Is my noble friend pleased that a commitment to build the Holocaust memorial and learning centre specifically in Victoria Tower Gardens was included in the Conservative Party's election manifesto at the general election last month?

Viscount Younger of Leckie: On my noble friend's second point, yes, we are pleased—and it is a commitment from this Government—to go ahead and build this Holocaust memorial. Of course, he is right, and I am sure the whole House will agree that the number of people involved—6 million Jewish men, women and children, and millions of others—is almost incomprehensible and absolutely horrendous. That is why the Holocaust has to stand out on its own. However, as I mentioned earlier, we must never forget other atrocities.

Lord Palmer of Childs Hill (Liberal Democrat): My Lords, all genocide is horrific but, on the anniversary of the liberation of Auschwitz, surely we should recognise how the sheer industrialisation of the Holocaust differs from other genocides, appalling though they all are. There are still Holocaust deniers. Civilisation is only skin deep, and we need continual reminding of man's inhumanity to man. Does the Minister agree that the UK needs to preserve the memories of survivors and educate future generations?

Viscount Younger of Leckie: The noble Lord is absolutely right. That is why the memorial exhibition and learning centre will explore the role of Britain's Parliament and democratic institutions in the Holocaust— what we did and what more we could have done to tackle the persecution of the Jewish people and other groups.

Lord Kennedy of Southwark (Labour Co-op): My Lords, I endorse the comments of the noble Viscount in answering this Question. I am delighted that my noble friend Lady Smith of Basildon, along with the noble Lord, Lord Pickles, and others, is a trustee of the Holocaust Memorial Day Trust. Does the noble Viscount agree that it is welcome that the learning centre will focus not just on the Holocaust but on all other genocides and that it is important that we do not forget the horrors of the past?

Viscount Younger of Leckie: Yes, indeed. I repeat what I said earlier: the learning centre, which still requires a lot of input, will focus on the Holocaust but will also cover other genocides.

Lord Singh of Wimbledon (Crossbench): My Lords, we all recognise that the Jewish people have suffered probably the most horrendous genocide in human history. However, we should not forget that other genocides have wiped out millions of people. Although the Holocaust memorial should focus on the suffering of the Jewish people, it is appropriate for it also to recognise that other communities suffer and will continue to suffer unless we recognise that politicians—to use the word in its worst sense—can turn communities which had previously lived together peacefully against each other, to the point where they massacre each other.

Viscount Younger of Leckie: I know that there are strong feelings in the House on this matter and I can only repeat that the memorial will look at other genocides. I mentioned Cambodia, Rwanda and Bosnia. The main point is that it will use the lessons of our shared past to inform the decisions that affect our future.

<https://hansard.parliament.uk/lords/2020-01-20/debates/A1EA9D33-5CDA-479A-88EE-1515CC2E6BC5/UKHolocaustMemorial>

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Israel

House of Commons Written Answers

Palestinians: Foreign Relations

Seema Malhotra (Labour Co-op) [3756] To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, what discussions his Department has had with his EU counterparts on Palestine ahead of the EU Foreign Affairs Council on 20 January 2020.

Christopher Pincher: The United Kingdom is strongly supportive of a regional and international approach to the Middle East peace process. We have regular discussions with EU counterparts, the United States, other key partners and multilateral institutions like the UN, to support resolutions and policies that encourage Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territories to take steps that rebuild trust. This is crucial for negotiations to succeed. We work closely with EU partners to make clear our serious concerns about the situation on the ground.

<https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Commons/2020-01-15/3756/>

UNRWA

Seema Malhotra (Labour Co-op) [3757] To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, what steps his Department has taken to provide support to the UN Relief and Works Agency.

Andrew Murrison: The United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA) is an essential humanitarian and stabilising force in the region, providing vital services to millions of Palestinian refugees every day. In 2019/20 the UK has committed £65.5 million to UNRWA, matching our 2018 contribution. The UK's support helps provide education to more than 532,000 children (half of which are girls), health services for around 3.1 million people and social safety net assistance for 255,000 of the most vulnerable. UNRWA's three year mandate was renewed at the UN General Assembly's Fourth Committee on 13 December; the UK voted in favour.

<https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Commons/2020-01-15/3757/>

House of Lords Written Answers

Palestinians: Elections

Lord Hylton (Crossbench) [HL137] To ask Her Majesty's Government what steps they intend to take, including in conjunction with other countries, to ensure that the first Palestinian elections in 13 years are held; and in particular, that Palestinians in East Jerusalem are able to vote.

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: Along with EU partners, we have encouraged the Palestinian leadership to work toward strong, inclusive, accountable and democratic institutions, based on respect for the rule of law and human rights. We welcome work towards genuine and democratic national elections for all Palestinians. We consider this to be crucial in view of the establishment of a viable and sovereign Palestinian State. To this end, we call on all Palestinian factions to seek common ground and to work together to pursue a positive path towards new elections.

<https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Lords/2020-01-07/HL137/>

Israel: Palestinians

Lord Hylton (Crossbench) [HL138] To ask Her Majesty's Government what discussions they have had with the government of Israel about (1) the convictions of 4,519 persons during the five years ending in June 2019 for failing to comply with military orders declaring closed military zones, and (2) the use of regulations dating from the time of the League of Nations Mandate.

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: As part of our frequent engagement with Israel with respect to its obligations as an occupying power under the Fourth Geneva Convention, officials in our Embassy in Tel Aviv have raised with the Israeli authorities both the issue of closed military zones being declared by the Israel Defence Force, and their implementation of specific laws and regulations, including ones dating from the mandate period, in the Occupied Palestinian Territories.

<https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Lords/2020-01-07/HL138/>

Hebron: Demolition

Baroness Tonge (Non-affiliated) [HL240] To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of reports that the government of Israel intends to demolish the Palestinian wholesale market in the centre of Hebron in order to build housing to accommodate Israeli settlers.

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: We are aware of the Israeli authorities' instruction to advance planning procedures for a new settlement in Hebron. We understand that this does not signal the start of a formal planning process. However, if such plans

were to advance this would be of grave concern given the sensitivities of the location. We are monitoring the situation closely.

<https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Lords/2020-01-08/HL240/>

West Bank: Demolition

Baroness Tonge (Non-affiliated) [HL241] To ask Her Majesty's Government what estimate they have made of the number of Palestinian homes that have been demolished in East Jerusalem and the West Bank in order to build housing for settlements; and whether that number has increased in the last two years.

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: The British Government is seriously concerned by the continued demolition of Palestinian property by the Israeli authorities. The practice causes unnecessary suffering to ordinary Palestinians; calls into question Israel's commitment to a viable two-state solution and, in all but the most exceptional of cases are contrary to International Humanitarian Law. Officials from our Embassy in Tel Aviv have repeatedly raised our concerns about demolitions with the Israeli authorities. Most recently, the UK's Deputy Permanent Representative to the UN raised this issue at the UN Security Council briefing on the Middle East on 18 December 2019. We call on the Israeli authorities to cease the counter-productive policy of demolitions, and provide a clear, transparent route to construction for Palestinians in Area C.

<https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Lords/2020-01-08/HL241/>

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Relevant Legislation ** new or updated today

UK Parliament

Divorce, Dissolution and Separation Bill

<https://services.parliament.uk/Bills/2019-20/divorcedissolutionandseparation.html>

**** European Union (Withdrawal Agreement) Bill**

<https://services.parliament.uk/Bills/2019-20/europeanunionwithdrawalagreement.html>

Report Stage, House of Lords

[https://hansard.parliament.uk/lords/2020-01-20/debates/396570D8-4F9D-431B-B907-3CE6AEE077F1/EuropeanUnion\(WithdrawalAgreement\)Bill](https://hansard.parliament.uk/lords/2020-01-20/debates/396570D8-4F9D-431B-B907-3CE6AEE077F1/EuropeanUnion(WithdrawalAgreement)Bill)

Debate, Northern Ireland Assembly

<http://aims.niassembly.gov.uk/officialreport/report.aspx?&eveDate=2020/01/20&docID=291366#2673328>

Scottish Parliament

**** Civil Partnership (Scotland) Bill**

<https://www.parliament.scot/parliamentarybusiness/Bills/112997.aspx>

Stage 1 Report, Delegated Powers and Law Reform Committee

<https://sp-bpr-en-prod-cdneq.azureedge.net/published/DPLR/2020/1/17/Civil-Partnership--Scotland--Bill--Stage-1/DPLRS052020R4.pdf>

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Consultations

** new or updated today

Civil Partnership (Scotland) Bill (closing date 31 January 2020)

<https://www.parliament.scot/parliamentarybusiness/CurrentCommittees/113449.aspx>

Harassment and sexual misconduct in higher education (closing date 27 March 2020)

<https://www.officeforstudents.org.uk/media/76f6bdd3-bb14-4956-b089-cd1598323d55/consultation-on-harassment-and-sexual-misconduct-in-higher-education.pdf>

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