



Political Affairs Digest

A daily summary of political events affecting the Jewish Community

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Westminster Hall Debate

Assisted Dying Law

col 186WH **Christine Jardine (Liberal Democrat):** ... The current law in this country simply is not working. I hope that we can begin to address today the effect of that law on terminally ill people and their loved ones, and on public servants such as doctors, health and social care professionals, police and coroners. ... this issue is hugely evocative, can involve issues of faith and puts the medical profession in the most difficult of positions. It is also, of course, the most personal, intimate and ultimate of decisions. ...

Andrew Selous (Conservative): ... Does the hon. Lady agree that we need to be very careful to ensure that old and sick people do not feel a pressure to end their lives, perhaps from their children, who might want to inherit their assets and to whom they may feel they are being a burden?

Christine Jardine: ... That is why I am so concerned that we should have a very narrow and precise definition if we change the law. ...

col 187WH **Fiona Bruce (Conservative):** What is the hon. Lady's response to the evidence that, in countries where assisted suicide has been made legal, investment in palliative care has fallen?

Christine Jardine: ... That is something we would have to be aware of, but I believe it is up to us to address it. ...

col 188WH **Rupa Huq (Labour):** ... I get her point that saying goodbye in an airport is not the best thing for people who choose to go to Switzerland, but at the same time I worry about safeguards. This could be exploited as a shortcut if NHS funds are not as we want. ...

Christine Jardine: ... this debate ... is intended to get the ball rolling, look for the evidence, find out what people are afraid of, and consider the safeguards we need and how the law can be improved ...

col 189WH **Sarah Olney (Liberal Democrat):** ... a key issue that we are all wrestling with: the capacity to consent? My hon. Friend has made the point clearly that this has to be a choice, and that safeguards must be in place to ensure a person has the capacity to make that choice. ...

Lisa Cameron (SNP): ... Does [Christine Jardine] agree that ... we should provide better mental health support, psychological support and counselling to enable people to come to terms with their feelings and look much more positively towards their abilities and the contribution they make? ...

Christine Jardine: ... A recent policy paper considered by the homicide committee of the National Police Chiefs' Council showed that investigators are frustrated with the current legislation, and that families whose loved ones have had assisted deaths are losing confidence in the police and criminal justice system. ...

Dignity in Dying has calculated that every eight days, someone from the United Kingdom travels to Switzerland for an assisted death, with their grieving families often treated as criminals once they return. Every year in England and Wales alone, an estimated 300 people take their own lives because they are faced with a terminal diagnosis and it seems their only option. ...

The law has created a two-tier system. If someone has more than £10,000, they can travel to Switzerland or elsewhere for the end-of-life care of their choice. ... According to the most recent surveys, 84% would like to see a change. ...

col 190WH **Jim Shannon (DUP):** ... The answer is not legalising assisted suicide. The answer is to help, to support and to be compassionate towards families. ...

col 191WH **Fiona Bruce:** ... In Oregon physician-assisted suicide for the terminally ill was legalised 10 years ago. The annual Government report of 2018 stated that more than half of those applying now cite "fear of being a burden" as their major end-of-life concern. Far fewer cite pain concerns. Disability groups are extremely concerned about what has happened, for example, in Canada since 2016. In just four years, under the law that has allowed terminally ill people to request assisted suicide and euthanasia, safeguards have been ignored, removed and extended to non-terminally ill people such as those with depression. ...

... regardless of the wording of eligibility criteria in legislation, in practice safeguards are often discarded, and vulnerable and depressed people are assisted to end their lives. That applies in all jurisdictions that have legalised assisted suicide or euthanasia. ...

col 192WH Rather than assisting vulnerable people to commit suicide, or administering euthanasia, we should be looking to improve palliative care provision and mental health treatment. ...

Rachel Hopkins (Labour): ... we must consider how to prevent slippage and avoid a transition towards a lax law that would allow assisted dying without sufficient safeguards. Assisted dying should be an option for those who are terminally ill, and we must ensure that any legislation is not used as an alternative to effective palliative care. ...

col 193WH **Elliot Colburn (Conservative):** ... Even with a sign-off from two separate doctors, can we really adequately say that we can protect people—that we can prevent people from feeling as if they are a burden? What test should we apply to mental capacity? How can we guarantee that mistakes will never be made about something as final as ending a life? ...

On the other side of the argument, however, there is something that I struggle with. When there is no chance of recovery and no quality of life at all, it seems almost cruel to let someone live with that and prolong their suffering for no reason. ...

col 195WH **Desmond Swayne (Conservative):** ... It is estimated that some 400 people have taken their lives in the last year as a consequence of having a terminal illness. In the Netherlands, however, the service that provides assisted dying has assisted some 21,000 persons to take that route. With our proportionately larger population, are we prepared for the trajectory of increase in this phenomenon that will fundamentally change the nature of the medical profession when the clinician who brings healing is also the clinician who brings death? ...

col 197WH **Fiona Bruce:** No major medical organisation is in favour of changing the law

to promote assisted suicide in this country. ...

Ian Paisley (DUP): ... Ninety per cent. of us who walked into the building today probably did not realise that we walked under a portrait of Moses carrying the ten commandments. The top one says, "Thou shalt not kill". We are debating at what point we shall kill. The House debates it many times. Should we kill in the womb? Should we kill at the end of life? When should we do it? We have to take those tough, critical decisions, and sometimes the House gets it wrong. We should not get it wrong on this occasion.

We should not set a position on when is the right time to kill someone who is sick. We should be asking the positive, strong question: how much palliative care and support can we give people at the greatest point of need? ...

col 198WH Alicia Kearns (Conservative): ... Many doctors hold that assisting in death is a violation of their professional oaths and a desecration of their ethical responsibilities. For that reason, any legislation must protect the conscience rights of healthcare professionals and ensure adequate protections for them. ...

col 202WH John Hayes (Conservative): ... All our lives will have a share of that, and some lives have more of it than others. That is a sad fact.

In our age, it seems very unpalatable to people that that should be so. We have been encouraged, perhaps by the world we live in, by media, popular culture or the exchange of ideas, to think that lives can be made ideal, perfect, cushioned and so forever comfortable, but it is just not like that. ...

Although life, as I have described it, is momentary, each moment is precious. The life of profoundly disabled people is precious, and the life of those weak, wizened, sick and infirm people is precious. Every life has value and every life ultimately ends. If that is unpalatable, then so be it, because that is the contextual reality that this debate is considering. ...

... in the end, the truth is that it is compassionate most of all to care, to protect and to prevent where we possibly can. That is the ultimate compassion: coming to terms with the temporary nature of life and the pain that I have described, and then exercising that kind of care.

It is easier to end lives. ...

col 203WH Imran Hussain (Labour): ... for every argument made in favour of relaxing the law on assisted dying, a counter-argument is advanced ... Those who oppose change point out that legalising assisted dying could lead to an abuse of the system and to pressure being applied, even unintentionally, to those suffering from terminal illness. They may feel that they are, or will become, a burden on their friends, family and carers, leaving them, in their eyes, with no real choice but to end their own life in a selfless act to spare others. ...

col 205WH The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Justice (Chris Philp): ... The current law on assisted suicide in England and Wales is governed by section 2 of the Suicide Act 1961, which gives a blanket criminalisation of the offence, including by "encouraging or assisting" suicide. There are no exemptions from that in statute. In Northern Ireland, there are similar statutory provisions. In Scotland, there is no statutory criminalisation of assisted suicide, but it is prosecuted as a culpable homicide, so the effect in Scottish law is, broadly speaking, the same. ...

The application of the law, and prosecutions for anyone suspected of assisting or encouraging suicide, is subject to prosecution policy—whether the Crown Prosecution Service in England and Wales, or the Procurator Fiscal Service in Scotland, decide to prosecute. In making a prosecution decision, with this offence as with any other, the Crown Prosecution Service and the Director of Public Prosecutions apply two tests. One is an evidential test: is there evidence that the offence has been committed? Secondly, there is a public interest test: does it serve the public interest to pursue a prosecution? ...

col 206WH Clause 43 of those Crown Prosecution Service guidelines sets out a number of conditions that will make it more likely that a prosecution serves the public interest.

However, clause 45 lays out six conditions that will make a prosecution less likely, including: first, that the person who has died reached a voluntary, clear and settled decision; secondly, that the accused was motivated by compassion; thirdly, that the nature of the assistance or encouragement was minor; fourthly, that the accused had tried to dissuade the person dying from pursuing that course of action; and fifthly, that the matter had been properly reported to the police. ...

Between April 2009 and July 2019, the police referred 152 cases related to this issue to the Crown Prosecution Service in England and Wales; I regret that I do not have the figures for Scotland. Of those 152 cases, 104 cases were not proceeded with by the CPS; 29 cases were withdrawn by the police; three cases were prosecuted successfully; one case was prosecuted unsuccessfully ... three cases remain outstanding; and eight cases led to prosecutions for a different criminal offence. ...

col 208WH A number of Members have asked for a review or a call for evidence. The Government do not have any plans at the moment to initiate any review or call for evidence; our view is that it is for Parliament to act in this space. ...

... it is also for Parliament to initiate legislation, if it sees fit to do so. ...

To read the full transcript see

<https://hansard.parliament.uk/commons/2020-01-23/debates/B0F8B659-0411-45E7-9341-05C2B3529102/AssistedDyingLaw>

House of Commons Oral Answers

Justice System: Causes of Racism

5. **Angela Crawley (SNP):** What recent discussions she has had with Cabinet colleagues on (a) tackling the causes of racism and racial disparities in the justice system and (b) promoting equality of opportunity. [900373]

6. **Kirsten Oswald (SNP):** What recent discussions she has had with Cabinet colleagues on (a) tackling the causes of racism and racial disparities in the justice system and (b) promoting equality of opportunity. [900374]

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Justice (Wendy Morton): We are working across Government and with partners to tackle the over-representation of black and Asian people and those from other ethnic minorities in the criminal justice system, which we know has deep-rooted causes. That work includes taking forward the recommendations of the extensive, independent review by the right hon. Member for Tottenham (Mr Lammy) and developing a number of interventions, and it is all aimed at reducing disproportionality.

Angela Crawley: The Home Office's proposals to strengthen police powers to tackle unauthorised encampments have rightly been condemned for discriminating against Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities, and for effectively criticising and criminalising their way of life. Those who have condemned the proposals include the Scottish Government Minister for Older People and Equalities; Friends, Families and Travellers; and Liberty. The Women and Equalities Committee has also looked at this issue. Given those concerns, will the Minister commit to conducting and publishing an equality impact assessment of the proposals?

Wendy Morton: My Home Office colleagues are aware of this, and it is something they are considering.

Kirsten Oswald: The Home Secretary was recently quoted as saying: "I'm not in that category...where I believe there's racism at all. I think we live in a great country, a great society, full of opportunity, where people of any background can get on in life."

Does the Minister agree with the Home Secretary's statement that there is no racism at all? If she does not, will she condemn those who deny that racism and inequality of opportunity exist?

Wendy Morton: That is not my understanding of what the Home Secretary said, but let me be absolutely clear that this Government have regard to eliminating discrimination and advancing equality of opportunity in all our work. This approach informs regular engagement between Cabinet Ministers in relation to the justice system. This is something we take incredibly seriously.

Anne McLaughlin (SNP): ... It is not just the Home Secretary who is in denial about racism. The racism to which it is easiest for us all to turn a blind eye is the insidious type, where often even the perpetrator does not realise what lies behind it. Is the Minister open to working with people like me and, more particularly, with black, Asian and minority ethnic MPs to raise awareness of unconscious racial bias and the devastating impact it has on the day-to-day lives of many of our citizens?

Wendy Morton: I think it is deeply unfair to lecture the Home Secretary on discrimination. Let us be absolutely clear that this Government are committed to closing the opportunity gap in our society. We are determined to implement the policies needed for the UK to succeed as a nation. I work very closely with the right hon. Member for Tottenham, and the Ministry of Justice takes the issue of racial disparity very seriously.

<https://hansard.parliament.uk/commons/2020-01-23/debates/FCB58815-C2B2-4878-8AED-CEAAF616B3C4/JusticeSystemCausesOfRacism>

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Holocaust

House of Commons Debate

Holocaust Memorial Day

col 437 **The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government (Luke Hall):** This debate is taking place on the 75th anniversary of the liberation of the Nazi concentration camps throughout Europe, which brought an end to the murder of 6 million Jewish men, women and children by Nazi Germany. But as we know, it did not bring an end to the scourge of antisemitism. Today, sadly, we see antisemitism on the rise once more in this country and across Europe and the Americas. It is a mark of a civilised society that people of different faiths, different cultures and different traditions can live together in harmony. If we are truly to value Holocaust Memorial Day, we will do it by remembering this lesson: that we must show tolerance and respect for other people in order to live in peace. That is why it is vital that we all rise to the challenge and rid our society of this age-old hatred.

On Holocaust Memorial Day, we remember all those murdered by the Nazis ... The enormity of the numbers can make it seem almost impossible to relate to individual victims. That is made even harder because the names of many holocaust victims have been lost to us. In Nazi Germany, Jewish men and women were forced to change any name believed to be Aryan to Israel for men and Sara for women. Others, in the camps, had their names stripped from them and replaced by a tattooed number. Personal names that had been handed down from father to son and from mother to daughter were lost or replaced. ...

Survivors are at the heart of holocaust commemorations. Those of us who have been fortunate enough to sit before a survivor and listen to them describe their experience can be in no doubt about the terrible truth of what happened. Sadly, to this day there are still people who insist that the holocaust never happened. ...

col 438 Survivors are the ultimate rebuke to such thoughts, and the testimonies that we hear are a reminder of our duty to confront those who would tell lies about our history. ...

I pay tribute to the eye witnesses for their resilience and their bravery. They are still, even

in their 80s and 90s, sharing their testimony in schools across the country with the Holocaust Educational Trust. We are also hugely grateful to the next generation of Holocaust Educational Trust ambassadors—thousands of young people who have heard testimony from survivors and who have visited Auschwitz and returned to share what they have learned. ...

John Hayes (Conservative): ... will the Government play their part in working with schools to bring the life of the work of the trust to every part of our kingdom? It is vital that the next generation understand that the future is, in part, shaped by what we learn from the past.

Luke Hall: I absolutely give that commitment ...

col 439 Although Auschwitz is synonymous with the holocaust, few people are aware of the Arolsen archive, the world's most comprehensive archive on the victims and survivors of Nazi persecution. The collection has information on around 17.5 million people and belongs to UNESCO's memory of the world. Apart from the paper records, the archive has 3,000 personal possessions belonging to former inmates of concentration camps. Thanks to the #StolenMemory campaign, the archive has returned precious recovered items to family members. Members can imagine the immeasurable value that these items have to their families—they are often the last remaining traces of parents, grandparents, brothers and sisters. ...

The theme for this year's Holocaust Memorial Day is "stand together". It is a reminder for us to stand together, with each other and with our communities, to remember the holocaust. It is also a reminder that during the holocaust and subsequent genocides, communities themselves were deliberately divided, with individuals persecuted because of their identity, and that, despite the dangers of doing so, some people chose to stand together with those targeted, to challenge the divisive actions of genocidal regimes. We must remember their bravery and sacrifice and be inspired by it. We also must make sure that we stand together to challenge hatred and prejudice wherever we find them today ... The incredible work of the Holocaust Educational Trust is of massive value. ...

Despite that education and the support of successive Governments and people in the United Kingdom, it is a sad fact that antisemitism has spread like a virus far into UK politics in recent years—even into the very building in which we stand. When the Chief Rabbi unprecedentedly feels the need to speak about his fears during the general election campaign, when Jewish councillors and Members of Parliament are subjected to such campaigns of hatred that they feel they have no alternative but to stand down, when dangerous conspiracy theories become so widespread on social media that the public start to believe them and write in to our offices with the most offensive lies, we must shake ourselves and remember that this is not normal; this is wrong. I urge all Members to play their part in turning the tide of antisemitism. ...

col 440 We are proud to support the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance, which unites experts and 34 member states behind the need for holocaust education, remembrance and research. In 2016, the IHRA created a working definition of antisemitism, which is now internationally accepted. The alliance seeks to ensure that no one can shirk responsibility for their words by playing with semantics, but it will succeed only if organisations sign up to the definition and support it. The IHRA definition is already used in guidance for the police and Crown Prosecution Service, to help them to identify hate crime. I urge public organisations in the UK to sign up to the IHRA definition. ...

James Brokenshire (Conservative): ... We must reassure British Jews that they are and always will be a special part of what Britain is all about. In that spirit, does he agree that having a holocaust memorial and learning centre is essential to underline both that commitment to them and our duty to ensure that law and practice can never take us down a dark path like the holocaust?

col 441 **Luke Hall:** ... I completely agree that the memorial will stand as a reminder that a central role of democracy is to encourage tolerance for ethnic, religious and racial

differences that will foster religious freedom, individual rights and civic responsibility. It will prompt a sincere commitment to mourn and to remember, and absolutely for us to act. ...

Cat Smith (Labour): ... I thank the Holocaust Memorial Day Trust for everything it does to ensure that the whole country remembers the 6 million Jews murdered during the holocaust, as well as the millions of other people killed under Nazi persecution and in subsequent genocides. ...

I also pay tribute to the Holocaust Educational Trust and the work that it does to ensure that the UK plays a leading role internationally on holocaust education, remembrance and research. ...

Finally, I pay tribute to the survivors and the many who lost loved ones. Although it is now 75 years since the liberation of Auschwitz, the physical and mental scars of the horrors that holocaust survivors have had to endure have not necessarily faded with time. It is therefore all the more incredible that so many survivors dedicate their lives to sharing their experiences and educating young people about the horrors of that era, and the need to oppose antisemitism and any form of racial or religious hatred. These survivors—now of a generation who were just young children when they went through some of the most awful experiences that any of us can imagine—have collectively helped to educate millions of schoolchildren against the hatreds that are tragically still too prevalent in society. ...

col 442 Holocaust Memorial Day is a reminder that we all have a duty to ensure that such an event can never happen again, but also that the hatred that culminated in the genocide did not start with the biggest of crimes. It emerged from a climate of scapegoating and victimisation of minorities—primarily Jews, but also Roma, Sinti and others—which is much closer to the racism that we know still scars our society today. ...

As Primo Levi said, monsters do exist in our world, but they are too few to be truly dangerous; more dangerous are those who are willing to follow their evil without asking questions. It is our job in this place to ensure that those questions are asked, and clearly we need to do more.

Dave Rich of the Community Security Trust has suggested that the recent rises in antisemitism are not just about attitudes to Jewish people but are the results of our society weakening as a whole. Extremist movements in the UK and abroad have given confidence to those that previously hid in the shadows. Antisemitism always flourishes when extremism takes hold, and our current times are no different. This is a problem that all British society must confront, and it demands leadership that is prepared to turn its back on inequality and division. Prejudice and hatred of Jewish people has no place whatsoever in society, and every one of us has a responsibility to ensure that it is never allowed to fester again. ...

col 443 **Margaret Hodge (Labour):** I want to raise an issue around social media and the way that it has been exploited by, I am afraid, the hard left in what I would call almost holocaust weaponisation. The hard left are trying to close down any constructive debate that we can have on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. They are trying to fuel modern antisemitism and trying to silence many Jews in public life. I regularly receive images which, for example, have piles of dead bodies from Nazi death camps, and swastikas alongside Israeli flags. I am likened to SS guards, and I have seen online remarks calling for a final solution to my sort of politics. ...

Cat Smith: ... Members of the Jewish community are on the receiving end of this hate, but today's debate is a chance for us to acknowledge that they cannot be left to tackle this problem alone. We need to be vigilant, because the events that led to the holocaust appeared, not as a single grotesque event, but through the normalisation and mainstreaming of hatred, inequality and intolerance. ...

col 444 **Andrew Percy (Conservative):** ... I am delighted to stand here as the newly elected co-chairman of the all-party parliamentary group against antisemitism ...

The principle we have set out for the all-party group is that we are going to take on the

problems of antisemitism wherever it is found in this country—or indeed in this Chamber, in whichever party it exists. ...

col 445 Daniel Kawczynski (Conservative): ... The problem with that term is that it is a firewall between the real perpetrators, the Germans. We are now seeing a revisionism as to who was to blame for the start of the second world war; we heard President Putin last week claim that Poland was somehow partly responsible for starting it. It is very important not to use third-term expressions such as “Nazis”, but to say exactly who started this and who is responsible, which is Germany and the German people. ...

Andrew Percy: ... While there have been problems on both sides of politics, I do fear, sadly, that on the Labour Benches—some 30 of the party’s candidates at the recent election were accused of antisemitism—there is more work to be done to counter anti-Jewish racism. ...

col 446 Lisa Cameron (SNP): ... Does he agree that the whole House must condemn the terrible actions of individuals during the election who put through my door my own election leaflets with swastikas drawn over the part where I mentioned that my gran had escaped from Germany during the war? We must educate people across the United Kingdom, but we must also have particular cognisance of the impact of such issues during election periods and the damage that is done to Jewish communities and others across the United Kingdom.

Andrew Percy: I entirely agree with the hon. Lady ... who has been incredibly brave in calling out antisemitism herself, as well as the subject of antisemitism. ...

col 447 I agree with the Minister’s comments and urge colleagues to sign up to the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance definition. The APPG sat in Portcullis House for a very long time yesterday to encourage colleagues to sign up. Many still have not done so, but I ask them please to sign up to the IHRA definition, because that is one way in which all of us can demonstrate leadership and show our commitment to zero tolerance of antisemitism.

Of course, antisemitism and antisemitic tropes were the beating heart of Nazism, yet in the past few years there has been a resurgence of holocaust denial, and the holocaust has been distorted and denigrated. ... The Antisemitism Policy Trust and the Community Security Trust have found that the number of searches for “holocaust hoax” on Holocaust Memorial Day is 30% above the average for the rest of the year. If someone types the words “Jew joke” into Google, they will find some of the most shocking and disgusting antisemitic, holocaust-minimising and racist bile they can find. This all occurs in an online space that impacts on our real world ...

As the Institute for Jewish Policy Research has shown, the chances are that while only 2.5% of the public may be what we would understand as antisemites, one antisemitic opinion is likely to be held by some 30% of the public. Therefore, the chances of encountering antisemitism in this country are relatively high. ...

col 448 ... the Holocaust Educational Trust does a fantastic job. No Holocaust Memorial Day debate is complete without a shout-out to Karen Pollock and all of her fantastic team for everything that they do. ...

One of the real challenges of teaching the holocaust is that, because of the scale of the horror and the outrage, it is often very difficult for young people to understand the machinery and the scale of what actually happened. However, a visit reinforces something that it is much more difficult to get across in the classroom. We have to continue holocaust education, and we have to continue to fund the Holocaust Educational Trust properly. ...

col 450 ... putting our names to something is very easy ... However, issues such as this are not just about signing bits of paper, or indeed signing the very important remembrance book this week, but about action. ...

Kirsten Oswald (SNP): ... Our Scotland is, and must be, a Scotland for people of all faiths and none—a home for all of us. The theme of the debate today has to be a stark reminder

to us all that we must all challenge antisemitism wherever we see it—standing together, standing up against hate and speaking out. ...

col 451 A holocaust does not just suddenly happen: it builds up gradually and bit by bit. Intolerance and hatred become the norm, and they grow. So our language and our actions matter. We need to be very clear about that and about the responsibilities we have in this place. We must stand together. We must influence others to do so and we must call out hatred wherever it exists. It cannot be allowed to grow and fester unchallenged. ...

I visited the Scottish Jewish Archives Centre at Garnethill a while back, and was struck by the huge value of that facility. ...

Alison Thewliss (SNP): ... Was she as struck as I was, when looking at some of the personal effects of Jewish people—their passports and their personal belongings—at just how quickly things can change and how quickly hate can rise? ...

Kirsten Oswald: ... We have a responsibility to recognise hate when we see it. We have that responsibility to call it out, because things can change very quickly. ...

col 452 I was very fortunate to visit Yad Vashem, the World Holocaust Memorial Centre. ... It was the little things that stood out and affected me profoundly. Seeing the photos and the names, the people who were killed were not just numbers—although they amount to more than the entire population of Scotland—but people just like you and me. ...

col 453 **John Howell (Conservative):** ... I have been to Yad Vashem ... Two things stand out in my memory. The first is the objectivity of the displays—they do not try to dress up the holocaust; they explain it as it is. The second is the timeline there—it illustrates not just what happened when the second world war started, but the timeline before that and the sort of words and feelings that started the whole process that led to the holocaust. ...

col 460 **Lyn Brown (Labour):** ... I want to thank and pay tribute to Olivia Marks-Woldman, the inspirational Karen Pollock and all the wonderful people at the Holocaust Memorial Day Trust and the Holocaust Educational Trust for their tireless work. ...

In previous debates in the House, I have spoken about the incredible bravery of Jewish people in the most extraordinary and terrible circumstances, and the extraordinary strength that they displayed when they must truly have felt that there was no hope left. That strength was epitomised in the Warsaw ghetto uprising. The Bielski partisans also showed that strength, as did the Sobibor uprising. The strength and courage in evidence there were simply staggering. ...

... after the German occupation of Poland in 1939, the Nazis pursued a policy of segregation. The Jews of Warsaw were relocated to a ghetto, and at the outset 138,000 Jews were forcibly transported there, and 113,000 non-Jewish Poles were also forced from their homes. Society was split in two. People were forbidden to bring their possessions into the ghetto, and they were thrust into immediate destitution. ...

col 461 It cannot be denied that some were looking on in satisfaction, gloating that their Jewish neighbours were being forced from their homes and forced apart from them, but thousands of people stood against this awful racism. ...

col 462 Sadly, the reason it is so important to remember these histories is that the poison of racism has not gone away. It is really frightening to see how it rears its ugly head again and again, right around the world; whether it is the treatment of the Uyghur Muslims, who have been put into re-education camps in Xinjiang; the treatment of Indian Muslims in Assam and throughout India—many of whom are being stripped of their citizenship and being attacked; or the attacks on refugees by the President of the United States, who employs the rhetoric of the terrible so-called “great replacement theory”. ...

Stephen Crabb (Conservative): ... many of the survivors, including many still with us today in our society, have devoted enormous amounts of time to teaching young people about the past, and about the challenge of antisemitism and hatred in our own society. Much of that work, as we have heard, has been done through the Holocaust Educational Trust. I, too, wish to place on the record my admiration and support for its work. ...

Israel has not been mentioned a lot in this debate. When we discuss antisemitism, or when it is discussed in our society, people often skirt around the issue of Israel. I recognise that there are distinctions ... but when we call out antisemitism in our society today it is important to recognise that the mask—the face—worn by antisemitism in 2020 is often a blatant hatred of Israel. People dress up their core antisemitism with a hatred of Israel, thinking it somehow makes their antisemitism more acceptable.

col 465 Andrew Percy: That was precisely why, when I responded to such a debate a few years ago, I referenced the Israelification of antisemitism. That is why it is so important that we sign up to the IHRA definition. We have a big problem with antisemitism on the campuses of our universities in this country, so will my right hon. Friend condemn universities like Warwick, whose vice-chancellor is refusing to sign up to the IHRA definition that addresses the Israelification of antisemitism?

Stephen Crabb: ... Antisemitism in this country often has a face of Israel-hatred. I have a problem when people talk about fighting antisemitism, and being against antisemitism, while indulging in far-right or far-left conspiracy theories and tropes of Jewish stereotypes, even though they try to untangle those remarks. ...

People know exactly what they are doing when they describe Israelis as Nazis, and it stems from the core of antisemitism that underlies a lot of this. ...

I am a proud defender of the state of Israel—that makes me a Zionist—and I believe in a Jewish homeland. We recognise that the state of Israel was founded in the ruins and the aftermath of the dark events we are remembering today—there is a direct link. A Jewish homeland, the state of Israel, is the last defence against antisemitism. It is the right of Jews to live in a country where they can walk around without fear of being who they are, and where they can fully own their identity and live in a Jewish state. ...

col 466 Jim Shannon (DUP): ... As we mark the 75th anniversary of the liberation of those remaining in Auschwitz, I feel sickened and saddened by the images that are conjured. It is important that future generations understand this and feel as we do. ...

col 467 The evil events we remember today started more than eight decades ago, but antisemitism is not called the “oldest hatred” for no reason, and neither has it been eradicated. Our Jewish brothers and sisters ... have been persecuted for millennia. Even in 2020, Britain, Europe and the world have witnessed rising levels of this sickness in society. We are reminded daily that antisemitism is alive and destructive not only across the world, but here in the United Kingdom. In this place, there have been accusations of antisemitism being brushed under the carpet, as opposed to being confronted and dealt with. Let us be clear: antisemitism was at the heart of the Nazi plan. If we, as political leaders in the constituencies we represent, are not brave enough to recognise and call out the cause and effect of the oldest hatred, we will not find a solution. ...

We also have to recall the Gaza border debate that took place in this House on 15 May 2018, when Member after Member stood up to denounce the state of Israel for killing innocent people. We found out a day later, of course, that 53 of the 62 killed at the Gaza border on 14 May were members of Hamas or Islamic Jihad—terrorists trying to breach the border fence to kill innocent Jewish people. We must keep in perspective the fact that hatred towards the Jewish people is clear. Nine innocent people were also killed, having been used as human shields and cannon fodder by the terrorists. Furthermore, those who denounced Israel on 15 May 2018 did nothing to alter the *Hansard* record of their contributions. No apologies were issued and there were no retractions; their comments stand in *Hansard* ...

col 468 Antisemitism is bred in many places, with the middle east being one of them. It is in our media—on TV and radio—every day. Antisemitism is a powder keg and inevitably, without peace, there will be many more times over the course of this Parliament when we will debate the issues. Let us not fall into the trap of encouraging division and hatred, and let us commit over this parliamentary term to listen to both sides of the debate. ...

col 470 **Scott Benton (Conservative):** ... We can rightly be proud of the UK's role in creating a homeland for the Jewish people. It is more important than ever that we reassert our commitment to Israel's security, its right to defend itself and its right to exist. The relationship between our nations is built not only on trade, research collaboration and security, but on our shared values. Indeed, it is Israel's commitment to freedom, religious tolerance and equality that distinguishes it from its neighbours and that its enemies in the middle east want to eradicate from the region.

Sadly, that is not the only thing that Israel's enemies want to eradicate. Terrorist organisations such as Hamas and Hezbollah continue to peddle antisemitic propaganda, and in many ways it is Israel's Jewish identity that makes it so vulnerable. But it is not just groups in the middle east, or indeed those who deny Israel's right to exist, who hold such vile views. Antisemitic incidents are on the rise across western Europe and here in the UK. It is appalling that an antisemitic element has crept back into our politics. Antisemitism should have no place in politics, nor in the world ...

col 472 **Carolyn Harris (Labour):** ... By keeping alive the memory of acts of defiance and bravery during the holocaust, we shine a light on the exceptional examples of individuals standing together in the face of evil. It is important that we remember them on this day, as well as the many, many victims of the holocaust and the families who lost people in the camps, to remind us how important it is that we unite against hatred. For the sake of those who were taken too early—those who could not defend themselves against the evil they were up against—we must continue to tell their stories and honour their sacrifice. Holocaust Memorial Day gives us the opportunity to stop and reflect; to remember those who were lost; to pay tribute to those who risked their own safety to help; and to ensure that we will never forget the innocent victims of this dreadful and evil crime. ...

col 473 **Gillian Keegan (Conservative):** ... The darkest hours in human history have been fuelled by a false narrative of difference, ignoring the fact that, as the former Member Jo Cox said in this Chamber, we have much more in common. It is clearly wrong to ignore the fact that we are all human. It undermines our society and has brought the greatest shame on humanity throughout our collective history. Holocaust Memorial Day asks us to look at the horrors of our past and to remember and learn. This year's theme is "stand together", emphasising the point that, standing shoulder to shoulder, humanity has done, and will do, exceptional things: we have wiped out diseases, ended wars and connected the world from east to west. ...

Holocaust Memorial Day also gives us the opportunity to learn about genocide more widely ... We explore how regimes have fractured societies and marginalised certain groups, and we all know that that still goes on today. ...

col 474 Given that we know from our history the horror that hate and discrimination bring, a resurgence of antisemitism in the UK today seems unthinkable. Yet sadly, it seems to be rearing its ugly head across our society, and we have heard several examples of that in today's debate. The rise of virulent antisemitism on social media platforms is truly appalling, and I want to take this opportunity to praise the brave members of our Jewish community who have taken a stand against it ...

Edward Davey (Conservative): ... I want to share with colleagues the lessons that I learned on a trip to Auschwitz, which was organised by the Holocaust Educational Trust. It was a truly moving day—I went with some young pupils from a school in my constituency. I had been to Auschwitz before—I had been to Dachau and Yad Vashem—but I had never received the insight of the Holocaust Educational Trust. I learned two things. One was about telling the individual stories ... I also want to talk about the academic studies that have been done on how we learn the lessons, and what the lessons to be learned are. ... On that day, I learned about how we can stop holocausts and genocides of the future. ... I do not suggest that all genocides are the same. The holocaust stands on its own, not only for its sheer scale but for the political ideology that forced it through in the most appalling

machine-like way. But as we look at antisemitism, racism and hatred in society here and in other places, I think it is important to discover lessons we can learn. ...

col 476 Alicia Kearns (Conservative): ... It is simply inconceivable, from where we stand now, how in the last century, within 1,000 miles of this House, unspeakable evil worked systematically to destroy an entire people, those who opposed it, the disabled and those who just wanted to love freely. There is something distinctly perverse and pernicious about antisemitism, in particular its manifestation in the creation of conspiracy theories that feed off division and envy. It is supremely disheartening that between January and June last year, the Community Security Trust recorded the highest ever number of antisemitic incidents in a six-month period. None of us can be left in any doubt that we have to do more to combat the malign force of antisemitism.

col 477 The terrors of our past must never become the fears of our future. On Remembrance Day we say, "Lest we forget"—not just for the fallen, but for those who were killed in barbarous acts of tyranny. The holocaust memorial and education centre next to Parliament will serve as a stark reminder of our enduring responsibility to prevent such atrocities from happening again. ...

We in this House have an intrinsic responsibility to reflect on history to prevent it from repeating itself, and to respond with swift resolve to atrocities. The Kindertransport saved abundant human potential, and it is only when we truly stand together that our society can decidedly flourish. ...

I therefore commend my colleagues on both sides of the House who have so bravely spoken out against antisemitism with such conviction—from small, everyday interactions to those who have courageously stood up to systemic antisemitism on a national level, at great personal and professional cost. But we still see genocide and hatred. The Rohingya, the Yazidis, the Uyghur—these people are being massacred. It is still happening ...

col 478 There is so much more that we all need to do to eviscerate hatred and division in our communities. We must refuse to see history repeat itself. We each have a duty to change the level of debate at our dinner tables, in the shops, on WhatsApp, on the tube and within our own families. That is how we change things. None of us can stand idly by; we have a duty to do more. It is only by talking to each other, and by creating the understanding and empathy that comes through that dialogue, that we build stronger communities who refuse to accept hatred and division. ...

col 479 Charlotte Nichols (Labour): ... There is something about the sheer scale of the holocaust that makes it so hard to comprehend; it becomes almost an abstraction. Visiting Auschwitz-Birkenau as a teenager, the part that really brought it all home for me was standing in one of the gas chambers and realising how small it was, how many people had been murdered inside it, and in such a relatively short timescale. It began to dawn on me how mechanised the holocaust was. It was a whole system, designed with the goal of murdering Jewish, Roma and Sinti, disabled and LGBT people on an industrial scale. Civilians from across Nazi-occupied Europe and political prisoners were also murdered in great numbers. As someone raised with the belief that humans are inherently good, facing up to the reality of man's capacity for evil towards his fellow man totally shook my world view. ...

col 480 We must not allow these atrocities to fade from the public consciousness, nor our commitment to standing against hatred and division to be dulled by time. We must stand firm against fascism and confront it by any means necessary to stop this vile poison from again taking root. If you will forgive my bad Yiddish, mir veln zey iberlebn—we will outlive them. ...

col 482 Bob Blackman (Conservative): ... Antisemitism is not new. It has been prevalent in society for centuries, and it is still prevalent with us today. But what makes the holocaust different is that it shows us the ultimate destination of antisemitism, with a systematic attempt to wipe out the Jewish race and anyone of Jewish religion—not just people who

were openly Jewish, but anyone with Jewish genealogy somewhere in their DNA. The way in which people's backgrounds were traced to see whether any relative or any person of their blood was Jewish was systematic, deliberate and intentional.

I was at school with many Jewish children, and no one ever spoke about the holocaust. It was ignored—perhaps to be airbrushed from history forever because it was such a tragedy. The relatives—the fathers and mothers—of many of my friends had actually come from eastern Europe or Germany as refugees, but they never spoke about the holocaust. Whenever one went for dinner on Friday nights, it was never mentioned—I often wondered why. When we were at school, we never got the opportunity to learn about the horrors of the holocaust and what people went through.

I remember my first visit to Yad Vashem. ... When I heard the names of the children being recited, it brought home to me how people could systematically murder children—wipe them off the face of the planet—and what a terrible experience it was. ...

col 483 I have often wondered how a civilised nation such as Germany could get into a position in which it would commit such inhumane acts. How could that possibly happen? When we talk about 6 million Jews being killed, it is a number, and it is hard to personalise that down to individual circumstances. It is difficult to visualise the horror of this attempt to wipe out the Jewish race. We have to remember that this did not just take place in one or two years. This was a deliberate attempt by the Nazis to eliminate the Jewish race. ...

col 484 I echo the need for a holocaust education centre to be set up alongside this building. People visit this place as the cradle of democracy, and it is right that we have a holocaust education centre alongside our Parliamentary Education Centre so that people visiting London can see a proper record of what happened without having to travel to Jerusalem or other parts of the world. ...

col 487 Crispin Blunt (Conservative): ... My father ... was one of the young officers sent to go and see what had been found in Bergen-Belsen. He recalled that to explain to the German population, who had averted their gaze from what was happening very close to them, local leaders were invited to go and see what had happened.

That is the lesson. This happened in a “civilised” nation. ...

I do not think that there is any doubt that this experience has been seared into the German soul. One can see it in its foreign policy. ...

But we have not learnt. What we need to understand is that too often other conflicts in other parts of the world have their base in hatred. Antisemitism is the virulent hatred that led inexorably to the holocaust, which is why it is so important it is called out. Other hatreds, based on ethnicity, sexuality and other characteristics, continue to exist. ...

col 488 There is no monopoly of good in the world. I have in this House pointed out, and will continue to point out, that there is very unlikely to be security for Israel until there is a decent measure of justice for the Palestinians. It is the elision sometimes of these issues that makes things extremely difficult. I have, in the whirl of social media, been called an antisemite, because I have had the temerity to stand up for the Palestinians. ...

col 492 Matthew Offord (Conservative): ... I have to tread carefully as I say this, but there is also some reluctance on the part of the Jewish community in the United Kingdom to give permission for the excavation of Jewish burial sites. This is a very delicate area, and I know that the great Chief Rabbi, Ephraim Mirvis ... has been involved in this issue. Rabbinic law dictates that the grave sites of Jewish people should not be disturbed. I have a great deal of sympathy with that point of view, but I do have a belief that unmarked graves, mass graves and locations of bodies hidden by their murderers are not proper graves in themselves, and I believe that it is appropriate for the identification of bodies to be undertaken, because people do need a proper resting place. ...

col 494 Daniel Kawczynski: ... Many hon. Members have used the term “Nazi,” and I am very worried about that term. It is almost like a firewall in front of the responsibility of the German nation and the Germans. It is almost as if Nazis are some third party who

descended on us temporarily. They were not Nazis—the Nazi party was a political party—most of the people who carried out these brutal attacks in Poland were German soldiers and German Gestapo officers who were not connected with the Nazi party. They were Germans. When I talk about the revisionism that is taking place today, we must remember who the perpetrators of these appalling crimes were. ...

col 496 Peter Bottomley (Conservative): ... My father's cousin George Woodwark was one of the 100 medical students who went out to Belsen in May 1945. Once they arrived at the camp, after liberation, the number of deaths dropped from 500 a day to 100. Within weeks, people were able to say that not a single person had died in one of the huts. ...

At the Imperial War Museum, where 900,000 people a year go to the holocaust galleries—the same number as go to Yad Vashem—they have the records of many of those medical students, as well as of the photographers and journalists who went in in April 1945. The details are there. Someone said that black-and-white photographs cannot convey the smell. In March 1945, some 20,000 people died at Belsen. They were not directly killed; they just died. There were 40,000 people left at liberation, of whom 18,000 died. ...

col 498 Stephen Morgan (Labour): ...one thing resonates above all else: the immeasurable tragedy of the holocaust has darkened lives on an infinite scale. That is why the salience of Holocaust Memorial Day and the continued commemoration must never be underestimated. The murder of 6 million Jews—the same number as the population of Rio de Janeiro—at the hands of their fellow citizens will always evoke shock and terror, but we all have a responsibility to ensure that the story is passed on to future generations. ...

col 499 Antisemitism must be drummed out with an iron fist and met with fierce opposition. In 2020, the need for reflection could not be greater. ...

The importance of reflection and remembrance transcends that of commemoration. Reflection and remembrance are the tools we must use to prevent further atrocities. The holocaust was not the last genocide; therefore we still have more work to do. ...

Education, remembrance and co-operation—these are the tools we will use to combat humanitarian catastrophes. ...

On racism and prejudice, we must educate to eradicate, especially when hate crime in this country is at an all-time high. With around 300 police-reported incidents taking place each day and nearly 80% of cases not resulting in further action being taken, it is up to all of us to change the society to which we owe so much for the better. ...

col 501 Luke Hall: ... We are one of the world's most successful multi-faith, multi-ethnic democracies. From the arts to business, from politics to culture, it would be a poorer country without the immense contribution of the Jewish community to British society. That is why we must all acknowledge that antisemitism is not just a threat to the Jewish community but to all of us and our country. This debate has highlighted the importance of Holocaust Memorial Day to stopping antisemitism and all forms of hatred.

The UK's Holocaust Memorial Day was created to remember all the victims of the holocaust and Nazi persecution, to remember those affected by more recent atrocities, and to educate people—we have heard so much about the importance of education—about the continuing dangers of racism and discrimination. It reminds us of the continuing need for vigilance and motivates people, individually and collectively, to ensure that the horrendous crimes, racism and victimisation committed during the holocaust and subsequent periods of genocide are neither forgotten nor repeated. ...

In the years leading up to the holocaust, Nazi policies and propaganda deliberately encouraged divisions within German society, urging "Aryan" Germans to keep themselves separate from their Jewish neighbours. The holocaust, Nazi persecution of other groups and each subsequent genocide were enabled by ordinary citizens not standing with their targeted neighbours. For those who might feel powerless when confronted with hatred, it is worth remembering that this is a powerful step we can all take—to stand up for and

support those who are the victims of bigotry. ...

col 502 During the debate, Members have raised concerns about how antisemitism has taken hold in British institutions including universities, local government and our political parties. The UK's Government was the first in the world to adopt the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance's working definition of antisemitism, which provides a guide on how antisemitism manifests itself in the 21st century. It is important that public bodies understand the kinds of behaviour that constitute anti-semitism today, and that is why we are calling on all local authorities and public bodies to adopt that definition.

But our institutions need to do more. We plan to bring forward legislation to ban universities and local councils from organising boycotts, sanctions and disinvestment against other countries—a measure that is often used to target Israel and can, in some instances, lead to antisemitic acts. We all have a role to play in rooting out antisemitism where we see it, and the Jewish community can be assured that this Government will stand shoulder to shoulder with them. I know that that message goes out from everybody in the Chamber today. ...

To read the full transcript see

<https://hansard.parliament.uk/commons/2020-01-23/debates/91823D04-BF3E-4AFE-B0DD-E4A907B577C5/HolocaustMemorialDay>

and

<https://hansard.parliament.uk/commons/2020-01-23/debates/3E8ADAB4-B5D4-46B0-BB5D-508488D4498C/HolocaustMemorialDay>

UK Parliament Early Day Motion

Peter Bottomley (Conservative) (104) Holocaust Memorial – That this House recognises the example of Yad Vashem with professional development courses for educators, age-appropriate study programmes with educational materials; recognises its exhibitions on the Holocaust with the names of Holocaust victims, the memory and names of its six million Jews murdered and the numerous Jewish communities destroyed; notes its support for Holocaust research projects, further notes its honouring of the non-Jews who risked their lives to save Jews; and calls on the Government and the United Kingdom National Memorial Foundation to work to achieve the Foundation's specifications set out in September 2015 and to withdraw the present controversial proposals that do not meet the 2015 specification.

<https://edm.parliament.uk/early-day-motion/53559/holocaust-memorial>

Clarence House

A speech by HRH The Prince of Wales at the World Holocaust Forum at Yad Vashem, Jerusalem

The Holocaust must never be allowed to become simply a fact of history: we must never cease to be appalled, nor moved by the testimony of those who lived through it. Their experience must always educate, and guide, and warn us. ...

To come to this sacred place, Yad Vashem – “A Memorial and a Name” – is to be faced with that for which no name, no words and no language can ever possibly do justice.

The magnitude of the genocide that was visited upon the Jewish people defies comprehension and can make those of us who live in the shadow of those indescribable events feel hopelessly inadequate.

The scale of the evil was so great, the impact so profound, that it threatens to obscure the countless individual human stories of tragedy, loss and suffering of which it was comprised. That is why places like this, and events like this, are so vitally important.

For many of you here, and for Jewish people across the globe, those stories are your stories: whether you witnessed and somehow endured the appalling barbarity of the Holocaust personally; or whether it touched your lives through the experience of your loved ones, or through the loss of parents, grandparents, uncles, aunts or other family you were never able to know. But we must never forget that they are also our story: a story of incomprehensible inhumanity, from which all humanity can and must learn. For that an evil cannot be described does not mean that it cannot be defeated. That it cannot be fully understood, does not mean that it cannot be overcome.

And so it is of particular significance that we should gather here, in Israel, where so many of those who survived the Holocaust sought and found refuge, and built a new future for themselves and this country.

In the same way, it has been a singular privilege, throughout my life, to have met so many Holocaust survivors who were welcomed to the United Kingdom and who began new lives there, contributing immeasurably to the welfare of our country, and the world, in the years that followed. ...

For my own part, I have long drawn inspiration from the selfless actions of my dear grandmother, Princess Alice of Greece, who in 1943, in Nazi-occupied Athens, saved a Jewish family by taking them into her home and hiding them.

My grandmother, who is buried on the Mount of Olives, has a tree planted in her name here at Yad Vashem, and is counted as one of the Righteous among the Nations – *ḥasidei ummot ha`olam* – a fact which gives me, and my family, immense pride.

Ladies and Gentlemen, almost a lifetime has passed since the horror of the Holocaust unfolded on the European continent, and those who bore witness to it are sadly ever fewer. We must, therefore, commit ourselves to ensuring that their stories live on, to be known and understood by each successive generation. ...

The Holocaust must never be allowed to become simply a fact of history: we must never cease to be appalled, nor moved by the testimony of those who lived through it. Their experience must always educate, and guide, and warn us.

The lessons of the Holocaust are searingly relevant to this day. Seventy-five years after the Liberation of Auschwitz-Birkenau, hatred and intolerance still lurk in the human heart, still tell new lies, adopt new disguises, and still seek new victims.

All too often, language is used which turns disagreement into dehumanisation. Words are used as badges of shame to mark others as enemies, to brand those who are different as somehow deviant. All too often, virtue seems to be sought through verbal violence. All too often, real violence ensues, and acts of unspeakable cruelty are still perpetrated around the world against people for reasons of their religion, their race or their beliefs.

Knowing, as we do, the darkness to which such behaviour leads, we must be vigilant in discerning these ever-changing threats; we must be fearless in confronting falsehoods and resolute in resisting words and acts of violence. And we must never rest in seeking to create mutual understanding and respect. We must tend the earth of our societies so that the seeds of division cannot take root and grow. And we must never forget that every human being is *be-tselem Elokim*, “in the image of God,” and even a single human life is *ke-olam malei*, “like an entire universe.”

The Holocaust was an appalling Jewish tragedy, but it was also a universal human tragedy, and one which we compound if we do not heed its lessons. ...

To read the full transcript see

<https://www.princeofwales.gov.uk/speech/speech-hrh-prince-wales-world-holocaust-forum-yad-vashem-jerusalem>

TOP

UK Parliament

Divorce, Dissolution and Separation Bill

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

**** Education (Assemblies) Bill**

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

Bill as introduced

<https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/bills/lbill/58-01/056/5801056.pdf>

First Reading, House of Lords

[https://hansard.parliament.uk/lords/2020-01-23/debates/9FA111B0-E815-46EC-A3F4-7E2F8252ECA7/Education\(Assemblies\)Bill\(HL\)](https://hansard.parliament.uk/lords/2020-01-23/debates/9FA111B0-E815-46EC-A3F4-7E2F8252ECA7/Education(Assemblies)Bill(HL))

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

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

Royal Assent

<https://hansard.parliament.uk/commons/2020-01-23/debates/14692F26-1508-41E7-A595-0C6A9ED58FC7/RoyalAssent>

Written Statement

The Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster (Michael Gove): [HCWS60] This Government was elected with a clear mandate to deliver the result of the 2016 referendum, and to ensure that the UK ratifies the deal reached by the Prime Minister, before the UK leaves the European Union on the 31 January.

The Government have sought, in line with the Sewel convention, legislative consent from the devolved legislatures of Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland for the European Union (Withdrawal Agreement) Bill.

It is important to note that despite the argument of some, the devolved legislatures have not been asked to consent to Brexit overall. In line with the devolution settlements, they have been asked to consent to the specific parts of the Bill that fall within devolved competence, or otherwise engage the legislative consent process.

It is therefore disappointing that the three devolved legislatures have refused to agree a legislative consent motion (LCM) for the European Union (Withdrawal Agreement) Bill.

We recognise that taking the Bill to Royal Assent without the consent of the devolved legislatures is a significant decision and it is one that we have not taken lightly. However, it is in line with the Sewel convention. It is also necessary in order to ensure that all parts of the UK have the powers required to meet our obligations in the withdrawal agreement. These include important protections for EU and UK citizens' rights as we leave the EU.

The Sewel convention—to which the Government remain committed—states that the UK Parliament “will not normally legislate with regard to devolved matters without the consent” of the relevant devolved legislatures. The circumstances of our departure from the EU, following the 2016 referendum, are not normal; they are unique.

At every stage of the European Union (Withdrawal Agreement) Bill, the UK Government have demonstrated their enduring commitment and respect for the Sewel convention and the principles that underpin our constitutional arrangements.

The practices and procedures that have developed to deliver the Sewel convention encourage the UK Government to consult with the devolved administrations on legislation at an early stage to ensure their views are taken into account.

Through extensive consultation and engagement it has respected the spirit and the letter

of the devolution settlement. Changes have been made to recognise the valid concerns of our partners in the Scottish and Welsh Governments. We have also, during the absence of the Executive, worked closely with the Northern Ireland civil service.

Despite the Government's efforts, it is unfortunate that common ground could not be found on all elements.

We will continue to respect and uphold the Sewel convention and the devolution settlements going forward.

We will also continue to engage with the Scottish and Welsh Governments, as well as the newly formed Northern Ireland Executive, as we negotiate our future relationship with the EU.

[https://hansard.parliament.uk/commons/2020-01-23/debates/20012313000012/EU\(WithdrawalAgreement\)Bill](https://hansard.parliament.uk/commons/2020-01-23/debates/20012313000012/EU(WithdrawalAgreement)Bill)

Scottish Parliament

Civil Partnership (Scotland) Bill

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

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Consultations

** new or updated today

**** closes in 8 days**

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