



Political Affairs Digest

A daily summary of political events affecting the Jewish Community

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House of Commons Written Answers

Arrests: Hate Crime

Edward Leigh (Conservative) [4296] To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many people were arrested for hate speech in (a) 2016, (b) 2017, and (c) 2018.

Victoria Atkins: The term 'hate speech' does not have any legal meaning, nor does it relate to a criminal offence in the UK. For any example of hate speech to be treated as a hate crime it would need to meet the police and Crown Prosecution Service definition of a hate crime.

<https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Commons/2020-01-16/4296/>

Slaughterhouses: Animal Welfare

Neil Parish (Conservative) [9660] To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many reports of mis-cutting he received for each category of animal in each year since 2008.

Jo Churchill: The Food Standards Agency (FSA) can provide the recorded data from 2010 onwards detailing the number of instances of mis-cutting which have occurred in the main categories of animals, in FSA approved slaughter premises in England and Wales. Each instance relates to an event that has been categorised as a serious or critical non-compliance on the welfare reporting systems used at that time. These figures do not reflect the number of animals involved.

Year	Period	Poultry	Cattle	Pigs	Sheep & Goats	Total
2010	April 2010 to March 2011	181	0	0	0	181
2011	April 2011 to March 2012	154	0	0	0	154
2012	April 2012 to March 2013	180	0	0	0	180

2013	April 2013 to March 2014	88	0	0	0	88
2014	April 2014 to March 2015	93	0	0	0	93
2015	April 2015 to March 2016	96	0	0	0	96
2016	April 2016 to March 2017	42	0	0	0	42
2017	April 2017 to March 2018	43	0	0	0	43
2018	April 2018 to March 2019	31	0	0	0	31
2019	April 2019 to December 2019	25	0	0	3	28
	Grand Total	933	0	0	3	936

As is evident in the data contained in the table the issue is almost exclusively related to poultry processing with an improving trend in recent years. This is due to improvements in business operator practices, technology and enforcement action being taken against operators who do not comply with the legal requirements.

<https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Commons/2020-01-29/9660/>

Slaughterhouses: Animal Welfare

Neil Parish (Conservative) [9661] To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many reports of mis-stunning before slaughter he has received for each category of animal in each year since 2008.

Jo Churchill: The Food Standards Agency (FSA) can provide recorded data from 2010 onwards detailing the number of instances of inaccurate/ineffective stunning which have occurred in the main categories of animals, in FSA approved slaughter premises in England and Wales. Each instance relates to an event that has been categorised as a serious or critical non-compliance on the welfare reporting systems used at that time. These figures do not reflect the number of animals involved.

Number of inaccurate/ineffective stuns recorded as serious/critical in England and Wales 2010-19

Year	Period	Poultry	Cattle	Pigs	Sheep & Goats	Total
2010	April 2010 to March 2011	17	9	4	9	39
2011	April 2011 to March 2012	6	10	3	4	23
2012	April 2012 to March 2013	9	8	2	6	25
2013	April 2013 to March 2014	6	13	3	2	24
2014	April 2014 to March 2015	11	21	3	3	38
2015	April 2015 to March 2016	4	81	0	3	88
2016	April 2016 to March 2017	2	27	0	1	30

2017	April 2017 to March 2018	4	15	1	10	30
2018	April 2018 to March 2019	2	34	4	6	46
2019	April 2019 to December 2019	0	14	1	6	21
Grand Total		61	232	21	50	364

The figures in the table above for poultry only reflect the data associated with electrical stunning methods as the predominant method used in larger poultry premises is controlled atmosphere stunning (gas) method which is designed to kill rather than stun.

<https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Commons/2020-01-29/9661/>

House of Lords Written Answers

The following two questions both received the same answer

Religious Hatred: Islam

Lord Bourne of Aberystwyth (Conservative) [HL840] To ask Her Majesty's Government when they expect to publish their definition of Islamophobia.

Lord Bourne of Aberystwyth (Conservative) [HL900] To ask Her Majesty's Government when they intend to appoint a second adviser on the matter of defining Islamophobia.

Viscount Younger of Leckie: It is unacceptable for anyone to feel unsafe while practising their religion, and this government will never allow prejudice and discrimination of any kind against the Muslim community.

We will continue to take a zero-tolerance approach to anti-Muslim hatred and recognise the importance of this matter. We will continue to explore and interrogate the issue of publishing a definition of Islamophobia in further detail.

<https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Lords/2020-01-28/HL840/>

and

<https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Lords/2020-01-29/HL900/>

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Israel

Downing Street

PM call with Prime Minister Netanyahu

The Prime Minister spoke to Prime Minister Netanyahu ... They discussed the United States' proposals for peace between Israel and the Palestinians and the Prime Minister reiterated his support for US efforts. He also underlined the UK's longstanding view on the importance of a two state solution, with Jerusalem as the shared capital of both sides, and our opposition to the unilateral annexation of territory.

The leaders agreed that we should continue to strengthen our bilateral relationship following the UK's departure from the EU, including in areas such as trade.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/pm-call-with-prime-minister-netanyahu-6-february-2020>

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House of Commons Debate

Persecution of Christians

col 508 **The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs (Heather Wheeler):** ... The suffering of men, women and children persecuted for their faith or belief is a matter of deep concern to the Government. ...

The scale and severity of suffering is alarming, from daily discrimination in the workplace or in school to intimidation of businesses and families to large-scale violence or state-sanctioned persecution. On every continent, religious minorities are under threat. ...

However, despite our long-standing support of freedom of religion or belief, it is fair to say that we had not given the particular issue of Christian persecution the attention it warranted. That is why in 2018 the then Foreign Secretary ... commissioned an independent review to consider what more the Foreign and Commonwealth Office could do to support persecuted Christians overseas. ...

... we have to be a bit cautious about the scale of Christian persecution because we may not have the full picture. The reason for that is that, at the moment, only limited data is available on religious minorities. The UK is actively working to fill that information gap. ...

col 509 We have also announced that it is our intention to use our position as a permanent member of the United Nations Security Council to highlight the issues faced by Christians and people of other faiths and beliefs in the middle east. ...

col 510 Last year, we joined 87 other states to co-sponsor a UN resolution establishing the international day commemorating the victims of acts of violence based on religion or belief. We stand with the international community not only to honour those who have paid the ultimate price to practise their faith, but also to combat ongoing intolerance and discrimination ...

col 511 **Fabian Hamilton (Labour):** ... It is especially timely to be having such a debate shortly after the 75th anniversary of the liberation of Auschwitz, when we saw the ultimate, unimaginable depths of evil; where such persecution can lead humanity. For a world that reacted to the horror of what was discovered at Auschwitz and other concentration camps with a solemn promise of “never again”, it should appal and shame us that 75 years on we are still debating religious attacks, persecution and genocides that have happened in countries across the world in recent years. ...

Whether it is the Jews in Portland Oregon, Muslims in Myanmar and New Zealand or Christians in Nigeria and Pakistan, we all believe that an attack on people of any faith is an attack on people of all faiths. ...

col 512 As much as we might reassure ourselves that Britain is a tolerant society where such prejudice and attacks do not occur, we know, sadly, that that is utterly wrong, whether it is the terrible scourge of antisemitism, which poisons online debate and forces the Jewish community in this country to post guards around synagogues and Jewish schools; the appalling rise in Islamophobia and attacks on our Muslim population in recent years, unfortunately whipped up by the comments of some politicians and media commentators; or, indeed, the attacks by sick-minded Jihadists with bombs, guns, vehicles and knives on innocent crowds of people in our country who they have dubbed as unbelievers or kafirs. This is an issue we know we have to confront domestically. ...

col 522 **William Cash (Conservative):** ... I have always been a strong supporter of Holocaust Memorial Day, and I feel intensely about the matter. I had the opportunity the other day to sign the book, and I remember writing, “Never again.” I do not need to write 10 lines, just the words, “Never again.” Having been born in 1940, I am the oldest Member in the House of Commons, so unlike many others ... I actually lived through that period. I can remember as a small boy seeing the extent of the persecution when I watched black-

and-white films after the war about what went on in the concentration camps. One must remember that some people were taken to those camps due to their Christian beliefs. ...

It has bothered me for a long time that some people appear to be able to go up and down Whitehall with placards attacking Christians—make no mistake—without being properly prosecuted. If Christians were to attack other religions in the same context, it would immediately fall into the category of what is called human rights law. ...

col 523 It is important that issues of religious toleration have complete equivalence of treatment under the law. Once it gets out of control, it becomes so pervasive and causes so much division in society—I come back to Holocaust Memorial Day and my concern for the Jewish population, and to what I have seen in the press about some aspects of the accusations against some members of the Labour party.

We all owe it to everybody to be fair, reasonable and tolerant, but also to put our foot down, using sanctions where necessary and financial conditions where required, to ensure that we do not allow Christians, either abroad or at home, to be persecuted. ...

col 524 **Lisa Cameron (SNP):** ... We think about the international persecution of Christians, but we need to address how Christians across the United Kingdom sometimes feel. People from many different religions feel persecuted at times, and we must always address that. No matter our own religion or values, we must make sure that the UK has freedom of religious belief for everybody.

Some of the groups that contacted me over the past year have highlighted a gradual perception of the erosion of beliefs and values related to Christianity across the United Kingdom. That concern is felt by teachers who contacted me, and by individuals who feel it is important to celebrate Easter and who were very upset by the announcement a few years ago that Cadbury's would be taking the word "Easter" off its Easter eggs. ...

Other individuals highlighted cases where "Merry Christmas" has been replaced with "Happy Holidays," or where they felt pressured to make that change. I visited a hospital not so long ago where staff were greatly upset that the star had been taken off the Christmas tree. It is important ... that this is not just seen singularly as an issue for other countries, because we have to accept that we also have a lot of work to do to ensure the continuation of freedom of religious belief ...

col 540 **Bob Stewart (Conservative):** ... I remain horrified that people who are peace-loving—all they want to do is worship privately—are so misused in our world, and it is to do with us. My mother, who went to Belsen in 1945 as an officer in the Special Operations Executive, never told me that she had been there until just before she died. When I asked, "How the heck, mum, did you not tell me that you had been in Belsen in 1945 with the British Expeditionary Force as an SOE agent?"—a spy, effectively—she said, "It is because, Robert, I am ashamed." I said, "Mum, what do you mean, ashamed?" She said, "I am ashamed because the holocaust happened when I was alive." Now I understand what she meant. We have got to stop the persecution of any religion, but this debate is about the persecution of Christians. It has got to stop. It is happening in our lifetime, and we must do everything we can to sort it out. ...

col 545 **The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs (Heather Wheeler):** ... we are deeply concerned about the way in which blasphemy laws are widely abused. The Government regularly apply diplomatic pressure to countries that abuse their blasphemy laws. That work is often done behind the scenes because of the sensitivity of the issue. ...

Colleagues understandably expressed particular concern about the safety and security of minority communities in the middle east in the light of recent events. Let me state clearly and on the record that the Government will continue to promote and protect human rights in the region. We will not shy away from urging Governments to protect the rights of all their citizens, in accordance with international human rights law. ...

col 547 Today's debate has focused on the persecution of Christians, but, as other Members have mentioned, we should not overlook the suffering of other religious groups around the world.

col 548 It would be remiss of us in any debate on this matter not to recognise that discrimination against and hostility towards faith communities also exists in western countries. We were sickened to see antisemitic graffiti sprayed on businesses and synagogues around north London in December, and in New York, during the Hanukkah celebrations, five victims were stabbed as they worshiped at the home of their rabbi. These incidents were all the more appalling because they took place just weeks before the 75th anniversary of the liberation of Auschwitz, when we were all reminded of what can happen when good people turn a blind eye to hate. ... Bob Stewart ... has put on record the amazing story about his mother being present as an SOE officer at the liberation Belsen. That is a story that will stay with me for some time. That anniversary was also a time to recommit ourselves to enhancing understanding between communities of different faiths and beliefs. It is clear that there is much more to do, even in countries such as ours, with good human rights records. ...

col 550 The Government believe passionately that everyone should enjoy the same freedom to choose and practise their religion, or to hold no religion at all. We will continue to strive for that to become a reality for everyone everywhere, and to strive for a world in which all nations respect and protect the rights of all their people, irrespective of their faith or belief. Those suffering persecution today, including the 260 million Christians, deserve nothing less. ...

To read the full transcript see

<https://hansard.parliament.uk/commons/2020-02-06/debates/39461207-892D-4E68-A5F0-F772500BB2A6/PersecutionOfChristians>

House of Lords Oral Answers

International Development: Freedom of Religion or Belief

Lord Suri (Conservative): To ask Her Majesty's Government what plans they have to ensure the protection of the right to freedom of religion or belief in their international development plans.

The Minister of State, Department for International Development (Baroness Sugg): My Lords, we remain deeply concerned by violations of freedom of religion or belief. Her Majesty's Government are protecting these rights by raising individual cases, highlighting discriminatory legislation and funding targeted programme work. Last year we launched the John Bunyan fund and announced funding through a UK Aid Connect programme for a consortium led by the Institute of Development Studies to address the key challenges in building these freedoms. DfID's use of country context analysis has increased the extent to which religious dynamics are factored into our country programmes.

Lord Suri: ... In Myanmar, years of unaddressed violations of freedom of religion or belief against Rohingya Muslims led to enormous and costly humanitarian disaster. The Department for International Development responded admirably to this crisis but it seems it has still not learned the lesson that, in certain countries, prioritising FoRB can save not only lives but taxpayers' money by helping to prevent humanitarian disasters before they emerge. Can the Minister assure your Lordships' House that specific plans for the promotion of FoRB have been included in DfID country strategies for all countries with significant conflict due to religious tensions?

Baroness Sugg: My Lords, I agree with my noble friend that prioritising freedom of religion or belief can save lives and prevent humanitarian disasters before they emerge. Through DfID's building stability framework, our programmes aim to tackle

the drivers of instability that can create an environment for conflict and humanitarian disasters. When considering our programme, we undertake a full analysis of a country's politics, society, state and economy to identify the most significant problems hindering development. That includes the role of freedom of religion and belief.

Lord Singh of Wimbledon (Crossbench): My Lords, freedom of belief is so central to Sikhism that Guru Tegh Bahadur gave his life defending the rights of those of a different religion to worship in the manner of their choice. Yet inexplicably, the BBC tried to stop me speaking about this incident, which carries a significance in Sikhism comparable to that of Easter. The *Times* condemned it and asked for the director-general to apologise. Does the Minister agree that it would add to the clout and voice of the Government if they too condemned such acts of censorship?

Baroness Sugg: My Lords, I agree with the noble Lord that it is important that the Government step up and call out such issues when we see them arise. We are working to protect the right to freedom of belief in individual cases. We have also recently appointed Rehman Chishti as our Special Envoy on Freedom of Religion or Belief. DfID funds two posts in the FCO to work on that. We are stepping up our advocacy of freedom of religion or belief through our diplomatic network.

Lord Anderson of Swansea (Labour): ... are there any circumstances in which our aid will be reduced or postponed as a result of gross religious persecution, which, as the recent Open Doors report shows, is increasing throughout the world? Can she give specific examples of this? If not, it is clearly inconsistent with the Government's acceptance of the Bishop of Truro's report and the declared policy on human rights generally.

Baroness Sugg: My Lords, withdrawal of our overseas aid will obviously affect the persecuted minorities and the very poor, whom we are aiming to help. The noble Lord refers to the Bishop of Truro's report, which was commissioned by the previous Foreign Secretary. That sets out a number of challenges to us to implement new programmes and procedures. We have accepted those recommendations in full and are implementing them.

The Lord Bishop of Southwark: My Lords, following the previous supplementary question, I understand that in the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, there is a champion for promoting freedom of religious belief at director-general level. In the light of the report just mentioned, commissioned by the previous Foreign Secretary, will the Minister consider appointing a similar champion to influence policy formation at the most senior level in her department?

Baroness Sugg: The right reverend Prelate is right that the Foreign Office has a director-general-level freedom of belief champion, the FCO's chief operating officer, in that case. DfID has a director-level champion on all aspects of faith and belief, who promotes freedom of religion and belief through seminars, blogs and training. ...

Lord Collins of Highbury (Labour): My Lords, I very much welcome the Government's efforts on freedom of religious belief, both in the FCO and in DfID—I am a member of the APPG—but we have to be aware on occasion of false prophets. I heard earlier today that at the National Prayer Breakfast in the United States, President Trump is about to announce an international religious freedom alliance. He has a reputation, does he not, on LGBT rights and women's rights? Can I be assured that the Government will not fall in step with such false prophets and will resist joining President Trump in such an organisation?

Baroness Sugg: I am afraid I have not seen President Trump's words this morning, but I refer back to the Bishop of Truro's report. We are determined to ensure that we take action in this area. It is an incredibly important, fundamental belief of the UK's that we must promote religious freedom overseas, and we will continue to do that through our diplomatic and aid efforts.

<https://hansard.parliament.uk/lords/2020-02-06/debates/002EAFB5-F609-40FC-B596-FC004EB9CC34/InternationalDevelopmentFreedomOfReligionOrBelief>

The Open Doors report, referred to above, can be read at
<https://www.opendoorsuk.org/persecution/resources/wwl-advocacy-report-2019.pdf>

The Bishop of Truro's report, referred to above, can be read at
<https://christianpersecutionreview.org.uk/storage/2019/07/final-report-and-recommendations.pdf>

The Times article referred to above can be read at
<https://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/the-times-view-on-lord-singh-and-the-today-programme-thought-for-the-day-rmt736ckg>

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Relevant Legislation ** new or updated today

UK Parliament

Assisted Dying Bill

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

Divorce, Dissolution and Separation Bill

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

Second Reading, House of Lords

[https://hansard.parliament.uk/lords/2020-02-05/debates/81678CD1-63E7-4F5A-A70F-44E3B4A4EBEC/DivorceDissolutionAndSeparationBill\(HL\)](https://hansard.parliament.uk/lords/2020-02-05/debates/81678CD1-63E7-4F5A-A70F-44E3B4A4EBEC/DivorceDissolutionAndSeparationBill(HL))

Education (Assemblies) Bill

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

Genocide Determination Bill

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

Marriage Act 1949 (Amendment) Bill

<https://services.parliament.uk/Bills/2019-20/marriageact1949amendment.html>

Marriage and Civil Partnership (Minimum Age) Bill

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

Scottish Parliament

Civil Partnership (Scotland) Bill

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

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Consultations

** new or updated today

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