



Political Affairs Digest

A daily summary of political events affecting the Jewish Community

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House of Commons Oral Answer

Prime Minister's Questions

Naz Shah (Labour): Last week, Emmy award-winning actor and musician Riz Ahmed released a hard-hitting new album and a short film, "The Long Goodbye", which powerfully expresses the heartbreak of many British minorities who feel unwanted in Britain, where hate crime is rising and hate speech infects public life. These are also the concerns of Muslims in my constituency. I urge Members of the House to listen to it and watch it. Will the Prime Minister, for once without hiding behind the robes of his Muslim ancestors—yes, we all know he had them—or clinging to the fig leaf that his ex-Chancellor's presence in the Cabinet provided him, or resorting to the potentially divisive, tit-for-tat deflection of the very serious issue of antisemitism, and given the 300 complaints of Islamophobia in his party, simply tell me what he is doing to assure Britain's Muslims that their Prime Minister is not an Islamophobe and takes their concerns seriously? [901454]

The Prime Minister: I can reassure the hon. Member that there is absolutely no room for hatred or racism in this party—in our Conservative party—and I wish I could say the same of her own party.

<https://hansard.parliament.uk/commons/2020-03-11/debates/93AC1505-2F6C-4142-BED5-AEAADB2D98DC/Engagements#contribution-D2C8E75A-D20A-4815-A765-C37B75C6CE81>

House of Commons Written Answers

Coroners

Kevan Jones (Labour) [24260] To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what steps the Chief Coroner has taken to ensure that coronial decision-making is consistent throughout the UK.

Alex Chalk: The Chief Coroner provides judicial leadership to coroners on a range of statutory and non-statutory matters. In doing so, he publishes guidance and advice to promote consistency of practice and service across England and Wales which is available at

<https://www.judiciary.uk/related-offices-and-bodies/office-chief-coroner/guidance-law-sheets/coroners-guidance/>

This guidance, including the Bench Book for coroners, is in the process of being reviewed.

The Chief Coroner also provides training to all coroners and coroners' officers via the Judicial College, further promoting consistency and ensuring that coroners follow the most recent standards of practice. These are also supported by the Chief Coroner's monitoring duties. In particular, he registers cases lasting more than 12 months, as required by the Coroners and Justice Act 2009, allowing him to keep any delays under review.

In addition, the Chief Coroner has a statutory duty to provide an annual report to the Lord Chancellor which, among other matters, must include an assessment for the year of the consistency of standards between coroner areas.

<https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Commons/2020-03-03/24260/>

Hate Crime

Matthew Offord (Conservative) [18670] To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, if he will make an assessment of the adequacy of the College of Policing's operational guidance for investigating and recording allegations of non-crime hate incidents.

Kit Malthouse: The College of Policing is independent from Government and its role is clear: setting high professional standards; sharing what works best; acting as the national voice of policing; and ensuring police training and ethics is of the highest possible quality.

The College of Policing has recently consulted on revised operational guidance on hate crime, which the College plans to publish in due course to support forces dealing with hate crimes and hate incidents.

<https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Commons/2020-02-21/18670/>

The following three questions all received the same answer

Places of Worship Security Funding Scheme

Claudia Webbe (Labour) [23609] To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how much funding she has allocated to public safety in and around mosques in the most recent 12 month period for which figures are available; and if she will make a statement.

Claudia Webbe (Labour) [23610] To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what plans her Department has to increase funding for security in and around mosques in response to the Hanau terrorist attack on 19 February 2020.

Claudia Webbe (Labour) [23483] To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what funding is available to support security and safety in and around mosques; and if she will make a statement.

Victoria Atkins: In addition to the 134 grants already provided over the first three years of the Places of Worship scheme, the Government have announced a further commitment of £1.6m funding for the Places of Worship Scheme this financial year and are further doubling the available funding in 2020-21. We will shortly be announcing the outcome of the fourth year of the scheme, which will see over fifty organisations receive funding to enhance the security of their premises.

The police regularly review events and potential threats to ensure everything is being done to protect all our communities from terrorism, hate crime and the impact of public protest. The Government also has an established programme that provides those responsible for crowded places with high quality advice and guidance, to enable them to understand the terrorist threat; prepare for all types of terrorist attacks; and ensure appropriate measures may be taken to reduce their vulnerability.

<https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Commons/2020-03-02/23609/>

and

<https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Commons/2020-03-02/23610/>

and

<https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Commons/2020-03-02/23483/>

Information about the Places of Worship Security Funding Scheme, referred to above, can be read at

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/places-of-worship-security-funding-scheme>

Scottish Parliament Oral Answers

Hate Speech

John Mason (SNP): To ask the Scottish Government how it ensures that the action that it takes to restrict hate speech does not inadvertently discourage freedom of speech. (S5O-04266)

The Cabinet Secretary for Communities and Local Government (Aileen Campbell): Scotland is a modern and inclusive nation that protects, respects and realises internationally recognised human rights. Any form of hate crime is, nonetheless, unacceptable. In June 2017, the Scottish Government published an ambitious programme of work to tackle hate crime through an action group that I chair. Our plans include the introduction of a hate crime bill during this parliamentary term. The bill, like all our efforts to tackle hate crime, has been carefully balanced against the fundamental rights and freedoms of all who live in Scotland, as reflected in human rights legislation.

John Mason: We have had two recent cases in Glasgow where freedom of speech has, apparently, been restricted. One case was when Franklin Graham was refused an event at the Scottish Exhibition and Conference Centre, and the other case was when forwomen.scot was refused an event at the Glasgow Women's Library. It appears that there is a cooling towards freedom of speech and that, when someone disagrees with someone else, it is simply called hate speech.

Aileen Campbell: I am aware of the exchanges that John Mason referred to, and I am sure that we are all aware of the tone and nature of some of the discussion and dialogue that has gone along with them. That tone is not necessarily helpful in carving out the space for dialogue, discussion and debate, and for that to be done respectfully.

As I said in my earlier reply, Scotland is a modern and inclusive nation; however, that does not happen by accident. It is precious, and we need to work hard to keep that. It is incumbent on all of us as parliamentarians to ensure that we set the right tone, lead by example, and are guided by kindness, respect and empathy. That should be the hallmark of our approach to all the vexing and challenging discussions that we have.

Gordon Lindhurst (Conservative): Following on from the cabinet secretary's comments, does she share the concern of many Christians in Edinburgh at the cancellation of a Destiny Church event at the public Usher Hall venue, and their concern about perceived, potentially state-supported, religious censorship?

Aileen Campbell: As I said, the tone of some of the dialogue that happens around that is, sometimes, not necessarily helpful. I am happy to meet Gordon Lindhurst and John Mason should they have concerns to make sure that, as we take forward

the hate crime bill, they can be made to feel reassured.

As I said, Scotland is a modern and inclusive nation; however, that has to be worked hard for. We should lead by example. We will meet members to discuss concerns to ensure that we proceed in a positive way and that people do not feel in any way threatened.

<http://www.parliament.scot/parliamentarybusiness/report.aspx?r=12573&i=113675#ScotParlOR>

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House of Commons Written Answers

Palestinians: Textbooks

Jack Lopresti (Conservative) [25083] To ask the Secretary of State for International Development, what recent assessment she has made of the implications for her Department's funding for the UN Relief and Works Agency's for Palestine Refugees in the Near East of reports that Palestinian school textbooks contain content which incites violence; and if she will make a statement.

James Cleverly: The UK recognises the UN Relief and Works Agency's (UNWRA) unique mandate to support Palestinian refugees until a lasting political settlement is reached which determines their final status. Until that time, the UK will continue to meet humanitarian need and promote regional security by supporting the 5 million Palestinian refugees across the Middle East through UNRWA. Our contribution to UNRWA last year helped provide education to more than 530,000 children (half girls), health services for over 3 million people, and social assistance for over 250,000 of the most vulnerable people.

Students in all UNRWA schools are taught the curriculum of their host country. UNRWA reviews host country textbooks and when problematic material is identified, develops alternative content and provides its teachers with support to ensure that the lessons taught in its schools promote tolerance and peace. The International Development Secretary spoke to the Palestinian Minister of Education in February to emphasise this point and encourage the Palestinian Authority to remove all inappropriate material from textbooks.

<https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Commons/2020-03-04/25083/>

The following two questions both received the same answer

Israeli Settlements: Palestinians

Kate Osamor (Labour Co-op) [26160] To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, whether his Department plans to respond to the report by the UN Human Rights Office, published on 12 February 2020, on business enterprises involved in certain activities relating to settlements in the occupied Palestinian territories.

Israeli Settlements: Business

Kate Osamor (Labour Co-op) [26161] To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, what plans his Department has to respond to the publication of the UN Human Rights Office report on business enterprises involved in certain activities relating to settlements in the Occupied Palestinian Territory published in February 2020.

James Cleverly: The UK, along with a number of other European countries, opposed the creation of the UN Human Rights Office's database. We neither encourage nor offer support to individuals or companies who operate in settlements

in the Occupied Palestinian Territories.

<https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Commons/2020-03-06/26160/>

and

<https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Commons/2020-03-06/26161/>

The report referred to above can be read at

https://www.ohchr.org/EN/HRBodies/HRC/RegularSessions/Session43/Documents/A_HRC_43_71.docx

Scottish Parliament Petition

PE01803: Right to Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions (BDS)

Petitioner: Dr Eurig Scandrett on behalf of Scottish Palestine Solidarity Campaign

Calling on the Scottish Parliament to urge the Scottish Government to support the right of public bodies and institutions in Scotland to debate, (and where democratically supported) to endorse and implement BDS against foreign countries and those who trade with them.

<https://www.parliament.scot/GettingInvolved/Petitions/righttoBDS>

Background Information to the petition

https://www.parliament.scot/gettinginvolved/petitions/PE01800-PE01899/PE01803_BackgroundInfo.aspx

Previous action taken to resolve issue

https://www.parliament.scot/gettinginvolved/petitions/PE01800-PE01899/PE01803_PreviousAction.aspx

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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>

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>

Hate crime legislation in Northern Ireland: an independent review (closing date 31 March 2020)
<https://www.hatecrimereviewni.org.uk/sites/hcr/files/media-files/Consultation%20Paper%20Feb%202020.pdf>

Electing a more diverse Assembly (closing date 22 April 2020)
<http://www.senedd.assembly.wales/mgConsultationDisplay.aspx?ID=389>

Amendments to the organ donation regulations (Wales) (closing date 30 April 2020)
<https://gov.wales/amendments-organ-donation-regulations>

Regulating Independent Educational Institutions (closing date 8 May 2020)
<https://consult.education.gov.uk/school-frameworks/regulating-independent-education-institutions/>

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