



Political Affairs Digest

A daily summary of political events affecting the Jewish Community

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House of Lords Debate

Coronavirus Bill: Committee Stage

col 1777 **Baroness Uddin (Non-affiliated):** ... I have raised this point on a number of occasions; I am raising it now with respect to the powers within the Bill relating to necessity and proportionality, particularly as regards matters of dignity in death and what may happen in the unforeseen circumstances that thousands of deaths occur among the faith communities, and cremation may be decided upon due to the lack of burial spaces and storage facilities. I am suggesting that Schedule 28 affects our human rights obligations. I am requesting, therefore, on behalf of the many hundreds of individuals who have written to me, including faith leaders and organisations, that the Government remove from paragraphs 13(1) and (2) in Part 4 of Schedule 28 the words “have regard to the desirability of disposing” and replace them with “dispose”, and then delete from paragraphs 13(1)(b) and 13(2)(b) the words “in a way that appears” so that the necessary guarantees are provided in the legislation, which will be required to provide assurance to the relevant faith communities.

Lord Bethell [The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Department of Health and Social Care]: My Lords, the noble Baroness, Lady Ludford, and all those who have signed up to this amendment have made incredibly important points that the Government utterly confirms. ...

To read the full transcript see

<https://hansard.parliament.uk/lords/2020-03-25/debates/3C266E78-4BB7-4330-9199-D361CDBAE2AD/CoronavirusBill>

House of Lords Written Answer

Universities: Antisemitism

Baroness Deech (Crossbench) [HL2491] To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of whether universities in England and Wales (1) have breached the public sector equality duty, and (2) are compliant with the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance's working definition of antisemitism, by permitting Israeli Apartheid Week activities to take place on their campuses.

Baroness Berridge: There is no place in our society - including within higher education (HE) – for hatred or any form of harassment, discrimination or racism, including antisemitism. The government will continue to work with universities to ensure we stamp out antisemitism in all its forms.

The government expects HE providers to take their responsibilities, including those under the Equality Act 2010 (including the Public Sector Equality Duty) and to promote freedom of speech, seriously. We expect HE providers to have robust policies and procedures in place to meet, and balance, their legal obligations effectively and to investigate and swiftly address reports of hate crime, including any antisemitic incidents that are reported.

We expect HE providers to have clearly set out procedures and policies for events and the hosting of external speakers, which allow for open, transparent events, challenge and debate and ensure that lawful speech can occur on campuses. Under the Education (No. 2) Act 1986, HE providers have a legal duty to take reasonably practicable steps to ensure that freedom of speech within the law is secured for their members, students, employees of the establishment and visiting speakers.

In relation to events occurring under the banner of Israeli Apartheid Week, it is crucial that HE providers handle these appropriately, taking into account their legal obligations to ensure that our values, expectations and laws are upheld.

The government strongly encourages HE providers to adopt the IHRA definition of antisemitism. It is an important tool in tackling antisemitism and a strong signal that HE providers take these issues seriously.

<https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Lords/2020-03-11/HL2491/>

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Israel

House of Commons Written Answers

Gaza: Coronavirus

Christian Matheson (Labour) [30804] To ask the Secretary of State for International Development, what assessment she has made of the effect on the healthcare system in Gaza of the response to the spread of covid-19 in that region.

James Cleverly: There are currently two known cases of COVID-19 in Gaza. The World Health Organisation (WHO) has delivered essential equipment such as lab testing kits and personal protective equipment and has used DFID-funded Trauma Stabilisation Tents to quarantine suspected COVID-19 patients at the Rafah border crossing. UN agencies are supporting further measures such as the establishment of a field hospital and the creation of a medical checkpoint at the Erez border crossing.

A widespread outbreak of the virus could overwhelm Gaza's already overburdened health system - especially given the lack of reliable access to clean water and energy in the strip. We continue to monitor the situation and are working closely with the UN and the international community to ensure agencies are ready to respond to an outbreak.

<https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Commons/2020-03-17/30804/>

UNRWA: Finance

Matthew Offord (Conservative) [32297] To ask the Secretary of State for International Development, pursuant to the answer of 18 March 2020 to Question 27998, what criteria is used by UK officials to assess UNRWA's effectiveness in allocating resources on the basis of need.

James Cleverly: UK officials are in regular contact with the United Nations Relief and Work Agency (UNWRA) to ensure high quality aid delivery. This includes attendance at all of UNRWA's formal meetings, such as the sub and advisory commission meetings and budgetary briefings. UNWRA has provided substantial briefings on its budgeting and funding situation, which UK officials assess alongside the United Nations Board of Auditors report, which provides an external assessment of UNRWA's performance on financial matters.

<https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Commons/2020-03-19/32297/>

The answer referred to above can be read at

<https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Commons/2020-03-11/27998/>

Palestinians: Schools

Scott Benton (Conservative) [30195] To ask the Secretary of State for International Development, what recent discussions he has had with the Palestinian Authority on the removal and replacement of textbooks from schools in the Palestinian Territories as a result of reports of anti-Semitic and extremist content in those books.

James Cleverly: The UK government is deeply concerned about allegations of incitement in Palestinian Authority's school textbooks. Ministers have regularly raised the issue of incitement in the education sector with the PA's Minister for Education, which the Secretary of State did most recently in February this year. We are pleased that the PA are undertaking a review of their textbooks and updating them in time for the new academic year in September.

<https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Commons/2020-03-16/30195/>

Palestinians: Textbooks

Jonathan Gullis (Conservative) [30837] To ask the Secretary of State for International Development, what recent assessment she has made of the compliance with Article 29 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child of the reported use of Palestinian Authority school textbooks containing antisemitic and extremist content.

James Cleverly: The UK government is deeply concerned about the allegations of incitement in Palestinian Authority's school textbooks. The International Development Secretary reiterated our concerns in a call to the Palestinian Authority's Education Minister just last month.

The UK has been at the forefront of international action to get to the bottom of the allegations. We funded work to develop the methodology for an independent textbook Review sponsored by our European partners. We expect an interim report in June, with a full report later in the year. We have regular discussions with our European Partners on the Review.

<https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Commons/2020-03-17/30837/>

Palestinians: Textbooks

Jack Lopresti (Conservative) [31486] To ask the Secretary of State for International Development, what recent discussions he has had with her Norwegian counterpart on that

country's decision in 2019 to withhold funding to the Palestinian Authority if extremist content is not removed by the Palestinian Authority's from the school curriculum; and if she will make a statement.

James Cleverly: The UK government is deeply concerned about the allegations of incitement in the Palestinian Authority's school textbooks. The International Development Secretary reiterated our concerns in a call to the Palestinian Authority's Education Minister just last month.

The UK has been at the forefront of international action to get to the bottom of the allegations. We funded work to develop the methodology for an independent textbook Review sponsored by our European partners. We expect an interim report in June, with a full report later in the year. The UK has regular discussions with our European partners on the Review. I have not had specific discussions with my Norwegian counterpart on this issue.

<https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Commons/2020-03-18/31486/>

The following two questions both received the same answer

Palestinians: Schools

Chris Clarkson (Conservative) [31567] To ask the Secretary of State for International Development, what recent representations she has made to the Palestinian Authority on reports that 31 schools are named after Palestinian terrorists.

Chris Green (Conservative) [31633] To ask the Secretary of State for International Development, what recent representations she has made to the Palestinian Authority on reports that three schools are named after Nazi collaborators.

James Cleverly: We have raised our concerns about school naming at senior levels within the Palestinian Authority (PA) and will continue to do so. Our partnership with the PA includes a commitment from the Palestinian leadership to adhere to the principle of non-violence and to tackle language and actions that could incite violence or hatred. We continue to assess that the PA's commitment to peace is in line with our Partnership Principles.

UK support to the PA contributes to the salaries of carefully vetted teachers and education workers in the West Bank through the Palestinian-European Socio-Economic Management Assistance mechanism, which screens recipients against international sanctions lists.

<https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Commons/2020-03-18/31567/>

and

<https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Commons/2020-03-18/31633/>

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Relevant Legislation ** new or updated today

UK Parliament

Assisted Dying Bill

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

**** Coronavirus Bill**

<https://services.parliament.uk/Bills/2019-21/coronavirus.html>

Notice of amendments

<https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/bills/lbill/58-01/110/5801110-l.pdf>

Committee Stage, House of Lords

<https://hansard.parliament.uk/lords/2020-03-25/debates/3C266E78-4BB7-4330-9199-D361CDBAE2AD/CoronavirusBill>

Report Stage, House of Lords

<https://hansard.parliament.uk/lords/2020-03-25/debates/630D8AAE-9C0B-4283-BFD2-F786C2AB4873/CoronavirusBill>

Third Reading, House of Lords

<https://hansard.parliament.uk/lords/2020-03-25/debates/3EA1E44D-1D7A-4494-B5F8-7FBE073F9D5E/CoronavirusBill>

Royal Assent

<https://hansard.parliament.uk/lords/2020-03-25/debates/025CBE1A-37B3-4362-9FAC-94359D78E325/RoyalAssent>

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

**** closes tomorrow**

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>

**** closes in 5 days**

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/>

Protecting places of worship (closing date 10 May 2020)

<https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/protecting-places-of-worship-consultation>

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