



# Political Affairs Digest

A daily summary of political events affecting the Jewish Community

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## Home Affairs

### House of Commons Debate

#### Online Harms

*col 528 Jeremy Wright (Conservative):* ... The term “online harms” covers many things, from child sexual exploitation to the promotion of suicide, hate speech and intimidation, disinformation perpetrated by individuals, groups and even nation states, and many other things. Those problems have increased with the growth of the internet, and they have grown even faster over recent months as the global pandemic has led to us all spending more time online. ...

*col 529* We have operated for some time on the principle that what is unacceptable offline is unacceptable online. How can it be right that actions and behaviours that cause real harm and would be controlled and restricted in every other environment, whether broadcast media, print media or out on the street, are not restricted at all online? ...

*col 530* The duty of care should mean changing algorithms that prioritise the harmful and the hateful because they keep our attention longer and cause us to see more adverts. When a search engine asked about suicide shows a how-to guide on taking one’s own life long before it shows the number for the Samaritans, that is a design choice. The duty of care needs to require a different design choice to be made. ...

*col 532 Damian Collins (Conservative):* ... We must have a regulatory body that has an auditing function and can look at what is going on inside these companies and the decisions they make to try to remove and eliminate harmful hate speech, medical conspiracy theories and other more extreme forms of harmful or violent content. Companies such as Facebook say that they remove 95% of harmful content. How do we know? Because Facebook tells us. Has anyone checked? No. Can anyone check? No; we are not allowed to check. Those companies have constantly refused to allow independent academic bodies to go in and scrutinise what goes on within them. ...

*col 535 Stephen Doughty (Labour Co-op):* ... It was ironic to be asked to take part in a programme to support local schools on internet safety and being safe online, when at the same time YouTube, despite my personally having reported instances of far-right extremism, gang violence and other issues that specifically affect my constituency, has

refused to remove that content. ...

I am talking about examples of gang videos involving convicted drug dealers in my constituency; videos of young people dripping in simulated blood after simulated stabbings; videos encouraging drug dealing and violence and involving young people as actors in a local park, just hundreds of metres from my own house—but they have not been removed, on grounds of legitimate artistic expression. There are examples of extremist right-wing organisations promoting hatred against Jews, black people and the lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender community that I have repeatedly reported, but they were still on there at the start of this debate. The only conclusion I can draw is that these companies simply do not give a damn about what the public think, what parents think, what teachers think, what all sides of the House think, what Governments think or what the police think, because they are failing to act, having been repeatedly warned. That is why the Government must come in and regulate, and they must do it sooner rather than later. ...

**col 537 Catherine McKinnell (Labour):** ... From your internet browser today you could access video that shows graphic footage of real-event stabbings before alleging that the attack was, in fact, a Jewish plot. If you were so inclined, you could watch a five-hour-long video that alleges a Jewish conspiracy to introduce communism around the world—10,000 people already have. I could go on. These videos and others like it are easily discoverable on some of the so-called alternative platforms that have become safe havens for terrorist propaganda, hate material and covid-19 disinformation, so it is crucial that when the Government finally bring their online harms Bill forward, it has to have teeth. ...

The Antisemitism Policy Trust, which provides the secretariat to the all-party parliamentary group against antisemitism, which I co-chair, has produced evidence outlining how hateful online materials can lead to violent hate crime offline. A code of practice on hate crime, with systems-level advice to start-ups and minimum standards for companies will go some way towards creating a safer world. ...

**col 540 Bambos Charalambous (Labour):** ... Looking at online hate speech at a recent Home Affairs Committee session, we heard that Facebook had deleted a staggering 9.6 million hate speech posts in the first quarter of this year. Much of that hate was directed towards south and east Asian communities, fuelled in part by President Trump using his position of power to fan the flames of hate by calling covid-19 the China virus. However, those 9.6 million posts are only the tip of the iceberg. There is still hate speech that has not been taken down, where it falls short of being hate speech. ...

It is not just the south and east Asian communities who have been targeted. Before lockdown, the blame for coronavirus was already being directed at the Muslim, Jewish, Gypsy, Roma, Traveller and LGBT+ communities. Chinese and east Asian people in the UK endured physical and verbal attacks, while Muslims were accused of ignoring lockdown and spreading the virus by visiting mosques. Conspiracy theories were abundant, and falsely linking those groups to the spread of the virus allowed those conspiracy theories to flourish. ...

**col 541 Robert Langan (Conservative):** ... In the past, typical hate crime took place on the street and involved a small number of people: the perpetrator, the victim and perhaps a handful of witnesses. The internet has changed all that. Now, when hate crime takes place online, it is seen and shared by thousands within minutes. The hatred is amplified and echoed in a toxic spiral that incites others to go further and further, sometimes spilling over into real life with devastating consequences. We are seeing the impact the amplification of hate is having in real numbers. In the first six months of this year, the Community Security Trust recorded 789 antisemitic incidents across the UK. In 2019, it recorded a record annual total of 1,813. That is just one particular kind of hate directed at one tiny minority community.

I have seen this at first hand, for reasons I can never quite fathom. Last year, one then

Labour councillor decided to start bombarding me with abusive messages over several months, accusing me of eating babies, claiming I was linked to Benjamin Netanyahu, repeatedly sending me messages with images of the crucifixion and images of pigs, songs referring to the Wandering Jew, photos of himself dressed in orthodox Jewish clothing, and repeatedly changing my name to Herr Largaman or Herr Larganberg. These incidents are relatively minor compared with what others have had to face, particularly women and many Members of this House. I pay tribute to the Community Security Trust for the amazing work it does, as well as to the Jewish Leadership Council and the Antisemitism Policy Trust, but the fact that such groups have to exist underlines why this Bill is so important.

We need to grasp the nettle and update our laws to reflect the new reality of the online world, and to make certain that this legislation is sufficiently strong and effective. In particular, I urge the Government to carefully consider the issue of anonymity. Many extremists hide behind a keyboard, masking their true identity to unleash abuse and spread false information. That has been facilitated by the growth of alternative social media platforms that anyone can access and post on anonymously. As a result, we have seen them turn into hotbeds of incitement and radicalisation. Some platforms even allowed the live-streaming of atrocities such as the murder of 51 worshippers at two mosques by white supremacists in New Zealand. ...

**col 549 The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport (Matt Warman):** ... We know that we can and must do more in this vital area. Covid-19 has emphasised how much we rely on the web and on social media, and how vital it is for firms to apply to their users as soon as possible the duty of care that has been discussed this afternoon. Platforms can and must do more to protect those users, and particularly children, from the worst of the internet, which is sadly all too common today. The Government will ensure that firms set out clearly what legal content is acceptable on their platforms and ensure, via a powerful and independent regulator, that they enforce that consistently and effectively. Codes of practice will set out what is acceptable ... so that the networks themselves no longer make the rules. ...

**col 550** We will publish the full Government response to the online harms White Paper this year. We will set out further detail of our proposals, and alongside that we will publish interim voluntary codes of practice on terrorist content and child sexual exploitation and abuse. The full Government response will be followed by legislation, which will be ready early next year. ...

Close to half of adults in the UK say that they have seen hateful content online in the past year. I want to make it clear today that online abuse targeted towards anyone is unacceptable; as with so many other areas, what is illegal offline is also illegal online.

Online abuse can have a huge impact on people's lives, and is often targeted at the most vulnerable in our society. Our approach to tackling online harms will support more users to participate in online discussions by reducing the risk of bullying or being attacked on the basis of their identity. ...

It is important, though, to note that the aim of this regime is not to tackle individual pieces of content. We will not prevent adults from accessing or posting legal content, nor require companies to remove specific pieces of legal content. Instead, the regulatory regime will be focused on the systems and processes implemented by companies to address harmful content. ...

Tackling online harms is a key priority for this Government in order to make the internet a safer place for us all. I close by reiterating how vital it is that we get this legislation right. This Government will not shy away from ensuring that we do, and that we do so quickly. ...

**To read the full transcript see**

<https://hansard.parliament.uk/commons/2020-11-19/debates/29AA4774-FDE3-4AB9-BBAB-F072DE3E8074/OnlineHarms>

## Police Service of Northern Ireland

### Trends in Hate Motivated Incidents and Crimes Recorded by the Police in Northern Ireland 2004/05 to 2019/20

<https://www.psni.police.uk/globalassets/inside-the-psni/our-statistics/hate-motivation-statistics/2019-20/hate-motivated-incidents-and-crimes-in-northern-ireland-2004-05-to-2019-20.pdf>

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## Israel

### House of Commons Oral Answer

#### Topical Questions: International Trade

**Greg Smith (Conservative):** With all our minds on both the health and economic recovery from the covid pandemic, may I ask my right hon. Friend what discussions she has had with her Israeli counterpart to further trade co-operation beyond the continuity deal, not least given the incredible and ground-breaking Israeli innovations to combat covid-19, such as through remote monitoring of patients and thermal scanning?

**Elizabeth Truss:** My hon. Friend is right. It is vital that we use trade as a way of motoring growth post this terrible covid crisis. We are working on negotiating a cat's cradle of trade deals around the world to support British business. Of course, Israel is one of those priorities. It is very advanced in areas such as data and digital. There is strong scope for a world-leading agreement, and we are in discussions about that.

<https://hansard.parliament.uk/commons/2020-11-19/debates/D675B66D-3D95-4CD9-957A-BFC404B3A015/TopicalQuestions#contribution-E44AEF76-9E38-4A70-BE3D-69CB83EAED58>

### House of Commons Written Answer

#### Trade cooperation: Israel

**Greg Smith (Conservative)** [909006] What progress has been made in discussions with her Israeli counterpart on an agreement for further trade cooperation with Israel beyond the trade continuity deal.

**Ranil Jayawardena:** Britain's trading relationship with Israel is already strong, totalling £5bn in 2019. As my Rt Hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary said recently, we are now able to 'start scoping, probing for talks for a new higher level ambition trade agreement'. Next year's United Kingdom-Israel Trade and Partnership Joint Council - alongside our plans to host a United Kingdom-Israel Trade and Investment Conference - will drive forward these discussions to deliver significant benefits for British business.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2020-11-19/909006>

### House of Lords Written Answers

#### Turkey: Hamas

**Baroness Eaton (Conservative)** [HL10059] To ask Her Majesty's Government what discussions they have had with the government of Turkey following reports that that government is granting Turkish citizenship to senior members of Hamas.

**Baroness Sugg:** We are aware of reports about the granting of Turkish citizenship to Hamas figures. Hamas continues to pose a threat to Israel and Israeli civilians. The UK is clear that Hamas' failure to renounce violence and recognise Israel remains a significant barrier to peace. We continue to call upon Hamas to end permanently their incitement and indiscriminate attacks against Israel. The UK retains a policy of no contact with Hamas, in its entirety. Hamas' military wing has been proscribed as a terrorist organisation by the UK since 2001.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2020-11-09/hl10059>

#### **Turkey: Hamas**

**Baroness Eaton (Conservative)** [HL10061] To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the security threat (1) to the UK, and (2) other European countries, following reports that senior members of Hamas have been awarded Turkish citizenship with the right to travel.

**Baroness Sugg:** We continue to monitor the activities of Hamas and maintain regular assessments of the overall threat posed by the group.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2020-11-09/hl10061>

## **Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office**

### **Israeli and Palestinian cooperation: Foreign Secretary statement**

Foreign Secretary Dominic Raab said: Restoring cooperation is an important and constructive step towards peace. This is welcome progress and shows both sides are willing to put the needs and security of Israelis and Palestinians first.

We need to build on this momentum through further dialogue and compromise to move towards a lasting solution to the conflict.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/israeli-and-palestinian-cooperation-foreign-secretary-statement>

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### **Updated travel advice: Israel**

The FCDO no longer advises against all but essential travel to Israel, and no longer advises against all but essential travel to Jerusalem (including to East Jerusalem (Occupied Palestinian Territories)). Israel, and Jerusalem are both now on the list of countries and territories where self-isolation is not required on return to England, Wales, and Northern Ireland.

<https://www.gov.uk/foreign-travel-advice/israel>

### **Updated travel advice: The Occupied Palestinian Territories**

The FCDO no longer advises against all but essential travel to Israel, and no longer advises against all but essential travel to Jerusalem (including to East Jerusalem (Occupied Palestinian Territories)). Israel, and Jerusalem are both now on the list of countries and territories where self-isolation is not required on return to England, Wales, and Northern Ireland.

<https://www.gov.uk/foreign-travel-advice/the-occupied-palestinian-territories>

## UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights

### **UN experts condemn Israel's demolition of houses in Palestinian Bedouin community**

UN human rights experts condemned the demolition by Israel of the homes and property belonging to a Palestinian Bedouin community in the northern Jordan Valley of the West Bank, amid a significant rise in property demolitions across the occupied territory.

In early November, at least 73 inhabitants of Khirbet Humsa, including 41 children, were displaced, and more than 75 structures – including tent homes, animal sheds and solar panels – were destroyed.

The Israeli Civil Administration – the arm of the Israeli Defense Forces which administers the occupation of the West Bank – has said that the living structures of the Bedouin community were destroyed because they were built illegally in a military firing zone.

The experts note that Israel, the occupying power, routinely demolishes Palestinian homes and structures in the West Bank and East Jerusalem that were built without a permit. They say the Israeli military has confiscated significant portions of the West Bank as military firing zones, upending the lands and lives of many pastoral and permanent Bedouin communities.

“The Israeli planning regime in the occupied territory is discriminatory and restrictive, and rarely grants Palestinian applications for building permits,” said the experts. “This results in a coercive atmosphere, where property demolitions, or the threat of demolitions, drives Palestinians away from their homes, lands and livelihoods.” ...

“Home and property demolitions belonging to a protected population under occupation by an occupying power are a grave breach of the Fourth Geneva Convention,” the experts said. “According to Article 53, the occupying power is prohibited from destroying real and personal property unless rendered ‘absolutely necessary by military operations’.” ...

“We call on Israel to immediately halt its property demolitions in the occupied territory, to ensure that its actions are strictly compliant with its international humanitarian and human rights obligations and to provide protection for, rather than displacement of, the protected population.” ...

**To read the full press release see**

<https://www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=26522&LangID=E>

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## Other Relevant Information

### United Nations

#### **No Place for Racism at United Nations, Secretary-General Stresses, Describing It as ‘Scourge of the World’ at Launch of ‘Awareness and Action’ Campaign**

... Racism is a persistent scourge of our world. People’s opportunities for education and employment, and their access to health care and justice, are often determined by their race. Much of today’s racism is deeply entrenched in centuries of colonialism and slavery. ...

Despite periodic attempts at redress, racism and racial inequality still permeate institutions, social structures and everyday life. I have consistently spoken out against a global surge in populism, nationalism and xenophobia that has empowered neo-Nazis, white supremacists and racists of all kinds. Racism challenges every Government, every society and every organization, including our own.

Let me be very clear: racism has no place in the United Nations. Our Organization was

founded on the principles of the dignity and worth of the human person, without distinctions of race, colour, ethnic or national origin. ...

This creates a special responsibility for us — all of us who have the privilege of working for the United Nations — to examine and address racism and racial discrimination inside our Organization. It's true that we have clear rules in place that prohibit and protect staff from all forms of discrimination, including racism.

But, let's be honest: sometimes we have been slow to acknowledge the existence of racism inside the United Nations. ...

Addressing racism is not a simple, one-time action. Racism is a complex cultural phenomenon; combating it demands action every day, at every level. Addressing racism requires cultural and structural changes. It calls on us, all of us to examine long-held assumptions, and to question our unconscious biases.

Fighting racism also requires positive action, including investment in social cohesion. ...

Today marks the start of an important opportunity for reflection and change. Together, let's make sure people of every race, ethnicity, colour, gender, religion, creed and sexual orientation enjoy a sense of belonging and safety, and have an equal opportunity to contribute to the success of our United Nations. ...

**To read the full press release see**

<https://www.un.org/press/en/2020/sqsm20428.doc.htm>

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## **Relevant Legislation** \*\* new or updated today

### **UK Parliament**

#### **Animal Welfare (Sentencing) Bill**

<https://bills.parliament.uk/bills/2622>

#### **Assisted Dying Bill**

<https://bills.parliament.uk/bills/2592>

#### **Education (Assemblies) Bill**

<https://bills.parliament.uk/bills/2579>

#### **Genocide Determination Bill**

<https://bills.parliament.uk/bills/2621>

#### **Marriage Act 1949 (Amendment) Bill**

<https://bills.parliament.uk/bills/2608>

#### **Marriage (Approved Organisations) Bill**

<https://bills.parliament.uk/bills/2537>

#### **Marriage (Authorised Belief Organisations) Bill**

<https://bills.parliament.uk/bills/2795>

#### **Marriage and Civil Partnership (Minimum Age) Bill**

<https://bills.parliament.uk/bills/2584>

## Scottish Parliament

### **Domestic Abuse (Protection) (Scotland) Bill**

<https://beta.parliament.scot/bills/domestic-abuse-protection-scotland-bill>

### **Hate Crime and Public Order (Scotland) Bill**

<https://beta.parliament.scot/bills/hate-crime-and-public-order-scotland-bill>

### **Post-mortem Examinations (Defence Time Limit) (Scotland) Bill**

<https://beta.parliament.scot/bills/post-mortem-examinations-defence-time-limit-scotland-bill>

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## Consultations

\*\* new or updated today

### **\*\* closes today**

**Human Tissue (Authorisation) (Specified Type B Procedures) (Scotland) Regulations**  
(closing date 20 November 2020)

<https://consult.gov.scot/population-health/consultation-specified-type-b-procedures/>

**Ethnic disparities and inequality in the UK** (closing date 30 November 2020)

<https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/ethnic-disparities-and-inequality-in-the-uk-call-for-evidence/ethnic-disparities-and-inequality-in-the-uk-call-for-evidence>

**Getting Married: A Consultation Paper on Weddings Law** (closing date 3 December 2020)

<https://www.lawcom.gov.uk/project/weddings/#weddings-consultation-paper>

**Independent Faith Engagement Review** (closing date 11 December 2020)

<https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/independent-faith-engagement-review-call-for-evidence/independent-faith-engagement-review-call-for-evidence>

**Hate crime laws** (closing date 24 December 2020)

<https://www.lawcom.gov.uk/project/hate-crime/>

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