



Political Affairs Digest

A daily summary of political events affecting the Jewish Community

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House of Lords Debate

Domestic Abuse Bill

col 1429 Amendment 3 Moved by Baroness Altmann: Clause 1, page 2, line 1, at end insert—

“(f) unreasonable prevention or threat of prevention of dissolution of a religious Jewish marriage via a religious bill of divorce (a “get”);” Member’s explanatory statement

This specifically itemises one spouse unreasonably preventing the dissolution of a Jewish religious marriage with a ‘get’ as being within the scope of the Bill by bringing it under the definition of abusive behaviour.

Baroness Altmann (Conservative): ... I shall speak also to my other amendments in this group—Amendments 5, 168, 169 and 170, which all relate to the same issue. ...

This set of amendments is designed to address a specific type of abuse that mostly affects religious Jewish women, and I declare an interest as one. This issue has long been of concern to me and to many other religious Jews in this country and worldwide. Our aim with the amendments is to help victims who are unable to leave a failed marriage because their spouse unreasonably decides to prevent them moving on with their life in accordance with Jewish religious law.

I stress at the outset that the amendments are specifically designed to refer only to Jewish religious divorce, with no intention of impacting on procedures relevant to any other religion. Jewish law, of course, governs Judaism, and there is no intention to undermine the role of the Jewish courts. The amendments are intended to offer a means of helping those impacted by a particular type of abuse that can arise in some cases in this country under Jewish laws of divorce.

I also stress that the majority of Jewish divorces proceed smoothly and British Jewish wives can move on with their lives once their civil divorce is finalised. However, sadly, there are some instances where a husband, sometimes demanding money to improve a divorce settlement agreed in the civil courts, sometimes driven by a desire to punish or control their ex-wife and sometimes to continue emotional abuse that existed in the marriage, unreasonably refuses to grant the get—the Jewish bill of divorce—leaving the wife married to him in the eyes of Jewish law, even if she wishes to be free.

The amendments seek to protect and support Jewish women—it is, I am afraid, usually women—whose husbands do not willingly sign the Jewish divorce document, the get. ... Those worst affected by an unreasonable refusal to grant a Jewish religious divorce can effectively be kept chained in the marriage for decades as their husbands prevent them being able to marry anyone else or have children accepted under Jewish religious law. ... col 1430 Of course, ultimately, it is up to the religious authorities to make decisions about religious Jewish divorce ... These amendments cannot interfere with the rulings of the religious courts. Nevertheless, with this Bill being such a huge advance for our country and offering our citizens better protection and support against abuse, I hope that my noble friends on the Front Bench will agree that these victims should also be entitled to the protection that will be available. The amendments specifically aim to address the plight of the abuse victims in such circumstances so that these citizens, who are subjected to such unreasonable, coercive and controlling behaviour, can access practical and emotional support, as provided under the Bill.

Amendment 3 would add the unreasonable refusal to grant a get as a recognised form of domestic abuse in British law. It would specifically enshrine in this legislation that a spouse unreasonably preventing the dissolution of a Jewish religious marriage with a get was brought within the scope of the Bill as committing a defined form of abusive behaviour.

Amendment 5 stipulates that a spouse impeding the dissolution of a religious Jewish marriage can be considered to be acting in a controlling, coercive, threatening or abusive manner to their partner for the purposes of the Bill.

I stress that the amendments are not designed in any way to reduce the ability of the Jewish religious court to apply Jewish law and, in particular, the provisions of the Divorce (Religious Marriages) Act 2002 ...

A civil divorce will not substitute for a get, no matter how long the wife and husband are separated. If their relationship was abusive to begin with, this is a way in which the man can continue that abuse and continue to exert control over his wife with impunity. ...

col 1431 Amendment 168 seeks to amend Section 76 of the Serious Crime Act 2015. This Act's introduction of the new criminal offence of coercive and controlling behaviour in intimate family relationships was a very positive step in recognising and responding to this form of abuse, which has a devastating impact on victims' lives. The amendment would specifically ensure that unreasonably preventing the dissolution of a Jewish religious marriage is included in the definition of that offence. ...

Amendment 169 says that the Secretary of State's guidance relating to Clause 1 of this Domestic Abuse Bill or Section 76 of the Serious Crime Act 2015 must recognise "unreasonably preventing dissolution of a religious Jewish marriage" against the wishes of the other partner as "controlling or coercive" behaviour. ...

Amendment 170 stipulates that a court must take into account unreasonably impeding religious Jewish marriage dissolution when considering whether this is domestic abuse, and thus whether an offence has been committed under Section 76 or 76A of the Serious Crime Act, or whether domestic abuse support should be provided under Clause 55 of this Bill. ...

col 1432 **Baroness Deech (Crossbench):** ... There could be as many as 100 women at a time caught in this situation who are known to the religious courts. It is not uncommon for women to secure their release by paying sums extorted from them by acts comparable to blackmail. ...

It is embarrassing to have to turn to secular law for relief. The Divorce (Religious Marriages) Act 2002 allows parties to ask a judge to delay a decree absolute until a religious divorce is finalised, but this law is ineffective if the husband does not care about getting a civil divorce. Then there is the Serious Crime Act 2015, Section 76, which is referred to in the amendment too. In the circumstances of a get refusal, there have been prosecutions launched against wholly unreasonable and controlling husbands under that section, which created the offence of controlling or coercive behaviour in an intimate or

family relationship. Withholding the get fits well within that section. It is not, however, retrospective, and a person bringing a private prosecution has to be prepared to foot the bill for their legal costs. The section needs the proof of intent to cause fear of violence or serious distress. ...

So why will the potential of Section 76 not suffice for the cruel treatment that has been described? The answer is that there would be advantages to dealing with unreasonable withholding of the get in the domestic abuse setting rather than of the Serious Crime Act. The use of a domestic abuse protection notice or order would open the door to a range of support for the victim. It also would mean that, rather than a criminal procedure, the perpetrator—usually, but not always, the husband—will be subject to a civil preventive measure, the notice, not a finding of guilt. A domestic abuse protection order can contain appropriate conditions, and must not conflict with the perpetrator's religious beliefs. It is important that a domestic abuse order or notice be perceived as less coercive than a criminal conviction under the Serious Crime Act 2015. This is because a strict interpretation of the orthodox Jewish law requires that the husband be not directly coerced into giving the get; it has to be voluntary ...

col 4133 Lord Polak (Conservative): ... To be clear, as my noble friend Lady Altmann said, the majority of cases of Jewish divorce are completed without too much difficulty; in the Orthodox community, they are handled by a beth din, and the judges—or dayanim—of the beth din ensure that all provisions of Jewish law are fully and appropriately adhered to. However, there are far too many cases where a man with ill intent can frustrate the process with potentially devastating ramifications for his spouse and, of course, his children. These amendments are clearly being proposed to ensure that victims of domestic abuse or coercive behaviour have full access to the provisions of the Bill. The amendments do not reduce the court's existing ability to allow the religious courts to apply halacha—Jewish law—or, in particular, the provisions of the Divorce (Religious Marriages) Act 2002, which had the support of Lord Jakobovits, Lord Sacks and the London Beth Din. ...

col 1434 While the amendments do not create any new provisions that currently cannot be exercised through existing legislation, it can be argued that the reasons for adding these measures to the Bill are that they will make access to its provisions easier and more timely, thus potentially reducing the cost burden, while the agunah—the chained woman—can more speedily gain the ability to remarry or to lead a normal life without the stigma associated with her position. In addition, these women can access sources of support that will be made available by this important Bill. ...

Lord Mendelsohn (Labour): ... These amendments do not seek to legislate on what I consider to be essentially matters of religious doctrine and custom. They do not seek to involve the civil courts in questions of Jewish religious law. In fact, these provisions would provide greater flexibility for the courts to apply matters so as to ensure a greater appreciation of religious law and those involved in it. ...

col 1435 What these measures will do, most importantly, is support the person who in adverse circumstances is the most powerless, vulnerable and likely to be experiencing coercive or abusive behaviour. There has been a tendency in this debate to raise grounds for criticising rabbis for not getting a grip on the problem, but it is important to recognise that religious law is biblical in origin and therefore seen to be immutable. Changes in practice and interpretation are very hard to achieve, most notably in the orthodox and ultra-orthodox communities, especially in the absence of any central parliament and in the context of so many different traditions. In my opinion, their position must be understood. ... Unfortunately, these established rules of religious law sometimes bring out the worst in people. On these occasions, the giving of the get may be used as a tactical device or a weapon of blackmail in relation to the ancillary arrangements for the children of the marriage and the financial settlement made in connection with the civil divorce. Alternatively, a refusal to deliver a get may be motivated simply by malice or spite that is in turn driven by jealousy or some other, perhaps understandable but nevertheless

objectively unreasonable, purpose. ...

col 1436 Not every matter can be resolved easily and not every situation will fall into neat boxes with regard to the roles that either the religious or civil courts can play. It is therefore essential that we take this opportunity to level the playing field and make sure that we give the support to victims that these amendments would provide. Their objective is to enshrine the right of Jewish women to secure their get where it is being withheld by a recalcitrant ex-husband in order to exert control over the woman. Having a specific inclusion for victims of this kind of coercive behaviour, psychological abuse and often economic extortion would be valuable to those women who may have secured a civil divorce but are not considered to be divorced within the Jewish religion. It is in line with the key objective of the Bill, which is to raise awareness and understanding of domestic abuse and its impact on victims. ... While the Jewish religious courts have introduced communal and social sanctions with some degree of effectiveness, they are severely limited by having weak enforcement capabilities. This is why the law needs to go further to protect victims of this kind of coercive control and mental cruelty. ...

col 1438 **Lord Moylan (Conservative):** ... The stories recounted by noble Lords can inspire only sympathy for the women caught in this terrible trap; that is completely understandable. However, I have a concern and a question. Although it has been stated several times that the amendments relate only to Jewish marriage and can have no consequences for other belief systems I am concerned that, without some additional wording, the general principle underlying them—that one has an obligation to collaborate in a divorce—might leak out into other systems. such as those in which one spouse may have a conscientious objection to the principle of divorce. I am thinking principally of Roman Catholics, but also of other denominations. If it were to be taken, either by analogy or by legal persuasion, that that principle made it a criminal offence not to collaborate in or expedite a divorce to which one party had a conscientious objection, that would be a matter that needed careful consideration.

Although I have every sympathy with the amendments, I believe that they need additional wording and protection, at the very minimum, to ensure that the consequences I have hinted at are not brought about in legal reality. ...

col 1439 **Baroness Wilcox of Newport (Labour):** ... the amendment is intended to help women who are unable to leave a failed marriage, and is specific only to Jewish religious laws; there is no intention to undermine the Jewish courts. Including it in the Bill would provide the opportunity to ensure that its provisions and protections were applicable to all, and that it specifically recognised the plight of those women, removing the shadow of abuse and control, and restoring their right to exercise their faith through their ability to remarry and have children within their faith. ...

It is in line with a key objective of the Bill to raise awareness and understanding of domestic abuse and its impact on victims. ...

col 1440 **Baroness Williams of Trafford (Conservative):** ... Amendments 3 and 5 would add a sixth limb to the list of behaviours in Clause 1(3) which count as abusive, namely the unreasonable refusal, or the threat thereof, to agree to the granting of a religious bill of divorce, or a get, which is necessary to dissolve a Jewish religious marriage. ...

The list of abusive behaviours in Clause 1(3) is deliberately drafted at a high level, to provide a clear and easily understandable summary of what constitutes domestic abuse. Including very specific circumstances in this list could lead to pressure to include other such circumstances, which would make the definition unwieldy. It could also create the impression that there is a hierarchy of abuse, which of course there is not. ...

Amendment 169 seeks to ensure that this guidance and the statutory guidance issued under Section 77 of the Serious Crime Act 2015 include in their discussion of controlling or coercive behaviour the unreasonable refusal to grant a get. We wish to avoid, as far as possible, prescribing in statute what statutory guidance must contain, which can arguably

defeat the purpose of producing that guidance. ...

... including the specific issue of Jewish religious divorces similarly in the Bill would lead to pressure for a large number of other topics to be so included ...

col 1441 Amendment 168 seeks to amend Section 76 of the Serious Crime Act 2015 to ensure that the person who unreasonably refuses a get, and their spouse, are regarded as being in an intimate personal relationship with each other, and therefore count as personally connected, which is a prerequisite for the application of the offence of controlling or coercive behaviour ... My noble friend may be aware that in our White Paper on domestic abuse, published in January 2019, the Government committed to undertake a review into the controlling or coercive behaviour offence. That review, which has considered evidence surrounding the effectiveness of that offence, will be published before Report, and the Government will consider their position in relation to that offence after its publication, in the light of the content of the review and any other information brought to our attention. Therefore, my noble friend's amendment may be slightly premature.

Amendment 170 seeks to ensure that the unreasonable refusal to consent to a get be regarded as a significant factor in the consideration of whether a person has suffered domestic abuse, particularly whether the offence of controlling or coercive behaviour has been committed; whether a domestic abuse protection order should be issued; and the production by relevant local authorities of strategies for the provision of domestic abuse support, as required by Clause 55. On the first limb of that, the determination of domestic abuse, my remarks about what it is appropriate to include in the Bill and what to include in guidance apply equally.

On the two limbs which refer to court proceedings, it would not be appropriate for the Government to direct the judiciary in this way as to what it might or must consider, and nor is it necessary. ...

On the final limb, relating to local authorities, we are not otherwise specifying what local authorities must consider when drawing up their strategies. Strategies will relate to general provision in the local authority area, and it would be very odd for the only such provision to refer to a situation which relates to a very small number of people at most. ...

col 1442 **Baroness Altmann:** ... I respect the Minister's concerns about the inclusion of these provisions, and I thank her for her offer to continue discussion and consideration of how this important issue could be included in the statutory guidance at the very least. I take the point that it concerns a small number of people, but it has a dreadful effect on them. I also welcome her confirmation that the review of coercive and controlling behaviour, associated with the Serious Crime Act 2015, will be published before Report. ... Of course, I have sympathy with, and am sensitive to, my noble friend Lord Moylan rightly pointing out the potential dangers of reading across from these amendments to other religious reasons for objecting to a divorce. That is why the amendments consistently specify "religious Jewish" divorce and "unreasonable" refusal to agree to the dissolution of a Jewish marriage. ...

I thank everyone—all colleagues across the House, my noble friends and the department—who has respectfully and carefully considered these amendments. I hope that we may continue the discussion because it is such an important issue to many noble Lords, it seems. For the moment, I beg leave to withdraw Amendment 3.

Amendment 3 withdrawn.

To read the full transcript see

<https://hansard.parliament.uk/Lords/2021-01-25/debates/218A33F6-D938-4EDB-A7AF-070FAE5D2330/DomesticAbuseBill#contribution-66F9B3F9-5ED8-42A8-8508-CF72F65E9DED>

UK Parliament Home Affairs Committee

Online Harms

Q2 Chair (Yvette Cooper, Labour): ... How far do you think that your platform has enabled the kind of extremism that we have seen? Not what are your processes but, realistically, how far do you think your platforms have enabled this?

Derek Slater (Global Director of Information Policy, Google): ... we have continued to improve over time, but there is always more to do. There are always new challenges, new bad actors, new threat vectors. ...

Q3 Chair: ... how much [do] you think some of the groups that organised the assault on the Capitol were communicating, were using YouTube to radicalise each other, to publish their videos and so on ...?

Derek Slater: We took action against groups that were violating our policies. ...

Q4 Derek Slater: We have continued to make progress in removing and reducing this sort of harmful behaviour ...

Q5 Derek Slater: ... When we saw content that was violative, we did take action. ...

Q6 Chair: You basically think you have done everything you could and you have taken it all down?

Derek Slater: ... We are not resting on our laurels in any way. We will continue to evaluate how we did, how we are doing and what we need to do going forward.

Q7 Chair: Have you removed white supremacist material from YouTube?

Derek Slater: Yes, we remove material that expresses superiority based on race, religion or other characteristics of that sort. ...

Q8 Chair: How come I could find it just 10 minutes ago? ...

Q10 Nick Pickles (Global Head of Public Policy Strategy and Development, Twitter): ... The link between offline harm and online content is demonstrably real. ... One of the challenges is that there has not been an obvious tipping point where you would say, "This was the point where we should have taken action." ...

Looking at our actions around the Capitol riots, ultimately suspending the personal account of the President of the United States was an unprecedented moment, but it was also a reflection of our service's role in offline events. ...

Q11 Nick Pickles: ... the harm that is done by people not being challenged when they attack the integrity of civic processes is something that has a deeply corrosive effect on civic discourse and can lead to the kind of violence that we saw in the Capitol. ...

Q13 Chair: Would you ban white supremacist groups where the tweets themselves do not advocate violence but are clearly promoting hatred and racism?

Nick Pickles: For the purposes of the violent extremist group policy, we look at the group identity, so we do not look at individual tweets. We are looking at, for an organisation like National Action, are you supporting them? Are you affiliating with them? We then have a separate set of policies that look at questions of hateful conduct and glorifying violence. Again, we have recently expanded our policy around dehumanisation, which was an area of content that we did not previously capture in our rules, and we are also expanding our policies on incitement. ...

Q14 Chair: Do you include incitement to hatred, or do you just include incitement to violence, when you are removing content?

Nick Pickles: Incitement to harassment would capture that as well, and—I think this is a good example of how, as we change our rules, people change their behaviour—we have a longstanding policy on incitement to violence, but people would use coded language. They were trying to skirt that rule, and so, as you say, they would incite discrimination. ...

incitement is definitely an area where we felt we needed to do more work to refine our policies....

Q17 Chair: When the Anti-Defamation League Centre on Extremism talked in August 2020 about “the sheer volume of readily accessible white supremacist, anti-Semitic and otherwise hateful video content on TikTok”, were they just wrong?

Theo Bertram (Director of Government Relations and Public Policy for Europe, TikTok): ... Obviously, we are not 100% and we need to do better. ... On the broad judgment, I think we are doing a good job. ...

Q19 Chair: In June, the International Institute for Counter-Terrorism highlighted anti-Semitic content on TikTok, videos of Nazi rallies and holocaust denial. Other organisations are identifying content on your platform that you are not identifying.

Theo Bertram: We have proactively removed about 80% of hateful content. ... Last year we changed our policy around hateful racial attacks so that we broadened—you have protected groups and you have attacks on protected groups. One way we saw that this was happening on our platform was that the far-right extremist groups were deliberately sailing close to the wind and finding codes and ways to get around our policies, so we have broadened the policy ... Now, for example, we would not just remove “on the face of it” anti-Semitic attacks. We would remove proxies for that, such as conspiracy theories around George Soros. ...

Q20 Henry Turnbull (Head of Public Policy UK & Nordics, Snap Inc.): ... I think it is well recognised that we have done a good job in keeping that kind of content away from public areas of Snapchat. ... Snapchat is a very different platform from traditional social media. ... the core functionality of the app is private messaging, so the public side of Snapchat, which is our Discover platform for news and entertainment, and our Spotlight tab for the community’s best snaps, is a curated and moderated environment, which means that we have always chosen what content is surfaced and promoted there. ...

Q24 Diane Abbott: I think there is a difference between something that is quite clearly an incitement to violence ... and Twitter being almost a cesspool of ugly and unpleasant conversation. ...

Nick Pickles: This is where the question of consistency of enforcement of rules comes in. Clearly, we have more work to do to make sure that the abuse that you and others receive is responded to equally and as vigorously: making sure that we are enabling our users to control their experiences, launching things, for example, that mean you can control who replies to tweets, as well as more technology to find those abusive and harassing tweets. ...

Q25 Ruth Edwards (Conservative): ... Like other social media companies, Twitter has for a long time maintained that it is a platform not a publisher. Are you at all concerned, given the controversy of your suspending President Trump’s account, that this action has undermined the way you categorise yourselves?

Nick Pickles: ... Certainly, the idea of taking a regulatory system that was created for newspapers and trying to fit the entire internet into that regulatory system is not going to give good public policy outcomes.

The question for us is that we should publish our rules, and we should enforce our rules consistently and impartially around the world, for all of our users. ...

Some of the troubling conversation around the publisher framework is that you lose that diversity and competition, and ultimately you would have less speech on the internet. I think it is time to move beyond the publisher question and look at how companies enforce their rules, and then rebuild trust in those processes. ...

Q30 Ruth Edwards: Is the issue one of timing? If it is happening in real time and it is inciting violence as it happens, it gets taken down, but if it is justifying violence, enforced labour or something in hindsight—although really it is still carrying on—that is okay, is it?

Nick Pickles: ... On the speech from the President and the tweets that we took action on, we outlined why the context of those tweets was leading to discussion of violence being committed in other places again in the future, and those tweets incited further violence. ...

Q39 Simon Fell (Conservative): ... I am interested in the issue of profile versus presence on your platform. [Stephen Yaxley-Lennon] may have been banned, he may not have a profile, yet there is content on there that is produced by him, starring him, shared by either puppet accounts, from the ones I have looked at, or his supporters and followers. It is just as harmful as him being there in person. ...

Nick Pickles: ... Certainly, for example, looking at recent events around the world, people will post content to Twitter to condemn it, to draw attention to it and to say, "Did you know someone has just said this in another place?" One of the challenges is that then reproduces the very content from an individual who we have previously banned from Twitter. We try to draw the line currently around: is an account being created to evade our ban? ...

We draw a distinction between, "Are you evading a ban?" versus, "Are you sharing this content because it is off-platform commentary?" The content itself may not break our rules. That balance is the one we are constantly trying to strike, but particularly when people are sharing content to condemn and to raise awareness, we take that context into account. ...

Q61 Tim Loughton (Conservative): ... back in 2017 when Twitter was confronted about some anti-political hate tweets—it was at a time when there had been a lot of problems around anti-Semitism and attacks on Labour MPs who tried to call it out—I raised the subject of the hashtag #KillaTory, which by any reading falls outside your guidance, and you promised to have a look at it. When I looked into #KillaTory again today, I got, "If everyone who tweeted about Thatcher killed one Tory each the country would be fixed in time for Corrie." Another one is, "I really see nothing to celebrate Trafalgar Day so why don't we replace it with Kill a Tory Day" or, even more recently, "Now breaking the law is all fine and dandy, let's all go out and kill a Tory."

Mr Pickles, why is it still there on Twitter, this incitement of violence against, in this case, Tories? ...

Nick Pickles: I think the question is whether this is new content or the same content. ... This is an example of where I will go and speak to my colleagues and ask how it is that this is not being fed into the technology we are using to find the content. We will get it reviewed under our rules. ...

Q62 Tim Loughton: You can block a hashtag on Twitter, can you not?

Nick Pickles: No, because the problem we have is that some people will tweet hashtags to condemn something. Some people will tweet hashtags and say, "Why is this trending?" We can stop a hashtag. ...

Q63 Tim Loughton: ... the answer you have just given is exactly the same answer that your predecessor gave last time round, so why should we have any confidence that you are taking this sort of thing seriously? ...

If somebody posted, "#Israel is a malignant, cancerous tumour in the west Asian region that has to be removed and eradicated. It is possible and it will happen", do you think that is encouraging or exhorting people to violence?

Nick Pickles: I do not know the context of that tweet. ...

Q64 Tim Loughton: It does not need a context, does it? I have just told you this tweet says that Israel is a malignant, cancerous tumour and has to be eradicated. In any context that sounds fairly hateful, doesn't it?

Nick Pickles: As I say, without knowing the account that posted that tweet ...

Q65 Tim Loughton: Let me tell you that the person who posted it is the supreme leader of Iran, and you have done nothing to vet any of his tweets that appear to be exhorting violence against an entire nation that might be said to be on a par with what Donald Trump

was doing, less or worse, I don't know. But it is just double standards, isn't it? ...

Nick Pickles: We have a specific rule, and we have had it for several years, that covers geopolitical sabre rattling from world leaders. I had the same conversation, for example, when President Trump spoke about military action against Iran and North Korea. We did not take action on those tweets because we recognised it is important that the engagement of world leaders in speech relating to other states is publicly available and transparent in our rules currently. ...

Q77 Stuart C McDonald (SNP): ... Committee staff looked at the thread for a group that you can fairly describe as a white nationalist group. But Twitter is then recommending very similar stuff, including another Twitter thread that promotes anti-Semitic conspiracy theories, white supremacy politics and so on. Why does Twitter think that is acceptable just now?

Nick Pickles: ... This is clearly an issue of balance and, if we have not yet found the right balance of which accounts we should not recommend, we will keep looking at that. ...

Q79 Stuart C McDonald: ... another AI challenge illustrated by the horrible attack in Christchurch. The challenge is faced in trying to stop that violent content being uploaded again and again. I think only a couple of hundred people viewed the live feed, but millions ultimately saw it. People were making slight changes to how they were doing it, and that meant it was not picked up and so on. Is it just beyond your organisations to be able to implement algorithms or schemes that will stop that happening ...?

Derek Slater: ... we continue to improve on our automated detection systems over time. If you look at YouTube's community guidelines enforcement report, over 90% of the things we removed were first detected by machines. The vast majority of those, 80%, were removed before 10 views. ...

... certainly the Christchurch event was horrific and led us to take a number of different steps as a company in restricting mobile uploads and how we tuned our machine systems, but also as an industry. ... We have worked through the Global Internet Forum to Counter Terrorism to improve how we deal with those sorts of perpetrator-filmed violent events through our content internet protocol ...

Q80 Stuart C McDonald: What about banned users setting up new accounts? How do you stop that happening?

Derek Slater: We also use automated detection systems to see if they are trying to game the system. We might look at IP addresses or other sorts of metadata ...

Q81 Stuart C McDonald: ... How far away are we from being able to prevent something like Christchurch, god forbid, being repeated?

Nick Pickles: ... First, the number of people who were maliciously, deliberately editing the video to try to evade our detection, so we were seeing new versions of the video every 60 seconds. I think the final tally of the number of unique copies runs into the tens of thousands, which we have not seen in another area.

Secondly, people uploaded the content to condemn it and call it out, people were challenging the information around this event. On Twitter we did some analysis: about 70% of the people who saw the Christchurch video on Twitter saw it because it had been posted by a verified account, and that included very high-profile news organisations and some celebrities who were posting this as part of their editorial coverage or to condemn it.

We are taking those accounts down, but people adding split-screen where they were speaking over it, and praying in some cases, was something we had not seen before, and it does make the detection challenge much harder. ...

Q91 Chair: ... I would also like to raise the issue about co-operation with police forces. TikTok, is it right that you charge the police for help with their requests?

Theo Bertram: Not as far as I am aware, no, not at all. ...

Q92 Chair: There are no charges to the police either for material for investigations or for any material that might be needed for court?

Theo Bertram: Not as far as I am aware. I have not come across that at all but I will check with the team and write to you to follow that up. ...

Q93 Chair: Snap Inc., can I just ask you the same question, Mr Turnbull?

Henry Turnbull: No, that is not the case. We have well-established processes for supporting law enforcement investigations in the UK and internationally. ...

Q94 Chair: There are no charges. Mr Pickles, does Twitter ever charge the police for any investigations that Twitter does?

Nick Pickles: Not that I am aware of ...

Q95 Chair: Mr Slater, any charges from YouTube or Google to the police for any investigations?

Derek Slater: Broadly similar, I am not familiar with any charges in this area, but I would be happy to follow up.

Q96 Chair: ... could I raise with you a case that was raised with me? It is a revenge porn case where the police approached Snapchat but, by the time Snapchat responded, the material had all been deleted. Even though it had sat on Snapchat for some time, wasn't initially deleted immediately, had been seen by a range of people, there could be no prosecution and no action taken against the perpetrator in that case. How do you justify long delays in responding to the police if you delete your material so quickly?

Henry Turnbull: ... We are confident that we co-operated with law enforcement in this case in a way that is consistent with our policies. ... I think one of the lessons learned from this is the importance of law enforcement submitting a preservation request, which they are able to do when there is any indication of criminal content on Snapchat. That basically allows us to keep a snapshot in time of a user's data, including basic subscriber information, for 90 days and allows us plenty of time to process any requests. You can also extend it for an additional 90 days. ...

Q97 Chair: Can you respond to preservation requests immediately?

Henry Turnbull: We can certainly respond very quickly. The standard turnaround time for that is seven days.

Q98 Chair: When material might be deleted within 30 days or less, seven days is quite a long time for those preservation requests. ...

Q99 Chair: If you got a request today and the material would otherwise disappear on Friday, what happens if you take seven days to respond to that request? Isn't there a risk that the material is gone?

Henry Turnbull: First, in most of these cases we are not providing content, we are providing account data related to the account that law enforcement is looking to. ... If there is an imminent threat to life situation, we can respond within an hour. Requests regarding serious crimes we can respond to within 24 hours, and then all other preservation requests we aim to respond to within seven days. We can act on those quite quickly, but we are not providing content in most of those cases. ...

Q100 Chair: If there was a request around a revenge porn case, would you not expect to provide any content?

Henry Turnbull: We do not typically provide content.

Q101 Chair: The question here is whether a crime has been committed or not, and what the evidence is of a crime having been committed. If someone's experience is that there have been explicit photographs or videos of them that have been shared widely, even if they are then deleted, a lot of people may have seen them, which can be deeply distressing for someone. For the police to be able to put a charge through court, they need some evidence that a crime has taken place. Are you saying that, even in those

circumstances, you would not expect to provide any content to the police?

Henry Turnbull: Currently there isn't a legal framework that enables us to share content with UK law enforcement. ...

Q102 Monika Bickert (Vice President, Global Policy Management, Facebook): Of course we know that any technology platform can be abused and, in fact, we see people trying to share hate speech or trying to incite violence on our platform. We are very aggressive in trying to identify and remove that, and we are transparent about how we do it. ...

Niamh Sweeney (Director of Public Policy EMEA, WhatsApp): Co-ordinating harm of any kind is prohibited on WhatsApp. We haven't seen any evidence of that at this point. We receive tips from Facebook and the very public-facing nature of trying to co-ordinate harm, the requirement to allow people to attempt to do so, means it is easier and more in Facebook's remit to look for that content. If they find it or see any evidence of it moving to WhatsApp, they will give us information and we investigate. ...

Q103 Monika Bickert: On the technology company side, there are some challenges and some benefits. One is that we can move faster sometimes than a Government process might. For instance, we are able to designate some of these militia groups and other dangerous organisations quicker than a Government could. We also have some limitations. We can only see what the group is showing us about its speech and its aims. ...

Q109 Diane Abbott: ... The Committee understands that you would not knowingly allow a white nationalist group on Facebook. The fact that so many of them flourish on Facebook must surely mean that you are not proactive enough in taking down that sort of presence. ...

Monika Bickert: We are not passive. We are very aggressive in proactively searching for this kind of content. We put out a report every quarter that details exactly how proactive we are. In fact, keeping in mind that we remove any such content that is reported to us, I think it says something that, if you look at our published numbers, around 99% of the content that we remove for violating our terrorism or dangerous organisation policies is content that we find ourselves before anybody has reported it to us. ...

Q130 Chair: ... if somebody shares an awful piece of child abuse with someone else on WhatsApp, and they do not put it in their profile, they do not put it in their name and they do not put it in the title of the group—they just share awful images with a large group of people on WhatsApp—how do you know it is happening?

Niamh Sweeney: Messages are fully end-to-end encrypted, so we would not be able to identify it through one of those deliveries.

Q131 Chair: So you do not know that it is happening. ...

Q132 Chair: Let us move back to Ms Bickert. You want to extend this end-to-end encryption to all of your Facebook messaging, your other services and so on. How are you going to be able to identify the Internet Watch Foundation's images, the ones that everybody has agreed will be taken down, if you are introducing end-to-end encryption?

Monika Bickert: As we are looking to move towards end-to-end encryption for our messaging services, which includes Facebook and Instagram direct messaging services, one of the things that we are trying to do is leverage the available unencrypted content that we have from Facebook and Instagram to try to understand who is behind these accounts. That can be a very useful signal for us in stopping this abuse at the outset. ... Another thing that we are doing is leveraging metadata and traffic patterns to try to understand ... the patterns that we see to identify when behaviour might be spam behaviour or attempted grooming of a minor to engage in sexual activity. ...

What we are doing beyond that, one important component is user education and giving people the tools that they need either to use our reporting functions, so they will be able to report content to us and we can send that on to law enforcement, or to avoid a bad

situation in the first place.

Q133 Chair: This just sounds hopelessly naive. When you have people who deliberately look for ways around systems, where we know that people go to great lengths to perpetrate vile crimes against children, the kinds of things that you are talking about sound like the sorts of things that are extremely easy for perpetrators to evade. You are making it even easier for them by introducing end-to-end encryption. ...

Q138 Chair: ... If you have two people who are sharing awful child abuse images with each other—images that the IWF has identified—on an open platform your systems would pick them up. In the new system, so on WhatsApp currently, if they have not put it in their profile, they have not done anything else, they are just sharing it between them, would you have any way of picking it up? On Facebook's messaging systems in their new world—in the end-to-end encrypted world—will you have any way of picking that up? That is an image that the IWF has already identified and given you the hash to be able to find.

Monika Bickert: You are right. If content is being shared and we do not have access to that content, if it is something we cannot see, it is something that we cannot report.

Q139 Chair: Do you accept then that your reporting of cases of serious abuse against children, the kinds of reporting that currently rescues children from very dangerous situations, will go down under end-to-end encryption?

Monika Bickert: I do expect those numbers will go down. ...

Q163 Stuart C McDonald: There is a sense in which you will always be playing catch-up because things evolve, but specifically on the point about how AI can flag content and then it has to be reviewed, do you have figures about what percentage of the flagged posts end up being restored or on what percentage the human moderation agrees with what the AI formulas have decided?

Monika Bickert: We put out some numbers around decisions that we have overturned based on appeal, but those are more about when we have made a final decision. A decision could have been made by automation, but it also could have been made by a person, and then on a second look we reinstate content. We do not have figures on when a technical system has suggested that something violates and then our reviewers have said, "No, it does not," ...

Q168 Monika Bickert: ... When I look at some of the trends, a year and a half ago nobody would have expected what we have seen with Covid-19, for instance, and we have also seen this dramatic shift in the way that we think about terrorism and extremist content with the rise of white nationalism and the far right. It is going to be very important for the regulator to strike that balance between actual guidance and flexibility. ...

To read the full transcript see

<https://committees.parliament.uk/oralevidence/1566/html/>

TOP

Holocaust

UK Parliament Early Day Motion

Jim Shannon (DUP) [1405] Holocaust Memorial Day – That this House notes Holocaust Memorial Day; further acknowledges the impact that the Holocaust still has upon this world with rising antisemitism remaining a threat to Jewish people around the globe; recognises the need to preserve the remembrance of these dreadful acts against humanity; reaffirms our commitment to appropriate remembrance and dedication to educating our children and grandchildren to know the truth about this genocide; and expresses again our deep sorrow

to those who survived and still mourn their dead and understands the steps that must be taken to ensure that such atrocities do not take place ever again.

<https://edm.parliament.uk/early-day-motion/58013>

Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office

Dominic Raab

Today is a day to reflect on the depths that humanity can sink to. The testimonies we hear renew our collective memory and strengthen our resolve to teach future generations of today's unwavering fight against antisemitism #HolocaustMemorialDay

<https://twitter.com/DominicRaab/status/1354352561067859972>

Dominic Raab

I thank Ambassador @TzipiHotovely for hosting the annual #HolocaustMemorialDay event today. Covid may have prevented us from gathering in person, but we will never forget, nor end the fight against the scourge of anti-Semitism

<https://twitter.com/DominicRaab/status/1354065952627978241>

@FCDOGovUK

Ruth Schwiening was just 3 years old when her parents sent her to Britain to escape Nazi Germany. They didn't know if they would ever see her again. On #HolocaustMemorialDay we pay tribute to victims and survivors, and pledge never to forget.

<https://twitter.com/FCDOGovUK/status/1354416948025692167>

@FCDOGovUK

Jane Haining sacrificed her life to save Jewish children from Nazi concentration camps. On #HolocaustMemorialDay we remember all the victims and survivors of genocide, and honour those who opposed it #HMD2021

<https://twitter.com/FCDOGovUK/status/1354362069987041281>

Scottish Parliament

Time for Reflection

Lucy Craven (Lessons from Auschwitz Ambassador, Holocaust Educational Trust): ... Hearing Eva [Clarke]'s testimony enabled me to rehumanise the 6 million Jewish men, women and children who were murdered in the Holocaust. When we visited the site of the former Nazi concentration and death camp Auschwitz-Birkenau, Eva's experiences stayed with me the whole time. As I walked along the railway track at the entrance to the camp, I thought of the journey that her mother and father would have made. We must see beyond the numbers and remember that the victims of the Holocaust were people, the same as you and me, who had their lives cruelly taken away.

Zuzanna Wisniewska (Lessons from Auschwitz Ambassador, Holocaust Educational Trust): Before visiting Auschwitz-Birkenau, I did not know what to expect. Once there, I found it hard to comprehend that I was standing at the site that I had learned about, at which more than a million people had been murdered.

Once we had returned home, I began to grasp the importance of visiting such a site and its contemporary relevance. I began thinking about my role in ensuring that the Holocaust is never forgotten. ...

It is important that young people ensure that the testimonies of survivors such as Eva Clarke are never forgotten. Such experiences serve as a reminder of what can happen when hate is left unchallenged.

This year, Holocaust memorial day's theme is "Be the light in the darkness". We will stand against hatred only when we choose to be kind and choose to be the light.

<https://www.parliament.scot/parliamentarybusiness/report.aspx?r=13077&i=118323#ScotParlOR>

Welsh Government

Written Statement: Holocaust Memorial Day 2021: Jane Hutt MS, the Deputy Minister and Chief Whip

Today we mark Holocaust Memorial Day 2021: the anniversary of the liberation of Auschwitz and the annual day of remembrance for those killed in the Holocaust, and in genocides which have followed.

The theme this year is 'Be the light in the darkness.' The Holocaust Memorial Day Trust is encouraging every household across the UK to light a candle in their window at 8:00pm tonight. This act is both to remember the victims and survivors of genocide, and to shine a light against hatred and prejudice that causes division in our communities today.

The lighting of a candle is a symbolic gesture of positivity and kindness which we can all take. It remains a difficult time for people across Wales and reading the news or social media may give the impression that we are a more divided society than ever. However, we have seen great community spirit and resilience, where people have united and supported one another despite the awful circumstances. ...

The proportion of people who stated that they agree that people in their area treat each other with respect has never been higher.

Nevertheless, we have also seen greater levels of hate crime than ever before. These two findings may seem contradictory but they are not. A very small proportion of the community commit hate crimes and will continue to do so unless wider society stands up against them, shoulder-to-shoulder with victims. In a few weeks' time, the Welsh Government will launch our anti-hate crime campaign, 'Hate Hurts Wales'. The campaign encourages us all to tackle hate and recognise that our society is also damaged when anyone is targeted because of their identity. ...

We remain alert to the divisive rhetoric that continues to seek to fragment our communities through fear and misinformation, and are tackling this through work such as our Hate Crime Minorities Communities Grant, Regional Community Cohesion Programme, and the upcoming anti-hate crime media campaign 'Hate Hurts Wales'. We must never lose sight of the origins of atrocities such as the Holocaust, and the horrifying results of letting hatred go unchallenged and allowing prejudice to embed itself in everyday life.

To read the full press release see

<https://gov.wales/written-statement-holocaust-memorial-day-2021>

Northern Ireland Executive

Holocaust Memorial Day 2021: We must learn lessons from the past to create a better future – Foster and O'Neill

... First Minister Arlene Foster said: "It is important that we continue to remember those who lost their lives in the Holocaust and subsequent genocides. Society has to learn lessons from the past to create a better future for us all."

"The theme for Holocaust Memorial Day 2021 is 'Be the light in the darkness'. That is particularly poignant at the present time. Not only is it associated with the Holocaust and subsequent genocides, but the challenges we face with the Covid-19 pandemic and the impact it has had on everyone's lives. It urges all of us to show the better side of our humanity."

Deputy First Minister Michelle O'Neill said: "The Holocaust is a poignant and powerful reminder of what can happen when bigotry and discrimination go unchecked. Holocaust Memorial Day is an opportunity for all of us to remember the millions of people who were persecuted during the Holocaust and subsequent genocides.

"We must do everything we can to ensure such atrocities never happen again. Holocaust Memorial Day reminds us that we all have a role to play in tackling prejudice, ending division and building a shared future. We must embrace and celebrate difference and diversity in order to create a better society for all."

As part of HMD 2021, The Executive Office has unveiled a video poem by Co Down-based artist Csilla Toldy, which was created last year to commemorate the 75th anniversary of the liberation of the Nazi concentration camps.

The powerful artwork, entitled Here I Stand, is based on a story of a survivor of Auschwitz, Ivor Perl, who was only 11 years old when he was deported with his family. As they entered the concentration camp, Ivor's mother told him to leave her and join the other queue where his older brother was standing, saving his life. ...

The First Minister and deputy First Minister said: "Csilla's video poem is a powerful reminder of the horrors of the Holocaust and the unthinkably heartbreaking decisions so many parents were forced to make to save their children's lives. Her poem and documentary film will be useful tools in helping future generations learn vital lessons from the past."

To read the full press release see

<https://www.executiveoffice-ni.gov.uk/news/holocaust-memorial-day-2021-we-must-learn-lessons-past-create-better-future-foster-and-oneill>

Council of Europe

Council of Europe leaders and victims' representatives mark Holocaust Remembrance Day

... Secretary General Marija Pejčinović Burić said "Every year on this day we search for words that will describe the terror of the Holocaust. But words fail us. We cannot capture the suffering and loss. Our responsibility now is to ensure that we do not fail those who lost their lives, and those who have come after. That we remember, and that we act, to preserve memory, to ensure dignity and to build societies in which people live in the safety and security that each of us deserve".

The President of the Parliamentary Assembly, Rik Daems, said "What happened behind the walls of Auschwitz-Birkenau, Treblinka and the other camps, or under the bullets of the Einsatzgruppen does not only concern the families of the victims or their descendants. It concerns us all, because it is an attack and a violation of human dignity which stands at the heart of human rights. Our Assembly will continue its work on combatting Antisemitism. At a time when Antisemitism and attacks against the memory of the Holocaust, propagated by fake information and relayed by social media, persist in Europe and beyond, it is more than ever necessary to keep the memory of the Holocaust alive".

[Video Statements](#)

To read the full press release see

<https://www.coe.int/en/web/portal/-/council-of-europe-leaders-and-victims-representatives-mark-holocaust-remembrance-day>

Message from Anders Knappe, President of the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe on the occasion of the Holocaust Remembrance Day

Today, we pay tribute to all those who lost their lives during the reign of horror and

inhumanity.

More than ever we share our determination to remember, to honour and to never forget for it was on the ashes of a continent devastated by war that the Council of Europe was founded to bring about European unity and to stand guard of democratic principles. Over seven decades, it has brought to life a human rights protection system unique in the world, and a democratic system where governments, parliaments, local and regional authorities and civil society work together as indispensable parts of the whole.

Today, I am alarmed to hear extremist political discourse and to see anti-Semitism, xenophobia, Islamophobia, anti-gypsyism and homophobia on the rise again in Europe. It is a stark reminder to all of us that the rights and freedoms we are enjoying are not a given, and that even absolute values can be questioned if they are not constantly upheld and defended.

All tiers of governance, civil society and the private sectors have an important role to play in this respect ...

Mayors, local and regional councilors have a responsibility vis-à-vis all their fellow citizens to establish inclusive societies based not on prejudice and the rejection of others, but on dialogue, tolerance and concertation. They cannot do this on their own. All levels of governance need to come together to build a Europe of Citizens, a Europe of Cities and Regions, a Europe of genuine participation and social justice, genuine inclusion and tolerance.

To read the full transcript see

<https://www.coe.int/en/web/congress/-/international-holocaust-remembrance-day-we-must-confront-antisemitism-in-order-to-preserve-our-democratic-values-said-the-congress-president>

European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA)

Remember the past to build a better, more inclusive future

Holocaust Remembrance Day is a time to honour and remember the millions of Jews, Roma, people with disabilities, gays and lesbians, and many others who fell victim to the horrors of Nazi persecution. Championing inclusion and tolerance towards others serves to honour their memory, says the EU Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA).

The hardships and worries caused by the long-running COVID-19 pandemic are creating the conditions for intolerance to spread.

Early on, it triggered an increase in [racist and xenophobic attacks, particularly towards Asians](#). Some people [blame Jews for creating and spreading the virus](#). Some even claim Jews use the pandemic for profit.

Even before the pandemic, Europe-wide surveys point to widespread intolerance towards ethnic minorities, Jews, Roma and LGBTI people.

Only 1 in 2 [Europeans would feel comfortable with their child loving a Roma person](#), for example.

Almost 2 in 5 Jews [surveyed by FRA](#) consider emigrating because they do not feel safe as Jews in their own countries.

Not only that, Holocaust survivors are particularly at risk from the virus given their age.

This becomes problematic. The number of survivors diminishes at a time when 1 in 2 [Europeans believe that Holocaust denial is a problem](#) in their country. It reduces the number of people who can recount the horrors of the past first hand.

Holocaust Remembrance Day so should act as a springboard to promote understanding between diverse communities as a guard against intolerance.

It should be a poignant time to learn from the past and build for a better, more inclusive future.

It underlines the importance of strengthening Holocaust education, celebrating diversity, and raising awareness to create a better understanding of how intolerance affects people

and society as a whole.

In the morning of 27 January 1945, soldiers liberated the Auschwitz extermination camp. At that time, it still held some 7,000 prisoners. But over the course of its existence, over a million people deported to Auschwitz died there.

<https://fra.europa.eu/en/news/2021/remember-past-build-better-more-inclusive-future>

Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE)

Closer co-operation and greater creativity needed to combat contemporary anti-Semitism, OSCE officials say on International Holocaust Remembrance Day

Co-operation and an ongoing conversation about the changing face of anti-Semitism are crucial to ensure that we do not only commemorate the horrors of the Holocaust but also learn from it for the future," leading OSCE officials said on International Holocaust Remembrance Day.

"Today we pay tribute to the six million Jewish persons, half a million Roma and all other victims – who were murdered in the Holocaust. The passing of the last witnesses to the Holocaust puts a clear responsibility on all participating States to document their testimonies, to educate the next generation, to support research of the Holocaust, to remember, and never to forget. This responsibility applies equally to all genocides or mass atrocities," says the Chairperson-in-Office, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Sweden Ann Linde. ...

Since the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic, we have seen hatred spreading as Jewish people and minorities have found themselves scapegoated, and in some cases, become victims of targeted violence. This spread has often been fuelled by individuals using digital technologies as a tool, which make it easier and faster to disseminate anti-Semitic conspiracy theories that have been in circulation for years or centuries. States must ensure accountability for hate crimes.

"The Holocaust provides the ultimate lesson on the horrific consequences of prejudice and hatred when they are allowed to run rampant or are actively promoted," said Matteo Mecacci, Director of the OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR). "The efforts to combat anti-Semitism and the crimes connected to it must be redoubled by governments – while always respecting human rights and the rule of law – as we otherwise risk further spreading these toxic narratives, including through new digital technologies."

Finding strategies to counter the spread of anti-Semitism requires a co-ordinated and comprehensive approach that brings together government, civil society, faith communities, the private sector, media, schools, and universities. ODIHR can effectively contribute to these efforts, through its coalition-building work and educational initiatives that address anti-Semitism and foster more tolerant and inclusive societies, making sure that the human rights of all those involved are always respected.

"The Holocaust demonstrated how anti-Semitism, if unchallenged, can lead societies to become undemocratic and immune to prejudice and even hate attacks against Jewish people, generating immediate and long-term threats to their security," said Rabbi Andrew Baker, Personal Representative of the OSCE Chairperson-in-Office on Combating Anti-Semitism. "For this reason, it is critical that governments address comprehensively the security needs of Jewish individuals and communities to enable them to fully participate in the life of society."

ODIHR is continuously seeking new and creative solutions to counter anti-Semitism in all its forms through the remembrance and study of the Holocaust and the Roma and Sinti genocide, and has developed numerous resources and [teaching materials to challenge anti-Semitism](#) both off- and online. Recognizing that education is key to preventing anti-Semitism and other forms of intolerance, the Office has published [dedicated curricula](#) to

train school directors and teachers to address anti-Semitism and counter prejudice through innovative teaching methods and practices.

To read the full press release see

<https://www.osce.org/chairmanship/476707>

UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights

International Holocaust Remembrance Day 27 January 2021

UN experts said today States must take resolute action against rising antisemitism and ensure deniers of the Holocaust and all levels of society are effectively educated about the Holocaust and other manifestations of antisemitism. Reminding governments of their international human rights obligations, the UN experts issued the following statement marking the 76th anniversary of the liberation of the Auschwitz concentration camp on 27 January, 1945.

In 2019, reports by the [Special Rapporteur on freedom of religion or belief](#) and the [Special Rapporteur on contemporary forms of racism](#) documented a dramatic and persistent increase in antisemitic rhetoric and incidents in many countries in recent years, both offline and online. During 2020, these trends grew even more worrying, with widespread reports of antisemitic rhetoric on social media and in traditional media outlets, promoting outrageous conspiracy theories and attributing responsibility for the COVID-19 pandemic to Jews, as noted by the Special Rapporteur on freedom of religion or belief in an April 2020 [statement](#) and by the Special Rapporteur on contemporary forms of racism in an August 2020 [report](#).

The antisemitic rhetoric and incidents seen over the past year have included notable examples of Holocaust denial, including in some cases by government officials and state-sponsored media, with particular effect on young people in many countries, as well as distortions of the Holocaust's scope and intentionality during public demonstrations in the context of the COVID-19 public health crisis.

It is clear that when left unchecked, distortion and denial of the Holocaust – in which six million Jews, alongside members of other targeted groups were murdered in a uniquely brutal, systematic and state-sanctioned campaign of antisemitic extermination, dehumanisation and persecution – can undermine States' ability to protect and promote human rights. Not only can these and other forms of antisemitic expression create a climate of fear in which Jews are unable to manifest their religion and identity, but they can also threaten the rights to liberty and security and to take part in cultural life and equality and non-discrimination of all by encouraging the spread of conspiracy theories, stereotyping and harmful prejudices.

Today, we call for public figures to condemn Holocaust denial and distortion and for States to urgently step up educational, training and awareness-raising efforts that counter antisemitic stereotypes and prejudices and that include accurate information about the Holocaust, at all levels of society.

We commend recent efforts by some social media platforms to tackle cyberhate targeting Jews and other minorities, by prohibiting content that denies or distorts the Holocaust and by directing users to credible information about it.

These measures must be consistently and systematically adopted, implemented, and enforced, including through concrete regulatory policies and terms of service, while respecting the freedoms of expression and of the press.

We recall the 2005 UN General Assembly resolution 60/7, which urges Member States to educate future generations about the Holocaust and which reaffirms that it will 'forever be a warning to all people of the dangers of hatred, bigotry, racism and prejudice'.

Recent events have served as a painful reminder of the potential for antisemitic conspiracy theories and misinformation to contribute to an environment in which violence,

discrimination, and hatred can flourish. We urge stakeholders to come together and act, in line with a human rights approach, to ensure more effectively that the facts of the Holocaust are known and appreciated, and to counter Holocaust distortion and denial and other similarly harmful antisemitic narratives, in the years ahead. ...

To read the full press release see

<https://www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=26690&LangID=E>

Holocaust remembrance day: Statement by Michelle Bachelet, UN High Commissioner for Human Rights

"Auschwitz-Birkenau, the largest Nazi extermination centre, was liberated on this day 76 years ago.

On this day of remembrance and sorrow, we are reminded of the horror to which hatred and lies can lead.

Millions of women, children and men – one-third of the Jewish people, and countless members of other minorities and persecuted groups – were murdered.

We weep for these appalling deaths. We honour the memory of the victims.

We recall the passive indifference of so many to these crimes – and the active involvement of many others. We renew our determination to combat the forces of hatred and discrimination – everywhere.

The past year has seen frightening increases in the number of hate crimes, in many societies. Amid the upheaval of the COVID-19 pandemic, there has also been a sharp rise in online anti-Semitic activity. The World Jewish Congress has reported a 30 percent increase in anti-Jewish slurs on major social media sites since November 2019.

With renewed vigour, conspiracy theorists increasingly link extreme political ideologies and anti-Semitic delusions – weaving elaborate lies and falsehoods that lay responsibility for every kind of government failing on individual Jews or the Jewish community as a whole.

Whipped up by irresponsible opinion-leaders – and amplified and legitimised by the uniquely powerful engines of digital media – these hate-filled fabrications are deeply damaging in themselves and can pose a real threat of violence.

Just as they did in the 1930s, lies, hatred, scapegoating and dehumanisation are also breaking our social fibre. Words have consequences.

Governments and digital platforms should urgently re-evaluate their responsibility in enabling or participating in such trends.

We need to push back against lies. We need to ensure that public discourse is based on facts, which objectively reflect truth – including the fundamental truth of our equal rights and dignity as human beings. We need to invest in human rights education in order to counter discrimination and groundless, toxic conspiracy theories.

Learning the lessons of the 20th century means grasping that we need to stand up and defend human rights – so that humanity can survive.

<https://www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=26689&LangID=E>

TOP

Israel

House of Commons Written Answers

Israel: Military Bases

Jim Shannon (DUP) [138982] To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether his Department holds data on military bases with missiles that are within range of Israeli territory.

James Cleverly: Israel is an important strategic partner for the UK and we collaborate frequently on issues of defence and security. Our commitment to the security of Israel is unwavering. All countries, including Israel, have a legitimate right to self-defence, and the right to defend their citizens from attack. However we cannot comment on intelligence and security matters.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2021-01-18/138982>

Overseas Trade: Israel

Janet Daby (Labour) [140253] To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, what her Department's policy is on the supply to the Israeli Government of (a) mechanical diggers and (b) other large-scale industrial or agricultural equipment that may potentially be used for the destruction of buildings in that country; and whether her Department has supplied such equipment to the Israeli Government.

Ranil Hayawardena: The United Kingdom applies export controls to military items and certain dual-use items. Standard mechanical diggers and agricultural machinery are not subject to such controls, but the Department for International Trade is not a supplier of such equipment.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2021-01-19/140253>

Palestinians: Remote Education

Robert Halfon (Conservative) [140776] To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what assessment he has made of the implications for his policies of the findings of the Institute for Monitoring Peace and Cultural Tolerance in School Education's report on the content of educational material published by the United Nations Relief and Works Agency during the Covid-19 pandemic to assist remote learning, published in January 2021.

James Cleverly: The UK government has zero-tolerance to incitement of violence, and we have raised this issue with UNRWA. We understand that as soon as the mistake was identified, UNRWA took swift action to correct the issue and conducted a thorough review to address any education materials in breach of its policies. We continue to monitor the situation to ensure self-learning materials remain in line with UN values. No UK funds were used for the development of UNRWA's self-learning material.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2021-01-20/140776>

The report referred to above can be read at

<https://www.impact-se.org/wp-content/uploads/UNRWA-Produced-Study-Materials-in-the-Palestinian-Territories.pdf>

Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office

Normalisation should help deliver Israeli-Palestinian peace: Statement by Ambassador Barbara Woodward, UK Permanent Representative to the UN, at the Security Council briefing on the Middle East

... Mr President, let me start by welcoming President Abbas's announcement of dates for legislative and Presidential elections in the Occupied Palestinian Territories for the first time since 2006. We encourage the Palestinian leadership to work toward strong, inclusive, accountable and democratic institutions, based on respect for the rule of law and human rights. Free and fair elections are an important and necessary step.

Turning to the conflict, Mr President, I should first reiterate the United Kingdom's longstanding position on the Middle East Peace Process: we support a negotiated settlement leading to a safe and secure Israel living alongside a viable and sovereign Palestinian state; based on 1967 lines with agreed land swaps, Jerusalem as the shared

capital of both states, and a just, fair, agreed and realistic settlement for refugees. The UK supports existing UN Security Council Resolutions as a basis for this settlement, including UN Security Council Resolution 2334.

With our commitment to the two-state solution in mind, Mr President, we condemn the Government of Israel's decision on 20 January to award tenders, and thus proceed towards construction of settlement units in the prospective East Jerusalem settlement of Givat Hamatos, an extremely sensitive area of the West Bank. Settlements are illegal under international law, and remain an obstacle to peace, and a threat to the two-state solution. The decision undermines the potential for future peace talks. The UK has also expressed concern at the additional 3,900 settlement units that have been advanced across the West Bank throughout January. We again urge Israel to immediately cease settlement expansion in the West Bank. And we remain concerned by demolitions and evictions of Palestinians from their homes.

Mr President, we condemn the murder of Esther Horgan, in a suspected terror attack by a Palestinian suspect on 20 December in Tal Menashe. ...

Mr President, this month also saw the firing of rockets on 17 January from militant groups in Gaza. The UK condemns the firing of rockets towards civilian populations. Any attacks targeted against civilians are unlawful and unjustifiable. ... We call upon Hamas and other terrorist groups to permanently end their incitement and rocket fire against Israel. We continue to urge the parties to prioritise progress towards reaching a durable solution for Gaza. And we encourage Israel to take the necessary practical steps to ensure Gaza's reconstruction and economic recovery. ...

The UK has been a strong supporter of recent Arab-Israeli normalisation agreements. Normalisation changes the regional context, and presents opportunities for moving ahead with material benefits and new partnerships, to help deliver long overdue Israeli-Palestinian peace. ...

To read the full transcript see

<https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/normalisation-should-help-deliver-israeli-palestinian-peace>

Scottish Parliament Motion

Ross Greer (Green) [S5M-23961] Ali Ayman Saleh Abu Alia – That the Parliament condemns the murder of 15-year-old Ali Ayman Saleh Abu Alia, a Palestinian child reportedly shot by the Israeli Defence Force (IDF) while attending protests as an observer in his village, Al-Mughayyir, in December 2020; understands that he was the fifth Palestinian child killed by the IDF using live ammunition in the West Bank last year; condemns the use of live ammunition against protestors, and agrees with Defence for Children International's reported assessment that the lack of accountability from Israeli forces in these cases of violence against children, who in areas of armed conflict are afforded additional protections in international law, represents a major violation of their human rights.

<https://www.parliament.scot/parliamentarybusiness/28877.aspx?SearchType=Advance&ReferenceNumbers=S5M-23961>

United Nations

Decree Ordering Long-Awaited Palestinian Elections 'Crucial Step' towards Building Democratic State, Special Middle East Coordinator Tells Security Council

Despite reprisals between Palestinians and Israelis, and the ongoing ravages of COVID-19 on a region struggling to staunch its spread, achievement of an elusive two-State vision

remains possible, the senior United Nations official for Middle East peace told the Security Council today, hailing a 15 January decree announcing the conduct of Palestinian elections in 2021 as “a crucial step” towards Palestinian unity and the building of a democratic State.

“There are opportunities unique to this moment that should not be missed,” said Tor Wennesland, Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process ...

According to the long-anticipated decree, issued by Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas, legislative elections will take place on 22 May, he said, followed by presidential elections on 31 July and voting for the Palestinian National Council on 31 August. An amendment to the elections law, meanwhile, raised the quota for female representation from 20 per cent to 26 per cent. In a separate development, he noted that Israel’s Knesset dissolved on 23 December 2020 after failing to pass a budget, with general elections now slated for 23 March 2021.

Turning to the issue of settlements, he expressed concern over Israel’s advancement on 17 January of 800 housing units in Area C settlements, as well as its publication of tenders for 1,900 units in that Area, and 210 units in East Jerusalem, a day later. ...

More broadly, he said violence persists, marked by rocket fire from militants in Gaza on 25 December 2020, followed by three additional firings from Gaza towards Israel on 18 and 19 January 2021. A month earlier, on 21 December 2020, a 52-year-old Israeli woman was found killed near the Tal Menashe settlement in the occupied West Bank, having been attacked with a stone. And on 24 December 2020, a Palestinian man in the village of Tura, near Jenin, was arrested on suspicion of the killing. Settler-related violence also increased, notably following the death of a 16-year-old boy from the Bat Ayin settlement, he added. ...

Ahmed Aboul Gheit, Secretary-General of the League of Arab States, noted that Palestinians suffered unprecedented pressure during the past four years from the former Administration of the United States, which chose to adopt dangerous, unjust measures and to freeze funding for UNRWA. ...

Riyad al-Malki, Minister for Foreign Affairs and Expatriates, Observer State of Palestine, warned that the countdown to the demise of a two-State solution is under way, pointing out that some critics say that time has already elapsed. ...

Asking the Council to consider how much trust existed 30 years ago, when the parties met in Madrid, he wondered how willing Israel’s Prime Minister was to make peace or how pleased the Palestinians were that the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) could not send its own delegation. “The world decided it was time to solve this conflict and was not going to take no for an answer,” he recalled, asserting: “Without Madrid, we would not have made it to Oslo.” ...

He went on to question whether anyone believed that Israel had dropped its annexation plans, or instead, was advancing them through accelerated demolition of Palestinian homes and record high settler violence. Israel’s goal has always been the same: grabbing maximum Palestinian geography with minimum Israeli demography. “Who would accept that?”, he asked, stressing: “We cannot.” ...

He went on to question whether the world had used the tools available to end the occupation and the conflict, proposing that international observers be deployed to assess compliance, and questioning why one side should fear the consequences of breaching commitments or reject the idea of binding timeframes. “This is the path towards changing the dramatic reality under way in Palestine,” he said. Palestinians will continue to fulfill their obligations. “An entire nation is yearning for freedom and its calls must be answered,” he said. ...

The representative of Israel said he hoped the new Special Coordinator will bring fresh energy to help to resolve the issue and recognize Iran for its role as the real threat to the region, including Tehran’s call for the destruction of Israel and denying the Holocaust. ...

The reality in 2021 is not the reality of 2016, he said. Iran did not use the removal of

sanctions to improve conditions for its people, but has built an arsenal of missiles, funded terrorism and is threatening regional and international peace and security. A recently discovered secret archive has demonstrated that Iran failed to disclose its massive nuclear weapon programme, deceiving the world when it signed the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action. The Council must not give in to this nuclear extortion, he said, adding that measures should ensure that Iran truly abandons its atomic weapon aspirations. ...

He expressed hope that the Council's approach to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict will change and focus on the real threat to the process — Palestinian incitement and terrorist attacks. Israel remains ready to negotiate to resolve the conflict and will make peace when there is a willing partner, which can be seen in agreements signed with Egypt, and more recently, other countries in the region. ...

However, the Middle East of today is no longer the old Middle East held hostage by the Palestinians, he continued. The new peace accords with several countries bring stability and new hope for the region, he said, asking Palestinians to explain why they call these agreements a "stab in the back". Addressing false claims about Israel's COVID-19 vaccination programme, he said a successful campaign involves including all parts of society, and Israel's experiences will be shared with other countries in addition to contributions of millions of dollars and cooperation with United Nations agencies. The Palestinian Authority is responsible for the health care of its people and has requested vaccines from the Russian Federation, he said, adding that Israel will provide whatever assistance it can in this endeavour. ...

The representative of the United Kingdom welcomed the announcement of dates for Palestinian presidential and legislative elections for the first time since 2006, encouraging leaders to work towards strong, inclusive and accountable democratic institutions, based on respect for the law and human rights. ...

To read the full press release see

<https://www.un.org/press/en/2021/sc14423.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>

**** Domestic Abuse Bill**

<https://bills.parliament.uk/bills/2709>

Committee Stage, House of Lords

<https://hansard.parliament.uk/lords/2021-01-25/debates/218A33F6-D938-4EDB-A7AF-070FAE5D2330/DomesticAbuseBill>

Education (Assemblies) Bill

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

Freedom of Speech (Universities) Bill

<https://bills.parliament.uk/bills/2820>

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>

Notice of amendments

<https://beta.parliament.scot/-/media/files/legislation/bills/current-bills/hate-crime-and-public-order-scotland-bill/stage-2/daily-list-of-amendments-26-january-2021.pdf>

and

<https://beta.parliament.scot/-/media/files/legislation/bills/current-bills/hate-crime-and-public-order-scotland-bill/stage-2/daily-list-of-amendments-27-january-2021.pdf>

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

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

Stage 1 Debate

<https://www.parliament.scot/parliamentarybusiness/report.aspx?r=13077&i=118360#ScotParlOR>

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Consultations

** new or updated today

Introduction of a statutory opt-out system for organ donation for Northern Ireland
(closing date 19 February 2021)

<https://www.health-ni.gov.uk/consultations/organ-donation>

Human Rights Act Review (closing date 3 March 2021)

<https://committees.parliament.uk/committee/93/human-rights-joint-committee/news/138635/call-for-evidence-the-governments-independent-human-rights-act-review/>

Social Distance, Digital Congregation: British Ritual Innovation under COVID-19

(closing date not stated)

<https://bric19.mmu.ac.uk/take-the-survey/>

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