



Political Affairs Digest

A daily summary of political events affecting the Jewish Community

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House of Commons Written Answers

Mass Media: Antisemitism

Catherine West (Labour) [150892] To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what steps his Department is taking with (a) the press and (b) media industries to tackle discriminatory speech towards the Haredi Jewish Community.

John Whittingdale: The government is committed to a free and independent press, and does not intervene in what the press can and cannot publish. We are clear, however, that with this freedom, comes responsibility, which media organisations must take seriously. It is important that there exists an independent self regulatory regime to ensure that the press adheres to a wide set of clear and appropriate standards, and to offer individuals a means of redress where these are not met.

The majority of traditional publishers—including 95% of national newspapers by circulation—are members of The Independent Press Standards Organisation (IPSO). A small number of publishers have joined The Independent Monitor for the Press (IMPRESS). These regulators issue codes of conduct which provide guidelines on a range of areas including discrimination, and set out the rules that members have agreed to follow.

Ofcom, the UK's independent broadcast regulator, sets clear rules in its Broadcasting Code for licensed broadcasters to meet to ensure UK audiences are adequately protected from harmful material.

In addition, the government has been clear that more needs to be done to ensure safety online. Therefore this government is introducing new Online Harms legislation. This will require companies to tackle abuse on their services and take reasonable steps to protect users' safety online. Users will be better able to report abuse, and should expect to receive appropriate support from the relevant platform if they do so.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2021-02-08/150892>

Social Media: Hate Crime

Mark Menzies (Conservative) [150765] To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, with reference to online hate speech posted on social media using country-specific language or tropes which might not be identifiable as such elsewhere or via an algorithm, whether the online harms Bill will include a requirement for social media companies to operate specific UK moderating teams which will be able to recognise country-specific language.

Caroline Dinenge: As part of the new online harms regulatory framework, Ofcom will set out how companies can fulfil their duty of care via codes of practice. The codes will outline the systems and processes companies must have in place to keep their users safe, including procedures on the training and support of human moderators.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2021-02-08/150765>

Social Media: Racial Discrimination

Matthew Offord (Conservative) [150775] To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what steps his Department is taking to tackle racism on social media platforms.

Caroline Dinenge: We are clear that the online racist abuse is unacceptable. We must do all we can to tackle it. We are taking steps through the online harms regulatory framework to ensure that online abuse is addressed. Under a new legal duty of care, companies will need to remove and limit the spread of illegal content, including illegal online abuse. All companies will need to take swift and effective action against such content.

Companies providing high-risk, high-reach services will also need to undertake regular risk assessments to identify legal but harmful material on their services. These companies will need to set clear terms and conditions which explicitly state what categories of legal but harmful material they accept (and do not accept) on their service. Companies will need to enforce these terms and conditions consistently and transparently and could face enforcement action if they do not. The Online Safety Bill, which will give effect to the regulatory framework, will be ready this year.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2021-02-08/150775>

Ministers of Religion: Hospitals

Jim Shannon (DUP) [146884] To ask the Member for South West Bedfordshire, representing the Church Commissioners, what role hospital chaplains are playing in supporting (a) patients and (b) the NHS during the covid-19 pandemic.

Andrew Selous: NHS chaplains have given their all in response to the unprecedented need for pastoral and spiritual support during the pandemic, with patients, in liaison with families unable to visit their loved ones, and with NHS staff under stress. Chaplains are an essential component in the care for the whole person that is central to the NHS's vocation.

The Archbishop of Canterbury has also been supporting patients at St Thomas's Hospital, London as part of the chaplaincy team there and is regularly making time to speak to patients and support families and staff.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2021-02-01/146884>

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Holocaust

House of Lords Written Answers

Poland: Property

Baroness Deech (Crossbench) [HL12787] To ask Her Majesty's Government what recent discussions they have had with representatives of the government of Poland about the restitution of property seized from Polish Jewish citizens during the period of Nazi occupation; and what was the outcome of any such discussions.

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: The UK continues to meet its commitments under the Terezin declaration.

HMG have been in regular discussions with the Polish Government about the restitution of property seized during the Nazi occupation. As the Minister for the European Neighbourhood and Americas noted in the House in July 2020, the British Ambassador to Poland has raised our concerns with the Polish Foreign Minister and the Speaker of the Polish Parliament. Lord Pickles, the UK's Special Envoy for post-Holocaust Issues, and the Minister for the European Neighbourhood and Americas have also engaged the Polish Government on this sensitive issue since it was last discussed in the House.

We regret that, despite this, the Polish Senate passed legislation in September 2020 which may make property restitution more difficult for some claimants in Warsaw. The UK will continue to take a strong stand on the issue of property restitution, in line with our unwavering commitment to supporting Holocaust survivors. Working with like-minded partners and the World Jewish Restitution Organisation (WJRO), the FCDO will continue to urge Poland to introduce comprehensive national legislation to deal with Holocaust-era property restitution.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2021-02-01/hl12787>

The Minister for the European Neighbourhood and Americas does not appear to have mentioned this subject in the House during July 2020 – or, indeed, at any time during the whole of 2020, and also did not respond to any written questions on this subject. Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon may be referring to a comment in the House of Lords on 27 July 2020 from Lord Pickles about the Terezin Declaration, and his own answers on the same date, which can be read at

<https://hansard.parliament.uk/lords/2020-07-27/debates/8F895CBC-5BBC-43B7-840D-EE1483FB2205/TerezinDeclaration>

National Holocaust Memorial Centre and Learning Service

Baroness Deech (Crossbench) [HL12782] To ask Her Majesty's Government whether Armenians will be included in the genocides to be commemorated in the proposed UK Holocaust Memorial and Learning Centre; and, if so, what consultation they have carried out with Armenian representatives.

Lord Greenhalgh: The UK Holocaust Memorial will honour the six million Jewish men, women and children who were murdered in the Holocaust, and all other victims of Nazi persecution. The remit of the co-located learning centre will also focus on subsequent genocides.

The scope and content of the exhibition within the UK Holocaust Memorial and Learning Centre will be developed over the coming years by the UK Holocaust Memorial Foundation, drawing on a wide range of external advice and expertise.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2021-02-01/hl12782>

National Holocaust Memorial Centre and Learning Service

Baroness Deech (Crossbench) [HL12783] To ask Her Majesty's Government which (1)

nations, and (2) minority groups, will be included in the genocides to be commemorated in the proposed UK Holocaust Memorial and Learning Centre; and what consultation they have undertaken with the representatives of any such nations or groups.

Lord Greenhalgh: The scope and content of the exhibition within the UK Holocaust Memorial and Learning Centre will be developed over the coming years by the UK Holocaust Memorial Foundation, drawing on a wide range of external advice and expertise.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2021-02-01/hl12783>

National Holocaust Memorial Centre and Learning Service

Baroness Deech (Crossbench) [HL12784] To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the educational impact of the proposed UK Holocaust Memorial and Learning Centre; and whether they have consulted the British Association of Holocaust Scholars on the content of the memorial and learning centre.

Lord Greenhalgh: The UK Holocaust Memorial Foundation will work with other institutions both in the UK and across the World supporting Holocaust commemoration and education, seeking to promote a deeper understanding of the Holocaust among as wide an audience as possible.

An Academic Advisory Board has been appointed, which includes members of the British Association of Holocaust Scholars and the head of the UCL's Centre for Holocaust.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2021-02-01/hl12784>

National Holocaust Memorial Centre and Learning Service

Baroness Deech (Crossbench) [HL12785] To ask Her Majesty's Government whether there is a plan for the management of the proposed UK Holocaust Memorial and Learning Centre; and if so, where that plan is available.

Lord Greenhalgh: We are considering a range of operating models and will put in place a sustainable long-term plan.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2021-02-01/hl12785>

National Holocaust Memorial Centre and Learning Service

Baroness Deech (Crossbench) [HL12786] To ask Her Majesty's Government what estimate they have made of the annual running costs of the proposed UK Holocaust Memorial and Learning Centre; and how such costs will be met.

Lord Greenhalgh: The annual running costs are estimated at up to £6 million. My Right Honourable Friend the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government announced on 28 January that the Government will provide free entry in perpetuity to everyone visiting the Holocaust Memorial and Learning Centre.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2021-02-01/hl12786>

The announcement referred to above can be read at

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/jenrick-announces-free-admission-to-the-proposed-uk-holocaust-memorial>

National Holocaust Memorial Centre and Learning Service: Expenditure

Baroness Deech (Crossbench) [HL12937] To ask Her Majesty's Government how much funding they have spent to date on activities relating to the proposed Holocaust Memorial and Learning Centre.

Lord Greenhalgh: From 2015/16 to 31 January 2021, the Government has spent £12.9 million (including VAT) on the Holocaust Memorial and Learning Centre programme.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2021-02-03/hl12937>

National Holocaust Memorial Centre and Learning Service: Finance

Baroness Deech (Crossbench) [HL12938] To ask Her Majesty's Government how much private funding is required for the creation of the proposed UK Holocaust Memorial and Learning Centre; and how much private funding has been raised to date.

Lord Greenhalgh: The aim is to raise at least £25 million from charitable donations. A fund-raising campaign is being led by a newly established independent charity, led by Foundation member Gerald Ronson CBE, who has committed to securing pledges of at least £25 million.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2021-02-03/hl12938>

National Holocaust Memorial Centre and Learning Service

Baroness Deech (Crossbench) [HL12939] To ask Her Majesty's Government what organisations will (1) own, and (2) manage, the proposed UK Holocaust Memorial and Learning Centre if planning permission is obtained; and what progress has been made towards setting up any such organisations.

Lord Greenhalgh: The site will continue to be owned by Government. We are considering a range of operating models for managing the Holocaust Memorial and Learning Centre.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2021-02-03/hl12939>

National Holocaust Memorial Centre and Learning Service

Baroness Deech (Crossbench) [HL12940] To ask Her Majesty's Government what plans they have for the (1) ownership, and (2) management, of the parts of Victoria Tower Gardens not required for the proposed UK Holocaust Memorial and Learning Centre.

Lord Greenhalgh: The site will continue to be owned by Government. We are in discussion with the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport and The Royal Parks about the future management arrangements for Victoria Tower Gardens.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2021-02-03/hl12940>

National Holocaust Memorial Centre and Learning Service

Baroness Deech (Crossbench) [HL12941] To ask Her Majesty's Government what proportion of Victoria Tower Gardens would be closed to the public during the construction of the proposed UK Holocaust Memorial and Learning Centre; and what estimate has been made of the duration of the building works.

Lord Greenhalgh: Construction is expected to last no longer than 3 years. Provision will be made to ensure part of Victoria Tower Gardens remains open for users during construction works.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2021-02-03/hl12941>

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Foreign Affairs

House of Commons Written Answer

Lebanon: Hezbollah

Chris Loder (Conservative) [148920] To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what assessment he has made of the (a) size and (b) capability of Hezbollah's weapons arsenal in southern Lebanon.

James Cleverly: The UK is aware of reports that Hizballah continues to amass an arsenal of weapons within Lebanon, in direct contravention of relevant UN Security

Council Resolutions (UNSCRs). The UK Government regularly raises this at the UN Security Council, and we call on the Lebanese authorities to abide by provisions of the relevant UNSCRs. Hizballah's destabilising influence threatens regional stability and endangers Lebanon and its people.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2021-02-03/148920>

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Other Relevant Information

Nahamu

Position Paper on Forced Marriage: Analysis of Arranged Marriage as Practiced in Jewish Communities

<http://nahamu.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/02/Position-Paper-on-FM-Nahamu-Feb-2021-Final.pdf>

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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>

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>

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 in 5 days**

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