



# Political Affairs Digest

A daily summary of political events affecting the Jewish Community

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## Home Affairs

### House of Commons Written Answers

#### **Maintained Schools: Collective Worship**

**John Hayes (Conservative)** [174005] To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps his Department is taking to ensure that a daily act of worship is taking place in every maintained school.

**Nick Gibb:** Every maintained school, academy and free school is required to ensure that collective worship takes place each day.

If the Department is informed that a school may be in breach of this requirement, it will be investigated. Where needed, the Department will remind schools of their duty on this matter and advise on how this can be met.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2021-03-23/174005>

*The following two questions both received the same answer*

#### **Hate Crime: Educational Institutions**

**Preet Kar Gill (Labour Co-op)** [174229] To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many hate crimes have been recorded at education institutions in each of the last 10 years.

#### **Hate Crime: Young People**

**Preet Kar Gill (Labour Co-op)** [174230] To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what support is available to young people to help them report a hate crime if they are a victim or witness of such a crime at college or at school.

**Victoria Atkins:** There is no place for racism and hatred in our education system. Schools and colleges have an important role in preparing children and young people for life in modern Britain. This involves supporting them to understand the society in which they are growing up and teaching about respect for other people and tolerance.

The Government expects schools to take a strong stand against all forms of bullying and discrimination and tackling it at the earliest opportunity to prevent it from escalating, particularly given the impact it can have on pupils, both emotionally and physically. Schools should develop their own approaches for monitoring bullying

and discriminatory incidents and exercise their own judgement as to what will work best for their circumstances. We expect schools to support pupils affected by hate crimes and bullying as necessary.

The Government has continued to take action to support schools in this area. This work has included projects targeting bullying of particular groups, such as those with SEND and those who are victims of hate related bullying, along with a project to report bullying online.

In extreme circumstances, where schools are concerned that an incident of bullying or discrimination may amount to a criminal offence, they should report this to the police.

Victims may wish to seek contact from an organisation to provide them with support suitable to the victim's needs. A list of such organisations can be found at the police-run True Vision website at the following link:

[https://www.report-it.org.uk/organisations\\_that\\_can\\_help](https://www.report-it.org.uk/organisations_that_can_help)

Information on whether or not hate crime offences recorded by the police in England and Wales took place in educational institutions is not recorded centrally.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2021-03-23/174229>

and

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2021-03-23/174230>

## Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government

### **Robin Simcox appointed as Interim Lead of Commission for Countering Extremism**

Director of Counter Extremism Group think-tank, Robin Simcox, has been appointed as Interim Lead Commissioner of the Commission for Countering Extremism.

His appointment for 6 months initially will involve working across government and with external partners to advise on how to tackle extremism in all its forms, including on the future role of the commission and on how government could further harness innovative thinking within the academic and think-tank sector on tackling extremism. ...

Robin Simcox said: ... Extremism is a scourge that has the potential to impact us all. There can be no place for it in the UK.

I hope to be able to translate my experience in the counter-extremism field into recommendations that can help the government make headway on this key issue.

Minister for Countering Extremism, Baroness Williams said: The government remains committed to tackling extremism and disrupting those who seek to sow hatred and division in our communities and radicalise others. ...

**To read the full press release see**

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/robin-simcox-appointed-as-interim-lead-of-commission-for-countering-extremism>

### **Sara Khan appointed as independent advisor for social cohesion and resilience**

Sara Khan has been appointed by the Prime Minister as the government's Independent Adviser for Social Cohesion and Resilience ... as part of government action to tackle extremism in our communities.

In her role as Independent Adviser, Sara will work to understand and build resilience against the negative impact of extremism in local communities. She will work with frontline experts to develop recommendations on how we can better support and protect victims of extremism and those working to stamp it out, as well as communities that are affected. ...

Communities Secretary Rt Hon Robert Jenrick MP said: ... We want to build a united and integrated country, in which extremists cannot operate with impunity and all of society, from councils, to schools, to charities, works together to root them out. ...

Sara Khan said: ... The Commission [for Countering Extremism] has put forward

recommendations on what can be done to tackle extremist activity in our country. However, alongside this it is vital we also support and strengthen institutional and societal resilience and cohesion which act as a critical bulwark against extremism. ...

**To read the full press release see**

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/sara-khan-appointed-as-independent-advisor-for-social-cohesion-and-resilience>

## Crown Prosecution Service (CPS)

### **Police officer guilty of membership of banned group and terrorism offences**

A probationary police officer has been convicted of being a member of a banned far-right organisation and possessing documents that could have been of use to a terrorist.

Benjamin Hannam, 22, was also found guilty at the Old Bailey of lying about his membership of National Action on his job application and police vetting forms so he could get a job as a PC with the Metropolitan Police.

Jenny Hopkins, from the CPS, said: "Benjamin Hannam would not have got a job as a probationary police constable if he'd told the truth about his membership of a banned far-right group. His lies have caught up with him and he's been exposed as an individual with deeply racist beliefs who also possessed extremist publications of use to a terrorist."

National Action was proscribed in the UK by the Home Office in December 2016. It was a neo-Nazi organisation that espoused homophobia, antisemitism, and racism and promoted violence and inter-racial hatred. Hannam said he had never been a member.

But before it was banned, he was posting comments about National Action on an online message board. In April 2016, when another user showed interested in the group, Hannam wrote "always good for more people to join, means we can arrange more stuff which is just more fun for everybody!". The prosecution said this showed that he was not just a member but sought to recruit others. ...

After the ban he attended a meeting in a pub in Swindon in January 2017. The prosecution used CCTV images, travel and financial transactions to confirm he was there. ...

The publications found on a USB stick were a manual on how to use a knife to seriously injure or kill someone and a document written by Anders Breivik, a right-wing extremist who carried out terrorist attacks in Norway in 2011 that left 77 people dead.

Hannam also pleaded guilty to possessing a prohibited image of a child and will be sentenced for all the offences at a later date.

**To read the full press release see**

<https://www.cps.gov.uk/cps/news/police-officer-guilty-membership-banned-group-and-terrorism-offences>

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## Israel

### House of Commons Written Answers

#### **Hammas**

**Andrew Bowie (Conservative)** [174226] To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps her Department takes to distinguish between the military and political wings of Hamas; and if she will review her assessment of the functions of Hamas' Political Bureau.

**Kevin Foster:** The UK Government does not routinely comment on intelligence matters.

While we work closely with our international partners in the global fight against terrorism, any executive action must be underpinned by intelligence which satisfies the UK's criminal and statutory thresholds.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2021-03-23/174226>

### Hamas

**Andrew Bowie (Conservative)** [174227] To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what discussions she has had with her counterparts in (a) the EU, (b) the US, (c) Canada and (d) Israel on their classification of Hamas as a terror group in its entirety.

**Kevin Foster:** The UK Government does not routinely comment on intelligence matters.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2021-03-23/174227>

## UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights

### Human Rights Council Concludes Forty-Sixth Regular Session after Adopting 30 Resolutions and One Decision

... In a resolution (A/HRC/46/L.31) on the human rights situation in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, and the obligation to ensure accountability and justice ... the Council calls upon Israel, the occupying Power, to comply immediately with its international law obligations to the protected occupied population, and ensure non-discriminatory access to vaccines for immunization against the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, including in coordination with the Government of the State of Palestine. ...

In a resolution (A/HRC/46/L.16) on human rights in the occupied Syrian Golan ... the Council demands that Israel stop its repressive measures against the Syrian citizens in the occupied Syrian Golan, and release immediately the Syrian detainees in Israeli prisons and determines that all legislative and administrative measures and actions taken or to be taken by Israel, the occupying Power, including the Knesset's decision of 22 November 2010 to hold a referendum before any withdrawal from the occupied Syrian Golan and East Jerusalem, that seek to alter the character and legal status of the occupied Syrian Golan are null and void, constitute a flagrant violation of international law and of the Fourth Geneva Convention, and have no legal effect.

In a resolution (A/HRC/46/L.18) on the right of the Palestinian people to self-determination ... the Council calls upon Israel, the occupying Power, to immediately end its occupation of the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, and further reaffirms its support for the solution of two States, Palestine and Israel, living side by side in peace and security. The Council confirms that the right of the Palestinian people to permanent sovereignty over their natural wealth and resources must be used in the interest of their national development, the well-being of the Palestinian people and as part of the realization of their right to self-determination.

In a resolution (A/HRC/46/L.30) on Israeli settlements in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, and in the occupied Syrian Golan ... the Council calls upon Israel to accept the de jure applicability of the Geneva Convention relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War, of 12 August 1949, to the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, and to the occupied Syrian Golan, to abide scrupulously by the provisions of the Convention, in particular article 49 thereof, and to comply with all its obligations under international law and to cease immediately all actions causing the alteration of the character, status and demographic composition ...

**To read the full press release see**

<https://www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=26947&LangID=E>

**Human rights situation in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, and the obligation to ensure accountability and justice (A/HRC/46/L.31)**

<https://undocs.org/A/HRC/46/L.31>

**Human rights in the occupied Syrian Golan (A/HRC/46/L.16)**

<https://undocs.org/A/HRC/46/L.16>

**Right of the Palestinian people to self-determination ( A/HRC/46/L.18)**

<https://undocs.org/A/HRC/46/L.18>

**Israeli settlements in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, and in the occupied Syrian Golan ( A/HRC/46/L.30)**

<https://undocs.org/A/HRC/46/L.30>

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## Other Relevant Information

### UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights

**Human Rights Council Concludes Forty-Sixth Regular Session after Adopting 30 Resolutions and One Decision**

... In a resolution (A/HRC/46/L.5) on the **freedom of religion or belief**, adopted without a vote, the Council condemns violence and acts of terrorism, which are increasing in number and targeting individuals, including persons belonging to religious minorities across the world. The Council emphasizes that no religion should be equated with terrorism, as this may have adverse consequences for the enjoyment of the right to freedom of religion or belief of all members of the religious community concerned. ...

Action on Resolution under Agenda Item Nine on Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Forms of Intolerance, Follow-up to and Implementation of the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action

In a resolution (A/HRC/46/L.3) on combating intolerance, negative stereotyping and stigmatization of, and discrimination, incitement to violence and violence against, persons based on religion or belief, adopted without a vote, the Council calls upon all States, inter alia, to take effective measures to ensure that public functionaries, in the conduct of their public duties, do not discriminate against individuals on the basis of religion or belief; and to foster religious freedom and pluralism by promoting the ability of members of all religious communities to manifest their religion and to contribute openly and on an equal footing to society. ...

**To read the full press release see**

<https://www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=26947&LangID=E>

**Freedom of religion or belief (A/HRC/46/L.5)**

<https://undocs.org/A/HRC/46/L.5>

**Combating intolerance, negative stereotyping and stigmatization of, and discrimination, incitement to violence and violence against, persons based on religion or belief (A/HRC/46/L.3)**

<https://undocs.org/A/HRC/46/L.3>

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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>

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## Consultations \*\* new or updated today

#### **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