



Political Affairs Digest

A daily summary of political events affecting the Jewish Community

Contents

Home Affairs

Israel

Other Relevant Information

Relevant Legislation

Consultations

Back issues

Home Affairs

House of Commons Written Answers

Community Centres: Coronavirus

Steve Baker (Conservative) [180478] To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, when community centres can re-open as covid-19 restrictions are eased; and whether those facilities are allowed to offer food and beverages.

Luke Hall: As part of the Government's 'COVID-19 Response Spring 2021' roadmap, community centres can re-open in the whole of England from 12 April, but restrictions on meeting indoors with people not in your household or support bubble will remain unless the community centre is used for the purposes set out in the exemptions at Paragraph 14(5) of Schedule 1 to the Health Protection (Coronavirus, Restrictions) (Steps) (England) Regulations 2021.

Any facility which offers food and drink for consumption, must close any indoor premises or indoor parts of the premises in which food or drink are provided, the food and beverages must be consumed off the premises in a seated area, and the person responsible for the facility must take all reasonable steps to ensure that the customer remains seated outdoors whilst consuming the food or drink on the premises.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2021-04-12/180478>

The roadmap referred to above can be read at

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-response-spring-2021/covid-19-response-spring-2021>

The Regulations referred to above can be read at

<https://www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2021/364/contents>

Schools: Hate Crime

Preet Kaur Gill (Labour Co-op) [179339] To ask the Secretary of State for Education, pursuant to the answer of 31 March 2021 to Question 174230, on Hate Crime: Young People, when his Department last undertook an assessment of the efficacy of its policies on the prevention and reporting of hate crimes in schools.

Nick Gibb: The Government, alongside schools and teachers, is committed to supporting children and young people to thrive and reach their potential in a safe and respectful environment. Schools continue to play an important role in preparing children and young people for life in modern Britain, supporting them to understand the society in which they are growing up and teaching about respect for other people and tolerance.

We continue to work with colleagues across Government, as well as those in the school sector and communities to better understand issues around discrimination, hatred, and prejudice on an ongoing basis. For example, the Department has provided funding to anti-bullying organisations to support schools to tackle bullying, including projects targeting bullying of particular groups, such as those who are victims of hate related bullying. These grants ended in March 2021, and grant holders are currently working to finalise independent evaluations of their programmes, which will be published in due course. The Department has considered next steps for anti-bullying support in schools, working closely with external stakeholders, and will shortly be running a procurement exercise to fund activity in 2021-22.

Having supported the creation and delivery of the Government's hate crime action plan (2016-2020), officials from the Department continue to work with Home Office officials on the development of the Government's next strategic response to hate crime. We are also currently considering recommendations from the Commission on Race and Ethnic Disparities on education in detail.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2021-04-12/179339>

The answer referred to above can be read at

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

The hate crime action plan referred to above can be read at

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/927673/2016_Hate_Crime_Action_Plan.pdf

with an update at

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/748175/Hate_crime_refresh_2018_FINAL_WEB.PDF

The Commission on Race and Ethnic Disparities recommendations referred to above can be read at

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/974507/20210331_CRED_Report_FINAL_Web_Accessible.pdf

The following five questions all received the same answer

Asylum

Neil Coyle (Labour) [175877] To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, pursuant to the Answer of 11 February 2020 to Question 11509 on Asylum, if he will publish the terms of reference for the completed review on the way asylum claims on the basis of religion and LGBT+ grounds are assessed.

Neil Coyle (Labour) [175878] To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, pursuant to the Answer of 11 February 2020 to Question 11509 on Asylum, if his Department will publish the (a) findings of the review into the way asylum claims on the basis of religion and LGBT+ grounds are assessed and (b) action plan.

Neil Coyle (Labour) [175879] To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, pursuant to the Answer of 11 February 2020 to Question 11509, on Asylum, what progress his Department has made since that action plan was formed on the way that asylum claims on the basis of religion and LGBT+ grounds are assessed.

Asylum: Religion

Neil Coyle (Labour) [175880] To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department,

pursuant to Answer of 11 February 2020 to Question 11509, on Asylum, what steps his Department have taken to consult representatives of (a) the Church of England, (b) the Catholic Church and (c) other faith based organisations on the review and action plan in respect of asylum claims on the basis of religion.

Asylum: LGBT People

Neil Coyle (Labour) [175881] To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, pursuant to Answer of 11 February 2020 to Question 11509, on Asylum, what steps his Department has taken to consult representatives of LGBT+ organisations on the review and action plan in respect of asylum claims on the basis of sexuality.

Chris Philp: The UK has a proud record of providing protection to individuals fleeing persecution based on their religious beliefs, sexual orientation and gender identity and are committed to delivering an asylum system that is responsive to all forms of persecution.

We have previously worked closely with the All-Party Parliamentary Group (APPG) for International Freedom of Religion or Belief and associated stakeholders, to produce a specialist training package designed to ensure that where religion or belief is raised in an asylum claim, decision makers appropriately consider all the available evidence. The course has now been rolled out to all relevant staff and we will continue to update this as and when required, working with relevant parties.

The Home Office continue to work with organisations specialising in sexual orientation/gender identity to further our work for LGBT+ people, including the development of a new interview training workshop that is being developed in consultation with UK Lesbian Gay Immigration Group (UKLGIG). It is hoped that, if successful, this training will be rolled out in the next few months.

Updated policy guidance on how to approach religious based claims and sexual orientation has been published, including guidance on the need to ensure appropriate and sensitive questions are asked during asylum interviews.

Our processes are underpinned by a robust framework of safeguards and quality checks, ensuring that claims based on LGBT+ issues are properly considered, decisions are sound, and that protection is granted to those who genuinely need it.

We do not have any plans to publish the findings of this internal review.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2021-03-25/175877>

and

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2021-03-25/175878>

and

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2021-03-25/175879>

and

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2021-03-25/175880>

and

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2021-03-25/175881>

The answer referred to above can be read at

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2020-02-03/11509>

Radicalism

John Hayes (Conservative) [175699] To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether she has considered commissioning a new review into the activities of (a) the Muslim Brotherhood and (b) extremist Islamist organisations in the UK; and if she will make a statement.

Kevin Foster: The Government keeps under review the activities of those associated with the Muslim Brotherhood in the UK in accordance with the five commitments included in the former Prime Minister's statement to Parliament.

The Government continues to assess the Muslim Brotherhood's activities when appropriate, this is to ensure our position is based on the latest information

available. We will consider action against the review's commitments if and where legal thresholds are met.

We will not tolerate any individuals or groups who spread hate by demonising those of other faiths or ethnicities or who deliberately raise community fears and tensions by bringing disorder and violence to our towns and cities.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2021-03-25/175699>

The five commitments referred to above can be read at

<https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/muslim-brotherhood-review-statement-by-the-prime-minister>

House of Lords Written Answers

Coronavirus: Vaccination

Baroness Masham of Ilton (Crossbench) [HL13114] To ask Her Majesty's Government what plans they have to establish a national COVID-19 helpline, accessible in multiple languages, (1) to support and advise the public on the benefits of vaccination, and (2) to collect data on the long term effects of COVID-19.

Lord Bethell: Whilst there are no plans to establish national COVID-19 telephone helplines for the public to use to ask questions related to COVID-19 vaccines, the Department and the NHS and PHE are providing advice and information at every possible opportunity to support those who have been prioritised to receive a vaccine and anyone who has questions about the vaccination process. The latest advice and information is available online and our social media channels are regularly publishing fact cards, films and interviews about vaccine safety and answering frequently asked questions about vaccine production. In addition, senior clinicians are giving media interviews and taking part in live question and answer sessions with the public about COVID-19 vaccines.

The Government's communications plan includes targeted information and advice via TV, radio and social media. This is being translated into 13 languages including Bengali, Chinese, Filipino, Gujarati, Hindi, Mirpur, Polish, Punjabi and Urdu. Print and online material, including interviews and practical advice has appeared in 600 national, regional, local and specialist titles including media for African, Asian, Bangladeshi, Bengali, Gujarati, Jamaican, Jewish, Pakistani and Turkish communities.

Research to evaluate the long-term health and psychosocial effects of COVID-19 is continuing. Major studies include the Post-Hospitalisation COVID-19 study in the United Kingdom and the International Severe Acute Respiratory and emerging Infection Consortium global COVID-19 long-term follow-up study.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2021-02-08/hl13114>

TOP

Israel

House of Commons Written Answers

Israel: Embassies

Jack Lopresti (Conservative) [174812] To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what discussions he has had with his international counterparts on the validity of reports that an Iranian-affiliated group

detonated an explosive device outside Israel's embassy in New Delhi in January 2021.

James Cleverly: The UK Government works closely with international counterparts on security issues. This particular incident has not been raised by partners - but we work closely with both India and Israel on security issues.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2021-03-24/174812>

Palestinians: Housing

Sarah Olney (Liberal Democrat) [180577] To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps the Government is taking to support Palestinians forcibly transferred from their homes.

James Cleverly: We regularly make clear our concerns about the evictions of Palestinians from their homes in East Jerusalem to the Israeli authorities and the Municipality of Jerusalem. The Fourth Geneva Convention, which applies to all occupied territories, including East Jerusalem, prohibits demolitions or forced evictions absent military necessity.

The UK Ambassador in Tel Aviv raised ongoing demolitions with the Israeli Authorities in a meeting alongside like-minded partners on 25 February 2021. I raised the issue of evictions of Palestinians from their homes with the Israeli Ambassador to the UK on 29 October 2020, and the British Embassy in Tel Aviv raises this issue regularly with the Israeli authorities. UK officials from the British Consulate in Jerusalem have made regular visits to areas at risk of demolition and eviction to reiterate UK support for those communities.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2021-04-13/180577>

TOP

Other Relevant Information

Kantor Center for the Study of Contemporary European Jewry

Antisemitism Worldwide 2020: extract report

https://en-humanities.tau.ac.il/sites/humanities_en.tau.ac.il/files/media_server/Extract%20of%20the%20Annual%20Worldwide%20Report%20for%202020_130421.pdf

UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights

UN Experts Condemn UK Commission on Race and Ethnic Disparities Report

The UN Working Group of Experts on People of African Descent categorically rejects and condemns the analysis and findings of the recently published report by the UK's Commission on Race and Ethnic Disparities, which, among other conclusions, claim that "geography, family influence, socio-economic background, culture and religion have more significant impact on life chances than the existence of racism." Among other things, the Report blames single parents for poor outcomes, ignoring the racial disparities and the racialized nature of poor outcomes that exist despite an increased prevalence of single-parent families in every demographic. The Report's conclusion that racism is either a product of the imagination of people of African descent or of discrete, individualized incidents ignores the pervasive role that the social construction of race was designed to play in society, particularly in normalizing atrocity, in which the British state and institutions played a significant role.

Stunningly, the Report also claims that, while there might be overt acts of racism in the UK,

there is no institutional racism. The Report offers no evidence for this claim, but openly blames identity politics, disparages complex analyses of race and ethnicity using qualitative and quantitative research, proffers shocking misstatements and/or misunderstandings about data collection and mixed methods research, cites “pessimism,” “linguistic inflation,” and “emotion” as bases to distrust data and narratives associated with racism and racial discrimination, and attempts to delegitimize data grounded in lived experience while also shifting the blame for the impacts of racism to the people most impacted by it. ...

The Report ... omits any recognition or analysis of institutional racism by international human rights experts, including the UN Working Group of Experts on People of African Descent’s 2012 review after its country visit to the UK, the 2016 Concluding Observations of the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (CERD), and the UN Special Rapporteur on Contemporary Forms of Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance’s report following her 2018 country visit to the UK. Without exception, these reports have highlighted the damaging impact of institutional racism and deep-rooted inequities in areas such as health, education, employment, housing, “stop and search” practices, and the criminal justice system in the UK.

The reality is that People of African descent continue to experience poor economic, social, and health outcomes at vastly disproportionate rates in the UK. ... While racial disparities may not always stem from racism or racial discrimination, there is also compelling evidence that the roots of these disparities lie in institutional racism and structural discrimination as they clearly do not reflect the preferences or priorities of the communities facing structural disadvantage. Instead, many racial disparities in the UK clearly reflect specific nodes of power and decision-making by employers, teachers, and others who dictate the opportunities and advantages available to people of African descent. ...

Finally, the Report’s mythical representation of enslavement is an attempt to sanitize the history of the trade in enslaved Africans. This is a reprehensible, although not unfamiliar tactic, employed by many whose wealth came directly from the enslavement of others, ever since slavery was outlawed. ... The Report’s sanitized version of history devalues the experiences, and deaths of millions of Africans who were violently uprooted, taken to the Americas where they were further exploited, brutalized and dehumanized. ...

In 2021, it is stunning to read a report on race and ethnicity that repackages racist tropes and stereotypes into fact, twisting data and misapplying statistics and studies into conclusory findings and ad hominem attacks on people of African descent. ... The Report cites dubious evidence to make claims that rationalize white supremacy by using the familiar arguments that have always justified racial hierarchy. This attempt to normalize white supremacy despite considerable research and evidence of institutional racism is an unfortunate sidestepping of the opportunity to acknowledge the atrocities of the past and the contributions of all in order to move forward. ...

We urge the British government to categorically reject the findings of the Report, given its own acknowledgement of institutional racism before the CERD in 2016. The UK Commission on Race and Ethnic Disparities should be disbanded or reconstituted to prioritize an authentic and rigorous examination of race, rather than a politicized erasure of the racialized realities Black Britons navigate. ... The distortion and falsification of these historic facts may license further racism, the promotion of negative racial stereotypes, and racial discrimination.

To read the full transcript see

<https://www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=27004&LangID=E>

The report referred to above can be read at

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/974507/20210331_-_CRED_Report_-_FINAL_-_Web_Accessible.pdf

TOP

Relevant Legislation ** new or updated today

UK Parliament

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

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

Second Reading, House of Lords

[https://hansard.parliament.uk/lords/2021-04-16/debates/6D25D736-FC11-4550-AE23-AD6153737DDA/AnimalWelfare\(Sentencing\)Bill](https://hansard.parliament.uk/lords/2021-04-16/debates/6D25D736-FC11-4550-AE23-AD6153737DDA/AnimalWelfare(Sentencing)Bill)

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>

TOP

Consultations ** new or updated today

**** New Plan for Immigration** (closing date 6 May 2021)

<https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/new-plan-for-immigration>

Social Distance, Digital Congregation: British Ritual Innovation under COVID-19
(closing date not stated)

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

TOP