



Political Affairs Digest

A daily summary of political events affecting the Jewish Community

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House of Lords Ministerial Statement and Q&A

Commission on Race and Ethnic Disparities

The statement made by Kemi Badenoch in the House of Commons (included in yesterday's Political Affairs Digest) was read in the House of Lords.

col 1853 **Baroness Wilcox of Newport (Labour):** ... Following the Black Lives Matter movement, the commission that produced this report had an opportunity meaningfully to engage with structural inequality and racism in the UK. Disappointingly, and incredulously, they have produced a divisive and downright offensive piece of material. It seems to glorify slavery and within the underplay of institutional racism appears to blame ethnic minorities for their own disadvantage. This report must be rigorously challenged to prevent the decades of progress that we have made in our efforts to develop race equality in the UK. ...

The data is misleading and incoherent, and its conclusions are ideologically motivated and divisive. ...

Despite the overwhelming body of evidence, why does this report seek to downplay the role of institutional and structural racism in the UK? Does the Government share its view? ...

Does the Minister agree with the foreword by the chair of the report? There he remarks: "There is a new story about the Caribbean experience which speaks to the slave period not only being about profit and suffering but how culturally African people transformed themselves into a re-modelled African/Britain." Will her Government reject these abhorrent remarks? ...

col 1854 The report appears to soften the role of structural racism in the labour market, but the latest ONS unemployment figures show that the unemployment rate for ethnic minorities is more than 9.5%—more than double the rate for white people at 4.5%. What steps, therefore, will the Government take to address structural racism in the labour market? ...

The report appeared to downplay the role of structural racism in health inequalities despite

the hugely disproportionate number of deaths of black and Asian people from Covid-19 over the past year and is out of step with the analysis of the ONS. Does the Minister agree that this section is an insult to black, Asian and ethnic minority people who have suffered the worst fatal and financial consequences of the pandemic?

The report also downplays the role of structural inequalities in our education system, despite very recent data that shows that black Caribbean children are more than five times more likely to be excluded from school in parts of the UK. There have been 60,000 racist incidents in schools in the past five years. What steps will the Minister take to address the deep-rooted, structural racial inequalities within the education system? ...

Finally, the language in the report appears to regress to blame black, Asian and ethnic minority people for their own disadvantage. Mentions of family structure and culture misrepresent the reality of structural racism and turn back the clock on how we talk about race and structural inequality. Will the Minister reject this report before us today in this Chamber? ...

col 1855 **The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Department for Education and Department for International Trade (Baroness Berridge):** ... In the areas the commission was reporting on, the evidence base did not support structural racism findings. However, the report is incredibly clear that racist incidents, racist prejudice and racism exist today in this country and should be dealt with and condemned wherever they are found. It is not an offensive report. It does not glorify racism but stands against it. ...

The noble Baroness is, though, right to draw attention to the fact that, unfortunately, Covid has led to a recent increase in young, black unemployment. We are looking at the response to that. ...

col 1856 It is important to outline the commission's response to the criticism of its remarks about slavery. It says this: "There has ... been a wilful misrepresentation by some people of the Commission's view on the history of slavery. The idea that the Commission would downplay the atrocities of slavery is as absurd as it is offensive to every one of us. The report merely says that in the face of the inhumanity of slavery, African people preserved their humanity and culture. ...

We have seen an incredible rise in particular in the number of black African boys going on to higher education at the moment. I do not recognise the noble Baroness's characterisation of structural racism across our system. That is not to say that there are not incidents within our schools that need to be dealt with as and when they happen, and we would of course expect any member of teaching staff treating any pupil in that way to be subject to disciplinary measures. ...

col 1857 **Lord Lucas (Conservative):** My Lords, will my noble friend join me in thanking all those millions of people who, over the last 50 years that I have been politically conscious, have made this country a much friendlier place for ethnic minorities? The noble Baroness, Lady Wilcox, reports that, on average, there is one report of a racial incident at a school every two and a half years—it would have been more like every two and a half hours when I was young. ...

Baroness Berridge: ... We applaud all those people who have stood against the injustices that we have seen decline over the years. We recognise that anywhere racist incidents exist, we all have a responsibility. It is not just government; wherever we see such incidents—many of us will have seen them in our own lives on public transport and places such as that—we must all speak up. We all have a responsibility to get to a racially fair society. ...

col 1858 **Lord Dholakia (Liberal Democrat):** ... My Lords, the Statement does nothing to allay the fears of the black and ethnic minority community about this report. ... racism and racial discrimination are a daily reality in the lives of the black and ethnic minority community in Britain. Socially and economically they occupy the same place that was allocated to them in the earlier days, and institutions and organisations have little

awareness of our culturally different communities. ... I want to see the day when black and brown faces in this country do not have to look over their shoulder to see if they are welcome. ...

col 1859 Lord Woolley of Woodford (Crossbench): ... Yesterday the government Minister Kemi Badenoch ... stated, to my great relief, that no one, not least the Government, is denying institutional racism as distinct from verbal racism. She went on to say that it is not everywhere, and I think we can all agree with that. But the report said, and the Minister confirmed, that Dr Sewell and his commissioners did not find systemic racism in this report from the deluge of evidence, including from myself. Given that dramatic but welcome U-turn in acknowledging systemic race inequalities, were the commissioners incompetent or in wilful denial?

Baroness Berridge: My Lords, as I have outlined, the evidence that was considered by the commissioners, as we understand it, is that they did not find institutional racism in any of the sectors. ... institutional racism is a concept that we respect and understand, and the commission stood by the Macpherson definition, but there was not the evidence base here. ... when the evidence does not lead you to that conclusion then we have to respect that. ...

To read the statement and lengthy Q&A in full, see

<https://hansard.parliament.uk/lords/2021-04-21/debates/DBF1EF40-EC56-4244-BB6A-D020CDB6480D/CommissionOnRaceAndEthnicDisparities>

The report of the Commission for Race and Ethnic Disparities, 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](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/974507/20210331_-_CRED_Report_-_FINAL_-_Web_Accessible.pdf)

House of Commons Written Answer

Travel Restrictions: Coronavirus

Afzal Khan (Labour) [179509] To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what assessment he has made of the effect of not allowing travel to attend a commemorative event under the current covid-19 regulations on different religious groups whose practices require those commemorative events to take place quickly.

Nigel Adams: The guidance for travel exceptions from the United Kingdom can be found at

www.gov.uk/guidance/coronavirus-covid-19-declaration-form-for-international-travel#permitted-reasons-for-international-travel

The guidance notes that travel for funerals falls under a reasonable excuse, but commemorative events do not.

All policies that were related to staying at home were applied equally and without prejudice - regardless of the event, religious belief or any other factor. For some time, the government has focused on ensuring the public know how to travel safely, however they decide to travel. This is important because people feel more confident travelling when they see other people complying with the same rules, for example wearing a face covering unless they are exempt.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2021-04-12/179509>

House of Lords Written Answer

Islam

Lord Pearson of Rannoch (Non-affiliated) [HL14809] To ask Her Majesty's Government,

further to the Written Answer by Baroness Williams of Trafford on 22 March (HL14054) which states "Islamist extremism is not true Islam", what assessment have they made of (1) any verses in the Koran which appear to support violence, and (2) the use of these verses by Islamist extremists to sanction violence.

Baroness Williams of Trafford We look at and assess all material that may be used by extremists to support or justify violence and will not tolerate those who spread divisive and harmful narratives.

We remain of the view that the propaganda used by Islamist extremists is a distortion of true Islam.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2021-04-12/hl14809>

The answer referred to above can be read at

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2021-03-09/hl14054>

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Israel

House of Commons Written Answer

Palestinians: Textbooks

Craig Tracey (Conservative) [180561] To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what progress has been made on the international review into the content of Palestinian Authority school textbooks.

James Cleverly: We understand the review is in the final stages and the final report is due to be completed shortly. We continue to engage with the EU at a senior level and push for timely publication. We will review the findings carefully before deciding on any next steps.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2021-04-13/180561>

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Foreign Affairs

House of Commons Written Answer

Religious Freedom: Hate Crime

Jim Shannon (DUP) [180495] To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps he is taking to help tackle online hate speech towards minority religious and belief communities that have been blamed for spreading covid-19 in many countries.

Nigel Adams: The FCDO are continuing to assess the impact of Covid-19 on members of all minority religious and belief communities. We are particularly concerned by the secondary effects of the pandemic including incidents of hate speech and the rise in conspiracy theories that certain faiths or beliefs are to blame for the pandemic. We will continue to refute these divisive and harmful claims and raised our concerns both during the 46th session of the Human Rights Council in March 2021 and the 75th session of the United Nations General Assembly in November 2020.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2021-04-13/180495>

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Other Relevant Information

Board of Deputies

Board of Deputies publishes landmark report on racial inclusivity in the Jewish community

The Board of Deputies has published the report of its Commission on Racial Inclusivity in the Jewish Community, the result of a 10-month exhaustive investigation unparalleled in UK Jewish history. ...

The brutal, racist murder of George Floyd on 25 May 2020 sparked a reckoning about the treatment of Black people all over the world, and the undeniable reality of systemic racism and discrimination in societies on both sides of the Atlantic. We vociferously expressed our concerns about this at the time. However, we realised that we needed to go further. No community is immune from the scourge of prejudice and ours is no exception. ...

As such, we launched this Commission to learn more about the experiences of Black Jews, Jews of Colour and Sephardi, Mizrahi and Yemenite Jews, to examine the issues and make recommendations for how our community can do better. ...

Our Commission has considered 17 different areas of communal life, and the ground-breaking report makes 119 recommendations, with profound implications for British Jewry. Among them are the following:

- Representative bodies and organisations involved in rabbinic training should encourage members of under-represented ethnic groups to put themselves forward for communal roles
- Jewish schools should ensure that their secular curriculum engages with Black history, enslavement and the legacy of colonialism ...
- Jewish studies departments should ensure that their teaching celebrates and engages with the racial and cultural diversity of the Jewish community worldwide ...
- Communal institutions, particularly synagogues and schools, should commemorate key dates for diverse parts of the community...
- Schools and youth movements should improve training for teachers and youth leaders on tackling racist incidents
- Communal bodies and Jewish schools should establish regular listening exercises that seek the concerns of their members or students
- Communal bodies should ensure that complaints processes are accessible, transparent, fair and robust, with all complaints related to racism handled according to the Macpherson principle ...
- Communal venues should ensure that their security guards or volunteers desist from racial profiling
- Communal venues should institute bag searches for all visitors, including regular attendees, so as not to stigmatise people who look different, without compromising on security
- A code of conduct should be developed for discourse on social media, making clear that attempts to delegitimise converts, calling people names such as 'Kapo', or using Yiddish terms such as 'Shvartzer' in a racist way, are completely unacceptable
- *Batei Din* should improve processes for conversion ...

Commission Chair Stephen Bush said: "I hope my report will enhance communal life for Black Jews, Jews of Colour and Sephardi, Mizrahi and Yemenite Jews. My recommendations cover vast swathes of communal life, and draws on best practice from across our community. ... A proactive attitude to inclusion will draw in many people of all backgrounds who have felt marginalised, left out or turned off from Jewish life. As a community that often frets about its numbers and its future, giving as many people as

possible a sense of belonging and a full ability to participate will nourish, strengthen and enrich the Jewish community further, for the benefit of all its members.”

Board of Deputies President Marie van der Zyl said: “I would like to pay tribute to Stephen Bush for this thoughtful and detailed report. It makes difficult reading at times and its recommendations are certainly challenging. However, I am proud that we have done it. This is the first occasion that we know of that any Jewish community, anywhere, has published such a comprehensive audit of itself, backed by its national representative body. I sincerely hope the Commission serves as a starting point for a wider conversation in our community and in wider society about how to tackle and defeat the scourge of racism. ...

To read the full press release see

<https://www.bod.org.uk/board-of-deputies-publishes-landmark-report-on-racial-inclusivity-in-the-jewish-community/>

Report: Commission on Racial Inclusivity in the Jewish Community

<https://www.bod.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/04/Commission-on-Racial-Inclusivity-in-the-Jewish-Community.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>

House of Lords consideration of Commons amendments ('ping pong')

<https://hansard.parliament.uk/lords/2021-04-21/debates/99B0FAAA-A5C5-41A1-94CC-F1FB0299C9C3/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>

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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/>

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