



# Political Affairs Digest

A daily summary of political events affecting the Jewish Community

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## Home Affairs

### Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport and the Home Office

#### **Landmark laws to keep children safe, stop racial hate and protect democracy online published**

... New internet laws will be published today in the draft Online Safety Bill to protect children online and tackle some of the worst abuses on social media, including racist hate crimes.

Ministers have added landmark new measures to the Bill to safeguard freedom of expression and democracy, ensuring necessary online protections do not lead to unnecessary censorship. ...

The draft Bill includes changes to put an end to harmful practices, while ushering in a new era of accountability and protections for democratic debate, including:

- New additions to strengthen people's rights to express themselves freely online, while protecting journalism and democratic political debate in the UK. ...
- Social media sites, websites, apps and other services hosting user-generated content or allowing people to talk to others online must remove and limit the spread of illegal and harmful content such as child sexual abuse, terrorist material and suicide content.
- Ofcom will be given the power to fine companies failing in a new duty of care up to £18 million or ten per cent of annual global turnover, whichever is higher, and have the power to block access to sites.
- A new criminal offence for senior managers has been included as a deferred power ...

Digital Secretary Oliver Dowden said: ... We will protect children on the internet, crack down on racist abuse on social media and through new measures to safeguard our liberties, create a truly democratic digital age.

Home Secretary Priti Patel said: ... It's time for tech companies to be held to account and to protect the British people from harm. If they fail to do so, they will face penalties. ...

... all companies in scope will have a duty of care towards their users so that what is unacceptable offline will also be unacceptable online. ...

They will need to take robust action to tackle illegal abuse, including swift and effective

action against hate crimes, harassment and threats directed at individuals ...

The largest and most popular social media sites (Category 1 services) will need to act on content that is lawful but still harmful such as abuse that falls below the threshold of a criminal offence, encouragement of self-harm and mis/disinformation. ...

The draft Bill contains reserved powers for Ofcom to pursue criminal action against named senior managers whose companies do not comply with Ofcom's requests for information. ...

**To read the full press release see**

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/landmark-laws-to-keep-children-safe-stop-racial-hate-and-protect-democracy-online-published>

## Department for Education and Office for Students

### **Universities to comply with free speech duties or face sanctions**

A historic bill introduced in Parliament today ... will strengthen the legal duties on higher education providers in England to protect freedom of speech on campuses up and down the country, for students, academics and visiting speakers.

The Higher Education (Freedom of Speech) Bill will bring in new measures that will require universities and colleges registered with the Office for Students to defend free speech and help stamp out unlawful 'silencing'.

For the first time, these legal duties will also be extended to students' unions, which, under the measures in the Bill, will have to take reasonably practicable steps to ensure lawful freedom of speech.

This delivers on a manifesto commitment to strengthen academic freedom and free speech in higher education and will help protect the reputation of our universities as centres of academic freedom. Universities, colleges and students' unions that breach these duties may face sanctions, including fines.

Education Secretary Gavin Williamson said: It is a basic human right to be able to express ourselves freely and take part in rigorous debate. Our legal system allows us to articulate views which others may disagree with as long as they don't meet the threshold of hate speech or inciting violence. This must be defended, nowhere more so than within our world-renowned universities.

Holding universities to account on the importance of freedom of speech in higher education is a milestone moment in fulfilling our manifesto commitment, protecting the rights of students and academics, and countering the chilling effect of censorship on campus once and for all.

A new Director for Freedom of Speech and Academic Freedom will sit on the board of the Office for Students, with responsibility for investigations of breaches of the new freedom of speech duties, including a new complaints scheme for students, staff and visiting speakers who have suffered loss due to a breach.

The Bill comes in light of examples of a 'chilling effect' on students, staff and invited speakers feeling unable to speak out. In one incident, Bristol Middle East Forum was charged almost £500 in security costs to invite the Israeli Ambassador to speak at an event. ...

Registered higher education providers in England will have extended legal duties not only to take steps to secure freedom of speech and academic freedom, but also to promote these important values.

Universities Minister Michelle Donelan said: The values of freedom of speech and academic freedom are a huge part of what makes our higher education system so well respected around the world.

Which is why this government will tackle head on the growing chilling effect on our campuses which is silencing and censoring students, academics and visiting speakers.

This Bill will ensure universities not only protect free speech but promote it too. After all how can we expect society to progress or for opinions to modernise unless we can challenge the status quo?

The government has been clear throughout that it is important to distinguish between lawful, if offensive, views on one hand and unacceptable acts of abuse, intimidation, and violence on the other.

Higher education providers and students' unions must ensure that they comply with their legal duties on discrimination and harassment as well as their legal duties to protect freedom of speech.

**To read the full press release see**

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/universities-to-comply-with-free-speech-duties-or-face-sanctions>

## Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs

### **UK to lead the way on animal welfare through flagship new Action Plan**

In a first of its kind, the Government has today published an action plan for animal welfare that will revolutionise the treatment of animals in the UK and introduce measures to protect the welfare of animals abroad.

Now that we have left the EU, the UK has new freedoms to further strengthen animal welfare standards and reinforce its position as a global champion of animal rights.

The Action Plan for Animal Welfare, launched today by the Environment Secretary George Eustice, will build on our existing world leading standards by recognising animals as sentient in law and committing to a range of new game changing welfare measures to protect pets, livestock and wild animals. ...

The Action Plan for Animal Welfare also sets out how the government will: ...

Improve welfare for farmed animals by:

- ending the export of live animals for fattening and slaughter
- introducing new measures to improve welfare during transport ...
- improving animal welfare at slaughter ...

To deliver these reforms, the Government will be introducing a series of Bills in due course focusing on animal sentience, kept animals here in the UK and the welfare of animals. There will also be a series of non-legislative changes to promote animal welfare over the coming months, with a number of regulations due to be brought forward as early as this year. ...

**To read the full press release see**

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/uk-to-lead-the-way-on-animal-welfare-through-flagship-new-action-plan>

### **Action Plan for Animal Welfare**

[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/985332/Action\\_Plan\\_for\\_Animal\\_Welfare.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/985332/Action_Plan_for_Animal_Welfare.pdf)

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## Israel

### House of Commons Debate

#### Queen's Speech

col 57 **Jeremy Corbyn (Labour):** ... The news over the last couple of days has been

heavily dominated by what is happening in Jerusalem and what is happening now in Gaza. Some years ago, I went to Sheikh Jarrah in Jerusalem, a place of Palestinian homes. It has been a place of Palestinian homes for almost all of my lifetime. Settlers are trying to drive the people out of those homes, and this is emblematic of the way in which settlers all across the west bank have taken over Palestinian land, divided up farms, created settler roads and created the quite correct anger of the Palestinian people against the occupation. Surely the way forward is to end the occupation, end the siege of Gaza and ensure that there is peace in the future. I say that because I believe very strongly in it, and if anyone doubts the horrors of what it is like to live under occupation, I urge them to look at a film called "The Present", which demonstrates just how difficult life can be for people trying to undertake an ordinary thing like going out to buy a present. I have taken part in many conferences, calls and discussions with people from Israel, from Palestine and from different organisations all over the world. Peace will not be achieved by bombardment or by land-grabbing; peace will be achieved only by the recognition of the rights of the Palestinian people and an end to the occupation. ...

**col 69 Joanna Cherry (SNP):** ... the Government said that they want to uphold human rights and democracy across the world. If they are really committed to doing that, why do they frequently fail to do it when it comes to the Palestinian people? The inaction from the international community, including from the United Kingdom Government, to properly defend and support Palestinians in the face of Israeli Government and Israeli human rights abuses is not indicative of a country that supposedly stands for human rights and democracy abroad. The excessive force used by Israeli forces on worshippers at al-Aqsa and against families in Sheikh Jarrah in occupied East Jerusalem only prompts the mildest of criticism and zero consequences for those responsible. Those families are facing forced transfer and dispossession of their homes, which would constitute a war crime. In the past 24 hours, we have seen a grim escalation, with 24 people, including nine children, killed in Israeli attacks on Gaza. Although we should rightly condemn the rocket attacks coming from Gaza to Jerusalem, we should also condemn and take action against the events that led up to these escalations and the excessive response to them.

If the UK Government really want to be a human rights defender, they should fully support the International Criminal Court's investigation into an alleged grave crime committed in the occupied Palestinian territory, and they should not undermine it. Please can we have real meaning to the words of "upholding human rights and democracy abroad"? ...

**To read the full transcript see**

<https://hansard.parliament.uk/commons/2021-05-11/debates/A73F9E62-E76C-4188-9742-E84C55ACC435/DebateOnTheAddress>

## Downing Street

**Boris Johnson:** I am urging Israel and the Palestinians to step back from the brink and for both sides to show restraint. The UK is deeply concerned by the growing violence and civilian casualties and we want to see an urgent de-escalation of tensions.

<https://twitter.com/BorisJohnson/status/1392396152805462022>

## UK Parliament Early Day Motion

**Tahir Ali (Labour) [3] Violence perpetrated by Israeli authorities against Palestinian civilians in Sheikh Jarrah** – That this House unequivocally condemns the ongoing violence perpetrated by Israeli authorities against Palestinian civilians in the Sheikh Jarrah area of Jerusalem; condemns the attack on Al-Aqsa Mosque by Israeli police which left hundreds of civilians injured; joins the UN in calling upon the Israeli authorities to

demonstrate maximum restraint and to allow the freedom of peaceful assembly for Palestinians; opposes and will work to prevent the ongoing evictions of Palestinian families from East Jerusalem, which is part of a wider attempt to push Palestinians out of Jerusalem altogether; calls on the international community to pursue suitable sanction against the Israeli Government until all violations of international law and human rights are ceased; and recognises that the violence perpetrated by the Israeli authorities in May 2021, along with the continued evictions of Palestinian families from Sheikh Jarrah, increases regional tensions and frustrates efforts to broker a lasting and just peace between Israel and Palestine.

<https://edm.parliament.uk/early-day-motion/58435>

## Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office

**Updated travel advice: Israel**

<https://www.gov.uk/foreign-travel-advice/israel>

**Updated travel advice: The Occupied Palestinian Territories**

<https://www.gov.uk/foreign-travel-advice/the-occupied-palestinian-territories>

## United Nations

**Tensions could escalate to ‘full-scale war’, UN Middle East envoy warns**

The UN Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process added his voice to calls for calm in the Occupied Palestinian Territory late on Tuesday, warning that the situation is “escalating towards a full-scale war”, amid continuing air strikes and rocket attacks.

“Stop the fire immediately. We’re escalating towards a full scale war”, Tor Wennesland said in a [post](#) on Twitter.

[According](#) [to] the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, as of 5 pm Tuesday (local time) at least 28 people, including 10 children, were reported to have been killed in Gaza in Israeli airstrikes, and two women were killed in Israel as a result of rockets fired from Gaza. Many more are said to be injured on both sides.

Mr. Wennesland stressed that the “cost of war in Gaza is devastating and is being paid by ordinary people”. “Leaders on all sides have to take the responsibility of deescalation ... stop the violence now”, he added. ...

**To read the full press release see**

<https://news.un.org/en/story/2021/05/1091782>

## UNRWA

**Unrwa decries killing of four Palestine refugee students in Gaza**

UNRWA condemns in the strongest possible terms the killing yesterday of four Palestine refugee children near the Palestine refugee camp of Beit Hanoun, Gaza. All four children came from the same family, two siblings and two cousins. They were under the age of twelve and were known to the Agency as they went to UNRWA schools. Our hearts go out to their families and friends in communities that have been so cruelly affected by this latest escalation. ...

UNRWA repeats its profound concern regarding the impact of the military escalation on children by placing their lives and futures at risk. Children are and must be protected under International Law and those responsible for breaching their obligations must be held fully accountable on the basis of clear evidence. The Agency yet again appeals to all parties to

exercise maximum restraint and comply with their obligations under International Law in the strictest terms, including with regard to protecting the inherent right to life of children.

**To read the full press release see**

<https://www.unrwa.org/newsroom/official-statements/unrwa-decries-killing-four-palestine-refugee-students-gaza>

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## Relevant Legislation \*\* new or updated today

### UK Parliament

#### **\*\* Higher Education (Freedom of Speech) Bill**

<https://bills.parliament.uk/bills/2862>

Bill as introduced

<https://bills.parliament.uk/Publications/41479/Documents/212/21012.pdf>

Explanatory Notes

<https://bills.parliament.uk/Publications/41480/Documents/213/21012en.pdf>

Delegated Powers Memorandum

<https://bills.parliament.uk/Publications/41488/Documents/215/210511HigherEducationDelegatedPowersMemorandum.pdf>

Higher education: free speech and academic freedom

[https://bills.parliament.uk/Publications/41487/Documents/214/Higher\\_education\\_free\\_speech\\_and\\_academic\\_freedom.pdf](https://bills.parliament.uk/Publications/41487/Documents/214/Higher_education_free_speech_and_academic_freedom.pdf)

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## Consultations \*\* new or updated today

**Evidence for Equality National Survey (EVENS)** (closing date 30 June 2021)

<https://evensurvey.co.uk/>

**Protect Duty** (closing date 2 July 2021)

<https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/protect-duty>

**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