



Political Affairs Digest

A daily summary of political events affecting the Jewish Community

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House of Commons Written Answers

Higher Education: Antisemitism

Gregory Campbell (DUP) [32299] To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what the outcome was of the strategic guidance letter he issued to the Office of Students to identify higher education providers which have yet to adopt an internationally recognised definition of anti-semitism.

Michelle Donelan: There is no place in our society, including within higher education (HE), for antisemitism. The International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA) definition is an important tool in tackling antisemitism. Adopting the widely recognised definition sends a strong signal that HE providers take these issues seriously.

My right hon. Friend, the Secretary of State for Education, wrote to the sector in October 2020, calling upon leaders to adopt the IHRA definition. He repeated this message in May, reinforcing the government's expectation that providers adopt the IHRA definition, stressing the even greater importance of doing so in light of increased number of antisemitic incidents recorded (as a result of the conflict in the Middle East). We are aware of over 100 HE providers which have now adopted the IHRA definition. This includes over 80 universities.

In his February 2021 strategic guidance letter, the Secretary of State also asked the Office for Students (OfS) to undertake a scoping exercise, to identify providers which are reluctant to adopt the definition. He asked them to consider introducing mandatory reporting of antisemitic incident numbers by providers, with the aim of ensuring a robust evidence base, which the OfS can then use to effectively regulate in this area. I meet regularly with the OfS, and they have assured me they are progressing work in response to Secretary of State's request, including in relation to a scoping exercise to identify higher education providers which have yet to adopt the IHRA definition.

The decision on adoption of the definition rests with individual providers, but the government will continue to urge them to adopt the definition and ensure that HE is a genuinely fulfilling and welcoming experience for everyone.

Adoption of the IHRA definition is only a first step, and while the government considers that adoption of the definition is crucial, it is not enough on its own. That is why I will continue to work with the sector to ensure it better understands antisemitism and does more to end it.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2021-07-13/32299>

The letters referred to above can be read at

<https://www.officeforstudents.org.uk/media/48277145-4cf3-497f-b9b7-b13fdf16f46b/ofs-strategic-guidance-20210208.pdf> (page 7)

and

<https://twitter.com/GavinWilliamson/status/1314506646115278848>

Hate Crime: Sentencing

Rupa Hyq (Labour) [32457] To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what assessment she has made of the potential merits of increasing the maximum sentence for people convicted of racist hate crime.

Victoria Atkins: The legal framework for hate crimes already ensures there are increased penalties for offenders when compared to non-hate crimes. This includes higher possible sentences for a range of offences such as assault, harassment and criminal damage when they include racial hostility.

We have asked the Law Commission to review hate crime legislation and consider how the law can be made more effective. It will report recommendations this year and we will respond when it is complete.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2021-07-13/32457>

Information about the review referred to above can be read at

<https://www.lawcom.gov.uk/project/hate-crime/>

Internet: Racial Discrimination

Chi Onwurah (Labour) [33224] To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what plans his Department has to make all racially discriminatory user-generated content illegal content in the draft Online Harms Bill.

Caroline Dinenge: To ensure the criminal law is fit for purpose to deal with online harms, the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport sponsored the Law Commission to review the criminal law relating to harmful online communications. The Law Commission has consulted on proposed reforms and will publish their final report this summer. We will carefully consider using the online safety legislation to bring the Law Commission's final recommendations into law, where it is necessary and appropriate to do so.

In addition, the Law Commission is undertaking a separate review sponsored by the Home Office, which is considering the adequacy and parity of protection offered by the law relating to hate crime. The Law Commission has consulted on their proposals and aims to publish a final report later this year.

The Online Safety Bill will ensure that racially discriminatory content that is illegal offline, is illegal online. Under the Online Safety Bill, services in scope will need to minimise and remove illegal content. Major platforms will also need to address legal but harmful content for adults. Priority categories of legal but harmful content for adults will be set out in secondary legislation and are likely to include online racist abuse.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2021-07-14/33224>

Information about the review referred to above can be read at

<https://www.lawcom.gov.uk/project/hate-crime/>

Internet: Racial Discrimination

Chris Elmore (Labour) [33294] To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, whether racism that falls short of the standard of a racial hatred offence will be covered by the Online Safety Bill as a priority harm.

Caroline Dinenage: Racism online is completely unacceptable and has no place in an open and tolerant society. All companies whose services are likely to be used by children will have to protect them from racist content that falls short of the criminal threshold. Companies providing high-risk, high-reach services, such as the main social media services will also need to address legal content of this type that is harmful to adults. Racist abuse falls within the definition of harmful content that companies must address.

The government will set out priority harms for both children and adults in secondary legislation following consultation with Ofcom. Racist abuse that does not meet the threshold of a criminal offence will likely be a priority harm.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2021-07-14/33294>

Twitter: Racial Discrimination

Michael Fabricant (Conservative) [32282] To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, if she will (a) commission an investigation through her Department's agencies into the proportion of the racist tweets directed at three England football players following the UEFA Euro 2020 final that originated in the UK and (b) publish a report following that investigation.

Kit Malthouse: Racist abuse is utterly unacceptable whether it takes place online or offline. Individuals who commit racist offences should face the full force of the law and we already have robust legislation in place to deal with online hate crime. While companies have taken some positive steps, more needs to be done to tackle online harms, including hate crime. The upcoming Online Safety regulatory framework will put in place measures to tackle illegal and legal but harmful abuse, including racist abuse. If major platforms do not meet their own standards to keep people safe and address abuse quickly and effectively, they could face enforcement action. There is no reason for companies to wait until the regime is fully running to take action against this abhorrent abuse, and we will continue to press them to do so.

The police are reviewing offending material and will work with the relevant social media companies to identify account holders and progress their investigations.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2021-07-13/32282>

Cabinet Office, and Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, and Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy

Updated Guidance: Coronavirus (COVID-19): Wedding and civil partnership ceremonies, receptions and celebrations

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/coronavirus-covid-19-wedding-and-civil-partnership-ceremonies-receptions-and-celebrations>

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House of Commons Written Answer

Palestinians: West Bank

Judith Cummins (Labour) [32417] To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what recent discussions he has had with his international counterparts on ending demolitions of Palestinian homes in the West Bank.

James Cleverly: In all but the most exceptional of circumstances demolitions are contrary to International Humanitarian Law. The UK regularly raises the issue of demolitions with the Government of Israel, most recently on 12 July. The Foreign Secretary did so during his visit to the region on 26 May.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2021-07-13/32417>

House of Lords Written Answers

Palestinians: Overseas Aid

Baroness Sheehan (Liberal Democrat) [HL1733] To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the proportion of their financial aid to the Palestinian Authority which is spent on that Authority's security forces.

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: The UK has not provided financial assistance to the Palestinian Authority National Security Forces. UK financial assistance has helped to deliver essential health and education services in the West Bank. The UK provides technical assistance to support the development of capable, accountable, sustainable, and inclusive Palestinian security forces.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2021-07-05/hl1733>

Nizar Banat

Baroness Janke (Liberal Democrat) [HL1701] To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the future of the Palestinian Authority, following the death of political activist Nizar Banat in police custody.

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: On 25 June Middle East Minister James Cleverly publicly expressed his sadness to hear of the death of activist and human rights defender Nizar Banat while in Palestinian police custody. Our thoughts are with his family. The Palestinian Authority investigation must be swift and transparent. We continue to have a regular dialogue with the Palestinian Authority, where we urge them to respect human rights and to improve the performance of the security sector.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2021-07-05/hl1701>

The statement referred to above can be read at

<https://twitter.com/jamescleverly/status/1408441930711699465>

Israel: Palestinians

Baroness Janke (Liberal Democrat) [HL1702] To ask Her Majesty's Government what representations they have made to the government of Israel, in response to the findings by a UN Working Group on 7 June that three Palestinian students from Birzeit University have been held in arbitrary detention.

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: We are aware of the findings by the UN Working Group on Arbitrary Detention, published 7 June, on Israel's continued detention of Layan Kayed, Elyaa Abu Hijla and Ruba Asi. The UK remains concerned about Israel's extensive use of administrative detention. According to international law,

administrative detention should be used only when security makes it absolutely necessary rather than as routine practice and as a preventive rather than a punitive measure. We continue to call on the Israeli authorities to comply with their obligations under international law and either charge or release detainees.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2021-07-05/hl1702>

The findings referred to above can be read at

https://www.ohchr.org/Documents/Issues/Detention/Opinions/Session90/A_HRC_WGAD_2021_8.docx

Israel: Palestinians

Baroness Janke (Liberal Democrat) [HL1703] To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of reports of authorities in Israel carrying out extra-judicial killings of Palestinians.

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: We remain concerned by the number of Palestinians killed in the West Bank and Gaza. In instances where there have been accusations of excessive use of force, we urge the Government of Israel to conduct swift and transparent investigations. We repeatedly call on Israel to abide by its obligations under international law and have a regular dialogue with Israel on legal issues relating to the occupation. We continue to stress the importance of the Israeli security forces providing appropriate protection to the Palestinian civilian population.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2021-07-05/hl1703>

House of Commons Petition and Observations

Occupation of East Jerusalem

The petition of residents of the United Kingdom, declares that the residents of Sheikh Jarrah in occupied East Jerusalem are facing dispossession and forced evictions from their homes; further that Israel's illegal occupation of East Jerusalem has facilitated discriminatory laws against Palestinians who now have little recourse to the law and face the constant threat of dispossession and displacement; further that the SNP strongly condemns all breaches of international law and violence and supports the European Union position of a two-state solution based on the 1967 borders; further that the International Criminal Court must be able to do its duty and urgently conduct a full investigation; further that the Israeli Government must reconsider its position of non-cooperation with the ICC's impartial probe; and further that this illegal occupation cannot continue with no investigation and repercussions.

The petitioners therefore request that the House of Commons urge the Government to support the International Criminal Courts' investigation into the illegal occupation of East Jerusalem and to take the necessary steps to reach a peaceful resolution to the current violence. ... [P002665]

Observations from The Minister for the Middle East and North Africa (James Cleverly): The UK's opposition to evictions of Palestinians from their homes is long-standing and well known. The Geneva Convention, which applies to all occupied territory, including East Jerusalem, prohibits demolitions or forced evictions absent military necessity. The practice causes unnecessary suffering to Palestinians and is harmful to efforts to promote peace. We urge Israel to cease such actions permanently. We are monitoring court proceedings around Sheikh Jarrah and will continue to make our views on the issue clear.

The UK is helping fund legal aid for Palestinians in 96% of ongoing cases. We remain particularly concerned about the further demolitions in Humsa Al Bqai'a. The UK has

publicly called on Israel to end these demolitions and we will continue to raise this with the Israeli Government. The British Embassy in Tel Aviv has reiterated the UK position in meetings with the new Government of Israel.

As the Foreign Secretary made clear during his visit to Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territories (OPTs) on 26 May, settlements are illegal under international law and damaging to peace efforts. The UK has condemned decisions by the Government of Israel to advance the construction of settlements in the occupied West Bank, which causes serious damage to a viable Palestinian state and calls into question Israel's commitment to the two-state solution.

We continue to urge Israel to cease such actions permanently. UK Officials at the British Embassy in Tel Aviv continue to raise the issue regularly with the Israeli authorities and repeatedly call on Israel to abide by its obligations under international law.

The UK's long-standing position on the middle east peace process is clear and has not changed: we support a negotiated settlement leading to a safe and secure Israel living alongside a viable and sovereign Palestinian state, based on 1967 lines with agreed land swaps, Jerusalem as the shared capital of both states, and a just, fair, agreed and realistic settlement for refugees. Our position was reflected in our support for UN Security Council resolution 2334 and we continue to urge Israel at the highest level to halt settlement expansion immediately. The UK's position is that the status of Jerusalem should be determined in a negotiated settlement, and ultimately the shared capital of both states.

We continue to strongly support scrutiny of the situation in the OPTs.

We regularly engage the UN Security Council, working closely with European and regional partners, as well as the US.

The UK is a proud friend of Israel. We stand up for Israel when it faces bias and disproportionate focus. However, we do not hold back from voicing or raising concern about Israel's actions when warranted.

The UK remains resolute in its commitment to Israel's security. We condemn Hamas' indiscriminate and abhorrent rocket attacks against Israel and the Israeli people. Israel has a legitimate right to self-defence. In exercising this right, it is vital that all actions are proportionate and in line with international humanitarian law.

The UK is a strong supporter of international criminal justice and accountability. The UK is a strong supporter of the ICC and we respect the independence of the Court and its officials. We do not consider that the ICC has jurisdiction in this instance as the UK does not currently recognise Palestinian statehood.

The situation on the ground demonstrates the urgent need to make progress towards peace. We are actively working with partners to support a durable ceasefire and to encourage the parties to address the drivers of conflict. The UK remains committed to the two-state solution as the best way to bring peace and stability to the region, and ensure a comprehensive and permanent solution to the conflict.

<https://hansard.parliament.uk/commons/2021-07-19/debates/21071941000039/OccupationOfEastJerusalem>

UK Parliament Early Day Motion

Grahame Morris (Labour) [337] Spyware and state surveillance of journalists – That this House is deeply concerned by reports that at least 180 journalists across the world have been spied on using Pegasus software, a tool developed by the Israeli cybersurveillance company NSO and sold to a number of clients, including states across the world; notes that among those who have been the targets of the global spying operations are human rights defenders, political opponents, lawyers, diplomats and heads of state; further notes that the list of the 180 journalists targeted includes reporters from global media platforms, as well as freelance investigators who appear to have been

targeted by regimes determined to uncover sources, undermine research, and in some cases, stop their reporting; believes that those revelations of the use of NSO's Pegasus software to spy on journalists shows the profound vulnerability of media freedom and illustrates the serious breach of the public's right to know; and therefore joins the National Union of Journalists in the UK and Ireland and the International Federation of Journalists in utterly condemning all attempts to interfere with journalists' private communications, encouraging journalists to use extra vigilance to protect their data and calling on governments to enshrine in domestic law the inviolability of journalists' communications.

<https://edm.parliament.uk/early-day-motion/58790>

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Relevant Legislation ** new or updated today

UK Parliament

Animal Welfare (Sentience) Bill

<https://bills.parliament.uk/bills/2867>

Assisted Dying Bill

<https://bills.parliament.uk/bills/2875>

Charities Bill

<https://bills.parliament.uk/bills/2877>

Education (16 to 19 Academies) (Religious Character) Bill

<https://bills.parliament.uk/bills/2946>

Education (Assemblies) Bill

<https://bills.parliament.uk/bills/2878>

Higher Education (Freedom of Speech) Bill

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

Israel Arms Trade (Prohibition) Bill

<https://bills.parliament.uk/bills/3025>

Marriage Act 1949 (Amendment) Bill

<https://bills.parliament.uk/bills/3017>

Marriage and Civil Partnership (Minimum Age) Bill

<https://bills.parliament.uk/bills/2900>

**** Nationality and Borders Bill**

<https://bills.parliament.uk/bills/3023>

Second Reading, House of Commons

<https://hansard.parliament.uk/commons/2021-07-19/debates/FC19E458-F75D-480D-A20D-CD1E7ADC937E/NationalityAndBordersBill>

Online Safety Bill (Draft)

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/draft-online-safety-bill>

Palestine Statehood (Recognition) Bill

<https://bills.parliament.uk/bills/2942>

Northern Ireland Assembly

Organ and Tissue Donation (Deemed Consent) Bill

<http://www.niassembly.gov.uk/assembly-business/legislation/2017-2022-mandate/primary-legislation---bills-2017---2022-mandate/organ-and-tissue-donation-deemed-consent-bill/>

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** new or updated today

Animal welfare [EU legislation] (closing date 3 August 2021)

https://ec.europa.eu/info/law/better-regulation/have-your-say/initiatives/12950-Animal-welfare-revision-of-EU-legislation_en

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