



Political Affairs Digest

A daily summary of political events affecting the Jewish Community

Contents

Home Affairs

Israel

Foreign Affairs

Relevant Legislation

Consultations

Back issues

Home Affairs

House of Commons Oral Answers

Prime Minister's Questions

Keir Starmer (Labour): ... Telegram has been described as the “app of choice” for extremists. If you can believe it, Mr Speaker, as we were paying tribute to Sir David on Monday—as we were paying our respects—Telegram users were able to access videos of murders and violent threats against politicians, the LGBT community, women and Jews. Some of those posts are illegal; all of them are harmful. Hope not Hate and the Board of Deputies have said that Telegram “has facilitated and nurtured a subculture that cheerleads for...terrorists”.

Tough sanctions are clearly needed, yet under the Government's current proposals, directors of platforms failing to crack down on extremism would still not face criminal sanctions. Why is that?

The Prime Minister: This Government have brought forward an online harms Bill and the right hon. and learned Gentleman has heard what I have said about the Second Reading before Christmas. In the collegiate spirit in which he began his questioning, I can tell him that we will continue to look at ways in which we can toughen up those provisions and come down hard on those who irresponsibly allow dangerous and extremist content to permeate the internet. I am delighted that he is taking this new tough line and I very much hope that he will get the rest of his party to join him in the Lobby with us.

Keir Starmer: ... We need to recognise the measures in the Bill, but we need tough and effective sanctions—that means criminal sanctions—and that does matter. It is, frankly, beyond belief that, as the *Mirror* reported yesterday, 40 hours of hateful content from Anjem Choudary could be easily accessed online. The Prime Minister and the Government could stop this by making it clear that directors of companies are criminally liable for failing to tackle this type of material on their sites. We do not need to delay, so in the collaborative spirit we saw in this House on Monday, will the Prime Minister commit to taking this away, looking at it again and working with all of us to strengthen his proposed legislation?

The Prime Minister: I have already said that we are willing to look at anything to strengthen the legislation. I have said that we are willing to bring it forward, and we

will bring it forward to Second Reading before Christmas. Yes, of course we will have criminal sanctions with tough sentences for those who are responsible for allowing this foul content to permeate the internet, but what we hope for also is that, no matter how tough the proposals we produce, the Opposition will support it.

Keir Starmer: We are making progress. ... the Prime Minister has now committed to criminal sanctions. At the moment, they are a fallback position at the discretion of the Minister. They should, in my view, be on the face of the Bill as the automatic default for the failure to act. ...

I turn now to the report of the commission for countering extremism, which was set up in the wake of the horrific Manchester bombings. Eight months ago, that commission made recommendations to plug gaps in existing legislation and strategy—gaps that extremists have been able to exploit and are continuing to exploit—yet Sir Mark Rowley, formerly head of our counter-terrorism policing, who led on those recommendations, said just this week: “I have had no feedback from the Home Office on their plans in relation to our report on the absence of a coherent legal framework to tackle hateful extremism”.

Given the seriousness of the matter and the clear need for action, why have the Government not responded to this important work? Will the Prime Minister now commit to act swiftly on the commission’s recommendations?

The Prime Minister: The Government and my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary work with all parties to tackle violent extremism. The UK has one of the strongest counter-terrorism and counter-extremism systems in the world, as a consequence of which we have foiled 31 terrorist plots since 2017. I pay tribute to the work of Sir Mark Rowley, with whom I worked extremely closely while I was in London, and all those who were involved in foiling those terrorist plots. I can tell you, Mr Speaker, that they will receive the complete support of this House and of this Government; nor will we allow those who are convicted to be released early from prison, because that was one of the most important things that this Government passed and which the Labour party opposed.

Keir Starmer: ... There are clearly problems with the Government’s counter-extremism strategy. Internet users are increasingly likely to come across extremist content online. The Government’s own independent reviewer has said that there is “no evidence” that the Government’s key deradicalisation programme is effective—that is the Government’s independent reviewer saying that—and we have seen a spate of lone-attack killings, with the perpetrator invariably radicalised online. We all, across this House, want to stop this, but at the moment things are getting worse not better, so what urgent plans does the Prime Minister have to fix these glaring problems?

The Prime Minister: ... we will continue to do everything that we can to strengthen our counter-terrorism operation and to support all those who are involved in keeping us safe. Obviously, it is too early to draw any particular conclusions from the appalling killing of our colleague, but we will draw all relevant conclusions from that investigation.

Keir Starmer: The inescapable desire of this House on Monday finally to clamp down on the extremism, hate and abuse that festers online is incredibly welcome. However, closing down anonymous accounts would not have prevented the murder of Jo Cox or of PC Keith Palmer and, although we do not know the full circumstances surrounding his death, neither would it have saved Sir David. If we are to get serious about stopping violent attacks, we must stop online spaces being safe spaces for terrorists. We must ensure that unaccountable and arrogant social media companies take responsibility for their platforms. We must end the delays, get on with the legislation, and clean out the cesspit once and for all.

I have prosecuted terrorists and I have prosecuted extremists. I have worked with Sir Mark and others. Dozens of Labour MPs have worked hard on tackling social media companies on these issues. I started collegiately, and I will continue collegiately: we know what it

takes, and we can help. Will the Prime Minister now capture the spirit that we have seen this week, and agree to work with us on a cross-party basis so that we can tackle violent extremism, and its enablers, together?

The Prime Minister: I am delighted to join the right hon. and learned Gentleman in committing to tackle online harms and violent extremism together, and that is what the Government are doing. That is why we brought forward the online harms Bill, and that is why we are investing record sums in counter-terrorism. In addition, I think what the whole country and the whole House would certainly want to see—and I say this to the right hon. and learned Gentleman in a collegiate spirit—is a commitment by the Labour party in future to support measures, and not to allow the early release of terrorists and those convicted of such offences from prison. If we hear that from the Labour party, I think it would be a fine thing.

<https://hansard.parliament.uk/commons/2021-10-20/debates/C7F11738-673D-4738-874E-0718BD4AF330/Engagements#contribution-CE56185C-3D95-4A77-89CC-2A866D5F06DF>

The Commission for Countering Extremism report referred to above can be read at
https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/963156/CCE_Operating_with_Impunity_Accessible.pdf

The report in the Mirror referred to above can be read at
<https://www.mirror.co.uk/news/uk-news/brit-hate-preachers-40-hours-25243752>

House of Commons Written Answers

Meat: Ritual Slaughter

Fabian Hamilton (Labour) [56354] To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps he is taking to ensure the Jewish community's supply of kosher meat is uninterrupted.

Victoria Prentis: The Government is committed to protecting the rights of the Jewish community to eat meat prepared in accordance with their religious beliefs. This is a fundamental issue of religious freedom and belief, which the Government upholds. As the global economy has rebounded from the pandemic, we have seen pressures placed on supply chains across sectors and across countries. The UK has a highly resilient food supply chain which has coped well in responding to unprecedented challenges and we have been taking decisive action to ease these pressures where immediate interventions have been required, including making available temporary visas in some sectors such as HGV drivers and the poultry sector. We have well-established ways of working with the food industry to address potential food supply chain disruptions and that hasn't changed. As such we are confident the supply of kosher meat will continue uninterrupted.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2021-10-15/56354>

Meat: Ritual Slaughter

Fabian Hamilton (Labour) [56802] To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps he is taking to ensure the Jewish community is able to continue performing Shechita.

Jo Churchill: The Government is committed to protecting the rights of Jews to eat meat prepared in accordance with their religious beliefs. This includes slaughtering animals by the shechita method. This is a fundamental issue of religious freedom and belief, which the Government upholds.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2021-10-15/56802>

Sikhs: Curriculum

Alex Sobel (Labour Co-op) [56200] To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether he has made an assessment of the potential merits of increasing education around the Sikh faith in Key Stage 1 of the national curriculum.

Robin Walker: There are no plans to introduce teaching about specific faiths in any of the subjects of the national curriculum at any of the key stages.

The teaching about the Sikh faith by any school would be expected to be part of the religious education (RE) curriculum. The RE curriculum must reflect the fact that the religious traditions in the UK are in the main Christian, whilst taking account of the teaching and practices of the principal religions represented in the UK, including Sikhism.

The RE curriculum is part of the basic curriculum, rather than one of the subjects within the national curriculum. In addition, the RE curriculum is compulsory in all state-funded schools from age 5 to 18, which includes Key Stage 1.

Schools have the freedom to include content about specific faiths as part of their teaching of the subjects in the national curriculum, such as history or citizenship, but this would need to be in line with the purpose and aims of the subjects themselves.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2021-10-15/56200>

TOP

Israel

House of Commons Written Answers

The following two questions both received the same answer

Israel: Palestinians

Andrew Gwynne (Labour) [56855] To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, pursuant to the Answer of 9 September 2021 to Question 43430, on Israel: Palestinians, what steps her Department has taken to take forward relevant recommendations in the research study undertaken by the Department for International Development entitled Value for money investment in people to people programming in Israel and Palestine.

Diana Johnson (Labour) [56880] To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, with reference to the research study for the Department for International Development entitled Value for Money Investment in People to People Programming in Israel and Palestine, what steps her Department has taken to implement the recommendation that donors fund programmes over longer time horizons.

James Cleverly: We are taking forward relevant recommendations in the research study undertaken by the Department for International Development: "Value for Money Investment in People to People Programming in Israel and Palestine". A just and lasting resolution that ends the occupation and delivers peace for both Israelis and Palestinians is long overdue. The recommendations of the research report are already being incorporated into other UK peacebuilding programmes.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2021-10-15/56855>

and

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2021-10-15/56880>

The answer referred to above can be read at

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2021-09-06/43430>

The report referred to above can be read at

Israel: Occupied Territories

David Jones (Conservative) [56582] To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what is the Government's policy on UK direct investment in Israeli enterprises operating in the occupied Palestinian territories.

James Cleverly: We routinely update our guidance to British businesses on the Overseas Business Risk website. We advise British businesses to bear in mind the British Government's view on the illegality of settlements under international law when considering their investments and activities in the region. When approached by businesses, we set out the UK's clear position on Israeli settlements, and share with them our online guidance. This is voluntary guidance to British businesses on doing business in Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territories.

Ultimately it will be the decision of an individual or company whether to operate in settlements in the Occupied Palestinian Territories, but the British Government would neither encourage nor offer support to such activity.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2021-10-15/56582>

Arab States: Israel

Diana Johnson (Labour) [56879] To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, pursuant to the Answer of 9 September 2021 to Question 43429 on Arab States: Israel, whether the Government is encouraging Arab countries that do not conduct normalised relations with Israel to do so.

James Cleverly: The UK warmly welcomed the normalisation agreements between Israel, Bahrain, the United Arab Emirates, Morocco, and Sudan. These are historic steps which see the normalisation of relations between friends of the UK. The United Kingdom will continue to encourage further dialogue between Israel and other countries in the region, to work towards a more peaceful and prosperous future for Israelis and Palestinians alike.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2021-10-15/56879>

The answer referred to above can be read at

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2021-09-06/43429>

The following two questions both received the same answer

Dalal Mughrabi

Andrew Gwynne (Labour) [56856] To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, with reference to the Answer of 20 March 2017 to Question 67423, on Dalal Mughrabi, whether the youth camp named after Dalal Mughrabi was renamed after the Government raised concerns with the Palestinian Authority.

Palestinians: Overseas Aid

Diana Johnson (Labour) [56882] To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, with reference to the Answer of 9 April 2019 to Question 240936 on Palestinians: Overseas Aid, whether the Government made representations to the Palestinian Authority (PA) on concerns over the naming of the PA Ministry of Education sports festival after Dalal Mughrabi; and what assessment she has made of the impact of those representations on the decision to rename that festival.

James Cleverly: We have been clear that incitement to hatred or violence is unacceptable from all parties. We will continue to raise concerns about this with the Palestinian Authority (PA) and continue to urge all parties to condemn incitement wherever and whenever it occurs.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2021-10-15/56856>

and

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2021-10-15/56882>

The answers referred to above can be read at

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2017-03-10/67423>

and

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2019-04-04/240936>

Palestinians: Education

Andrew Gwynne (Labour) [56858] To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether his Department has plans to review the allocation of funding to the Palestinian education system following the publication of the Georg Eckert Institute's report on Palestinian textbooks in June 2021.

James Cleverly: Following Official Development Assistance (ODA) prioritisation exercises undertaken in March 2021, the UK no longer provides direct funding to the Palestinian Authority to support the salaries of education workers and health professionals. This decision was not influenced by the publication of the Georg Eckert Institute's report on Palestinian textbooks published in June 2021. The UK remains firmly committed to ensuring a quality education for Palestinian children, demonstrated by our longstanding support to the UN Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA) and through the British Council.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2021-10-15/56858>

The report referred to above can be read at

<https://owncloud.gei.de/index.php/s/FwkMw8NZgCAJgPW/download>

Palestinians: Schools

Diana Johnson (Labour) [56883] To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what information her Department holds on the reasons for the delayed publication of the Georg Eckert Institute's report on incitement in the Palestinian school curriculum.

James Cleverly: The Georg Eckert Institute, who were commissioned by the EU to undertake a review into Palestinian textbooks published the final report on 18 June 2021. The review is publicly accessible on their website:

<http://www.gei.de/en/departments/knowledge-in-transition/analysis-of-palestinian-textbooks-paltex.html>

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2021-10-15/56883>

Palestinians: Textbooks

Andrew Gwynne (Labour) [56857] To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what assessment his Department has made of the cost of educational materials with hateful content in the Palestinian education system that were recalled by the UN Relief and Works Agency.

James Cleverly: We have not made this assessment. The UK will continue to monitor UNRWA's implementation of its curriculum framework to ensure UNRWA's educational materials, including those on the digital learning platform, are in line with UN values. We accompany our support for UNRWA with stringent attention to implementation of their neutrality policy, including how they apply this to any educational materials.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2021-10-15/56857>

Occupied Territories: Teachers

Andrew Gwynne (Labour) [56859] To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, with reference to the Answer of 21 January 2021 to Question 138479, on Occupied Territories: Education, how much funding UK Aid

has contributed to the salaries of educational professionals in the Palestinian Authority since 1 January 2016.

James Cleverly: The FCDO's programme spend is publicly available on devtracker. UK funding to the Palestinian Authority since 2016 to support the salaries of carefully vetted teachers and education workers is available here:

<https://devtracker.fcdo.gov.uk/projects/GB-GOV-1-300050/transactions>

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2021-10-15/56859>

The answer referred to above can be read at

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2021-01-15/138479>

Palestinians: Teachers

Diana Johnson (Labour) [56881] To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what estimate she has made of the number of children in the Palestinian Authority who have been taught by UK-funded teachers.

James Cleverly: Access to a quality education for all, especially girls, remains a key priority for the UK Government. It is essential to have a strong and thriving Palestinian education system to provide opportunities for the next generation. UK education funding to the Palestinian Authority between March 2018 and March 2021 contributed to the salaries of around 31,000 education workers (including teachers). In 2020 451,000 children (50% girls) were in basic education in Palestinian Authority schools in the West Bank. Our continued support to UNRWA (the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East) will help provide basic education to over 533,000 children a year (half of whom are girls).

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2021-10-15/56881>

Palestinians: Children

Andy Slaughter (Labour) [56681] To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, if she will (a) raise with her Israeli counterpart (i) the fatal shooting of Mohammad Mo'ayyad Bahjat Abu Sara and (ii) the abduction and assault of a 15-year-old boy by Israeli settlers on 17 August 2021 and (b) seek assurances that there will be a criminal investigation into both incidents.

James Cleverly: We condemn any incidence of violence by settlers against Palestinians. We welcome the efforts of Israeli authorities to address settler violence, and urge them to thoroughly investigate every instance to bring those responsible to justice. We also continue to stress the importance of the Israeli security forces providing appropriate protection to the Palestinian civilian population, in particular the need to protect children, and urge restraint in the use of live fire.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2021-10-15/56681>

TOP

Foreign Affairs

House of Commons Written Answer

Cemeteries: Vandalism

Catherine West (Labour) [53306] To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether she has raised the matter of desecration and destruction of Jewish burial sites in Europe with European partners.

Wendy Morton: The Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs has not spoken to counterparts about the desecration and destruction of Jewish Burial sites. We do, however, remain committed to defending freedom of religion or belief for all, and promoting respect between different religious and non-religious communities.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2021-09-22/53306>

TOP

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>

Public Bill Committee

[https://hansard.parliament.uk/commons/2021-10-21/debates/c792c024-a3aa-41de-b23d-14714a8a6be6/NationalityAndBordersBill\(SeventhSitting\)](https://hansard.parliament.uk/commons/2021-10-21/debates/c792c024-a3aa-41de-b23d-14714a8a6be6/NationalityAndBordersBill(SeventhSitting))

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/>

TOP

Consultations

** new or updated today

**** closes in 7 days**

The Scottish Government's international work (closing date 29 October 2021)

<https://yourviews.parliament.scot/cteea/international-engagement-external-affairs/>

Labelling for Animal Welfare (closing date 6 December 2021)

<https://consult.defra.gov.uk/animal-welfare-market-interventions-and-labelling/labelling-for-animal-welfare/>

Proposed Assisted Dying for Terminally ill Adults (Scotland) Bill (closing date 22 December 2021)

<https://www.parliament.scot/bills-and-laws/bills/proposals-for-bills/proposed-assisted-dying-for-terminally-ill-adults-scotland-bill>

Animal Welfare – revision of EU legislation (Food Safety) (closing date 21 January 2022)

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

Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission Strategic Plan 2022-2025

(closing date not stated)

<https://nihrc.org/news/detail/we-want-to-hear-from-you-about-our-strategic-planning-2022-2025>

TOP

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