



Political Affairs Digest

A daily summary of political events affecting the Jewish Community

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House of Commons Written Answers

The following three questions all received the same answer

Religion: Education

Kim Leadbeater (Labour) [69704] To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what discussions officials in his Department have held with representatives of teachers of religious education regarding the value offered in terms of skills for young people by that subject; and if he will make a statement.

Kim Leadbeater (Labour) [69705] To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what assessment his Department has made of the potential merits of the value offered in terms of skills for young people by the subject matter of religious education; and if he will make a statement.

Kim Leadbeater (Labour) [69706] To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what recent assessment his Department has made of the societal value for young people of religious education; and if he will make a statement.

Robin Walker: The government firmly believes that religious education (RE) is important. Good quality RE is essential in developing children's knowledge of British values and traditions, and those of other countries. RE is a vital part of fostering understanding among different faiths and beliefs, which is why it is a compulsory subject for all state-funded schools up to the age of 18.

Department officials engage regularly with key RE stakeholders, including the National Association of Teachers of Religious Education as the main subject association for RE in England.

When teaching RE, schools should consider how their curriculum can develop social skills and empathy, as well as equip children and young people with the skills for living and working in a diverse society. For older pupils, RE should also focus on developing skills that are useful in a wide range of careers and adult life, and in particular the skills of critical enquiry, creative problem-solving and communication in a variety of media.

In school life, RE can develop and nuance the skills required for other parts of the school curriculum such as history, citizenship, and personal, social, health and

economic education.

RE is an important subject, developing an individual's knowledge and understanding of the religions and beliefs which form part of contemporary society, as well as serving to inform their own values and behaviour. RE can also contribute to pupils' personal development and well-being by promoting mutual respect and tolerance in a diverse society. It is an important contributor to the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils, which schools are required to facilitate as per the Education Act 2002.

Studying RE can also serve to improve community cohesion, providing a key context to develop young people's understanding and appreciation of diversity, to promote shared values and to challenge racism and discrimination.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2021-11-04/69704>

and

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2021-11-04/69705>

and

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2021-11-04/69706>

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Holocaust

House of Commons Debate

Recognition of Armenian Genocide [*First Reading*]

col 212 **Tim Loughton (Conservative):** ... In 1915, the Ottoman authorities arrested and deported hundreds of Armenian intellectuals and leaders from Constantinople. Subsequently, on the orders of Talaat Pasha, an estimated 800,000 to 1.2 million Armenian women, children and elderly or infirm people were sent on death marches leading to the Syrian desert in 1915 and 1916. Driven forward by paramilitary escorts, the deportees were deprived of food and water and subjected to robbery, rape and massacres. In the Syrian desert, the survivors were dispersed into concentration camps.

In 1916, another wave of massacres was ordered, leaving about 200,000 deportees alive by the end of 1916. Around 100,000 to 200,000 Armenian women and children were forcibly converted to Islam and integrated into Muslim households. Massacres and ethnic cleansing of Armenian survivors were carried out by the Turkish nationalist movement during the Turkish war of independence after the first world war. The Armenian genocide resulted in the destruction of more than two millennia of Armenian civilization in eastern Anatolia.

We knew about these atrocities at the time. The British Government commissioned a parliamentary blue book in 1916 to document the Armenian genocide. ... I read the *Hansard* of the debates in the Lords at the time, and in particular the speeches of the then Archbishop of Canterbury, Randall Davidson ... He spoke of "appalling stories of wholesale massacre, of expulsion of great populations from their homes under conditions which could only be described as in most cases slowly dragged-out massacre...on a scale so vast as is scarcely credible in our own time or, indeed, in any time."—[[Official Report, House of Lords, 17 December 1919; Vol. 38, c. 280.](#)] ...

col 213 Part of the problem is that the term "genocide" was not in use then and therefore not applied to massacres such as this back in 1916, and it did not have the international resonance that it does today. ... It was first recognised as a crime under international law in 1946 by the UN General Assembly and codified as an independent crime in the 1948 convention on the prevention and punishment of the crime of genocide, which came into

effect in 1951. From that flow all the subsequent international cases on genocide tried in the international court, which includes retrospectively—that is an important point—the Jewish holocaust. ...

We know about the Jewish holocaust as a genocide and, since 2001, we have commemorated Holocaust Memorial Day, applied to all holocausts. We acknowledge and mourn the Rwandan genocide of 1994, in which 800,000 Tutsis and Hutus died. The Srebrenica massacre of 1995 has been recognised as genocide by the International Criminal Tribunal, and there are others. However, the UK has yet to recognise the Armenian genocide ...

Let me uniquely quote Hitler, who, ahead of his invasion of Poland in 1939, famously said “who after all speaks today of the annihilation of the Armenians?”

That is the point: we cannot legitimately call out and stand up to genocides that are still going on in the 21st century by side-lining and neglecting the genocides of the 20th century. ...

col 214 The Armenian genocide is not an historical anachronism but an important contemporary issue where, inexplicably, we have failed to read the room internationally. We urgently need to put that right now. ...

To read the full transcript see

<https://hansard.parliament.uk/commons/2021-11-09/debates/AEFD429A-450D-41A4-A66F-9BDAB7583AB4/RecognitionOfArmenianGenocide>

Department for Education

Nadhim Zahawi My incredibly moving and humbling visit to Auschwitz has redoubled my resolve to do everything we can to eradicate anti-Semitism in our society. I'm pleased that more universities have adopted @TheIHRA 's definition of anti-Semitism - but I want all providers to sign up.

Also includes video message

<https://twitter.com/nadhimzahawi/status/1458339533951541250>

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Israel

House of Commons Written Answers

Palestinians: Health Services

Wayne David (Labour) [69015] To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what recent assessment she has made of the impact of reductions in UK official development assistance to support the salaries of healthcare professionals on the delivery of essential healthcare services in the Occupied Palestinian Territories.

James Cleverly: The UK remains firmly committed to ensuring access to essential healthcare services for all Palestinians. We are a longstanding supporter to the UN Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA) which provides core services, including healthcare to Palestinian refugees in Gaza. The UK Embassy in Tel Aviv regularly raises the importance of access to healthcare with the Israeli authorities.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2021-11-03/69015>

Palestinians: Health Services

Wayne David (Labour) [69014] To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth

and Development Affairs, what assessment she has made of the implications for her policies of the healthcare needs in the Occupied Palestinian Territories in the context of the outbreak of covid-19.

James Cleverly: We welcome the steps that the Israeli and Palestinian authorities have taken so far to coordinate responses to the COVID-19 pandemic and encourage further dialogue in this regard. The UK is committed to global equitable access to effective vaccines as demonstrated by our £548 million contribution to the COVAX Advance Market Commitment - the international initiative to support global equitable access to vaccines. The Occupied Palestinian Territories (OPTs) were among the first to benefit from the COVAX scheme with its first delivery of vaccines on 17 March 2021. Since that initial shipment, several further deliveries have arrived in the OPTs, including most recently on 25 August 2021.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2021-11-03/69014>

Lebanon: Palestinians

Wayne David (Labour) [69013] To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what assessment she has made of the implications for her policies of the effect of Lebanon's economic crisis on the humanitarian welfare of Palestinian refugees in that country.

James Cleverly: The UK is one of the leading donors in supporting Lebanon to host both Syrian and Palestinian refugees. Since 2011, the UK has allocated over £787 million in humanitarian and development funding to Lebanon. Our humanitarian assistance will continue to promote access to education and provide those most in need with timely, flexible assistance and protection services to cover their basic survival needs and reduce gender-based violence, saving lives and reducing suffering. The UK is also a key supporter to the UN Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA) which provides vital services to Palestinian refugees across their five fields of operation, including in Lebanon.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2021-11-03/69013>

Council of Europe

Green Blue Deal for the Middle East wins Council of Europe's Democracy Innovation Award

At the closing session of the 9th World Forum for Democracy, the Council of Europe announced that the winner of its 2021 Democracy Innovation Award was the Green Blue Deal for the Middle East, an initiative by EcoPeace Middle East which brings together Israeli, Palestinian and Jordanian environmentalists.

[EcoPeace Middle East](#) was founded in 1994 to advance sustainable regional development and the conditions for peace by promoting co-operation, across conflict lines, around shared environmental challenges, especially the need for water. ...

To read the full press release see

<https://www.coe.int/en/web/portal/-/green-blue-deal-for-the-middle-east-wins-council-of-europe-s-democracy-innovation-award>

United Nations

Members Approve 20 Draft Resolutions Spanning Decolonization Matters, Occupied Palestinian Territory, Other Topics, as Fourth Committee Begins Action

... the representative of **Indonesia** noted ... that the resolutions reaffirm the rights of Palestine refugees and the international community's support for UNRWA's mandate.

They also draw attention to the ongoing hardships faced by Palestine refugees as a result of their prolonged displacement and continued denial of their rights, as well as operational challenges and funding deficit of the Agency. ...

Turning specifically to the draft resolution titled “Assistance to Palestine refugees” ... [he] noted that the draft resolution contains an additional preambular paragraph, new this year, underscoring UNRWA’s commitment to operate in line with the humanitarian principles of neutrality, humanity, independence and impartiality ...

The representative of **South Africa** introduced two other resolutions in the cluster, namely those titled “Operations of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East” (L.13) and “Palestine refugees’ properties and their revenues” (L.14). He said the former reaffirms that UNRWA’s support for more than 5.7 million Palestinian refugees remains essential to alleviating their plight, which has been exacerbated by the deteriorating socioeconomic situation in the region. ... It further acknowledges UNRWA’s reform efforts and funding shortfalls and calls on Israel to cease obstruction of the Agency’s work and comply with the Fourth Geneva Convention.

Turning to the draft resolution on “Palestine refugees’ properties and their revenues” (L.14), he said it reaffirms that Palestine refugees are entitled to their property and income derived from it. ...

The Committee then turned its attention to a raft of texts submitted under the agenda item “Israeli practices and settlement activities affecting the rights of the Palestinian People and other Arabs of the occupied territories”. The representative of **Namibia** ... introduc[ed] the draft resolution titled “Work of the Special Committee to Investigate Israeli Practices Affecting the Human Rights of the Palestinian People and Other Arabs of the Occupied Territories” (document A/C.4/76/L.7). Expressing regret that Israeli violations escalated during the last year, he said the Special Committee’s debate reflected the international community’s serious concerns over those activities and their impact on the civilian population. Israel continues to impose an illegal blockade on the Gaza Strip, gravely impacting humanitarian conditions there. Meanwhile, the construction of settlements has forcibly dispossessed and displaced hundreds of Palestinians and many remain under threat of forced transfer, undermining the prospects for a two-State solution. ...

The representative of **Cuba** introduced the draft resolutions titled “The occupied Syrian Golan” (document A/C.4/76/L.8) and “Israeli settlements in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, and the occupied Syrian Golan” (document A/C.4/76/L.9), noting that they outline Israel’s illegal settlement activities and violations of Palestinians’ human rights. ...

The representative of **Israel** ... said those texts are highly political and reflect an unbalanced and distorted image of the Middle East. Emphasizing that the drafts are disproportionate, one-sided and biased against Israel, she called on the United Nations not to consider them. Pointing to the Organization’s “never-ending anti-Israel agenda”, she described the funding of Committees and Agencies that target Israel as a tragic and unprecedented misappropriation of resources. Noting that UNRWA uses its funding to pursue the “hateful indoctrination of children” in classrooms, she called upon the Agency to show a genuine commitment to transparency and accountability. ...

The representative of the **United States** said Israel and Palestine deserve equal measures of freedom, dignity, security and prosperity. Stressing that the package of resolutions does not support that goal and disproportionately singles out Israel, he stated that the United States strongly opposes the annual submission of resolutions biased against Israel. ...

The observer for the **State of Palestine** ... said it is a critical contribution to addressing the profound issues Palestine has faced over the past 50 years. ... She went on to emphasize that the resolutions are based on international law and respect for universal human rights, while describing the decision by a few States to shift their positions away from support for Palestine as unfortunate.

The representative of **Syria** said the support for resolutions related to Israeli practices

demonstrate Member States' rejection of the occupation of the Syrian Golan by force. Refraining from supporting the Israeli occupation is an important step towards dismantling the settlement regime, she said. ...

To read the full press release see

<https://www.un.org/press/en/2021/gaspd743.doc.htm>

Assistance to Palestine refugees (A/C.4/75/L.9)

<https://undocs.org/A/C.4/75/L.9>

Operations of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (A/C.4/76/L.13)

<https://undocs.org/A/C.4/76/L.13>

Palestine refugees' properties and their revenues (A/C.4/76/L.14)

<https://undocs.org/A/C.4/76/L.14>

Work of the Special Committee to Investigate Israeli practices and settlement activities affecting the rights of the Palestinian people and other Arabs of the occupied territories (A/C.4/76/L.7)

<https://undocs.org/A/C.4/76/L.7>

The occupied Syrian Golan (A/C.4/76/L.8)

<https://undocs.org/A/C.4/76/L.8>

Israeli settlements in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, and the occupied Syrian Golan" (A/C.4/76/L.9)

<https://undocs.org/A/C.4/76/L.9>

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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 (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>

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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Consultations

** new or updated today

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>

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