



Political Affairs Digest

A daily summary of political events affecting the Jewish Community

Contents

Home Affairs

Holocaust

Israel

Other Relevant Information

Relevant Legislation

Consultations

Back issues

Home Affairs

House of Lords Oral Answers

Islamophobia

Lord Sheikh (Conservative): To ask Her Majesty's Government what is their position on adopting a formal definition of Islamophobia.

The Minister of State, Home Office and Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (Lord Greenhalgh): The Government remain committed to acting against Islamophobia in all its forms. We utterly condemn the prejudice, discrimination and hatred directed towards British Muslims due to their faith. While we are considering definitions of Islamophobia, this in no way restrains our ability to monitor, prosecute and punish those perpetrating religiously motivated hate crime. We have provided Tell MAMA with £4 million over the last five years to monitor anti-Muslim hate crime and to support victims.

Lord Sheikh: My Lords, I thank my noble friend for his response. I first raised this matter in your Lordships' House on 11 July 2019. We were told then that the Government agree that there needs to be a definition and that two advisers would be appointed. One adviser was appointed more than two years ago and nothing tangible has been done since. The Muslim community is concerned about issues relating to Islamophobia, and would ask that a second adviser now be appointed and their terms of reference agreed, which must include consultation with the community. We need to do this without any further delay and to commence the process.

Lord Greenhalgh: My Lords, I thank my noble friend for raising the concerns of the Muslim community, for his contribution to how we tackle the issue of Islamophobia and for his advice on how best to proceed. We remain committed to tackling Islamophobia where it exists across our communities, and we will continue to consider this issue with the utmost seriousness.

Baroness Blake of Leeds (Labour): My Lords, the Government's own hate crime statistics show that nearly half of all recorded religious hate crimes were against Muslims. What specific urgent steps have the Government taken to end this abuse and will the Minister commit to working with Muslim groups to ensure urgent progress?

Lord Greenhalgh: My Lords, it is quite correct to say “nearly half”—around 45% of religiously motivated hate crime was against Muslims. As I mentioned in my Answer, we provided Tell MAMA £4 million over the last five years to monitor anti-Muslim hate crimes and support victims. We have also awarded £1.8 million through the faith, race and hate crime grant scheme to support established community groups and civil society organisations to boost shared values and tackle religiously and racially motivated hate crime.

Baroness Hussein-Ece (Liberal Democrat): My Lords, the Minister has acknowledged that the Home Office’s own figures show that 45% of all recent recorded religious hate crimes in England and Wales targeted British Muslims, but he has not yet said why the Government are so reluctant and are dragging their feet over coming up with a clear definition of Islamophobia. Why have they refused to do this? Is he aware that it is mainly Muslim women who are being targeted, because of the way they dress? Young people are being targeted and bullied in schools and on the streets. Given the scale of this problem, and given the rise in far-right extremism, can the Minister tell me what actual action, besides funding an organisation to monitor it, the Government will take to reassure the 3 million British Muslims of their commitment to tackling hatred, and the violent crimes and discrimination they are experiencing?

Lord Greenhalgh: My Lords, we recognise the seriousness of this, but we also recognise the point made by Khalid Mahmood MP in the other place that there are issues with the term “Islamophobia”. It has been weaponised by particular groups to tackle free speech. We recognise that it is important to establish a definition, but as he himself says, this is a difficult thing to solve and the first principle is to do no harm. We will proceed slowly and carefully in order to get this right.

Lord Robathan (Conservative): My Lords, I think the House will be united against anybody who discriminates against somebody on their beliefs, but I will follow up on the last question about what exactly we mean by “Islamophobia”. I understand that it means fear of Islam. Why should one be frightened of one of the great religions of the world? It is fair enough to be frightened of the people who blew up the Manchester Arena or whatever, but surely not of Islam itself. I think the Minister is on my side in this: could we please be absolutely clear what it is that we are trying to do?

Lord Greenhalgh: My Lords, part of the difficulty of adopting some of the definitions that are being proposed, including that proposed by the APPG, is that they effectively conflate anti-Muslim hatred and Islamophobia with race. They also do not deal with issues around sectarianism. I completely agree that we want to tackle prejudice that discriminates against people based on who they are.

Lord Singh of Wimbledon (Crossbench): My Lords, a phobia is a fear. An irrational fear of Muslims is best countered by leaders of the community explaining that discrimination against women and violent attitudes to other faiths have nothing to do with Islam. Will the Minister agree with a previous government statement that all faiths and beliefs should be given equal protection, and that giving special consideration to one or two groups at the expense of others is totally contrary to the Government’s levelling-up agenda?

Lord Greenhalgh: My Lords, I can give that assurance. We must provide our faiths and beliefs, particularly a religion such as Islam, with the same protections as all other important religions, but we must not make the mistake of conflating religion with race, as I said in the previous answer.

Baroness Fox of Buckley (Non-affiliated): My Lords, it is crucial that we distinguish between aberrant anti-Muslim bigotry and the highly contentious concept of Islamophobia which threatens free speech for fear of it being labelled Islamophobic. Does the Minister acknowledge this chilling effect for liberal Muslims, as is well described in the Don’t Divide Us film “‘Islamophobia!’ The Accusation that Silences Dissent”, muting any criticism of Islam as a religion and even muting critiques of political Islamism, however dangerous? Does the Minister accept the nervousness of politicians from all parties in supporting the

Batley Grammar School teacher who was forced into hiding under shouts of “Islamophobic”, effectively allowing a default blasphemy law to be snuck in for fear of being called Islamophobic?

Lord Greenhalgh: My Lords, I do recognise that issue and I was trying to point that out in the responses I gave to previous supplementary questions. There is no doubt that the term “Islamophobia” is used as a heckler’s veto to shut down alternative opinions. We need to come up with a way forward that does not compromise free speech, and that is absolutely what we are committed to doing.

Lord Mann (Non-affiliated): Imam Qari Asim, whom the Government appointed to assist with this in 2019, has been a magnificent ally in the fight against anti-Semitism and had a huge impact in West Yorkshire on Covid vaccinations in the Muslim community. Would it not be in the Government’s interests to find more work for Qari Asim to do?

Lord Greenhalgh: My Lords, as someone who has spent time with and engaged with Qari Asim—I met him in my previous role as Faith Minister—I recognise that he has much to contribute and I am sure we will continue to make best use of his undoubted reputation and track record.

Lord Kennedy of Southwark (Labour Co-op): My Lords, Islamophobia is a real problem in the UK. Prejudice against Islam must be taken very seriously. The Government are certainly proceeding very slowly—there is no question about that—as highlighted by the noble Lord, Lord Sheikh. Can the Minister confirm that it is the Government’s intention to adopt a definition, or are they not planning to do so? It is very easy, either way.

Lord Greenhalgh: ... Of course we want to work on establishing a definition that can be adopted, but I want the House to recognise that this is not a straightforward matter and will take time.

Baroness Uddin (Non-affiliated): My Lords, do the Government recognise that in any attempt to elucidate a formal definition of Islamophobia, religion and not race must be the central tenet? I agree with the noble Lord’s earlier response. Will the Minister give a personal assurance to the noble Lord, Lord Sheikh, me and others that he will do everything he can to resolve this as a matter of urgency?

Lord Greenhalgh: My Lords, I can give the assurance that we are tackling this as a matter of urgency. I completely agree with the point made about the need not to conflate race with religion. We need to get the definition of Islamophobia right.

<https://hansard.parliament.uk/lords/2021-11-15/debates/261C3990-4515-41B0-8373-5E445FF19FC3/Islamophobia>

TOP

Holocaust

House of Lords Written Answers

The following four questions all received the same answer

UK Holocaust Memorial and Learning Centre

Baroness Deech (Crossbench) [HL3563] To ask Her Majesty’s Government when was the last review of the total cost of the proposed UK Holocaust Memorial and Learning Centre; what were the findings of that review; what is the most recent total cost estimate to (1) build, and (2) open, the Centre; and what are the reasons for the changes, if any, in those costs.

Baroness Deech (Crossbench) [HL3564] To ask Her Majesty’s Government how much has been spent to date on the proposed UK Holocaust Memorial and Learning Centre.

Baroness Deech (Crossbench) [HL3565] To ask Her Majesty’s Government what estimate they have made of the annual running costs of the UK Holocaust Memorial and Learning Centre.

Baroness Deech (Crossbench) [HL3566] To ask Her Majesty's Government how much has been raised so far in private funding for the UK Holocaust Memorial and Learning Centre; and what is the source, if any, of any commitments to raise private funding.

Lord Greenhalgh: Costs are regularly reviewed and updated figures will be published in due course in line with the Government Major Projects Portfolio reporting process.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2021-11-01/hl3563>

and

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2021-11-01/hl3564>

and

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2021-11-01/hl3565>

and

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2021-11-01/hl3566>

UK Holocaust Memorial and Learning Centre

Baroness Deech (Crossbench) [HL3567] To ask Her Majesty's Government whether the estimate of £25 million private funding required to support the delivery of the UK Holocaust Memorial and Learning Centre remains an accurate estimate of what is required; and whether the requisite amount of private funding will be available before construction commences.

Lord Greenhalgh: The independent fund-raising campaign is expected to secure at least £25 million. Funding arrangements will be in place before main construction begins.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2021-11-01/hl3567>

UK Holocaust Memorial and Learning Centre

Baroness Deech (Crossbench) [HL3616] To ask Her Majesty's Government when the flood risks to the Victoria Tower Gardens site proposed for the UK Holocaust Memorial and Learning Centre were last reviewed; and whether the floods in central London this year have been taken into account.

Lord Greenhalgh: Flood risks have been considered throughout the development of the UK Holocaust Memorial and Learning Centre. The Environment Agency have given their consent to the proposal subject to conditions which will be complied with in full.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2021-11-02/hl3616>

Victoria Tower Gardens

Baroness Deech (Crossbench) [HL3617] To ask Her Majesty's Government whether their commitment (1) to protecting, and (2) to accessing, green spaces includes the preservation of Victoria Tower Gardens as a fully open park.

Lord Parkinson of Whitley Bay: The Government's commitment to protecting access to all green spaces includes Victoria Tower Gardens. There will occasionally be work or programmed maintenance that will require the temporary closure or the limiting of access to these green spaces, but the Government is committed to ensuring this is kept to a minimum.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2021-11-02/hl3617>

TOP

House of Commons Written Answers

The following two questions both received the same answer

Israel: Oman

Andrew Gwynne (Labour) [71288] To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps her Department is taking to encourage diplomatic normalisation between Israel and Oman.

Israel: Mauritania

Andrew Gwynne (Labour) [71291] To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps her Department is taking to promote diplomatic normalisation between Israel and Mauritania.

James Cleverly: The United Kingdom (UK) warmly welcomed the normalisation agreements between Israel, Bahrain, the United Arab Emirates, Morocco, and Sudan. These were historic steps which saw 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, Palestinians and citizens across the region.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2021-11-08/71288>

and

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2021-11-08/71291>

Overseas Aid

Afzal Khan (Labour) [70301] To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what recent assessment she has made of the effect of reductions in the aid budget on the UN's relief agency for (a) Palestinians and (b) the humanitarian situation.

James Cleverly: The UK is a long-term supporter of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA). We recognise UNRWA's unique mandate from the UN General Assembly, to provide protection and core services including health and education to Palestinian refugees across the Middle East. The UK's annual contribution to UNRWA's programme budget helps UNRWA to provide basic education to more than 533,000 children a year (half of whom are girls), access to health services for 3.5 million Palestinian refugees and social safety net assistance for around 255,000 of the most vulnerable across the region.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2021-11-05/70301>

Trade Agreements: Palestinians

Emily Thornberry (Labour) [70248] To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, whether the meeting of the Joint Committee for UK-Palestinian Authority Trade and Cooperation held on 22 September 2021 discussed the implications of the UK-Palestine trade agreement for the tariff treatment of goods manufactured in UK freeports.

Ranil Jayawardena: It did not.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2021-11-05/70248>

Palestinians: Third Sector

Wayne David (Labour) [69589] To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, pursuant to the Answer of 28 October 2021 to Question 62756, what information the Government has now received from the Israeli Government as the basis for their designation of six Palestinian civil society organisations as terrorist.

James Cleverly: The UK is aware of the decision by the Israeli authorities to designate six Palestinian Civil Society Organisations. We are in contact with the

Government of Israel to understand the basis of the designations. We have made clear that human rights and civil society organisations have a vital role to play in both Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territories (OPTs), including those focused on Israel's conduct in the Palestinian Territories.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2021-11-04/69589>

The answer referred to above can be read at

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2021-10-25/62756>

Palestinian Authority

Andrew Gwynne (Labour) [71289] To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, with reference to the most recent Memorandum of Understanding between the UK and the Palestinian Authority, what representations officials in her Department have made to representatives of the Palestinian Authority on the glorification of Fadi Al-Qunbar, Baha Alyan and Alaa Abu Jamal as martyrs on official Palestinian Authority TV news on 26 June 2021.

James Cleverly: Our partnership with the Palestinian Authority (PA) includes a commitment from the Palestinian leadership to adhere to the principle of non-violence and to tackle any language and actions that could incite violence or hatred. We have a regular dialogue with the PA in which we reiterate the need for both sides to prepare their populations for peaceful coexistence, including by promoting a more positive portrayal of each other.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2021-11-08/71289>

Gaza: Reconstruction

Andrew Gwynne (Labour) [71290] To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what assessment she has made of the need to fully proscribe Hamas in order to facilitate the reconstruction of Gaza.

James Cleverly: Hamas' military wing has been proscribed as a terrorist organisation by the UK since 2001 and the UK maintains a no contact policy with Hamas in its entirety. We welcomed Israeli Foreign Minister Lapid's speech on 12 September, proposing positive policy suggestions to support economic development in Gaza and greater security for Israel. A long-term solution for Gaza is needed to prevent further conflict and make progress towards a two-state solution. The UK will continue to urge the parties to prioritise progress towards reaching a durable solution for Gaza and to take the necessary practical steps to ensure Gaza's reconstruction and economic recovery.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2021-11-08/71290>

House of Lords Written Answer

Occupied Territories: Olives

Baroness Janke (Liberal Democrat) [HL3639] To ask Her Majesty's Government what representations they have made to the government of Israel about Palestinians being prevented from harvesting their olive crops in occupied territory by (1) Israeli forces, and (2) Israeli settlers.

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: We are aware of the particular significance of olive trees given their status as a national symbol and the sole source of income for many Palestinian farmers. We have repeatedly raised the issue of incidents of settler violence, including the destruction of olive trees, with the Israeli authorities. We continue to urge them to investigate thoroughly every instance to bring those responsible to justice and of the Israeli security forces providing appropriate protection to the Palestinian civilian population.

Other Relevant Information

OSCE / ODIHR

2020 Hate Crime Data Key Findings

https://hatecrime.osce.org/sites/default/files/2021-11/2020%20Infographic_EN.pdf

2020 Hate Crime: Full Data

<https://hatecrime.osce.org/hate-crime-data?year=2020>

Ditch the Label

Uncovered: Online Hate Speech in the Covid Era

https://www.ditchthelabel.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/11/Uncovered_Online-Hate_Speech_DTLxBW_V2-1.pdf

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/>

[TOP](#)

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

**** Marriage Law (Northern Ireland)** (closing date 18 February 2022)

<https://www.finance-ni.gov.uk/consultations/public-consultation-marriage-law>

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](#)