



Political Affairs Digest

A daily summary of political events affecting the Jewish Community

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House of Commons Debate

Prevention and Suppression of Terrorism

Draft Terrorism Act 2000 (Proscribed Organisations) (Amendment) (No. 3) Order 2021

<https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukdsi/2021/9780348229288/data.pdf>

col 402 **The Minister for Security and Borders (Damian Hinds):** ... This Government are committed to protecting the people of this country, and tackling terrorism in all its forms is clearly a critical and central part of that mission. ...

The Government's position towards Hamas is well-documented. ...

... we have a no-contact policy now with the entirety of the group, but we proscribe only the military wing. ...

We mirror the EU sanctions in our own domestic regime against Hamas, also in their entirety. The Government condemn Hamas's indiscriminate and abhorrent rocket attacks and remain resolute in our commitment to Israel's security. We continue to call on Hamas permanently to end its incitement and rocket fire against Israel. ...

Steve McCabe (Labour): I support the measure. It seems to have cross-party support, which I welcome. It seems to me that it largely closes a few existing loopholes and brings us into line with the position of our allies. None the less, does the right hon. Gentleman agree that it does not close the door on Hamas participating in the political process? Were it to recognise Israel's right to exist and renounce violence and terrorism—in effect, accept the Quartet principles—it would be very welcome.

col 403 **Damian Hinds:** ... Our position on Hamas is clear and it is public. Hamas must renounce violence. It must recognise Israel and accept previously signed agreements. Credible moves must be made towards those conditions. They remain the benchmark against which intention should be judged. ...

Tom Hunt (Conservative): ... Last weekend, an Israeli tour guide was murdered in Jerusalem. My understanding is that the individual who committed that murder was a member of the political wing of Hamas. Surely that goes to prove that this arbitrary distinction between a military wing and a political wing is not accurate, and that, in its entirety, Hamas is a terrorist organisation and deserves to be labelled as such.

Damian Hinds: The incident that my hon. Friend mentions is a timely reminder ...

The threat posed by terrorist organisations varies depending on each group's ideology, membership and ability to train members. Groups such as Hamas train members in terrorism, as well as preparing and committing terrible acts of violence against innocent members of the public. We have a duty to our allies, as well as to our own people, to tackle groups that inspire and co-ordinate terror on the international stage. Although we can sadly never entirely eliminate the threat from terrorism, we must always do all that we can to act against and mitigate the danger it poses, and to seek to keep the public safe. ...

Proscription is a powerful tool for degrading terrorist organisations ... We propose to amend the existing listing of "Hamas-Izz al-Din al-Qassem Brigades", or Hamas IDQ, in schedule 2 of the Terrorism Act 2000 to cover Hamas in its entirety. ...

col 404 Mark Harper (Conservative): ... is not one of the strongest reasons for proscribing the whole organisation to strengthen the role of moderate Palestinians and the ability of the Palestinian Authority to come to a peace agreement with Israel, and to send a clear message that extremists, who do not accept the existence of Israel and want to use violence, have no place in this process? ...

Damian Hinds: ... It is a criminal offence for a person to belong to, support or arrange a meeting in support of a proscribed organisation. It is also a criminal offence to wear clothing or carry articles in public that arouse reasonable suspicion that an individual is a member or supporter of a proscribed organisation. ...

Having carefully considered all the evidence, the Home Secretary believes that Hamas in its entirety is concerned in terrorism and the discretionary factors support proscription. Although I am of course unable to comment on specific intelligence, I can provide the House with a summary of the group's activities. Hamas is a militant Islamist movement that was established in 1987. Its ideology is related to that of the Muslim Brotherhood combined with Palestinian nationalism. Its main aims are to liberate Palestine from Israeli occupation, the establishment of an Islamic state under sharia law and the destruction of Israel, although Hamas no longer demands the destruction of Israel in its covenant. The group operates in Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territories.

Jonathan Edwards (Independent): ... what assessment have the British Government made of the impact of the measure on the internal political dynamics of the Palestinian Territories? Does it weaken Hamas, as the right hon. Member for Forest of Dean said, and help the moderate forces, or is there a danger that it might strengthen Hamas's hand? ...

col 405 Damian Hinds: We are of course greatly concerned with what happens in-country and in-region. We want to see progress. We want to see the Palestinian Authority extending its governance. But this measure is specifically about the entity of Hamas. It is a proscription of a body because of its involvement in terrorism, and this debate and vote must focus on that specific question.

Seema Malhotra (Labour Co-op): Will the Minister clarify what assessment has been made of important discussions that may need to go on in relation to humanitarian issues, education and healthcare, and how that will continue in the very important work that has to be done to support people in the Gaza strip?

Damian Hinds: ... Hamas formally established Hamas IDQ in 1992. IDQ was proscribed by the UK in March 2001. At the time, it was determined that there was a distinction between the political and military wings of Hamas, and that the only part of the organisation that was concerned in terrorism, and should therefore be proscribed, was the military wing. Over the past 20 years ... Hamas's so-called military and political wings have grown closer together, with any distinction between them now considered to be artificial. The Government's assessment is that Hamas is a complex but single organisation made up of constituent parts, one of which includes Hamas IDQ. It is clear that these constituent parts are not wholly independent of Hamas's so-called political wing and that they take strategic direction from it. There is also movement of key individuals across the organisation as well

as, of course, a shared ideology. It is clear that the current proscription listing of Hamas does not reflect its true structure, and that is why this order has been laid. The Home Secretary has a reasonable belief that Hamas, in its entirety, is concerned in terrorism. It is our assessment that the group prepares for, commits and participates in acts of terrorism. There is also evidence that the group promotes and encourages terrorism. Indiscriminate rocket or mortar attacks against Israeli targets are key examples of Hamas committing this terrorism. ... Hamas also frequently uses incendiary balloons to launch attacks from Gaza into southern Israel. ... Only last summer, Hamas launched camps in Gaza that focused on training groups, including minors, to fight. In a press statement Hamas described the aim of these camps as to “ignite the embers of jihad in the liberation generation, cultivate Islamic values, and prepare the expected victory army to liberate Palestine”. This vile indoctrination of young people into the organisation’s violent ideology shows how diametrically opposed it is to our country’s core values.

col 406 The action we are taking is not a commentary on the ongoing tensions in Israel and the occupied Palestinian territories, nor is it a departure in any way from the Government’s long-standing position on the middle east peace process. We continue to support a negotiated settlement leading to a safe and secure Israel alongside a viable and sovereign Palestinian state. This decision is based on the Government’s assessment that Hamas, in its entirety, is concerned in terrorism and that proscription is a proportionate action to take, and nothing more. ...

It goes without saying that this Government do not provide any assistance to Hamas or the Government structure in Gaza that is made up of Hamas members. However ... this proscription will not prevent aid from reaching civilians in need. ...

Nick Thomas-Symonds (Labour): ... I start by outlining that the Opposition agree with the proscription motion and support the decision to proscribe Hamas in its entirety. ...

col 407 The previous Labour Government proscribed Hamas’s military wing in 2001 and made the assessment that there was at that time a meaningful distinction between the military and political wings.

Looking at this situation today, 20 years on, the Government have set out that there is now no distinction between the military and political wings.

Hamas, the Government have said, is certainly a complex organisation, but it is a “single terrorist organisation”, and the Opposition accept that. ...

In relation to this proscription, Members on both sides of the House remain committed to a negotiated settlement to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict that delivers a safe and secure Israel alongside a viable and sovereign Palestinian state. We know that meaningful dialogue that brings together those from both sides of the conflict to find a resolution offers the only prospect of a meaningful and lasting peace in the middle east. ...

I ask the Minister to give his assessment of and reassurance on the impact that today’s decision will have on the prospect of securing a peaceful resolution to the conflict, and what he understands the implications are for future engagement with bodies including the Palestinian Legislative Council and the Palestinian Authority.

Similarly ... could the Minister outline the impact that he foresees on non-governmental organisations supporting Palestinian civilians in Gaza and on British people who are there at the moment and their safety? ...

col 408 As the Minister stated, the decision brings the United Kingdom into line with our allies the United States, Canada and the European Union, all of which have already proscribed Hamas in its entirety. ...

Robert Jenrick (Conservative): ... Last week, a young man, as we heard earlier—Eli Kay, a 26-year-old tour guide—was murdered as he was doing his business, walking around the old city in Jerusalem. His grandparents are well-respected members of the West Hampstead Jewish community, and he had deep links here in the United Kingdom. I think all of us would send our best wishes and our deepest condolences to his grandparents and all those who knew him here in the UK. He was murdered by a Hamas

terrorist—a Hamas terrorist who purported to be from the political wing of that organisation. That one young man's brutal, unexpected and unexplainable death goes some way to explain why we as a country need to be proscribing the whole of the organisation that that murderer, that terrorist belonged to. ...

col 409 I cannot reach into the heart of that individual and explain what motivated him to take the life of Eli Kay. ... We cannot accommodate terrorism. When someone uses the slaughter of innocent people to advance a political cause or a supposed political cause, at that point that cause becomes immoral and unjust, and they and the organisation that they stand for have to be eliminated from serious debate and serious discussion. ...

As my right hon. Friend the Minister has said, the distinction between the political and the military wing of this organisation has for a very long time been entirely artificial, just as it was with Hezbollah, which we took similar action to proscribe in its entirety just a couple of years ago. It was an absurdity that, during the al-Quds Day rally, an individual could march through the streets of London shouting antisemitic remarks and waving the flag of Hezbollah, but get away with it because it was the flag of the political wing of Hezbollah, not the military wing. ...

... hatred between Muslims and Jews is a product of history, which we must consign to history. Organisations such as Hamas that stand for that hatred must be treated as the terrorist organisations they are. We only need to look at its charter to see that. ...

col 410 **Alyn Smith (SNP):** ... I think that across the House we all have a common endeavour: we all support a just peace in the middle east. That just peace will need to be based on dialogue, the rule of law and peaceful respect. Israel has a right to exist and a right to peace and security within its borders, but we also recognise that a deep injustice has been done to the Palestinian people, and that injustice is continuing. Everything in the middle east is connected to everything else, and it is important for all of us, as outsiders, to view it in totality rather than through a particular prism.

We believe that international law should be applied to all sides, and there are more than two sides to this dispute. Peace is made not among friends but among enemies, and difficult conversations with difficult people need to be taken forward to create the conditions for peace to happen. Dialogue is not supported by declaring stakeholders, however unpalatable, to be *persona non grata* or illegal. That said, we recognise, of course, the odious nature of Hamas. ...

Proscribing all of Hamas will bring the UK in line with the US, all EU states, Japan and Canada, and Australia is in the process of adopting similar measures. ... However, we have unease at this proposal, and that unease boils down under three heads: the timing, the process, and the implications of this proposal in the real world.

col 411 ... why is this being done now? I listened with great attention to the Minister. I did not find much I disagreed with, but I also did not find much that we could not have heard two or three years ago. ...

As recently as 18 months ago, in response to a written parliamentary question in June 2020, Minister Brokenshire set out the UK Government's position as follows: "The political wing of Hamas is not proscribed as it is considered that there is a clear distinction between Hamas's military and political wings." ...

I have not heard much today to suggest that much has changed. ...

Philippa Whitford (SNP): ... my husband and I spent 18 months as volunteers in Gaza in the early '90s and have been running a breast cancer project between Scotland and Gaza for the last five years. ... Do we not need clarity on the position of small education and healthcare NGOs in Gaza supporting the 2 million people there? The work that I and my volunteers do inevitably involves the Ministry of Health because that is who runs the hospitals. ... I am afraid this will send a chill when I am trying to recruit breast cancer specialists in Scotland to keep supporting this wonderful project. ...

Alyn Smith: ... I refer to the explanatory notes to this statutory instrument. The final sentence states: "A full impact assessment has not been produced for this Order as no, or

no significant, impact on the private, voluntary or public sector is foreseen.” I am glad to hear that, but I have to say that I find it quite unbelievable. ...

col 412 What will be the effect ... of this listing on NGOs, big and small, and on civil society? The reality in Gaza especially is that Hamas is a fact of life. You cannot get anything done—you cannot get aid delivered, you cannot have a medical project, you cannot have a civil society dialogue—without Hamas’s active involvement one way or another. ... How will this listing impact on the NGOs trying to promote dialogue and civil society, and trying to deliver humanitarian aid? ...

Crispin Blunt (Conservative): ... First, we need to put the measure in context. The nearest parallel is the proscription of both wings of Hezbollah. In terms of practicality, our engagement with Lebanon is very much less than it is with Palestine and Israel. We are unable to talk to the four Ministries that have Hezbollah Ministers and the French are then seen as the lead western European nation in that space. Our relative position in the very troubled country of Lebanon—we have made difficulties for ourselves because of the extent of the popular support for Hezbollah in Lebanon—is significantly reduced from that. Of course, Hezbollah is only part of the Government of Lebanon. The difficulty we are giving ourselves here is that the jurisdiction of Gaza is run by Hamas. ...

col 413 We have already taken a position on what is plainly the stupid, illegitimate and immoral mortaring of people where you cannot tell where the targets are, simply flying weapons over the wall, because you do not have the capacity to engage in that targeting of what would be legitimate targets under international law as resistance. Of course those acts are illegitimate. That is why they have been proscribed.

However, we need to be careful because people do have a right to resist, and we must understand that we are talking about an occupied people. ... We delivered half of the Balfour declaration ... where we gave the Jewish people, who had suffered the most appalling, the greatest crime in human history in the holocaust, as well as the pogroms and all the other oppression in European history and elsewhere, a safe place in the state of Israel. Obviously half of that declaration is undelivered—the bit that said it would not be done at the cost of the rights of the people already there. ... That is why we have the Balfour project, led by our former consul-general in Jerusalem, Sir Vincent Feen, who is working away to draw attention to the fact that the work is half done and the United Kingdom still has to deliver the Balfour declaration. ...

Mark Harper: When he was talking about the indiscriminate attacks that Hamas sends into Israel, he seemed to say that the only problem with them was that they were not more accurately targeted to kill certain Israelis, that they indiscriminately killed other Israelis, and that, if they targeted the weapons more accurately, that would be sort of okay. ... If that is so, I find that an offensive and extraordinary thing to say.

Crispin Blunt: ... Under international law, you have a legal right to resist. Not only is the use of those weapons unlawful because they are untargeted and indiscriminate; it is also fantastically stupid because it gives the Israelis’ argument about the threat they face from the Palestinian people its *raison d’être*. ...

col 414 The Israelis have been in gross breach of the fourth Geneva convention ever since the occupation of the territories in 1967, and the ensuing settlements are a grievous breach of international law. What has the United Kingdom done about it? What is the United Kingdom going to do about it? ...

In the forthcoming vote of the UN General Assembly on the status of Jerusalem—a resolution sponsored by the Palestinians and the Jordanians—we appear to be about to change the long-standing British position of supporting the status quo in Jerusalem. The United Kingdom is apparently going to abstain; according to reports made to me, it is also actively working to get other countries to abstain and change their position. ...

col 415 This will have a chilling effect on effective assistance to Gaza. ...

Do I support Hamas? That is a little unlikely, speaking as the gay chair of the all-party

parliamentary humanist group. But have I taken the trouble to try to understand political Islam? ... I spent 20 years getting to know and trying to understand these people. My right hon. Friend the Member for Newark (Robert Jenrick) said: "I cannot reach into the heart of that individual". I say to him: no, but you deserve to make every effort to understand the movement around that individual and whether it relates to why he came to that perspective. ...

Wayne David (Labour): I support the proscription of Hamas in its entirety as a terrorist organisation. Every protection and reassurance must be given to the Jewish community in this country, and antisemitism has no place in our society. I also appreciate that since we have left the European Union, the EU's ban on Hamas in its entirety is no longer in place, and we must have an alternative measure in this country. ...

I am also concerned about the fact that there appears to have been very little consultation, if any, with organisations and bodies that are engaged in conflict resolution efforts and humanitarian work in the occupied Palestinian territories and in Gaza in particular. Aid agencies such as Oxfam, Medical Aid for Palestinians and Save the Children do excellent work in Gaza, and the nature of their humanitarian work means that they have no choice but to engage with civilian agencies in Gaza which are under the control of Hamas. Indeed, it is impossible to enter Gaza without contact with Hamas agencies. ...

col 417 **Andrew Percy (Conservative):** ... Comments have been made today about the targeting of British nationals and the threat to Brits, and we saw with the murder of Eli Kay this weekend how attacks from Hamas are targeted indiscriminately not just at Israelis but Brits in the country. I myself have spent time in Israel in bomb shelters as rockets have rained over from Gaza; it is not a pleasant experience, but Israelis are at least to a great degree protected from that. ...

Stephen Hammond (Conservative): ... does my hon. Friend agree that, in essence, those who incite terror are as culpable as those who implement terror ...

col 418 **Andrew Percy:** ... My hon. Friend's comment is absolutely right. The crux is that this is an antisemitic, despotic terrorist dictatorship, effectively, in Gaza, guilty of war crimes, targeting civilians and hiding behind its own civilians. ...

Hilary Benn (Labour): I support this measure for the reason set out by the shadow Home Secretary ... namely, that there is no doubt that the political wing of Hamas supports its military operations. As we have heard, these operations include attacks on Israeli civilians that are completely unacceptable. ...

col 419 We know that ... NHS volunteers from all over the country have gone repeatedly to Gaza to advise very capable Palestinian surgeons—I have visited the main hospital in Gaza—on the management of the most complex injuries that arise from bombs, bullets and blasts. There is now more capacity than previously existed, precisely because of that work. The question that I want to put to the Minister is: will NHS staff be able to carry on doing that work without fear of prosecution? It has been pointed out that they have to talk to the authorities there in order to be able to do that work. ...

Secondly, what about peacebuilding organisations such as Forward Thinking? Over the years, as the Minister may be aware, Forward Thinking has brought leaders of the parties to the conflict, from Israel and from the Palestinian side, to Britain and Northern Ireland to meet former foes who talk them through the journey they made that led from armed conflict to the Good Friday agreement. That has included leaders from Hamas. I have seen the work of Forward Thinking at first hand, and I have participated in some of it. It is deeply impressive and, in my view, very important.

The Home Office document, "Proscribed terrorist groups or organisations", published in 2015, sets out the offence and draws attention to section 12(4), which "provides a defence, in the case of a private meeting addressed by a member of a proscribed organisation, if a person can prove that they had no reasonable cause to believe that the address would support the proscribed organisation or advance its terrorist activities.

col 420 Further, the explanatory notes to the Terrorism Act 2000” ... “explain that the defence in section 12(4) is intended to permit the arrangement of ‘genuinely benign’ meetings...designed to encourage a designated group to engage in a peace process or facilitate delivery of humanitarian aid where this does not involve knowingly transferring assets to a designated organisation.” ...

Will the Crown Prosecution Service now produce guidelines on the implications of this kind of order for the activities to which I have drawn attention? ...

Sarah Olney (Liberal Democrat): ... The Government should undoubtedly be doing all they possibly can to combat terrorism and stamp out antisemitism wherever they find it. Within Gaza, Hamas’s persecution of and discrimination against marginalised groups—including Jews, the LGBT+ community and women—civil society organisations and democratic opposition is abhorrent, and it is certainly true that Hamas’s attitude to the conflict in Israel and Palestine, including its entrenched and extremist rhetoric, its antisemitic incitement and its refusal to recognise the state of Israel, is a significant barrier to peace. ...

col 421 The military wing of Hamas is currently proscribed by the Government and has been for nearly 20 years, and rightly so. However, we have some concerns about the legislation before us today. Under the Counter-Terrorism and Border Security Act 2019, jurisdiction for offences relating to proscribed organisations was extended on an extra-territorial basis. Offences such as these carry a maximum sentence of 14 years in prison. We are seriously concerned that someone who meets the political wing of Hamas for the purposes of advancing peace, in the UK or even in a country where the political wing of Hamas is not proscribed, such as Palestine, could still be prosecuted for it in the UK. We must not risk criminalising those who work towards peace building and dialogue. There is a concern among UK charities who play an important role in working towards peace that this measure may impact them. ...

We also have concerns regarding the delivery of aid to Gaza; again, it is vital that this step does not obstruct or criminalise charities that are trying to improve the situation on the ground in Gaza. ...

col 422 **Jim Shannon (DUP):** ... Hamas glorifies atrocities and the murder of innocents—women, children and civilians. Those in Hamas deserve no mercy for what they have been doing over the years. This order will rightly categorise Hamas as a terrorist organisation, without caveat. It will force the media to properly record its designation as a terror organisation when it is referenced. ...

Will the Minister confirm to the House whether the proscription in this order will automatically cover Hamas’s offshoot organisations—many suppression of terrorism orders come forward and another organisation always comes forward—or will we need to follow this process each time there is a name change and so on? ...

Damian Hinds: The Home Secretary and I strongly believe that the proscription of Hamas IDQ should be extended to cover the entire organisation. Subject to the agreement of this House and the other place, the order will come into force on Friday 26 November. ...

col 423 The shadow Home Secretary and others asked implicitly—in fact, the hon. Member for Stirling (Alyn Smith), who spoke for the SNP, asked explicitly—why now? It is because we keep the response to terrorism under continual review. It is entirely appropriate that we take all available opportunities to strengthen the UK’s response to domestic and international threats. The extension of the proscription of Hamas is part of that response. As I have said, the group in its entirety is assessed to be concerned with terrorism, with the lines that the Government had previously drawn between its constituent parts now being assessed as artificial. ...

col 424 A number of colleagues ... spoke about the position of NGOs ... Implicitly, the question is, would this stop the work of UK NGOs or others in location? ... The Government recently published guidance to support our NGOs to operate overseas in high-risk

jurisdictions while complying with the counter-terrorism legislative framework and sanctions regime. A specific section refers to proscription, including how to operate around what are known as sections 11 to 13 offences. ...

Crispin Blunt: ... If those of us who want to continue to engage with people whom we know are members of Hamas and who are in leadership positions—in order to try to draw them into peace negotiations, the unification of the Palestinian position and all the other things that we should be trying to do as parliamentarians engaged in that process—have made it clear that we have no support for Hamas as a movement, will we be at risk of prosecution?

Damian Hinds: I think my hon. Friend will appreciate that I am not in a position, standing at the Dispatch Box, to give guarantees about unspecified activities in which he or others may or may not be involved in the future. This is an order specifically to proscribe this organisation in its entirety. The legislation is clear about the activities that that covers, including support for the organisation, and particular ways of using emblems and so on in support of it, or in ways that would reasonably be considered to be in support of it, and I direct him to that guidance. ...

Finally, a number of colleagues raised the overall position of the middle east peace process. The UK's long-standing position on that 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 the 1967 borders, with agreed land swaps, Jerusalem as the shared capital of both states, and on a just, fair, agreed and realistic settlement for refugees. Proscription is not targeted at any particular faith, social grouping or ideological motivation. It is based on clear evidence that an organisation is concerned with terrorism as assessed by the Joint Terrorism Analysis Centre.

col 425 We are clear that, based on the available evidence, it is appropriate for the Home Secretary to exercise her discretion to proscribe Hamas in its entirety. It is our duty to support the order to protect the public from the noxious ideologies that Hamas holds. ...

Question put and agreed to.

Resolved,

That the draft Terrorism Act 2000 (Proscribed Organisations) (Amendment) (No. 3) Order 2021, which was laid before this House on 19 November, be approved.

To read the full transcript see

<https://hansard.parliament.uk/commons/2021-11-24/debates/575EBB10-93BA-4D8C-8806-7504B5200AF2/PreventionAndSuppressionOfTerrorism>

The guidance for NGOs, referred to above, can be read at

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/operating-within-counter-terrorism-legislation/for-information-note-operating-within-counter-terrorism-legislation>

Westminster Hall Debate

Islamophobia Awareness Month

col 108WH Afzal Khan (Labour): ... When I go home and look at my grandchildren, I see limitless potential that deserves to flourish and thrive, yet I find it heartbreaking that they must grow up in a world where racism is still present—they will be subject to racism purely because of their faith—and that I, as their grandfather, must stand up to talk about the rampant Islamophobia in our midst. ...

col 109WH For 2.7 million Muslims, Islamophobia has distressing and real-life implications. A recent example is the far right peddling the narrative during the pandemic that British Muslims were super-spreaders of covid simply by practising their faith. As a result, Muslim communities suffered a shocking 40% increase in online Islamophobia during this period, according to Tell MAMA. ...

The Government's own figures reveal, once again, that Muslims have been victim to the highest proportion of all hate crimes committed this past year. ... Time and again, we see the conflation of Islam and terrorism, which is wrong and perpetuates a harmful stereotype of Muslims. ...

col 110WH Last week, Azeem Rafiq's powerful and moving testimony about his experience in cricket shone a light on how easily racism and Islamophobia can go unchecked and be simply dismissed as "banter". A series of attacks on mosques, including in Manchester and east London, demand serious action by the Government. Most recently, a man was convicted of terrorism offences after planning an attack on a mosque in Scotland. Will the Minister outline what steps are being taken to better safeguard places of worship? ...

A coalition of more than 450 Muslim organisations has boycotted the Government's review of Prevent in protest at the appointment of William Shawcross as its chair. Shawcross has openly expressed a hostile view of Islam and Muslims, including suggesting that—I quote—"Islamic fascism" was the biggest problem facing our society. ...

Will [the Minister] outline why the Government appointed someone with Islamophobic views? Will she respond to the overwhelming discontent over Shawcross's appointment? Will she explain why the Government refuses to engage with the MCB, the largest Muslim organisation in the UK? Who sits on the Government's anti-Muslim hatred working group, and has she ever met the group? ...

The APPG on British Muslims has worked tirelessly to create the definition of Islamophobia, which has the confidence of more than 800 organisations and has been adopted by Labour, the Liberal Democrats, Plaid Cymru, the SNP, the Green party and even the Scottish Conservatives, as well as the Mayors of London and Greater Manchester and hundreds of councils across the country. ...

Defining and naming a problem is the first step in rooting it out, but it seems that the Government cannot even bring themselves to use the term Islamophobia. ...

col 111WH We all remember the Prime Minister's shocking comment about Muslim women and letterboxes, but what is less well known is the fact that his comment directly resulted in a 375% rise in hate crime against Muslims. ... During last year's Islamophobia Awareness Month, I wrote to the Prime Minister to urge him to take action and to meet with me and key Muslim organisations. More than a year later, I am still waiting for a reply. ...

col 112WH **James Daly (Conservative):** ... The hon. Member for Manchester, Gorton knows two people who work for me; one is certainly my best friend. I am a Conservative Back-Bench MP who does not see a difference in human beings because of their religion, faith or anything. I see the decency in people and that is what motivates me in politics. It is what motivates Shahbaz and Khalid. ...

Afzal Khan: ... The issue is not that the hon. Gentleman has two employees who are Muslim or that he has friends who are Muslim; the issue is that we have a Government who are failing to tackle this problem ...

col 113WH **Bell Ribeiro-Addy (Labour):** ... for those who experience Islamophobic abuse, there is a feeling that the abuse they receive is not taken seriously. Islamophobia is relegated to the very bottom, despite British Muslims being on the sharp end of some of the worst racism. And it is no surprise that there is a growing sentiment of anti-Muslim hate, because the current party of Government have such a disgraceful track record on Islamophobia ...

col 114WH ... the Prevent strategy has contributed to the continuing prevalence of Islamophobia. That policy has embedded infrastructure of surveillance in Muslim communities, has increased police stop-and-search powers and has been inherently Islamophobic in its theoretical underpinnings. ...

... 45% of religious hate crimes recorded by the police in 2020-21 were Islamophobic. That is an estimated 42,000 incidents of religiously motivated hate crime per year, which is approximately six times the number of recorded offences. ...

col 116WH **Rosena Allin-Khan (Labour):** ... Like many other speakers today, I have my scars. From being attacked by a racist gang in the park with dogs, as me and my brother ran away, having our clothes ripped from us, scared; to the audible gasps of, "Why the hell would you choose to be a Muslim?", my experiences are as real as they are painful. ... I have, sadly, experienced overt racism and bigotry; unfortunately, I have also been where people speak in perceived safety, not realising that I am a Muslim.

When I was studying medicine at Cambridge, a senior surgeon spoke openly about terrorism and Islam. When I asked him kindly to stop, he was shocked. When I stated that I was a Muslim, he asked where I was from and proceeded to tell me that half my family were eastern European cleaners and the other half were terrorists, and that I should go and tell my family to stop killing people.

A taxi driver once told me, 20 minutes into a cab journey, that he would never in his life allow a Muslim into his taxicab. He told me that Muslims were taking over the world, that he had absolutely no desire to meet one, and that he would not allow his daughter to go and study at a university where someone wore a hijab. I told him to stop the car, that he had met a Muslim and that I would continue my journey on foot.

My mum, who is not a Muslim but married one and had two children who chose to be Muslim, is Polish and has blonde hair and green eyes. She has been spat at in the street, called dirty for walking with her children and, while we were growing up, had people shouting at her on the tube, telling her she had married a dirty—I will not name the name ...

col 117WH **Anthony Higginbotham (Conservative):** ... It is very sad that in recent years we have seen an increase in Islamophobia and antisemitism. ...

Islamophobia is a scourge on society, and I hope that what we do in this place and the words that we use help people realise that we can find a better way of discussing things and finding solutions. ...

col 119WH **Steve Baker (Conservative):** ... I want to say to those Islamophobic trolls that it is categorically wrong to condemn innocent people collectively for the crimes of others, because sometimes that is what is done overwhelmingly. I am Christian and, with humility, recognise that over the course of 2,000 years, terrible things have been done in the name of Christianity. People have been tortured to death, murdered and persecuted, even today. We know from the campaign around LGBT conversion therapy that Christians still persecute others. That does not mean that I am responsible for it, and I would not accept anyone else holding me responsible for it. It would be wrong and unjust of them to do so. All I am asking for is that British Muslims enjoy the same treatment: that they be judged on the content of their own character and behaviour. I am very proud of the contribution that British Muslims make to our society.

I turn briefly to the APPG's definition of Islamophobia. I understand that the Government object to the use of the word "racism" because racism refers to race, not religion, and there therefore might be a conflict with the Equality Act 2010. I can understand that. The meaning of words does matter, and it is important that we get the definition right, but I say to my hon. Friend the Minister that we have a real problem with Islamophobia or anti-Muslim hatred—whatever term we want to use—and we need to do something about it. ...

col 120WH **Ruth Jones (Labour):** ... Islamophobia is not just verbal or physical abuse; it is structural. In many ways, it is entrenched in our society ...

It is completely unacceptable that abuse takes place on social media and that it is often elected representatives who engage in it. ...

Jamie Stone (Liberal Democrat): ... It is ironic that when we consider the word "Islamophobia", we think about the word "Islam". "Islam" means "peace". ...

As a student, I was fishing about for a subject to make up my degree, and one of the subjects I chose, by great good fortune, was the history of Islam and Islamic culture. That was one of the best things that I ever did, because I learned everything about the life of the Prophet.

col 121WH I learned about the Hegira in 622. I learned about the Umayyads, the Abbasids, the hadith literature ... In doing so, we met Muslims. They came to lectures. We worked with them. We ate with them and learned about food. It is a very simple thing, but when you know somebody and you like them, it is hard to hate them. ... I think that we can build into education in the future a greater understanding of Islam, Judaism and other religions, which will make for a more tolerant society. ...

Anum Qaisar (SNP): ... if you want to tackle Islamophobia, you need to listen to the lived experiences of Muslims. Our contributions and lived experiences will help you to shape policy to tackle Islamophobia. I know what it feels like. I was nine years old when I was asked if my dad was a terrorist the day after 9/11. Only a couple of months after that, our mosque was burned to the ground in a suspected Islamophobic attack. ...

When people say, "I don't see race. I don't see religion," they might not, but I do, because there are other people out there who ensure that I know how it feels that I am a little bit different from the rest of you. ...

col 122WH The Scottish Government recently passed legislation that expanded the definition of hate speech and makes it easier to hold to account those who express prejudice in a threatening or abusive way. That is a step in the right direction ...

Gareth Thomas (Labour Co-op): ... Almost 50% of all recorded religious hate crimes are targeted against Muslims. Survey after survey shows Muslim adults held back from even getting interviews, never mind full-time work, and we know from the evidence that the MCB published that it costs more to live if someone is a Muslim. They pay more to insure their car, for example, and those with an apparently obvious Muslim name who seek a flat get fewer replies. ...

Muslims in Harrow walk the same streets as I do and shop in the same supermarkets. Their children play in the same playgrounds and they use the same public services as I do, so why should they not have the same opportunities as I and those who look like me do? ...

col 124WH **Rachel Hopkins (Labour):** ... British Muslims are victims of the highest proportion of religiously motivated hate crimes. The Home Office hate crime statistics for 2020-21 show that 45% of religious hate crimes recorded by the police in England and Wales were against Muslims, with 22% of crimes targeted at Jewish victims and 9% at Christians, while 16% of offences were unknown. ...

col 125WH **Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi (Labour):** ... As the Muslim Council of Britain noted, 70% of Muslims have experienced religious-based prejudice in the past 12 months and just under half of all religious hate crimes recorded by police in 2020-21 were Islamophobic. I also highlight that abuse can happen to Muslims or even those perceived as looking like Muslims, such as turbaned Sikhs like myself. ...

Apsana Begum (Labour): Every single day, people of Muslim backgrounds like me face discrimination and prejudice. I am never allowed to forget that my presence in Parliament, as the first MP to wear a hijab, makes many uncomfortable, from the regular mispronunciation of my name to being mistaken for other hijab-wearing women who work in Parliament, to being asked, even, if I am related to Shamima Begum.

col 125WH Too often, we are cynically used as a focal point for people's anxieties, as scapegoats for the failings of the political and economic system. It should therefore be no surprise to anyone that I constantly have to cope with a vicious torrent of abuse. ...

All too often, Muslims live with a constant, persistent fear overshadowing our lives, especially given that the latest data shows that Muslims are the largest target of religiously motivated hate crimes. The rise of the far right, in particular, is a very present danger. I just want to pick up on the fact that Government Members have been talking about taking politics out of this. I wonder what they would say to what the UN special rapporteur on freedom of religion or belief reported—that institutional suspicion and fear of Muslims has escalated to "epidemic proportions" and that "numerous" states, regional and international bodies were to blame. ...

col 127WH Kirsten Oswald (SNP): ... Tackling Islamophobia absolutely requires us to listen to the lived experience of those who are affected. It is absolutely not on for those voices to be minimised in any way. ...

There are other people whose powerful work in this area is making a difference. We heard about Tell MAMA, which supports real change and works closely with the Community Security Trust. Joint working between Muslim and Jewish bodies is really important. It is a shame that such work is needed, but it is assuredly needed. From what some people might describe as low-level discrimination or harassment—presumably, those people have never experienced it themselves—to very serious crimes, the way that Islamophobia touches lives is broad and ever evolving. ...

It is also worth reflecting on the work that other groups are doing, including groups led by young people. In my local area, Kirsty Robson is a co-founder of Yet Again, a group of young people who work to prevent genocides such as that faced by the Uyghur Muslim population in China. There is the work of Never Again Right Now, another youth-led movement, spearheaded by the European Union of Jewish Students, including my colleague, Olaf Stando. It is international in membership, and calls out the treatment of those who suffer human rights abuses because of their religion. ...

I mention those groups in particular because solidarity is important. Tackling Islamophobia is not something that only Muslims should have to deal with and it is not something that is the responsibility of Muslims. We need to be open, all of us, to the fact that it is an issue everywhere. ...

col 128WH We need to define Islamophobia; we need to be clear what we are talking about and what is unacceptable, and we cannot do that if we do not define it. We need to be confident in our language. ...

col 129WH Naz Shah (Labour): ... In the UK, Islamophobic hate crimes against Muslims and their places of worship have sadly become far too common. The latest data for 2020-21 show that 45% of all religious hate crimes recorded by police in England and Wales were against Muslims, although a large number of cases are simply not reported to the police. Data from the crime survey of England and Wales suggests the actual number is approximately six times the number of recorded offences. According to the same data, Muslims were the most likely to be victims of religiously motivated hate crimes in 2017-18 and 2019-20.

That is not Muslims complaining about Islamophobia. That is the police collecting data on Muslims being attacked. One would think, when Muslims are the most likely to be the victims of religiously motivated hate crimes, that Islamophobia would be a top Government priority but, tragically, it is not. Islamophobia does not manifest itself only in hate crime. Islamophobia is not always a visible attack on mosques or Muslims. Someone does not have to vigorously hate another person to discriminate against them. Discrimination comes in many forms, including conscious and unconscious bias. ...

Many Muslims face similar barriers daily. A sizeable percentage of British Muslim women do not wear the headscarf, not because they do not want to but because they fear that, by wearing one, they may be attacked, or due to prejudice, will have lower chances of succeeding and reaching the top. They, too, feel that they have to fit in to avoid abuse, discrimination or their chances being limited. Their fear is not misplaced. A 2016 Women and Equalities Committee report found that Muslim women face a triple penalty. Some of the vilest vitriol I have received online is coupled with a picture of me wearing the headscarf while being at a place of worship.

As Muslim women, we often recall praise such as, “I am impressed to see how empowered you are as a Muslim woman”—as if being a Muslim was a barrier to empowerment and we even beat it through our archaic faith to become a symbol of success. Although this is often done unknowingly, it is done through people accepting a trope about Islam being a faith that is deeply misogynistic. ...

col 130WH When such perpetuated tropes and false conspiracies about Muslims are

allowed to develop, it enables an environment where people are otherised and demonised. ... Islamophobes and those who consciously or unconsciously discriminate against Muslims often use anything and everything that links to a person's Muslimness as a factor for their negativity, be that religious practices, ways of dressing or customs, or even sometimes something that is not part of Islam, but is perceived as Muslim, such as a Sikh man wearing a turban. The reality is that Islamophobia is rampant across society, and purely basing Islamophobia on hate crimes like this Government wish to do deprives us of the ability to tackle the full extent of Islamophobia. ...

col 131WH The Government's record on a definition of Islamophobia is horrific. The Government refused the Muslim community a definition of Islamophobia, they then refused to accept a cross-party definition, and now two and a half years after promising a definition, they have failed to produce one. ...

The Minister for Equalities (Kemi Badenoch): ... We are not going to have a semantic argument, but there are good reasons why we refer to anti-Muslim hatred. It is partly to do with the APPG finding that the definition is not in accordance with the Equality Act 2010. ... We must not allow those who seek to divide our diverse and multi-faith society to succeed. We are united here today in our determination to protect people and end discrimination. ...
col 132WH No one in our society should be discriminated against because of their religion. ...

We have a large and thriving Muslim population who have made contributions to our country and society. The country's first two mosques were founded in 1887, and now there are almost 2,000 mosques serving a Muslim population of more than 3 million. Wherever we look, we see Muslims enriching our public life, including as politicians in the Cabinet, as doctors and nurses keeping our NHS going, and as sporting heroes dominating on the world stage. Their prominence is testament to our openness as a country, and proof of something that has long been true: when someone lives in Britain they can become anything they want, whether that is Health Secretary, Education Secretary or growing up to win gold medals representing Team GB. ...

col 133WH We all share the view that hatred of Muslims is a vile social ill. We have no time for people who seek to divide us. As I said before, we will not tolerate anti-Muslim hatred any more than we tolerate antisemitism or any other form of hatred, but the reality is that, despite this and our continued condemnation, stubborn pockets of prejudice exist. ...

col 134WH It is shameful that Muslims can still face verbal or physical attacks and are made to feel like outsiders in their own country. ...

Debates such as this are symbolically important to show our shared commitment, but symbolism does not improve lives on its own. The Government have done a lot and we have some of the strongest legislation in the world for tackling hate crime, and it is working. ...

Our approach to discrimination is something that we should be proud of. In July, the European Court of Justice gave the green light to employers in the European Union to ban their workers from wearing hijabs or other religious insignia. We have taken control of our laws and are no longer subject to the ECJ's jurisdiction. I am sure that all hon. Members will agree that that kind of prohibition is thoroughly un-British. ...

To read the full transcript see

<https://hansard.parliament.uk/commons/2021-11-24/debates/DD26BF90-337B-4E89-8FC7-8D913BDE59CB/IslamophobiaAwarenessMonth>

House of Commons Oral Answers

Diversity and Freedom of Belief: Public Institutions

Gareth Bacon (Conservative): What recent discussions [the Minister] has had with Cabinet colleagues on diversity and freedom of belief in public institutions. (904382)

The Minister for Equalities (Kemi Badenoch): I regularly discuss these important issues with other Ministers, as does the Minister for Women and Equalities. Freedom of belief and speech are vital pillars of our democratic society, and no one should be silenced for expressing their legitimately held opinions. Freedom of speech in universities is already protected by law, but there is no effective enforcement mechanism. The Government are therefore taking steps, in line with our manifesto, to strengthen academic freedom and free speech in universities in England.

Gareth Bacon: My hon. Friend may be aware that John Cleese recently felt that he needed to pull out of speaking to the Cambridge Union following the revelation that it had blacklisted certain people from speaking. Although the union's president has now rowed back on the claim that a list of banned speakers exists, will my hon. Friend outline what the Government are doing to promote freedom of speech and belief in our universities to make sure that students are exposed to a range of views even though they may themselves disagree with them?

Kemi Badenoch: I completely agree with my hon. Friend. Indeed, John Cleese was quite right to highlight this issue. However, it should not be up to comedians to educate students on core values such as freedom of speech and freedom of belief; the universities themselves should do that. Those that seek to bully, harass and intimidate others because of their views risk undermining our precious freedoms. Such behaviour should not and will not be tolerated on university campuses. That is why we have introduced the Higher Education (Freedom of Speech) Bill to strengthen freedom of speech and academic freedom in universities and ensure that individuals can seek redress. ...

<https://hansard.parliament.uk/commons/2021-11-24/debates/17C36807-D312-4A57-A260-F60753520E4F/DiversityAndFreedomOfBeliefPublicInstitutions>

Islamophobia

Jamie Stone (Liberal Democrat): What steps [the Minister] plans to take with the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport to tackle Islamophobia in sport. (904384)

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and sport (Nigel Huddleston): I am sure the whole House has been appalled by recent reports of racism in cricket, a sad reminder that racial discrimination still exists within sport. There can be no place for it. Sports bodies must take robust action to tackle this behaviour. The Government and our sports councils are committed to ensuring that sport is inclusive for everyone, and will be watching; where action does not go far enough, the Government are prepared to step in.

Jamie Stone: It seems to me that we have an opportunity here to tackle hate crimes by raising them to the status of aggravated offences. Clearly, training and resources would have to follow that decision, but, while we can all say the right things and be quite correct in what we say about absolutely opposing Islamophobia and antisemitism, unless we do something concrete, we may have this problem for a lot longer than we think.

Nigel Huddleston: I agree with the hon. Gentleman. He is right: we must ensure that laws are constantly updated and reviewed. That goes for the offline world, but also the online one; I am sure he will be aware of the work we are doing, with cross-party support, on online safety to tackle the important issues he raises.

<https://hansard.parliament.uk/commons/2021-11-24/debates/CA7B2B04-77E1-49F3-9EFD-297CE1911541/Islamophobia>

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Israel

See also the Commons debate “Prevention and Suppression of Terrorism” included in the Home Affairs section above.

House of Commons Written Answer

Air Force: Military Exercises

Kevan Jones (Labour) [78267] To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many exercises the RAF have completed over the past three years; and what information his Department holds on where those exercises took place.

James Heapey: The RAF have completed 31 exercises, defined as collective training with Joint and Multinational elements, since November 2018. These exercises took place in France, Hungary, Italy, Israel, Japan, Malaysia, Qatar, Oman, Singapore, United Arab Emirates, United Kingdom and United States of America.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2021-11-19/78367>

Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office

James Cleverly The UK and @UKinIsrael supporting #Maktoub, the 1st exhibition of Emirati & Israeli artists. The #AbrahamAccords are bringing people and cultures together and I am proud that we are playing our part.

<https://twitter.com/JamesCleverly/status/1463859327354220547>

United Nations

Continued Palestinian Rights Violations, Israeli Settlement-Expansion Threatening Prospects for Two-State Solution, Secretary-General Warns in Observance Message

... On this International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People, the situation in the Occupied Palestinian Territory — including East Jerusalem — continues to pose a significant challenge to international peace and security. Persistent violations of the rights of Palestinians along with the expansion of settlements risk eroding the prospect of a two-State solution.

As the international community strives to re-start Israeli–Palestinian dialogue, I am encouraged by recent engagements between senior Israeli and Palestinian officials. However, containing the situation is not sufficient. The overall goal remains two States living side by side in peace and security, fulfilling the legitimate national aspirations of both peoples, with borders based on the 1967 lines and Jerusalem as the capital of both States.

I call on the parties to avoid unilateral steps that would undermine the chances for a peaceful resolution of the conflict based on international law and relevant United Nations resolutions. I further call on the parties to engage constructively to end the closure of Gaza and improve the living conditions of all Palestinians under occupation.

I commend the generous donors who support the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) and call for Member States to provide timely and predictable funding to allow the Agency to conduct its vital work.

Together, let us reaffirm our unwavering commitment to the Palestinian people in their quest to achieve their inalienable rights and build a future of peace, justice, security and dignity for both Palestinians and Israelis.

<https://www.un.org/press/en/2021/sqsm21035.doc.htm>

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/>

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>

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