



Political Affairs Digest

A daily summary of political events affecting the Jewish Community

Contents

Home Affairs

Israel

Relevant Legislation

Consultations

Back issues

Home Affairs

House of Commons Written Answers

Universities: Antisemitism

Peter Gibson (Conservative) [93902] To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps his Department is taking to tackle rising levels of antisemitism on university campuses.

Michelle Donelan: The government is clear that antisemitism is abhorrent and we expect higher education (HE) providers to be at the forefront of tackling the challenge of it.

We have pushed for several years for greater action from HE providers to address antisemitism. We have encouraged HE providers to adopt the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA) definition of antisemitism to give clarity of what constitutes antisemitic behaviour. This will enable providers to better understand and recognise incidences of antisemitism and take action to address them.

In October 2020, the former Secretary of State for Education, my right hon. Friend for South Staffordshire, wrote to all HE providers urging adoption of the IHRA definition, stating that we would consider further action if HE providers did not adopt. The former Secretary of State for Education also sent a follow-up letter in May 2021, reinforcing the government's expectation that providers adopt the IHRA definition, stressing the even greater importance of doing so considering increased numbers of antisemitic incidents recorded as a result of the conflict in the Middle East.

In response to this, on 10 November 2021, the Office for Students published a list of HE providers who have adopted the definition. I am pleased to report good progress in the last year: an increase from around 30 to over 200 providers having adopted. This includes the vast majority of universities. I will continue to urge all HE providers to adopt the IHRA definition of antisemitism

Adoption of the IHRA definition is only a first step towards ridding HE of antisemitism. While the government considers that adoption of the definition is crucial, it is not enough on its own. As my right hon. Friend, the Secretary of State

for Education, has previously announced publicly, we are leading a summit later this month specifically focused on tackling antisemitism in HE. This event will include key stakeholders from the sector to examine what more can be done to make Jewish students and staff feel safe on campus.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2021-12-15/93902>

The Secretary of State's first letter referred to above can be read at

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

He wrote a follow-up letter in February (not May) 2021 which can be read at

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

An updated version of the list of providers who have adopted the definition, referred to above, can be read at

<https://www.officeforstudents.org.uk/media/cddac91e-e9a5-49ff-8197-8a5a76c31cde/providers-who-have-adopted-the-ihra-working-definition-of-antisemitism.pdf>

The announcement referred to above can be read at

<https://www.thejc.com/news/uk/exclusive-minister-orders-summit-to-stamp-out-hate-on-campus-1.522611>

Out-of-school Education: Discrimination

Kim Leadbeater (Labour) [93927] To ask the Secretary of State for Education, if he plans to take steps to prevent children who receive all their education in (a) unregistered and (b) unregulated religious schools from being exposed to homophobia, sexism and extremism.

Robin Walker: It is a criminal offence under section 96 of the Education and Skills Act 2008 to conduct an independent educational institution unless it is registered. The Department for Education and Ofsted continue to investigate any settings where intelligence or evidence suggest the operation of an unregistered school. Section 97 of the Education and Skills Act 2008 permits no-notice inspections of settings believed to be operating in breach of the registration requirement.

All unregistered schools present a safeguarding risk to the children attending since they are not regulated by the department. This means that these schools are not subject to inspection and so assurances cannot be made as to the quality and appropriateness of the education provided, the safety of the premises or the suitability of the adults responsible for the setting. The department will take regulatory action against any school found to be operating without registration, in breach of section 96 of the 2008 Act. This action can include the prosecution of those conducting and responsible for such settings.

Between 1 January 2016 and 31 August 2021, 114 settings inspected under section 97 were identified as operating as an unregistered independent school. Joint work between the Department for Education and Ofsted has led to 101 of these settings changing their provision to no longer operate unlawfully, in breach of the 2008 Act. In that time, 5 successful prosecutions have been brought against groups responsible for operating illegal settings.

The department has committed to taking forward measures to make it easier to investigate and prosecute unregistered schools, and these will be introduced when a suitable legislative opportunity arises.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2021-12-15/93927>

Israel: Education

Theresa Villiers (Conservative) [96809] To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what recent discussions he has had with Cabinet colleagues on the teaching and learning about Israel in UK schools.

Robin Walker: Schools can teach pupils about Israel as part of a broad and

balanced curriculum, including in history and geography. For example, at key stage 3, history encompasses the study of Britain, Europe and the wider world from 1901 to the present day, and must include the Holocaust. At key stage 4, there are GCSE specifications that include Israel, in the context of the study of the Middle East. However, we do not specify how schools should teach the curriculum and we trust teachers to use their professional judgement and understanding of their pupils to develop the right teaching approach for them.

We are aware of unfortunate issues around bias and imbalance in teaching about Israel and the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. On 28 May 2021, my colleague and the former Secretary of State for Education, wrote to all schools to reiterate that they are subject to legal duties on political impartiality which are relevant to teaching about the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. This intervention was a clear message that this government is committed to upholding the principle of political impartiality in our schools and will act where necessary to do so. The department is also developing further guidance on political impartiality in schools, and we continue to work with the sector and others across government to ensure schools are adequately supported in this area. We hope this guidance will offer clarity to the sector and support teachers to cover sensitive political issues and topics in an appropriate manner.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2022-01-04/96809>

The letter referred to above can be read at

<https://twitter.com/GavinWilliamson/status/1398374786871537664>

Hamas

Hilary Benn (Labour) [96781] To ask the Attorney General, whether the CPS plans to issue guidance on the impact of the Prevention of Terrorism Act 2000's provisions on holding a meeting in support of a proscribed organisation on organisations or individuals who hold meetings with members or supporters of Hamas to encourage them to turn away from violence and join peace talks.

Alex Chalk: The CPS recognises the vital work undertaken by civil society to provide humanitarian relief and to promote peacebuilding efforts overseas and that this can take place within a backdrop of instability and fluid governance arrangements, including heavily sanctioned countries or in countries/regions where proscribed terrorist groups are active.

While there are no plans to issue guidance covering these specific circumstances, the CPS intends to publish general prosecutorial guidance in 2022 on the interaction between counter terrorism legislation and the work of aid agencies operating overseas that provide humanitarian relief or promote peacebuilding efforts. A draft of the guidance has been prepared and the CPS is currently engaging in wider consultation with HMG colleagues prior to publication.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2022-01-04/96781>

Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities and Cabinet Office

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

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

Coronavirus (COVID-19): Updated guidance for funerals and commemorative events during the coronavirus pandemic

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-guidance-for-managing-a-funeral-during-the-coronavirus-pandemic/covid-19-guidance-for-managing-a-funeral-during-the-coronavirus-pandemic>

TOP

Israel

See also Commons written answers 96809 “Israel: Education”, and 96781 “Hamas”, which are included in the Home Affairs Section above.

House of Commons Written Answers

The following two questions both received the same answer

Palestinians: Non-governmental Organisations

Patrick Grady (SNP) [96939] To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what recent discussions she has had with her Israeli counterpart on Israel's classification of six Palestinian NGOs as terrorist organisations.

Patrick Grady (SNP) [96940] To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what assessment she has made of the decision by Israel officials to designate six Palestinian NGOs as terrorist organisations.

James Cleverly: The decision by the Israeli authorities to designate six Palestinian NGOs and the evidence which forms the basis of these designations is a matter for the Government of Israel. The UK maintains its own criteria for designation. We continue engagement with a number of these organisations on human rights issues and respect the role that NGOs and civil society organisations play in upholding human rights and democracy.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2022-01-04/96939>

and

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2022-01-04/96940>

Palestinians: Non-governmental Organisations

Patrick Grady (SNP) [96941] To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what assessment she has made of the effectiveness of work carried out by NGOs in Palestine.

James Cleverly: We have not attempted to assess the effectiveness of every NGO working in the Occupied Palestinian Territories. We are clear that human rights and civil society organisations have a vital role to play in both Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territories, including those focused on Israel's conduct in the Occupied Palestinian Territories.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2022-01-04/96941>

Palestinians: Schools

Theresa Villiers (Conservative) [96808] To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what recent discussions she has had with the UN Relief and Works Agency on the Palestinian Authority's school curriculum.

James Cleverly: We strongly condemn all forms of violence and incitement to violence. We accompany our support for the United Nations Relief and Works

Agency (UNRWA) with stringent attention to implementation of their neutrality policy, including how they apply this to textbooks and other learning material to ensure they reflect UN values. In Gaza and the West Bank, UNRWA uses the Palestinian Authority's (PA's) curriculum in their schools after rigorously reviewing that it is in line with UN values. Officials from the British Consulate General Jerusalem regularly discuss the curriculum with counterparts in UNRWA and the PA.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2022-01-04/96808>

TOP

Relevant Legislation ** new or updated today

UK Parliament

**** Animal Welfare (Sentience) Bill**

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

Animal Sentience Committee Terms of Reference

[http://data.parliament.uk/DepositedPapers/Files/DEP2022-0007/Animal Sentience Committee Draft Terms of Reference.pdf](http://data.parliament.uk/DepositedPapers/Files/DEP2022-0007/Animal_Sentience_Committee_Draft_Terms_of_Reference.pdf)

Assisted Dying Bill

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

**** Charities Bill**

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

Third Reading, House of Lords

[https://hansard.parliament.uk/lords/2022-01-10/debates/33D3D71B-3D04-40F1-A9ED-F1BB84D6778F/CharitiesBill\(HL\)](https://hansard.parliament.uk/lords/2022-01-10/debates/33D3D71B-3D04-40F1-A9ED-F1BB84D6778F/CharitiesBill(HL))

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

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

Outdoor marriages and civil partnerships (closing date 24 January 2022)

<https://consult.justice.gov.uk/digital-communications/outdoor-marriages-civil-partnerships/>

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

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

Human Rights Act Reform: A Modern Bill of Rights (closing date 8 March 2022)

<https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/human-rights-act-reform-a-modern-bill-of-rights>

TOP

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