



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

Meat: Ritual Slaughter

Matthew Offord (Conservative) [93746] To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, whether the Government is taking steps to protect the practice of shechita.

Jo Churchill: The Government is committed to supporting the rights of Jewish communities to eat meat slaughtered by the shechita method. This is secured in our legislation by the derogation from stunning that applies when animals are slaughtered in accordance with religious rites.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2021-12-15/93746>

Social Media: Hate Crime

Jim Shannon (DUP) [98299] To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what steps her Department plans to take to tackle hate speech on (a) Twitter and (b) other social media platforms to ensure that comments are removed in addition to users banned.

Chris Philp: Under the draft Online Safety Bill, services in scope will need to minimise and remove illegal content, including illegal hate speech. Services in scope which are likely to be accessed by children will also need to protect them from harmful or inappropriate content.

Major platforms will also need to address legal but harmful content for adults. These services will have to set out clearly what legal content is acceptable on their platforms and enforce their terms and conditions consistently and transparently. This could include removal of prohibited content, banning repeat offenders and preventing them from creating new accounts. Priority categories of legal but harmful content for adults will be set out in secondary legislation and these are likely to include some forms of abuse, including racist abuse.

If platforms fail in their duties under the Bill, they will face tough enforcement action including fines of up to 10% of global annual qualifying turnover.

The draft Bill has been subject to pre-legislative scrutiny by a Joint Committee which

reported its recommendations on 14 December. We are considering the Committee's report and will introduce the Bill as soon as possible.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2022-01-05/98299>

The Joint Committee report and recommendations referred to above can be read at <https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/jt5802/jtselect/jtonlinesafety/129/129.pdf>

House of Lords Oral Answers

DWP: Support for Larger Families

The Lord Bishop of Durham: To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the adequacy of support offered by the Department for Work and Pensions to larger families.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office and Department for Work and Pensions (Baroness Stedman-Scott): No assessment has been made as every household has different requirements. While there is no objective way of deciding what an adequate level of support should be, the department will spend more than £110 billion this year—4.8% of GDP—on working-age benefits. Additionally, the Government offer a wide range of support to families with children depending on their circumstances, including free school meals, childcare, Healthy Start vouchers and the household support fund.

The Lord Bishop of Durham: ... According to the benefit changes and large families research carried out by the Child Poverty Action Group with the Universities of York and Oxford and the LSE, the increase in child poverty since 2012-13 has been sharpest among families with three or more children at 47%, compared with 24% for families with one or two children. These families are deeply affected by the two-child limit. They have been severely affected by the £20 cut to universal credit last September and they are less able to increase their working hours due to childcare demands. What are the Government planning to do to address the levels of poverty among larger families while the cost of living is rising steeply?

Baroness Stedman-Scott: ... To start with, let me say that I quite understand, as do others, the issue of childcare. We must do what we can to try to improve opportunity and facility. The right reverend Prelate asked me what we plan to do. Let me say what we have done. We continue to take action to support living standards by increasing the national living wage and reducing the universal credit taper rate, which has more than compensated for the £20 uplift in UC. We also recognise that some people will need extra help this winter as the economy recovers, so we have made £500 million of funding available across the UK to help. Rather than read out a whole list of things that we have done, let me say that I am sure the Government are doing everything they can to help people in these circumstances.

Baroness Sherlock (Labour): My Lords, I am not so sure. The Government may not have made any assessment of the position of families, but let me give the Minister one assessment. The director of the IFS has said that the cost of living crisis we are facing right now could hit someone on average earnings harder than the financial crash of 2008. Taxes are rising, inflation is soaring and energy prices are going through the roof. Earnings and benefits simply cannot keep up. If the average worker is in trouble, what of larger families? The two-child limit caps what they get and they have already been hit by the £20 limit. They are in the position right now of having to decide whether to feed the meter or feed the kids. What are the Government going to do about that?

Baroness Stedman-Scott: On the two-child policy, families can claim for up to two children and there may be further entitlement for other children if they were born

before 6 April. There are also exceptions, but at the end of the day we are trying to make it possible for people who are working to make decisions about how many children they have over affordability. We have no intention of changing the Government's two-child policy.

Baroness Fookes (Conservative): My particular concern is with those vulnerable households who are unable to work at all and therefore cannot benefit from the welcome improved take-up. What is my noble friend doing to help that group?

Baroness Stedman-Scott: We recognise that some people may require extra support over the winter as we enter the final stages of recovery. That is why vulnerable households across the country will now be able to access the new £500 million support fund to help them with essentials. We have provided £670 million in 2021-22 for local authorities to support these people. We are investing over £200 million per year in holiday activities. We are increasing healthy-start vouchers. We are establishing a 60-day breathing period and, as I have said before, without reading out a long shopping list, I will say that we are doing a lot to help people. ...

Baroness McIntosh of Hudnall (Labour): The Minister made an uncharacteristically harsh observation in her response to my noble friend Lady Sherlock when she said that the Government had no intention of changing. She has had put to her a number of ways in which the world has changed since this policy was developed. Does she really think that it is appropriate for the Government to take such an intransigent view at this point?

Baroness Stedman-Scott: I am sorry if my response was harsh. That would never be my intention in this Chamber. However, I believe in being absolutely truthful and I am reporting that the Government at the moment will continue with the two-child policy. But, as ever, if people have other ideas and things they want to talk about, the door is open.

Lord Bird (Crossbench): My Lords, not supporting children in the early stages of their lives will cause a ricochet through the years. ...

Baroness Stedman-Scott: ... That is why early intervention is critical, and why we are working with the Early Intervention Foundation on reducing parental conflicts so that young children can have a better start in life, and the family hubs network is coming in. However, I understand the noble Lord's point and it is well made.

Lord Farmer (Conservative): My Lords, the benefit cap level appears the same whether a couple or a single parent heads a household, yet two adults cost more than one. While there are more opportunities to avoid the cap by working if there are two adults, given strong evidence for the health and societal benefits of stable two-parent family structures, what measures are in place to ensure that the benefit cap does not create a couple penalty and discriminate against couple families and children?

Baroness Stedman-Scott: My noble friend again makes a very good point. We understand that where children grow up with parents and healthy support, they do much better and they thrive. But the Government firmly believe that, where possible, it is in the best interests of children to be in working households, and the benefit cap provides a clear incentive to work. Household earnings of only £617 a month provide an exemption from the cap, and exemptions apply for the most vulnerable claimants who are receiving disability benefits or are entitled to carer benefits.

Baroness Bennett of Manor Castle (Green): Following on from the Minister's answer to the noble Lord, Lord Bird, in which she talked preventing problems, is she aware of the report in *Community Care* last week on research by academics from Huddersfield and Liverpool which found that, between 2015 and 2020, benefit cuts meant that 10,000 more children had been taken into care and an additional 22,000 children were placed on child protection plans? This disproportionately affected poorer boroughs. In light of levelling up and the desire for prevention, will the Minister look at this report, and are the Government counting the actual cost of these policies in terms of children in care?

Baroness Stedman-Scott: I will certainly look at the report if the noble Baroness will send it to me. We have a grave sense of concern about children going into care and child protection, and I can assure her that we are looking at early intervention. I am very happy to speak to the noble Baroness outside the Chamber.

<https://hansard.parliament.uk/lords/2022-01-11/debates/0AC00228-6BDF-4207-930A-F91C52B125F3/DWPSupportForLargerFamilies>

Information about the Child Poverty Action Group research referred to above can be read at <https://www.welfarereform-largerfamilies.org.uk/>

The “Community Care” research referred to above can be read at <https://tinyurl.com/2s42ydyp>

Home Office

Government response document, Protect Duty public consultation

<https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/protect-duty/outcome/government-response-document>

TOP

Israel

House of Commons Written Answers

Trade Agreements: Israel

Stephen Crabb (Conservative) [94307] To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, what recent discussions she has had with the government of Israel on a free trade agreement.

Penny Mordaunt: Officials and Ministers are in regular contact with their Israeli counterparts on our existing bilateral free trade agreement and ambitions for our future relationship. On Wednesday 24th November 2021, my Rt. Hon. Friend the Secretary of State for International Trade met the Israeli Ambassador and discussed ways in which we can enhance our existing trade relationship over time. The Government will open a Call for Input on an enhanced bilateral free trade agreement with Israel early this year.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2021-12-16/94307>

Overseas Trade: Israel

Stephen Crabb (Conservative) [94308] To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, what estimate she has made of the total value of bilateral trade with Israel in the last five years, and what steps she is taking to increase that value in the next five years.

Penny Mordaunt: Our bilateral trade relationship with Israel is already strong at almost £5 billion per year. Total trade between the UK and Israel has grown over the last five years from £3.5 billion in 2015 to £4.8 billion in 2020.

Officials and Ministers are in regular contact with their Israeli counterparts on our existing bilateral free trade agreement and ambitions for our future relationship. The Government will open a Call for Input on an enhanced bilateral free trade agreement with Israel early this year.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2021-12-16/94308>

Palestinians: British Council

Matthew Offord (Conservative) [93745] To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what support the UK Government provides to Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza through the British Council.

James Cleverly: The FCDO and British Council co-fund the 'Connecting Classrooms through Global Learning' programme which supports the UK's longstanding commitment to ensure quality education for children in the Occupied Palestinian Territories (OPTs). The UK is also committed to protecting heritage at risk and generating sustainable socio-economic prosperity through the British Council Cultural Protection Fund in the OPTs and across the broader Middle East North Africa region.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2021-12-15/93745>

Gaza: Humanitarian Aid

Andrew Bowie (Conservative) [94457] To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps her Department are taking to ensure that UK humanitarian aid in Gaza is not diverted to the Hamas terror group.

James Cleverly: The UK has a zero-tolerance approach to fraud and robust controls against the diversion of aid. We select our partners for the strong safeguards they have in place, which reduces risks and ensures the maximum impact of UK aid for Palestinians. In Gaza, we have strong controls in place to monitor spending, including enhanced due diligence assessments, annual audits, and field visits; all to ensure UK aid reaches its intended beneficiaries and achieves value for money for the UK taxpayer. The UK's funding agreements also commit partners to understand and comply with UK and international counter terrorism legislation.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2021-12-16/94457>

Israel: Iran

Damien Moore (Conservative) [94517] To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what assessment she has made of the implications for her policies of the Tehran Times publishing a map of Israel with potential strike targets.

James Cleverly: Our commitment to Israel's security is unwavering. Israel is an important strategic partner for the UK and we collaborate on issues of defence and security, which includes regular discussions with Israel on Iranian destabilising activity in the region.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2021-12-16/94517>

Iran: Terrorism

Craig Tracey (Conservative) [93817] To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what recent assessment her Department has made of the level of Iran's support for (a) Hezbollah, (b) Hamas and (c) Palestinian Islamic Jihad.

James Cleverly: The Government regularly assesses the impact of Iran's continued destabilising activity throughout the region, including its political, financial and military support to several militant and proscribed groups, including Hizballah, Hamas and Palestinian Islamic Jihad. Such activity compromises the region's security, its ability to prosper and escalates already high tensions, with consequences for the international community. It is for this reason that we currently have over 200 EU sanctions listings in place against Iran, including the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps in its entirety; have proscribed Hamas' military wing as a terrorist organisation; and support the enforcement of UN prohibitions on the

proliferation of weapons to non-state actors in the region, including to Lebanese Hizballah (UNSCR 1701).

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2021-12-15/93817>

UNSCR 1701, referred to above, can be read at

<http://unscr.com/en/resolutions/doc/1701>

Lebanon: Palestinians

Craig Tracey (Conservative) [94443] To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what discussions she has had with the Lebanese Government on reports that labour restrictions on Palestinian refugees are to be eased in that country.

James Cleverly: The UK welcomes the decision by the Lebanese Government to ease labour restrictions for Palestinian refugees. We acknowledge Lebanon's generosity in hosting refugees, which the UK will continue to support through our assistance for education and basic needs.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2021-12-16/94443>

TOP

Relevant Legislation ** new or updated today

UK Parliament

Animal Welfare (Sentience) Bill

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

Assisted Dying Bill

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

Charities Bill

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

Education (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

**** closes in 9 days**

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