



Political Affairs Digest

A daily summary of political events affecting the Jewish Community

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House of Commons Oral Answers

Topical Questions, Home Department

T9. Christian Wakeford (Conservative): Following the events that took place in Texas this weekend, will the Home Secretary provide an update on the UK investigation into the British perpetrator of the attack on the Congregation Beth Israel synagogue, and on the measures taken to ensure the security of the UK Jewish community, and can I further ask whether the perpetrator was known to the security services? (905063)

Priti Patel: I thank my hon. Friend for his question; this is a very important matter. Just prior to questions this afternoon, I had a bilateral call with my homeland security counterpart in the US. Let me say a few things. First, we are working with the FBI—in fact, we have been since the incident took place—and there is a great deal of intelligence sharing and work taking place. Of course, when it comes to our domestic homeland, a range of measures are being undertaken right now, including protective security for the Jewish community. The investigation is obviously live, so I am unable to talk about the specifics.

<https://hansard.parliament.uk/commons/2022-01-17/debates/FF62934B-0956-46F8-9FF2-A39929EBCC20/TopicalQuestions#contribution-2644BBE8-3D3E-4D08-99FB-5A810C4C0585>

Topical Questions, Home Department

Matthew Offord (Conservative): Further to the point made by my hon. Friend the Member for Bury South (Christian Wakeford), a month ago, Feras Al Jayoosi was convicted on four counts under the Terrorism Act 2000, including twice walking around Golders Green with a large rucksack on his back and a Palestinian Islamic Jihad t-shirt on. Three days ago, Tahra Ahmed was convicted of two charges of stirring up racial hatred, after a complaint about a Facebook post that claimed the Grenfell Tower fire was a “Jewish sacrifice”. My constituents face this daily, often by people from outside the area who are coming in to incite violence and outrage against them. Can the Home Secretary please advise, in addition to the measures she has mentioned about the disgraceful behaviour in Dallas, what my constituents can expect to receive from the police and security services?

Priti Patel: My hon. Friend is right to raise this. Let me be very clear: in no way and under no circumstances are any of the acts that he has spoken about acceptable. They are thoroughly unacceptable and that is why the police in particular are doing everything possible to go after the individuals. As he will know, certain individuals have been on various watchlists, radars and so on, where we come together to ensure that the Jewish community, and his constituents in particular, are fully supported and fully protected.

<https://hansard.parliament.uk/commons/2022-01-17/debates/FF62934B-0956-46F8-9FF2-A39929EBCC20/TopicalQuestions#contribution-063AC82B-C746-4E50-8E1C-C4007CE68F61>

House of Commons Written Answer

Social Media: Harassment

Carla Lockhart (DUP) [99411] To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what discussions officials in her Department have had with representatives of social media platforms on tackling the use of anonymous accounts to abuse people.

Chris Philp: Officials have regular meetings and discussions with social media platforms on a range of issues, including the use of anonymous accounts.

The Online Safety Bill will require companies in scope to manage the risk of online anonymous abuse. Companies will need to remove and limit the spread of illegal content and prevent children from harmful abuse. Major platforms will also need to set out clearly what legal content is acceptable for adult users on their services and enforce their terms and conditions consistently and transparently. This applies whether a user is anonymous or not.

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/2022-01-07/99411>

The Joint Committee report referred to above can be read at

<https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/jt5802/jtselect/jtonlinesafety/129/129.pdf>

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Israel

House of Lords Written Answers

Middle East: Christianity

The Lord Bishop of Southwark [HL5199] To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the report Defeating Minority Exclusion and Unlocking Potential: Christianity in the Holy Land, published in October 2021.

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: We are aware of this report. The UK stands in solidarity with Christian communities in the Occupied Palestinian Territories and condemns all attacks on the right to freedom of religious belief, freedom of religion, or belief. Israel is a thriving democracy, and has made clear its commitment to freedom of religion. The UK is committed to working with all parties across the Holy Land to ensure the safety and security of the holy sites and all who worship there, including Christians from all nations.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2022-01-06/hl5199>

The report referred to above can be read at

https://static1.squarespace.com/static/61546290b1fcf4242de2e9e9/t/61792427ca61e06fe48624a5/1635329073928/ICOHS_full_digital_research_report.pdf

The following two questions both received the same answer

Israel: Christianity

The Lord Bishop of Southwark [HL5200] To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the socio-economic (1) exclusion, and (2) marginalisation, experienced by Christians in Israel.

The Lord Bishop of Southwark [HL5201] To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of reports of the incidents of (1) harassments of priests, (2) intimidation of local Christians, and (3) attacks on churches, by radical fringe groups in Israel.

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: The UK is committed to defending freedom of religion or belief (FoRB) for all, and promoting respect between different religious and non-religious communities. Promoting the right to FoRB is one of the UK's longstanding human rights priorities. Israel is a thriving democracy with a long-standing commitment to equality for all. We encourage the Israeli Government to do all it can to uphold the values of equality for all enshrined in its laws.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2022-01-06/hl5200>

and

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2022-01-06/hl5201>

Jerusalem: Christianity

The Lord Bishop of Southwark [HL5202] To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the 'Statement on the Current Threats to the Christian Presence in the Holy Land by the Patriarchs and Heads of Churches in Jerusalem', published on 13 December 2021; in particular, the recommendation that a special Christian cultural heritage zone be created in the Christian Quarter in the Old City of Jerusalem.

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: The UK is committed to defending freedom of religion or belief (FoRB) for all, and promoting respect between different religious and non-religious communities. Promoting the right to FoRB is one of the UK's longstanding human rights priorities. We are aware of this statement and are reviewing its recommendations. Our Embassy in Tel Aviv and Consulate General in Jerusalem regularly raise issues of FoRB with the Israeli Government and the Palestinian Authority. The UK recognises that Jerusalem holds particular significance for many groups, especially the three Abrahamic faiths of Christianity, Islam and Judaism.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2022-01-06/hl5202>

The statement referred to above can be read at

<https://www.oikoumene.org/news/patriarchs-and-heads-of-churches-in-jerusalem-release-statement-on-the-current-threat-to-the-christian-presence-on-the-holy-land>

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Foreign Affairs

See also Oral Answer T9 “Topical Questions, Home Department” which is included in the Home Affairs section above.

Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office

Liz Truss: My thoughts are with the Jewish community and all those affected by the appalling act in Texas. We condemn this act of terrorism and anti-semitism. We stand with US in defending the rights and freedoms of our citizens against those who spread hate.

<https://twitter.com/trussliz/status/1482753011223080960>

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Other Relevant Information

Muslim Council of Britain

Texas Synagogue Hostage Stand-Off: Muslim Council of Britain Condemn Act

The Muslim Council of Britain today expresses its solidarity with the Jewish community following a hostage stand-off at a synagogue in the United States. The hostage-taking at Congregation Beth Israel in Texas, is completely unacceptable and we condemn the action in the strongest possible terms.

Zara Mohammed, Secretary General of the Muslim Council of Britain said: “The act is all the more reprehensible since it was instigated at a place of worship where Jews were targeted. This was, quite simply, a hate crime and an act of antisemitism. We are thankful that the hostages are unharmed. Though some may seek to exploit such incidents for divisive ends, we must double our resolve to remain united against such hatred.”

We understand that the perpetrator is reported to be of British origin and a Muslim. His actions fall way short of what is expected of a Muslim. His family and local community in Blackburn have also condemned the perpetrator’s action and are shocked and saddened to learn of this incident. We are in touch with our regional affiliate, the Lancashire Council of Mosques, and are ready to support them and local Muslim communities during this difficult time.

<https://mcb.org.uk/press-releases/texas-synagogue-hostage-stand-off-muslim-council-of-britain-condemn-act/>

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Relevant Legislation ** new or updated today

UK Parliament

Animal Welfare (Sentience) Bill

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

Assisted Dying Bill

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

Charities Bill

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

Education (Assemblies) Bill

<https://bills.parliament.uk/bills/2878>

Higher Education (Freedom of Speech) Bill

<https://bills.parliament.uk/bills/2862>

Israel Arms Trade (Prohibition) Bill

<https://bills.parliament.uk/bills/3025>

Marriage Act 1949 (Amendment) Bill

<https://bills.parliament.uk/bills/3017>

Marriage and Civil Partnership (Minimum Age) Bill

<https://bills.parliament.uk/bills/2900>

Nationality and Borders Bill

<https://bills.parliament.uk/bills/3023>

Online Safety Bill (Draft)

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/draft-online-safety-bill>

Palestine Statehood (Recognition) Bill

<https://bills.parliament.uk/bills/2942>

Northern Ireland Assembly

Organ and Tissue Donation (Deemed Consent) Bill

<http://www.niassembly.gov.uk/assembly-business/legislation/2017-2022-mandate/primary-legislation---bills-2017---2022-mandate/organ-and-tissue-donation-deemed-consent-bill/>

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Consultations

** new or updated today

**** closes in 3 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

**** closes in 6 days**

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>

CPS: Public interest guidance for suicide pact and 'mercy killing' type cases

(closing date 9 April 2022)

<https://www.cps.gov.uk/consultation/consultation-public-interest-guidance-suicide-pact-and-mercy-killing-type-cases-0>

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