



Political Affairs Digest

A daily summary of political events affecting the Jewish Community

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House of Commons Debate

Animal Welfare (Sentience) Bill: Second Reading

col 243 **The Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (George Eustice):** ... Every piece of animal welfare legislation passed by this House since 1822 has implicitly recognised the sentience of animals. During the European Union era, the UK was a signatory to article 13 of the Lisbon treaty, which offered a form of legal recognition of the sentience of animals. ...

How we treat animals, and the legislation we have to govern animal welfare, is a hallmark of a civilised society. We should be constantly looking to improve and refine our legislation in this area. ...

col 245 Devolved matters are also excluded from the Bill's provisions. The Scottish Government have their own counterpart to the Animal Sentience Committee already, while Wales and Northern Ireland have the powers to establish equivalent bodies, should they wish to do so. ...

col 248 **Geoffrey Clifton Brown (Conservative):** ... Of course we can all accept that animals can suffer and therefore we are obliged to ensure that we maintain our high standards of welfare. That animals can experience pain and suffering has been implicit in British animal law, as my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State so rightly laid out, since 1835 when Parliament passed the landmark Cruelty to Animals Act. However, the lack of definition in this Bill or use of science to decide whether an animal is sentient is concerning; it even lacks a definition of what sentience means. ...

We need to make sure that the Animal Sentience Committee set up by the Bill does not have any unforeseen or perverse consequences, and that the Bill is not introduced simply as a public relations exercise to meet the demands of activist groups and the tabloids. ...

col 249 There is no requirement in the Bill for the committee to consider the public interest or the legislative or administrative provisions and customs of the UK relating in particular to religious rites, cultural traditions and regional heritage. In a meat-eating society where vertebrate animals are farmed and hunted for food, and used in scientific and medical research under strict legal limits, the fact that the committee is not required to consider the public interest could lead to a conflict between activist groups and the Government. ...

Will the Minister therefore balance the requirement to have “all due regard” to animal welfare with a requirement to have regard to the public interest? ...

The Bill originated in demands for sentience to be explicitly written into law after Brexit, but it does not contain the safeguards within the EU law on sentience. EU law on sentience is limited and balanced. ... Member states—this is a particular part of European law—are required to have “full regard to the welfare requirements of animals, while respecting the legislative or administrative provisions and customs of the Member States relating in particular to religious rites, cultural traditions and regional heritage.”

I will try to get an amendment included in the Bill ... stating that “the recommendations by the committee must respect the legislative or administrative provisions and customs relating in particular to religious rights, cultural traditions and regional heritage”. ...

col 250 Deidre Brock (SNP): Animal welfare is a devolved issue and the scope of the Bill is largely England-only. With that established, the Scottish National party broadly welcomes the legislation and is pleased that the UK Government are following our lead in this area. The Scottish Government pledged to maintain high animal welfare standards after we left the EU and, in June 2020, established the Scottish Animal Welfare Commission, which is an independent body of leading animal welfare experts responsible for developing expert recommendations on issues relating to animal welfare and sentience. The Bill seeks to replicate its evidence-based policymaking success and expert-driven approach. ...

col 252 Jonathan Djanogly (Conservative): ... While everyone knows what animal welfare is and values what the Bill is intended to do, nothing in it, and no one, can either define animal sentience or say how it is measured. As a result, the phrase becomes a kind of forerunner of what science may, but does not yet, tell us. The Bill is effectively a statement of direction, but does not quite know where to start or where it will finish. It does not define animal sentience, so Ministers will have no gauge to work against. ...

col 253 At the same time, various lobbyists will push the committee towards reviewing everything that they see as being important to their various causes. ...

Of course, as was mentioned in the other place, in reality, the Bill is not just about public relations, because those involved in minority areas of activity in our national life are realising that it could easily be used against them. Yes, I did see the assurances that the Government gave in the other place that the Bill would not attack the Jewish and Muslim religious animal slaughter practices of shechita and halal, and blatantly yes, the Bill makes no direct attack on those practices, but it does open up indirect lines of attack that could easily be used to prejudice or damage those minority religious practices. Importantly, as was explained clearly by my hon. Friend the Member for The Cotswolds (Sir Geoffrey Clifton-Brown), the Bill has no exemptions on the grounds of religious rights, cultural traditions and regional heritage, although those exemptions were included in the equivalent EU legislation. That should be corrected; I will be with him on that.

If the new committee were, for instance, to come up with regular reports against non-stunning slaughter practices, the pressure for change would quickly switch to Ministers. I would defend those religious practices, although that is not today’s debate. However, it is relevant to argue that any such changes should be formulated and debated by Ministers and then Parliament, not the new committee. ...

col 258 Richard Drax (Conservative): ... This Bill emanated from the Lords, where on Third Reading the noble Lord Herbert said that proposed amendments defining sentience, limiting the committee’s scope, ensuring scientific expertise, and balancing provision for religious, cultural and regional heritage were all refused by the Government as “not necessary”. This committee will be another bureaucracy whose tentacles will reach far and wide. A partisan committee will bring with it division and hostility where there need be none. ...

col 283 The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural

Affairs (Jo Churchill): ... Our scientific understanding of sentience has come a long way in recent years, but it is well defined and continues to evolve. ... The situation will carry on evolving, so it would seem to be counter-intuitive to have a fixed definition, because the definition itself is not fixed. We therefore do not deem it necessary to define sentience for the work going forward. ...

col 285 Wide-ranging points were made by colleagues, which flowed into medical research and respect for people's religious needs. The Bill is tight, and the reason it is a small, tight Bill is that it is important that we are aware that it does not change existing legislation. The committee does not make value judgments. ...

To read the full transcript see

[https://hansard.parliament.uk/commons/2022-01-18/debates/33984457-F036-4329-B701-FC4F71A26E62/AnimalWelfare\(Sentience\)Bill\(Lords\)](https://hansard.parliament.uk/commons/2022-01-18/debates/33984457-F036-4329-B701-FC4F71A26E62/AnimalWelfare(Sentience)Bill(Lords))

House of Commons Written Answer

Social Media: Hate Crime

Jim Shannon (DUP) [101725] To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, if he will include provisions in forthcoming online harms bill to prevent anonymity in social media to help tackle the prevalence of online hate.

Chris Philp: The Online Safety Bill places new requirements in relation to anonymity online. It requires companies in scope to effectively manage the risk of online anonymous abuse on user-to-user services.

Services within scope of the Bill will need to remove and limit the spread of illegal content and prevent children from harmful content. 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/2022-01-11/101725>

The Joint Committee report referred to above can be read at

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

House of Lords Written Answers

Schools

Lord Taylor of Warwick (Non-affiliated) [HL5346] To ask Her Majesty's Government what plans they have to alter the definition of what constitutes a school in order to protect children who attend alternative education.

Baroness Barran: The existing definition of full-time education does not capture providers which offer only a narrow curriculum even if this teaching takes place throughout all, or most, of the school day.

In 2020, the department's consultation on regulating independent educational institutions contained a number of related proposals for legislation which would affect independent schools and also some education providers which are neither state-funded nor currently registered with the department as independent schools, although they are attended full-time by children of compulsory school age. This

includes some religious education and several other providers.

The consultation included proposals to consider how to expand on the categories of full-time institutions that will be regulated in the same way that independent schools are currently regulated, and to change the definition of independent schools in primary legislation to incorporate such institutions. Taking forward the proposals would bring a range of currently unregistered institutions under the independent education regulatory regime and help ensure requirements are consistent for all providers that children of compulsory school age attend full-time during the school day, which prevents them securing an education elsewhere.

The government remains committed to changing the law on the registration of independent educational providers.

Publication of the response to the consultation on regulating independent educational institutions is expected in early 2022.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2022-01-11/hl5346>

The following two questions both received the same answer

Out-of-school Education: Islam

Lord Pearson of Rannoch (Non-affiliated) [HL5056] To ask Her Majesty's Government, further to the Answer by Baroness Barran on 15 December (HL Deb col 297), what estimate they have made of (1) the number of madrassas in England, and (2) the number of children that attend them; whether they have made an assessment of whether radical Islamist views are being taught in those madrassas; and if so, what were the conclusions of that assessment.

Lord Pearson of Rannoch (Non-affiliated) [HL5057] To ask Her Majesty's Government, further to the Answer by Baroness Barran on 15 December (HL Deb, col 297), what plans they have to encourage Ofsted to inspect all madrassas in England, regardless of whether they provide teaching for fewer than 18 hours per week.

Baroness Barran: The department does not hold a register of madrassas and has not made an estimate of the number of madrassas or the number of children attending them.

Madrassas are generally considered to be out-of-school settings, which are not captured by a single dedicated regulatory framework, and are not subject to inspections by Ofsted or the department.

Local authorities are, however, legally responsible for safeguarding and promoting the welfare of all children in their areas, including when attending out-of-school settings. To support local authorities with their existing safeguarding duties, the department has been taking forward a package of measures to enhance safeguarding in out-of-school settings, safeguarding children from all forms of harm, including extremism and terrorism.

This package of activity has included over £3 million of targeted funding to selected local authorities to examine ways to boost local capacity to identify and intervene in out-of-school settings of concern, and to test the utility of existing powers and engagement approaches for undertaking safeguarding activity in these settings. The final phase of this work concluded end of December last year, and we are currently considering the next steps for this work.

In addition, the department has also published a voluntary safeguarding code of practice to support providers, such as madrassas, to understand what they need to do to run a setting safely, and accompanying guidance for parents and carers to help them make more informed choices, including the red flags to look out for and what steps to take where they might have concerns. This is available here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/keeping-children-safe-in-out-of-school-settings>

If the department became aware of a setting where extremist activity was taking

place or where children were at risk of harm, we would work closely with relevant agencies, such as the local authority, Ofsted and the police, to take action.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2021-12-16/hl5056>

and

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2021-12-16/hl5057>

The answer referred to above can be read at

<https://hansard.parliament.uk/lords/2021-12-15/debates/8973CC98-51BB-4694-B869-E8D8B38D5297/AlternativeEducation#contribution-7AEE3176-FFB3-40DE-A351-09587CF42D96>

Attorney General

Ben John's sentence increased following personal intervention by the Solicitor General

Ben John, 22, has been sentenced to an immediate prison term after the Solicitor General, Alex Chalk QC MP personally presented the case at the Court of Appeal.

On 7 January 2020, Lincolnshire Police searched John's home and seized several electronic devices including a phone and hard drives. Police found tens of thousands of politically extreme and far-right documents and files. This included white nationalist and anti-Semitic materials.

Amongst the materials, Lincolnshire Police found a copy of the 'Anarchy Cookbook', a book containing instructions for the manufacture of explosives and rudimentary weapons. John was found guilty of one count of possessing information likely to be useful to a person committing or preparing an act of terrorism.

On 31 August 2021, John was sentenced to 2 years' imprisonment, suspended for 2 years, at Leicester Crown Court.

Following the sentence, the Solicitor General referred John's sentence to the Court of Appeal under the Unduly Lenient Sentence (ULS) scheme.

On 19 January, the Court of Appeal found his original sentence to be unduly lenient and increased it to 2 years' imprisonment with a 1 year licence period.

Speaking after the hearing, the Solicitor General, Alex Chalk QC MP said: The Government is committed to confronting terrorism in all its forms, including from the Extreme Right Wing. We remain focussed on disrupting the activities of the most dangerous extremists, supporting those who stand up to their hateful rhetoric, and protecting vulnerable people being drawn into terrorism.

I referred Ben John's sentence to the Court of Appeal, and chose to personally present it, because I believed it to be unduly lenient. I am pleased that the Court of Appeal agreed and chose to increase his sentence today.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/ben-johns-sentence-increased-following-personal-intervention-by-the-solicitor-general--3>

Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities and Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government

COVID-19: Updated guidance for the safe use of places of worship

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/covid-19-guidance-for-the-safe-use-of-places-of-worship>

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>

Department for Education

Updated guidance: Protective measures for holiday or after-school clubs and other out-of-school settings for children during the coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1048378/OOSS_Provider_guidance_Plan_B_Review_19Jan21.pdf

Updated guidance for parents and carers of children attending out-of-school settings during the coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1048356/OOSS_Parent_Guidance_Plan_B_Review_19Jan21.pdf

Senedd Oral Answer

Appointment of the Children's Commissioner

Darren Millar (Conservative): ... I note that, on the business statement for next week, there is due to be a statement from the Minister for Social Justice on the occasion of Holocaust Memorial Day, which, of course, is also coming up very soon. You will also be aware of the concerns that have been raised about the recent appointment of the children's commissioner here in Wales, and potential associations with antisemites and attendance at antisemitic rallies. I do think that we need some assurances from the Welsh Government about this particular appointment of Rocio Cifuentes, and I think that next week's statement on Holocaust Memorial Day provides an opportunity for that. ...

Lesley Griffiths (Minister for Rural Affairs and North Wales, and Trefnydd): ...

I wasn't aware of any concerns, and, obviously, a written statement was made by the First Minister in relation to that appointment, but I'm sure the Minister for Social Justice will have heard your comments.

<https://record.senedd.wales/Plenary/12590#C399923>

Reports about the concerns raised in the above can be read at

<https://www.herald.wales/news/new-childrens-commissioner-for-wales-announced/>

and

<https://www.conservatives.wales/news/questions-raised-over-new-commissioners-social-media-background>

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Unitec Nations

UNRWA seeks \$1.6 billion to support Palestinian refugees in 2022

Philippe Lazzarini, the agency's Commissioner-General, said budget shortfalls pose a serious threat to its ability to maintain operations.

"The international community recognizes the lifesaving role of UNRWA and its indispensable contribution to stability in the Middle East. It also recognizes how cost-efficient and agile UNRWA is. In 2022, that recognition must be supported by the adequate level of funding to meet this critical moment for Palestine refugees," he [said](#).

The budget proposal comes as UNRWA confronts chronic funding gaps as needs keep rising.

It is estimated that 2.3 million Palestinian refugees are living in poverty, and the COVID-19 pandemic continues to threaten health and livelihoods.

Distress and despair have become the norm among Palestinian refugees, according to UNRWA. Many, particularly in Gaza, Syria and Lebanon, report that they are ready to use any means to try to migrate outside of the region. ...

To read the full press release see

<https://news.un.org/en/story/2022/01/1110002>

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Relevant Legislation ** new or updated today

UK Parliament

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

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

Second Reading, House of Commons

[https://hansard.parliament.uk/commons/2022-01-18/debates/33984457-F036-4329-B701-FC4F71A26E62/AnimalWelfare\(Sentience\)Bill\(Lords\)](https://hansard.parliament.uk/commons/2022-01-18/debates/33984457-F036-4329-B701-FC4F71A26E62/AnimalWelfare(Sentience)Bill(Lords))

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>

Joint Committee on Human Rights Legislative Scrutiny Report: Nationality and Borders Bill (Parts 1, 2 and 4) – Asylum, Home Office Decision Making, Age Assessments, and Deprivation of Citizenship Orders

<https://committees.parliament.uk/publications/8549/documents/86371/default/>

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 2 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 5 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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