



Political Affairs Digest

A daily summary of political events affecting the Jewish Community

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Local Government: Religion

Rachael Maskell (Labour Co-op) [113179] To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, what steps he will take to ensure that faith organisations have a greater role in working with local government.

Eddie Hughes: The Government recognises the vital role played by our faith groups in their local communities. Faith organisations have been at the forefront during the pandemic, working alongside local authorities and other partners to provide communities with much needed support.

The Faith New Deal pilot scheme announced last September will build on this, strengthening engagement between faith organisations and local government.

The successful applicants will be announced shortly.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2022-01-27/113179>

The following three questions all received the same answer

Community Centres

Rachael Maskell (Labour Co-op) [113176] To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of developing a model of interfaith centres in communities.

Rachael Maskell (Labour Co-op) [113177] To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of developing cultural centres in all communities.

Rachael Maskell (Labour Co-op) [113178] To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, if he will take steps to ensure the provision of (a) community centres and (b) other public spaces in communities to allow minority and other groups access to premises to carry out civic activities.

Neil O'Brien: The Government recognises the contribution which faith organisations and minority communities make to our civic and cultural life, and we are committed to supporting all our communities to have the power to shape their local area and work together to improve their neighbourhoods.

In initiatives the department has funded, we have sought to support efforts to build friendly, working relationships between people of different faiths to promote tolerance and understanding and to help focus efforts to tackle social problems. The £150 million Community Ownership Fund demonstrates our determination to ensure that all communities are able to protect the community assets and local facilities which are important to them by bringing them into community ownership. In round one of the fund, we have provided £983,088 of support to help community groups take ownership of community centres.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2022-01-27/113176>

and

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2022-01-27/113177>

and

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2022-01-27/113178>

House of Lords Written Answer

Hate Crime

The Marquess of Lothian (Conservative) [HL5389] To ask Her Majesty's Government what steps they are taking to require (1) web hosting services, (2) technology companies, and (3) non-UK based service providers such as Cloudflare, to do more to identify and remove hateful content in order to protect the public; and whether they believe 'incel' content constitutes terrorism.

Baroness Williams of Trafford: Our objective is to ensure that there are no safe spaces online for all forms of terrorists to promote or share their extreme views. To tackle terrorism online, the Counter Terrorism Internet Referral Unit refers illegal terrorist content to tech companies for removal. Within the Home Office, we encourage tech companies to work together as one coordinated body through the Global Internet Forum to Counter Terrorism to reduce the availability of terrorist content online.

We have also published the draft Online Safety Bill, which gives effect to the regulatory framework outlined in the Full Government Response to the Online Harms White Paper. The Joint Committee for pre-legislative scrutiny of the draft Bill published its report on 14th December, and we will prioritise introduction of the Bill once we have carefully considered the Committee's recommendations.

We want the internet to be a safe space for all users - we are clear that what is unacceptable offline should be unacceptable online. However, we recognise the complexities in adapting our approach against an ever-changing technological landscape. We have committed to publishing a new Hate Crime Strategy, building on our achievements under the 2016-2020 Hate Crime Action Plan, which improved the response to all forms of hate crime, including online.

Whether or not online content relates to an offence contrary to terrorism legislation is a matter for the police to investigate and will be determined by the facts of each case. The Government is however clear that the definition of terrorism within the Terrorism Act 2000 remains fit for purpose and capable of responding to modern forms of terrorism. Serious violence or the threat of serious violence for the purpose of advancing an ideological cause, including where this is inspired by incel beliefs, is capable of satisfying the definition of terrorism. This is a position supported by the Independent Reviewer of Terrorism Legislation.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2022-01-13/hl5389>

The Government response referred to above can be read at

<https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/online-harms-white-paper/outcome/online-harms-white-paper-full-government-response>

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

Scottish Government

Faith and belief engagement

Modern Scotland is a multi-faith society but it can be a challenge for some faith and belief communities to make their voices heard. It can also be difficult for policy makers to have an in-depth understanding of the needs of faith and belief communities, given the range of views on particular issues.

To address these challenges and ensure we engage effectively with faith and belief stakeholders, a new faith and belief team has been set up ... The team will develop a new strategy for faith and belief engagement aiming to:

- work closely with stakeholders to promote interfaith dialogue and relations
- help ensure the voices of faith and belief stakeholders are fairly represented in policy development
- support faith and belief communities to be active partners in Covid recovery

The coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic has highlighted the central role that faith and belief groups have in Scottish society. ...

These experiences showed there is scope for government to work more closely with faith and belief groups to deliver on shared priorities. This also prompted important questions about the relationship between government and faith and belief communities and how this can and should operate in the future. ...

Whilst some Christian churches continue to see a decline in numbers, there has been growth amongst the Muslim, Buddhist and Pagan faiths. There are trends towards a more secular society overall, but also towards a greater diversity of faiths, traditions and non-religious belief groups ...

Of course, the engagement strategy will also need to reflect on the tensions and challenges that can arise from faith and belief in society. We must have a balanced view of the impacts of faith and belief in society, recognising the potential for divisive and harmful effects and how we respond to these, as well as the huge positive contributions that so many communities make. ...

To read the full press release see

<https://blogs.gov.scot/participation/2022/02/03/faith-and-belief-engagement/>

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House of Commons Written Answers

Trade Agreements: Israel

Caroline Ansell (Conservative) [110478] To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, when the Government plans to open a public consultation on an enhanced bilateral free trade agreement with Israel; and if she will make a statement.

Penny Mordaunt: The UK is strongly committed to our trade and investment relationship with Israel, worth an estimated £4.8 billion pounds. My Rt. Hon. Friend the Prime Minister has committed to started talks to enhance and improve the UK-Israel Free Trade Agreement this year. Ahead of this, the United Kingdom has published a Call for Input on February 1st, to hear the views of businesses and wider society on how to improve our existing trade agreement with Israel.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2022-01-24/110478>

The Call for Input referred to above can be read at

<https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/trade-with-israel-call-for-input>

Exports: Israel

Beth Winter (Labour) [113286] To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, on which date her Department most recently reviewed the export of British manufactured equipment to Israeli distributors for the purposes of monitoring any subsequent use in the demolition of homes in the occupied Palestinian territories.

James Cleverly: We do not collect this information. The UK is clear that in all but the most exceptional of circumstances, demolitions and evictions are contrary to International Humanitarian Law. On 19 January, I [Minister Cleverly] urged the Government of Israel to stop these practices. The UK regularly raises the issue of demolitions, confiscations and forced evictions of Palestinians from their homes with the Government of Israel, most recently with Israel's Ministry of Defence on 20 January and Ministry of Justice on 27 January.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2022-01-28/113286>

The statement referred to above can be read at

<https://twitter.com/jamescleverly/status/1483866915613388810>

Elbit Systems UK

Claudia Webbe (Independent) [113296] To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, if the Government will stop awarding contracts to the Leicester-based subsidiary of Elbit Systems in response to the use of Elbit Systems' equipment in the 2014 Gaza War.

Jeremy Quin: The Procurement Regulations set out who can apply for consideration under Ministry of Defence procurement tenders.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2022-01-27/113296>

The Regulations referred to above can be read at

<https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukxi/2011/1848/contents>

Israel: Palestinians

Stephen Timms (Labour) [114612] To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what discussions she has had with her counterparts in Israel on reports of the firing of tear gas and sound bombs into Palestinian schools during class time in the West Bank; and if she will make a statement.

James Cleverly: While we recognise Israel's legitimate need to deploy security measures, we encourage them to deploy these in a way that minimises tension and uses appropriate force. We repeatedly call on Israel to abide by its obligations under international law and have a regular dialogue with Israel on legal issues relating to the occupation, including the treatment of Palestinian children. It is essential to have a strong and thriving Palestinian education system in order to provide opportunities, economic development and hope for the next generation.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2022-01-31/114612>

Israel: Palestinians

Clive Betts (Labour) [113687] To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what new steps she will take to help ensure that the Government of Israel ceases its destruction of family homes in the occupied West Bank.

James Cleverly: The UK is clear that in all but the most exceptional of circumstances, demolitions and evictions are contrary to International Humanitarian Law. On 19 January, I urged the Government of Israel to stop these practices.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2022-01-28/113687>

Relevant Legislation ** new or updated today

UK Parliament

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

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

Notice of amendments

https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/bills/cbill/58-02/0219/amend/sentience_rm_pbc_0207.pdf

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>

Committee Stage, House of Lords

<https://hansard.parliament.uk/lords/2022-02-03/debates/9DC6EED3-5277-4E39-B2E5-CE25FEA89DA3/NationalityAndBordersBill>

and

<https://hansard.parliament.uk/lords/2022-02-03/debates/613D1EE1-4E4A-43BF-8CBB-3CDDDB76159B/NationalityAndBordersBill>

Notice of amendments

<https://bills.parliament.uk/publications/45100/documents/1360>

**** Online Safety Bill (Draft)**

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

Evidence session, Digital, Culture, Media and Sport Committee Sub-committee on Online Harms and Disinformation

<https://committees.parliament.uk/oralevidence/3377/html/>

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

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

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

Equality Commission for Northern Ireland Draft Corporate Plan 2022-2025

(closing date 25 February 2022)

<https://www.equalityni.org/CorporatePlanConsultation#gsc.tab=0>

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>

Hate Crime Legislation in Northern Ireland (closing date 28 March 2022)

<https://www.justice-ni.gov.uk/consultations/consultation-hate-crime-legislation-northern-ireland>

Trade with Israel (closing date 30 March 2022)

<https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/trade-with-israel-call-for-input>

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