



Political Affairs Digest

A daily summary of political events affecting the Jewish Community

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House of Commons Written Answer

Religion: Education

Kirsten Oswald (SNP) [119631] To ask the Secretary of State for Education, with reference to the judgment in *R (Fox) v Secretary of State for Education* [2015] EWHC 3404, what recent assessment he has made of the potential impact of the proposed reforms to sections 3 and 6 of the Human Rights Act 1998 on his policies on the delivery of religious education.

Robin Walker: Whilst the administrative court ruled against the department in the case of *R (Fox) v Secretary of State for Education*, the government considered the judgment to have no broader impact on any aspect of its policy in relation to the religious education curriculum or religious studies GCSE subject content for schools, with or without a religious character.

In December 2015, the department responded to this judgment by publishing guidance for schools and awarding organisations about the religious studies GCSE, alongside the religious studies GCSE subject content, at:

www.gov.uk/government/publications/gcse-religious-studies

The proposed reforms to the Human Rights Act (1998) are currently subject to a public consultation which will run until 8 March 2022. The department will make an assessment of any impact of these reforms on the delivery of religious education once they have been confirmed.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2022-02-07/119631>

The judgement referred to above can be read at

<https://www.judiciary.uk/wp-content/uploads/2015/11/r-fox-v-ssfe.pdf>

The consultation referred to above can be read at

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

Northern Ireland Assembly Member's Statement

Anti-Semitic Hate Crime

Paula Bradshaw (Alliance): In late January, I was shocked and appalled to learn that an

individual had spray-painted anti-Semitic graffiti at Newforge Lane in my constituency, an area where people frequently walk. Actions like that have a heavy impact on our Jewish community, and I was saddened that such issues remain today. Thankfully, it was not just members of the Jewish community who contacted me about it but other right-thinking members of the public. I duly reported it, and I am grateful to Belfast City Council for promptly removing it. It is our moral duty to defend and support those who are victims of such shocking ignorance and prejudice. I heavily condemn those acts, and I extend my thoughts to all those who were affected by it.

Offering our thoughts will simply not cut it, however. Between 2020 and 2021, the PSNI investigated 39 hate crime incidents against the Jewish community. Six of those occurred in south Belfast. The issue is now far more prominent, and, unfortunately, it is still conspicuous in our communities. The consequence of such hatred is held closely to our hearts, particularly during Holocaust Memorial Day, the day on which the graffiti appeared. It should be a day when we remember the six million Jewish people who were subject to genocide in one of the most appalling atrocities in human history. It is more important than ever that we highlight the effects that such ignorance and hate have on our communities and realise that we have work to do to overcome them. Such acts only encourage conspiracy and hate.

My colleague the Justice Minister Naomi Long has recently outlined her vision for a new hate crime Bill, and I encourage everyone to participate in the public consultation, which closes on 22 March.

The Bill will pave the way for new, much-needed hate crime provisions that will protect victims to a much larger extent. Through the Bill's specifically defining acts of hate crime and the role of the perpetrator, victims will see better support and are ultimately more likely to see justice.

That having been said, the main objective must be to stop hate crime occurring in the first place. Expressions of anti-Semitism, for example, have a grievous impact on a community that already feels vulnerable here. We must take responsibility for promoting, at every turn, awareness raising, compassion and, most importantly, respect. We must all resolutely support our local Jewish community and be clear that this is their home and that they are cherished here.

<http://aims.niassembly.gov.uk/officialreport/report.aspx?&eveDate=2022/02/14&docID=367307#3975166>

The consultation referred to above can be read at

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

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Israel

House of Commons Written Answer

Israel and Pakistan: Nuclear Weapons

Martyn Day (SNP) [118589] To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what recent estimate his Department has made of the strength of (a) Pakistan's and (b) Israel's nuclear arsenal.

Jeremy Quin: The hon. Member's question is a matter for the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2022-02-04/118589>

House of Lords Written Answers

Gaza: Coronavirus

Baroness Janke (Liberal Democrat) [HL5843] To ask Her Majesty's Government what support they intend to offer, if any, to the COVID-19 vaccination programme for Palestinians in Gaza, given reports of shortages of medical equipment.

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: Tackling COVID-19 remains a priority for the Government. The UK is one of the largest donors to the COVAX Advance Market Commitment (AMC), which supports access to COVID-19 vaccines for up to 92 low- and middle-income countries. Our £548 million commitment will support the COVAX AMC to deliver up to 1.8 billion doses to these countries by mid-2022. The Occupied Palestinian Territories was one of the first to receive vaccines from this scheme and continues to receive further consignments of COVAX vaccines, most recently on 29 December 2021.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2022-02-01/hl5843>

Israel: Palestinians

Baroness Janke (Liberal Democrat) [HL5842] To ask Her Majesty's Government what representations they have made to the government of Israel following reports of (1) roadblocks and checkpoints placed on entrances to the Palestinian village of Dir Nizam, and (2) military incursions into that village.

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: The UK will continue to raise the issue of freedom of movement and access into and out of the Occupied Palestinian Territories, including for emergency services, with the Israeli authorities. We recognise Israel's legitimate need to deploy security measures and we encourage them to deploy these in a way that minimises tension and uses appropriate force.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2022-02-01/hl5842>

Israel: Palestinians

Baroness Sheehan (Liberal Democrat) [HL5813] To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of reports that Israeli authorities are blocking donations of winter clothes and blankets to Palestinian prisoners in jails in Israel; and what representations, if any, they have made to the government of Israel on this issue.

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: We have a regular dialogue with Israel on legal issues relating to the occupation, including the treatment of Palestinian detainees. We remain committed to working with Israel to secure improvements to detention practices.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2022-01-31/hl5813>

Israel: Palestinians

Baroness Sheehan (Liberal Democrat) [HL5814] To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of reports of Israeli forces firing gas bombs at Palestinian farmers on their fields near the Gaza–Israel perimeter fence; and what representations, if any, have they made to the government of Israel.

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: 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 have a regular dialogue with Israel on legal issues relating to the occupation.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2022-01-31/hl5814>

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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**

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