



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 Answer

Higher Education: Scotland

Barry Sheerman (Labour Co-op) [141140] To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland, if his Department will take steps to encourage higher education institutions in Scotland adopt the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance definition of antisemitism.

Alister Jack: There is no place in our society, including within higher education (HE), for antisemitism. The International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA) definition is an important tool in tackling antisemitism. Adopting the widely recognised definition sends a strong signal that HE providers take these issues seriously.

HE in Scotland is devolved and responsibility for policy, for the most part, rests with the Scottish Government. The decision on adoption of the definition rests with individual providers. However, the UK Government has urged HE providers in England to adopt the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance definition of antisemitism and ensure the HE is a genuinely fulfilling and welcoming experience. I am sure that many HE providers in Scotland will also choose to adopt the definition and I would support them in doing that.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2022-03-16/141140>

House of Lords Oral Answers

Commission on Race and Ethnic Disparities

[The statement made by the Minister in the Commons](#) was read in the Lords.

Baroness Thornton (Labour): ... Perhaps the Minister can explain why her Government find it so hard to accept that we still have a country where there clearly is discrimination and that racial disparities are the result of historic, endemic and still existing structural racism. Unless we accept that and build from that understanding, both individually and organisationally, we will not solve the terrible racial disparities, many of which are

described in the original report. ...

Unlike with gender pay gaps, there is currently no legal requirement for UK businesses to disclose their ethnicity pay data. Will the UK Government follow the recent recommendation of the Women and Equalities Committee and introduce mandatory ethnicity pay-gap reporting by 2023, including urging employers to publish a supporting action plan? ...

For example, if the pay gap is non-existent at entry level but significantly skewed at more senior levels, that can help inform the areas of focus. Employers might decide to, for example, invest in mentoring, with a focus on supporting particularly under-represented groups to progress, or in assessing the progression path to interrogate and root out baked-in bias. ...

One issue is health inequalities, most starkly demonstrated in the pandemic in the unequal way that it affected and cost lives in our ethnic minority communities, but we know this to be the case over a whole range of health matters. How does the Office for Health Improvement and Disparities intend to change this? ... The other issue is employment, concerning the treatment and promotion of ethnic minority employees in the NHS. White applicants are 1.6 times more likely to be appointed from shortlisting, compared with BME applicants. This figure has got worse in the last year or so.

BME staff are 1.6 times more likely to enter formal disciplinary process compared with white staff. The number of BME board members in trusts has increased—we should be very pleased about that. ...

What action will the Minister take in the action plan to address a transformation in the culture of our policing which so desperately needs to address racial disparity? The report says that it wants to “bridge divides and create partnerships between the police and communities”.

Will the Minister explain how she thinks that we can possibly bridge that divide when black schoolgirls are being strip-searched? Is she aware that this is not an isolated incident? The Metropolitan Police’s own figures show that, in 2021, 25 young people under 18 were strip-searched. Most were black or from other ethnic minorities. Some 60% were black, and only two of the 25 children were white. ...

Lord Dholakia (Liberal Democrat): ... There is progress in some areas of disparities, while questions arise on other matters which need clarification. The first major question relates to the Covid pandemic and the Government’s disregard for the disproportional impact on ethnic minorities. ...

I had to enter a local hospital for a procedure recently, and throughout the seven days I was there I did not meet a single white person. All the services were provided by minorities from various parts of the world. How can we adequately thank them—instead of criticising their appearances as postboxes, as the Prime Minister once said? ...

The new framework for stop and search will not build trust between the police and the ethnic communities they serve, unless they end suspicionless stop and search due to its disproportionate impact on minorities. ...

It is worrying that the Government have set out an action plan to tackle inequality based on recommendations from a commission which concluded that there was no systemic racism in Britain. The *Inclusive Britain* strategy, published on Wednesday evening, was developed in response to a controversial report by the Commission on Race and Ethnic Disparities last year. The commitments in the action plan include revamping the history curriculum for schoolchildren, a cash injection for school pupils who have fallen behind during the pandemic, and clamping down on online racist abuse through new legislation. ...

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office and Department for Work and Pensions (Baroness Stedman-Scott): ... I cannot rule out that some organisations in the UK may be institutionally racist. Of course, that is why we are funding the Equality and Human Rights Commission to strengthen its investigative work. I also believe that the term

should be applied based on evidence. Often, the causes of racial disparity are complex, and not rooted in discrimination or prejudice. As the commission said, they did not find clear evidence for it in the areas it examined. This does not mean that people do not experience racism, but institutional racism is deeper, and we need evidence to say that it is there. I understand that there are structural reasons why some ethnic groups have better or worse outcomes than others. The new strategy aims to deal with those root causes. ...

We are publishing guidance to employers on voluntary ethnicity pay reporting by summer 2022. No one should have to worry about why they are not being given the same opportunities as their colleagues. ...

The Government are committed to reducing unacceptable disparities in health outcomes and experience of care, including by ethnicity, many of which have been further highlighted and exacerbated by the Covid-19 pandemic. The Department of Health and Social Care will publish a health disparities White Paper later this year, which will set out impactful measures to address ill health and health disparities, so that a person's background does not dictate their prospects for a healthy life ahead of them. ...

Recent events have raised serious issues with the police, and it is right that the Government ask those difficult questions to drive positive change. ... Forces have worked hard to improve community engagement and we have seen major improvements in how the police deal with racist crimes, but we know that there is more to do. ...

Both the noble Baroness, Lady Thornton, and the noble Lord, Lord Dholakia, raised the issue of the outrageous case of a black 15 year-old Hackney schoolgirl who was strip-searched. I cannot comment on this case, as I am not familiar with its details, but it raises issues of serious concern ...

Baroness Warsi (Conservative): My Lords, for all the criticism that this report has rightly faced about its findings, many of which are flawed, I tentatively welcome parts of it, not least because it has among its stated intentions a clear acknowledgment that the Government must build trust and a sense that every individual in our society must be treated fairly. ...

In this spirit, can my noble friend explain why, despite the Government's commitment to adopt a definition of Islamophobia, they have failed to adopt the APPG cross-party, non-legally binding, agreed definition, which has been adopted by all political parties, including the Conservative Party in Scotland, local authorities, universities, the NUS, charities and numerous other organisations? It is supported by over 800 British Muslim organisations and underpinned by more than 100 academics who are experts in this area. Why is the definition accepted by large sections of the community that it seeks to protect not acceptable to government?

Why, despite promising to appoint two advisers to review the definition nearly three years ago, has only one been appointed? Even he has yet to be engaged by government or given any clarity as to his remit; he has not even been given terms of reference or any resources to support his work. ...

Baroness Stedman-Scott: ... I hope she will allow me to take this back to the Minister and write to confirm the position. ...

Baroness Chakrabarti (Labour): ... It really is time that we all, on a cross-party basis, gripped the Islamophobia definition. If we do not, we are in danger of having a hierarchy of racisms in this country, with some groups feeling less represented than others. None of us wants that. ...

Baroness Stedman-Scott: ... On the definition of Islamophobia, which the noble Baroness, Lady Chakrabarti, and my noble friend Lady Warsi raised, I am afraid that we cannot accept the APPG definition of Islamophobia because we do not want to adopt a definition that would conflict with the Equality Act. ...

To continue reading this very lengthy question and answer session in full see

<https://hansard.parliament.uk/lords/2022-03-21/debates/8D7D6F7C-DBE0-424E-89EB-B4E8FA75BFE1/CommissionOnRaceAndEthnicDisparities>

The commission findings referred to above can be read at

[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/974507/20210331 - CRED Report - FINAL - Web Accessible.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/974507/20210331_-_CRED_Report_-_FINAL_-_Web_Accessible.pdf)

The Government response referred to above can be read at

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/inclusive-britain-action-plan-government-response-to-the-commission-on-race-and-ethnic-disparities/inclusive-britain-government-response-to-the-commission-on-race-and-ethnic-disparities>

House of Lords Written Answer

Hamas

Lord Foulkes of Cumnock (Labour) [HL6648] To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the report by HonestReporting Help Combat Hamas Terrorism, published on 2 February; and what assessment they have made of the warning within the report by Lloyd's of London against its members doing business with Hamas.

Baroness Williams of Trafford: The UK has a robust legislative framework which criminalises the financing of terrorism in all its forms. The Government regularly meets with the banking sector, regulators and non-profit organisations to identify, assess and understand the risk of terrorist financing and collaborate to respond to the risks that are identified, including producing appropriate guidance and best practice on risk mitigation measures.

The Home Secretary extended the proscription of Hamas to cover the organisation in its entirety in November 2021. The extension makes all of Hamas' assets 'terrorist property', it also makes it illegal for people to be members or supporters of Hamas, with a maximum sentence of up to 14 years in prison and/or an unlimited fine. Hamas is also subject to an asset freeze under the Counter-Terrorism (International Sanctions) (EU Exit) Regulations 2019.

The investigation and prosecution of offences is a matter for the police and Crown Prosecution Service. It would be inappropriate for the Government to comment further on such matters

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2022-03-04/hl6648>

"Help Combat Hamas Terrorism", referred to above, can be read at

<https://honestreporting.com/help-combat-hamas-terrorism-join-honestreporting-campaign-to-expose-entities-helping-gazas-rulers-hide-reported-500-million/>

TOP

Israel

See also Lords written answer HL6648 "Hamas", which is included in the Home Affairs Section above.

House of Lords Written Answers

Trade Agreements

Baroness Ritchie of Downpatrick (Labour) [HL6747] To ask Her Majesty's Government what recent steps they have taken to increase the proportion of UK trade through free trade agreements.

Lord Grimstone of Boscobel: We have secured free trade agreements (FTAs) with 70 countries plus the EU, covering trade worth £772 billion in 2020. So far, this year, we have signed an FTA with New Zealand and a Digital Economy Agreement with Singapore, commenced the second round of FTA negotiations with India, launched a consultation for an enhanced FTA with Israel, and launched FTA negotiations with Greenland. We are preparing for FTA negotiations with the Gulf Cooperation Council, Canada and Mexico, which we expect to launch later this year.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2022-03-08/hl6747>

Israel: Palestinians

Baroness Sheehan (Liberal Democrat) [HL6692] To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the report from the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs Protection of Civilians Report: 25 January - 7 February 2022, dated 11 February; and in particular, the prevalence of the use of violence in the Occupied Palestinian Territories.

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: We raise the issue of the high numbers of Palestinians killed and injured by Israeli Defence Forces in the West Bank and Gaza with the Israeli authorities, encouraging them to carry out swift, transparent and thorough investigations. Officials from the British Embassy in Tel Aviv raised the case of Ammar Shafiq Abu Afifeh with the Israeli Authorities on 2 March. We continue to stress the importance of the Israeli security forces providing appropriate protection to the Palestinian civilian population and urge restraint in the use of live fire.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2022-03-07/hl6692>

The report referred to above can be read at

<https://www.ochaopt.org/poc/25-january-7-february-2022>

Amar Shafiq Abu Afifa

Baroness Sheehan (Liberal Democrat) [HL6691] To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of press reports that teenager Amar Shafiq Abu Afifa was killed near Bethlehem by Israeli forces.

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: We raise the issue of the high numbers of Palestinians killed and injured by Israeli Defence Forces in the West Bank and Gaza with the Israeli authorities, encouraging them to carry out swift, transparent and thorough investigations. Officials from the British Embassy in Tel Aviv raised the case of Ammar Shafiq Abu Afifeh with the Israeli Authorities on 2 March. We continue to stress the importance of the Israeli security forces providing appropriate protection to the Palestinian civilian population and urge restraint in the use of live fire.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2022-03-07/hl6691>

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>

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

<https://bills.parliament.uk/bills/3137>

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 6 days**

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>

[TOP](#)