



Political Affairs Digest

A daily summary of political events affecting the Jewish Community

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House of Commons Written Answer

Proscribed Organisations

Andrew Rosindell (Conservative) [143607] To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what assessment she has made of the effect of the Online Safety Bill on terrorist content (a) linked and (b) not linked to the UK list of proscribed terrorist groups.

Damian Hinds: The effect of the Online Safety Bill on terrorist content has been considered as part of the published Impact Assessment.

The Bill will require all in-scope companies to prevent terrorist content from being uploaded onto their sites, and when it is uploaded, to remove it immediately. The duty of care overseen by Ofcom will set a high standard that all in-scope platforms will need to meet, and therefore increase the amount of terrorist content that is identified and removed.

Those who fail to do so, will need to answer to an independent regulator, Ofcom, who will have the power to require all in-scope companies to use automated technology to identify and remove terrorist content from their public channels.

The Government has also pressed companies to increase the use of technology to automate the detection and removal of terrorist content where possible. As a result of continued engagement, companies have expanded the use of automated removals.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2022-03-21/143607>

House of Lords Oral Answers

Schools: Extremism and Intolerance

Lord Godson (Conservative): To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the reporting in "The Trojan Horse Affair" podcast, published by the *New York Times* on 4 February; and what steps they are taking to prevent extremism and intolerance from gaining a foothold in schools in England.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Department for Education

(Baroness Barran): My Lords, we remain absolutely committed to keeping children safe from extremism. We provide online resources and fund networks of practitioners to support schools to promote shared values and build resilience to extremism. We also take action against those in the sector who express extremist views. The Government's response at the time of "Trojan horse" rightly focused on whether the alleged events and behaviours actually happened. A number of independent reports confirmed that they did. ...

Lord Singh of Wimbledon (Crossbench): My Lords, does the Minister agree that extremism arises from claims that the one God of us all has human prejudices and is more favourably disposed to our particular faith, as opposed to others', no matter how we behave towards others? Does she further agree that the teaching of RE in schools should emphasise ethical commonalities, which are much greater than the smaller area of conflict-producing differences?

Baroness Barran: The noble Lord asks a rather profound first question, which I might need a bit more time to think about. On his second point, the principles that underpin fundamental British values, which are now taught in every school, include diversity, tolerance, mutual respect and the rule of law. ...

Baroness Meacher (Crossbench): My Lords, at least 6,000 children are being educated in unregistered illegal schools where they are exposed to extremist, intolerant, homophobic and sexist literature. As the Government indicated, can the Minister confirm that legislation will be included in the May Queen's Speech to increase powers for Ofsted to bring illegal schools into registration, and to introduce a register of home-educated children, so many of whom attend illegal schools? If not in May, then when?

Baroness Barran: The noble Baroness will understand that I cannot anticipate the Queen's Speech, but I absolutely share her deep concern about the risks faced by children who are in unregistered schools. The Government have said that at the next legislative opportunity, we will seek to address some of those weaknesses. I can confirm that the Government are committed to a register for home-educated children.

Lord Pearson of Rannoch (Non-affiliated): My Lords, do the Government recall that one of the schools in the Trojan horse scandal is actually called the Al-Hijrah School, thus extolling not only Muhammad's journey from Mecca to his takeover of Medina, but his massacre there of 600 Jews in one afternoon, after which his religion went on to conquer most of the known world. Does not the name say it all?

Baroness Barran: I really cannot comment on that; I will leave it to the noble Lord to decide for himself. ...

Baroness Hussein-Ece (Liberal Democrat): My Lords, can the Minister confirm that what was subsequently uncovered by several Ofsted reports, two separate inquiries by the Department for Education, Birmingham council and multiple court judgments was that there was no organised plot but that a small cluster of Birmingham schools, including three run by an academy trust, suffered from a range of issues—poor governance, a lack of child protection safeguards and a failure of leadership? Does the Minister agree that what millions of Muslim families in this country want most of all is for their children to have a good education, to be integrated and not to suffer the consequences of this incident?

Baroness Barran: I absolutely agree with the noble Baroness that the vast majority of Muslim families in this country want exactly what she described. I have had the pleasure of visiting a number of excellent faith schools of all faiths, including Muslim schools, which comply with promoting fundamental British values, as all in your Lordships' House would agree. ...

Baroness Sanderson of Welton (Conservative): ... it is a complicated situation, but the podcast itself—the reporting as per the original Question—was at times quite worryingly skewed. Does my noble friend think that schools are doing enough to challenge extremism, or, as a result of this podcast, are they afraid of being labelled racist?

Baroness Barran: My noble friend is right that these are very sensitive issues, but challenging intolerant, racist or discriminatory views should be seen as part of a school's wider anti-bullying and safeguarding duties. Actively promoting British values means that any opinions or behaviours that contradict them need to be challenged. I hope my noble friend will be reassured that a survey in 2021 showed that 87% of school leaders reported feeling confident that their school could facilitate conversations around extremism and radicalisation.

To read the full transcript see

<https://hansard.parliament.uk/lords/2022-03-28/debates/7D239720-9C29-48AF-BEC0-94D27331CCBD/SchoolsExtremismAndIntolerance>

The podcast referred to above can be heard at

<https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2022/podcasts/trojan-horse-affair.html>

Senedd Oral Answers

Eradicating Antisemitism

Sam Rowlands (Conservative) [OQ57901] What action is the Welsh Government taking to eradicate antisemitism in Wales?

The First Minister (Mark Drakeford): ... For over a decade, the Welsh Government has funded the Holocaust Educational Trust to provide its Lessons from Auschwitz programme in Wales. That, and other actions to address antisemitism, will be reflected in our anti-racist Wales action plan, to be published later this year.

Sam Rowlands: ... I'm sure all Members from across the Chamber here today agree that antisemitism is abhorrent to us all, and all efforts must be made to ensure that this and all forms of racism are stamped out in Wales. And as the First Minister will know, back in May 2017, Welsh Government adopted the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance's definition of antisemitism. Nevertheless, I do find it deeply concerning that the majority of universities in Wales still haven't adopted this definition for themselves. Whilst you may not have direct control over universities in Wales, the Government does provide significant funding, and, as First Minister, you have a significant role in setting the tone and expectation of how people, public bodies and publicly funded organisations present themselves here in Wales. So, in light of this, First Minister, will you join me in urging and setting the expectation that all of our universities in Wales should adopt the IHRA definition of antisemitism?

Mark Drakeford: Well, Llywydd, it is my expectation that no public body in Wales tolerates antisemitism, Islamophobia or any other form of discrimination against groups in our society. As the Member said, the Welsh Government has adopted the IHRA definition of antisemitism. The Minister for education has been discussing this matter over recent months. He met with Lord Mann, who is carrying out the review of antisemitism policies for the UK Government currently, and the Welsh Government has provided evidence to that review. The Minister for Education met Lord Mann back in November and this issue was discussed there. He met with the Union of Jewish Students here in Wales at the end of February and once again this matter was raised. He has a meeting with senior university staff on Monday, I think, of next week, and this item is on the agenda. So, the Member can be assured that the Welsh Government is drawing this matter to the attention of universities across Wales when we have the opportunity to do so, and setting that discussion in the context of the general expectation we set about public bodies doing everything they can to combat discrimination. However, as the Member said, universities are autonomous bodies. They are not controlled, nor should they be controlled, by the Welsh Government. We will discuss this matter and bring it to their attention, but

as George Freeman, the Conservative Minister for higher education in the UK Government said just this weekend, free and open academic discourse underpinned by the values of freedom is fundamental, and that freedom applies to universities to make their own decisions within the matters that fall within their own ambit.

<https://record.senedd.wales/Plenary/12661#C418670>

Northern Ireland Assembly

The Northern Ireland Assembly is now dissolved. Elections to the Assembly will take place on Thursday 5th May 2022.

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Israel

House of Commons Written Answer

Israel: Palestinians

David Jones (Conservative) [145830] To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, with reference to the report of the UN Special Rapporteur on the situation of Human Rights in the occupied Palestinian territories, published on 21 March 2022, what assessment he has made of the implications for his policies of the conclusion that Israel has imposed upon Palestine an apartheid reality in a post-apartheid world.

Amdanda Milling: We do not agree with the use of this terminology. Any judgment on whether serious crimes under international law have occurred is a matter for judicial decision, rather than for governments or non-judicial bodies. As a friend of Israel, we have a regular dialogue on human rights. This includes encouraging the Government of Israel to abide by its obligations under international law and do all it can to uphold the values of equality for all.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2022-03-23/145830>

The report referred to above can be read at

https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/2022-03/A_HRC_49_87_AdvanceUneditedVersion.docx

House of Lords Written Answers

West Bank: Migrant Workers

Baroness Janke (Liberal Democrat) [HL6931] To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the restrictions on foreign citizens seeking to reside or work in the West Bank, published by the government of Israel in February.

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: The UK raises the issue of freedom of movement and access into and out of the Occupied Palestinian Territories 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.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2022-03-14/hl6931>

West Bank: Demolitions

Baroness Janke (Liberal Democrat) [HL6933] To ask Her Majesty's Government what

assessment they have made of the map of (1) house demolitions, and (2) household displacements, in Israel and the West Bank, published by the Israeli Committee Against House Demolitions in February.

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: In all but the most exceptional of circumstances, demolitions and evictions are contrary to International Humanitarian Law. On 19 January, the former Minister for the Middle East urged the Government of Israel to stop these practices. The UK raises these issues 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/2022-03-14/hl6933>

The map referred to above can be read at

<https://icahd.org/maps-showing-demolitions-and-displacements-during-2021/>

West Bank: Demolition

Baroness Sheehan (Liberal Democrat) [HL6945] To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of (1) the policy of the government of Israel of demolishing the homes of suspected Palestinian terrorists, and (2) the restrictions on demonstrations against this policy.

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: In all but the most exceptional of circumstances, demolitions and evictions are contrary to International Humanitarian Law. On 19 January, the former Minister for Middle East urged the Government of Israel to stop these practices. The UK raises these issues 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/2022-03-14/hl6945>

The Minister's comment referred to above can be read at

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

Ahmad Manasra

Baroness Sheehan (Liberal Democrat) [HL6946] To ask Her Majesty's Government what representations they have made to the government of Israel concerning the incarceration of Ahmad Manasra for almost six years, from the age of 13.

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: We 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. We remain committed to working with Israel to secure improvements to the practices surrounding children in detention and raise this with the Israeli Ministry of Justice.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2022-03-14/hl6946>

Occupied Territories: Health Services

Baroness Sheehan (Liberal Democrat) [HL6947] To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of recent reports of the restrictions placed on healthcare services in the West Bank and Gaza, including the distribution of COVID-19 vaccines, resulting from transit restrictions imposed by the government of Israel.

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: The UK regularly raises the issue of freedom of movement and access into and out of the Occupied Palestinian Territories, including for healthcare services, with the Israeli authorities.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2022-03-14/hl6947>

Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office

Liz Truss: I am deeply saddened by another terrible terror attack in Israel today. My thoughts are with the Israeli people, especially those affected. The UK condemns this horrifying and senseless violence.

<https://twitter.com/trussliz/status/1508892272124997643>

Updated Travel Advice: Israel

<https://www.gov.uk/foreign-travel-advice/israel>

Updated Travel Advice: The Occupied Palestinian Territories

<https://www.gov.uk/foreign-travel-advice/the-occupied-palestinian-territories>

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Other Relevant Information

UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights

High Commissioner for Human Rights: It is Time for States and Societies to Address the Complex Legacy of Past Forms of Racism and Exclusion, including Colonial Exploitation and the Trade in Enslaved Africans, and Deliver Reparatory Justice

... Michelle Bachelet, United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, said the debate today celebrated the millions of voices around the globe who relentlessly – and courageously – fought racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance. Still today, millions of people ... continued to be confronted by racism, racial discrimination, inequality and exclusion. This could often take the form of Islamophobia, anti-Semitism, religious discrimination and intolerance, affecting Muslim, Arab, Jewish and other communities around the world.

Ms. Bachelet said it was vital – and urgent – that the international community united to accelerate the pace in the fight against racism and racial discrimination. States and societies must address the complex legacy and lasting consequences of past forms of racism and exclusion ...

Mary Kluk, Director and Board Chairperson of the Durban Holocaust and Genocide Centre, National Vice-President of the South Africa Jewish Board of Deputies and President of the Africa Australia Region of the World Jewish Congress, said South Africa had an extensive history of exclusion, which tragically continued in different forms today. ...

She underlined the importance of joint efforts and shared a short uplifting experience of hers. Six years ago, in South Africa, a man of prominence made a vicious anti-Semitic statement where he expressed his admiration for Hitler, among other things. She spent six years pursuing him with no avail, until last year, when he reached out with the intention to meet up. He explained that he went through a process of remorse and wanted to make amends, so instead of going through a punitive process, Ms. Kluk engaged with him and he agreed to spend an extensive period of time at the Johannesburg Holocaust Centre. He then expressed publicly his apologies where he recognised the danger of his previous statement. They had developed a meaningful relationship and he was now campaigning against racism in South Africa. That was the power of restorative justice, Ms. Kluk concluded. ...

To read the full press release see

<https://www.ungeneva.org/en/news-media/meeting-summary/2022/03/la-journee-internationale-pour-lelimination-de-la-discrimination>

Human Rights Council continues General Debate on Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Forms of Intolerance

... speakers welcomed the opportunity to express their commitment to countering racism and racial discrimination in all its forms, both at home and abroad. Racism, discrimination, xenophobia and intolerance in all its forms were strongly opposed. The United Nations Secretary-General, Antonio Guterres, was quoted as saying that racism continued to poison institutions, social structures, and everyday life in every society. The Durban Declaration was a firm commitment of the international community to tackle racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia, and related intolerance at the national, regional and international levels. ...

However, more than 20 years after the adoption of the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action, racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia, hate speech and related intolerance remained widespread worldwide. The objectives set out in the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action were far from being attained. ... The international community needed to come together to condemn racial discrimination in all its forms and manifestations, as well as cultivate a culture of tolerance, racial equality and genuine respect of all human rights of all peoples. ...

Speakers regretted that despite positive steps racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and other forms of intolerance still constituted the reality of hundreds of thousands of victims of discrimination and hatred on the basis of religion, race or colour, and more particularly amongst immigrants and asylum seekers. ... Extremist policies continued to spread, promoting stereotypical images of ethnic and religious minorities. Islamophobia and anti-Semitism were denounced. Concerns over growing prejudices, hatred, and religious profiling against Muslims in many parts of the world were expressed. Repeated attacks against Jewish communities in recent years revealed the extent of the hatred against Jews worldwide. Many of these perpetrators were being radicalised online. Violence against any religious, ethnic or other minority community needed to be forcefully condemned by all nations. ...

Great concern was expressed about the concerted efforts by some, to obliterate and undermine the implementation of the Durban Declaration. ... Some speakers believed that the Durban refrain promoted racism and xenophobia by weaponising the history of apartheid against the people of Israel. Thirty-eight democratic nations had refused to celebrate the twentieth year of the Durban legacy of hate. Despite aiming at combatting racism and intolerance, the Durban Declaration was instead symbolic of the enduring scourge of anti-Semitism. In times of global crisis, people looked for a scapegoat for their problems and in recent times, that scapegoat was also often Israel, the Jewish State, and the Jews among nations. ...

To read the full press release see

<https://www.ohchr.org/en/press-releases/2022/03/human-rights-council-continues-general-debate-racism-racial-discrimination>

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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>

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/>

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Consultations

** new or updated today

**** closes today**

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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