



Political Affairs Digest

A daily summary of political events affecting the Jewish Community

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House Commons Debate

The Queen's Speech: Achieving Economic Growth

col 743 Crispin Blunt (Conservative): ... I understand the purpose of the boycott Bill, which is described as legislation to "prevent public bodies engaging in boycotts that undermine community cohesion."

However, I think we need to be a little careful. ... It is designed to take away people's ability to make a statement of their beliefs about the policy of a nation that is in gross breach of international law. Obviously the nation in question is Israel, and obviously the community cohesion being thought about relates to antisemitism within communities. I fully appreciate the Government's concerns about the matter, but if a nation is in gross breach of the fourth Geneva convention, has invaded and then settled an occupied territory, and is killing journalists in that territory who are observing what is going on, we might just want to reflect on what capacity or ability there is in our society to say, "We don't think that's right," notwithstanding the obvious associated issues of antisemitism. ...

col 725 Chris Grayling (Conservative): ... it is noticeable that the European Union is preventing the United Kingdom from participating in Horizon Europe, while allowing the Israelis to do so. That does not feel to me like an awful lot of good will from their side, and that is to be regretted. ...

col 777 Chris Loder (Conservative): ... I am delighted to see that the Animal Welfare (Kept Animals) Bill will be coming back in this parliamentary Session. ... I hope that, during our debates on the Bill, we will also discuss the unnecessary non-stun slaughter of animals for supply chain purposes. ...

To read the full transcript see

<https://hansard.parliament.uk/commons/2022-05-18/debates/27E5BBC2-C573-45B8-891B-F1CFF1C3E977/AchievingEconomicGrowth>

House of Commons Written Answer

Islamophobia: Scotland

Afzal Khan (Labour) [900011] To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland, what recent discussions he has had with the Scottish Government on tackling Islamophobia in Scotland.

Rachel Maclean: Tackling Islamophobia is a matter of devolved competence in Scotland

The UK Government is committed to eradicating anti-Muslim hatred and all forms of religious prejudice, and I know that the Scottish Government shares that commitment.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2022-05-10/900011>

Office for National Statistics

Marriages in England and Wales: 2019

<https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/birthsdeathsandmarriages/marriagecohabitationandcivilpartnerships/bulletins/marriagesinenglandandwalesprovisional/2019>

Data

<https://www.ons.gov.uk/file?uri=%2fpeoplepopulationandcommunity%2fbirthsdeathsandmarriages%2fmarriagecohabitationandcivilpartnerships%2fdatasets%2fmarriagesinenglandandwales2013%2f2019/marriages2019workbook.xlsx>

Crown Prosecution Service (CPS)

Co-founder of right-wing terror group convicted

The co-founder of National Action, a small and secretive right-wing group which espoused hateful violent rhetoric, has been convicted of being a member of a proscribed organisation.

Alex Davies, 28, was found guilty ... by a jury at Winchester Crown Court.

National Action was jointly founded by Davies in 2013 but joined the list of extremist groups proscribed by the government in December 2016 after it drew greater attention to itself by openly celebrating the murder of Jo Cox MP.

Nick Price, Head of the CPS Counter Terrorism Division, said: "It is clear that Davies secretly set up a new right-wing terror group after the ban on National Action and had a leading role in recruiting people to join the group.

"My team has worked hard to prove that he was a willing and important member of the National Action and worked to avoid the ban and keep the racist and hateful views of National Action alive. This included travelling thousands of miles to meet new members. I am glad that he has been convicted today for his crimes."

<https://www.cps.gov.uk/cps/news/co-founder-right-wing-terror-group-convicted>

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Israel

See also the Commons debate on the Queen's Speech which is included in the Home Affairs section above, and the Lords debate on the Queen's Speech which is included in the Foreign Affairs section below.

House of Commons Written Answers

The following two questions both received the same answer

Arms Trade: Israel

Beth Winter (Labour) [991] To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, if she will publish how many arms exports applications to Israel her Department has (a) licensed and (b) rejected in each year since 2010.

Beth Winter (Labour) [992] To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, if she will publish the value of all arms export licenses to Israel in each year since 2010.

Ranil Jayawardena: HM Government publishes Official Statistics (on a quarterly and annual basis) for export licences granted, refused and revoked to all destinations on [GOV.UK](https://www.gov.uk) and these reports contain detailed information, including the overall value, the type (e.g. Military, Other), and a summary of the items covered by these licences. The data for 2021 was published on 12th April 2022.

The Consolidated EU and National Arms Export Licensing Criteria, was superseded by Strategic Export Licensing Criteria, announced in the Written Statement of 8th December 2021, [HCWS449](#).

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2022-05-11/991>

and

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2022-05-11/992>

The following two questions both received the same answer

Shireen Abu Akleh

Afzal Khan (Labour) [1541] To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, if her Department will take steps to encourage an independent inquiry by the parties involved into the death of Al Jazeera journalist Shireen Abu Aqleh.

Afzal Khan (Labour) [1542] To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether she has made any representations to her Israeli counterpart on the murder of Al Jazeera journalist Shireen Abu Aqleh.

Amanda Milling: On 11 May, I publicly expressed my sadness upon hearing news of the tragic death of veteran Palestinian Al Jazeera journalist Shireen Abu Aqleh, and called for a thorough investigation. The Foreign Secretary also made this clear in a statement on 12 May. The UK Ambassador to Israel has reiterated the importance of an investigation with the Israeli authorities. The safety of journalists across the globe is vital and they must be protected when carrying out their critical work.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2022-05-13/1541>

and

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2022-05-13/1542>

The statements referred to above can be read at

<https://twitter.com/amandamilling/status/1524396468370653184>

and

<https://twitter.com/trussliz/status/1524648916012220417>

UK Parliament Early Day Motion

Alistair Carmichael (Liberal Democrat) [77] **Killing of Palestinian-American reporter Shireen Abu Aqla** – That this House condemns unreservedly the killing of Palestinian-American Al Jazeera reporter Shireen Abu Aqla in the Jenin refugee camp while reporting on a raid by Israeli forces; notes that last year UNESCO recorded fifty-five deaths of journalists while working; recognises that Shireen was an experienced and popular

journalist across the Middle East and in Palestine in particular and that her loss will be deeply felt by colleagues and others across the region; notes that Al Jazeera producer Ali Samoudi was also injured in the shooting; calls on the UK Government to make representations to the Government of Israel to allow an independent investigation into the shooting so that those responsible can be held to account; and condemns further the violence inflicted on mourners at the funeral of Shireen Abu Aqla, described by the leaders of fifteen Christian denominations as a violent intrusion by Israeli police.

<https://edm.parliament.uk/early-day-motion/59781>

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Foreign Affairs

House of Lords Debate

The Queen's Speech

col 488 Lord Mendelsohn (Labour): ... My Lords, the UK Government played an important role in the discussions with Iran which first led to the JCPOA and today are part of an important negotiation being led by the United States for a new treaty. There are many voices pressing caution. ...

col 489 Today Iran's capacity is very significantly advanced and it is a lesson, if ever we needed it, that it is not just about signing agreements but about ensuring that provisions are implemented and the consequences properly managed. ...

The revolutionary guard was not present at the 2015 talks and did not like the deal. As Agha concludes, it is unequivocally in control now ... We have seen its role in creating parallel institutions around the region and supporting destabilisation ... It is not just about how it has increased popular mobilisation forces in Iraq, or various militias in Syria, and not just about Hezbollah in Lebanon, whose rule has destroyed and crippled the country and whose electoral setbacks still mean that it will exert much destructive influence. It is not just about its increased activity and support for Hamas and Islamic jihad in the Palestinian territories, setting loose terrorism in Israel to undermine the Palestinian Authority and push further away, as if it was not far away already, any opportunity to re-engage in any form of peace process. Its influence with the Houthis in Yemen continually undermines the fragile ceasefire. ...

col 498 Lord Campbell-Savours (Labour): ... My Lords, in the 1990s, Edwina Currie and I were invited to Moscow to undertake a series of talks in the Duma on democracy. During that visit, and on a later visits under different auspices, I gained two distinct impressions. First, our embassy staff were convinced that the embassy was bugged, with its staff under surveillance. Secondly, Russians I met seemed convinced to the point of paranoia that American-sponsored nuclear deployments encircling Russia were a constant threat to Russian security. The problem was that both accusations were essentially true.

That belief, set against a background of 26 million losses in the Second World War, stands at the heart of Russia's paranoia. This is why decent, innocent and patriotic Russian citizens, when additionally subject to propaganda on Ukraine's Nazification, believe that the West is conspiring to undermine the Russian state. It is that combination—the perceived Nazification of Ukraine, the 26 million losses and the nuclear threat—which underlines and reinforces Putin's grossly exaggerated case. He has been able to justify his actions and appalling brutality by drawing on the work of Lev Golinkin, a prominent Jewish writer with impeccable credentials, who, in his detailed 19-page report, "Neo-Nazis and the Far Right Are On the March in Ukraine" ... details concerns over what he describes as "dark nationalism". His case is endorsed by Human Rights Watch, Freedom House, the

Simon Wiesenthal Center, the US-funded Radio Free Europe, Amnesty International and the World Jewish Congress. His report details the scale of alleged Nazification of Ukrainian institutions, the sponsorship of violence, the role of the Azov Battalion with its roots in extremism, the persecution of Jews, Roma and LGBT groups, the treatment of the liberal media, attitudes to the Holocaust and the banning of the Russian language.

col 499 We cannot simply ignore the impact of such reporting on Russian public opinion. It is influencing events and attitudes to military intervention. Our democracies are identified with these reactionary movements and our response is ill-judged. ... We need to rethink our current and post- Putin strategy. We do not need a humiliated Russia and a Versailles; there would be no real winners. ...

col 544 **Lord Purvis of Tweed (Liberal Democrat):** ... Winding his speech from these Benches in the first debate on the humble Address in Her Majesty's reign in 1952 was Viscount Samuel. I will close with his words from *Hansard*.

"For five years I had the great honour, as representative of the British Crown and under the supervision of the League of Nations, to preside over the Administration which laid the foundations of the modern State in Palestine. That task was accomplished and all went well for some years afterwards, but of late there have been conflict and war. Although the war is over, there is still no peace, and grave suffering has been caused, particularly to the Arab refugees. I most earnestly hope that the United Nations now will take active steps to bring about a settlement. ... I end by quoting famous words, in their literal sense as well as in the symbolic, mystical sense in which they are familiar in the Churches throughout the world: 'Pray for the peace of Jerusalem: they shall prosper that love thee.'"—[[Official Report, 6/11/1952; cols. 103-04.](#)]

We will see, even if war is over, that there may still be no peace and there may be grave suffering. We should strive to ensure that the future does not go further back but goes forward. ...

To read the full transcript see

<https://hansard.parliament.uk/lords/2022-05-18/debates/23276162-0466-48BA-9FB3-2017ECBCAA37/Queen'SSpeech>

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Relevant Legislation ** new or updated today

UK Parliament

Higher Education (Freedom of Speech) Bill

<https://bills.parliament.uk/bills/2862>

Online Safety Bill

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

Schools Bill

<https://bills.parliament.uk/bills/3156>

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Consultations

** new or updated today

Independent Review of Social Cohesion and Resilience (closing date 2 June 2022)

<https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/independent-review-of-social-cohesion-and-resilience-call-for-evidence/independent-review-of-social-cohesion-and-resilience-call-for-evidence>

Public Participation at the Scottish Parliament (closing date 30 June 2022)

<https://yourviews.parliament.scot/cppp/participation-2022/>

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The Scottish Council of Jewish Communities (SCoJeC) is Scottish Charitable Incorporated Organisation SC029438