



Political Affairs Digest

A daily summary of political events affecting the Jewish Community

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UK Parliament, Public Bill Committee Debate

Online Safety Bill (Sixth sitting)

col 258 Kirsty Blackman (SNP): ... Those with a minority characteristic are at higher risk of online harm, but the risk facing those with more than one minority characteristic is substantially higher ...

I have spoken specifically about people being attacked on Twitter, Facebook and other social media platforms, but people in certain groups face an additional significant risk. If a young gay woman does not have a community around her, or if a young trans person does not know anybody else who is trans, they are much more likely to use the internet to reach out, to try to find people who are like them, to try to understand. If they are not accepted by their family, school or workplace, they are much more likely to go online to find a community and support—to find what is out there in terms of assistance—but using the internet as a vulnerable, at-risk person puts them at much more significant risk. This goes back to my earlier arguments about people requiring anonymity to protect themselves when using the internet to find their way through a difficult situation in which they have no role models. ...

This is not about saying that someone with only one protected characteristic is not at risk; it is about recognising the intersectionality of risk and the fact that the risk faced by those who fit into more than one minority group is much higher than that faced by those who fit into just one. ...

Chris Philp [Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport]: ... the Government ... support the concept that people with multiple intersecting characteristics, or those who are members of multiple groups, may experience—or probably do experience—elevated levels of harm and abuse online compared with others. ...

col 259 There is a technical legal reason why the use of the singular characteristic and group singular is adopted here. Section 6(c) of the Interpretation Act 1978 sets out how words in Bills and Acts are interpreted, namely that such words in the singular also cover the plural. That means that references in the singular, such as “individuals with a certain characteristic” in clause 10(6)(d), also cover characteristics in the plural. A reference to

the singular implies a reference to the plural.

Will those compounded risks, where they exist, be taken into account? The answer is yes, because the assessments must assess the risk in front of them. Where there is evidence that multiple protected characteristics or the membership of multiple groups produce compounded risks, as the hon. Lady set out, the risk assessment has to reflect that. ...

The critical point is that, because there is evidence of high levels of compounded risk when people have more than one characteristic, that must be reflected in the risk assessment, otherwise it is inadequate. ...

col 263 Maria Miller (Conservative): ... does the Minister anticipate that Ofcom might be able to insist that a third-party provider be involved if there is significant evidence that the measures put in place by a platform are ineffective? ...

Chris Philp: We have deliberately avoided being too prescriptive about precisely how the duty is met. We have pointed to age verification as an example of how the duty can be met without saying that that is the only way. We would not want to bind Ofcom's hands, or indeed the hands of platforms. Clearly, using a third party is another way of delivering the outcome. If a platform were unable to demonstrate to Ofcom that it could deliver the required outcome using its own methods, Ofcom may well tell it to use a third party instead. The critical point is that the outcome must be delivered. That is the message that the social media firms, Ofcom and the courts need to hear when they look at our proceedings. ...

col 270 Alex Davies-Jones (Labour): ... I want to recount my own experience on this issue. [The Minister] mentioned that anybody in receipt of anonymous abuse on social media should report it to the police, especially if it is illegal. On Thursday, I dared to tweet my opinions on the controversial Depp-Heard case in America. As a result of putting my head above the parapet, my Twitter mentions were an absolute sewer of rape threats and death threats, mainly from anonymous accounts. My Twitter profile was mocked up—I had devil horns and a Star of David on my forehead. It was vile. I blocked, deleted and moved on, but I also reported those accounts to Twitter, especially those that sent me rape threats and death threats.

That was on Thursday, and to date no action has been taken and I have not received any response from Twitter about any of the accounts I reported. The Minister said they should be reported to the police. If I reported all those accounts to the police, I would still be there now reporting them. How does he anticipate that this will be resourced so that social media companies can tackle the issue? That was the interaction resulting from just one tweet that I sent on Thursday, and anonymous accounts sent me a barrage of hate and illegal activity.

Chris Philp: The shadow Minister raises a very good point. Of course, what she experienced on Twitter was despicable, and I am sure that all members of the Committee would unreservedly condemn the perpetrators who put that content on there. Once the Bill is passed, there will be legal duties on Twitter to remove illegal content. At the moment, they do not exist, and there is no legal obligation for Twitter to remove that content, even though much of it, from the sound of it, would cross one of various legal thresholds. Perhaps some messages qualify as malicious communication, and others might cross other criminal thresholds. That legal duty does not exist at the moment, but when this Bill passes, for the first time there will be that duty to protect not just the shadow Minister but users across the whole country. ...

col 271 Kim Leadbeater (Labour): ... In protecting against online harm while preserving fundamental rights and values, we must also address the threats posed to those involved in the democratic process. Let me be clear: this is not self-serving. It is about not just MPs but all political candidates locally and nationally and those whose jobs facilitate the execution of our democratic process and political life ...

Many other groups in society are also subjected to a disproportionate amount of targeted abuse, but those working in and around politics sadly receive more than almost any other people in this country, with an associated specific set of risks and harms. That does not

mean messages gently, or even firmly, requesting us to vote one way or another—a staple of democratic debate—but messages of hate, abuse and threats intended to scare people in public office, grind them down, unfairly influence their voting intentions or do them physical and psychological harm. That simply cannot be an acceptable part of political life. ...

col 272 ... we continue to see significant volumes of racist, sexist and homophobic hate-filled abuse and threats online to politicians of all parties. That is unacceptable in itself, but we must ask whether this toxic environment helps to keep decent people in politics or, indeed, attracts good people into politics, so that our democracy can prosper into the future across the political spectrum. ...

Currently, the platforms look at their own rules to determine what constitutes freedom of speech or expression and what is hateful speech or harm. ... There is no consistency across platforms, and we therefore urgently need more clarity and a legal duty in place to remove that content quickly. ...

col 274 **Chris Philp:** ... I agree with both of them that abuse and illegal activity directed at anyone, including people running for elected office, is unacceptable. ...

col 275 In relation to the technicality of these amendments, what they are asking for is in the Bill already but in different places. This clause is about protecting content of “democratic importance” ... What the hon. Members are talking about is different. They are talking about abuse and illegal activities, such as rape threats, that people get on social media, particularly female MPs, as they both pointed out. I can point to two other places in the Bill where what they are asking for is delivered. ...

col 277 **Alex Davies-Jones:** ... The duties ... require platforms to have special terms and processes for handling journalistic and democratically important content. In respect of journalistic content, platforms are also required to provide an expedited appeals process for removed posts, and terms specifying how they will define journalistic content. ...

As the Bill stands, we feel that there is too much discretion for platforms. They are required to define “journalistic” content, a role that they are completely unsuited to and, from what I can gather, do not want. ... Individuals intent on causing harm are likely to apply to take advantage of either of those duties; masquerading as journalists or claiming democratic importance in whatever harm they are causing, and that could apply to almost anything. ... Ultimately, treating “journalistic” and “democratically important” content differently is unworkable, leaving platforms to make impossible judgments over, for example, when and for how long an issue becomes a matter of reasonable public debate, or in what settings a person is acting as a journalist. As the Minister knows, the duties outlined in the clause could enable a far-right activist who was standing in an election, or potentially even just supporting candidates in elections, to use all social media platforms. That might allow far-right figures to be re-platformed on to social media sites where they would be free to continue spreading hate. ...

col 278 Hacked Off provided me with a list of people it found who have claimed to be journalists and who would seek to exploit the journalistic content duty, despite being banned from social media because they are racists or bad actors. First is Charles C. Johnson, a far-right activist who describes himself as an “investigative journalist”. Already banned from Twitter for saying he would “take out” a civil rights activist, he is also alleged to be a holocaust denier.

Secondly, we have Robert Stacy McCain. Robert has been banned from Twitter for participating in targeted abuse. He was a journalist for *The Washington Post*, but is alleged to have also been a member of the League of the South, a far-right group known to include racists. Then, there is Richard B. Spencer, a far-right journalist and former editor, only temporarily banned for using overlapping accounts. He was pictured making the Nazi salute and has repeated Nazi propaganda. When Trump became President, he encouraged people to “party like it’s 1933”. Sadly, the list goes on and on. ...

col 279 **Chris Philp:** ... content of democratic and journalistic importance are expressly referenced as areas where codes of practice will have to be published by Ofcom, which will do further work on and consult on that. ...

If someone from the far right, as the shadow Minister described, was spewing out vile hatred, racism or antisemitism, and tried to use those clauses, the fact that they might be standing in an election might well be taken into account. However, in performing that balancing exercise, the social media platforms and Ofcom acting as enforcers—and the court if it ever got judicially reviewed—would weigh those things up and find that taking into account content of democratic importance would not be sufficient to outweigh considerations around vile racism, antisemitism or misogyny. ...

Alex Davies-Jones: The Minister mentions that it would be taken into account. How long does he anticipate it would be taken into account for, especially given the nature of an election? A short campaign could be a number of weeks, or something could be posted a day before an election, be deemed democratically important and have very serious and dangerous ramifications.

Chris Philp: As I say, if content was racist, antisemitic or flagrantly misogynistic, the balancing exercise is performed and the democratic context may be taken into account. I do not think the scales would tip in favour of leaving the content up. Even during an election period, I think common sense dictates that.

To be clear on the timing point that the hon. Lady asked about, the definition of democratic importance is not set out in hard-edged terms. It does not say, “Well, if you are in a short election period, any candidate’s content counts as of democratic importance.” It is not set out in a manner that is as black and white as that. If, for example, somebody was a candidate but it was just racist abuse, I am not sure how even that would count as democratic importance, even during an election period, because it would just be abuse; it would not be contributing to any democratic debate. Equally, somebody might not be a candidate, or might have been a candidate historically, but might be contributing to a legitimate debate after an election. That might be seen as being of democratic importance, even though they were not actually a candidate. ...

To read the full transcript see

[https://hansard.parliament.uk/commons/2022-06-07/debates/90e5ab5b-a47b-4750-9c47-3f0ac7cd46eb/OnlineSafetyBill\(SixthSitting\)](https://hansard.parliament.uk/commons/2022-06-07/debates/90e5ab5b-a47b-4750-9c47-3f0ac7cd46eb/OnlineSafetyBill(SixthSitting))

Senedd Ministerial Statements

Tackling institutionalised and systemic racism—Anti-racist Wales Action Plan

Minister for Social Justice (Jane Hutt): ... Last October, the whole Senedd endorsed a motion to support wholeheartedly the global fight to root out racism and racist ideology and strive towards a more equal Wales, tackling systemic and structural race inequality. Following our consultation last year, we've continued to co-design with black, Asian and minority ethnic people across Wales the actions we must take to tackle institutionalised and systemic racism. I'm therefore proud to be publishing ... the anti-racist Wales action plan. At its heart is a shared vision to create an anti-racist nation by 2030, where everyone is treated as an equal citizen and is enabled to thrive and prosper.

The plan sets out the goals and actions we will take over the next 24 months, covering all aspects of public life that shape and influence the experience and life chances of ethnic minority people. We want to make sure that we continue to walk in the shoes of people with lived experience, and that the experiences of individuals and communities keep shaping our thinking and the decisions we make. We developed the plan by involving people and communities and in collaboration with organisations across all parts of Wales, and this will continue as we move to implementation.

To provide the necessary and continuing confidence that this plan is being implemented an accountability group will be established ... It will mainly consist of ethnic minority people, and will be further strengthened by including experts with lived experience of racism, and will benefit from evidence and insight coordinated from our recently established race disparity unit.

We knew that we needed to shape the goals and actions with ethnic minority people, so we made valuing lived experience one of the values underpinning how we developed the plan. And, quite rightly, we were also asked to embrace the values of a rights-based approach and that of openness and transparency. Ethnic minority people's expectations are clear: they want action that makes a meaningful difference to their lives. An anti-racist approach is a fundamental shift that we need to take. Adopting an anti-racist approach requires the Welsh Government, public services and us all to be proactive in identifying and tackling systemic racism in all aspects of how Wales works. It requires us to look at how racism is built into our policies, formal and informal rules, and the way we work and involve people in the decisions that affect them, and then do something about it.

This plan will play an important part in creating a united and fairer Wales for all. ...

We are committed to provide the leadership, our resources and our influence to tackle systemic and institutionalised racism within Wales. This is a whole-of-Government plan, with commitments and actions from across ministerial portfolios and within the Welsh Government civil service. ...

We're asking everyone to work with us in creating an anti-racist Wales, a Wales in which we can all be proud to belong and in which each of us will thrive. ...

Altaf Hussain (Conservative): ... Despite the Welsh Government's previous efforts to eradicate racism in Wales, the number of racially motivated hate crimes is on the rise. It is estimated that 65 per cent of hate crimes are racially motivated. These sorts of facts have led some to consider Wales as the most racist country in the United Kingdom. Many young people from ethnic minority backgrounds believe racism is just a part of normal life for them and no Government plan will stop the racism they receive. ...

A BBC report into racism in Wales found young people in general don't always feel safe when they leave their homes, out of fear of what might happen to them. The Welsh Government's plans are undermined by the reluctance of the police in Wales and England to acknowledge institutional racism within their organisations. This is despite complaints of young ethnic minorities suffering injuries during their time in police custody.

Trust in public services, including Government policies, can often be heavily influenced by the relationship with enforcement agencies and services on the ground. Despite the BAME communities making up around 6 per cent of the Welsh population, only 3 per cent from ethnic minority backgrounds are appointed to public office positions. Within the general job market, employees from ethnic minority backgrounds earned 7.5 per cent less than their white counterparts. All these issues can have major implications for the mental and physical health of people of all ages from ethnic minorities. The notions of self worth and acceptance are things we all want. For ethnic minorities, these fears are sometimes a sad reality.

My question to the Minister is: the Welsh Government have made previous attempts to end racism and discrimination in Wales; with their new programme, can the Minister outline what they have done differently to prepare a plan to address the issues they have previously failed to solve? ...

Jane Hutt: ... Now, this is a leadership issue; it's a representation issue. ...

We have to actually get rid of policies, systems, structures and processes that result in very different outcomes for ethnic minority people. I've already mentioned the fact that we have a rich contribution of black, Asian and minority ethnic people to our society, and it can be felt everywhere, in every sphere of life, but not enough has been done to ensure that all can play their part, and to have that opportunity

and that confidence that they are not going to face barriers as they grow up, go through school, education, opportunities. It is important that we do have those goals and outcomes. ...

... crime and justice ... is not devolved. ... we would rather we were responsible for justice, and are pursuing the case ... But I think, when this is published, you will welcome, I'm sure, the criminal justice anti-racism action plan, because it is those police and crime commissioners and chief constables who've agreed to take this approach, and what they would like to see is one public service approach to advance race equality across Wales.

I just want to say, in terms of hate crime, we fund the Wales hate support centre. It's run by Victim Support Cymru—24/7 support, advocacy and advice, and also it's the first service in the UK to offer a national children and young person friendly hate crime service. And, of course, the campaign, actually, is part of our Hate hurts Wales campaign, which we've looked at, and it's going to help us identify where we need to address issues. The campaign highlighted the hugely negative impact of hate crime on victims in their own lives, and also referred to the bystanders who actually do not call out the racism that we all know about. I think it's important that we do see that race hate crime is recorded in Wales, and that our national hate crime statistics did show an increase, but it also highlights why our work in this area is needed, and that's why our hate crime in schools project is so important and our community cohesion programme as well. ...

Sioned Williams (Plaid Cymru): ... It's a sad fact, isn't it, that it took a global pandemic and a movement ignited by a horrific murder in the United States, that of George Floyd, to open the eyes of many in Wales to the blatant truth of race inequality and its devastating and too often deadly consequences—a truth lived by thousands of Welsh black, Asian and minority ethnic people, an everyday experience of living with prejudice, with disadvantage, with fear. ...

I welcome the acknowledgement in the plan that we must do things differently if we want to see different results, and the need for goals to be set, be reviewed and monitored better to ensure agile, robust, tangible actions that will have a real effect on people's lives. Given that implementation has been identified as a major failing in past strategies, what will ensure accountability and transparency around the plan's measures and goals? ...

By 2030 the plan aims for our nation to be free of that hatred that scars, oppresses and defers dreams. We must recognise that it is not enough to ensure that the structural racism that exists in our society is eliminated; we must stop it from taking root in the first place. And it starts, I think, with our youngest citizens, who represent our future.

The requiring of reporting of racist incidents and harassment in schools and colleges through strengthened data collection is most welcome, therefore. But I'd like to understand why this will take until a year next September to change. ... what does the plan say to young people who could be maimed and scarred for life by these terrible experiences, who cannot wait for the effects of the new curriculum to educate and enlighten their peers, and with over a year to pass before the whole-school systems are put in place to begin the process that can effect real systemic change? ...

The aim of increasing the number of minority ethnic people in public positions and elected office is also one that is vital to achieve anti-racist institutions and systems. ...

Finally, the plan rightly places a firm focus on the criminal justice system as an area in which there is racial injustice as regards its treatment of, and the outcomes for, people from ethnic minorities. ... The plan states that 'it is only when we have full oversight of the justice system in Wales that we will be able to fully align its delivery with the needs and priorities of minority ethnic communities of Wales...devolution of the police and the justice system is the most sustainable way of creating a justice system that is anti-racist and fully meets the diverse needs of people in Wales.' This surely must be the ultimate aim of the plan. ...

Jane Hutt: ... it has to be about leadership. ... race equality action is not enough; it has to be very clearly stated as an anti-racist action plan. People have to embrace and recognise, as we do in Government, the institutionalised and systemic racism that actually holds people back and affects every minute of every day of their lives. ...

So, leadership within Welsh Government and across the public sector is crucial, and the zero tolerance of racism throughout the public sector. ...

We'll take actions to tackle racism in terms of monitoring actions annually through the accountability group, but it won't be just for us. Actually, someone said this morning ... that this is about community accountability as well; it's about the accountability of all those public sector bodies, and that, of course, includes all the statutory bodies, but also business as well. ...

Joyce Watson (Labour): ... If we're going to look at—and this plan is—ending institutional racism and systemic racism, then we clearly have to tackle those institutions where we find the prevalence. Of course, that will be in education and it will also be in health. ...

And we have to look at sport. We all know that, in terms of football, black, Asian and minority ethnic players are heroes when they're scoring, but should they miss a penalty or something, the racial abuse that they suffer afterwards is somewhat appalling. ... We have to change the narrative and we have to, without a doubt, move forward with that at all levels. ...

I'm reminded here today that we talk about, 'Me, you, other'; we need to start talking ... about 'us', and that is all of us.

Jane Hutt: ... You've absolutely spelled it out so clearly—this is about ending institutional racism. Therefore, we have to look at those institutions, including our own, and tackle that. ...

To read the full transcript see

<https://record.senedd.wales/Plenary/12874#A72559>

The three sections of the Anti-Racist Action Plan referred to above can be read at

<https://gov.wales/sites/default/files/publications/2022-06/an-introduction-to-an-anti-racist-wales.pdf>

and

<https://gov.wales/sites/default/files/publications/2022-06/anti%E2%80%91racist-wales-action-plan.pdf>

and

<https://gov.wales/sites/default/files/publications/2022-06/appendices.pdf>

Culture and Heritage Update:

Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic History, Culture and Heritage

Deputy Minister for Arts and Sport, and Chief Whip (Dawn Bowden): ... We have a rich and diverse culture and heritage in Wales. Our programme for government commits to properly represent and reflect the history of black, Asian and minority ethnic people, aiming to ensure their immeasurable contribution is recognised, and to enable equal access and participation. This will improve outcomes for all and will better reflect and promote a multicultural, vibrant and diverse Wales, which is fundamental to delivering our vision of a truly anti-racist Wales.

Delivering this change has already begun. In the last financial year, we undertook initial preparatory work, investing nearly £350,000 with organisations including the National Library of Wales, the Archives and Records Council Wales and Race Council Cymru. Our national organisations play a critical role in addressing inequality and achieving an anti-racist Wales. ...

Of course, while collaboration between organisations is important, collaboration and co-production with the ethnic minority communities themselves is crucial to developing this

work and implementing change that will have a real impact. I am pleased to see our organisations focusing on this; for example, the Arts Council of Wales has undertaken a major review of its arts associates programme, and recruited new associates with lived experience of cultural and ethnic diversity, as well as an agent for change. ...

We provided funding to Race Council Cymru to carry out a pilot project to develop its Black History Wales programme, including the record of stories right across Wales. Six culturally diverse people, each with black history expertise and trusted community engagement experience, led the development of Black History Wales networks in different parts of Wales. ...

We are also preparing to recruit community mentors to work with my officials over the next year. They will offer critical advice for the delivery of the action plan, support the development of the grant scheme and the establishment of a sector-specific lived-experience advisory group. Together, and at national, local and grass-roots level, we will continue to deliver meaningful change for black, Asian and minority ethnic people across Wales and take vital steps to making our vision of an anti-racist Wales a reality. ...

To read the full transcript and subsequent Q&A see

<https://record.senedd.wales/Plenary/12874#A72560>

Supporting an Anti-Racist education system

Minister for Education and the Welsh Language (Jeremy Miles): ... We are absolutely committed to our schools being inclusive and welcoming to all pupils. ...

Llywydd, our education system has a crucial role and responsibility to help deliver our vision for an anti-racist Wales. We know that what young people learn in school stays with them their entire lives and shapes our broader society.

The Welsh Government's anti-racist Wales action plan ... sets out a number of goals and actions to embed an anti-racist culture in schools in order to make meaningful and measurable changes to the lives of black, Asian and minority ethnic people. The plan also brings together work across education, including updating statutory anti-bullying guidance, to reflect our vision for a truly anti-racist Wales.

While we will deliver on our commitment to update our anti-bullying guidance by the beginning of the next academic year, we will build on this guidance further by working with the Children's Commissioner for Wales to engage with the lived experiences of children and young people, as well as our teachers and education practitioners.

But, recognising that one of the areas that is most asked about is how we can provide better support to the teaching workforce to deal appropriately with questions in relation to race and racism, today's statement primarily focuses on our innovative developments to establish a national approach to diversity and anti-racism professional learning. ...

I am pleased to confirm today that a new professional learning module for middle-tier education leaders will be developed, and that we are extending the reach of the project to include early years and further education, so that we see a step change right across the system. ...

I will soon be publishing the first annual update on the recommendations by the black, Asian and minority ethnic communities, contributions and cynefin in the new curriculum working group, reflecting on progress to date. The Curriculum for Wales seeks to engender a sense of cynefin in both our practitioners and learners, celebrating the diverse culture of modern Wales. ...

Since publication of Professor Williams's report in March 2021, we've made progress across a number of areas to develop both a whole-school and national approach to anti-racism, including becoming the first part of the UK to introduce mandatory teaching of black, Asian and minority ethnic histories in all schools and settings from September 2022 ...

... our young people have a key role to play as positive disruptors and change agents to

establish a true culture of inclusion, equipped to make real change, moving forward. ... There is a great deal of further work needed to build confidence and resilience across the system to tackle racism head on. ...

To read the full transcript and subsequent Q&A see

<https://record.senedd.wales/Plenary/12874#A72561>

Prof William's report, referred to above can be read at

<https://gov.wales/sites/default/files/publications/2021-03/black-asian-minority-ethnic-communities-contributions-cynefin-new-curriculum-working-group-final-report.pdf>

TOP

Israel

House of Lords Written Answers

Israel: Palestinians

Baroness Janke (Liberal Democrat) [HL421] To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of reports that the government of Israel plans to expel over 1,000 Palestinians from their villages in Masafer Yatta.

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: The UK is clear that in all but the most exceptional of circumstances, demolitions and evictions are contrary to International Humanitarian Law. Our opposition to the demolition of Palestinian property and the evictions of Palestinians from their homes is long-standing. 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.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2022-05-23/hl421>

The following two questions both received the same answer

Shireen Abu Aqleh

Baroness Janke (Liberal Democrat) [HL422] To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of (1) the presence of armed Israeli forces at St Joseph's hospital on 13 May, (2) the actions of the Israeli forces towards attendees of the funeral of Shireen Abu Aqleh, and (3) the confiscation of Palestinian flags by Israeli forces at the funeral.

The Marquess of Lothian (Conservative) [HL431] To ask Her Majesty's Government, further to the statement by Catholic leaders on 16 May regarding the actions of the Israeli police at St Joseph Hospital during Shireen Abu Aqleh's funeral, what representations they have made to the government of Israel, including to Prime Minister Naftali Bennet on this matter.

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: During a call with the Israeli Ambassador on 19 May, Minister Milling made clear the UK's sadness at the recent death of Shireen Abu Aqleh and the deeply disturbing scenes at her funeral in Jerusalem. She urged a thorough, impartial and transparent investigation into the events. The UK Ambassador to Israel has reiterated the importance of an investigation with the Israeli authorities. We call for urgent steps to de-escalate tensions and for restraint in the use of force. 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/2022-05-23/hl422>

and

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2022-05-23/hl431>

Israel: Palestinians

Baroness Sheehan (Liberal Democrat) [HL453] To ask Her Majesty's Government what representations they have made to the government of Israel concerning reports of Israeli forces using a girl as a human shield, and then bombing her home in Jenin, on 13 May.

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: 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. We continue to stress the importance of the Israeli security forces providing appropriate protection to the Palestinian civilian population, particularly the need to protect children. We also regularly raise the importance of the Israeli security force's adherence to the principles of necessity and proportionality when defending its legitimate security interest.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2022-05-23/hl453>

Mohammad Ghassan Ahmad Mansour

Baroness Sheehan (Liberal Democrat) [HL454] To ask Her Majesty's Government what representations they have made to the government of Israel concerning reports of the imprisonment, without charge or trial, of Mohammad Ghassan Ahmad Mansour.

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: 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. We call on the Israeli authorities to comply with their obligations under international law and either charge or release detainees.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2022-05-23/hl454>

UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights

Commission of Inquiry on the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, and Israel, issues first report

The continued occupation by Israel of Palestinian territory and discrimination against Palestinians are the key root causes of the recurrent tensions, instability and protraction of conflict in the region, according to the first report by the new United Nations Independent International [Commission of Inquiry](#) on the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, and Israel, issued today.

The Commission also noted that impunity is feeding increased resentment among the Palestinian people. It identified forced displacement, threats of forced displacement, demolitions, settlement construction and expansion, settler violence, and the blockade of Gaza as contributing factors to recurring cycles of violence.

“The findings and recommendations relevant to the underlying root causes were overwhelmingly directed towards Israel, which we have taken as an indicator of the asymmetrical nature of the conflict and the reality of one State occupying the other,” Navanethem Pillay, chair of the Commission, said.

The Commission released its 18-page report after conducting an assessment of recommendations made by previous Commissions of Inquiry and Fact-Finding Missions, as well as other United Nations mechanisms and its own hearings. ...

“We also found that these recommendations have overwhelmingly not been implemented, including calls to ensure accountability for Israel’s violations of international humanitarian and human rights law and the indiscriminate firing of rockets fire by Palestinian armed groups into Israel. It is this lack of implementation coupled with a sense of impunity, clear evidence that Israel has no intention of ending the occupation, and the persistent discrimination against Palestinians that lies at the heart of the systematic recurrence of violations in both the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, and Israel,” Ms. Pillay added. ...

The Commission identified several overarching issues that lay at the core of most recommendations, including Israel's failure to uphold the laws and customs of war, including those of belligerent occupation, violations and abuses of individual and collective rights, and a lack of accountability.

"Our review of the findings and recommendations of previous UN mechanisms and bodies clearly indicates that ending Israel's occupation, in full conformity with Security Council resolutions, remains essential in stopping the persistent cycle of violence. It is only with the ending of occupation that the world can begin to reverse historical injustices and move towards self-determination of the Palestinian peoples," Commissioner Miloon Kothari noted.

Commissioner Chris Sidoti added: "Israel clearly has no intention of ending the occupation. In fact, it has established clear policies to ensure complete permanent control over the Occupied Palestinian Territory. This includes altering the demography of these territories through the maintenance of a repressive environment for Palestinians and a favourable environment for Israeli settlers. Israel's policies and actions build Palestinian frustration and lead to a sense of despair. They fuel the cycle of violence and the protraction of conflict."

The report also noted that the Palestinian Authority frequently uses the occupation as a justification for its own human rights violations and as the core reason for its failure to hold legislative and presidential elections. At the same time, the de facto authorities in Gaza have shown little commitment to upholding human rights, and no adherence to international humanitarian law. ...

To read the full press release see

<https://www.ohchr.org/en/press-releases/2022/06/commission-inquiry-occupied-palestinian-territory-including-east-jerusalem>

Report of the Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, and Israel

<https://daccess-ods.un.org/tmp/2953102.88667679.html>

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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>

Public Bill Committee

[https://hansard.parliament.uk/commons/2022-06-07/debates/45bb6ec7-7b51-4e34-b839-d814a00c0cdf/OnlineSafetyBill\(FifthSitting\)](https://hansard.parliament.uk/commons/2022-06-07/debates/45bb6ec7-7b51-4e34-b839-d814a00c0cdf/OnlineSafetyBill(FifthSitting))

and

[https://hansard.parliament.uk/commons/2022-06-07/debates/90e5ab5b-a47b-4750-9c47-3f0ac7cd46eb/OnlineSafetyBill\(SixthSitting\)](https://hansard.parliament.uk/commons/2022-06-07/debates/90e5ab5b-a47b-4750-9c47-3f0ac7cd46eb/OnlineSafetyBill(SixthSitting))

Schools Bill

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

Scottish Parliament

**** Gender Recognition Reform (Scotland) Bill**

<https://www.parliament.scot/bills-and-laws/bills/gender-recognition-reform-scotland-bill>

Equalities, Human Rights and Civil Justice Committee, Stage 1 evidence sessions

<https://www.parliament.scot/chamber-and-committees/official-report/what-was-said-in-parliament/EHRCJ-31-05-2022?meeting=13796&iob=125069>

and

<https://www.parliament.scot/chamber-and-committees/official-report/what-was-said-in-parliament/EHRCJ-07-06-2022?meeting=13806&iob=125166>

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Consultations

** new or updated today

Independent Review of Social Cohesion and Resilience (closing date 23 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