



Political Affairs Digest

A daily summary of political events affecting the Jewish Community

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House of Commons Public Bill Committee

Online Safety Bill (Seventh sitting)

col 283 The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport (Chris Philp): ... Clauses 17 and 27 have similar effects, the former applying to user-to-user services and the latter to search services. They set out an obligation on the companies to put in place effective and accessible content reporting mechanisms, so that users can report issues. ...

The clause will ensure that anyone who wants to report illegal or harmful content can do so in a quick and reasonable way. We are ensuring that everyone who needs to do that will be able to do so, so the facility will be open to those who are affected by the content but who are not themselves users of the site. For example, that might be ... non-users who are members of a specific group with certain characteristics targeted by the content, such as a member of the Jewish community reporting antisemitic content. ... Clause 27 sets out similar duties in relation to search. ...

col 286 Kirsty Blackman (SNP) ... my concern is that “affected” is not wide enough. My logic is that, on the strength of these provisions, I might not be able to report racist content that I come across on Twitter if I am not the subject of that content—if I am not a member of a group that is the subject of the content or if I am not caring for someone who is the subject of it. ...

I think the clause unintentionally excludes some people who would have a reasonable right to expect to be able to make reports in this instance. That is why I tabled amendments 78 and 79 to clause 28, about search functions, but those proposals would have worked reasonably for this clause as well. ... [they] would change “affected person” to “any other person”. That would allow anyone to make a report, because if something is illegal content, it is illegal content. It does not matter who makes the report, and it should not matter that I am not a member of the group of people targeted by the content.

I report things all the time, particularly on Twitter, and a significant amount of it is nothing to do with me. It is not stuff aimed at me; it is aimed at others. I expect that a number of the platforms will continue to allow reporting for people who are outwith the affected group, but I do not want to be less able to report than I am currently, and that would be the case

for many people who see concerning content on the internet.

Alex Davies-Jones (Labour): ... One stark example that comes to my mind is when English footballers suffered horrific racist abuse following the penalty shootout at the Euros last summer. Hundreds of thousands of people reported the abuse that they were suffering to the social media platforms on their behalf, in an outcry of solidarity and support, and it would be a shame if people were prevented from doing that. ...

Barbara Keeley (Labour): ... It is important that users of online services are empowered to report harmful content, so that it can be removed. It is also important for users to have access to complaints procedures when wrong moderation decisions have been made. ...

col 289 Chris Philp: ... the hon. Member for Aberdeen North ... posed the question, “What if somebody who is not an affected person encountered some content and wanted to report it?” ... The answer is to be found in clause 17(2), which refers to “A duty to operate a service using systems and processes that allow users and”—I stress “and”—“affected persons”. As such, the duty to offer content reporting is to users and affected persons, so if the hon. Member for Aberdeen North was a user of Twitter but was not herself an affected person, she would still be able to report content in her capacity as a user. ...

Kirsty Blackman: ... That is key, and I am glad that this is wider than just users of the site. However, taking Reddit as an example, I am not signed up to that site, but I could easily stumble across content on it that was racist in nature. This clause would mean that I could not report that content unless I signed up to Reddit, because I would not be an affected person or a user of that site. ...

Chris Philp: ... I can confirm that in order to be a user of a service, she would not necessarily have to sign up to it. The simple act of browsing that service, of looking at Reddit ... regardless of whether or not the hon. Lady has an account with it, makes her a user of that service, and in that capacity she would be able to make a content report under clause 17(2) even if she were not an affected person. ...

col 302 Alex Davies-Jones: ... I share the Minister’s sentiments about the Bill protecting free speech; we all want to protect that. He mentions some of the clauses we debated on Tuesday regarding democratic importance. Some would say that debating this Bill is of democratic importance. Since we started debating the Bill on Tuesday, and since I have mentioned some of the concerns raised by stakeholders and others about the journalistic exemption and, for example, Tommy Robinson, my Twitter mentions have been a complete sewer—as everyone can imagine. One tweet I received in the last two minutes states: “I saw your vicious comments on Tommy Robinson...The only reason you want to suppress him is to bury the Pakistani Muslim rape epidemic” in this country. Does the Minister agree that that is content of democratic importance, given we are debating this Bill, and that it should remain on Twitter?

Chris Philp: That sounds like a very offensive tweet. Could the hon. Lady read it again? I didn’t quite catch it.

col 303 Alex Davies Jones: ... It goes on: “this is a toxic combination of bloc vote grubbing and woke” culture, and there is a lovely GIF to go with it.

Chris Philp: I do not want to give an off-the-cuff assessment of an individual piece of content—not least because I am not a lawyer. It does not sound like it meets the threshold of illegality. It most certainly is offensive, and that sort of matter is one that Ofcom will set out in its codes of practice, but there is obviously a balance between freedom of speech and content that is harmful, which the codes of practice will delve into. I would be interested if the hon. Lady could report that to Twitter and then report back to the Committee on what action it takes.

Alex Davies-Jones: Yes, I will do that right now and see what happens.

Chris Philp: At the moment, there is no legal obligation to do anything about it, which is precisely why this Bill is needed, but let us put it to the test. ...

To read the full transcript see

[https://hansard.parliament.uk/commons/2022-06-09/debates/112801bb-af6a-4407-bc06-43d5b913717e/OnlineSafetyBill\(SeventhSitting\)](https://hansard.parliament.uk/commons/2022-06-09/debates/112801bb-af6a-4407-bc06-43d5b913717e/OnlineSafetyBill(SeventhSitting))

House of Commons Written Answers

Synagogues: Security

Theresa Villiers (Conservative) [13069] To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether her Department's funding for the security of synagogues has risen in line with inflation in each of the last five years.

Damian Hinds: Funding for the Jewish Community Protective Security Grant was £14 million in each of the last three years, and £13.4 million in the two years prior to that.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2022-06-06/13069>

Community Security Trust: Finance

Theresa Villiers (Conservative) [13070] To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, pursuant to the Answer of 16 May to Question 88 on Whetstone Synagogue: Security, if she will take steps to ensure that funding for the Jewish Community Protective Security Grant is increased in line with inflation.

Damian Hinds: Annual funding for the Jewish Community Protective Security Grant is allocated from Departmental budget allocations.

The Home Secretary has announced the extension of the Jewish Community Protective Security Grant for 2022/23, at £14 million, the same amount as in 2021/22.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2022-06-06/13070>

The answer referred to above can be read at

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2022-05-10/88>

Death Certificates

Kim Leadbeater (Labour) [5520] To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will make an assessment of the impact of Part 6, of Section 169, on medical examiners of the Health and Social Care Act 2022 on the time taken to complete the death certification process; and if he will take steps to reduce that time.

Maria Caulfield: We have no current plans to make an assessment. The Secretary of State for Health and Social Care will have a duty to ensure that sufficient medical examiners are appointed in the healthcare system in England; funds and resources are made available to medical examiners to enable them to carry out their functions of scrutiny to identify and deter poor practice; and to ensure that performance is monitored. NHS England and NHS Improvement's National Medical Examiner will issue guidance to medical examiners to ensure that their functions are undertaken in an effective and proportionate manner. In 2018 we set the objective to ensure that a reformed system for certifying non-coronial deaths improves the quality and accuracy of Medical Certificate of Cause of Deaths and provides adequate scrutiny to identify and deter criminal activity or poor practice. This should be achieved without imposing undue delays on the bereaved or undue burdens on medical practitioners and others involved in the process.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2022-05-19/5520>

Part 6, Section 169 of the Health and Social Care Act 2022, referred to above, can be read at

<https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2022/31/section/169/enacted>

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Israel

House of Lords Written Answer

Imports: Israel

Baroness Sheehan (Liberal Democrat) [HL452] To ask Her Majesty's Government, further to the Written Answer by Lord Grimstone of Boscobel on 27 April (HL7831), what checks are carried out to ensure that Israeli export goods originate from Israel and not from illegal Israeli settlements in Palestinian Occupied Territories.

Lord Grimstone of Boscobel: Goods originating from illegal Israeli settlements are not covered by any United Kingdom trade agreement, so do not receive tariff preferences. Should HMRC have reasonable doubts regarding the origin of an imported good, or suspect that a certificate of origin has been erroneously completed, then a verification of the good's origin can be requested.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2022-05-23/hl452>

The answer referred to above can be read at

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2022-04-07/hl7831>

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Relevant Legislation ** new or updated today

UK Parliament

** Higher Education (Freedom of Speech) Bill

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

Notice of amendments

https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/bills/cbill/58-03/0001/amend/higherEd_rm_rep_0610.pdf

** Online Safety Bill

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

Public Bill Committee

[https://hansard.parliament.uk/commons/2022-06-09/debates/112801bb-af6a-4407-bc06-43d5b913717e/OnlineSafetyBill\(SeventhSitting\)](https://hansard.parliament.uk/commons/2022-06-09/debates/112801bb-af6a-4407-bc06-43d5b913717e/OnlineSafetyBill(SeventhSitting))

Evidence session, Digital, Culture, Media and Sport Committee Sub-committee on Online Harms and Disinformation

<https://committees.parliament.uk/oralevidence/10358/html/>

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>

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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