



# Political Affairs Digest

A daily summary of political events affecting the Jewish Community

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## Home Affairs

### House of Lords

#### **Schools Bill, Committee Stage**

*col 1602* **The Lord Bishop of Chichester:** ... Amendment 64 requires the consent of the relevant diocesan board of education before seeking an academy order on a school for which it is the religious authority. Consultation with the diocesan boards of education before seeking an academy order is an important step to retain the cohesion that they already help to promote, and to ensure that the governance of schools with a religious character is maintained by the religious authority. ...

Amendment 65 and the consequential Amendments 66, 67, 71, 72, 73 and 74 are intended to reflect the position of the churches as partners in state education. ... The drafting also reflects the expectations of each religious authority before applying the power and accounts for schools with a religious character that do not have a religious authority. This would enable the religious authority, or appropriate religious body, to apply for an academy order in respect of its schools, in line with a strategic plan to enable a fully trust-led system. This is important because the churches and other religious authorities have a strategic role in the development of the educational landscape. ...

*col 1603* It is essential that those authorities have the same power as outlined for the local authorities, to ensure that they have the ability to function as a strategic partner with the state in this way. ...

*col 1605* **Lord Murphy of Torfaen (Labour):** ... It is particularly important that church and state schools should have the same opportunities as academies. There is no reason in this wide world why a Church of England school or a Roman Catholic school—I am a Catholic—should not have the same opportunities as a state school. ...

There is a very strong case for ensuring that church schools have equal status in the Bill; handbooks and various bits of guidance from the Department for Education are okay, but they are not enough. If there is to be proper equality between church schools and state schools, that has to be recognised in law. ...

**Baroness Penn (Conservative):** ... I acknowledge the very important role played by churches and other religious bodies in state education. ...

Amendment 64 relates to requirements for local authorities to obtain consents before applying for an academy order on behalf of a school with a foundation. The Government understand the desire for the appropriate diocesan authority, as the religious body for a church school, to be among the bodies whose consent is required for an application. However, as drafted, the amendment captures only the diocesan authorities and not religious bodies for other faiths, and the position should be fair for all religious bodies. ...  
... the Government want schools with a religious character to enjoy, like all others, the benefits of being part of a strong academy trust. The Government are sympathetic to the principle of these amendments but further consideration is needed to establish the scope of the religious bodies that could apply for an academy order and the types of maintained school to which it should apply. As drafted, the amendment may not adequately capture all the religious bodies involved in maintained schools with a religious character. It may also inadvertently include bodies which are responsible for schools without a religious character. ...

**To read the full transcript see**

[https://hansard.parliament.uk/lords/2022-06-15/debates/8321BC1E-6911-460E-AFD1-12CE4C5CCFE4/SchoolsBill\(HL\)](https://hansard.parliament.uk/lords/2022-06-15/debates/8321BC1E-6911-460E-AFD1-12CE4C5CCFE4/SchoolsBill(HL))

*The amendments referred to above can be read at*

<https://bills.parliament.uk/publications/46782/documents/1944>

## NHS England

### High street pharmacies spot cancers in new NHS early diagnosis drive

... Speaking at the NHS Confed Expo conference in Liverpool, Amanda Pritchard will say: "The NHS will not rest in our efforts to catch cancer early and save more lives. ..."

The NHS will also launch a new programme of genetic testing for BRCA mutations for people with Jewish heritage who are at higher risk of mutations, with up to one in 40 people affected, compared with 1 in 400 in the general population.

This is expected to identify thousands more BRCA carriers over the next three years so they can seek early access to further surveillance and prevention programmes. ...

**To read the full press release see**

<https://www.england.nhs.uk/2022/06/high-street-pharmacies-spot-cancers-in-new-nhs-early-diagnosis-drive/>

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## Israel

### Westminster Hall Debate

#### Middle East Peace, Security and Development and UNRWA

**col 175WH Sarah Champion (Labour):** ... At the end of last year, I met the commissioner-general of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency, Philippe Lazzarini ... I have seen at first hand its work helping Palestinian refugees in the Occupied Palestinian Territories. I am hugely grateful for what it does ...

**Gareth Thomas (Labour Co-op):** ... UNRWA ... does hugely important work in helping to reduce poverty and to prevent, as much as it can, hunger and joblessness in the Palestinian territories. Does she agree that UNRWA's finances should be a continuing source of worry? It often struggles to get the funding it needs, so would it not be good to hear the Minister say that she and the Foreign Secretary will lead an international process

to try to ensure that UNRWA has the resources it needs?

**Sarah Champion:** ... I completely agree that a stable funding base is needed ...

There is no doubt that the plight of Palestinian refugees is both tragic and a recurring obstacle in the search for a two-state solution. Established in 1949, UNRWA has an important role to play in providing much needed education, healthcare and social services for the Palestinian people. ...

*col 176WH* UNRWA is unique, in that it effectively offers state-like services in the Occupied Palestinian Territories, Jordan, Lebanon and Syria, but relies on voluntary contributions, including donations by the UK, to educate hundreds of thousands of children, support the poorest, and take care of the sick and injured. ... UNRWA delivers its services at the maximum of its available budget, but because of understaffing, doctors can spend only three minutes with each patient, and after two years of covid, health services are severely strained.

In 2021, UNRWA provided education for over half a million children, nearly 400,000 people benefitted from social safety net assistance, including cash and food, and 8,000 young people accessed technical and vocational education and training. On his visit to the UK, Mr Lazzarini explained to me how he believes his organisation is providing hope in a region beleaguered by conflict. ...

Following years of cuts to its funding, the financial crisis faced by UNRWA means not only that it runs the risk of not being able to pay salaries, but that its installations, car fleet and computers are in such a state of disarray that its delivery of services is put at risk and the integrity of its staffing threatened. ...

Since 2018, the UK's support for UNRWA has decreased by nearly 60% from approximately £70.3 million to £28.6 million. ... The UK has yet to make any contribution to UNRWA for 2022.

**Robert Largan (Conservative):** The hon. Member is talking about education and bringing hope to the region. She will be aware that in its education work and the schools it runs in the west bank and Gaza, UNRWA uses the official Palestinian Authority curriculum. Does she share my concerns that the European Union review found that textbooks on that curriculum contain a number of examples of extensive antisemitism and incitement to violence? Does she agree that the Government are right to take a position of zero tolerance on antisemitism?

**Sarah Champion:** I agree with the hon. Gentleman on some of that ... Of course we should have zero tolerance of antisemitism. We should have zero tolerance of any form of hate crime. I have no reason to doubt the criticism contained in the Georg Eckert Institute review of the Palestinian Authority textbooks, and I believe action has been taken as a result of the report.

*col 177WH* To quote the then Minister, the right hon. Member for Braintree (James Cleverly) said in response to a written question last January: "UNRWA has a robust review system of each host country's textbooks to ensure education in its schools reflects the values and principles of the UN." ...

... the EU has resumed funding UNRWA in full, based on its research on the textbooks he mentioned. I understand the hon. Gentleman's concerns, but the evidence points to that issue having now been resolved. ...

**Jim Shannon (DUP):** ... Does she agree that the role of the UN as an impartial agency is vital and that all steps must be taken to ensure its neutrality from top to toe? ...

**Sarah Champion:** ... I am proud to be ... the Chair of the Select Committee on International Development. We have done a lot of inquiries on the subject of UN practice—on sexual exploitation by its staff, on misuse of funds and on racism in the sector. In such a vast organisation, of course there will be some rotten apples, but when those failings are highlighted it is inexcusable that they are not rooted out and safety measures put in so that such issues never happen again. ...

The British Council, which recently signed a co-operation agreement with UNRWA, has granted the British Council's international school awards to 80 UNRWA schools during the past two years, with many others having gained this recognition previously. The World Bank has confirmed that UNRWA students are on average one year ahead of their peers in public schools in the region. ...

In establishing UNRWA, the UN General Assembly recognised that continued assistance for the relief of the Palestinian refugees was necessary "to further conditions of peace and stability". ...

*col 178WH* Of the nearly 6 million Palestinian refugees living in the middle east, more than 2.6 million live in poverty. As the number of refugees falling into poverty continues to rise, UNRWA faces increased demands on its services. Refugees are increasingly reliant on UNRWA for the education of their children, their health and their livelihood.

**Dan Poulter (Conservative):** ... the hon. Lady ... has rightly highlighted key problems in Palestine, but, more generally, some of the cuts to the aid budget, particularly to health and education, were arbitrary and have had a real impact on people's lives. Can we urge the Minister to look again at some of those decisions?

**Sarah Champion:** ... The impact of UNRWA breaking down because of donors such as the UK continuing to significantly decrease or stop its funding is unimaginable. Have the Government considered the consequences for millions of people in the middle east if the cuts cause significant reductions in UNRWA's services? ...

Without UNRWA, we risk destabilising the region further and emboldening those who do not share our belief that the best way to bring peace and stability to the region is through a political resolution to the conflict. ... If we are to remain committed to our vision of two states, surely we should provide support to UNRWA ...

*col 179WH* It is clear that UNRWA is essential for the stability of that volatile and fragile region, so will the Minister explain the substantial cuts in UK funding to UNRWA ... If the UK cannot or will not sufficiently support UNRWA, we have to ask: do we not have a responsibility towards these people? Is not stability in the middle east what we are aiming for, and why are we not doing all we can to achieve it?

**The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs (Vicky Ford):** ... The UK and the Government are long-standing supporters of UNRWA, and value the vital role it plays as a humanitarian service and a stabilising force in the region. In 2021, we provided the agency with over £27 million of support, including £4.9 million to the flash appeal that it launched following the Gaza conflict in May. ... We recognise that UNRWA needs to be on a more secure financial footing to ensure that Palestinian refugees' basic needs continue to be met, and that it can play a full role in supporting regional stability. We are working with UNRWA, other donors and host countries to help ensure its sustainability in the years to come. ...

*col 180WH* UNRWA's essential work is focused not only on the Occupied Palestinian Territories; it also supports vulnerable Palestinian refugees in Lebanon and across the region with essential services, including basic education and healthcare. ... The final status of Palestinian refugees must be agreed as part of wider peace negotiations. Until that time, I confirm that the UK remains firmly committed to supporting Palestinian refugees through UNRWA, and the other valuable work that UNRWA does in the region. ...

*col 181WH* The humanitarian situation in Gaza is dire. Alongside our support of UNRWA and our bilateral programmes, the UK provided £2 million to UNICEF in 2021 to help feed and clothe vulnerable people and ensure that children can continue their education, keeping the hope of a better life alive.

We continue to stress to the Israeli authorities that restrictions on movement, access and trade for the people of Gaza are damaging the lives of ordinary Palestinians. As I will say again and again, we urge all parties to drive for a durable solution for Gaza and take the necessary practical steps to ensure Gaza's reconstruction and economic recovery. We

welcome the continued engagement between the Israeli Government and the Palestinian Authority on economic matters, but urge more rapid progress.

Improving the economic situation in the Occupied Palestinian Territories remains a priority for the UK, so in addition to our support for the United Nations Relief and Works Agency, the UK Government have funded a number of development programmes in the occupied territories that work to preserve the prospect of a negotiated two-state solution ... and to improve the lives of Palestinians throughout the west bank, Gaza and East Jerusalem. A key part of this work is building the capacity of the Palestinian Authority to provide essential services, and the basis for a future Palestinian state.

We continue to work with the Palestinian Authority to reform its security sector, and strengthen its financial management ...

My hon. Friend the Member for High Peak (Robert Langan) mentioned the issue of educational textbooks. We urge the Palestinian Authority to remove problematic content from its textbooks. We have robust conversations with the highest levels of the Palestinian leadership, challenging them on the need to prepare their population for peace, including by promoting a positive portrayal of others. We have zero tolerance for all forms of incitement to violence or antisemitism. It is worth pointing out that the UK does not fund textbooks in the OPTs.

*col 182WH* The situation on the ground demonstrates the need to accelerate progress towards peace ... We remain committed to the two-state solution as the best way to bring peace and stability to the region. We support a negotiated settlement, leading to a safe and secure Israel living alongside a viable and sovereign Palestinian state, based on the 1967 borders with agreed land swaps, Jerusalem as the shared capital of both sides, and a just, fair, agreed and realistic settlement for refugees.

We firmly believe in a just and lasting resolution that ends the occupation and delivers peace for both Israelis and Palestinians. It is long overdue. We will continue to press both parties on the need to refrain from taking actions that make peace more difficult to attain. We call on all parties to abide by international humanitarian law and to promote peace, stability and security.

We are deeply concerned about the fragile security situation in the west bank and Jerusalem, and look to all parties to take urgent steps to de-escalate tensions. ...

**Sarah Champion:** ... Will the Government go as far as they have gone with regard to the Russian invasion and start imposing sanctions, if they see international law being broken?

**Vicky Ford:** ... We believe that honest and open discussions, rather than imposing sanctions or supporting anti-Israeli boycotts, best support our efforts to get progress on peace and on getting a negotiated solution. We were totally appalled by the recent terror attacks in Israel. We condemn them in the strongest possible terms, and reaffirm that our thoughts are with the victims and their families. We will engage with Israeli and Palestinian leaders to support co-operation on building stability and economic development. ...

**To read the full transcript see**

<https://hansard.parliament.uk/commons/2022-06-15/debates/2E4CB286-4CF8-4BC1-B1A2-FEADFCCD0C82/MiddleEastPeaceSecurityAndDevelopmentAndUNRWA>

*The written answer referred to above can be read at*

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2021-01-15/138478/>

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## Other Relevant Information

### European Court of Human Rights

#### **Complaint around social housing being reserved for Orthodox Jewish community in Hackney rejected**

... The applicant, L.F., is a British national who was born in 1991 and lives in London. She is a single mother of two sons born in 2011 and 2015 and twin daughters born in 2018.

In 2017 her accommodation was assessed as posing a risk to her children, two of whom had been diagnosed with autism spectrum disorder. The High Court ordered that she be rehoused in “accommodation which provide[d] a safe environment” for her children.

While in temporary accommodation L.F. became aware that the Agudas Israel Housing Association owned six four-bedroom houses in Hackney, which would have been suitable for her family’s needs.

However, in practice, such houses were only awarded to members of the Orthodox Jewish community. The borough did not forward her application to the housing association as she was not a member.

L.F. brought judicial review proceedings in the domestic courts, challenging the arrangements between Agudas Israel and Hackney Borough on the basis that they gave rise to discrimination under the Convention ... That claim was dismissed by the Divisional Court, which cited the difficulties faced by the Orthodox Jewish community in accessing housing; the exponential rise in anti-Semitism, giving rise to a need to live close together for security purposes; and their large family sizes which meant they had a particular requirement for properties which reduced the intensified risk of eviction from overcrowded accommodation. It determined that the scheme accounted for only 1% of the available units in the borough and so any discrimination suffered by individuals not falling within its remit was proportionate to the aim of meeting the housing needs of the orthodox Jewish community.

That decision was upheld on appeal by the Court of Appeal and the Supreme Court ...

The application was lodged with the European Court of Human Rights ...

The Court reiterated that Article 14 of the Convention did not prohibit treating groups differently in order to correct “factual inequalities” between them. Such a pressing need was clearly the case in respect of the Orthodox Jewish community owing to the significant hardship they faced in accessing housing in the private rental sector.

Furthermore, the Court noted the domestic authorities had a wide discretion ... in economic and social matters and that the national authorities were better placed than the international judge to assess the public interest. In the current case, the domestic courts had carefully considered the proportionality of Agudas Israel’s allocation policy with full reference to the Court’s case-law. ...

In view of these considerations, the Court saw no reason to substitute its own assessment for that of the domestic courts’ ... Accordingly, the application was rejected as manifestly ill-founded.

**To read the full press release see**

<https://hudoc.echr.coe.int/app/conversion/pdf/?library=ECHR&id=003-7361049-10056512&filename=Decision%20L.F.%20v.%20the%20United%20Kingdom%20-%20Complaint%20around%20social%20housing%20being%20reserved%20for%20Orthodox%20Jewish%20community%20in%20Hackney%20rejected.pdf>

**To read the full judgement see**

[https://hudoc.echr.coe.int/eng#{%22tabview%22:\[%22document%22\],\[%22itemid%22:\[%22001-218076%22\]}](https://hudoc.echr.coe.int/eng#{%22tabview%22:[%22document%22],[%22itemid%22:[%22001-218076%22]})

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## **Relevant Legislation** \*\* new or updated today

### **UK Parliament**

#### **Education (Non-religious Philosophical Convictions) Bill**

<https://bills.parliament.uk/bills/3186>

#### **Higher Education (Freedom of Speech) Bill**

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

#### **Online Safety Bill**

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

#### **\*\* Private Burial Grounds and Cemeteries Bill**

<https://bills.parliament.uk/bills/3188>

Bill as introduced

<https://bills.parliament.uk/publications/46855/documents/1980>

First Reading, House of Lords

[https://hansard.parliament.uk/lords/2022-06-15/debates/0EB2A2CC-B432-409E-8F1F-5897E3EB249B/PrivateBurialGroundsAndCemeteriesBill\(HL\)](https://hansard.parliament.uk/lords/2022-06-15/debates/0EB2A2CC-B432-409E-8F1F-5897E3EB249B/PrivateBurialGroundsAndCemeteriesBill(HL))

#### **\*\* Schools Bill**

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

Committee Stage, House of Lords

[https://hansard.parliament.uk/lords/2022-06-15/debates/8321BC1E-6911-460E-AFD1-12CE4C5CCFE4/SchoolsBill\(HL\)](https://hansard.parliament.uk/lords/2022-06-15/debates/8321BC1E-6911-460E-AFD1-12CE4C5CCFE4/SchoolsBill(HL))

and

[https://hansard.parliament.uk/lords/2022-06-15/debates/D4BBA21F-7DEB-4005-8E17-130B404A4152/SchoolsBill\(HL\)](https://hansard.parliament.uk/lords/2022-06-15/debates/D4BBA21F-7DEB-4005-8E17-130B404A4152/SchoolsBill(HL))

Notices of amendments

<https://bills.parliament.uk/publications/46782/documents/1944>

and

<https://bills.parliament.uk/publications/46802/documents/1957>

and

<https://bills.parliament.uk/publications/46845/documents/1976>

### **Scottish Parliament**

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

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

Evidence session, Equalities, Human Rights and Civil Justice Committee

<https://www.parliament.scot/chamber-and-committees/official-report/what-was-said-in-parliament/EHRCJ-14-06-2022?meeting=13823&iob=125329>

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## Consultations

\*\* new or updated today

**\*\* closes in 7 days**

**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