



Political Affairs Digest

A daily summary of political events affecting the Jewish Community

Contents

Home Affairs

Israel

Relevant Legislation

Consultations

Back issues

Home Affairs

House of Commons Public Bill Committee

Online Safety Bill (Eleventh sitting)

col 449 **Kirsty Blackman (SNP):** ... I start with a quote from the Minister on Second Reading: "A number of Members...have raised the issue of small platforms that are potentially harmful. I will give some thought to how the question of small but high-risk platforms can be covered."[—\[Official Report, 19 April 2022; Vol. 712, c. 133.\]](#) ...

Given how strong I felt that the Minister was on the issue on Second Reading, I am deeply disappointed that there are no Government amendments to this section of the Bill. I am disappointed because of the massive risk of harm caused by some very small platforms—it is not a massive number—where extreme behaviour and radicalisation is allowed to thrive. It is not just about the harm to those individuals who spend time on those platforms and who are radicalised, presented with misinformation and encouraged to go down rabbit holes and become more and more extreme in their views. It is also about the risk of harm to other people as a result of the behaviour inspired in those individuals. ... Those small platforms are the ones that are most likely to encourage individuals towards extremely violent acts.

col 450 If the Bill is to fulfil its stated aims and take the action we all want to see to prevent the creation of those most heinous, awful crimes, it needs to be much stronger on small, very high-risk platforms. ... I do not care if those platforms have small amounts of profits. They are encouraging and allowing the worst behaviours to thrive on their platforms. They should be held to a higher level of accountability. It is not too much to ask to class them as category 1 platforms. It is not too much to ask them to comply with a higher level of risk assessment requirements and a higher level of oversight from Ofcom. It is not too much to ask because of the massive risk of harm they pose and the massive actual harm that they create.

Those platforms should be punished for that. It is one thing to punish and criminalise the behaviour of users on those platforms—individual users create and propagate illegal content or radicalise other users—but the Bill does not go far enough in holding those platforms to account for allowing that to take place. They know that it is happening. Those platforms are set up as an alternative place—a place that people are allowed to be far

more radical that they are on Twitter, YouTube, Twitch or Discord. None of those larger platforms have much moderation, but the smaller platforms encourage such behaviour. Links are put on other sites pointing to those platforms. ...

We all know from our inboxes the number of people who contact us saying that 5G is the Government trying to take over their brains, or that the entire world is run by Jewish lizard people. We get those emails on a regular basis and those theories are propagated on the smallest platforms. Fair enough—some people may not take any action as a result of the radicalisation that they have experienced as a result of their very extreme views. But some people will take action and that action may be simply enough to harm their friends or family, it may be simply enough to exclude them and drag them away from the society or community that they were previously members of or it might, in really tragic cases, be far more extreme. It might lead people to cause physical or mental harm to others intentionally as a result of the beliefs that they have had created and fostered on those platforms.

That is why we have tabled the amendments. This is the one area that the Government have most significantly failed in writing this Bill, by not ensuring that the small, very high-risk platforms are held to the highest level of accountability and are punished for allowing these behaviours to thrive on their platforms. ...

col 451 Alex Davies-Jones (Labour): ...I echo the comments of the hon. Member for Aberdeen North. ...

In our evidence sessions, we heard from HOPE not hate and the Antisemitism Policy Trust specifically on this issue. In its current form, the categorisation process is based on size versus harm, which is a fundamentally flawed approach. ...

col 453 Barbara Keeley (Labour): ... I refer to the oral evidence we heard from Danny Stone, from the Antisemitism Policy Trust, on these small, high-harm platforms. He laid out examples drawn from the work of the Community Security Trust, which released a report called “Hate Fuel”. The report looked at “various small platforms and highlighted that, in the wake of the Pittsburgh antisemitic murders, there had been 26 threads...with explicit calls for Jews to be killed. One month prior to that, in May 2020, a man called Payton Gendron found footage of the Christchurch attacks. Among this was legal but harmful content, which included the “great replacement” theory, GIFs and memes, and he went on a two-year journey of incitement.”

A week or so before the evidence sitting, “he targeted and killed 10 people in Buffalo. One of the things that he posted was: ‘Every Time I think maybe I shouldn’t commit to an attack I spend 5 min of /pol/’—which is a thread on the small 4chan platform—‘then my motivation returns’.”

Danny Stone told us that the kind of material we are seeing, which is legal but harmful, is inspiring people to go out and create real-world harm. When my hon. Friend the Member for Pontypridd asked him how to amend this approach, he said: “You would take into account other things—for example, characteristics are already defined in the Bill, and that might be an option”.—[[Official Report, Online Safety Public Bill Committee, 26 May 2022; c. 128, Q203-204.](#)]

Alex Davies-Jones: ... The evidence we heard from Danny Stone from the Antisemitism Policy Trust clearly outlined the real-world harm that legal but harmful content causes. Such content may be legal, but it causes mass casualties and harm in the real world.

There are ways that we can rectify that in the Bill. Danny Stone set them out in his evidence and the SNP amendments, which the Labour Front Bench supports wholeheartedly, outline them too. ...

col 454 Chris Philp [Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport]: ... As we have heard, the clauses set out how different platforms will be categorised with the purpose of ensuring duties are applied in a reasonable and proportionate way that avoids over-burdening smaller businesses. However, it is worth being clear that the Online Safety Bill, as drafted, requires all in-scope services, regardless

of their user size, to take action against content that is illegal and where it is necessary to protect children. It is important to re-emphasise the fact that there is no size qualification for the illegal content duties and the duties on the protection of children.

It is also important to stress that under schedule 10 as drafted there is flexibility, as the shadow Minister said, for the Secretary of State to change the various thresholds, including the size threshold, so there is an ability, if it is considered appropriate, to lower the size thresholds in such a way that more companies come into scope, if that is considered necessary. ...

I will turn to the points raised ... about platforms that may be small and fall below the category 1 size threshold but that are none the less extremely toxic, owing to the way that they are set up, their rules and their user base. The shadow Minister mentioned several such platforms. I have had meetings with the stakeholders that she mentioned, and we heard their evidence. ...

I am not sure that amendment 80 as drafted would necessarily have the intended effect. Proposed new sub-paragraph (c) to schedule 10(1) would add a risk condition, but the conditions in paragraph (1) are applied with “and”, so they must all be met. My concern is that the size threshold would still apply, and that this specific drafting of the amendment would not have the intended effect.

We will not accept the amendments as drafted, but as I said on Second Reading, we have heard the representations ... and we are looking carefully at those matters. ...

To read the full transcript see

[https://hansard.parliament.uk/commons/2022-06-16/debates/5fa4f663-1282-4df6-a0ca-41a2e9e7d7be/OnlineSafetyBill\(EleventhSitting\)](https://hansard.parliament.uk/commons/2022-06-16/debates/5fa4f663-1282-4df6-a0ca-41a2e9e7d7be/OnlineSafetyBill(EleventhSitting))

The amendments referred to above can be read at

https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/bills/cbill/58-03/0004/amend/online_day_pbc_0616.pdf

A summary of the CST report referred to above can be read at

<https://cst.org.uk/news/blog/2020/06/11/hate-fuel-the-hidden-online-world-fuelling-far-right-terror>

Online Safety Bill (Twelfth sitting)

col 485 **Barbara Keeley (Labour):** ... there is little or no transparency about one of the most critical ways in which platforms tackle harms. Human moderators are on the frontline of protecting children and adults from harmful content. They must be well resourced, trained and supported in order to fulfil that function, or the success of the Bill’s aims will be severely undermined.

I find it shocking that platforms offer so little data on human moderation, either because they refuse to publish it or because they do not know it. For example, in evidence to the Home Affairs Committee, William McCants from YouTube could not give precise statistics for its moderator team after being given six days’ notice to find the figure, because many moderators were employed or operated under third-party auspices. For YouTube’s global counter-terrorism lead to be unaware of the detail of how the platform is protecting its users from illegal content is shocking, but it is not uncommon. ...

col 486 There are risks of platforms shirking responsibility when they outsource moderation to third parties. Stakeholders have raised concerns that a regulated company could argue that an element of its service is not in the scope of the regulator because it is part of a supply chain. ...

Platforms, in particular those supporting user-to-user generated content, employ those services from third parties. Yesterday, I met Danny Stone, the chief executive of the Antisemitism Policy Trust, who described the problem of antisemitic GIFs. Twitter would say, “We don’t supply GIFs. The responsibility is with GIPHY.” GIPHY, as part of the supply chain, would say, “We are not a user-to-user platform.” If someone searched Google for antisemitic GIFs, the results would contain multiple entries saying, “Antisemitic GIFs—get

the best GIFs on GIPHY. Explore and share the best antisemitic GIFs.”

One can well imagine a scenario in which a company captured by the regulatory regime established by the Bill argues that an element of its service is not within the ambit of the regulator because it is part of a supply chain presented by, but not necessarily the responsibility of, the regulated service. The contracted element, which I have just described by reference to Twitter and GIPHY, supported by an entirely separate company, would argue that it was providing a business-to-business service that is not user-generated content but content designed and delivered at arm's length and provided to the user-to-user service to deploy for its users. ...

Under the Bribery Act 2010, for example, a company is liable if anyone performing services for or on the company's behalf is found culpable for specific actions. These issues on supply chain liability must be resolved if the Bill is to fulfil its aim of protecting adults and children from harm. ...

col 488 Chris Philp [Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport]: ... I am answering slightly off the cuff, but ... I think the Bill makes it clear that where content is accessed through another platform ... the platform through which the content is made available is within the scope of the Bill. ...

To read the full transcript see

[https://hansard.parliament.uk/commons/2022-06-16/debates/27c9b6ed-16b3-47eb-97d8-7b9dcf0e68a4/OnlineSafetyBill\(TwelfthSitting\)](https://hansard.parliament.uk/commons/2022-06-16/debates/27c9b6ed-16b3-47eb-97d8-7b9dcf0e68a4/OnlineSafetyBill(TwelfthSitting))

Senedd Written Answer

Darren Millar (Conservative) [WQ85340] What action is the Welsh Government taking to ensure that people of faith are able to access prayer rooms, chapels and multi-faith rooms in Welsh hospitals now that COVID restrictions are being lifted?

Eluned Morgan (Minister for Health and Social Services): Officials have advised me that across the NHS Wales estate all existing multi faith rooms which include prayer rooms and chapels, are now open for patients and staff with all COVID restrictions lifted.

<https://record.senedd.wales/WrittenQuestion/85340>

TOP

Israel

House of Commons Oral Answers

Topical Questions: International Trade

Scott Benton (Conservative): A trade deal with Israel would slash red tape and increase investment opportunities for both the UK and Israel. What progress have the Government made in securing a bilateral free trade deal with our close ally?

Ranil Jayawardena: I am delighted that my hon. Friend raises this issue because, of course, our trade and partnership agreement was originally signed as one of the first continuity agreements back in 2019, but the Prime Minister announced last year that we would begin talks with Israel on an enhanced and improved UK-Israel free trade agreement. We have had a consultation, and I look forward to taking that work forward to boost our trade and investment relationship and to make sure the further ambitions of both nations are secured.

<https://hansard.parliament.uk/commons/2022-06-16/debates/088EF0F8-C6E6-44E2-AF8D-5051EAD5117D/TopicalQuestions#contribution-EBA40503-4AD1-4131-9685-7008C72F8272>

Topical Questions: International Trade

Jim Shannon (DUP): Will the Minister outline what steps have been taken to solidify our technological partnership with Israel, in the light of the tremendous advances that come from that nation, and the potential that home tech companies have to expand if we can build relationships more effectively?

Ranil Jayawardena: Israel is one of the middle east's most dynamic and innovative economies and there is a great opportunity in tech in particular. It is not only a bilateral opportunity but a multilateral or plurilateral opportunity: I was recently in Brazil, which is interested in a three-way partnership between Brazil, the United Kingdom and Israel.

<https://hansard.parliament.uk//commons/2022-06-16/debates/088EF0F8-C6E6-44E2-AF8D-5051EAD5117D/TopicalQuestions#contribution-346C40E2-6F19-474E-9302-436DD4920930>

House of Commons Written Answer

Israel: Palestinians

Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi (Labour) [17081] To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what discussions has she had with her Israeli counterparts on the eviction of Palestinians from the settlement of Masafer Yatta.

Amanda Milling: 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. The practice causes unnecessary suffering to Palestinians and is harmful to efforts to promote peace. 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.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2022-06-13/17081>

Department for International Trade

Updated Trade and Investment Factsheet: Israel

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1082931/israel-trade-and-investment-factsheet-2022-06-17.pdf

Updated Trade and Investment Factsheet: Occupied Palestinian Territories

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1082994/occupied-palestinian-territories-trade-and-investment-factsheet-2022-06-17.pdf

UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights

UN experts condemn Israel's arbitrary detention and conviction of Palestinian aid worker

UN human rights experts ... denounced Israel for abusing counter-terrorism laws to target and silence human rights defenders, after an Israeli court found Gaza aid worker, Mohammed el-Halabi, guilty of financing terrorism.

The conviction of the former programme director of World Vision's Gaza office was a clear violation of Israel's obligation to respect the right to a fair trial and due process, as well as its obligation as an Occupying Power under international humanitarian law, the experts said.

"Mr. el-Halabi's trial demonstrated a serious disregard for fair trial guarantees, including

the extensive use of secret evidence against him, restricted communication with his lawyer, inadequate time and obstacles posed for the preparation of his defence and the failure to try him without undue delay,” they said.

“Convicting a humanitarian aid worker in serious violation of the right to a fair trial and on baseless charges of ‘terrorism’ is further evidence of Israel’s egregious misuse of counter-terrorism measures to suppress voices of human rights defenders.”

On 15 June 2022, Israel’s Beersheba District Court convicted Mr. el-Halabi on 13 charges of terrorism, including membership of a terrorist organisation and diverting humanitarian funds to finance terrorist activities.

Mr. el-Halabi was arrested in 2016 by Israel’s Shin Bet security service after being accused of diverting millions of dollars in humanitarian funds to armed groups in Gaza. He was detained on the charges for six years.

“During his detention, he was reportedly subject to ill-treatment, solitary confinement, duress and coercion to provide a confession, all of which may amount to torture,” the experts said. “Mr. el-Halabi has consistently maintained his innocence. An independent audit carried out on World Vision found no evidence of diversion of funds,” they said. ...

Earlier this year, the UN Human Rights Committee [expressed concern](#) over “the widespread practice of arbitrary arrest and detention of Palestinians, including journalists, human rights defenders and children” in Israel.

“This practice of arbitrary arrest and detention is part and parcel of the protracted military occupation, which subjugates Palestinians to oppression and strips them of any sense of human rights and dignity,” said the experts. ...

The experts have previously [raised concerns](#) with the Government of Israel regarding Mr. el-Halabi’s case. The Israel authorities have not responded. ...

To read the full press release see

<https://www.ohchr.org/en/press-releases/2022/06/un-experts-condemn-israels-arbitrary-detention-and-conviction-palestinian>

TOP

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>

Public Bill Committee

[https://hansard.parliament.uk/commons/2022-06-14/debates/be957e3c-244c-48c2-b778-b131667e87af/OnlineSafetyBill\(TenthSitting\)](https://hansard.parliament.uk/commons/2022-06-14/debates/be957e3c-244c-48c2-b778-b131667e87af/OnlineSafetyBill(TenthSitting))

and

[https://hansard.parliament.uk/commons/2022-06-16/debates/5fa4f663-1282-4df6-a0ca-41a2e9e7d7be/OnlineSafetyBill\(EleventhSitting\)](https://hansard.parliament.uk/commons/2022-06-16/debates/5fa4f663-1282-4df6-a0ca-41a2e9e7d7be/OnlineSafetyBill(EleventhSitting))

and

[https://hansard.parliament.uk/commons/2022-06-16/debates/27c9b6ed-16b3-47eb-97d8-7b9dcf0e68a4/OnlineSafetyBill\(TwelfthSitting\)](https://hansard.parliament.uk/commons/2022-06-16/debates/27c9b6ed-16b3-47eb-97d8-7b9dcf0e68a4/OnlineSafetyBill(TwelfthSitting))

Notices of amendments

https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/bills/cbill/58-03/0004/amend/online_rm_pbc_0617.pdf

and

https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/bills/cbill/58-03/0004/amend/online_day_pbc_0616.pdf

Private Burial Grounds and Cemeteries Bill

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

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>

TOP

Consultations

** new or updated today

**** closes in 6 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/>

TOP

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