



Political Affairs Digest

A daily summary of political events affecting the Jewish Community

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Westminster Hall Debate

Assisted Dying

col 218WH Tonia Antoniazzi (Labour): ...Opinion polls have shown that there is wide support for a change in the law to make assisted dying legal in this country. Research commissioned by Dignity in Dying in 2019 showed that 84% of Britons supported assisted dying for terminally ill people. That is a huge proportion of people who would like to see a change in the way we deal with this situation. ...

col 219WH George Howarth (Labour): ...Does she agree that now is the time to legislate so that the end of life care issues ... can be accommodated? ... there are people in circumstances where all quality of life is gone, yet the legal situation is, at best, muddy and unclear; at worst, it works against the interests of people whose quality of life is completely gone. ...

col 221WH Tonia Antoniazzi: ... palliative care can mitigate some of the pain, but it can never mitigate the suffering. This seems to be so true. Even the best palliative care cannot make it easy, and it never is going to be easy, but we could do a lot more to make it better. Research has shown that where assisted dying is an option, palliative care improves. ...

Huw Merriman (Conservative): ... There seems to be a misconception that those who support an avenue that people do not currently have unless they go to Switzerland are somewhat not supportive of good-quality palliative care. It is possible to have different paths for different groups of people ...

Tonia Antoniazzi: ... [campaigner Liz Carr] talked about Daniel James, a rugby player who was paralysed from the chest down in a rugby accident. ... She explained that ... People with a disability are seen as something to be pitied and as people who will never live a full life. I want to make clear today that I do not believe that. There are people with disabilities who make invaluable contributions to British life, and we should listen to them and their concerns.

col 222WH Being disabled does not mean living a second-class life. I cannot even begin to understand how being considered in that way would make somebody feel. There are bigger problems in the health service, however, including dehumanising treatment—such

as when someone waits hours for a carer to visit to take them to the toilet—and insufficient pain relief because the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence has made an economic decision about someone’s worth versus the cost. ...

If we want to have a grown-up conversation about death, we need absolute commitment to properly funding end-of-life care and hospices. ... The palliative care system has been underfunded ... If we want people to be able to die well, let us fund palliative care, give people options and make everyone feel valued at the end of their life.

One word that I have not yet used in my speech is “autonomy”—deliberately so, because I had it explained to me in a way that I had never previously considered. I have always been a great believer in the idea that it is my body and I will do I want with it, thank you very much, but Liz said that disabled people can embody what most people are afraid of: a lack of autonomy and a loss of dignity. That understandably frightens many disabled people. When you think society does not value you, or that it considers you a burden, you must fear that society will find a way to rid itself of that burden. ...

col 223WH Andrew Mitchell (Conservative): ... We in the Commons have not been asked to vote on assisted dying for almost seven years. A great deal has changed in that time: California, Colorado, New Jersey, Maine, and even the District of Columbia have legislated for choice at the end of life. In just the past five years, every state in Australia has passed laws on assisted dying; New Zealand, too, legislated on assisted dying following a referendum that showed 66% support for the proposal. Other jurisdictions have gone further than the proposals that I support, including in Canada and Spain, and change is on the cards in Italy, Portugal and even Ireland. Proposals are under consideration in Scotland, Jersey and the Isle of Man that could be voted on before the end of next year. Our hospice and end-of-life care in this country is superb, but nobody—not even the most ardent defenders of the palliative provisions that are in place—can claim that every person who dies in their care does so without pain, in peace and with dignity. For those facing even the prospect of a traumatic death, knowing that they had the option of choosing the moment and manner of their end would offer so much reassurance.

Right now, some people with terminal illnesses feel they have no other option than to take their own life into their own hands. They do so privately and alone so as not to incriminate their loved ones, and they often do so in violent and distressing ways. The Office for National Statistics published data in April demonstrating that those with severe health conditions are twice as likely to end their own life as those without. Estimates suggest that every week, between six and 12 people with terminal illnesses choose to die in that way. ... New polling from YouGov shows that three quarters of the British public support an inquiry into assisted dying, including 80% of Conservative voters, 77% of Labour voters, 80% of those who voted remain and 79% of those who voted leave. ...

col 224WH Karin Smyth (Labour): ... End-of-life care has improved since my work in the health service 14 years ago, but there is still a contrast between how we talk about dying and how we attempt to talk about other care ... In all my years working in the planning and commissioning of services in the NHS, it was all about co-production—the importance of patient voice and choice—but the co-production partnership disappears at the time we can least fight: the time we die. ...

col 225WH Danny Kruger (Conservative): ... The main argument for assisted dying is the simple one of autonomy. I think a lot of the support for assisted dying comes from the simple and natural resentment that anybody should try to stop people doing what they want, especially about something as important as this—literally a matter of life and death. But in this case, things are the other way around for many people. In my view, we need to keep assisted dying illegal because, as a matter of practical fact, for many people, it would narrow their autonomy. It would reduce their freedom substantially, because it would put them on a path with only one destination. That is because of the incentives that assisted dying would introduce.

col 226WH The first incentive would be in our healthcare system. The simple, blunt fact is that it is cheaper for the system to help people end their life early than to care for them for weeks, months or years. That is not an argument we hear for assisted dying, but it is compelling. The cat was let out of the bag rather when the Member of the Scottish Parliament who is trying to legalise assisted dying in Scotland cited research from Canada showing that the health service there has saved hundreds of millions of dollars in care costs. ...

I know we pretend that we do not have rationing in the NHS, but obviously, with finite resources, we do. Do we really imagine that assisted dying will not become an option that doctors and medical managers will not tacitly—even unintentionally—encourage? ...

col 227WH Members who think we can prevent people from being put on the pathway to assisted dying by good drafting, or because doctors are good people—obviously, they are—should think about the “do not resuscitate” scandal we had during the pandemic, and about the Liverpool care pathway, and then suggest there is no risk. ...

I worry even more about the pressure on patients themselves to request assisted dying if it is an option. It will be an option for almost everybody approaching death—that is the proposal. Clinical guidelines for many terminal or chronic illnesses will likely require doctors, at an early stage of planning treatment, to ask patients whether they would wish to have assistance in taking their own life. What a question to ask. Whatever the guidelines, every family will be required to have the conversation, in whispers or openly. In some families, we know how that conversation could all too likely go.

Over half the people in countries where assisted dying is legal choose it because they feel they are a burden to their family. Tragically, a lot also say that they are lonely. Is that not terrible—people getting the state to help kill them because they do not want to be a burden on a family that never visits them? Talk to any hospice manager about relatives and they will quietly confirm it. There are a lot of people who want granny or grandpa to hurry up and die. ...

Christine Jardine (Liberal Democrat): ... Is it not the case that many of the people who are being characterised as wanting granny or grandpa to hurry up and die, are in fact simply wanting their pain to end, and want a compassionate way to bring that to an end? ...

col 228WH **Danny Kruger:** ... Tragically, we have a rising epidemic of elder abuse in this country. Half of elderly people who are victims of financial crime are victimised by their own adult children. It is not just the elderly we need to be concerned about. It is no surprise that no disabled organisation supports the proposal. It is the most vulnerable people, who by definition rely on the support of other people—their families and professionals—who are most at risk of assisted dying laws being misapplied, which is what I fear would happen. Suddenly, every controlling and coercive relative, every avaricious carer or neighbour, every overstretched or under-resourced doctor or hospital manager would have the means to cut their cost, and I do not believe it is possible to design out the risks. ...

col 229WH **Ian Paisley (DUP):** ... I am not for one moment saying, and I do not think that I can be accused of saying, that those who look at assisted dying do not care about palliative care. ... but I think we have to give hope to people. We need to turn this debate around into a debate about palliative care and helping people when they are at their lowest. ...

The threat to the disabled and the vulnerable has been raised by Disability Rights UK, Scope and the United Kingdom’s Disabled People’s Council, all of which say that this debate on assisted dying causes them great concerns. The British Medical Association, the Royal College of General Practitioners, the Royal College of Surgeons and the Royal College of Physicians do not support moves towards assisted dying. ...

col 230WH **Peter Bottomley (Conservative):** ... I have heard people say that people often commit suicide because they want their life to end and they cannot find another legal way of doing it. The Dutch rate of euthanasia—death on request—and assisted suicide is

between 6,000 and 7,000 cases a year. The Netherlands has a population of about 17 million. If we translated their numbers to this country, we would have well over 25,000 people a year. How many suicides a year do we have in this country that we know about? Obviously, some are not classified as suicides, but the conventional figure is about 5,000 to 6,000. We are in effect being told, "Everything's all right, because it's been all right in the Netherlands. And by the way, expect death on request and euthanasia figures to be four times the level of our known suicides." ...

If we seriously want to believe that bringing in legal euthanasia or assisted suicide—death on request—will drop the suicide rate, look at the Dutch. While their numbers of assisted deaths have gone up significantly—the law was passed in 2001 and enacted in 2002—from 2003-04 onwards, there has been a pretty consistent rise in the number of suicides in the Netherlands. ...

col 233WH Matt Hancock (Conservative): ... the truth is that even the best palliative care in the world cannot stop the deep pain and trauma that comes with some diseases, especially but not only cancers, at the end of life. Medicine simply cannot stop the pain in every case. ...

col 234WH Nine countries now allow assisted dying in a highly specific form. There are reasonable arguments on both sides, so there are constraints in place. We can learn from the experience overseas. There are countries with our common law tradition and parts of this United Kingdom that are considering assisted dying. ...

Danny Kruger: Does my right hon. Friend not acknowledge that in every single country where measures such as assisted dying, assisted suicide or euthanasia have been introduced, there is only one direction of change, which is towards more progressive liberalisation of the law?

Matt Hancock: ... In Oregon, for instance, which is the originator of the proposals that many people support, that is simply not the case. There was one change made many years ago and the law has now rested. ...

Stephen Timms (Labour): ... if we were to legalise assisted dying, we would impose an awful moral dilemma on every conscientious frail person nearing the end of their life. We have probably all known a number of such people. They have a lot of anxieties at that stage of their life. They worry very much about being a burden on their children, needing care from them and consuming resources that their children would otherwise inherit. If ending their life early were legally permissible, many who do not want to end their life would feel under great, probably irresistible, pressure to do so. There is no way to stop that happening. ...

col 235WH George Howarth: ... there is another group, rarely talked about, who put pressure on their parents or loved ones to stay alive. They do so out of love. Would he accept that both sides, more often than not, act out of love, rather than for venal reasons, so does not one argument cancel out the other? ...

Stephen Timms: ... I think a lot of the people I am concerned about, and expressing a worry about, are deeply loved by their children but do not want to put an undue burden on them. I am not saying that those children want to hasten their death or anything like that. I do not think that is often the case, although occasionally it might be.

I do think that conscientious and frail elderly people will feel that they ought to avoid being a burden, and they will feel a pressure to end their lives prematurely as a result. I would say that we ought not to impose such a burden on vulnerable people nearing the end of their lives. ...

I am mindful of the stern instruction we all received last week from the National Secular Society, which wrote: "Dire warnings about the coercion of disabled, elderly, sick or the depressed can mask true motivations for opposing a change in the law...disguising religion objections as secular concerns, rather than seeking ways to mitigate potential risks of legalising assisted dying, opponents can exaggerate the risks, weaponising them to

spread fear.” ...

I do not think the concerns I am expressing are apparent only to religious people. Disabled people’s organisations have been very clear—in the interests of all the people they represent, and certainly not on any religious grounds—that legalising assisted dying would be a deeply damaging change. ...

Matt Hancock: ... according to polls, 86% of people living with a disability are in favour of a change ... That figure is greater than in the population as a whole, so I do not understand the point he is making. ...

col 237WH Sally-Ann Hart (Conservative): ... Emotional, medical and practical problems faced by doctors have grown in countries where legalisation is already in place, and these issues should not be taken lightly. A review of the official data by Living and Dying Well found that between 30% and 50% of clinicians describe an emotional burden or discomfort resulting from participation in assisted dying, assisted suicide or euthanasia, and that 15% to 20% experience a lasting adverse psychological or emotional impact. ...

col 239WH Desmond Swayne (Conservative): ... We have heard much about the polling, but ... a poll is not an argument. The Association for Palliative Medicine of Great Britain and Ireland believes that the polling is driven by reports in our newspapers of the awful deaths that some people experience, without giving proper consideration to the advances in palliative care and the fact that many people with terminal illnesses die a peaceful death with their family around them. ...

We have also heard about the impact on palliative care. ... However, I have sat in this Palace and heard clinicians from Canada tell us in terms that palliative care budgets were being squeezed to provide for the new service of assisted dying. ...

We have to be clear on both the implications for the medical profession—the way the nature of the medical profession will change when doctors can bring death as well as life—and the scale ... As many as one in six deaths in Holland may be accounted for by deaths assisted by the medical profession. Once we normalise that as a way of death, I think we would definitely be dealing with dangers ...

col 240WH I accept entirely that people are put in a dreadful position if they have a terminal diagnosis. They have the capacity to end their lives but they want to live a bit longer and are worried about the loss of that capacity to end their lives, putting their friends and relatives in a difficult position. But it is a mistake to believe that for every one of life’s horrible dilemmas there is a lever that we can pull to make things better. My fear is that we will make things so much worse for those elderly and infirm people who will feel under pressure to do the “decent” thing and not consume resources. ...

col 242WH Lucy Allan (Conservative): ... As parliamentarians, we all want to improve the lives of our constituents, and as we have heard today, the prospect of a good and peaceful death is something that improves the lives of those facing a terminal illness. The debate needs to be about giving people that option, even if most terminally ill people never take it up. That peace of mind helps them to face death.

I deeply respect the religious views of others on all subjects, and it is their right to express their views and live them out. However, in a liberal democracy, the religious views of some do not restrict the rights and freedom of others, and so it is with this issue. ... Instead of debating the arguments, we have seen attacks on campaign groups and a determination to conflate the tragedy of suicide with the right of the terminally ill to decide the manner of their death. We must choose our words with care and have the humility to understand that those who disagree with us are not motivated by malign intent, or are somehow less virtuous. ...

col 244WH Edward Leigh (Conservative): ... Many of the arguments that we hear in favour of assisted dying are based on very appalling, horrible and extreme cases. They are similar arguments to what we heard when we had the initial debates on abortion, with foetal abnormality, rape and all the other things. Then we had abortion on demand, and

now we are going to get death on demand. ...

We are all agreed that we are still not doing enough about palliative care. We have to do much more. We have to tell everybody that they have the right to go into a hospice—a right that so many people are not given—and receive the full benefit of modern medical technology to die peacefully and painlessly. For the overwhelming majority of people, if they are given palliative care, it is an option they can enjoy. ...

col 245WH Wera Hobhouse (Liberal Democrat): ... Whatever might otherwise be heard, it is a fact that palliative medicine and care has its limitations, even at its most excellent. Figures from the Office of Health Economics in 2019 show that every year, 6,400 terminally ill patients in hospices have horrendous deaths. ...

Those who suggest that palliative care can manage pain are ignoring what happens. In too many cases, pain cannot be alleviated. We should not hide that truth. ...

In a BMA survey, 4,500 doctors voted in support of assisted dying legislation, whereby they could assist patients who can voluntarily take life-ending prescriptions under very clear and defined legislation. Recent evidence from a Royal College of General Practitioners survey shows that opposition to such legislation has fallen from 77% to 46%. Here in Parliament, we are falling very far behind public and medical opinion. We continue to force people to suffer a protracted death against their wishes, to spend £10,000 to go to Dignitas at a rate of one a week, or to add to the horrific new suicide statistics from the ONS. ...

col 247WH Rachel Hopkins (Labour): ... The blanket ban on assisted dying has resulted in unacceptable failings in patient safety. As we have heard, dying people are forced to matters into their own hands without sufficient protection or support for them, their families or the clinicians who care for them. ...

Assisted dying reform is a matter of freedom of choice at the end of life. Assisted dying laws can be introduced with robust safeguards. ...

... the current law in England and Wales fails dying people and their families ... The public need action from the Government ... the status quo is failing the public. This is not about either/or. It is about different pathways at the end of life and the right to have a choice. ...

col 249WH Christine Jardine: ... It is not an either/or on palliative care. We need better palliative care as well. People should be able to choose between better palliative care or an assisted death. ... I am not aware that any of the six Australian states or any parts of Canada, New Zealand and Spain ... saying publicly that they regret it. ...

On the point of elderly people feeling pressured to accept an assisted death for the sake of their family, life is precious and I believe it is at its most precious when we know we are about to lose it. The thought that anyone would say, “Well, I have to do this because my family wants it” is astonishing. ...

col 250WH Jill Mortimer (Conservative): ... in this country, there is a choice—a right to die—for some people: those who decide to have treatment withdrawn, but they die horribly. They suffocate, starve or die of dehydration, but doctors are allowed to withdraw that care, so they are allowed passively to intervene. Is it such a great step to allow people in that position to have drugs—modern medicine—that allow them to slip away? ...

... coercive abuse from relatives ... could already exist because of DNR. How many times are relatives sitting round hospital beds deciding whether to put a DNR order on their relative? It does not stop us having it because it is the right thing to do. People have a choice to say, “If I go, don’t bring me back.” Even if modern medicine could bring them back and extend their life for many weeks, we do not do that to them. ... We need to ensure that if someone has a right to life, they should have the right to a dignified life. ...

col 255WH Ruth Cadbury (Labour): ... the ban on abortions until the 1960s did not stop abortions; it simply banned safe abortions. That ban sent women to the trusted aunt, the neighbour, or the doctor running a backstreet clinic—too often in unsafe and dangerous conditions, too often while terrified or alone. Similar feelings have been expressed today.

We cannot prevent assisted dying from happening, but we can condemn decisions and actions to take place in darkness, alone; to involve journeys abroad while in pain; or to risk criminalising loving family members or friends. We place those issues out of mind and pretend they do not happen here, but they do.

Only by reforming the law and introducing safeguards to address the concerns that hon. Members have raised can we address this situation, which is about personal freedom and morality. Only by doing so can we step out of the darkness ...

col 257WH Aaron Bell (Conservative): ... This is fundamentally about bodily autonomy, and about ... pain and suffering ... The reality is that our constituents are having to go abroad. There is more than one person per week going to Switzerland, often without their relatives ... There is an inequity there based on the cost of going to Switzerland—not everybody can go—and it is earlier than they would like. ...

I do respect the sincerity of people who make faith-based arguments here. However, many of us do not have faith. Increasingly, that is the case for many of our constituents. ...

... do as you wish by yourself and your God, and vote accordingly, but recognise that those of us in the opposite position are motivated also by the deepest humanity and love. ...

col 260WH Andy Slaughter (Labour): ... the higher courts have been consistent in their view that this is squarely a matter for Parliament. However sympathetic they may be to the harrowing cases that have come before them, they look to us to set policy in this matter. ...

col 261WH One of the biggest arguments against assisted dying is concern about the possibility of coercion. Vulnerable adults nearing the end of their life could be at risk of pressure from family members who feel incapable, for whatever reason, of providing care and support for a terminally ill person. We must be alert to such possibilities. If Parliament is to decide on this matter, it is essential that there is a plan for robust safeguards against that, backed by evidence that they work. ...

The opinion of significant parts of the medical profession has moved to a neutral or more supportive view of assisted dying ... More evidence has emerged of the traumatic effect of the current restrictions, including travel abroad to die for those who can arrange and afford it, high suicide rates among the terminally ill, and many people dying without effective pain relief and in distressing and degrading circumstances.

Public opinion is overwhelming and clear, with over 80% supporting assisted dying. ...

Edward Leigh: Does the hon. Gentleman accept that, once we have assisted dying in this country, it will change the whole nature of the debate between GPs and old people? At the back of every GP's mind, and for every old person, there will be that question: "Should I end it?" That is not a burden that we should place on GPs.

col 262WH Andy Slaughter: I not only do not accept that; I find it the most appalling scaremongering. ...

This should not be a debate only between different attitudes, religious practices or medical treatments; it should be a debate about ensuring that the needs of the terminally ill are met in the most appropriate and compassionate way. ...

col 263WH The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Justice (James Cartlidge): ... Some people draw a distinction between assisted dying, which they see as allowing dying people to have a choice over the manner and timing of their imminent death, and assisted suicide, which they see as helping people who are not dying to choose death over life. To be clear, the criminal law currently makes no such distinction; under section 2 of the Suicide Act 1961, the offence is "encouraging or assisting" suicide, and my use of the term "suicide" reflects that. It does not indicate prejudice either way, and it is not an indication of the Government taking one side over the other.

The Government's view remains that any relaxation of the law in this area is an issue of individual conscience and a matter for Parliament to decide. To be clear, that does not mean that the Government do not care about the issue at hand—far from it. It means that the ultimate decision on whether to change the law is for Parliament to decide, in the

tradition of previous matters of conscience that have come before the House.
col 264WH While I note the petition's call for the Government to bring forward legislation to allow assisted dying for adults who are terminally ill and have mental capacity, our neutral stance means that such a change would have to be made via private Members' legislation. If, at a future date, it became the clearly expressed will of Parliament to amend or change the criminal law so as to enable some form of assisted dying, the Government would of course undertake the role of ensuring that the relevant legislation was delivered as effectively as possible.

I can confirm that NHS England is developing an ambitious programme ... [to] build on the work of the palliative and end-of-life care strategic clinical networks ... high-quality palliative and end-of-life care should include the opportunity for individuals to discuss their wishes and preferences so that they can be taken fully into account in the provision of their future care ...

Perhaps the key point of principle here, which is where this becomes a matter of conscience, is choice—choice versus the risk, shall we say, of abuse, and the need for safeguards ...

To read the full transcript see

<https://hansard.parliament.uk/commons/2022-07-04/debates/65B4AB0B-D148-42C6-8D8B-43AAC29219FB/AssistedDying>

Information about the Dignity in Dying research referred to above can be read at

<https://www.dignityindying.org.uk/news/poll-assisted-dying-support-84-britons/>

Information about the Living and Dying Well research referred to above can be read at

<https://livinganddyingwell.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/09/LDW-Doctors-Briefing.pdf>

The report of the BMA survey referred to above can be read at

<https://www.bma.org.uk/media/3367/bma-physician-assisted-dying-survey-report-oct-2020.pdf>

Results of the Royal College of General Practitioners survey referred to above can be read at

<https://comresglobal.com/polls/royal-college-of-general-practitioners-rcgp-2019-assisted-dying-membership-consultation/>

House of Commons Oral Answer

Topical Questions: Education

T9. Sarah Owen (Labour): I am sure that I am not alone in hearing worrying reports of faith-based bullying and sexual harassment in schools. If this week has taught us anything, it is that we need to lead by example. Will the Secretary of State tell us when the Department for Education's own bullying and harassment policies were last reviewed and updated? (900865)

Robin Walker: I recently spoke in a Westminster Hall debate on relationships and sex education, and I made it clear that we regularly review our guidance, both on keeping children safe in education and on safeguarding.

<https://hansard.parliament.uk//commons/2022-07-04/debates/60494693-C69B-441A-9534-935E0DFE0563/TopicalQuestions#contribution-A1FFD89D-8329-4900-B123-FF220353065E>

House of Commons Written Answers

Health Professions: Racial Discrimination

Chi Onwurah (Labour) [25851] To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, with reference to the recommendation in the British Medical Association's report entitled, Delivering Racial Equality in Medicine, what steps his Department is taking to help improve

the complaints procedure for incidents of workplace racism in medical settings.

Health Services: Racial Discrimination

Chi Onwurah (Labour) [26763] To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether his Department is taking steps to improve the complaints procedure for incidents of workplace racism in medical settings, as recommended in the British Medical Association's report entitled Delivering racial equality in medicine, published in June 2022.

Edward Argar: Formal complaints procedures are conducted at individual National Health Service trust and provider level. Through the NHS People Plan, NHS England and NHS Improvement have launched a training programme for Freedom to Speak Up Guardians to improve understanding of inequality experienced by ethnic minority staff and to seek their views.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2022-06-27/25851>

and

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2022-06-28/26763>

The report referred to above can be read at

<https://www.bma.org.uk/media/5745/bma-delivering-racial-equality-in-medicine-report-15-june-2022.pdf>

The NHS People Plan, referred to above, can be read at

<https://www.england.nhs.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/07/We-Are-The-NHS-Action-For-All-Of-Us-FINAL-March-21.pdf>

TOP

Israel

House of Commons Written Answers

The following two questions both received the same answer

Israel: Palestinians

Sam Tarry (Labour) [24699] To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, if she will condemn (a) forced evictions of Palestinians and (b) demolitions of Palestinian houses in the Occupied Territories.

Sam Tarry (Labour) [24700] To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, if she will hold discussions with her Israeli counterpart on that Government's obligations under international law to stop forced (a) evictions and (b) demolitions in the Occupied Territories.

Amanda Milling: The UK is clear that in all but the most exceptional of circumstances, demolitions and evictions are contrary to International Humanitarian Law. The practice causes unnecessary suffering to Palestinians and is harmful to efforts to promote peace. I met with Palestinian families affected by the ongoing demolition and eviction orders at Masafer Yatta during my recent visit to the Occupied Palestinian Territories, and raised our concerns with Israeli Deputy Foreign Minister Roll on 22 June.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2022-06-24/24699>

and

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2022-06-24/24700>

Ahmad Manasra

Layla Moran (Liberal Democrat) [26842] To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what representations she has made to the Israeli Government on behalf of Ahmad Manasra.

Amanda Milling: 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, including the treatment of Palestinian children. 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. I recently travelled to Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territories (OPTs) where I discussed a range of issues with Israeli Deputy Foreign Minister Roll.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2022-06-28/26842>

TOP

Foreign Affairs

Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office: International Ministerial Freedom of Religion or Belief Conference 2022

International Ministerial Freedom of Religion or Belief Conference 2022: Foreign Secretary's opening speech

... The freedom to believe, to pray and commit acts of worship, or indeed not to believe is a fundamental human freedom and has been one since the dawn of time. Societies that allow their people to choose what they believe are better, stronger and ultimately more successful. ... Yet throughout history, we have seen oppressors crack down on freedom of religion or belief in order to exert control. Whether it the appalling persecution of the Jewish community over centuries or Stalin trying to stamp out religion in the Soviet Union. Today there is further evidence of this around the world ...

Persecution ranges from exclusion and discrimination to forced conversion, destroying places of worship and targeted killings.

The [Bishop of Truro's 2019 review](#) for the UK government provided recommendations to support members of all faiths, beliefs and those of no religious belief. I welcome all of those recommendations, and we have taken forward the 22 in a way that will make a real change for everyone persecuted for their religion or belief. ...

We all want a world where people are free to believe.

That is why since becoming Foreign Secretary I have taken a strong stand against anti-Semitism, condemning the hateful act of terrorism at a Texas synagogue earlier this year. I continue to stand with our international partners in calling out the shocking persecution of Uighur Muslims in Xinjiang. I am at the forefront of standing up for all those suffering in Ukraine including Orthodox Christians.

Authoritarians and oppressors feel threatened by the freedom of religion or belief, fearing it will encourage people to think freely and question their authority.

We cannot allow them to win. ...

As St Paul told the Corinthians: "Be on guard, stand firm, be courageous, be strong".

So let's work together in that spirit to defend freedom of religion or belief and show the potential for positive change. Together, we can forge ahead to a fairer, safer world for people of faith across the globe. ...

To read the full transcript see

<https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/foreign-secretarys-remarks-at-the-freedom-of-religion-or-belief-conference>

Broad Conference Statement on Freedom of Religion or Belief

... We commit to:

- protect freedom of thought, conscience, religion, or belief and ensure individuals

- can freely change their beliefs, or not believe, without penalty or fear of violence
- raise awareness of the current challenges to FoRB across the world, the relevance of FoRB to other human rights, and best practice in preventing violations and abuses and protecting and promoting FoRB for all
 - speak out bilaterally, as well as through multilateral institutions, against violations and abuses of the right to freedom of religion or belief
 - look for opportunities to work more closely together with international partners, civil society actors, human rights experts, academia and faith and belief actors to implement practical solutions to address FoRB challenges, exchange best practice, and build shared commitments
 - strengthen the voices and build the capacity of defenders of FoRB, including religious or belief actors, inspiring future leaders and young people, and building and reinforcing global coalitions for collective action
 - annually mark the International Day Commemorating the Victims of Acts of Violence Based on Religion or Belief on 22 August, which was established in 2019 as a day to remember the victims of religious persecution and to commit to help those suffering acts of intolerance and violence based on religion or belief ...

To read the full statement see

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/freedom-of-religion-or-belief-broad-conference-statement-at-the-international-ministerial-conference-2022/broad-conference-statement-on-freedom-of-religion-or-belief>

Statement on freedom of religion or belief and gender equality

... We commit to:

- uphold and protect gender equality, non-discrimination and freedom of religion or belief. Discriminatory personal status laws, laws that allow harmful practices, or restrict women's and girls' full and equal enjoyment of all human rights, including sexual and reproductive health and rights, bodily autonomy, and other laws that justify, condone, or reinforce violence, discrimination, or inequalities on the grounds of religion, belief or gender should be repealed
- promote equal access to public goods, including health and education, as well as fair and un-biased funding and infrastructure for public goods
- support the provision of training and educational initiatives that encourage inclusion, equality and non-discrimination in the justice sector, the education system and elsewhere
- encourage participation of women and girls from religious minority groups and indigenous communities, or of diverse sexual orientations or gender identities, and others who are marginalised or discriminated against on the grounds of their religion, belief or gender, in national and local decision-making processes, and support capacity-building to strengthen respect for their human rights and freedom of religion or belief
- protect and support individuals, organisations and institutions that work to promote gender-responsive religious interpretations and practices
- support and build capacities of local religious and belief leaders to advocate for gender equality, denounce sexual and gender-based violence and harmful practices and ensure access to sexual and reproductive health and rights

To read the full statement see

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/freedom-of-religion-or-belief-and-gender-equality-statement-at-the-international-ministerial-conference-2022/statement-on-freedom-of-religion-or-belief-and-gender-equality>

Statement on freedom of religion or belief and youth

... We commit to:

- engaging young people from a diverse range of religion or belief backgrounds and enabling their effective and meaningful participation in decision-making at all levels related to freedom of religion or belief
- combating discrimination and violations related to the right to freedom of religion or belief that affect young people
- listening to young people, their ideas and initiatives, amplifying their voices, and working with their suggestions for advancing freedom of religion or belief and, where appropriate, designing programmes to support meaningful engagement with young people on freedom of religion or belief
- taking all steps necessary to tackle threats, discrimination, arbitrary arrests and detention or other forms of acts of intimidation and restrictions against youth activists and other civil society actors representing young people ...

To read the full statement see

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/freedom-of-religion-or-belief-and-youth-statement-at-the-international-ministerial-conference-2022/statement-on-freedom-of-religion-or-belief-and-youth>

Statement on freedom of religion or belief and education

... We commit to:

- prioritising inclusive curricula and teaching, matched to all students' needs, regardless of their background, that provides foundational skills for all. In addition, curricula should provide positive and accurate information about different faith and belief communities and combat negative stereotypes
- support teaching that promotes the equality of all individuals, regardless of their religion
- protecting education establishments and ensuring all students have access to education regardless of their faith or any other characteristic. This includes ensuring access to safe alternative spaces for education in emergencies and protracted crises
- promoting international efforts to support education reform, emphasising the benefits of pluralism and the importance of human rights, including freedom of religion or belief. Regular evaluation of education materials and practices should be carried out to ensure that these standards are always maintained ...

To read the full statement see

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/freedom-of-religion-or-belief-and-education-statement-at-the-international-ministerial-conference-2022/statement-on-freedom-of-religion-or-belief-and-education>

Statement on freedom of religion or belief and civil society

... We commit to:

- enhancing space for civic engagement in government policy decisions through consultations with members of civil society and civic experts on the right to FoRB
- supporting civil society initiatives that promote respect for FoRB, to seek to understand how they address challenges successfully, and to learn from their activities, whilst respecting their independence
- engaging with representatives of diverse religious or belief communities, including women and youth
- protecting the rights to freedoms of expression, peaceful assembly and association for those promoting FoRB including their ability to protest peacefully without fear of reprisal

- safeguarding and promoting operational space for civil society including religious or belief actors and organisations at local, national, regional and international levels
- amplifying the voices of civil society actors, including those defending the right to FoRB
- condemning arbitrary arrest and detention, torture or any other human rights violation affecting individuals who defend FoRB, and promoting accountability for perpetrators of such abuses and violations in line with international law

To read the full statement see

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/freedom-of-religion-or-belief-and-civil-society-statement-at-the-international-ministerial-conference-2022/statement-on-freedom-of-religion-or-belief-and-civil-society>

Statement on freedom of religion or belief and cultural heritage

... We commit to:

- promote the protection of places of worship as a point of convergence for the creation of inclusive societies through mutual respect and sustainable development
- condemn violations of international law pertaining to the protection of places of worship and cultural heritage and support measures to hold those responsible for these violations to account
- encourage the provision of technical assistance in support of the safeguarding of heritage sites and moveable cultural objects where necessary through professional training for relevant officials and those providing emergency assistance for cultural heritage sites and objects in immediate danger
- support the protection and restoration of the cultural heritage of all affected communities without discrimination, in order to foster intra and inter-communal relations and build peace
- respect and safeguard cultural heritage based on principles enshrined in the Convention for the Protection of Cultural Property in the Event of Armed Conflict of 1954, and other relevant instruments ...

To read the full statement see

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/freedom-of-religion-or-belief-and-cultural-heritage-statement-at-the-international-ministerial-conference-2022/statement-on-freedom-of-religion-or-belief-and-cultural-heritage>

Statement on freedom of religion or belief and digital technology

... We commit to:

- protecting human rights online, including freedom of religion or belief and freedom of expression, so that everyone can make the most of the positive opportunities that the online world offers
- working with tech companies and other stakeholders, including governments, academics and civil society, to tackle the threats faced by individuals online as a result of their religion or belief, including hate crimes, harassment and cyberstalking, and to respect their rights online
- in line with UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights and other relevant instruments, encourage digital technology companies to respect human rights in their business operations, in accordance with their responsibilities ...

To read the full statement see

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/freedom-of-religion-or-belief-and-digital-technology-statement-at-the-international-ministerial-conference-2022/statement-on-freedom-of-religion-or-belief-and-digital-technology>

Statement on freedom of religion or belief in conflict or insecure contexts

... We commit to:

- reaffirming condemnation of incitement to violence against all civilians, including towards members of religious or belief minority groups, in situations of conflict or insecurity
- promoting the protection of religion or belief in conflict or insecure environments, including through diplomatic, conflict resolution and peace-building initiatives
- ensuring the meaningful inclusion of marginalised religious or belief minorities in all aspects of peace-making, peacebuilding and transitional justice, taking into consideration other identifiers such as gender, age and ethnicity
- supporting local civil society organisations advocating for human rights, including for members of religious or belief minorities
- promoting the important role of faith leaders in tackling sexual and gender-based violence in conflict and insecure environments, including addressing the stigma often faced by survivors ...

To read the full statement see

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/freedom-of-religion-or-belief-in-conflict-or-insecure-contexts-statement-at-the-international-ministerial-conference-2022/statement-on-freedom-of-religion-or-belief-in-conflict-or-insecure-contexts>

Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office: Other Information

Assessment of the Implementation of the Recommendations of the Bishop of Truro's Independent Review of FCDO Support for Persecuted Christians

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1085231/Assessment_of_the_implementation_of_recommendations_of_Bishop_of_Truro_s_independent_review_of_FCDO_support_for_persecuted_Christians.pdf

UN Human Rights Council 50: UK statement on Contemporary Forms of Racism

... Let us be clear: neo-Nazism has no place in any of our societies.

That is why in 2025, we will open a Holocaust Memorial and Learning Centre to remind us why we must be relentless in the fight against Holocaust denial and distortion, antisemitism, and their repellent sibling ideology – neo-Nazism.

We share the Special Rapporteur's alarm that Russia has sought to justify its military invasion in Ukraine with outlandish claims that Ukraine is controlled by neo-Nazis.

The Kremlin's false statements dishonour those who fought to defeat Nazism in Europe.

They cause real pain to the victims and survivors of the Holocaust. ...

To read the full statement see

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/un-human-rights-council-50-uk-statement-on-contemporary-forms-of-racism>

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Relevant Legislation ** new or updated today

UK Parliament

Bill of Rights Bill

<https://bills.parliament.uk/bills/3227>

Education (Non-religious Philosophical Convictions) Bill

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

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

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

Notice of amendments

<https://bills.parliament.uk/publications/47164/documents/2087>

**** Online Safety Bill**

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

Notice of amendments

https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/bills/cbill/58-03/0121/amend/onlinesafety_rm_rep_0705.pdf

Digital, Culture, Media and Sport Committee Report: Amending the Online Safety Bill

<https://committees.parliament.uk/publications/22894/documents/168085/default/>

Palestine Statehood (Recognition) Bill

<https://bills.parliament.uk/bills/3217>

Private Burial Grounds and Cemeteries Bill

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

**** Schools Bill**

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

Notice of amendments

<https://bills.parliament.uk/publications/47125/documents/2089>

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

Public Participation at the Scottish Parliament (closing date 22 July 2022)

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

Standards for ethnicity data (closing date 30 August 2022)

<https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/standards-for-ethnicity-data>

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