



# Political Affairs Digest

A daily summary of political events affecting the Jewish Community

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## Home Affairs

### House of Commons Oral Answers

#### Hate Speech Online

**Afzal Khan (Labour):** What steps [is the Minister's] Department taking to tackle hate speech online. (901737)

**The Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport (Michelle Donelan):** We will lead the world in this area, and we will bring back the Online Safety Bill imminently, ensuring that social media platforms finally prioritise protecting children, remove abhorrent illegal content quickly—including hate crimes—and keep their promises to their own users.

**Afzal Khan:** Online hate speech affects all and aims to sow division, yet the Government are making painfully slow progress in making online spaces less toxic. Home Office figures reveal a sharp increase in far-right activity, with Muslim and Jewish communities facing the largest number of hate crimes in the UK year after year. Along with other parliamentary colleagues, I suffer online abuse on a regular basis. What steps will the Minister take to tackle Islamophobia and antisemitism online?

**Michelle Donelan:** Crimes such as those that the hon. Member has mentioned, including hate crimes, are not acceptable on any platform. As I have said, we will bring back the Online Safety Bill imminently. I cannot announce House business here today, but I can assure all Members that the Bill will be coming back very shortly. I share his concerns, as I am sure do all Members. ...

**Julian Knight (Conservative):** ... I also welcome her assurance that she will be strengthening the Online Safety Bill's protections for children, but there has been speculation, following previous comments, that she will be reviewing the duties of care for adults relating to so-called "legal but harmful content". Can she clarify what changes she is minded to make in relation to such content?

**Michelle Donelan:** We will be coming back to the House with this in due course, and the Bill will be coming back imminently. This is my key priority—I cannot stress that enough. Protecting children should be the fundamental responsibility of this House, and we will strengthen the provisions for children. I have given that assurance directly to Ian Russell, and I give it again now in the House. We are, however, rebalancing elements for adults' freedom of speech, while also holding social media companies to account so that they cannot treat different races and

religions differently, contrary to their own terms and conditions. Fundamentally, the Bill must be about ensuring that we are protecting children, and we will be bringing it back to the House as soon as possible.

**Alex Davies-Jones (Labour):** Last weekend there was yet another case of vile online racist abuse being hurled at a professional footballer, on this occasion the Brentford striker Ivan Toney. Ironically, tomorrow we will all come together to recognise Show Racism the Red Card day. If the Government are at all serious about keeping people safe online, it is vital for those at the top of these multimillion-pound social media companies to be held personally accountable. The Online Safety Bill is our opportunity to do better. Can the Minister therefore tell us exactly why the Government have failed to introduce personal criminal liability measures for senior leaders who have fallen short on their statutory duty to protect us online?

**Michelle Donelan:** I think it is about time the Opposition remembered that it is this Government who are introducing the Online Safety Bill. It is this Government who committed themselves to it in our manifesto. As I have already told Opposition Members, we will bring it back imminently. I am sure you agree, Mr Speaker, that it would not be proper for me to announce House business here today, but I can assure the hon. Member that this is my top priority. We will be coming back with the Bill shortly. I mean what I say, and I will do what I say. ...

**John Nicolson (SNP):** ... I agree with my friend the hon. Member for Solihull (Julian Knight) that there is a more constructive atmosphere on the Digital, Culture, Media and Sport Committee, on which I sit.

Last night, I was honoured to be present at the *PinkNews* awards, where I spoke up for trans rights with colleagues across party, including Conservatives. There has been an explosion of hate speech online. Women are targeted disproportionately and trans women are targeted especially. Edinburgh Rape Crisis Centre had to lock its door after barrages of violent online threats, and these are dangerous times. An atmosphere of hate has been fanned by too many newspapers and, sadly, politicians.

Does the Secretary of State agree that the now Prime Minister was wrong to weaponise anti-trans rhetoric during the Tory leadership campaign, as she did in attacking the now Leader of the House?

**Michelle Donelan:** I do not think that anybody disputes the fact that hate speech and hate crime should have no place in our society, but freedom of speech, of course, is the bedrock from which all freedoms stem. I personally believe that every member of this House has a duty to protect free speech as well as protecting our citizens from illegal harms.

<https://hansard.parliament.uk/commons/2022-10-20/debates/9B623624-C933-46FF-A423-CBA5BED9332F/HateSpeechOnline>

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## Israel

### House of Commons Written Answers

#### Trade Agreements: Commonwealth

**Mark Eastwood (Conservative)** [63015] To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, when she plans to publish the full details of the New Commonwealth Deal.

**James Duddridge:** We are committed to working with our friends and allies in the Commonwealth to remove unnecessary barriers to free and fair trade, strengthen trading relationships, and building better, greener and more resilient global supply chains.

Of the 55 other Commonwealth members, we have trade agreements with 33 and an additional 16 qualify for preferential access to the UK market under the Developing Countries Trading Scheme.

There are no current plans to proceed with a Commonwealth New Deal as we are negotiating an ambitious programme of Free Trade Agreements (FTAs) at unprecedented pace to help our nation become a truly Global Britain. We are progressing negotiations to join the Comprehensive and Progressive Trans-Pacific Partnership (CPTPP), as well as negotiating FTAs with India, Canada, Mexico, Israel, and the Gulf Cooperation Council.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2022-10-13/63015>

### **Israel and Occupied Territories: Armed Forces**

**Kenny MacAskill (Alba)** [66031] To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many UK military personnel are stationed in (a) Israel and (b) the Occupied Palestinian Territories; and what the roles of those personnel are.

**James Heapey:** As of 19 October 2022, the UK have three permanent military personnel in Israel. They are all based in the British Embassy in Tel Aviv. They carry out key activities in Defence Engagement and Diplomacy.

The Ministry of Defence supports the HMG Middle East Peace Process Programme in the Occupied Palestinian Territories and Israel. The programme aims to help protect the political and physical viability of a two-state solution. We would not disclose the location and numbers of military personnel for security reasons.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2022-10-18/66031>

*The following two questions both received the same answer*

### **Israel: Military Aid**

**Kenny MacAskill (Alba)** [66032] To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what training the Army provided to Israel in each year since 2019; where that training took place; and what types of training the Army delivered.

**Kenny MacAskill (Alba)** [66033] To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what training the Royal Air Force provided to Israel in each year since 2019; where that training took place; and what types of training the Royal Air Force delivered.

**James Heapey:** The Royal Air Force has not provided any training to Israel in this period.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2022-10-18/66032>

and

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2022-10-18/66033>

### **Israel: Military Exercises**

**Kenny MacAskill (Alba)** [66034] To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what planned training exercises the armed forces have with the Israeli armed forces in (a) 2022 and (b) 2023.

**James Heapey:** There are currently no planned training exercises with the Israeli Armed Forces during this period.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2022-10-18/66034>

### **Israel: Nuclear Weapons**

**Kenny MacAskill (Alba)** [66035] To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what estimate he has made of the size of Israel nuclear weapons arsenal.

**Gillian Keegan:** Israel has never declared a nuclear weapons programme. The UK Government continues to encourage Israel to sign the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) as a Non-Nuclear Weapon State. We

regularly monitor all global nuclear developments and will continue to work with international partners to strengthen the non-proliferation regime and advance multilateral nuclear disarmament.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2022-10-18/66035>

### **Gaza: Breast Cancer**

**Kim Leadbeater (Labour)** [62163] To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what representations he has made to his Israeli counterparts on ensuring women in Gaza are afforded unimpeded access to medical treatment for breast cancer.

**Gillian Keegan:** We are closely monitoring the ongoing humanitarian situation in Gaza. The UK Embassy in Tel Aviv regularly raises the importance of access to healthcare, including critical health services, with the Israeli authorities. We are urging the Government of Israel to ensure this access is maintained. The wounded and critically ill in Gaza should be able to access the urgent medical care they need.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2022-10-12/62163>

## **Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office**

### **Updated Travel Advice: Israel**

<https://www.gov.uk/foreign-travel-advice/israel>

### **Updated Travel Advice: The Occupied Palestinian Territories**

<https://www.gov.uk/foreign-travel-advice/the-occupied-palestinian-territories>

## **UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights**

### **Commission of Inquiry finds that the Israeli occupation is unlawful under international law**

There are reasonable grounds to conclude that the Israeli occupation of Palestinian territory is now unlawful under international law due to its permanence and the Israeli Government's de-facto annexation policies, according to the first report to the General Assembly issued today by the United Nations Independent International [Commission of Inquiry](#) on the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, and Israel.

Underlining that under international humanitarian law the occupation of territory in wartime is a temporary situation and does not deprive the occupied Power of its statehood nor its sovereignty, the three-person Commission called on the General Assembly to request an urgent Advisory Opinion from the International Court of Justice on the legal consequences of Israel's continued refusal to end its occupation of the Occupied Palestinian Territory.

"Recent statements by the Secretary-General and numerous member States have clearly indicated that any attempt at unilateral annexation of a State's territory by another State is a violation of international law and is null and void; 143 member States including Israel last week voted in favour of a General Assembly resolution reaffirming this", stated Navi Pillay, Chair of the Commission. "Unless universally applied, including to the situation in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, this core principle of the United Nations Charter will become meaningless", she added.

In reaching its findings, the Commission reviewed the policies and actions employed by the Governments of Israel to maintain the occupation, and annex parts of the Occupied Palestinian Territory. The Commission's review was based on interviews with experts and stakeholders, and submissions received following a call for submissions issued on 22 September 2021. ...

“By ignoring international law in establishing or facilitating the establishment of settlements, and directly or indirectly transferring Israeli civilians into these settlements, successive Israel governments have set facts on the ground to ensure permanent Israeli control in the West Bank”, Ms. Pillay stated. ...

The Commission reviewed statements by Israeli officials indicating that Palestinian construction is seen as an impediment to Israeli settlements, requiring action such as confiscation, demolitions and displacement. The Commission also observed similar processes in East Jerusalem where the restrictive planning and zoning regimes, which have obstructed adequate housing, infrastructure and livelihoods, have contributed to shrinking space for Palestinians. ...

“There is so much ‘silent harm’ and psychological trauma, that may not be immediately apparent, resulting from the erosion of economic, social and cultural rights. ...

The report outlines a specifically damaging impact on children, who experience constant military presence, arrest and detention, frequent attacks and acts of violence, restrictions on movement, home demolition and destruction of infrastructure and property. The Commission emphasised that the cumulative effects of occupation practices, including restrictions on movement, have had a pervasive discriminatory effect on Palestinian women, noting that they experience gender-based violence during their everyday activities. ...

“The actions of Israeli Governments reviewed in our report constitute an illegal occupation and annexation regime that must be addressed”, stated Commissioner Chris Sidoti. “The international system and individual States must act and uphold their obligations under international law. ...

**To read the full press release see**

<https://www.ohchr.org/en/press-releases/2022/10/commission-inquiry-finds-israeli-occupation-unlawful-under-international-law>

**Report of the Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, and Israel [A/77/328]**

<https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/documents/hrbodies/hrcouncil/coiopt/2022-10-19/Report-COI-OPT-14Sept2022-EN.pdf>

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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/2358>

## **Marriage Act 1949 (Amendment) Bill**

<https://bills.parliament.uk/bills/3325>

## **Online Safety Bill**

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

## **Palestine Statehood (Recognition) Bill**

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

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

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

## **Universal Credit (Removal of Two Child Limit) Bill**

<https://bills.parliament.uk/bills/3163>

## **Schools Bill**

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

## **Scottish Parliament**

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

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

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