



Political Affairs Digest

A daily summary of political events affecting the Jewish Community

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House of Commons Oral Answers

Hate Crimes

Afzal Khan (Labour): What steps [the Minister] has taken to tackle hate crimes. (902156)

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Home Department (Sarah

Dines): Hate crime is a scourge on communities across the country. We expect the police to fully investigate hateful attacks and ensure that the cowards who commit them feel the full force of the law.

Afzal Khan: The Home Secretary said that the public want the police to tackle crime, yet the Home Office cut the number of police officers and left Islamophobia to increase over the last five years. Year after year, Home Office figures show that British Muslims are the victims of the highest number of hate crimes. This Islamophobia Awareness Month, will the Home Secretary take any steps to root out this insidious hatred, which impacts our British Muslim community?

Sarah Dines: ... In relation to police numbers, I remind the hon. Gentleman that in his own area we have already recruited 804 new officers and there will be lots more coming in that space. On religious hate crimes against Muslims, my right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary is working hard in this area. I remind him that this Government have done more than any other to tackle anti-Muslim hatred. We have provided extra money—over £4 million between 2016 and 2022—to monitor and combat anti-Muslim hatred. I remind him that, in addition, the Home Office allocated £24.5 million to protect mosques and Muslim faith schools through the Places of Worship: Protective Security Funding Scheme in May 2022. A new Muslim faith schools protective security scheme will also be delivered this year. The Government are thoroughly committed to stamping out this evil crime.

<https://hansard.parliament.uk/commons/2022-11-14/debates/1D6880A5-2105-4390-8998-4418638EF35F/HateCrimes>

Information about the Places of Worship: Protective Security Funding Scheme, referred to above, can be read at

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/places-of-worship-security-funding-scheme>

Ministry of Defence

Hardy Sikh prayer book revived after 100 years to help personnel practice faith in the field

An operations-ready prayer book has been reintroduced for Sikh service personnel, reviving a tradition last seen in the British Indian Army during WW1.

Waterproof and tearproof, the Nitnem Gutka (Sikh Daily Prayers) is designed to be used in modern tactical environments. Nitnem translates to Daily Routine, and the collection of Sikh meditations will allow Sikh personnel to practice their faith at 3 different times of the day, wherever they are and in any conditions. ...

Maj Daljinder Singh Virdee, who led the project, said: I was inspired to undertake this initiative when I saw old images of Sikh soldiers conducting their prayers in uniform. It has been a two-year journey to get to this point but makes all the efforts worthwhile knowing that Sikhs in UK Defence no matter where they serve across the world in whatever conditions can connect to their faith and find spiritual support through this Nitnem Gutka, for generations to come”.

The project has opened the door for other faith communities in Defence to create a similar product, such as the Hindu Gita.

To read the full press release see

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/hardy-sikh-prayer-book-revived-after-100-years-to-help-personnel-practice-faith-in-the-field>

Senedd Legislation, Justice and Constitution Committee

Historic Environment (Wales) Bill: Ministerial evidence session

37 Mick Antoniw [Counsel General and Minister for the Constitution]: ... there are clearly judgments that have to be made along the way. ... one of the classic areas, and it's not an area I'd been familiar with until we started looking, was between the concept of the word 'ecclesiastical' as opposed to 'religious', and, of course, there is some case law on it. Case law isn't necessarily definitive in these areas, so you have to make a judgment, particularly if you're ensuring that the legislation is human rights compliant, and, of course, if 'ecclesiastical' might possibly be construed legally as referring to the Church of England as opposed to 'religious', which then becomes inclusive, well you have to opt for the term 'religious' on the basis that otherwise the legislation you're consolidating then becomes discriminatory. So, it's one of the things that's had to be addressed in the consolidation process and the judgment decided. I think one of the problems also is that, of course, some of the terms have never really been tested as to precisely what they do mean. ...

38 James George [Senior Legislative Counsel, Welsh Government]: ... throughout the Bill we've had to test and examine how the current legislation works, and sometimes that's not entirely clear, and the example about 'ecclesiastical buildings in ecclesiastical use' not counting as monuments has been probably one of the trickiest examples of that. But, as the Counsel General said, we've had to be informed by considering the European convention on human rights position and the need to avoid discrimination, which is why we think it's best to interpret it as 'religious', which has a wider meaning, rather than 'ecclesiastical', which could be interpreted as being limited to the Church of England or Christian churches. ...

39 Huw Irranca-Davies (Labour Co-op): ... we also suggested that the regulation-making power in section 2(3) was a new power that allowed the Welsh Ministers to apply historic environment law to buildings that could not previously have been subject to historic environment law. Could you confirm for us that this is indeed the effect of the new power and why this, if that's correct, amounts to a minor change? ...

41 James George: We didn't want to keep the doubt about what 'ecclesiastical' meant, so we've adopted a reference to 'religious buildings used for religious purposes', but the effect of that is, potentially, that it has a slightly wider meaning than the current provision. Now, I think Cadw's intention is not to change the policy on this at all, but the regulation-making power there is in there in case any adjustments are needed in the future. So, if it turned out that, actually, we did need to deal slightly differently with different religious denominations, for example, then the regulation-making power would allow that to be done. ...

Gwilym Hughes [Head of Cadw and Deputy Director, Welsh Government]: ... I'm very happy with that. I think that the distinction between 'ecclesiastical' and 'religious' is difficult, and it was a term that had been adopted in the original legislation to cover a particular area. But, that legislation was made in the days before the European convention on human rights. This will work. ...

To read the full transcript see

<https://record.senedd.wales/Committee/13037#A75005>

Information about the Historic Environment (Wales) Bill can be read at

<https://business.senedd.wales/mglIssueHistoryHome.aspx?Id=39698>

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House of Commons Written Answers

Trade Agreements: Israel

Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi (Labour) [80844] To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, what assessment she has made of the potential impact of a free trade agreement between the UK and Israel.

Nigel Huddleston: An enhanced agreement would expand a trading relationship already worth £5 billion per year. By reducing trade barriers, it could lead to gains in services trade and could benefit around 6,600 UK businesses that export goods to Israel and employed over 1.7 million people in 2020, including around 5,600 small and medium-sized enterprises. Israel's service sector has grown by 45% in 10 years and is an innovative and dynamic market for boosting UK service exports. Our published scoping analysis, which contains potential impacts of a new free trade agreement is available here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/uk-approach-to-negotiating-a-free-trade-agreement-with-israel>

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2022-11-07/80844>

Palestinians: Development Aid

Steve McCabe (Labour) [77277] To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, pursuant to the Answer of 25 October 2022 to Question 63915 on Palestinians: Development Aid, whether his Department made an assessment of the Palestinian Authority's commitment to non-violence as part of the December 2021 review.

David Rutley: I refer the honourable Member to the answer given on 25 October 2022 to Question 63915, the answer can be found on the Q&A web pages on

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2022-10-17/63915>

Following a review in December 2021, FCDO's assessment is that the Palestinian

Authority (PA) demonstrates a partially credible commitment to the Partnership Principles. There is relatively strong progress on improving public financial management and a continued commitment to delivering effective services and reducing poverty, despite the challenges of the occupation. However, cases of abuses of human rights and restrictions on freedom of expression continue and there is a need for greater action to strengthen human rights protection and increase domestic accountability in areas within the PA's control. The UK continues to monitor these issues closely, and raise them at the highest levels of the PA.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2022-11-02/77277>

Palestinians: Textbooks

Steve McCabe (Labour) [77278] To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, pursuant to the Answer of 25 October 2022 to Question 63914 on Palestinians: Textbooks, whether the United Nations Relief and Works Agency committed to take steps after his Department raised its concerns following the Review of 2022 UNRWA-Produced Study Materials in the Palestinian Territories published by IMPACT-se in July 2022.

David Rutley: I refer the honourable Member to the answer given on 25 October 2022 to Question 63914, the answer can be found on the Q&A web pages on <https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2022-10-17/63914>

The UK Government has zero tolerance towards incitement of violence. We are aware of the recent Institute for Monitoring Peace and Cultural Tolerance in School Education (IMPACT-SE) report and raised with the United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA) directly. We are longstanding supporters of UNRWA and their work to provide essential services to Palestinian refugees across the region, including in the Occupied Palestinian Territories (OPTs). We accompany our support for UNRWA with stringent attention to implementation of their neutrality policy, including how they apply this to the learning material UNRWA produces in the OPTs to ensure they reflect UN values.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2022-11-02/77278>

The report referred to above can be read at

<https://www.impact-se.org/wp-content/uploads/Review-of-2022-UNRWA-Produced-School-Materials.pdf>

House of Lords Written Answers

Rayan Suleiman

Baroness Sheehan (Liberal Democrat) [HL2986] To ask His Majesty's Government what representations they plan to make to the government of Israel to support the investigation of the death of Rayan Suleiman, a Palestinian boy who died in Tequa in the West Bank after reportedly being chased by Israeli soldiers.

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: We regularly raise the issue of the high numbers of Palestinians killed and injured by Israeli Defence Forces in the West Bank and Gaza with the Israeli authorities. We encourage them to carry out swift, transparent and thorough investigations and, if wrongdoing is found, that those responsible be held to account. We will continue to stress the importance of the Israeli security forces providing appropriate protection to the Palestinian civilian population, particularly the need to protect children, and urge restraint in the use of live fire.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2022-10-27/hl2986>

Israel: Palestinians

Baroness Sheehan (Liberal Democrat) [HL2987] To ask His Majesty's Government what steps they plan to take, if any, to prevent the forcible removal of Palestinians from Masafer Yatta, some of whom have deeds of ownership and have lived in the area prior to 1948.

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: 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/2022-10-27/hl2987>

Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office

Direct flights between Tel Aviv and Doha for the World Cup: Foreign Secretary's statement

The Foreign Secretary has welcomed an agreement between Qatar and Israel to allow direct flights between Tel Aviv and Doha for the football FIFA World Cup 2022.

Foreign Secretary James Cleverly said: The UK congratulates Israel and Qatar for reaching an important deal to open direct flights between Tel Aviv and Doha for the World Cup.

We welcome the commitment that this will benefit football fans in both Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territories, and foster stronger people-to-people links across the Middle East.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/foreign-secretary-statement-direct-flights-between-tel-aviv-and-doha-for-the-world-cup-14-november>

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House of Commons Library Briefing

Christian persecution: Freedom of religion or belief

<https://researchbriefings.files.parliament.uk/documents/CDP-2022-0200/CDP-2022-0200.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>

Committee Stage, House of Lords

[https://hansard.parliament.uk/lords/2022-11-14/debates/E570D3F1-93FC-4DE4-B9FA-79AF14EE5B69/HigherEducation\(FreedomOfSpeech\)Bill](https://hansard.parliament.uk/lords/2022-11-14/debates/E570D3F1-93FC-4DE4-B9FA-79AF14EE5B69/HigherEducation(FreedomOfSpeech)Bill)

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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