



# Political Affairs Digest

A daily summary of political events affecting the Jewish Community

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## Home Affairs

### House of Commons Debate

#### **Association of Jewish Ex-servicemen and Women: Remembrance Parade and Ceremony**

*col 1017* **Bob Blackman (Conservative):** ... I am very pleased and proud to introduce this debate to highlight the 100th anniversary of the Association of Jewish Ex-Servicemen and Women, who commemorate their annual remembrance ceremony and parade on Sunday. ... I am very proud to be an honorary member of AJEX ...

This debate has such significance because, 101 years ago, Jewish veterans of world war one—the great war—laid a wreath at the newly erected Cenotaph on Whitehall for the very first time. One hundred years ago to the day, the British Jewry Book of Honour, which marked the Jewish contribution between 1914 and 1918 and thereafter, was published. This demonstrates the great commitment that the Jewish community has given to the British armed forces over many years.

For over 200 years, prior to the great war, Jewish servicemen had played an important part in the British military. However, 1914 marked the precipitated emergence of a lasting and discrete Jewish identity within HM armed forces. Leaders of the faith, community bodies and the *Jewish Chronicle* urged recruitment into the British Army as support for the UK's ongoing support and acceptance of all. ...

The Jewish momentum grew in the British Army, with the forming of a Jewish legion comprising: the 38th Battalion, the Royal Fusiliers in the east end of London; the 39th Battalion of Canadian, American and Argentinian Jews; and a 40th Battalion of Jews from Palestine, including one Lieutenant Corporal David Ben-Gurion, later to become the first Prime Minister of the state of Israel.

Over 55,000 British and British Empire Jews served with the allies throughout the great war. Sadly, at least 2,000 lost their lives in the conflict, and we should be eternally grateful to them. ...

The pride of every Jewish serviceman and woman was captured in the 1922 British Jewry Book of Honour. This book contains the names of all those who served, details of fatalities and casualties, military honours, the Jewish units, the work of Jewish hospitals and of all other Jewish institutions and agencies. ...

*col 1018* I would like to take this opportunity to express my gratitude to the Reverend Michael Adler, who tirelessly conducted meticulous research in editing the original book,

enabling this significant piece of history. Reverend Michael Adler was the first Jewish chaplain to serve in HM forces and remains an inspiration to many.

It is worth noting that the Jewish contribution in world war two was just as important as in the first world war, with more than 100,000 Jewish military personnel—remarkably, that is one fifth of their entire community. Sadly, almost 3,000 lost their lives during the conflict. Today, a century later from the book of honour's inaugural publication, AJEX, the Jewish Military Association, continues to support veterans, their families and serving personnel of every rank. It continues to support and work with the British Legion, having a huge impact across the globe, providing essential welfare services during conflicts.

In the 1930s, AJEX was home to thousands of members from all parts of the country. It was beginning to become growingly concerned with activities commencing in Germany. AJEX members began to take to the streets to call out against Mosley's Blackshirts and against fascists who were beginning to speak at rallies and on the streets more frequently. The German Jewish ex-servicemen had also raised alarm at the growing movement, getting in touch with AJEX to co-operate on aiding visa applications for Jews to escape the rapidly worsening Nazi Germany. The help that AJEX provided had a huge impact, saving many lives.

In 1934, King George V granted AJEX the right to march to the Cenotaph on the Sunday following Remembrance Sunday ... in recognition of the Jewish contribution and as a display of loyalty from the Anglo-Jewish community. This Sunday, 20 November, will mark the 89th AJEX annual parade. ...

*col 1019* The parade has welcomed a host of esteemed guests to pay their respects over the years, including members of the royal family and the highest ranks of the military. ... As ever, the ceremony will be led by the Chief Rabbi, with the senior military Jewish chaplain in attendance and rabbis of other denominations also present. I am also pleased that parliamentarians have confirmed their attendance ...

Today, approximately 500 members of the Jewish community are on active duty. The annual AJEX parade provides an opportunity to recognise their efforts and the huge sacrifices they make to protect Great Britain and her allies. ... The theme of this year's parade is "connection". That feels particularly fitting, as we must continue to educate future generations about history, and about the great sacrifice our ancestors made for our freedom. ...

Finally, I hope that in this year of all years, my hon. and learned Friend the Minister will be able to attend. He will become unique, because Ministers have not attended on behalf of the Government for many years ...

*col 1020* **The Minister for Defence Procurement (Alex Chalk):** ... As my hon. Friend said, last year's parade was the 100th anniversary of the first wreath-laying by Jewish veterans at the Cenotaph. As he also said, it is also 100 years since the publication of the British Jewry Book of Honour, marking the Jewish military contribution between 1914 and 1918 and beyond. Both are significant milestones, and I am so pleased to have this opportunity to mark them—not least because, significant as the contribution of the Jewish community to our armed forces has been, I am sorry to say that on some occasions it has not been as well celebrated as it should have been. This is an excellent opportunity to commemorate, celebrate and salute those Jewish soldiers, sailors and aviators who served and sacrificed to preserve our freedom, and did so with such distinction.

More than a century ago, Jewish soldiers fought in the Boer war, and Jewish chaplains even arranged annual Chanukah parades for troops. In Aldershot synagogue there is a plaque with an inscription that reads: "To the glory of God and in loyal and patriotic memory of the soldiers of the Jewish race and faith who lost their lives in the service of their country".

I think that that simple inscription speaks to the very point that my hon. Friend made. These were brave service personnel who lost their lives in the service of their country. Tens of thousands then fought in the first world war, many signing up voluntarily to play their part,

with five winning the Victoria Cross ... Let me put this in context. Of the 6 million men who fought, only 578 received the Victoria Cross—less than 0.01%. What that tells us is that Jewish soldiers served with conspicuous gallantry.

However, not only Jewish men but Jewish women volunteered. Among them was Florence Greenberg, who bravely served on board a hospital ship during the devastation of the Gallipoli campaign. Not only did she save countless lives, but she wrote a diary about her experiences so that future generations could learn from the horrors she witnessed. ...

I also found it striking to look at what the Jewish recruiting committee had done during the first world war. In 1916, it took out a full-page advertisement in *The Jewish World*, declaring that there must be “no Jewish slackers”. It certainly secured its wish ...

col 1021 Indeed, the Jewish contribution extended far more broadly. Jewish personnel served as secret agents behind enemy lines and even as codebreakers at Bletchley Park. A former director of GCHQ in my constituency wrote an article in 2017 titled “The Jewish codebreakers who won the war”—praise indeed.

In particular, we must remember the crucial role played by Jewish women in the Special Operations Executive, not least Vera Atkins, who was part of the team which evacuated Poland’s Enigma codebreakers to Britain, and later ran a network of intelligence agents across France. ... There was also Krystyna Skarbek, the longest-serving of all Britain’s female agents, whose resourcefulness and success on operations in eastern Europe convinced officers to recruit more women, including some of the 10,000 Jewish refugees who had arrived from Germany and Austria as refugees. ...

That distinguished record of service has continued in more recent times. Jewish paratroopers served in the Falkland Islands 40 years ago, where Britain secured a decisive victory over a military dictator against all the odds. ...

Jewish soldiers were in Afghanistan too. ...

col 1022 Today our Jewish troops remain an integral part of our forces. In the last 12 months alone, Jewish personnel have served on Operation Newcombe in Mali, in eastern Europe under Operation Orbital and in various continuing operations in the middle east. They have also been supporting their counterparts fighting in Ukraine by sending them their entire stock of kosher ration packs.

The truth is that the contribution of British Jews to the freedom and security of the UK has far outweighed the community’s comparatively small size. Remembrance Day is our opportunity—indeed it is our privilege—to recall that exemplary record of service and sacrifice. ...

Ever since those first marchers, to whom my hon. Friend referred, laid a wreath at the Cenotaph in 1921, AJEX has brought together people of all ages to pay tribute to Jewish personnel. Last year’s event was naturally very special, marking not just the 100th anniversary but the first full parade since the outbreak of the pandemic. More than 1,000 people participated in the march from Horse Guards Parade down Whitehall to the Cenotaph, with current personnel, veterans and the families of now-deceased veterans walking side by side. Many thousands more watched on.

This Sunday’s parade is set to be just as moving, and following the earnest, important and well received entreaties of my hon. Friend, I am pleased to be able to say that I will join him. ...

The Jewish community is rightly proud of its history of service and loyalty. In synagogues across the country every Shabbat, a prayer is offered for the protection of His Majesty’s armed forces. As part of the respect and pride that we have in our Jewish personnel, we continue to do all that we can to ensure that the Ministry of Defence is considered by them a home from home, whether that is through the provision of kosher food packages, by ensuring that we grant annual leave for sacred holidays wherever possible, or by making places available to pray. We also have an armed forces Jewish chaplain, a Jewish champion and a thriving armed forces Jewish network.

I want to finish by reflecting on a pamphlet that I recently came across calling on Jewish

people to volunteer for the armed forces in the first world war. In the preface, it asks them to “join in unfaltering defence of the weak, and in vindication of those principles of justice, humanity and international good faith which they, as Jews, have so much reason to cherish, and from which they have still so much to hope.”

col 1023 It seems to me that those words sum up the attitude exemplified by all our Jewish combatants over the last 100 years and beyond. It is an attitude that has invigorated every branch of our armed forces and helped us repeatedly triumph over our adversaries. As the marchers make their way down Whitehall on Sunday, it will be an opportunity to reflect on those words, to pay tribute to the immense endeavours of Jewish personnel on our nation’s behalf and to underline our sincere wish and expectation that that contribution in future will go only from strength to strength. Given the timing of the debate, I thank our Jewish friends and colleagues and wish them Shabbat shalom.

**To read the full transcript see**

<https://hansard.parliament.uk/commons/2022-11-18/debates/8CE5C469-CD45-4685-BB8C-3B95CFBD2C2D/AssociationOfJewishEx-ServicemenAndWomenRemembranceParadeAndCeremony>

## The Charity Commission

### Update on investment guidance following Butler-Sloss case

... We consider that the judgment offers welcome clarification of how existing legal principles should be interpreted by trustees in a modern context, but that it does not fundamentally alter those principles. We therefore confirm that charities can continue to rely on the legal position in our published guidance [Charities and investment matters: a guide for trustees \(CC14\)](#) when making investment decisions.

The new judgment confirms that trustees have wide discretion where appropriate to exclude certain investments based on non-financial considerations when making financial investment decisions. These principles are described as ethical investment in our CC14 guidance, and have also been described as responsible investment.

The judgment also confirms that there is no obligation on trustees to do so – they can, where appropriate, make financial investments designed only to secure the best financial return. ...

As part of his judgment Mr Justice Green gave the following summary of the law ... We accept and endorse this framework in full ...

... Charity trustees’ primary and overarching duty is to further the purposes of the trust. The power to invest must therefore be exercised to further the charitable purposes.

That is normally achieved by maximising the financial returns on the investments that are made ...

... where trustees are of the reasonable view that particular investments or classes of investments potentially conflict with the charitable purposes, the trustees have a discretion as to whether to exclude such investments and they should exercise that discretion by reasonably balancing all relevant factors including, in particular, the likelihood and seriousness of the potential conflict and the likelihood and seriousness of any potential financial effect from the exclusion of such investments.

In considering the financial effect of making or excluding certain investments, the trustees can take into account the risk of losing support from donors and damage to the reputation of the charity generally and in particular among its beneficiaries.

However, trustees need to be careful in relation to making decisions as to investments on purely moral grounds, recognising that among the charity’s supporters and beneficiaries there may be differing legitimate moral views on certain issues. ...

If that balancing exercise is properly done and a reasonable and proportionate investment policy is thereby adopted, the trustees have complied with their legal duties in such respect

and cannot be criticised, even if the court or other trustees might have come to a different conclusion. ...

**To read the full press release see**

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/update-on-investment-guidance-following-butler-sloss-case>

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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>

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

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

#### **\*\* Online Safety Bill**

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

House of Commons Library Briefing: Online Safety Bill: Commons stages

<https://researchbriefings.files.parliament.uk/documents/CBP-9579/CBP-9579.pdf>

#### **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**

#### **Charities (Regulation and Administration) (Scotland) Bill**

<https://www.parliament.scot/bills-and-laws/bills/charities-regulation-and-administration-scotland-bill>

## **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