



Political Affairs Digest

A daily summary of political events affecting the Jewish Community

Contents

Home Affairs

Israel

Relevant Legislation

Back issues

Home Affairs

House of Commons Written Answer

Religion: Teachers

Kevan Jones (Labour) [92125] To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether she has plans to reintroduce the bursary for religious education teachers.

Nick Gibb: The bursaries the Department provides for initial teacher training (ITT) are intended to incentivise applications to ITT courses. The Department reviews the bursaries available each year to take account of factors including historic recruitment, forecast economic conditions, and teacher supply need in each subject. This provides flexibility to respond to the need to attract new teachers, and means the Department is spending money where it is needed most.

In the 2020/21 academic year, the Department exceeded the postgraduate ITT target for RE (129%), whilst in the 2021/22 academic year, the equivalent target was narrowly missed (99%). The Department will review the need for bursaries across all subjects before announcing what will be available for the 2024/25 academic year.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2022-11-21/92125>

House of Lords Oral Answers

Humanist Marriages

Baroness Blackstone (Labour): To ask His Majesty's Government when they intend to give legal recognition to humanist marriages. ...

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Ministry of Justice (Lord Bellamy): My Lords, the Law Commission recently published its report on reforming wedding law in England and Wales. We must consider the 57 recommendations in full. It is important that we balance the needs and interests of all groups, religious and non-religious, and very carefully consider the implications of changing the law. I hope to be able to publish our initial response in the first part of next year.

Baroness Blackstone: ... My Lords, I thank the Minister for his reply but I must say that I

am a little disappointed by it. The Law Commission, to which he referred, took no position on this question. It did not make a recommendation one way or the other. That is because this is a political decision. What is preventing the Government from going ahead and laying an order under the 2013 Act, getting it done now, and stopping once and for all the discrimination against humanists in this area?

Lord Bellamy: My Lords, in a nutshell, the Government's position is that to lay an order under the 2013 Act solely in favour of humanists would discriminate against other groups—Muslims, Sikhs, Hindus and so forth—in permitting them to have a particular form of marriage not available to other groups. The Government's position is that we must go forward together and solve the whole problem. I will elaborate in a moment on what the problem is.

Lord Cormack (Conservative): My Lords, we need to get a move on here. As one who believes very fervently in Christian marriage but even more in the institution of marriage, I ask: how can it be sensible to allow a wedding to take place in a registry office but not to allow humanists, who have their own ethics, to have a proper marriage ceremony? ...

Lord Bellamy: The Law Commission, in a very detailed and well-argued report, took the view that we should proceed as a country to solve the whole problem across all faiths at the same time and not favour a particular group. That is the Government's position ...

Baroness Meacher (Crossbench): My Lords, it will be 10 years next year since I tabled an amendment to the 2013 Marriage (Same Sex Couples) Bill about humanist marriages. In response to it, the Government tabled their own amendment enabling Ministers to make this tiny change—we are talking about two words—adding “and humanists” to Quakers and Jews. It seems highly unlikely that any legislation will pass following the Law Commission's report before the next election. Therefore, will the Minister meet me to discuss how, 10 years on, this tiny adjustment can be made to the law through a ministerial order to end this discrimination once and for all?

Lord Bellamy: ... This is a quite difficult problem. We have to solve it across the board without discrimination either in favour of or against any faith group or non-faith group. We have to deal with the civil preliminaries for marriage, who is to be authorised, what is the regime for authorisation and, in particular, the problems raised by the All-Party Parliamentary Humanist Group itself in relation to the Law Commission's report.

Baroness Thornton (Labour): My Lords, why is it that Scotland and Wales have managed to have humanist weddings in their law? ...

Lord Bellamy: My Lords, the Law Commission recommended reform. That has already taken place in other jurisdictions. We are working on exactly how the reform should take place in this country as fast as we can.

The Lord Bishop of St Albans: My Lords, those of us on this Bench in principle have no problem at all with humanist weddings. Does the Minister agree that the best way forward is the one that has been alluded to already, which is that it could be achieved most easily by following the historical precedent established with Jewish and Quaker weddings rather than adopting the overtly complex recommendations of the Law Commission's report?

Lord Bellamy: The Government have to consider in detail the Law Commission report ...

Lord Desai (Non-affiliated): My Lords, is the problem that the humanists are not religious? Every other religion has been treated kindly and LGBTQ marriages can take place. Just the humanists in England are discriminated against. Is the Church of England so upset about humanists that it will not let humanists get married?

Lord Bellamy: My Lords, as far as I know, this problem is not a matter for the Church of England. The Government's view is that as a country we should proceed across the board to solve and update our law of marriage all at the same time.

Baroness Burt of Solihull (Liberal Democrat): My Lords, in Scotland, where humanist

marriage is legal, as has been mentioned, there are more humanist marriages than Christian ones and marriage is more popular than ever. ...

Lord Bellamy: This Government strongly support the institution of marriage. ...

Lord Griffiths of Burry Port (Labour): ... It would enrich us all if people, according to conscience and practice, could marry in the way asked ...

Lord Bellamy: ... As the Government see it, we should have a regime for marriage in this country in which the civil preliminaries are common to all marriages, the persons who conduct marriages are authorised under one regime, we define what belief systems we will accept as people capable of authorising marriages, and we exclude extremists, cults and so forth. These are not straightforward questions. It is a very simple and, if I may say so, not complete answer to say that it is easy to do it for the humanists. We want to make sure that, for example, a marriage of a Muslim at home—which might not be a lawful marriage at the moment—is now taken forward and that we create a situation in which that becomes a lawful marriage and we have proper officiants, rules and regulations that regulate it all. That is the Government's position.

Baroness Brinton (Liberal Democrat): My Lords, I supported the amendment from the noble Baroness, Lady Meacher, to the same-sex marriage Bill of 2013. ... The provision that was arranged was deliberately simple to enable this to happen. I am sure the House would welcome other faiths being drawn into it, but this is long overdue. ...

Lord Bellamy: I will of course go back and look at the history. ... but in this case the Government feel that the country as a whole must go forward together and not favour a particular group.

To read this question and answer session in full see

<https://hansard.parliament.uk/lords/2022-11-29/debates/0E6C3E27-771D-41E3-9CC3-61F69E3DD961/HumanistMarriages>

The Law Commission report referred to above can be read at

<https://s3-eu-west-2.amazonaws.com/lawcom-prod-storage-11jsxou24uy7q/uploads/2022/07/A-new-weddings-law-LC-report.pdf>

TOP

Israel

House of Commons Written Answer

Israel: LGBTQ+ People

Robert Buckland (Conservative) [87836] To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether he has made a recent assessment of the trends in the levels of LGBTQ rights in Israel following the recent election results.

David Rutley: Israel is an open democracy with a vibrant civil society. Each year, Tel Aviv hosts the largest Pride parade in the Middle East - the British Embassy in Tel Aviv will continue to use this platform to project the importance of open and tolerant societies that champion equality and diversity. We encourage all Israeli parties to demonstrate tolerance and respect for minority groups. The UK is committed to championing LGBT+ rights internationally and supporting those who defend them. Ministers and our overseas missions work closely with partners across Israel to advance LGBT+ equality and promote the implementation of new laws and policies that better protect LGBT+ people from violence and discrimination. This year, Israel took the decision to ban medical professionals

engaging in so-called 'conversion therapy' for LGBT+ people. Since 2018, the UK has committed over £13.5 million in programmes to support the promotion and protection of LGBT+ people's rights around the world.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2022-11-15/87836>

United Nations

Amid Creeping Annexation, Shrinking Civil Society Space for Palestinians, Israel Must Be Held Accountable, Speakers Stress at Meeting Marking International Solidarity Day

... **Cheikh Niang (Senegal), Chair of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People**, said that on this day — the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People — the promise of independence, self-determination and the realization of the Palestinian people's rights remains unfulfilled. For over 55 years, the Palestinian people and Palestine refugees have experienced increasing levels of dispossession, displacement, violence, insecurity and violations of human rights. The dangerous escalation in military raids across the occupied West Bank, including East Jerusalem, in 2022 has led to the killing and injury of civilians. Such violence is not the answer to a just peace in the Middle East as outlined in international law and countless United Nations resolutions, he emphasized while calling for the immediate cessation of civilian killings and accountability for perpetrators. "The global consensus is clear that the provocative rhetoric and actions by Israel, especially in regard to the historic and legal status quo of Jerusalem and its holy sites, which greatly inflame tensions, must end," he underscored.

Turning to Israel's ongoing expansion of illegal settlements in the Occupied Palestinian Territory and the rise in settler violence, he voiced the Committee's grave concern that Israel's occupation is not temporary but rather a creeping annexation. Israel must reverse the dispossession and forcible displacement of Palestinians as well as the transfer of its population to occupied land. Condemning Israel's relentless targeting of Palestinian civil society organizations — including the decision to outlaw six that are partners to the United Nations and the Committee — as well as the shrinking of space for them, he called on that country to fully lift its 15-year illegal blockade on the Gaza Strip. Such actions are the source of countless human rights violations, lead to Gaza's de-development and run contrary to peace and international law. The land, air and sea blockade must end, he stressed. ...

Earle Courtenay Rattray, Chef de Cabinet, speaking on behalf of United Nations Secretary-General António Guterres, called on all parties to take immediate steps to reduce tensions and break the deadly cycle of violence. The longstanding drivers of conflict — including the ongoing occupation, settlement expansion, home demolitions and evictions — heighten anger, despair and hopelessness. Gaza, he added, continues to endure debilitating closures and humanitarian crises. All parties must engage to end the closures of Gaza and improve living conditions for all Palestinians. ... "The United Nations position is clear: peace must advance and the occupation must end," he emphasized.

Adding some of his own words, Mr. Rattray said this day is a powerful reminder that the international community must never lose sight of the deteriorating situation in the Occupied Palestinian Territory. 2022 is on track to being the deadliest year for Palestinians since the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs began systematically tracking fatalities in 2005. The West Bank, he continued, is a tinder-box in tension. The situation in Jerusalem is becoming more fragile amidst provocations and acts of violence in and around the holy sites. Gaza's 2 million Palestinian inhabitants continue to suffer under debilitating closures. While he welcomed the steps to ease access and movement over the past year, he nevertheless emphasized that more is required to reduce tensions and

open a clear, political horizon. ...

Riyad H. Mansour, Permanent Observer for the State of Palestine, delivering a message on behalf of Mahmoud Abbas, President of the State of Palestine, expressed gratitude to the overwhelming majority of Member States for their support to the right of the Palestinian people to self-determination. Describing “another year of killing, siege, arrest, forced displacement and home demolitions,” he drew attention to increasing violence against the Palestinian people and their Christian and Islamic holy site as well as the incitement to violence from Israeli officials and members of the Israeli Knesset. The Palestinian journalist Shireen Abu Akleh was assassinated by the Israeli occupying forces in cold blood, and her funeral and coffin bearers were attacked, he recalled, adding “this is Israel and its occupation” summarized in one event. The international community cannot expect the Israeli occupier to wake up one day, and choose justice and peace, he said, calling for intensification of efforts to put pressure on Israel to end its occupation and stop its crimes.

The two-State solution, based on the 1967 borders, he continued, is enshrined in United Nations resolutions, which identified the terms of reference and the basis for a settlement to the conflict, as well as the mechanisms to achieve it within a defined timeframe. Cautioning those States that have established trade or diplomatic offices in Jerusalem or concluded agreements with companies or educational institutions operating in settlements or buy products from these settlements, he said that such actions are in violation of international law. The Israeli authorities are undermining the two-State solution and entrenching Apartheid. Therefore, the State of Palestine has referred the Israeli colonial system and all its violations to the International Court of Justice. The two-State solution cannot be left hostage to the occupier's will, he added.

Highlighting the importance of recognizing the State of Palestine and supporting its full membership in the United Nations, he called for the convening of an international conference under the auspices of the United Nations, with the aim of ending the occupation, resolving all final status issues, and defining a package of guarantees for the implementation of what has been agreed upon within a defined timeframe. ...

To read the full press release see

<https://press.un.org/en/2022/gapal1447.doc.htm>

TOP

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

Written Ministerial Statement

<https://hansard.parliament.uk/commons/2022-11-29/debates/22112948000012/OnlineSafetyBill>

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>

[TOP](#)

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