



Political Affairs Digest

A daily summary of political events affecting the Jewish Community

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House of Commons Written Answers

Freedom of Expression: Antisemitism

Matt Western (Labour) [125446] To ask the Secretary of State for Education, if she will make it her policy to require the person appointed as Director for Freedom of Speech and Academic Freedom to commit to respecting the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance's definition of Anti-Semitism.

Matt Western (Labour) [125447] To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what assessment she has made of the potential impact of appointing a Director for Freedom of Speech and Academic Freedoms on Anti-Semitism.

Claire Coutinho: The department has encouraged higher education providers to adopt the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA) definition of antisemitism and has asked the Office for Students (OfS) to keep a record of those providers which have done so.

The department is clear that antisemitism is abhorrent. We remain committed to the IHRA definition and our belief that providers should adopt it. Students have a right to enjoy their university experience without the fear of antisemitic activity on university grounds and should be protected from harassment and violence.

The Director for Freedom of Speech and Academic Freedom will be a member of the board of the OfS, with responsibility for overseeing the free speech functions of the regulator.

The Higher Education (Freedom of Speech) Bill will require reasonably practicable steps to be taken to secure freedom of speech within the law. The Director will oversee the free speech functions in that context.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2023-01-17/125446>
and

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2023-01-17/125447>

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Holocaust

House of Commons Oral Answers

Prime Minister's Question Time

col 1000 **The Prime Minister (Rishi Sunak):** ... As we prepare to mark Holocaust Memorial Day, I am sure the whole House will join me in paying tribute to the extraordinary courage of Britain's holocaust survivors, including 94-year-old Arek Hersh, who is here with us today. This Government will legislate to build a holocaust memorial and learning centre next to Parliament so that the testimonies of survivors such as Arek will be heard at the heart of our democracy by every generation to come. ...

col 1001 **Keir Starmer:** This week, we will remember the 6 million Jews murdered in the holocaust and all those scarred by genocide since as we mark Holocaust Memorial Day. We must all commit, across this House, to defeat prejudice and hatred wherever we may find it. To work for a better future, we must find light in the darkness. ...

col 1004 **Stephen Flynn (SNP):** Let me start by echoing the sentiments of the Prime Minister and the Leader of the Opposition in relation to Holocaust Memorial Day—truly horrific crimes that we must never forget and endeavour to ensure are never repeated. ...

col 1005 **Jeffrey M Donaldson (DUP):** I echo the comments of the Prime Minister in relation to Holocaust Memorial Day ...

col 1007 **Tulip Siddiq (Labour) [903275]** This week, as a trustee of the Holocaust Memorial Day Trust, I was honoured to hear from Lia Lesser, a holocaust survivor who came to this country by herself at the age of eight because her parents believed that the UK was a safe haven for vulnerable children. I also read the Government's own statistics that say 200 unaccompanied asylum-seeking children were missing from hotels in the UK. Ministers have admitted that they have no idea about the whereabouts of those children. Does the Prime Minister think that the UK is still a safe haven for vulnerable children?

The Prime Minister: Over the last few years, the United Kingdom has opened up its hearts and homes to hundreds of thousands of people from Syria, Afghanistan, Ukraine and Hong Kong and provided refuge and sanctuary to many children in that process, but the reports that we have read about are concerning. Local authorities have a statutory duty to protect all children regardless of where they go missing from, and in that situation they work closely with local agencies, including the police, to establish their whereabouts. That is why it is so important that we end the use of hotels for unaccompanied asylum seekers and reduce pressure on the overall system. That is what our plans will do. ...

col 1008 **Nicola Richards (Conservative):** May I echo my right hon. Friend's comments on the importance of Holocaust Memorial Day and welcome his renewed commitment today regarding the holocaust memorial and learning centre? Will he join me in encouraging Members from across the House to sign the Holocaust Educational Trust's book of commitment, which will be in Parliament today and tomorrow, and pledge to remember the holocaust, fight antisemitism and support the important work of the Holocaust Educational Trust?

The Prime Minister: I thank my hon. Friend. As I said earlier, we will legislate to help build the holocaust memorial and learning centre next to Parliament to serve as a powerful reminder of the holocaust, its victims and where prejudice can lead if unchallenged. I also join her in thanking the Holocaust Educational Trust for its fantastic work and in encouraging all Members to sign the book of commitment, as I will be doing later today. ...

To read the full transcript see

<https://hansard.parliament.uk/commons/2023-01-25/debates/CC1C6066-E0E7-4BF6-84D4-BB5C11BC1EBA/Engagements>

Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities

Government to introduce legislation to pave way for new National Holocaust Memorial

... The Government will introduce new legislation to progress the construction of a national Holocaust memorial.

The Prime Minister announced ... that the Holocaust Memorial Bill will update historic legislation, removing a statutory obstacle that has previously prevented the building of a new memorial and learning centre in Victoria Tower Gardens in Westminster.

Located next to the Houses of Parliament, the memorial will serve as a powerful reminder to the whole of society of the Holocaust, its victims and where prejudice can lead if unchallenged.

The Prime Minister, Rishi Sunak, said: "This important Bill brings us one step closer to delivering a national Holocaust Memorial and Learning Centre at the heart of our democracy in Westminster, where it rightly belongs.

"The Memorial will honour the memory of those who were so cruelly murdered and preserve the testimonies of brave survivors so that future generations will never forget the horrors of the holocaust.

"As the remaining survivors become older and fewer in number, it is vital that we push ahead with the Memorial which is supported by all major political parties."

Secretary of State for Levelling up, Housing and Communities, Michael Gove said: "As the Holocaust moves from living history, to history, it becomes ever more important that we take the time to remember the six million Jewish men, women and children murdered and pay tribute to the survivors.

"We are committed to building the Memorial next to Parliament, a site which reflects its national significance and is close to other important memorials including the Cenotaph.

"We owe it to Holocaust survivors, to the British people and future generations to remember where hatred can lead."

Rt Hon Ed Balls and Rt Hon Lord Eric Pickles, Co-chairs of the UK Holocaust Memorial Foundation said: "As the generation of brave Holocaust survivors passes away, we have a duty to create this memorial to make sure that the memory and the truth of the Holocaust is preserved.

"Victoria Tower Gardens, at the heart of Westminster and alongside the great symbol and heart of our democracy, is absolutely the right place to construct the national Memorial to the Holocaust."

Manfred Goldberg BEM, a Holocaust survivor who was held captive in Stutthof concentration camp, Poland, said: "Several years ago survivors were promised a Holocaust Memorial in close proximity to the Houses of Parliament. I am a 92 year old survivor who would be so grateful to be alive when this project, uniquely situated next to the Mother of Parliaments, comes to fruition."

Planning consent for the Holocaust Memorial to be built in Victoria Tower Gardens was granted in July 2021, but the decision was quashed by the High Court in April 2022 due to historic legislation that requires the garden to be maintained as a garden open to the public.

The memorial and learning centre will be free to visitors, with timed entry tickets.

Careful design means the memorial will enhance the gardens, ensuring they continue to provide an important public garden available to residents and visitors to Westminster. Paths and seating will be more attractive, accessible and landscaping improvements will enhance the local environment, maintaining public access.

Holocaust Educational Trust Chief Executive Karen Pollock said: "As the Holocaust fades further into history, and with survivors becoming fewer and frailer, time is of the essence. Located in the heart of our democracy, the UK Holocaust Memorial will send a clear signal for years to come of the place the Holocaust should always have in our national

consciousness and the importance of learning its lessons for generations to come.” ... A High Court judgment in April 2022 found that the London County Council (Improvements) Act 1900 imposed an obligation to maintain Victoria Tower Gardens as a public garden, and that this obligation was an obstacle to construction of the Holocaust Memorial at that site. Based on this conclusion, the High Court quashed the decision to grant planning consent.

To read the full press release see

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/government-to-introduce-legislation-to-pave-way-for-new-national-holocaust-memorial>

The judgement referred to above can be read at

<https://www.bailii.org/ew/cases/EWHC/Admin/2022/829.html>

Council of Europe

The Holocaust Remembrance Day: statement by Petra Bayr

... “Holocaust Remembrance Day, commemorating the liberation of the Auschwitz concentration camp on 27 January 1945, is the day to honour the victims of the Nazi regime and their allies and collaborators. In doing so, we remember the deaths of over two-thirds of Europe’s Jewish community and of vast numbers of Roma and Sinti people, LGBTI people, Jehovah’s Witnesses, persons with disabilities, politicians, and Resistance members.

Crucially, it is also the opportunity to renew our commitment to fight relentlessly against racism and intolerance in any form, but today let us focus on the dangers of antisemitism. A few decades ago, this scourge seemed to be declining, repudiated by politicians and viewed as socially unacceptable. In reality, it had never disappeared. Today, antisemitism is rife, it manifests itself in new and insidious forms and, far from declining, it is on the rise. Deeply entrenched stereotypes and prejudice intersect with emerging myths and conspiracy ideologies. They pollute public discourse and spread hate in online communication. Antisemitism harms Jewish people directly and, undermining peaceful living together, it affects society at large.

“Never again”: keeping the memory of the Holocaust alive is crucial to prevent history from repeating itself, as ever fewer survivors remain with us to bravely share their terrible experience. The memory of this tragic page in history shows us that prejudice, stigmatisation, dehumanisation and demonisation inevitably lead to an escalation of intolerance and violence. Culture and education are among the most effective tools to counter this process.

On this day, we join our voices and call on the authorities of Council of Europe member States to preserve and pass on to new generations the memory of the Holocaust, to make teaching about it a priority in school programmes, and to combat the trivialisation, distortion or denial of it. Fostering Jewish life in Europe, by sharing information about Jewish culture and traditions and supporting Jewish educational and cultural structures is also crucial. Our goal must be to create a European society that does not only tolerate, but also embraces and celebrates diversity.”

<https://pace.coe.int/en/news/8961/the-holocaust-remembrance-day-statement-by-petra-bayr>

European Parliament

President Herzog: “Antisemitism remains, and Holocaust denial still exists”

Israel’s President Isaac Herzog called on MEPs to work to eradicate antisemitism in Europe and adopt the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance’s definition of antisemitism.

Opening the commemoration ceremony, European Parliament President Roberta Metsola called the Holocaust “history’s greatest crime. A crime intended to wipe out a people from the earth. A crime designed to inflict horror on generations. A crime that has shaped our modern European project, into an embodiment of the timeless promise: Never again”. She pointed out that the Holocaust did not happen overnight and that alarm bells should have rung long before they eventually did. Despite the years that have gone by, it remains essential to continue commemorating the Holocaust because antisemitism still exists, and because this is the last generation to bear witness to first-hand accounts from Holocaust survivors, President Metsola continued.

The European Parliament will always defend the values of respect, human dignity, equality and hope, she pledged, adding that Parliament will never be silenced in its fight to defend human values and push back against hate and discrimination.

Israel’s President Herzog opened his address by saying: “I stand before you today as the President of the State of Israel, the democratic nation-state of the Jewish People, but my heart and thoughts are with my brothers and sisters killed in the Holocaust, whose only crime was their Jewishness and the humanity they bore.”

“Europe could not be what it is without the Jews”, President Herzog said, but antisemitism, “like an autoimmune disease”, made Europe attack part of its own DNA, and a shared millennia-long history was erased. He emphasised that this antisemitism did not emerge in a vacuum but that “the Nazi death machine would not have managed to carry out its nightmarish vision had it not met soil fertilised with Jew-hatred.” For President Herzog, antisemitism remains, and Holocaust denial still exists, in new guises and spread through new channels – particularly on the internet. “The distance between a Facebook post and the smashing of headstones in a cemetery is shorter than we would think,” he said. “Deranged tweets can kill. They really can.”

Europe has a vital role to play in pushing back against this antisemitism, he pointed out. Calling on MEPs not to stand by in the face of rising antisemitism, President Herzog implored them to “read the warning signs, detect the symptoms of the pandemic of antisemitism, and fight it at all costs. You must ensure that every Jew wanting to live a full Jewish life in your countries may do so safely and fearlessly.” Through education, legislation and any other tools at their disposal, MEPs and the EU should commit to eradicating racism, hatred, and antisemitism in all their forms, he said. President Herzog also called on the European Parliament to fully adopt the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance’s definition of antisemitism.

He underscored that “criticism of the State of Israel must not cross the line into negation of the very existence of the State of Israel, the nation-state of the Jewish people.” Speaking of Europe-Israel relations, he said the “State of Israel and Europe are bound together in an unbreakable bond. Our shared interests, and even more so, our shared values, dictate our present and shape our future.” He called on MEPs and the EU to broaden, deepen, and strengthen their partnership to better fight the contemporary challenges Israel and the EU face, including the threat posed by Iran to its own people, to Israel and in the wider Middle East and Ukraine.

Watch the full speech [here](#)

<https://www.europarl.europa.eu/news/en/press-room/20230119IPR68202/president-herzog-antisemitism-remains-and-holocaust-denial-still-exists>

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House of Commons Written Answers

Israel: Palestinians

Beth Winter (Labour) [124136] To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what recent representations his Department has made to the Government of Israel on the withholding from the Palestinian Authority of approximately \$150million in tax revenue, collected on its behalf.

David Rutley: The UK regularly engages the Government of Israel on deductions from the clearance revenue transfer to the Palestinian Authority and related losses. The UK chairs a working group covering this issue at the regular Ad Hoc Liaison Committee attended by both parties. Addressing losses and deductions from the transfer of Palestinian Authority tax revenues is critical to managing the current fiscal crisis.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2023-01-16/124136>

The following two questions both received the same answer

West Bank: Palestinians

Beth Winter (Labour) [124137] To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what recent representations he has made to his Israeli counterpart to oppose the expulsion of Palestinians from the Masafer Yatta area of the West Bank.

Matt Western (Labour) [125448] To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether he has had recent discussions with his Israeli counterpart on the destruction of Palestinian villages located within Masafer Yatta in the West Bank.

David Rutley: 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. The Minister for the Middle East, Lord (Tariq) Ahmad of Wimbledon reinforced this message during a visit to a UK donor funded school facing demolition on 12 January.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2023-01-16/124137>

and

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2023-01-17/125448>

Israeli Settlements

Beth Winter (Labour) [124135] To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what recent representations his Department has made to his Israeli counterpart on the Government of Israel's proposals to advance and develop settlement in the West Bank.

David Rutley: We are clear that settlements are illegal under international law and threaten the viability of a two-state solution. The UK urges the Government of Israel to permanently end its settlement expansion and settlement activity in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem. Israeli outposts in the West Bank are also illegal under international and Israeli law, and should be removed entirely. The Minister for the Middle East, Lord (Tariq) Ahmad of Wimbledon reinforced this message during a visit to a UK donor funded school facing demolition on 12 January.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2023-01-16/124135>

House of Lords Written Answer

Israel: Palestinians

Baroness Janke (Liberal Democrat) [HL4571] To ask His Majesty's Government, further to the reported demolition of a primary school in Khirbet a-Safai al-Foqa in Masafer Yatta by Israeli forces and confiscation of its equipment in November 2022, what assessment they have made of whether the educational rights of Palestinian children under occupation by the Fourth Geneva Convention of 1949 are being upheld.

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: The UK is firmly committed to ensuring access to education for all Palestinians. 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. It is essential to have a strong and thriving Palestinian education system in order to provide opportunities, economic development and hope for the next generation. I reinforced this message during my visit to a UK donor funded school facing demolition on 12 January, and urged Israel to desist demolitions and evictions which cause unnecessary suffering to Palestinians and, in all but the most exceptional of cases, violate International Humanitarian Law.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2023-01-09/hl4571>

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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 Lords Library Briefing

<https://researchbriefings.files.parliament.uk/documents/LLN-2023-0005/LLN-2023-0005.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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Consultations

** new or updated today

**** closes tomorrow**

NUS UK Antisemitism Action Plan (closing date 27 January 2023)

https://assets.nationbuilder.com/nus/pages/108/attachments/original/1673471793/NUS_Antisemitism_Action_Plan_Jan2023.pdf

Equality and Human Rights Commission Statutory Review (closing date 1 March 2023)

<https://www.equalityhumanrights.com/en/our-statutory-review>

Draft guidance: charities use of social media (closing date 14 March 2023)

<https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/draft-guidance-charities-use-of-social-media>

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