



Political Affairs Digest

A daily summary of political events affecting the Jewish Community

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House of Commons Written Answers

Church of England: Antisemitism

Mark Pritchard (Conservative) [140073] To ask the Member for South West Bedfordshire, representing the Church Commissioners, whether he has had recent discussions with the Church of England on tackling anti-Semitism in (a) theological training colleges, (b) ordained clergy and (c) Church of England parishes.

Andrew Selous: The key resource that the National Church Institutions commend to all clergy, dioceses and parishes is God's Unfailing Word: Theological and Practical Perspectives on Christian-Jewish Relations, produced by the Faith and Order Commission of the Church of England in 2019. This addresses the need to combat antisemitism in the Church and affirms the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance definition of antisemitism. Teaching and training of ordinands and clergy in Theological Colleges and Dioceses includes much of this material, and there are regular resources and seminars for Diocesan Inter Faith Advisers equipping them in this area.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2023-02-06/140073>

The resource referred to above can be read at

<https://www.churchofengland.org/sites/default/files/2019-11/godsunfailingwordweb.pdf>

Hate Crime: Sentencing

Peter Gibson (Conservative) [141586] To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what assessment he has made of the level of parity in sentencing guidelines between hate crime based on disabilities and hate crime based on race.

Edward Argar: Sentencing guidelines are a matter for the independent Sentencing Council. However, the approach to the sentencing of hate crimes is primarily set out in legislation.

This Government recognises that hate crime legislation, having been developed and added to over time, has prompted concerns that it is not sufficiently coherent

and is difficult for practitioners and criminal justice agencies to implement. These concerns include parity between disability and other hate crime strands.

Recognising these issues, we asked the Law Commission to conduct a review into the coverage and approach of hate crime legislation. This review examined the adequacy and parity of protection offered by the law relating to hate crime and the current range of offences and aggravating factors in sentencing. The Law Commission reported its recommendations in 2021.

The Government is considering its proposals carefully and will respond to the recommendations in due course.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2023-02-07/141586>

The report referred to above can be read at

<https://s3-eu-west-2.amazonaws.com/lawcom-prod-storage-11jxou24uy7q/uploads/2021/12/Hate-crime-report-accessible.pdf>

Equality and Human Rights Commission

Equality watchdog concludes monitoring of Labour Party action plan

The Labour Party has made the changes required by its agreed action plan to address breaches of the Equality Act, says Britain's equality regulator.

On 29 October 2020, the Equality and Human Rights Commission served the Labour Party with an unlawful act notice, after its investigation into antisemitism found the Party responsible for unlawful acts of harassment and discrimination.

As a result, the Labour Party was obliged to produce an action plan to prevent continuation or reoccurrence of those unlawful acts, which was legally enforceable by the court if not fulfilled. ...

Britain's equality regulator has now confirmed that it is content with the actions taken and has concluded its work with the Party.

Marcial Boo, Chief Executive of the Equality and Human Rights Commission, said: "... Those organisations in the public eye have a particular responsibility to comply with the law, and to set high standards in tackling discrimination, including all forms of racism.

"In October 2020, following a thorough investigation of the UK Labour Party that found unlawful acts of harassment and discrimination, we made detailed recommendations to ensure that the Party adheres to equality law.

"We have reviewed progress with the agreed action plan since then. On 31 January 2023, we concluded our monitoring as we were satisfied that the Party had implemented the necessary actions to improve its complaints, recruitment, training and other procedures to the legal standards required. This will help to protect current and future Labour Party members from discrimination and harassment.

"No organisation is above the law. Every employer and every public body must take active steps to address racism and all other forms of illegal discrimination. We are pleased that our investigation and action plan has had the desired impact in this case." ...

To read the full press release see

<https://www.equalityhumanrights.com/en/our-work/news/equality-watchdog-concludes-monitoring-labour-party-action-plan>

UK Labour Party

Keir Starmer responds to EHRC announcement

... Today is an important moment in the history of the Labour Party. It has taken many, many months of hard work and humility to get here.

It has meant rebuilding trust, not just with the Jewish community, but with all those who were rightly appalled by the culture of the party under the previous leadership. When I became leader, I said I would turn Labour around and give it back to the British people.

The most important and urgent part of that was in tearing out antisemitism by its roots. Antisemitism is an evil and no political party that cultivates it deserves to hold power. ... The first step on that journey was to accept the findings of the Equality and Human Rights Commission.

But it was deeper than that because we also had to make clear that there was no space for anyone who didn't do the same.

That is as true today as it was then.

Let me be very clear: those who seek to blame others or downplay what happened in our party are, themselves, part of the problem and we will have zero patience or tolerance of that. ...

But while this is an important moment it is not one for celebration. It is one for reflection. ... This is also a moment to apologise once again.

To all those who were hurt, to all those who were let down, to all those driven out of our party, who no longer felt it was their home, who suffered the most appalling abuse.

Today, on behalf of the entire Labour Party, I say: sorry.

What you have been through can never be undone. Apologies alone cannot make it right. But just as I promised to take this issue head on.

Today, I make you a number of further promises: Firstly, that under my leadership there will be zero tolerance of antisemitism, of racism, of discrimination of any kind. ...

Change is never easy. And I understand that some people won't like the changes we've made.

But I say this with all candour: The Labour Party is unrecognisable from 2019 and it will never go back. ...

It will never again lose sight of its purpose or its morals. And it will never again be brought to its knees by racism or bigotry.

If you don't like that, if you don't like the changes we have made, I say the door is open and you can leave. ...

To read the full press release see

<https://labour.org.uk/press/keir-starmer-responds-to-ehrc-announcement/>

Scottish Government

First Minister to resign

The First Minister said: "Being First Minister of Scotland is, in my opinion, the best job in the world. It is a privilege beyond measure - one that has sustained and inspired me, in good times and through the toughest hours of my toughest days. ...

"Today, I am announcing my intention to step down as First Minister and leader of my party. I will remain in office until my successor is in place.

"I have been First Minister for over eight years, and I was Deputy First Minister for the best part of eight years before that. These jobs are a privilege but they are also - rightly - hard. And, it is only possible to give absolutely everything to a job of this nature for so long.

"Given the nature and scale of the challenges the country faces, I feel that duty, first and foremost, to our country - to ensure that it does have the energy of leadership it needs, not just today, but through the years that remain of this parliamentary term.

"We are at a critical moment. The blocking of a referendum as the accepted, constitutional route to independence is a democratic outrage. But it puts the onus on us to decide how Scottish democracy will be protected and to ensure that the will of the Scottish people prevails. I am firmly of the view that there is now majority support for independence. But

that support needs to be solidified - and it needs to grow further if our independent Scotland is to have the best possible foundation.

“To achieve that we need to reach across the divide in Scottish politics, and my judgement now is that this needs a new leader.

“It has always been my belief that no one individual should be dominant in any system for too long. But, as a leader, while it’s easy to hold that view in the abstract, it is harder to live by it.

“I consider this decision to be the right one for me, my party and the country. ...”

To read the full transcript see

<https://www.gov.scot/news/first-minister-to-resign/>

Church of England, Diocese of Winchester

In December 2022 the Rev Dr Stephen Sizer, was found guilty by the Bishop’s Disciplinary Tribunal for the Diocese of Winchester of “conduct ... unbecoming to the office and work of a clerk in Holy Orders, in that he provoked and offended the Jewish community, and ... in that he engaged in antisemitic activity”. The Penalty Judgment announced at the end of January has now been published:

Decision on Penalty – Rev Dr Stephen Sizer

<https://www.churchofengland.org/sites/default/files/2023-02/Sizer%20Decision%20on%20Penalty%2030%20January%202023.pdf>

For additional information about this case see

<https://www.scojec.org/pad/2023/i/23i31.pdf>

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Holocaust

House of Commons Written Answer

National Holocaust Memorial and Learning Centre: Costs

Peter Bottomley (Conservative) [139128] To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, what estimate he has made of the cost of the National Holocaust Memorial and Learning Centre; what allowance this makes for (a) contingencies and (b) optimism bias; and what the last such estimate of (i) cost, (ii) contingencies and (ii) optimism bias was.

Dehenna Davison: The forecast cost, produced in line with Green Book guidance, was published in the [NAO report of 5 July 2022](#). Costs are currently being reviewed in light of the delay due to the High Court judgement.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2023-02-03/139128>

The judgement referred to above can be read at

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

United Nations

Shuttering ‘rabbit holes’ of hate: Holocaust survivors send powerful message in new documentary

Amid a recent spike in antisemitic violence across the world, the [screening](#) of legendary filmmaker Ken Burns’ latest documentary on Thursday highlighted a dark chapter in US

history, and a frank [high-level discussion](#) at UN Headquarters showcased a proposed new code of conduct to shutter ‘rabbit holes’ of hate and online disinformation.

The six-hour-long documentary “The US and the Holocaust”, released in 2022, sheds light on the catastrophic consequences of hate speech and disinformation, and the desperate bid for freedom by millions of Jews fleeing Nazi Germany. ...

The documentary examines the rise of Adolf Hitler and Nazism in Germany from the late 1930s in the context of global antisemitism and racism alongside the eugenics movement and racist laws in the United States, some repealed as late as the 1960s. ...

Rarely seen images, many from the US Holocaust Memorial Museum, included “trophy” photographs taken by Nazi officers of 15-member firing-squad executions at the edge of deep pits in the ground, which served as mass graves for hundreds of their many thousands of victims. It also featured compelling evidence of resistance, heroism and Jewish refugees’ survival of a Nazi disinformation campaign that led to genocide. ...

During one deadly uprising, Jewish resistance leaders had buried metal milk cans, filled with notes describing the horrors they faced. A teenager had written a painful request: “may history attest for us.”

The survivors’ stories and interviews with historians amplify a stark warning against a tide of hateful campaigns currently fuelling Holocaust denial rhetoric and a spike in antisemitism. ...

... 200,000 Jewish refugees [were] hosted by the United States, which turned away many, many more than it admitted.

More than 100 antisemitic groups were founded across the country, which was cloaked in a depressed economy, segregation, and public wariness of immigrants.

Following the 1938 Kristallnacht pogrom in Nazi Germany, Mr. Burns said a survey in the United States revealed that about 85 per cent of Protestant and Catholic Christian respondents “did not want to let refugees in”. ...

During this time, Nazi jurists had drafted antisemitic legislation using US segregation and anti-miscegenation laws that targeted people of African descent.

The Nazis’ interracial marriage ban drew heavily on similar laws – enforced since 1691 – which the United States Supreme Court eventually struck down in 1967. ...

“We won’t work on a more important film in our professional lives,” Mr. Burns said. When production started, the subject had a distance from current events, he explained in an interview with UN Video.

“What made us very uncomfortable was the extent to which the events in the film were beginning to be mirrored by events in the United States and the world,” he said, expressing hope that the legacy of the survivors’ stories and their history lessons will reach a broad audience. ...

Prior to the screening, a high-level side event on globalizing efforts to combat antisemitism drew attention to learning from the past and using bold initiatives to tackle today’s rising antisemitism.

In the works is a new code of conduct, said Ms. Fleming. UN social media campaigns using such hashtags as #NoToHate and #ProtectTheFacts are gaining traction, and a joint publication with the UN Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) – “History under attack: Holocaust denial and distortion on social media” – will also feature a related panel discussion with civil society. ...

At the side event, Ambassador Gilad Erdan of Israel, himself a grandson of Holocaust victims, commended ongoing efforts, but said “the UN must do more.”

“Words are not enough,” he said. “Hateful words always mutate into violent actions. Antisemitism is a global pandemic. No Jew should ever live in terror.” ...

Efforts must include a pushback against Holocaust denial, with consequences for those engaged in antisemitism, said Doug Emhoff, the Second Gentleman of the United States, speaking at the event.

“Silence is not an option,” he said. “We must all speak out against antisemitism and build

coalitions to tackle this tide of hate. Any threat to one community is a threat to all communities. We must instil knowledge to fight antisemitism.” ...

Fighting “digital antisemitism” is essential, Ms. Fleming said, highlighting such alarming internet algorithms as “6mwe” – “six million weren’t enough” – referring to the number of Jews killed by Nazis.

A 2022 UN report showed that antisemitism is rampant on some platforms, with 50 per cent of posts on the Telegram social media platform relating to Holocaust denial ...

“The hate is circulating far and wide,” the UN communications chief said, adding that nefarious algorithms are leading people down “rabbit holes of hate” and disinformation, including movements denying the Holocaust ever happened.

“We are appealing to the tech companies to stop this because the dangers of distortion and denial are too much,” she said, warning that lies about a “white genocide” have begun to spread, fuelling violence and gathering followers online. ...

To read the full press release see

<https://news.un.org/en/story/2023/02/1133387>

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Israel

House of Lords Written Answer

Jerusalem: Religious Buildings

The Marquess of Lothian (Conservative) [HL5147] To ask His Majesty's Government what representations they have made to the government of Israel concerning the status quo at Jerusalem's Holy Esplanade (Haram al-Sharif/Temple Mount).

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: The UK recognises that Jerusalem's holy sites hold particular significance for all Christians, Jews and Muslims around the world. As set out to the UN Security Council on 5 January, the UK is committed to working with all parties to maintain calm, avoid provocation and uphold the Status Quo to ensure the safety and the security of the Al Haram Al Sharif / Temple Mount and all who visit there. I [Lord (Tariq) Ahmad of Wimbledon] reiterated this position in my meetings with Israeli Foreign Minister Cohen, Palestinian Prime Minister Shtayyeh and Palestinian Foreign Minister Malki, during my recent visit to Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territories on 10-13 January.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2023-01-26/hl5147>

The statement to the UNSC referred to above can be read at

<https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/the-status-quo-governing-jerusalem-s-holy-sites-preserves-peace-uk-statement-at-the-security-council>

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Foreign Affairs

House of Commons Written Answer

Religious Freedom: Christianity

Jim Shannon (DUP) [140139] To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what assessment he has made of the adequacy of freedom of religion or belief for Christians around the world.

Andrew Mitchell: Promotion of the right to freedom of religion or belief (FoRB) will continue to be a key human rights priority for the UK in 2023. A range of analyses, including reports from organisations which look at trends, informs our work and approach to freedom of religion or belief. We demonstrated the depth of our commitment to FoRB by hosting an international Ministerial conference in July 2022. We continue to recognise the issue of persecution of Christians globally on account of their faith, alongside recognising the persecution of others on the basis of their religion or belief.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2023-02-06/140139>

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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>

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

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