



Political Affairs Digest

A daily summary of political events affecting the Jewish Community

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House of Commons Written Answers

The following three questions all received the same answer

Faith Schools: Regional Planning and Development

Alexander Stafford (Conservative) [147089] To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what assessment she has made of the potential role of faith schools in levelling up.

Faith Schools: Admissions

Alexander Stafford (Conservative) [147091] To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what recent discussions she has had with (a) faith schools, (b) faith leaders and (c) Cabinet colleagues on the potential merits of removing the 50 per cent rule.

Faith Schools

Alexander Stafford (Conservative) [147092] To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what assessment she has made of the potential merits of faith-based education.

Nick Gibb: The Department supports schools with a religious character. They add to the diversity of the school system, they are popular with parents both with and without a faith, and they typically deliver high standards of education for their pupils. They also have an important role to play in supporting levelling up, by providing high quality school places throughout the country.

The Department recognises that some groups, including the Catholic Church, feel unable to participate in the free schools programme because of the 50% cap on faith admissions.

The Department is committed to ensuring that all providers of schools with a religious character remain able to open new schools once all schools are in academy trusts and, as such, will continue to keep the 50% cap under review. The Department regularly discusses the matter with groups who provide schools with a religious character, including the Catholic Church.

There are two mainstream Catholic schools in the Rother Valley Constituency, 296 in London and 1,955 in England.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2023-02-17/147089>

and

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2023-02-17/147091>

and

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2023-02-17/147092>

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Israel

United Nations

Bureau of General Assembly's Palestinian Rights Committee Condemns Extreme Violence by Israeli Forces in Nablus, Calls for Palestinians' Protection

... The Bureau of the United Nations General Assembly's Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People condemns the Israeli forces' raid in Nablus in the occupied West Bank that killed 11 Palestinians, including an elderly man and a minor, and injured 100 Palestinians to date.

The Bureau is deeply concerned by the deadly cycles of violence and the senseless loss of civilian lives, mainly Palestinians, which keep growing. The Bureau stresses the need for accountability for all illegal Israeli policies and measures in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem.

The Bureau welcomes United Nations Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process Tor Wennesland's engagement with all concerned parties to de-escalate the situation. The Bureau appeals for urgent Security Council and international action to protect the Palestinian people.

The Bureau reiterates the need for a de-escalation of violence and a just and peaceful resolution of the conflict leading to the unconditional end to Israel's illegal occupation and establishing a two-State solution, with the achievement of the independence and sovereignty of the Palestinian State based on the 1967 lines, with East Jerusalem as capital, and the realization of the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people, including to self-determination, and a just solution for the plight of the Palestine refugees in the context of their right of return, in line with United Nations resolutions, international law and bilateral agreements.

<https://press.un.org/en/2023/gapal1450.doc.htm>

UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights

Israel: UN experts alarmed by potential reinstatement of death penalty for "terrorism offences"

UN experts ... expressed grave concern that the Israeli Ministerial Committee on Legislation will vote on a private member's bill to reinstate the death penalty for persons defined as "terrorists" next week.

"The reinstatement of the death penalty is a deeply retrogressive step. More so when, on the face of it, the punishment will apply against minorities living within the State or those who live under the 55-year military occupation and rule," the experts said.

The proposed legislation defines such persons as those who "intentionally or out of indifference cause the death of an Israeli citizen, when the act is carried out from a racist motive or hate to a certain public ... and with the purpose of harming the State of Israel and the rebirth of the Jewish people in its homeland."

The UN experts said that the proposed law further entrenches two classes of criminal law in the State. "One class which privileges and protects Israeli Jewish citizens of the State and one which further targets, marginalises and undervalues the lives of Palestinian

citizens of Israel and Palestinians living in the occupied Palestinian territory—and their fundamental rights to non-discrimination and self-determination,” they said.

Two United Nations Working Groups and seven Independent Experts have trenchantly identified human rights and humanitarian law deficiencies in the Israeli Counter-Terrorism Law 5776-2016 and related regulations and orders ([OL ISR 6/2022](#)). The experts clearly identified that these overarching terrorism laws and regulations—including their sentencing provisions—suffer from a lack of legal precision, infringe on critically important rights and appear not to meet the required thresholds of legality, necessity, proportionality, and non-discrimination under international law.

“We are deeply concerned that counter-terrorism laws are already applied arbitrarily and undermine the fundamental guarantees of international humanitarian and human rights law with respect to counter-terrorism efforts,” the experts said. “The proposed law merely exacerbates these challenges.”

According to the experts, the fact that the Bill proposes that if the crime occurs in the occupied Palestinian territory such punishments will apply in military court, even where there is a lack of judicial unanimity on the appropriate punishment is deeply worrying, the experts said. “It also raises significant due process and fair trial challenges, as well as the potential arbitrary deprivation of life,” they said, underlining that the trial of civilians in military courts per se raises serious concerns in guaranteeing the right to equality and a fair trial and is permitted only under exceptional circumstances.

“Human rights violative practices and legislation do not make any country safer or more secure, but rather create the conditions that produce and sustain violence,” the experts warned.

They urged the Israeli government to abandon the Bill that appears discriminatory and pull back from undermining the rule of law in the use of a penalty that the international community has pledged to abolish. ...

To read the full press release see

<https://www.ohchr.org/en/press-releases/2023/02/israel-un-experts-alarmed-potential-reinstatement-death-penalty-terrorism>

Israel and Occupied Palestinian Territory: UN Human Rights Chief concerned by escalating violence

UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Volker Türk on Thursday expressed concern at the escalating cycle of violence in Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territory after 11 Palestinians were killed and at least 100 injured with live ammunition in an Israeli operation in Nablus, followed by Palestinian rocket attacks on Israel and Israeli airstrikes on Gaza.

“I am deeply concerned that scores of Palestinians, including a boy and three older men, were killed and hundreds injured in the Israeli operation in Nablus, and by airstrikes and rocket attacks between Israel and Palestinian armed groups in the Gaza Strip,” said Türk. “I reiterate my recent call to halt the illogic of escalation that has been building up to the detriment of the human rights of both Palestinians and Israelis.”

The High Commissioner also expressed concern at the Israeli security forces’ use of explosive weapons during the operation in Nablus. “Conducting an operation involving shoulder-launched explosive projectiles and other weapons typically associated with hostilities in a highly populated area in broad daylight at a time of heightened public activity suggests concerning disregard for the lives and security of bystanders,” Türk said.

“All law enforcement security operations must be conducted in full compliance with international human rights law, including by ensuring that all killings and serious injuries are investigated in accordance with international norms and standards,” he added.

<https://www.ohchr.org/en/press-releases/2023/02/israel-and-occupied-palestinian-territory-un-human-rights-chief-concerned>

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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>

**** Holocaust Memorial Bill**

<https://bills.parliament.uk/bills/3421>

First Reading

<https://hansard.parliament.uk//commons/2023-02-23/debates/262E5969-2026-48E7-9285-24DD53971BF3/FootballGovernanceWhitePaper#contribution-44DBC8D4-B70E-409E-91C9-008130F7B0CD>

The Examiners of Petitions for Private Bills have been ordered to examine the Bill and to report “with all convenient speed” whether or not private business standing orders are applicable to the Bill (Standing Order No. 61).

<https://bills.parliament.uk/bills/3421/news>

Marriage Act 1949 (Amendment) Bill

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

**** Online Safety Bill**

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

Notice of amendments

<https://bills.parliament.uk/publications/49991/documents/3013>

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 in 3 days**

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