



# Political Affairs Digest

A daily summary of political events affecting the Jewish Community

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## Home Affairs

### Westminster Hall Debate

#### Racial Discrimination in Schools

*col 152WH Janet Daby (Labour):* ... When I send my children to school every morning, I expect that they will be safe and protected. ...

That is why it was shocking and distressing to see an assault on a black female child by a group of white female children near their school in Surrey last month. ...

It quickly became apparent that the issue went much further than one case alone. I received a stream of emails and phone calls from teachers, parents and the wider public, who all raised their concerns about injustice and discrimination in schools. A teacher called me and asked to remain anonymous. She spoke about racial attacks at her school: two Asian girls had their hijabs pulled off their heads, and fights had broken out in the classroom. She spoke about teachers feeling let down by the headteacher and about a generally unsafe environment. Soon after that, a further disturbing and shocking assault case was brought to my attention—a group of ethnic minority schoolchildren at a school in Kent being segregated and subsequently attacked by a group of white children. ...

In 2021, *The Guardian* revealed that there were more than 60,000 racist incidents in British schools between 2016 and 2021. That is an astonishing figure, but it does not tell the full story. In 2012, the Government advised schools that they have no legal obligation to report racist incidents to their local authorities, and in 2017 the Government issued further guidance that schools have no obligation to record bullying of any form. If racist incidents, and bullying more generally, are not being tracked, how can schools, local authorities, Ofsted or the Department for Education identify a problem and then act on it? The answer is that, of course, they cannot. The data is simply not there. ...

*col 153WH* This week, a new survey by a young persons movement called I Have a Voice, found that one in four students say that they have experienced racism in their place of education. ...

**Kirsten Oswald (SNP):** ... Does [Janet Daby] agree that it is not only safeguarding that must be considered, although there is a direct and immediate need for that, but the ongoing consequences of discrimination? How can children learn effectively if they do not feel safe in their learning environment?

**Janet Daby:** ... The hon. Member is absolutely right. That has a huge emotional impact on children when they are in situations where they are discriminated against. It goes on to affect them psychologically and emotionally, and it can affect their ability to learn. ...

**col 154WH Alistair Carmichael (Liberal Democrat):** There are some things in life where we expect changes to come naturally, organically or incrementally, and there are other things for which change has to be driven, and the approach must be strategic. I suggest to the hon. Member that racial discrimination is something that falls in the latter category. ...

**Janet Daby:** ... Children from diverse backgrounds need to gain a sense of pride and self-worth by identifying with people who look like them in their learning. There is a risk that if children are not exposed to diversity in the school curriculum, they miss the opportunity to find out about those who are different from and those who are similar to them, and to be enriched by that difference and similarity. ...

**col 155WH Jim Shannon (DUP):** ... There is no hiding from or ignoring the fact that racism and cultural ignorance exist in our schools. ... Often, children are unaware of the meaning or full impact of their words, so it is crucial that this conversation is had and that action is taken to teach children how to do good. ...

**col 156WH** Racism has proven to be a big issue in schools, especially in England. Instead of co-operating more with one another, our attitudes suggest to younger people that it is all right to behave in this way and it makes the segregation even worse, complicating the issue and making it much more difficult to control. ...

It is really important in today's society that young children are aware of the environment around them. There are more people emigrating here, so there are more people from different cultures, with different histories, traditions and countries. We have more of that in Northern Ireland than we have ever had before. It tells me that we have to adapt. ...

**col 157WH Kirsten Oswald:** ... Racism in society in general is obviously deeply troubling and damaging, but racism in our schools and educational settings is perhaps even worse. These are children, at formative points in their lives, in an environment where they should feel completely safe and where they should be able to relax and to learn, being put into situations that make that much harder or even impossible. The knock-on impacts throughout people's lives if they have had that very difficult experience at school, which has perhaps caused them not to fulfil the potential they have, should be clear to all of us. ...

**col 158WH** From my own perspective, it is vital to me, my politics and my beliefs that Scotland is an open and welcoming country. That does not mean that we have some kind of magic wand that means that racism does not exist in Scotland. Of course, that is not the case; we have to be mindful of that and always on our guard. We must be clear that the aspirations we have and the reality we may see in front of us does not mean that racism not there. ...

I represent a very diverse constituency. ... Most of the Jewish population in Scotland lives there, we have a large and growing Muslim community and we have a thriving Baha'i community. A whole range of people have made their home there and we rub along really well together. That does not happen by accident; it happens with a great deal of good will, work and joint working between communities. ...

We need to have structures that allow us to scrutinise, work to targets and examine whether we are doing what is needed to make sure all of our children have an appropriate environment in which to learn. We need to appreciate the potential range and diversity of ways in which racism can manifest itself. It can have a broad range of impacts on people. If we are not able to think about and understand that, then we are working with one hand tied behind our back. ...

**col 159WH** Lots of holocaust education takes place in my community, and that is really valuable. Some of it involves the Anne Frank Trust, and there is work with the Holocaust

Educational Trust, Gathering the Voices, the Lessons from Auschwitz project and Vision Schools—I could go on. That work also involves listening directly to the voices of those who have been in that situation themselves—the testimony of people such as holocaust survivors Henry and the late Ingrid Wuga. All of those things really matter.

I was really glad to participate last week in the filming for a documentary by a young woman called Rachel Kinnear, a journalism student at Edinburgh Napier University, who is making a documentary about holocaust education. The fact that there are young people who are putting their minds to the issues of holocaust, race and education and how they fit together is profoundly helpful and very important, as we look forward, at a time where there are challenges in our society on how we deal with and engage with one another. ...

*col 160WH* **Stephen Morgan (Labour):** ... Schools should be a place where children develop a love of learning and are prepared for life, where they make friends and learn life skills, where they feel safe, and with zero tolerance for racism. Recent figures, however, sadly indicate a rise in racism in schools across the UK. Some 7,403 students were suspended last year for incidents including racially motivated assaults, according to data from the Department for Education under a freedom of information request. The number marks a 50% increase on the previous year. ...

*col 161WH* **The Minister for Schools (Nick Gibb):** ... There is of course no place in our education system for discrimination or bullying of any kind. I recognise and share the concerns ... about racist or discriminatory behaviour in schools. ...

Keeping children safe is a priority, and safeguarding is everyone's responsibility. The role of schools is critical, and all staff should have an awareness of the various safeguarding issues that children can face, including the risk of violence and discrimination. ...

*col 162WH* A vital part of meeting these duties is creating a safe, calm and supportive environment for all pupils. Headteachers play an important role in preventing bullying, harassment and discrimination in their schools, and they should ensure that they consider the needs of all pupils and staff when developing the school's approach to its behaviour policy, which all schools are required to have in place. ...

*col 163WH* Schools should explicitly teach pupils about which behaviours are permitted and which are not, and when any incidents of bullying, discrimination or use of derogatory language occur, staff should respond promptly, predictably and confidently. Pupils need to understand that there are consequences for their behaviour, and that will often involve the use of reasonable and proportionate sanctions. Schools should also make it clear to pupils that good behaviour does not end at the school gates, and underscore the importance of kindness and respect towards others outside of school. ...

The hon. Member asked about schools recording incidents of a racist nature. Racism of any kind is completely unacceptable and is abhorrent in any school setting—indeed, in any setting. We do not mandate that schools record or publish racist incidents; they are best placed to monitor and tackle racist incidents. They are required to have a behaviour policy, as I said, which outlines measures to prevent racist and other forms of bullying, and they are held to account by Ofsted. They are also required to take steps to advance equality of opportunity, foster good relations and eliminate racial harassment. We provide support to schools to do that. There is no legal obligation on schools to record and report incidents of bullying, and there never has been. ...

Bullying can just as easily occur online as it does face to face, but evidence suggests that most online bullying of children and young people is linked to face-to-face bullying. Schools can also help to prevent online bullying by educating their pupils about acceptable ways to behave online. ...

*col 164WH* Learning about respectful relationships is key to tackling discrimination in schools. ... The curriculum has a strong focus on equality, respect and the harmful impact of stereotyping, as well as the importance of valuing difference. Citizenship education enables pupils to explore a range of important and complex concepts, such as racial justice and the need for mutual respect and understanding. ...

I reiterate our commitment to supporting schools in their work to educate young people about prejudice of all forms and to protect young people from discrimination. Most schools maintain a high standard of behaviour, where pupils are educated in a calm, safe and supportive environment, but we know that managing these issues can be challenging and that some schools need to do more. ...

*col 166WH Janet Daby:* ... I impress on the Minister the need to look again at data collection, which I believe needs to take place in schools ... If data is being collected on what schools are doing on racial discrimination, bullying and even cyber-bullying, that can be tracked and monitored and can lead to improvements. ...

**To read the full transcript see**

<https://hansard.parliament.uk/commons/2023-03-08/debates/8815EE99-2F55-497F-A46E-871B4A000B0D/RacialDiscriminationInSchools>

*The Guardian report referred to above can be read at*

<https://www.theguardian.com/education/2021/mar/28/uk-schools-record-more-than-60000-racist-incidents-five-years>

*The 2012 guidance referred to above is no longer available online.*

*The 2017 guidance referred to above can be read at*

[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/1069688/Preventing\\_and\\_tackling\\_bullying\\_advice.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1069688/Preventing_and_tackling_bullying_advice.pdf)

*The findings of the survey referred to above are not currently available online, but a snapshot is available at*

[https://twitter.com/I\\_have\\_a\\_voice/status/1633523157158985728](https://twitter.com/I_have_a_voice/status/1633523157158985728)

## Scottish Parliament Motion

**Foyso Choudhury (Labour) [S6M-08139] Ramadan Mubarak** – That the Parliament notes the Muslim holy month of Ramadan, beginning around 22 March 2023 and lasting between 29 and 30 days, depending on the moon sighting; understands that Ramadan is observed worldwide as a period of fasting, prayer, and reflection; notes the Muslim focus on charity and charitable giving during this holy month; calls for the tolerance and free practice of peaceful religious observance around the world, and wishes the Muslim community in Scotland, and across the world, a blessed month of Ramadan.

<https://www.parliament.scot/chamber-and-committees/votes-and-motions/S6M-08139>

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## Israel

### House of Commons Written Answers

#### Israel: Palestinians

**Tonia Antoniazzi (Labour) [155199]** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps his Department is taking to help promote dialogue between Israel and the Palestinian Authority.

**David Rutley:** We urge the Israeli and Palestinian leadership to take urgent action to de-escalate the growing tensions in the West Bank. We welcome the communique agreed by Israel and the Palestinians at Aqaba on 26 February, and thank the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan for hosting. The Minister for the Middle East, Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon, has consistently offered UK support in

progressing dialogue between Israel and the Palestinians, including in his meetings with Israeli Foreign Minister Eli Cohen, Palestinian Prime Minister Mohammed Shtayyeh and Foreign Minister Riad Malki, during his visit to Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territories on 10-13 January, and during his regular engagement with the Israeli Ambassador, most recently on 16 February.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2023-02-28/155199>

*The communique referred to above can be read at*

<https://www.state.gov/aqaba-joint-communique/>

### **Israel: Palestinians**

**Sarah Champion (Labour)** [157642] To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, if he will make an assessment of the implications for his policies of the meeting of Jordanian, Egyptian, Israeli, Palestinian and US officials on 26 February 2023; and if he will make a statement.

**David Rutley:** As we made clear on 4 March in a joint statement with France, Germany, Italy, Poland and Spain, we warmly welcome the recent meeting in Aqaba, where Israelis and Palestinians both affirmed reciprocal commitments, including on efforts to de-escalate and work towards a just and lasting peace. The UK calls on all parties to make good on the commitments made in Aqaba to de-escalate tensions and to work constructively to ensure the next meeting in Egypt is a success.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2023-03-03/157642>

*The statement referred to above can be read at*

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/joint-statement-on-israel-and-palestine>

## **United Nations**

### **Statement by UN Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process, Tor Wennesland, on the situation in the occupied West Bank**

I am deeply disturbed by the continuing violence and appalled by the attacks of Israeli settlers against Palestinians two days ago in Huwwara, near Nablus. Israel, as the occupying power, must ensure that the civilian population is protected, and perpetrators are held to account.

I condemn settler violence against Palestinians. I condemn Palestinian attacks against Israelis. All civilians must be protected from violence.

I am also alarmed by the events that unfolded yesterday during an Israeli operation in Jenin, resulting in armed exchanges between Israeli security forces and armed Palestinians. Six Palestinians were killed, including the perpetrator of the 26 February terrorist attack in Huwwara.

We are in the midst of a cycle of violence that must be stopped immediately.

The Security Council has spoken with one voice, calling on the parties to observe calm and restraint, and to refrain from provocative actions, incitement and inflammatory rhetoric. Commitments were made in Aqaba in the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan that should be implemented if we are to find a way forward.

The parties must refrain from further steps that would lead us to more violence.

[https://unsco.unmissions.org/sites/default/files/statement\\_by\\_un\\_special\\_coordinator\\_wennesland\\_on\\_the\\_situation\\_in\\_the\\_occupied\\_west\\_bank\\_-\\_8\\_march\\_2023.pdf](https://unsco.unmissions.org/sites/default/files/statement_by_un_special_coordinator_wennesland_on_the_situation_in_the_occupied_west_bank_-_8_march_2023.pdf)

## UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights

### **Women fight the push back of their rights in the occupied Palestinian territory**

On 3 June 2022, Shatha Odeh, 60, was released from an Israeli prison, after spending a year there for being the head of what Israel claims is an illegal organisation in the occupied Palestinian territory.

In reality, Odeh said she was arrested and detained because she was the Director of Health Work Committees (HWC), a civil society organisation that provides health care to people living in the occupied West Bank, including women and girls in remote areas. Upon her release, Shatha was ordered by Israeli authorities to stop working for HWC.

According to UN Human Rights in the occupied Palestinian territory (oPt Office), Israel has designated her organisation, along with other leading Palestinian human rights and humanitarian organisations "terrorist" or "unlawful," without providing any evidence to substantiate this claim. ...

Mary Lawlor, UN Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights defenders, also [issued a statement](#) in August 2021 urging Israel to release Odeh.

Odeh was targeted as part of the most recent Israeli Government's crackdown against civil society organisations, particularly organisations documenting Israeli violations and organisations providing critical services such as health services to Palestinians under military occupation, according to the oPt Office. Three out of seven organizations targeted by Israel in this crackdown and declared "unlawful" were headed by women or providing specific services to women and girls, which otherwise would not be available to them in the occupied Palestinian territory.

While Shatha was imprisoned by Israeli forces, she was interrogated without having access to legal counsel and subjected to harsh treatment. ...

In addition to being prosecuted and imprisoned by Israel for her humanitarian and civil society work, Odeh and other Palestinian women defenders face threats, intimidation, and attacks by Palestinian individuals and groups for her activism. ...

The oPt Office has reported that women human rights defenders and journalists and women's rights organizations face threats, intimidation and hate both online and offline. According to the Office, offenders have included the Israeli Security Forces as the story of Shatha well exemplifies, settlers, Palestinian authorities, and the non-state actors targeting women for who they are or what they stand for. ...

According to a UN Human Rights [report](#), during a wave of protests against Palestinian authorities in the West Bank after the killing of political opponent and activist Nizar Banat, women who were at the forefront of the protests were specifically targeted by Palestinian security forces and private individuals seemingly acting in coordination with law enforcement officers physically attacked the women, seized their phones and shared their private pictures, as a punishment for participating and a deterrent from taking part in future protests. ...

The Palestinian Authority and other authorities in occupied Gaza have investigated complaints to a limited extent ...

While Odeh has faced many challenges, she isn't giving up. The time spent in an Israeli prison with other Palestinian women prisoners strengthened her determination to work on women's rights. "I'm a human rights fighter," she said. "If we lose hope, nothing will change." ...

**To read the full press release see**

<https://www.ohchr.org/en/get-involved/stories/women-fight-push-back-their-rights-occupied-palestinian-territory>

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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>

#### **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

**\*\* closes in 5 days**

**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