



Political Affairs Digest

A daily summary of political events affecting the Jewish Community

Contents

Home Affairs

Israel

Other Relevant Information

Relevant Legislation

Consultations

Back issues

Home Affairs

House of Lords Written Answer

Faith Schools

Lord Warner (Crossbench) [HL5960] To ask His Majesty's Government what progress Ofsted has made on the (1) registration, (2) regulation and (3) inspection of religious schools such as (a) madrassas, (b) yeshivas, and (c) Sunday schools where concerns have been raised about the appropriateness of the material being taught to children at such places; and what powers Ofsted has to take action, as necessary.

Baroness Barran: Out-of-school settings, such as supplementary religious schools, are not regulated under education or childcare law and are therefore not required to register with the department or Ofsted. However, the department remains committed to ensuring that children are safeguarded across all education settings and are working closely with key safeguarding partners, sector representatives, and parent groups to develop proposals for how we might further enhance safeguarding in this sector. The department will look to consult on such proposals later this year. We will be publishing updated safeguarding guidance for providers and parents, as well as a new e-learning package aimed at strengthening providers' understanding of the arrangements they should have in place to keep children safe.

Any education setting which makes full-time provision to five or more pupils of compulsory school age (or one or more such pupils who is looked after or has an education, health and care plan), is not maintained by a local authority and is not a non-maintained special school is required to register with the department as an independent school. It is a criminal offence to conduct an educational setting which meets the definition of an independent school if this is not registered with my right hon. Friend, the Secretary of State for Education.

The government has been working proactively since 2016 to identify, investigate and, where appropriate, prosecute those operating unregistered independent schools. Between 1 January 2016 and 31 August 2022, Ofsted issued warning notices to 132 settings that may be operating as unregistered schools (this includes all settings including those with a secular or faith ethos). Of those settings, 81

changed their operation to comply with legislation, 21 closed and 16 registered. There have been six successful prosecutions against those operating unregistered schools and there are several ongoing investigations. If safeguarding concerns are raised about a specific setting, we expect local authorities to intervene, as they are legally responsible for safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children in their areas, regardless of the educational setting they attend.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2023-02-27/hl5960>

TOP

Israel

House of Commons Written Answers

Cemeteries: Vandalism

Jim Shannon (DUP) [153753] To ask the Member for South West Bedfordshire, representing the Church Commissioners, what discussions he has had with representatives of the arch-diocese of Jerusalem on damage to graves at the Protestant Cemetery on Mount Zion in January 2023; and what steps he plans to take to (a) help promote religious acceptance and harmony in the UK and (b) prevent vandalism at cemeteries.

Andrew Selous: The escalating violence in Jerusalem and the occupied Palestinian territories is of deep concern. Representatives of the Church continue to work closely with the Department of Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, the British Consulate in Jerusalem, the Heads of Churches in Jerusalem and other faith leaders in the city. The Archbishop of Canterbury remains in close contact with the Archbishop of the Diocese of Jerusalem, the Rt Revd Hosam Naoum, and the Bishop of Southwark regularly visits the region with Roman Catholic bishops as part of the Holy Land Coordination Group.

Following the attacks, the Archbishop of Canterbury issued a statement that read, "The desecration of Christian graves in Jerusalem is a blasphemous act. I join the Chief Rabbi [Ephraim Mirvis] and religious leaders in Jerusalem in condemning it and hope those responsible will be brought swiftly to justice. As we continue to pray for peace in the Holy Land, I stand with Archbishop Hosam Naoum and other Jerusalem church leaders in calling for respect, protection, equality and justice for its Christian community – who are the Living Stones of the church."

Interviewed immediately after the attacks Archbishop Naoum spoke about the increasing use of exclusion, segregation, and intolerance alongside increasing attacks on the holy sites.

The Heads of Churches in Jerusalem have urged all sides to "actively reaffirm their commitment to a promotion of an environment of safety, mutual respect and religious tolerance in the Holy Land." They also called for assurances to be given to the Christian community in Jerusalem following the increasing levels of extremist threats against them. At a recent meeting with the Jordanian Parliament Committee of External Affairs in Amman, the Heads of Churches raised concerns about the future of a continued presence of Christians, specifically Arabic Christians, in Jordan, Jerusalem and the Occupied Palestinian Territories.

The statement by the Anglican Archbishop of Jerusalem, the Rt Revd Hosam Naoum, can be read here:

<https://j-diocese.org/wordpress/2023/01/04/statement-on-the-recent-vandalism-and-desecration-of-the-protestant-cemetery-on-mt-zion-4-january-2023/>

The statements of the Patriarchs and Head of all Churches in Jerusalem can be read here:

<https://j-diocese.org/wordpress/2023/01/05/head-of-churches-statement-on-the-recent-vandalism-desecration-of-the-protestant-cemetery-on-mt-zion/>

The statement of the World Council of Churches can be read here:

<https://www.oikoumene.org/resources/documents/wcc-statement-on-desecration-of-historic-protestant-cemetery-in-jerusalem>

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2023-02-27/153753>

Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps: Guided Weapons

Jack Lopresti (Conservative) [156114] To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what recent assessment he has made of reports that the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps has displayed a ballistic missile with Death to Israel written on it in Hebrew.

David Rutley: The UK is clear that Iran's ballistic missile program poses a threat to regional security. Iran should stop its threats to Israel which escalate already high tensions. Our commitment to Israel's security is unwavering. The UK works to counter malign Iranian activity in the Middle East and has sanctioned over 300 Iranian individuals and entities, including the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps in its entirety. Alongside France and Germany, we have written regularly to the UN Secretary-General to draw attention to Iranian missile activity inconsistent with UNSCR 2231.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2023-03-01/156114>

UNSCR 2231, referred to above, can be read at

https://www.iaea.org/sites/default/files/unsc_resolution2231-2015.pdf

House of Lords Written Answer

Israel: Palestinians

Lord Shinkwin (Conservative) [HL5952] To ask His Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of reports that Hamas has located three rocket launch sites close to schools in Gaza City.

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: The UK remains resolute in its commitment to Israel's security. Our position on Hamas is clear: we condemn Hamas' attacks against civilians which are unacceptable and unjustifiable. We continue to call upon Hamas and other terrorist groups to permanently end their incitement and indiscriminate rocket fire against Israel. Hamas must renounce violence, recognise Israel and accept previously signed agreements.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2023-02-27/hl5952>

Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office

Lord (Tariq)Ahmad of Wimbledon: Appalled by the terror attack in central Tel Aviv last night. My thoughts and prayers are with the victims, whom I hope make a full recovery. The UK condemns terrorism in all its forms.

<https://twitter.com/tariqahmadbt/status/1634077038360289280>

Lord (Tariq)Ahmad of Wimbledon: The rising tensions in Israel and the OPTs are alarming. @TWennesland and I spoke today about my visit to Israel and the OPTs in January, and the last few weeks of violence. We will work together to de-escalate the situation.

<https://twitter.com/tarigahmadbt/status/1634206380520267779>

Updated Travel Advice: Israel

<https://www.gov.uk/foreign-travel-advice/israel>

Updated Travel Advice: The Occupied Palestinian Territories

<https://www.gov.uk/foreign-travel-advice/the-occupied-palestinian-territories>

TOP

Other Relevant Information

United Nations

UN observes first International Day against Islamophobia

The United Nations on Friday commemorated the first-ever [International Day to Combat Islamophobia](#) ...

The observation follows the unanimous adoption of an Assembly resolution last year that proclaimed 15 March as the [International Day](#), calling for global dialogue that promotes tolerance, peace and respect for human rights and religious diversity.

As the UN Secretary-General [stated](#), the nearly two billion Muslims worldwide – who come from all corners of the planet – “reflect humanity in all its magnificent diversity”. Yet, they often face bigotry and prejudice simply because of their faith.

Furthermore, Muslim women can also suffer “triple discrimination” because of their gender, ethnicity, and faith. ...

The President of the UN General Assembly, Csaba Kőrösi, [noted](#) that Islamophobia is rooted in xenophobia, or the fear of strangers, which is reflected in discriminatory practices, travel bans, hate speech, bullying and targeting of other people.

He urged countries to uphold freedom of religion or belief, which is guaranteed under the [International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights](#).

“All of us carry a responsibility to challenge Islamophobia or any similar phenomenon, to call out injustice and condemn discrimination based on religion or belief – or the lack of them,” he added.

Mr. Kőrösi said education is key to learning why these phobias exist, and it can be “transformative” in changing how people understand each other.

The growing hate that Muslims face is not an isolated development, UN [Secretary-General António Guterres](#) told attendees.

“It is an inexorable part of the resurgence of ethno-nationalism, neo-Nazi white supremacist ideologies, and violence targeting vulnerable populations including Muslims, Jews, some minority Christian communities and others,” he said.

“Discrimination diminishes us all. And it is incumbent on all of us to stand up against it. We must never be bystanders to bigotry.”

Stressing that “we must strengthen our defenses”, Mr. Guterres highlighted UN measures such as a [Plan of Action to Safeguard Religious Sites](#). ...

Other policies already launched include a [Strategy and Plan of Action on Hate Speech](#), and the [Our Common Agenda](#) report, which outlines a framework for a more inclusive and secure “digital future” for all people. ...

To read the full press release see

<https://news.un.org/en/story/2023/03/1134462>

UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights

Rapporteur's Digest on Freedom of Religion or Belief: Excerpts of the Reports from 1986 to 2022 by the UN Special Rapporteur on Freedom of Religion or Belief Arranged by Topics of the Framework for Communications

<https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/Documents/Issues/Religion/RapporteursDigestFreedomReligionBelief.pdf>

[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>

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>

Notice of amendments

<https://bills.parliament.uk/publications/49991/documents/3115>

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>

Note of Informal Engagement Session, Social Justice and Social Security Committee

https://www.parliament.scot/-/media/files/committees/social-justice-and-social-security-committee/charities-bill/summary-of-discussions_informal-cra-event_1-march-2023.pdf

Stage 1 evidence session, Social Justice and Social Security Committee

<https://www.parliament.scot/chamber-and-committees/official-report/search-what-was-said-in-parliament/SJSS-02-03-2023?meeting=14185&iob=128481>

Gender Recognition Reform (Scotland) Bill

<https://www.parliament.scot/bills-and-laws/bills/gender-recognition-reform-scotland-bill>

TOP

Consultations

** new or updated today

**** closes in 2 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>

TOP

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