



Political Affairs Digest

A daily summary of political events affecting the Jewish Community

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House of Lords Written Answers

Batley Grammar School: Harassment

Lord Pearson of Rannoch (Non-affiliated) [HL6266] To ask His Majesty's Government, further to the Written Answer by Baroness Williams of Trafford on 27 July 2021 (HL1972), whether the Batley Grammar School teacher and his family are still receiving police protection following him showing a picture of the Prophet Mohammed to a class of school children; if so, how much longer they expect to need to provide that protection; how many arrests have been made in connection with the threats received by that individual and his family; and what were the consequences of those arrests.

Lord Sharpe of Epsom: The Government remains steadfast in our commitment to tackling those who spread views that promote violence and hatred against individuals and communities in our society and must always stand up to those who seek to undermine our fundamental values.

The Home Office does not hold information on police protection, or number of arrests made by West Yorkshire Police in relation to this case. This is a matter for West Yorkshire Police, which is operationally independent of Government.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2023-03-08/hl6266>

The answer referred to above can be read at

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2021-07-13/hl1972>

Schools: Koran

Lord Pearson of Rannoch (Non-affiliated) [HL6264] To ask His Majesty's Government what steps they will take to protect pupils who drop or deface a copy of the Koran, and the families of those pupils.

Baroness Barran: The safety of children is the utmost priority for the department, and it is never acceptable to threaten or intimidate pupils and their families under any circumstances. Schools and colleges have a critical role to play in safeguarding children and promoting their welfare. Keeping Children Safe in Education is statutory safeguarding guidance which all schools and colleges must consider, to

ensure the safety of children at school.

A vital part of schools meeting their duties includes creating a safe, calm, and supportive environment for all pupils. Head teachers 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.

In response to recent incidents, the government has been repeatedly clear that there is no blasphemy law in Great Britain. There is a range of existing guidance to help schools make decisions on how to meet the needs of their pupils, and to manage and resolve concerns and complaints. The department trusts school leaders to work with pupils, parents, and where necessary the local community and the police to manage the responses to these incidents locally.

However, we recognise that where these issues arise, they are often sensitive and complex, involving a range of local partners such as the police and local authorities.

The Home Office is drafting guidance around blasphemy incidents, which the department will support with as needed.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2023-03-08/hl6264>

The guidance referred to above can be read at

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1101454/Keeping_children_safe_in_education_2022.pdf

Schools: Koran

Lord Pearson of Rannoch (Non-affiliated) [HL6267] To ask His Majesty's Government, further to the statement by the spokesperson for the Department for Education on 2 March in respect of the suspension of four school children at Kettlethorpe High School for dropping a copy of the Koran that "the school followed standard disciplinary procedures in response to this incident" and that the Department "backs headteachers to take the appropriate action", what are the standard disciplinary procedures for such an incident; whether they consider the suspension of the children in this case to be an "appropriate action"; and if not, what plans they have to withdraw that statement.

Baroness Barran: The government's priority remains the safety and wellbeing of children and young people. The department trusts head teachers to work with pupils, parents and, where necessary, the local community and the police to manage the responses to these incidents locally.

All schools are required by law to have a behaviour policy which outlines effective strategies that will encourage good behaviour and the sanctions that will be imposed for misbehaviour. The department trusts head teachers to develop behaviour policies which reflect their school's individual contexts and needs. The department also supports head teachers in using suspension as a sanction when warranted as part of creating calm, safe and supportive environments where both pupils and staff can work in safety and are respected.

All decisions to suspend a pupil must be lawful, proportionate, and reasonable. Within these requirements, schools need to be able to set and enforce behaviour policies that reflect their ethos and the specific challenges they face. Decisions also need to be based on the particular facts of a case. For this reason, the statutory Suspension and Permanent Exclusion guidance does not prescribe the behaviours that should or should not lead to a suspension.

If parents feel that disciplinary action is unreasonable, they have the right to make representations to the school's governing board.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2023-03-08/hl6267>

The statement referred to above is not currently available online, but a report of the statement can be read at

<https://www.express.co.uk/news/uk/1741316/Quran-damaged-boys-suspended-school-Wakefield-department-for-education>

The guidance referred to above can be read at

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1101498/Suspension_and_Permanent_Exclusion_from_maintained_schools_academies_and_pupil_referral_units_in_England_including_pupil_movement.pdf

UK Parliament House of Commons Library

Relationships and Sex Education in Schools (England)

<https://researchbriefings.files.parliament.uk/documents/SN06103/SN06103.pdf>

Scottish Parliament Written Answer

Right to Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions (BDS)

Mercedes Villalba (Labour) [S6W-15486] To ask the Scottish Government, in light of (a) the UK Government's proposed legislation to prevent public institutions from imposing their own international boycotts and (b) its statement in response to PE1803: Right to Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions (BDS), on 11 August 2020, that it would, "strongly encourage the UK Government to develop their legislation in a manner which restricts the scope of application, and respects the autonomy of Scottish institutions in making decisions on this issue", whether it will provide an update on its discussions with the UK Government on the matter.

Neil Gray: Scottish Government officials have had limited engagement with UK Government officials about the UK Government's plans to introduce legislation to prevent public institutions from imposing their own international boycotts.

The Scottish Government view remains that any legislation should be developed in a way that respects Scotland's devolution settlement and the autonomy of Scotland's institutions. We will continue to engage with the UK Government on the detail of the proposed Bill provisions and will consider carefully how this impacts on devolved competence.

<https://www.parliament.scot/chamber-and-committees/questions-and-answers/question?ref=S6W-15486>

The statement referred to above can be read at

https://webarchive.nrscotland.gov.uk/20220217181348mp/http://external.parliament.scot/S5_PublicPetitionsCommittee/Submissions%202020/PE1803_A.pdf

Information about the Petition referred to above can be read at

<https://webarchive.nrscotland.gov.uk/20220217181348/http://external.parliament.scot/GettingInvolved/Petitions/righttoBDS>

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Israel

See also Scottish Parliament written answer "Right to Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions (BDS)" that is included in the Home Affairs section above.

Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office

All Israelis and Palestinians deserve peace and security: UK Statement at the Security Council: Statement by Ambassador James Kariuki at the UN Security Council briefing on the Middle East

We commend Israeli and Palestinian officials for their engagement in Aqaba on 26 February and Sharm El Sheikh on 19 March and thank Jordan and Egypt for hosting. Commitments to desist from provocative unilateral actions and to pursue further actions in support of de-escalation are critical ahead of the convergence of Easter, Passover and Ramadan.

It is also critical that both parties abide by the commitments made and take forward promised confidence building measures, including to support the historic Status Quo governing Jerusalem's holy sites and all those who worship there.

Mr President, let me make four points.

The Palestinian Authority must resume security cooperation with Israel, fight against terror and incitement, and maintain security in Area A. We also condemn indiscriminate rocket fire from Gaza.

Whilst Israel has a legitimate right to self-defence, unilateral incursions that result in the deaths of innocent Palestinians only escalate tensions. Israeli security forces must operate in accordance with international law, show restraint in the use of live fire, and conduct thorough investigations into the deaths of Palestinian civilians.

Second, Israel must also cease the approval of settlements and legalisation of outposts and from evictions of Palestinians in occupied territory, particularly in East Jerusalem.

The UK opposes the repeal of the Disengagement Law by the Knesset. This repeal is a unilateral measure which further undermines prospects for a two-state solution, and damages any renewed efforts at de-escalation.

Third, settler violence has gone unchecked for too long. The UK condemns all forms of violence by settlers, including the fatal attacks perpetrated against innocent Palestinians in Huwara.

I urge Israeli security forces to provide appropriate protection to the Palestinian civilian population as they are obliged to under international law, investigate and bring to justice perpetrators of settler violence, and end the culture of permissiveness and impunity. ...

Inflammatory rhetoric and incitement of violence by certain Israeli political leaders only serves to drive settler violence. The UK condemned the Israeli Finance Minister's comments calling for the Palestinian village of Huwara to be "wiped-out" and his recent comments that deny the existence of the Palestinian people, their right to self-determination, and their history and culture. The United Kingdom extends its full support to Jordan and its sovereign territory.

All Israelis and Palestinians deserve peace and security, particularly during the holy festivals of Easter, Passover and Ramadan. This will require political will, good faith, strong co-operation, and meaningful actions by both Israelis and the Palestinians.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/all-israelis-and-palestinians-deserve-peace-and-security-uk-statement-at-the-security-council>

Foreign Secretary's meeting with Jordanian Foreign Minister Ayman Safadi

... The Foreign Secretary praised Jordan's role, under the leadership of His Majesty King Abdullah II, as a force for stability in the Middle East and a generous host of refugees. The UK is continuing to provide humanitarian and development assistance to Jordan. The Foreign Secretary expressed his grave concern about the recent increase in violence in Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territories and affirmed the UK's active support for steps to de-escalate tensions, including the recent meetings of the parties hosted by Jordan in Aqaba and Egypt in Sharm El-Sheikh. The UK remains committed to a two-state solution to the conflict. ...

To read the full press release see

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/readout-foreign-secretary-meeting-with-jordanian-foreign-minister-ayman-safadi>

United Nations

Applauding Recent Diplomatic Talks between Israelis, Palestinians, Speakers in Security Council Urge Parties Commit to Agreements

... Tor Wennesland, United Nations Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process ... noted the start of the holiday period when the holy month of Ramadan coincides with Passover and Easter. Emphasizing that the status quo at the holy sites in Jerusalem must be respected, he urged all sides to refrain from unilateral steps that escalate tensions. “This should be a period for safe and peaceful religious reflection and celebration for all,” he said ...

On 12 February, the Government announced its authorization of nine outposts in the occupied West Bank, while the Higher Planning Committee advanced plans for over 7,200 settlement housing units. Nearly 1,000 of those are in outposts that are in the process of legalization under Israeli law. Demolitions and seizures of Palestinian-owned structures continued across the occupied West Bank, including East Jerusalem, displacing 388 people. ...

He voiced regret that daily violence increased significantly during the reporting period, with 82 Palestinians — including 1 woman and 17 children — were killed by Israeli security forces during demonstrations, clashes, security operations, attacks against Israelis and other incidents. More than 2,600 Palestinians were injured. In addition, 4 Palestinians were killed and 89 injured in a growing number of attacks by Israeli settlers. Meanwhile, 13 Israeli civilians — including one woman and three children, and one foreign national — were killed and 49 other Israelis were injured by Palestinians in shooting and ramming attacks, clashes and other incidents. ...

The reporting period has also been marked by a spate of violence against civilians, including acts of terror ...

In the aftermath of those fatal incidents, he said, Palestinian armed groups launched seven rockets from Gaza towards Israel, of which one fell short within the Strip, one landed in an open space inside Israel. Five were intercepted by the Israeli air defence system. In retaliation, the Israel Defense Forces conducted two air strikes against what it said were militant targets in Gaza, with no injuries reported. Noting that acts of provocation, incitement and inflammatory rhetoric also continued throughout the reporting period, he said some Fatah officials and social media pages — as well as Hamas and Palestinian Islamic Jihad — praised and glorified perpetrators of attacks against Israelis and called for additional attacks. One senior Fatah official called Israel a “fascist enemy that loves to murder and spill blood”. An Israeli minister conducted an inflammatory visit to Jerusalem’s holy sites, while several members of the Knesset praised the attacks by settlers against Palestinians and their property, adding that the town of Huwwara should be “wiped out” by Israeli forces. ...

... he said that five European Union countries, along with the United Kingdom, have all issued statements condemning the increasing violence and calling for de-escalation. Expressing his own deep concern over the continued Israeli settlement-expansion, he said such actions “further entrench the occupation, fuel tensions and systematically erode the viability of a Palestinian State as part of a two-State solution”. ...

At the same time, the absence of intra-Palestinian unity continues to undermine Palestinian national aspirations, he said, calling on all factions to take concrete steps to reunify Gaza and the occupied West Bank, including East Jerusalem, under a single, democratic Government. ...

Linda Thomas-Greenfield (United States), expressing concern over sustained violence in Israel and the West Bank, said that 2023 is on track to surpass the staggering levels of violence seen in 2022. ... Further, she urged the parties to refrain from unilateral actions and unhelpful rhetoric that increase tensions as April's confluence of religious holidays approaches. ... Emphasizing that a two-State solution remains the best way to ensure that Israelis and Palestinians can live side-by-side in peace and security, she urged — even though prospects feel remote at the moment — that a “horizon of hope” be preserved. ...

Dmitry A. Polyanskiy (Russian Federation) said that, since the beginning of 2023, the world has witnessed increased incidences of violent raids by Israeli forces, attacks by settlers and cases involving the disproportionate use of force. Further, daily reports of mass arbitrary arrests accompany a tense situation around the holy places of Jerusalem, which is all the more urgent in the context of Ramadan. While confirming Israel's right to ensure its security, he urged restraint from provocative, hateful rhetoric that will only complicate the situation, such as the dangerous, irresponsible statement recently made by Israel's Finance Minister. He also expressed concern over the Knesset's adoption of laws depriving Israeli Arabs of citizenship and rejecting medical care for Palestinian prisoners. ...

James Kariuki (United Kingdom), commending Israeli and Palestinian officials for their recent engagement in Jordan and Egypt, said it is now critical for both parties to abide by the commitments made there ... Condemning indiscriminate rocket fire from Gaza, he said that, while Israel has a legitimate right to self-defence, unilateral incursions that result in the deaths of innocent Palestinians only escalate tensions. Israeli security forces must operate in accordance with international law, show restraint in the use of live fire and conduct thorough investigations into the deaths of Palestinian civilians. He also emphasized ... the United Kingdom's opposition to the repeal of the Disengagement Law ... [\[click here to read the full transcript of this speech\]](#)

Adrian Hauri (Switzerland) ... Stressing that statements by the Israeli Finance Minister denying the existence of the Palestinian people are unacceptable ... called on Israel to respect previous agreements towards a two-State solution, as well as the 1994 peace treaty with Jordan. Emphasizing that protecting the civilian population is the priority, he voiced concern about operations by Israeli security forces in the West Bank — which frequently result in high numbers of Palestinian victims — and condemned acts of violence against Palestinian civilians committed by settlers, as well as those committed by Palestinians against Israeli civilians. ...

Nicolas De Rivi re (France) condemned Israeli settler violence against Palestinian civilians, as well as terror attacks against Israeli civilians. While reiterating his country's commitment to Israel's security, he expressed concern over recent Israeli operations in the West Bank and called on that country to protect Palestinian civilians in line with its international obligations. ... He went on to stress that lasting de-escalation can only occur if Israel's settlement-building policy ends ... Also calling on Israeli authorities to reverse their decision to expel Palestinians from certain neighbourhoods, he underscored that France will never recognize the annexation of territory. ...

Mohamed Issa Abushahab (United Arab Emirates) noted the constructive engagement between the parties in Sharm el-Sheikh and Aqaba, which “could not be more urgent”. ... he added that Israel must reverse its recent bill allowing settlers to return to four settlements in the northern area of the occupied West Bank. He cited that Government's recent commitment to “not discuss any new settlement units for four months and to stop the authorization of any settlement outposts for six months”, also calling on it to immediately stop all settler violence, hold perpetrators accountable, uphold its responsibilities under international law, end its raids in Palestinian cities and villages, and stop the demolition of Palestinian property. He further called on all parties to refrain from provocative rhetoric and statements that could incite hatred and violence, and condemned the Israeli Finance Minister's calls to “wipe out” the village of Hawara and his denial of the

history and existence of the Palestinian people. ...

Riyad H. Mansour, Permanent Observer for the State of Palestine, said the Palestinian people have existed, “and will continue existing”, on their land. They have endured dispossession, displacement, discrimination and denial of their most fundamental rights, but they have not disappeared. Noting that the recent denial by Israel’s Finance Minister of the Palestinians’ very existence is an attempt to justify “what is to come”, he said that statement came as Israel’s unlawful annexation pushed ever forward. Asking how Israel continues to justify killing Palestinians in the streets, keeping 2 million of them under an inhumane blockade for more than 15 years, colonizing their land, displacing them and demolishing their homes, he said diplomatic efforts that took decades are now being undone before the world’s collective eyes. “We must respond, collectively,” he stressed, adding that the Palestinian side will leave no stone unturned to prevent bloodshed. ... “Every effort must be mobilized to stop annexation, violence against our people and provocations,” he stressed, emphasizing the international community’s duty not to wait, but to act now, “to prevent a fire that will devour everything it encounters”. ...

Gilad Menashe Erdan (Israel) underscored that, despite the “distortions of reality” constantly advanced by Palestine, Israel is — unquestionably — the most vibrant liberal democracy in the Middle East. While observing that no democracy is perfect and that people may make mistakes, he said that, when violence is committed or laws are broken, Israel acts to bring perpetrators to justice. ... Palestine’s repeated lies to the Council serve only one objective — to eternalize the conflict and de-legitimize the idea of a Jewish State. This has been — and continues to be — the Palestinian Authority’s only goal, and while Israeli law enforcement investigates acts of violence, the Authority glorifies the terrorists who spill innocent blood. He said that, in 2021 alone, the Palestinian Authority paid over \$175 million to terrorists and their families ... Noting that the Council was just briefed on resolution 2334 (2016), he stated that even the drafter of that biased, anti-Israel text understood that reconciliation is impossible while the Palestinian leadership continues to call for the murder of Israeli civilians. Questioning why the Council never addresses this crucial issue, he underscored that his country will not remain idle. Israel will act against those who choose the path of violence, and will do the work the Palestinian Authority refuses to: namely, thwarting terror attacks. Adding that this debate is supposed to cover the situation in the entire Middle East, he asked why the Council is not discussing “the radioactive Shi’ite elephant in the room” and urged those present not to allow Iran’s threat to the region to be side-lined by Palestine’s lies.

To read the full press release see

<https://press.un.org/en/2023/sc15238.doc.htm>

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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>

Notice of amendments

<https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/bills/cbill/58-03/0279/220279.pdf>

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>

Same Sex Marriage (Church of England)

<https://bills.parliament.uk/bills/3438>

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

Prospective Scheme of Delegation for the Charity Commission for Northern Ireland
(closing date 15 May 2023)

<https://www.communities-ni.gov.uk/consultations/consultation-prospective-scheme-delegation-charity-commission-northern-ireland>

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