



Political Affairs Digest

A daily summary of political events affecting the Jewish Community

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House of Lords Debate

Online Safety Bill: Committee Stage

col 144 **Baroness Fox of Buckley (Non-affiliated)**: ...I also object to the idea that certain organisations are anointed with extra legitimacy as super-complaints bodies. We have seen this more broadly. You will often hear Ministers say, in relation to consultations, “We’ve consulted stakeholders and civil society organisations”, when they are actually often referring to lobbying organisations with interests. There is a free-for-all for NGOs and interest groups. We think of a lot of charities as very positive but they are not necessarily neutral. ...

There is also a danger that organisations will end up speaking on behalf of all women, all children or all Muslims. That is something we need to be careful about in a time of identity politics. We have seen it happen offline with self-appointed community leaders, but say, for example, there is a situation where there is a demand by a super-complainant to remove a particular piece of content that is considered to be harmful, such as an image of the Prophet Muhammad. These are areas where we have to admit that if people then say, “We speak on behalf of”, they will cause problems.

Although charities historically have had huge credibility, as I said, we know from some of the scandals that have affected charities recently that they are not always the saviours. They are certainly not immune from corruption, political bias, political disputes and so on. ...

col 146 **Lord Allan of Hallam (Liberal Democrat)**: ... from the vast funnel of complaints coming in, we have a smaller subset that are actionable. Some of those will be substantive, real complaints, where the individual simply disagrees with the decision. That could be primarily for two reasons. The first is that the platform has made a bad decision and failed to enforce its own policies. ... Those kinds of issues, where there is a simple operator error, should get picked up by the platforms’ own appeal mechanisms. ...

The second type would be where the platform enforces policies correctly but, from the complainant’s point of view, the policies are wrong. It may be a more pro-free speech platform where the person says, “This is hate speech”, but the platform says, “Well, according to our rules, it is not. ... In that case, the complainant is still unhappy but the

platform has done nothing wrong—unless the policies the platform is enforcing are out of step with the requirements under the Online Safety Bill, in which case the complaint should properly come to Ofcom. ...

col 158 Baroness Fraser of Craigmaddie (Conservative): ... I remain concerned that the particular unintended consequences of the Bill for the devolved Administrations have not been fully appreciated or explored. While online safety is a reserved issue, many of the matters that it deals with—such as justice, the police or education—are devolved, and, as many in this House appreciate, Scots law is different. ...

col 159 Amendment 58 asks the Government to state explicitly which standards of speech platforms apply in each of the jurisdictions of the UK, because at this moment there is a difference. I accept that the Human Rights Act is a UK statute already, but, under Article 10—as we have heard—freedom of expression is not an absolute right and may be subject to such formalities, conditions, restrictions or penalties as are prescribed by law. ...

In Scotland, the Scottish Government believe that they are protecting freedom of expression, but the Hate Crime and Public Order (Scotland) Act 2021 criminalises speech that is not illegal elsewhere in the UK. Examples from the Scottish Government's own information note state that it is now an offence in Scotland "if the urging of people to cease practising their religion is done in a threatening or abusive manner or, alternatively, ... if a person were to urge people not to engage in same-sex sexual activity while making abusive comments about people who identify as lesbian, gay or bisexual".

The Lord Advocate's guidance to the police says that "an incident must be investigated as a hate crime if it is perceived, by the victim or any other person, to be aggravated by prejudice".

So, I would have thought that we would want to take a belt-and-braces approach to ensuring that there cannot be any differences in interpretation of what we mean by freedom of expression ...

col 160 The hate crime Act was also the motivation for my Amendment 136, which asks why the Government did not include it on the list of priority offences in Schedule 7. ...

I stress again that it is not my intention that the Hate Crime and Public Order (Scotland) Act should dictate the threshold for illegal and priority illegal content in this Bill ... but the omission of the hate crime Act does raise the question of a devolution deficit because, while the definition of "illegal content" varies, people in areas of the UK with more sensitive thresholds would have to rely on the police to enforce some national laws online rather than benefiting from the additional protections of the Ofcom regime. ...

col 203 Baroness Merron (Labour): ... two-thirds of women who report abuse to internet companies do not feel heard. Three-quarters of women change their behaviour after receiving online abuse. ... the Bill currently assumes that there is no interconnection between different safety duties where somebody has more than one protected characteristic ... One has only to talk to Jewish women to know that, although anti-Semitism knows no bounds, if you are a Jewish woman then there is no doubt that you will be the subject of far greater abuse than your male counterpart. Similarly, women of colour are one-third more likely to be mentioned in abusive tweets than white women. Again, there is no level playing field. ...

col 204 As it stands, the Bill puts an onus on women and girls to protect themselves from online violence and abuse. The problem, as has been mentioned many times, is that user empowerment tools do not incentivise services to address the design of their service, which may be facilitating the spread of violence against women and girls. ...

Lord Parkinson of Whitley Bay [Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport]: ... I assure noble Lords that the codes will cover protections against violence against women and girls. In accordance with the safety duties, the codes will set out how companies should tackle illegal content and activity confronting women and girls online. ...

col 205 An additional stand-alone code would also be duplicative and could cause problems with interpretation and uncertainty for Ofcom and providers. ...

col 206 **Baroness Merron:** ... I think the Minister is saying that there should not be a code of practice in respect of violence against women and girls. That sounds to me like there will be no code of practice in this one particular area, which seems rather harsh. ...

Lord Parkinson of Whitley Bay: There are no codes designed for Jewish people, Muslim people or people of colour, even though we know that they are disproportionately affected by some of these harms as well. The approach taken is to tackle the problems, which we know disproportionately affect all of those groups of people and many more, by focusing on the harms rather than the recipients of the harm. ...

To read the full transcript see

<https://hansard.parliament.uk/lords/2023-05-16/debates/A95B3CA9-8816-4F58-8D03-45E7321D4C9B/OnlineSafetyBill>

The amendments referred to above can be read at

<https://bills.parliament.uk/publications/51085/documents/3398>

House of Commons Written Answers

Relationships and Sex Education

Nick Fletcher (Conservative) [183982] To ask the Secretary of State for Education, when she will publish the membership of the independent panel which will inform the review of the relationships, sex, and health education guidance; and what steps she will take to ensure that the views of faith groups are represented on that panel.

Nick Gibb: The Department is in the process of identifying the members for an independent expert panel to inform the wider review of the Relationships, Sex and Health Education statutory guidance. The Department expects the process to be completed shortly and will then make public more details of the panel and their work. The Department will ensure that the views of faith groups are represented in the review process.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2023-05-05/183982>

The following two questions both received the same answer

Local Government: Elections

Afzal Khan (Labour) [184187] To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, whether any people were turned away from voting on Thursday 4 May 2023 because they were wearing religious head dress.

Helen Morgan (Liberal Democrat) [184775] To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, what assessment he has made of the impact of voter ID on turnout levels at the local elections on 4 May 2023.

Dehenna Davison: Regarding the assessment of the potential impact of voter identification on levels of fraud and turnout levels at the May 2023 local elections, I refer the Hon. Member to the response given to Question UIN [162192](#) on 14 March 2023.

Regarding the list of accepted forms of identification and the equality impact assessment, I refer the Hon. Member to the response to Question UIN [183968](#) and to UIN [180947](#) on 16 May 2023 and 20 April 2023.

No eligible electors should be turned away due to wearing religious head dress. Privacy screens or private areas must be, by law, available in all polling stations for electors who may wish to have their identity checked in private.

I refer the Hon. Member to the answer I gave to Question UIN [183152](#) on 9 May 2023.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2023-05-09/184187>
and
<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2023-05-11/184775>

House of Lords Written Answers

HOPE not hate

Lord Pearson of Rannoch (Non-affiliated) [HL7538] To ask His Majesty's Government whether they have made any assessment of Hope Not Hate and any association that group may have with far-left extremist groups.

Lord Sharpe of Epsom: The Government is committed to tackling those who spread views that promote violence and hatred against individuals and communities in our society, and that radicalise others into terrorism.

We do assess all evidence of those that radicalise others though their support for or justification of violence and will not tolerate those who spread divisive and harmful narratives. This relates to all ideologies, including those that fall under the LASI (Left-Wing, Anarchist & Single Issue) banner. We continue to work with law enforcement agencies and multi-agency partners to increase our understanding of new and emerging threats to society.

The Home Office avoids publicly commenting on whether or not specific groups or individuals are of extremist concern, as this could have a detrimental effect on our ability to take future action against them.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2023-04-27/hl7538>

HOPE not hate

Lord Pearson of Rannoch (Non-affiliated) [HL7539] To ask His Majesty's Government whether any representatives from Government departments have met with Hope Not Hate; if so, on what dates; and what was the content and outcome of their discussions.

Lord Sharpe of Epsom: Representatives from the Home Office have met with members of Hope Not Hate on a small number of occasions in the past year, as part of engagement with wider partners on asylum and migration and responding to protest activity.

The Home Office is free to decide who and which organisations it meets with as long as the organisation in question does not act unlawfully. Decisions on individual meetings are taken on a case-by-case basis.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2023-04-27/hl7539>

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Israel

Scottish Parliament Motion

Maggie Chapman (Green) [S6M-08960] **75th Anniversary of the Nakba** – That the Parliament acknowledges that 15 May 2023 is the 75th anniversary of the Nakba, or “Catastrophe”, which is widely understood to mark the collective Palestinian struggle for freedom; understands that several events organised by Scotland Supports Palestine are taking place the week of the anniversary, including The Nakba at 75: Justice for All Palestinians, which was held on 13 May 2023 in Dundee, a city twinned with the Palestinian city of Nablus, and which was supported by local groups, including Dundee

Trades Union Council, Dundee-Nablus Twinning Association and the Scottish Palestine Solidarity Campaign; further understands that a Stand with Palestine Solidarity Demonstration took place in Aberdeen on 15 May 2023, supported by local groups, including Aberdeen Trades Union Council, Aberdeen Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament and the Aberdeen University Palestine Society; understands that, this year, the United Nations Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People will commemorate the 75th anniversary of the Nakba at the UN headquarters in New York, to mark a tragic historical moment in 1948 when a significant number of Palestinians were displaced almost overnight as part of a longer project of displacement of Palestinians from their homeland, leading to the dispossession, displacement and denial of their inalienable rights, which it considers continues to this day, and commends all who took part in marking the 75th anniversary of the Nakba.

<https://www.parliament.scot/chamber-and-committees/votes-and-motions/S6M-08960>

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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>

Act as passed

<https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2023/16/contents/enacted>

**** Holocaust Memorial Bill**

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

Submissions on applicability and compliance with Standing Orders:

Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities

<https://bills.parliament.uk/publications/51174/documents/3426>

Baroness Deech of Cumnor

<https://bills.parliament.uk/publications/51175/documents/3427>

The Buxton Family and the Thomas Fowell Buxton Society

<https://bills.parliament.uk/publications/51176/documents/3428>

Westminster City Council

<https://bills.parliament.uk/publications/51178/documents/3430>

London Historic Parks and Gardens Trust, Thorney Island Society and Residents of Westminster

<https://bills.parliament.uk/publications/51177/documents/3431>

Marriage Act 1949 (Amendment) Bill

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

**** Online Safety Bill**

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

Committee Stage, House of Lords

<https://hansard.parliament.uk/lords/2023-05-16/debates/A95B3CA9-8816-4F58-8D03-45E7321D4C9B/OnlineSafetyBill>

and

<https://hansard.parliament.uk/lords/2023-05-16/debates/545F4702-E05A-4C12-88A4-9CDD70C115BD/OnlineSafetyBill>

Nakba Commemoration Bill

<https://bills.parliament.uk/bills/3461>

Palestine Statehood (Recognition) Bill

<https://bills.parliament.uk/bills/3217>

Private Burial Grounds and Cemeteries Bill

<https://bills.parliament.uk/bills/3188>

Same Sex Marriage (Church of England)

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

Schools Bill

<https://bills.parliament.uk/bills/3156>

Terrorism (Protection of Premises) Draft Bill

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/terrorism-protection-of-premises-draft-bill-overarching-documents>

Universal Credit (Removal of Two Child Limit) Bill

<https://bills.parliament.uk/bills/3163>

Universal Jurisdiction (Extension)

<https://bills.parliament.uk/bills/3454>

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

The UK's international counter-terrorism policy (closing date 12 June 2023)

<https://committees.parliament.uk/call-for-evidence/3120/>

Supporting earlier resolution of private family law arrangements (closing date 15 June 2023)

<https://consult.justice.gov.uk/digital-communications/private-family-law-consultation/>

Review of the Race Relations (NI) Order 1997 (closing date 18 June 2023)

<https://www.executiveoffice-ni.gov.uk/consultations/consultation-review-race-relations-ni-order-1997>

Charities tax compliance (closing date 20 July 2023)

<https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/charities-tax-compliance/consultation-charities-tax-compliance>

JPR 2023 Antisemitism in the UK Survey (closing date not stated)

<https://www.jpr.org.uk/panel/UKantisemitism2023> (UK except Scotland)

and

<https://bit.ly/3Vg7DDH> (Scotland)

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