



Political Affairs Digest

A daily summary of political events affecting the Jewish Community

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SCoJeC is incurring significant extra costs as a result of the war in Israel and Gaza, including producing expanded issues of this digest. Please help us maintain these resources by donating at www.scojec.org/donate.html

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Home Affairs

House of Lords Written Answer

Universities: Antisemitism

Baroness Deech (Crossbench) [HL1263] To ask His Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the adequacy of the responses by the University and College Union and relevant university authorities to complaints by students of anti-Semitism and violence perpetrated by fellow students and staff.

Baroness Barran: The department is deeply concerned about the growth in antisemitic incidents on campus since the 7 October terrorist attacks against Israel and this government takes antisemitism extremely seriously. Departmental officials have assessed evidence of antisemitism and racial hatred linked to incidents at English universities. There is an online "Reporting Extremism" page from where members of the public can raise concerns to the department directly. Where concerns have arisen, officials have reached out to relevant universities to understand what actions they have taken, including reporting issues to the police where appropriate.

The department is also concerned to see antisemitic motions being passed at some universities. The department urges universities to crack down on inflammatory, politically motivated displays of support for a proscribed terrorist organisation, and on demonstrations which make Jewish staff and students feel unsafe.

My right hon. Friend, The Secretary of State for Education and my right hon. Friend, the Minister for Skills, Apprenticeships and Higher Education (HE), wrote to all schools, colleges and universities on 11 October, urging them to respond swiftly to

hate-related incidents and actively reassure Jewish students that they can study without fear of harassment or intimidation. Minister Halfon wrote again to Vice Chancellors on 16 November, further emphasising the use of disciplinary measures and the importance of police engagement, as well as the suspension of student visas where the student is a foreign national and requested that the universities review its policies and procedures to ensure that they remain fit for purpose at this challenging time. This was one of the key actions set out in the five-point plan for tackling antisemitism in HE, which was published on 5 November. A link to more information can be found here:

<https://educationhub.blog.gov.uk/2023/11/05/how-were-protecting-jewish-students-on-university-campuses/>

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2023-12-18/hl1263>

The reporting form referred to above can be read at

<https://report-extremism.education.gov.uk/>

The 11 October letter referred to above can be read at

<https://twitter.com/GillianKeegan/status/1712461243267829960>

The 16 November letter referred to above is not available online.

UK Parliament House of Lords Library Briefing

Quality of religious education in schools in England

<https://lordslibrary.parliament.uk/quality-of-religious-education-in-schools-in-england/>

Welsh Senedd Written Answer

Education: Jewish Pupils

Laura Anne Jones (Conservative) [WQ89948] What steps is the Government taking to protect Jewish pupils in schools, universities and throughout the education sector?

Jeremy Miles: I am concerned by reports of learners and students experiencing both antisemitism and Islamophobia in schools and education settings. I have met with representatives of both the Jewish and Muslim communities in Wales and have listened to their experiences and concerns.

The Welsh Government's Anti-Racist Wales Action Plan provides a framework through which we are taking concerted action to tackle antisemitism and Islamophobia. As a country committed to creating an anti-racist Wales by 2030, we are clear that racism and prejudice related behaviour are unacceptable in our education system and society.

We have been pro-active in sharing information on tackling antisemitism and Islamophobia with our partners across Wales, as well as directly with teachers and education practitioners:

- On Friday 13 October we reminded schools via the Dysg newsletter of our existing statutory anti-bullying guidance for schools Rights, Respect, Equality and the upcoming update to the guidance on prejudice-related bullying.
- We have shared materials and information with all local authorities, including links to the Welsh Government's Hate hurts Wales campaign which is running until at least March 2024.
- Links have also been shared to our conflict in war collection of resources on Hwb.

On 14 December I wrote to all Further Education and Higher Education institutions

in Wales, requesting a summary of progress on advancing race equality within respective institutions, including any key challenges. My letter also stated that adopting the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance definition of antisemitism is an important step to support understanding and recognition of contemporary forms of antisemitism, and to be clear that antisemitism in any form will not be tolerated in Wales.

On 19 December I, along with the Minister for Social Justice and Chief Whip, issued a joint letter to all schools and maintained education settings in Wales with advice and information on tackling antisemitism and Islamophobia. The letter also included useful guidance and sources of information for teachers and education practitioners, to support children and young people.

<https://senedd.wales/media/hkcpmtbs/wq89948.pdf>

The Action Plan referred to above can be read at

https://www.gov.wales/sites/default/files/publications/2022-06/anti-racist-wales-action-plan_0.pdf

The guidance referred to above can be read at

<https://www.gov.wales/sites/default/files/publications/2019-11/rights-respect-equality-statutory-guidance-for-governing-bodies-of-maintained-schools.pdf>

Information about the Hate Hurts Wales Campaign, referred to above, can be read at

<https://www.gov.wales/hate-hurts-wales>

The Hwb resources referred to above can be read at

<https://hwb.gov.wales/resources/conflict-in-war-resources>

The letters referred to above are not available online.

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Israel

See also Lords written answer HL1263 “Universities: Antisemitism” that is included in the Home Affairs section above.

Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office

UK statement on situation in Gaza

Gaza is Occupied Palestinian Territory and will be part of a future Palestinian state. The UK firmly rejects any suggestion of the resettlement of Palestinians outside of Gaza.

We share the concerns of our allies and partners that Gazans should not be subject to forcible displacement or relocation from Gaza.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/uk-statement-on-situation-in-gaza-3-january-2024>

Lord (Tariq)Ahmad of Wimbledon Gaza is occupied Palestinian Territory and will be part of the future Palestinian state. No Palestinian should be threatened with forcible displacement or relocation. Alongside our international partners, we deplore inflammatory remarks by Israeli Ministers Smotrich and Ben Gvir.

<https://twitter.com/tariqahmadbt/status/1742643978145800386>

Itamar Ben Gvir’s remarks referred to above can be read and listened to at

<https://twitter.com/itamarbengvir/status/1741821404515848688>

Bezalel Smotrich’s remarks referred to above can be read at

<https://twitter.com/bezalelsm/status/1742465988778483763>

and continued at

<https://twitter.com/bezalelsm/status/1742465990422573109>

David Cameron More must be done to get humanitarian aid into Gaza – Israel must allow significantly more supplies in to reduce the risk of hunger and disease. The UK also wants to see the immediate release of hostages and progress towards a sustainable ceasefire. I spoke with new Israeli Foreign Minister @Israel_Katz today about how we can work together on these issues.

https://twitter.com/David_Cameron/status/1742603808109142083

Lord (Tariq)Ahmad of Wimbledon Good discussion today with Foreign Minister of Iraq @Fuad_Hussein. We discussed the situation in Israel/OPTs, our shared concern over militia attacks against Coalition bases and other bilateral issues including cooperation on irregular migration.

<https://twitter.com/tariqahmadbt/status/1742917491863716217>

We call on the Houthis to cease these attacks immediately: UK statement at the UN Security Council

... The United Kingdom condemns in the strongest terms, the illegal and unjustified attacks on commercial shipping in the Red Sea by Houthi militants.

We call on the Houthis to cease these attacks immediately. ...

We will continue to work with allies and partners to pursue all diplomatic routes to end this threat.

If necessary, as the UK Defence Secretary has stated, we will not hesitate to take action to deter threats to freedom of navigation in the Red Sea. ...

Contrary to claims made by the Houthis, these attacks are totally indiscriminate and target shipping that has no connection to Israel. ...

President, the British Foreign Secretary spoke with the Iranian Foreign Minister on Sunday, making clear our view that Iran shares responsibility for preventing these attacks, given their long-standing support to the Houthis.

We call on all parties in the region to exercise restraint and avoid escalation. ...

To read the full transcript see

<https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/we-call-on-the-houthis-to-cease-these-attacks-immediately-uk-statement-at-the-un-security-council>

United Nations

Alarmed by Attacks on Ships in Red Sea, Top UN Officials Urge Protection of Global Supply Chains, Avoiding Deeper Regional Tensions, in Security Council Briefing

... **Khaled Khiari, Assistant Secretary-General for Middle East, Asia and the Pacific, Departments of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs and Peace Operations**, told the Council that ... the adverse political, security, economic and humanitarian repercussions of military escalation in the Red Sea, along with the risk of exacerbating regional tensions. Continued Houthi threats to maritime navigation — coupled with the risk of further military escalation — could potentially impact millions in Yemen, the region and the world. ...

Calling for the immediate release of the *Galaxy Leader* and her crew — seized by the Houthis on 19 November 2023 — he reiterated that such incidents originating from Houthi-controlled areas of Yemen must stop. “No cause or grievance can justify continuation of these attacks against the freedom of navigation,” he underscored. ...

Arsenio Dominguez, Secretary-General of the International Maritime Organization, condemned attacks against international shipping in the Red Sea ... Ships must be allowed to travel worldwide unhindered in accordance with international law. ... An initial

target was Israel, but that is not the case now. ...

Christopher P. Lu (United States) warned that the Houthis continue to strike commercial vessels transiting through the Red Sea's vital shipping lane ... The United States and its allies have launched multinational naval operations to protect ships in the southern part of the Red Sea and deter lawless non-State actors. ...

James Kariuki (United Kingdom) condemned in the strongest terms the illegal and unjustified attacks on commercial shipping in the Red Sea by Houthi militants ... His country will continue to work with allies and partners to pursue all diplomatic routes to end this threat, and if necessary, "will not hesitate to take action to deter threats to freedom of navigation in the Red Sea". ... Contrary to claims made by the Houthis, these attacks are totally indiscriminate and target shipping that has no connection to Israel ... [\[click here to read this speech in greater detail\]](#)

Vassily A. Nebenzia (Russian Federation) said that his country supported the Council's 1 December 2023 press statement, calling on the Ansar Allah movement to cease any actions that threaten commercial vessels and their crews in the Red Sea and the Gulf of Aden. But, this problem is not transpiring in a vacuum. "What is happening in the Red Sea is a direct projection of the violence in Gaza," he said, citing Israel's ongoing bloody operation. Condemning the United States for covering up Israel's actions and preventing the adoption of a resolution demanding an immediate ceasefire, he pointed out that this causes rage in the Arab world, sometimes taking on such dangerous forms as the actions of Ansar Allah in the Red Sea. ...

Nicolas De Rivière (France) ... [observed that] through these armed actions, the Houthis bear extremely heavy responsibility for the escalation of tensions in the region ...

Gilad Menashe Erdan (Israel) stressed that this is not an Israeli or Middle Eastern problem, but a global one. Houthi terrorists, armed and funded by a UN Member States, are flagrantly attacking ships flying any flag. These blatant attacks against diverse global targets are the epitome of an international terrorist threat. Noting that the Council has already acknowledged the Houthis as a terror group, he said that now is the time to enforce sanctions against them, as well as all who arm and fund them. On that, he underscored the need to "address the radioactive Shiite elephant in the room", stating that the Ayatollah regime funds, arms, trains and directs the Houthis, Hamas, Hizbullah and other terrorist groups in Syria and Iraq. Iran seeks to dominate the Middle East and beyond under Shiite hegemony, and the Ayatollah's strategy is to stand in the shadows while pulling the strings of terror proxy puppets. "Iran is a global danger," he stressed, calling on the Council to tackle the "real threat to the Middle East" by addressing Iran's destructive role.

To read the full press release see

<https://press.un.org/en/2024/sc15552.doc.htm>

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Relevant Legislation ** new or updated today

UK Parliament

Arms Trade (Inquiry and Suspension) Bill

<https://bills.parliament.uk/bills/3567>

Disestablishment of the Church of England Bill

<https://bills.parliament.uk/bills/3539>

Economic Activity of Public Bodies (Overseas Matters) Bill

<https://bills.parliament.uk/bills/3475>

The Equality Act 2010 (Amendment) Regulations 2023 [Draft]

<https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukdsi/2023/9780348253191/contents>

Genocide Determination Bill

<https://bills.parliament.uk/bills/3535>

Genocide (Prevention and Response) Bill

<https://bills.parliament.uk/bills/3521>

Holocaust Memorial Bill

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

International Freedom of Religion or Belief Bill

<https://bills.parliament.uk/bills/3564>

Palestine Statehood (Recognition) Bill

<https://bills.parliament.uk/bills/3596>

Terrorism (Protection of Premises) Draft Bill

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

Scottish Parliament

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 7 days**

Super-complaints: eligible entity criteria and procedural requirements [Online Safety Act] (closing date 11 January 2024)

<https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/super-complaints-eligible-entity-criteria-and-procedural-requirements>

**** closes in 8 days**

Death certification reform and the introduction of medical examiners [England] (closing date 12 January 2024)

<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/death-certification-reform-and-the-introduction-of-medical-examiners>

**** closes in 8 days**

Changes to medical certification of cause of death and the role of medical examiners

[Wales] (closing date 12 January 2024)

<https://www.gov.wales/death-certification-reform>

Strategic Equality Plan 2024 to 2028: proposed principles of approach and objectives

[Welsh Government] (closing date 12 February 2024)

<https://www.gov.wales/strategic-equality-plan-2024-2028-proposed-principles-approach-and-objectives>

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