



Political Affairs Digest

A daily summary of political events affecting the Jewish Community

Contents

Home Affairs

Holocaust

Israel

Relevant Legislation

Consultations

Home Affairs

House of Commons Oral Answer

Prime Minister's Questions

Q6. James Cleverly (Conservative): Yesterday, we heard of the horrific antisemitic attack on an elderly Jewish gentleman in north London. Tonight, right hon. and hon. colleagues from across the House will be breaking bread with the Community Security Trust, a charity that exists to defend against antisemitic violence. Does my right hon. Friend agree that we can never be blasé about antisemitism, we can never be tolerant of antisemitism, and the Labour party can never be too apologetic about antisemitism? [909477]

The Prime Minister: First, I join my hon. Friend in recognising the work done by the Community Security Trust. It does such important and valuable work throughout the year, and I am pleased that the Government are able to support the work it does. He is absolutely right to say that one can never be too apologetic about antisemitism, but I think what we have heard sums up Labour under its leader: it loses the hon. Member for Liverpool, Wavertree (Luciana Berger) and it keeps the hon. Member for Derby North (Chris Williamson). That tells us all we need to know about the Labour leadership: they are present but not involved. Perhaps if the Labour leader actually wants to take action against racism, he would suspend the hon. Member for Derby North.

<https://hansard.parliament.uk/commons/2019-02-27/debates/29279E4A-C05F-4397-BA73-054E73A0B26D/Engagements#contribution-9BDFA5C8-BEB4-4BF1-8F6E-17CA4BDAE31C>

House of Commons Written Answer

Schools: Bullying

David Simpson (DUP) [223113] To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps his Department is taking to help tackle bullying in schools.

Nick Gibb: The Government has sent a clear message to schools that bullying is unacceptable and should not be tolerated.

All schools are legally required to have a behaviour policy with measures to prevent

all forms of bullying. They have the freedom to develop their own anti-bullying strategies appropriate to their environment and are held to account by Ofsted. The Department issues guidance to schools on how to prevent and respond to bullying as part of their overall behaviour policy. The guidance outlines the Government's approach to bullying; the legal obligations and powers schools have to tackle bullying; and the principles which underpin the most effective anti-bullying strategies in schools. In our drive to tackle bad behaviour, we have strengthened teachers' powers to enforce discipline and promote good behaviour. Additionally, the Respectful School Communities tool supports schools to develop a whole-school approach which promotes respect and discipline.

The Department is also providing over £2.8 million of funding between September 2016 and March 2020, to four anti-bullying organisations to support schools to tackle bullying. This is in addition to £4 million that the Government Equalities Office are providing, over the same period, to help schools prevent and respond to Homophobic, Biphobic and Transphobic bullying.

The new mandatory subjects of Relationships Education, Relationships and Sex Education, and Health Education, will enable schools to deliver high-quality teaching including about acceptable ways to behave, both off and online. The draft guidance sets out that pupils should know about the different types of bullying, the impact it has, the responsibility of bystanders and how to get help. The consultation closed on 7 November 2018 and we are currently analysing the responses, which will help to finalise the regulations and guidance.

<https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Commons/2019-02-19/223113/>

The Respectful School Communities tool, referred to above, can be read at <https://educateagainsthate.com/resources/respectful-school-communities-self-review-signposting-tool/>

House of Lords Written Answers

Voluntary Schools

Lord Warner (Crossbench) [HL13719] To ask Her Majesty's Government what steps, if any, they will take to prevent new voluntary aided schools with a religious character from immediately converting to academy status to bypass the 50 per cent cap on religiously selective admissions that currently applies to free schools.

Lord Agnew of Oulton: Any voluntary-aided schools, including those funded through the recently announced capital scheme, can apply to convert to academy status in the same way as any other maintained school. Whilst we do not plan to put in place specific restrictions on academy conversion for voluntary-aided schools, they will need to obtain the necessary consents, meet our criteria and undertake a consultation before doing so.

<https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Lords/2019-02-13/HL13719/>

Faith Schools: Admissions

Baroness Bakewell (Labour) [HL13772] To ask Her Majesty's Government what plans, if any, they have to ensure that children within the catchment area of a school with 100 per cent religious intake are not disadvantaged in the choice of schools available to them.

Lord Agnew of Oulton: The government is committed to offering parents and children a diverse education system consisting of a wide variety of schools, and this includes faith schools.

Parents are able to express a preference for at least 3 schools they would like their child to attend and, subject to very limited exceptions, local authorities and school admission authorities must comply with that preference. However, where a school receives more applications than it has places available, places must be allocated in accordance with the school's published oversubscription criteria.

It is for the admission authority of individual schools to decide which oversubscription criteria are most suitable for their school, according to the local circumstances.

Admission authorities of schools with a religious designation can choose to adopt faith-based oversubscription criteria. However, some faith schools choose to only allocate a proportion of their places with reference to faith, and some do not apply any faith criteria at all. Where a faith school has places available, it must admit all applicants, without reference to faith.

Anyone who believes that a school's admission arrangements are unfair or unlawful may make an objection to the Schools Adjudicator.

<https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Lords/2019-02-18/HL13772/>

Police Service of Northern Ireland

Hate Motivated Incidents and Crimes Recorded by the Police in Northern Ireland: Update to 31 December 2018

<https://www.psni.police.uk/globalassets/inside-the-psni/our-statistics/hate-motivation-statistics/2018-19/q3/hate-motivations-tables-dec-18.xls>

TOP

Holocaust

House of Commons Public Bill Committee Debate

Holocaust (Return of Cultural Objects) (Amendment) Bill

col 3 **Theresa Villiers (Conservative):** ... This is a simple two-clause Bill with a simple objective: to retain on the statute book the Holocaust (Return of Cultural Objects) Act 2009. Section 4(7) of that statute is a sunset clause, and means that the legislation will cease to apply after 11 November this year. Clause 1 of the Bill would repeal section 4(7) and thus leave the 2009 Act to continue in operation indefinitely. ...

[The] legislation allows 17 UK national museums and other institutions listed in section 1 to return cultural property lost, seized or stolen during the Nazi era to its rightful owners. ...

col 4 Until the 2009 Act became law, certain national institutions were unable to give effect to a recommendation to return an object, because their governing legislation prevented them from transferring ownership of items in their collection, except in very narrow, specified circumstances. ...

Although much information is available about the items held in our national art collections, research into the provenance of items that changed hands during the Nazi era is ongoing, and potential claimants may still be unaware of the location of objects that used to be in the possession of their families. ... There is widespread acceptance that the horror of the holocaust and the systematic attempt to wipe out an entire race and its culture make it a unique case that justifies a unique response. ...

col 5 One family seeking restoration of property told the Commission for Looted Art: "Whether it's a painting or a book or a porcelain jar, every object represents the life and

lives that were lost. Their restitution restores a personal connection, a link with those lives so utterly transformed or destroyed by the Nazis. Hitler's project was to erase the Jews from history. But by recovering objects and documenting their owners, restitution also returns those people to their families and to the historical record." ...

Lyn Brown (Labour): ... what was lost can never really be recovered, but we have a duty to respect, to remember and to understand that history, and to keep those memories alive. ... Tragically, it is important to say that that work has never been more important than it is today. Each year, we lose more survivors of the holocaust—people of exemplary courage, resilience and moral fortitude who have suffered so much. We lose those who have taught us so much about not only the horrors they were subjected to but the ways in which the disease of antisemitism spreads: through lies and conspiracy, through baseless and manipulative accusations of disloyalty, and through an insidious, creeping and escalating dehumanisation of a people.

In recent years, we have seen a sharp rise in antisemitism across Europe, at home in our communities and, tragically, in our political parties. On the Friday we discussed this excellent Bill, other hon. Members mentioned the Community Security Trust, a group that I admire and thank. It has provided me with so much personal support in the work I have done over the years on community cohesion. The trust has released its report on antisemitic incidents in the UK in 2018, in which it has recorded a massive 1,652 incidents. That is the highest annual figure on record—more than 100 incidents every single month. ...

col 6 Returning stolen cultural objects wherever possible is an important part of this project. Returning artworks and cultural objects is not just about undoing the past but about recognising it and, frankly, about justice. ...

Ultimately, we do not know how many cultural objects stolen and looted from the Jewish community by the Nazis are still in collections here or how many have not been returned within the lifetime of the 2009 Act so far. That is why it is absolutely right that the Act is extended by this important Bill. ...

Paul Masterton (Conservative): ... It is no surprise that claims are still coming forward only sporadically; given that some holocaust survivors have only recently found living family members, it is hardly surprising that it has taken longer and been harder to find objects that were in their families' possession.

There is a worry that if holocaust survivors or their heirs were prevented from having property restored to them simply because they became aware of an object's continued existence and location only after several decades, we would be doing a huge disservice to all those who lost their lives in the holocaust. ... a completely arbitrary time bar entrenches one aspect of the holocaust in perpetuity. Property was stolen, expropriated, forced to be sold or transferred under duress, with the sole intention of destroying any memory of the Jews, their culture and their history. Being able to continue to return property is a very small part of what is a hugely important process for our Jewish communities. ...

col 7 **David Linden (SNP):** ... On a day when, sadly, the reputation of this House has once again been brought into disrepute by offensive comments about the Jewish community, we are reminded again of the horrors of the holocaust and its devastating consequences. It is estimated that 20% of Europe's cultural treasures were stolen by the Nazis, most notably from Jewish families, and that over 100,000 of those works are still lost, presumed to be in both private and public collections.

Even though many of the survivors are now passing away, their children and heirs still want the transparency, accountability and justice that was promised, and the restitution of what was taken and never returned. ...

col 8 **Kevin Brennan (Labour):** ... I was privileged some years ago to travel with a group of MPs, prominent figures and sixth-formers to visit Auschwitz-Birkenau. It was one of

many such visits organised by the Holocaust Educational Trust, led by its inspirational chief executive Karen Pollock and supported by the then Government. I am glad to say that the scheme exists to this day. Anyone who has undertaken that visit could not help but be horrified by the capacity for human depravity exemplified in the industrialisation of death at the Birkenau death camp, or to be moved to renew their pledge to fight antisemitism and oppose the politics of racism and hatred. The Bill is a small practical manifestation of the fulfilment of that duty ...

col 9 ... the holocaust was one of the worst events in human history, with millions of lives extinguished and millions more changed forever. The fact that it happened on our continent, in the heart of western civilisation, is a reminder of why we must be constantly vigilant against antisemitism and all forms of racism and remember that genocide starts with casual prejudice—in the dehumanisation of others who are deemed different by virtue of religion, ethnicity, lifestyle or sexuality. That such horror could be perpetrated, not just by those directly involved, but because of the indifference of others in the general population, should make us all reflect on what Hannah Arendt called the banality of evil and on our own roles in actively preventing it from taking root. ...

... Since 2000, 23 cultural objects taken by the Nazis have been returned to their rightful owners ... We must ensure that the [Spoliation Advisory] panel can continue its vital work. It has carried out its work fairly and delivered justice to the families of those whose precious possessions were stolen. ...

col 10 This is a carefully targeted, specific piece of legislation that works well. It is particularly important for those whose stolen possessions have, sadly, still not been found. ...

When I undertook that visit with the Holocaust Educational Trust over a decade ago, the spectre of antisemitism might have seemed, to some, to be on the wane, but it is clearly on the rise again, with antisemitic hate crimes, as my hon. Friend the Member for West Ham mentioned, hitting a record number in 2018. That should anger us all, and we must do everything in our power to face it down, including by supporting honourable colleagues from all parties who have been the subject of death threats, racist and misogynistic abuse, bullying and antisemitism. ...

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport (Michael Ellis): ... Let me say on behalf of Her Majesty's Government that we strongly support the Bill. As a nation, we must continue to pursue every effort to track down and return cultural objects lost during the Nazi era, when families were wrongfully and criminally dispossessed of these items, often in the most vicious and cruel way. ...

col 11 This is an ongoing task. Potential claimants may still be unaware of the location of objects that used to be in the possession of their families. Given that progress is still being made in carrying out comprehensive research on the provenance of items in relation to the 1933 to 1945 period, it is vital that the Holocaust (Return of Cultural Objects) Act 2009 be renewed ...

To read the full transcript see

[https://hansard.parliament.uk/commons/2019-02-27/debates/545af039-f272-421c-9cc0-47860ca3797f/Holocaust\(ReturnOfCulturalObjects\)\(Amendment\)Bill\(FirstSitting\)](https://hansard.parliament.uk/commons/2019-02-27/debates/545af039-f272-421c-9cc0-47860ca3797f/Holocaust(ReturnOfCulturalObjects)(Amendment)Bill(FirstSitting))

TOP

House of Commons Written Answer

Gaza: Israel

Caroline Lucas (Green) [223979] To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, what steps the Government is taking to ensure the protection of health professionals from violence perpetrated by Israeli security forces during the Great March of Return protests on the Gaza strip; and if he will make a statement.

Alistair Burt: We are concerned by the volume of live ammunition that Israel has used in Gaza and have raised our concerns with the Israeli authorities urging restraint, and stressing the particular importance of protecting those delivering medical services. We continue to support independent and transparent investigations into any such incidents.

<https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Commons/2019-02-20/223979/>

UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights

No Justification for Israel to Shoot Protesters with Live Ammunition

The United Nations Independent Commission of Inquiry on the protests in the Occupied Palestinian Territory today presented its findings. The report focuses on the demonstrations in the Gaza Strip, referred to as the “Great March of Return and the Breaking of the Siege”.

“The Commission has reasonable grounds to believe that during the Great March of Return, Israeli soldiers committed violations of international human rights and humanitarian law. Some of those violations may constitute war crimes or crimes against humanity, and must be immediately investigated by Israel,” said the Chair of the Commission, Santiago Canton of Argentina. ...

More than 6,000 unarmed demonstrators were shot by military snipers, week after week at the protest sites by the separation fence.

The Commission investigated every killing at the designated demonstration sites by the Gaza separation fence on official protest days. The investigation covered the period from the start of the protests until 31 December 2018. 189 Palestinians were killed during the demonstrations inside this period. The Commission found that Israeli Security Forces killed 183 of these protesters with live ammunition. Thirty-five of these fatalities were children, while three were clearly marked paramedics, and two were clearly marked journalists.

According to the Commission’s data analysis, the Israeli Security Forces injured 6,106 Palestinians with live ammunition at the protest sites during this period. Another 3,098 Palestinians were injured by bullet fragmentation, rubber-coated metal bullets or by hits from tear gas canisters. Four Israeli soldiers were injured at the demonstrations. Four Israeli soldiers were injured at the demonstrations. One Israeli soldier was killed on a protest day but outside the protest sites. ...

The Commission found reasonable grounds to believe that Israeli snipers shot at journalists, health workers, children and persons with disabilities, knowing they were clearly recognizable as such.

Unless undertaken lawfully in self-defence, intentionally shooting a civilian not directly participating in hostilities is a war crime. The Commission found reasonable grounds to believe that individual members of the Israeli Security Forces, in the course of their response to the demonstrations, killed and injured civilians who were neither directly participating in hostilities, nor posing an imminent threat. These serious human rights and

humanitarian law violations may constitute war crimes or crimes against humanity. The Commission took note of the Israeli claim that the protests by the separation fence masked “terror activities” by Palestinian armed groups. The Commission found however that the demonstrations were civilian in nature, with clearly stated political aims. Despite some acts of significant violence, the Commission found that the demonstrations did not constitute combat or military campaigns. ...

The Commission found that some members of the Higher National Committee organising the protests, which includes Hamas representatives, encouraged or defended demonstrators’ use of indiscriminate incendiary kites and balloons, causing fear among civilians and significant damage to property in southern Israel. The Commission concluded that Hamas, as the de facto authority in Gaza, failed to prevent these acts. ...

“The Commission finds that these protests were a call for help from a population in despair”, Santiago Canton reminded. “Not only Israel but also the de facto authorities led by Hamas and the Palestinian Authority have responsibilities towards them. The Commission calls on Israel to lift the blockade of Gaza, and on all three duty bearers to comply with their responsibilities and improve the living situation in Gaza.” ...

To read the full press release see

<https://www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=24226&LangID=E>

Report of the independent international commission of inquiry on the protests in the Occupied Palestinian Territory

https://www.ohchr.org/Documents/HRBodies/HRCouncil/CoIOPT/A_HRC_40_74.pdf

TOP

Relevant Legislation ** new or updated today

UK Parliament

**** Holocaust (Return of Cultural Objects) (Amendment) Bill**

<https://services.parliament.uk/Bills/2017-19/holocaustreturnofculturalobjectsamendment.html>

Committee Stage, House of Commons

[https://hansard.parliament.uk/commons/2019-02-27/debates/545af039-f272-421c-9cc0-47860ca3797f/Holocaust\(ReturnOfCulturalObjects\)\(Amendment\)Bill\(FirstSitting\)](https://hansard.parliament.uk/commons/2019-02-27/debates/545af039-f272-421c-9cc0-47860ca3797f/Holocaust(ReturnOfCulturalObjects)(Amendment)Bill(FirstSitting))

International Development Assistance (Palestinian National Authority Schools) Bill

<https://services.parliament.uk/Bills/2017-19/internationaldevelopmentassistancepalestiniannationalauthoritieschools.html>

Marriage Act 1949 (Amendment) Bill

<http://services.parliament.uk/bills/2017-19/marriageact1949amendment.html>

Online Forums Bill

<https://services.parliament.uk/Bills/2017-19/onlineforums.html>

Organ Donation (Deemed Consent) Bill

<http://services.parliament.uk/bills/2017-19/organdonationdeemedconsent.html>

Palestinian Statehood (Recognition) Bill

<https://services.parliament.uk/Bills/2017-19/palestinianstatehoodrecognition.html>

Scottish Parliament

Human Tissue (Authorisation) (Scotland) Bill

<http://www.parliament.scot/parliamentarybusiness/Bills/108681.aspx>

TOP

Consultations

** new or updated today

**** closes today**

Racial harassment in higher education (closing date 28 February 2019)

<https://www.equalityhumanrights.com/en/inquiries-and-investigations/racial-harassment-higher-education-our-inquiry>

Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission – Draft Strategic Plan 2019-22

(closing date 15 March 2019)

<http://www.nihrc.org/news/detail/ni-human-rights-commission-draft-strategic-plan-2019-2022-consultation>

Scottish charity law (closing date 1 April 2019)

<https://tinyurl.com/y9ln88df>

TOP

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