

# Political Affairs Digest

A daily summary of political events affecting the Jewish Community

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### House of Commons Written Answer

#### **Crime: Statistics**

**Yasmin Qureshi (Labour)** [235324] To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what steps he has taken to improve data on religion within the criminal justice system since the publication of the report *Tackling Racial Disparity in the Criminal Justice System: 2018 Update*.

**Rory Stewart:** We are committed on an ongoing basis to improving collection and publication of data to identify and tackle any disparities in the Criminal Justice System. Since publication of *The Lammy Review* (into the treatment of, and outcomes for, Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic individuals in the Criminal Justice System) we have published brand new ethnicity data or analysis in 16 releases. Currently HM Prison and Probation Service do collect data on religious beliefs via prisoner records and for offenders in the community. The *Offender Equality Annual Report*(1) provides religious belief breakdown data on prison population, gender, Incentives and Earned Privileges status, those on Mother & Baby units and adjudications charged and proven. Prison population by religious belief is also published in *Offender Management Statistics* quarterly (2).

HM Courts and Tribunal Service does not currently hold data on religious identity.

(1) [https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/760093/hmpps-offender-equalities-2017-18.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/760093/hmpps-offender-equalities-2017-18.pdf)

(2) <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/offender-management-statistics-quarterly>

<https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Commons/2019-03-21/235324/>

*Tackling Racial Disparity in the Criminal Justice System: 2018 Update*, referred to above, can be read at

[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/747335/tackling-racial-disparity-criminal-justice-system-2018-update-web.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/747335/tackling-racial-disparity-criminal-justice-system-2018-update-web.pdf)

*The Lammy Review*, referred to above, can be read at

[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/643001/lammy-review-final-report.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/643001/lammy-review-final-report.pdf)

## House of Lords Written Answers

*The following two questions both received the same answer*

### **Voluntary Schools: Admissions**

**Baroness Hayter of Kentish Town (Labour)** [HL14651] To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment, if any, they have made of the impact on ethnic minorities of voluntary-aided schools that select 100 per cent of their pupils based on their religion.

**Baroness Hayter of Kentish Town (Labour)** [HL14652] To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment, if any, they have made of public support for voluntary-aided schools that select 100 per cent of their pupils based on their religion.

**Lord Agnew of Oulton:** The department undertook an extensive series of activities as part of the attached Schools that Work for Everyone consultation from September to December 2016 to understand the variety of opinions relating to faith schools. Having considered the views of respondents, and those of a range of other stakeholders, the department decided to establish the voluntary-aided capital scheme alongside retaining the 50% cap in faith admissions in faith designated free schools.

An analysis of how the voluntary-aided schools capital scheme will affect specific protected groups (equalities impact assessment) is attached and can be found here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/voluntary-aided-schools-capital-scheme-equalities-impact-assessment>.

HL14651\_HL14652\_Schools\_that\_work\_for\_everyone

HL14651\_HL14652\_Equalities\_impact\_assessment

<https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Lords/2019-03-19/HL14651/>

and

<https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Lords/2019-03-19/HL14652/>

### **Voluntary Schools: Admissions**

**Baroness Hayter of Kentish Town (Labour)** [HL14653] To ask Her Majesty's Government what guidance, if any, they have issued to local authorities on consulting local people on proposals for new voluntary-aided schools that select 100 per cent of their pupils based on their religion.

**Lord Agnew of Oulton:** Alongside the launch of the capital scheme for new voluntary-aided schools, the department published updated statutory guidance on opening and closing maintained schools for proposers and decision makers. This document is attached.

Proposers are required to consult prior to publishing statutory proposals for a new school and hold a 4 week representation period following the publication of the statutory proposals. Any comments received during the representation period must be taken into account by the decision-maker (normally the local authority) when making their decision.

The statutory guidance sets out the department's expectations on how the consultations are carried out, including the Cabinet Office guidance on consultation principles.

[Opening\\_and\\_closing\\_maintained\\_schools\\_guidance](#)

<https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Lords/2019-03-19/HL14653/>

*The following two questions both received the same answer*

#### **Voluntary Schools: Admissions**

**Baroness Tonge (Non-affiliated)** [HL14682] To ask Her Majesty's Government whether they intend to monitor the impact on social cohesion and integration of 100 per cent selective voluntary-aided schools in areas where such schools are established.

**Baroness Tonge (Non-affiliated)** [HL14683] To ask Her Majesty's Government what plans they have to monitor the impact on social cohesion of new 100 per cent voluntary-aided religiously selective schools.

**Lord Agnew of Oulton:** All state funded schools, whatever their type, have a legal obligation to promote community cohesion and to teach a broad and balanced curriculum. The Integrated Communities Strategy made clear the important role schools play in knitting communities together. They are also required to promote the fundamental British values of democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty and mutual respect and tolerance of those of different faiths and beliefs. Their effectiveness in doing so is inspected by Ofsted.

<https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Lords/2019-03-19/HL14682/>

and

<https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Lords/2019-03-19/HL14683/>

*The following two questions both received the same answer*

#### **Voluntary Schools: Admissions**

**Baroness Blackstone (Labour Independent)** [HL14687] To ask Her Majesty's Government what steps they intend to take to ensure that measures designed to prevent voluntary-aided schools that select 100 per cent of their pupils based on faith from having a detrimental impact on social cohesion, such as school linking programmes and religious diversity on governing bodies, are implemented and maintained once those schools have

#### **Schools: Community Relations**

**Baroness Blackstone (Labour Independent)** [HL14691] To ask Her Majesty's Government what consideration they have given to introducing measures to promote social integration in all schools, in the same manner that has been done for voluntary-aided schools that select 100 per cent of their pupils based on faith.

**Lord Agnew of Oulton:** Schools play a vital role in promoting integration and encouraging greater community cohesion and this includes faith schools.

The Integrated Communities Strategy made clear the important role schools play in knitting communities together. All state funded schools, whatever their type, have a legal obligation to promote community cohesion and to teach a broad and balanced curriculum, and are under a duty to foster good relations between different groups. They are also required to promote the fundamental British values of democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty and mutual respect and tolerance of those of different faiths and beliefs. Their effectiveness in doing so is inspected by Ofsted. Many existing faith schools have a strong record on promoting integration and the department encourages them, as well as all new schools, to engage in programmes such as school linking, that promote social mixing within and across schools. The department is taking forward over 20 measures across its portfolio to support the sector to promote integration, as set out in the Integrated Communities Action Plan. This can be accessed at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/integrated-communities-action-plan>.

This document is also attached.

[Integrated\\_Communities\\_Strategy\\_Govt\\_Action\\_Plan](#)

<https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Lords/2019-03-20/HL14687/>

and

<https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Lords/2019-03-20/HL14691/>

### **Voluntary Schools: Admissions**

**Baroness Blackstone (Labour Independent)** [HL14688] To ask Her Majesty's Government how they will ensure that local objections to proposals for new voluntary-aided faith schools with the legal power to select all of their pupils based on faith are adequately taken into account by local authority decision-makers.

**Lord Agnew of Oulton:** Alongside the launch of the capital scheme for new voluntary-aided schools, the department published the updated and attached statutory guidance for proposers and decision-makers on opening and closing maintained schools.

The guidance explains that proposers are required to consult prior to publishing statutory proposals for a new school and hold a four-week representation period once the statutory proposals have been published. In deciding proposals, decision-makers (usually the local authority) must take any comments received during the representation period into account.

The statutory guidance sets out the department's expectations on how the consultations are carried out, including the Cabinet Office guidance on consultation principles.

[Opening\\_and\\_closing\\_maintained\\_schools\\_guidance](#)

<https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Lords/2019-03-20/HL14688/>

### **Voluntary Schools: Capital Investment**

**Baroness Whitaker (Labour)** [HL14760] To ask Her Majesty's Government whether new religious schools established as a result of their new capital funding scheme and which are legally permitted to select all of their pupils on faith grounds will be encouraged to convert to academy status; and whether there will be a time restriction on when such schools are able to do so.

**Lord Agnew of Oulton:** Any voluntary-aided school, including those funded through the recently announced voluntary-aided capital scheme, can apply to convert to academy status in the same way as any other maintained school. Whilst the department does not plan to put specific restrictions in place on academy conversion for this group of 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/2019-03-21/HL14760/>

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## **Israel**

### **UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs**

**Humanitarian Coordinator for the occupied Palestinian territory, Mr. Jamie McGoldrick, calls for action to prevent further loss of life and injury in the Gaza Strip** ... "In the past year, there has been a staggering loss of life and injury in the Gaza Strip," said Mr. McGoldrick. "Among the most tragic impacts have been the deaths and injury of children."

Between 30 March 2018 and 22 March 2019, 195 Palestinians, including some 40 children,

have been killed by Israeli security forces in the “Great March of Return” demonstrations, mainly during the weekly protests near the perimeter fence. Nearly 29,000 Palestinians have been injured in this context, including over 7,000 wounded by live ammunition. Three clearly-marked health workers providing care to the wounded during demonstrations have been killed and over 630 others injured. The large number of casualties among unarmed Palestinian demonstrators, including a high percentage of demonstrators injured by live ammunition, has raised concerns about the excessive use of force by Israeli security forces. As a result of the demonstrations, one member of the Israeli security forces was killed and six others were injured.

The mass influx of casualties has overwhelmed the already fragile Gaza health system and adversely affected the capacity and quality of healthcare. ... These developments have exacerbated the pre-existing challenges to healthcare in Gaza, such as chronic power outages, gaps in critical services, including mental health and psychosocial support, and shortages of essential medicines and supplies.

The “Great March of Return” demonstrations are occurring against the backdrop of an unprecedented humanitarian crisis facing the Gaza Strip, negatively affecting the livelihoods and access to essential services of two million residents, 70 per cent of whom are Palestine refugees. This crisis has been driven by over 11 years of an Israeli blockade and an unresolved internal Palestinian divide. As a consequence, over half of the population is unemployed and most families struggle to meet their most basic needs.

“The priority now is to save lives and everyone needs to take action accordingly,” Mr. McGoldrick urged. “Israeli security forces must ensure that their responses are in line with their international legal obligations, using non-violent means to the greatest extent possible. Hamas authorities must prevent acts of violence that compromise the peaceful nature of the demonstrations and everyone must ensure that children are not put in harm’s way.”

***To read the full statement see***

<https://www.ochaopt.org/content/humanitarian-coordinator-occupied-palestinian-territory-mr-jamie-mcgoldrick-calls-action>

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## **Relevant Legislation** \*\* new or updated today

### **UK Parliament**

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

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

#### **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>

## **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>

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## **Consultations**

\*\* new or updated today

**\*\* closes tomorrow**

**Scottish charity law** (closing date 1 April 2019)

<https://tinyurl.com/y9ln88df>

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