



Political Affairs Digest

A daily summary of political events affecting the Jewish Community

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House of Commons Written Answers

The following three questions all received the same answer

Religion: Education

Mike Kane (Labour) [282361] To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps his Department is taking to ensure that all schools provide pupils with opportunities to develop specific and age-appropriate knowledge and understanding of religions as part of promoting mutual respect and tolerance of people with different faiths and beliefs; and if he will make a statement.

Mike Kane (Labour) [282362] To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what assessment his Department has made of the effect of the EBacc on the opportunity pupils have to study religious education.

Mike Kane (Labour) [282363] To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps he is taking to ensure that all state-funded schools are providing an adequate provision of religious education; and if he will make a statement.

Reply from Nick Gibb: All state funded schools are required by legislation or by their funding agreements to teach religious education (RE) to all registered pupils aged 5 to 18 years. Teaching RE is also part of schools' activity to meet their legal duty to promote young people's spiritual, moral and cultural development.

Each area is required to have a locally agreed syllabus for RE that maintained schools without a religious designation must follow. This is monitored by each area's Standing Advisory Council for RE (SACRE). As part of school inspections from September 2019, as set out in Ofsted's published School Inspection Handbook, inspectors will take account of the religious education taught as part of assessing the quality of education provided by the school. It is not Ofsted's role to inspect denominational religious education in faith schools as part of its inspections. This provision is inspected separately under section 48 of the Education Act 2005. The requirement for state funded schools to teach RE did not change with the introduction of the English Baccalaureate (EBacc).

Many schools choose to teach RE in key stage 4 through offering Religious Studies GCSEs, which are not included in the EBacc. Information on entries to the RE GCSE can be found at:

www.gov.uk/government/statistics/key-stage-4-and-multi-academy-trust-performance-2018-revised.

<https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Commons/2019-07-25/282361/>

and

<https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Commons/2019-07-25/282362/>

and

<https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Commons/2019-07-25/282363/>

Hate Crime: Sikhs

Preet Kaur Gill (Labour Co-op) [282566] To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, pursuant to the Answer of 23 July 2019 to Question 277247, what funding his Department has allocated to help support hate crime reporting by the Sikh community in each of the last 10 years.

Luke Hall: Pursuant to the Answer of 23 July 2019 to Question 277247, my Department has allocated £250,000 in total over 2016/17 and 2018/19 to the National Police Chiefs' Council (NPCC). £150,000 of this was to support work encouraging reporting from groups who are less likely to report hate crime. These groups included EU citizens, Hindus, Christians, and the ultra-Orthodox Jewish community, as well as Sikhs.

In February, my Department organised a hate crime workshop for representatives from the Sikh community with contributions from across government, the police and criminal justice system. Outcomes included further engagement between the Sikh community and organisations including the NPCC, Crown Prosecution Service, Metropolitan Police and Department for Education.

My Department and the NPCC continue to work with the Sikh community and other groups who are less likely to report to raise awareness of hate crime and encourage reporting. This work forms part of our commitment to tackling faith and race based hate crime made in the refreshed Cross-Government Hate Crime Action Plan.

<https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Commons/2019-07-25/282566/>

The answer referred to above can be read at

<https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Commons/2019-07-15/277247/>

Religious Hatred: Islam

Nick Coyle (Labour) [282391] To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what steps the Government plans to take through the Online Harms Bill to tackle Islamophobia.

Matt Warman: Islamophobia is completely unacceptable and has no place in our society. The Online Harms White Paper sets out our plans for world-leading legislation to make the UK the safest place in the world to be online, by making companies more responsible for their users' safety online. We will establish in law a new duty of care on companies towards their users, overseen by an independent regulator. Companies will be held to account for tackling a comprehensive set of online harms, and hate crime is one of the harms in scope of these proposals. We will continue to work closely with the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, which has the cross-government lead on countering Islamophobia, as this policy is developed.

It is also important that the criminal law is fit for purpose to deal with online harms.

The Law Commission has recently started the second phase of its review of abusive and offensive online communications, which will review existing communications offences and make specific recommendations about options for legal reform in a final report in 2021. In parallel, the Law Commission is looking into the adequacy of protection offered by hate crime legislation, and this strand of work is expected to report in 2020.

<https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Commons/2019-07-25/282391/>

The White Paper referred to above can be read at

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/793360/Online_Harms_White_Paper.pdf

Information about the Law Commission reviews referred to above can be read at

<https://www.lawcom.gov.uk/law-commission-to-undertake-phase-2-of-the-abusive-and-offensive-online-communications-project/>

and

<https://www.lawcom.gov.uk/law-commission-review-into-hate-crime-announced/>

Scottish Government

Protecting Scotland's Future: Programme for Government 2019-20

... The First Minister said: "This Programme for Government will put health, prosperity and wellbeing at its heart, and will reinforce Scotland's place as a dynamic, open, innovative economy.

"In the last 12 months we have made important progress in creating a better and fairer country and this year's Programme for Government builds on that record. ...

Bills for introduction in 2019-20:

- Animal Health and Welfare (Amendment) Bill
- Budget Bill
- Circular Economy Bill
- Civil Partnership Bill
- Continuity Bill
- Defamation and Malicious Publication Bill
- UEFA European Championship Bill
- Forensic Medical Services (Victims of Sexual Offences) Bill
- Good Food Nation Bill
- Hate Crime Bill
- Heat Networks Bill
- Redress (Survivors of In Care Abuse) Bill
- Rural Support Bill
- Transient Visitor Levy Bill

To read the full press release see

<https://www.gov.scot/news/protecting-scotlands-future/>

Protecting Scotland's Future: the Government's Programme for Scotland 2019-2020

<https://www.gov.scot/binaries/content/documents/govscot/publications/publication/2019/09/protecting-scotlands-future-governments-programme-scotland-2019-20/documents/governments-programme-scotland-2019-20/governments-programme-scotland-2019-20/govscot%3Adocument/governments-programme-scotland-2019-20.pdf>

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House of Commons Written Answers

Abd el-Rahman Shatawi

Rosena Allin-Khan (Labour) [281029] To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, what representations he has made to his Israeli counterpart on the recent shooting of the unarmed child, Abd el-Rahman Shatawi, in Kafr Qaddum; and what information he has received on that shooting.

Andrew Murrison: Whilst we have not raised this specific case with the Israeli authorities, the Government is very concerned at the high numbers of Palestinian children killed and injured by Israel Defense Forces in the West Bank and Gaza. Officials from our Embassy in Tel Aviv have raised the issue of excessive use of force, including use of live ammunition, causing deaths and injuries to Palestinians in the West Bank with both the Office of the Coordinator of Government Activities in the Territories and the Israeli Ministry of Defense.

<https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Commons/2019-07-23/281029/>

Jerusalem: Demolition

Wes Streeting (Labour) [281067] To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, whether he has made representations to his Israeli counterpart on the demolition of Palestinian buildings in the Sur Baher neighbourhood in East Jerusalem; and if he will make a statement.

Andrew Murrison: On 23 July, the UK alongside France, Germany and Spain, issued a statement condemning the demolition by Israel of Palestinian buildings in the district of Wadi al Hummus. On the same day, our Permanent Representative to the United Nations (UN) reiterated our concern at the UN Security Council Open Debate on the Middle East. In this specific case, the demolitions were particularly egregious as a number of the buildings were located in Areas A and B, under the jurisdiction of the Palestinian Authority according to the Oslo Agreements. They set a dangerous precedent that directly jeopardises the two-state solution, which is why I raised our deep concern to the Israeli Ambassador to the UK on 24 July.

<https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Commons/2019-07-23/281067/>

The statement referred to above can be read at

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/wadi-al-hummus-france-germany-spain-and-uk-joint-statement>

Israel: Palestinians

David Drew (Labour Co-op) [282181] To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, what representations he has made to his Israeli counterpart on the demolition of Palestinian homes; and if he will bring the demolitions to the attention of (a) the Security Council and (b) the UN.

Andrew Murrison: I raised our deep concerns over the continued demolitions by Israel of Palestinian homes to the Israeli Ambassador to the UK on 24 July. The day before, our Permanent Representative to the United Nations (UN) had raised the demolitions in the district of Wadi al Hummus at the UN Security Council Open Debate on the Middle East, reiterating our concerns.

<https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Commons/2019-07-25/282181/>

Palestine

Motion debated, That the Parliament notes calls for action towards an independent Palestinian state; recognises Britain's historical responsibilities in Palestine and Israel and notes the view that British engagement is needed for a better future; acknowledges Scotland's role in influencing Britain to act for true equality, promoting a policy based on those universal values that Britain helped enshrine in international law; commends the work of the Balfour Project in advancing the education of the British public in the history of Britain's involvement in the Middle East, and notes calls, including from people in the South Scotland region, for six measures to be taken, which are an end to the closure of Gaza, freedom of worship for all believers, respect for the rule of law, accountability, recognition of the State of Palestine alongside Israel and a UK Government commitment to defend the fundamental rights of both peoples.

17.02 Claudia Beamish (Labour): ... To fully grasp the degree to which Britain was involved in the making—or, better said, the unmaking—of the Palestinian state, we must first remember the historical conditions that made it happen. The roots of the conflict date back to the late 19th century, when Palestine was still part of the Ottoman empire, and Jewish nationalism—political Zionism—developed in Europe, largely in response to the pogroms in the Russian empire. We should never forget either the centuries-long history of virulent antisemitism throughout Christian Europe. ...

It is worth remembering that, at that time, there were 600,000 Arabs and only 55,000 Jews living [in Palestine], most of whom were indigenous and religious, non-Zionist and Arabic speaking. In total, the Jewish community in Palestine owned less than 3 per cent of the land. ...

By 1939, because of Hitler's persecution of the Jews, the Jewish population in Palestine had risen sharply to about 30 per cent, but they still owned only some 6 per cent of the land. ...

During the second world war, Jewish militias turned on the British, their former sponsors. Ultimately, in 1947, Britain, which was exhausted militarily and financially, surrendered to Zionist terror and handed the future of Palestine over to the United Nations. We abandoned Palestine, shabbily and shamefully. Zionist militias defeated the Arab armies, expelled most of the Palestinian population—Muslim and Christian—into the surrounding countries and established the state of Israel on 78 per cent of the Palestinian land area. ...

Only by seeking and achieving equality of rights, peaceful coexistence between the citizens of Israel and Palestine and the right of self-determination equally exercised can there be lasting security. However, lasting security for one people does not come from suppressing the rights of the other. ...

In two weeks, the people of Israel will vote in a general election. Prime Minister Netanyahu seeks the votes of Israeli settlers by promising to annex the illegal settlements. Such an illegal step poses an existential threat to the policy of two states and equal rights that has been advocated by the British Government and the European Union. Recognition of Palestine and of Palestinian rights is the right way to pre-empt or even prevent that very real threat.

We should make no mistake: annexation is actually a threat to the wellbeing of both peoples. If there are not to be two states, there will effectively be one state and one power. Tragically, that state will be an apartheid state. ...

Recognition of Palestine alongside Israel does not delegitimise Israel. It takes nothing away from Israel that belongs to Israel; rather, it serves to confirm Israel's borders and her security. It also serves to establish Palestine's borders and her security, and it affirms the equal rights of two peoples to statehood, each in their own country. ...

17.10 Sandra White (SNP): ... We know that the Balfour declaration promised to establish

in Palestine a national home for the Jewish people, essentially vowing to give away a country that was not theirs—or ours—to give away. ...

We, in the Parliament and in Scotland, cannot continue to bury our heads in the sand. It is time for us and the rest of the UK to join other UN member states in recognising a state of Palestine. It is time that the UK Government recognised the state of Palestine. If we, in this Parliament, recognise the state of Palestine, it will send a huge message not just to the UN but throughout the world. ...

17.14 Bill Bowman (Conservative): ... In 2005, Israel unilaterally disengaged from the Gaza strip and dismantled all its settlements there. That could have been a victory for the Palestinians; instead, in the following year, Hamas won control over the Gaza strip and deposed the Palestinian Authority in a coup. To this day, it insists on using terror against Israel to gain control over its entire territory ...

Religious freedom and religious holidays are enshrined by constitutional legislation in Israel. Freedom of access and worship is ensured at all sites ... Those facts are perhaps unsurprising, because Israel is consistently ranked as the freest country in the middle east. The facts stand in stark contrast to what happens in the West Bank and Gaza; when it comes to holy places, Jews have little to no access to religious sites in the West Bank....

Israel has accepted UN Security Council resolution 242 and made peace with both Egypt and Jordan based on it. In both instances, Israel returned land for peace and uprooted Israeli settlements. Israel has offered blueprints for a two-state solution between itself and the Palestinians but they were rejected by the Palestinians. ...

The High Court of Justice of Israel is renowned worldwide for its judicial independence, and it has ruled many times against Israeli Government decisions. In the meantime, Hamas violates international humanitarian law by targeting civilians with its missiles, using its own civilians, including children, as human shields and hiding its arsenals in heavily populated areas, including in schools. ...

People who care about the fundamental rights of both peoples too often ignore the human rights violations of Palestinians by Palestinians. ... The Palestinian people are therefore prevented from choosing their representatives by their own leadership. ...

Recognition of a Palestinian state without its having arisen from direct negotiations between the two parties would harm the peace process and drive the Palestinians away from the negotiating table. It would reward the Palestinians for their rejectionism and eliminate any incentives for them to compromise on key issues that are critical in the negotiations. ...

17.19 Pauline McNeill (Labour): ... The world treats the issue as a multifaceted, complex story and demonises the struggle, as Bill Bowman has just done. People think that only Israel could possibly understand its complex story. Israel got 78 per cent of the former Palestine; the Palestinians were given 22 per cent, which has been occupied since 1967. The conflict is not about religion; it is about the Palestinian people's struggle for national identity. ...

There is no hope for Palestinians or for their future. Twenty years of peace talks have turned out to be a sham. ...

The state that we talk about is a state of occupation. Day and daily, children are shot in the street for throwing stones. ...

Children are interrogated and taken from their parents during the night. The parents are then presented with documentation in Hebrew that they cannot understand. Adolescents are locked in Israeli jails, but we do not know where they are and their families have not heard from them for 10 or 15 years. Is that the Israel that people want to defend? ...

17.24 John Finnie (Green): ... This is not a contest of equals, if that is how it is viewed. There is a heavily armed apartheid regime. ...

The paramedics who are targeted and shot in protests do not shoot at anyone, and the photographic journalists who cover demonstrations — that is what they are, and people

have a right to free assembly and to express opinions—pose a threat to no one. ...

17.29 Alex Cole-Hamilton (Liberal Democrat): ... As Lib Dems, we strongly believe that those two peoples, Israelis and Palestinians, are obliged to share the region forever. ... We favour neither group over the other in that reality, and we look forward to recognising a wholly autonomous and sovereign Palestinian state, when that will lead to a workable and sustainable two-state solution. We condemn the disproportionate use of force on both sides, whether that is rocket attacks by Palestinians or the Israelis' continuing illegal policy of settlement expansion. The morass of Israel/Palestine, and all the suffering that goes with it, is the dark inheritance of our history, and we need to play a part in its future. ...

17.33 Richard Lyle (SNP): ... Two states, two Governments: Jews and Palestinians working together for peace in the region—peace that is long overdue. As deputy convener of the cross-party group on building bridges with Israel, I can say only that the CPG would be very happy to hold a joint meeting in Parliament with the CPG on Palestine to discuss solutions. ...

John Finnie: ... I wonder whether Mr Lyle would accept that some people who attend the cross-party group on Palestine would feel extremely uncomfortable—perhaps even under threat by attending such a meeting ...

Richard Lyle: I am sure that I would not feel threatened in attending any cross-party group. We are saying that we need to find a solution ... we must at least be able to talk to each other. ...

Recognising a Palestinian state without that arising from direct negotiations between the two parties will harm the peace process and drive the Palestinians away from the negotiating table.

Anyone who claims to support a two-state solution must support a return to direct negotiations. That is the only way to guarantee a peaceful, secure and prosperous future. ...

So many plans have been rejected ...

Pauline McNeill: Rubbish!

Richard Lyle: It is not rubbish. It is true. ...

Claudia Beamish: You cannot say—

Richard Lyle: You do not want to listen. That is the problem. ...

I want a two-state solution. I will work with anyone, anywhere to afford peace to Palestinians and Jews in a region that deserves peace. ...

17.39 The Cabinet Secretary for Culture, Tourism and External Affairs (Fiona Hyslop): ... On the closure of Gaza, the Scottish Government encourages the Israeli Government and the Palestinian Authority to prioritise a sustainable solution for Gaza that includes practical steps to ensure the reconstruction and economic recovery of Gaza. The current situation, in which Palestinians are trapped in Gaza and in a cycle of violence, should not be allowed to continue. ...

A tolerant world should not allow a situation like that to develop. The end of the blockade of Gaza needs to go hand in hand with cessation of violence. That includes violence by Hamas in Gaza, which needs to commit to an end to attacks. ...

On freedom of worship, the right to worship fully is a key human right, and peace in the middle east is dependent on communities being free to pursue their religious beliefs. Without religious tolerance, there can be no long-term peace. I include in that the practice of Christianity in Israel, which is a key issue that my constituents have raised with me. Peace in the region is possible only if everyone is treated equally, no matter their beliefs, their ethnicity or their gender. ...

... the Scottish Government, in line with other Governments in Europe, supports a two-state solution, based on the 1967 borders. More than 130 countries around the world have already formally recognised the state of Palestine. On 15 May 2018, I wrote to the UK

Government to encourage it to do so at the UN, but as we know, it has not yet done so. Officially recognising the state of Palestine would send a clear signal that the right of the people of Palestine to self-determination is recognised.

Official recognition would make clear the expectations on a responsible independent Palestinian nation state. Palestine should aspire to recognised standards in terms of respect for human rights, the integrity of its neighbours and the sanctity of the lives of their people. The people of Palestine should not allow their territories to be used by those who seek the destruction of Israel. The people of Israel deserve to live free from the scourges of terrorism and antisemitic incitement that gravely undermine the prospects for a two-state solution.

We believe that peace depends on there being two secure, stable and prosperous states—Israel and Palestine—living side by side. Accepting Palestine as a state in its own right alongside Israel should be the starting point of negotiations. ...

We have consistently condemned obstacles to progress in the peace process, such as the indiscriminate rocket attacks on Israel and the continued expansion of illegal settlements in the occupied territories. We have repeatedly called on the UK Government to use its influence to help to revitalise the peace process, to find a way to break through the political deadlock and to bring an end to the conflict.

I commend the work of the Balfour Project to educate us all about the underlying causes of the Israel-Palestine conflict.

The Scottish Government strongly encourages the Israeli Government and the Palestinian Authority to work with the international community on securing long-term peace and ending the cycle of conflict that continues to affect Palestinians and Israelis. The Scottish Government supports the EU position of a two-state solution, based on the 1967 borders, and firmly encourages both Palestine and Israel to reach under international law a sustainable negotiated settlement that has, as its foundation, mutual recognition and the determination to co-exist peacefully. ...

To read the full transcript see

<http://www.parliament.scot/parliamentarybusiness/report.aspx?r=12225&i=110453#ScotParIOR>

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Relevant Legislation ** new or updated today

UK Parliament

Divorce, Dissolution and Separation Bill

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

Domestic Abuse Bill

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

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Consultations

** new or updated today

Islamophobia in Scotland (closing date 30 September 2019)

<https://forms.ncl.ac.uk/view.php?id=13027>

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