

Political Affairs Digest

A daily summary of political events affecting the Jewish Community

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House of Commons Oral Answer

Prime Minister's Questions

Q14. **Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi (Labour):** If I decide to wear a turban, or you, Mr Speaker, decide to wear a cross, or he decides to wear a kippah or skull cap, or she decides to wear a hijab or a burqa, does that mean that it is open season for right hon. Members of this House to make derogatory and divisive remarks about our appearance? For those of us who, from a young age, have had to endure and face up to being called names such as towelhead or Taliban, or to people saying we come from bongo, bongo land, we can appreciate full well the hurt and pain felt by already vulnerable Muslim women when they are described as looking like bank robbers and letterboxes. So rather than hide behind sham and whitewash investigations, when will the Prime Minister finally apologise for his derogatory and racist remarks? *[Applause.]* Those racist remarks have led to a spike in hate crime. Given the increasing prevalence of such incidents within his party, when will the Prime Minister finally order an inquiry into Islamophobia within the Conservative party, which was something that he and his Chancellor promised on national television? *[Applause.]* [912223] ...

The Prime Minister: If the hon. Gentleman took the trouble to read the article in question, he would see that it was a strong liberal defence of—as he began his question by saying—everybody's right to wear whatever they want in this country. I speak as somebody who is proud not only to have Muslim ancestors, but to be related to Sikhs like him. I am also proud to say that, under this Government, we have the most diverse Cabinet in the history of this country. We truly reflect modern Britain. We have yet to hear from anywhere in the Labour party any hint of apology for the virus of antisemitism that is now rampant in its ranks. I would like to hear that from the hon. Gentleman.

<https://hansard.parliament.uk/commons/2019-09-04/debates/A7A1E43B-AD26-4F52-BB21-E7715164C5B4/Engagements#contribution-9BAB8BCF-78C5-481A-9A9A-739940A9F837>

The article referred to above can be read at

<https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2018/08/05/denmark-has-got-wrong-yes-burka-oppressive-ridiculous-still/>

Scottish Parliament Oral Answers

First Minister's Questions: Sectarian Behaviour

Annie Wells (Conservative): To ask the First Minister what action the Scottish Government will take in response to the sectarian disorder in Glasgow at the weekend. (S5F-03500)

The First Minister (Nicola Sturgeon): ... The Government has been clear and will continue to be clear that the right to peaceful and lawful assembly is an important part of our democracy, but we are equally clear that violent and sectarian disruption is not part of our democracy and should never be tolerated. ...

As we have already stated, we remain open to giving full consideration to any proposals to tackle sectarianism in addition to the work that we are already undertaking, and to working with all partners to eradicate the scourge of sectarianism from our society once and for all.

Annie Wells: I understand that Police Scotland has advised that this weekend's marches should go ahead because, after last week's disgrace, it thinks that people will turn up anyway. We have to understand how we got here.

How on earth did an Scottish National Party Glasgow City Council leader think it was a good idea to let a republican march go through Govan on an old firm weekend? Anyone in Glasgow could have told her that that was a bad idea.

Everyone here condemns the unacceptable behaviour that shamed our city last week. Does the First Minister think that Susan Aitken was right to let that march go ahead?

The First Minister: I think that a really bad idea—probably the worst idea of all in this context—is to try to turn such a serious issue into a party-political bun fight ...

First and foremost, the people who are responsible for the outrageous and unacceptable scenes on the streets of Govan last Friday night are the people who behaved in an unacceptable, violent and sectarian way.

Glasgow City Council operates within the law on the basis of police and other advice. It takes the decisions that it is advised are the right ones to take. We are having discussions with Glasgow City Council to develop an understanding of whether the council has the powers that it needs within the existing law or whether changes to the law might be required. We will continue to take forward those discussions in a responsible way.

We will continue to invest heavily in projects and initiatives to tackle sectarianism. In this chamber, we opposed the repeal of the legislation that was trying to deal with the issue at football matches. I regret the fact that Opposition parties repealed that legislation, but Parliament took its decision.

Above all, we will listen and talk to anybody in considering how we deal effectively with a societal problem that has no place in modern Scotland. It is a scourge in our society. ...

John Mason (SNP): The First Minister might know that, of the two marches that are planned for this Saturday, one is starting in my constituency and one is finishing there. Can she give any reassurance to my constituents that they will be able to go about their normal lives on Saturday without being disrupted?

The First Minister: Citizens, whether they are in John Mason's constituency, my constituency or any other constituency, have a right to go about their normal business. I have a duty—we all have a duty—to stand up for the rights of law-abiding citizens.

The two marches that will take place in Glasgow this weekend have been given approval. I strongly support Police Scotland to take the necessary action to facilitate the marches. I appeal to all those who will be involved to conduct themselves in an orderly manner and to demonstrate that the right to march and demonstrate can be exercised without being abused.

A strong framework of legislation is already in place but, as I said to Annie Wells, we will look carefully at where improvements can be made. Dr Michael Rosie, an independent adviser, has been asked to review the implementation of the 2016 recommendations on marches, parades and static demonstrations, and he will put forward proposals on what more might be needed. Of course, legislation has an important part to play, but it is not the only way to tackle such problems. The discussions that the justice secretary will have with Glasgow City Council and Police Scotland will not be limited to looking only at legislative measures.

James Kelly (Labour): The scenes that we witnessed in Govan on Friday night were unacceptable and shocking. Bigotry and intolerance have no place in a modern progressive society. In reacting to those events, we all have a responsibility to be careful about our language and tone.

In response to Lord McConnell's comments that more can be done to tackle sectarianism, what is being done to work with parties across Parliament and with groups across Scotland to tackle bigotry and intolerance?

The First Minister: In one respect, Lord McConnell is right: when we see the scenes that we saw on Friday night, it is self-evident that more needs to be done. First and foremost, there is a responsibility on Government, through its work with councils, but I am glad to hear James Kelly agree that there is a responsibility on all of us. Cross-party and non-political leadership is needed on the issue.

We have invested heavily by increasing the funding that goes to anti-sectarian education projects in schools, prisons, workplaces and communities, and we will continue to do that. We will also continue to work with those who are doing very good work in this area.

James Kelly said that he wants to work with us. I welcome that. I recall that when the Offensive Behaviour at Football and Threatening Communications (Scotland) Act 2012 was being repealed, he said that he would develop an anti-sectarianism strategy that was fit for 2018. I am not aware of him having brought forward such a strategy yet, but I make an open offer to him: if he does so, we will consider that, in addition to the work that we are already doing and the further work that we are considering doing. I believe that the issue is one that we should come together to tackle. If James Kelly wants to bring forward his proposals, I am happy to give him an assurance that we will consider them fully.

To read the question and answer session in full see

<http://www.parliament.scot/parliamentarybusiness/report.aspx?r=12229&i=110504#ScotParlOR>

Crown Prosecution Service

Neo-Nazi jailed of stirring up racial hatred

An unemployed white supremacist who owned shirts, jumpers and boxer shorts emblazoned with Nazi swastikas and emblems has been sentenced to two years and six months in prison today (5 September) for stirring up racial hatred.

Nathan Worrell's home address was full of Nazi propaganda and paraphernalia including, flags, stickers, and fridge magnets. ...

Worrell was arrested in November 2017 but denied having done anything wrong.

The prosecution said the material was threatening, abusive or insulting and Worrell's intention was to stir up racial hatred around Grimsby by distributing or displaying the stickers. The CPS said that he had also stirred up racial hatred by publishing, distributing and displaying the racist stickers on lamp posts, signs and notice boards. ...

Jenny Hopkins from the CPS said: "Nathan Worrell is a committed neo-Nazi with a hatred of people who are not white.

“From the time he gets up to the time he goes to bed, he surrounds himself with images of Hitler, the SS and the Third Reich.

“The CPS will prosecute right-wing extremists who stir up racial hatred in communities and help keep the public safe.” ...

To read the full press release see

<https://www.cps.gov.uk/cps/news/neo-nazi-jailed-stirring-racial-hatred>

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Israel

Downing Street

PM meeting with Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu of Israel

A Downing Street spokesperson said: The Prime Minister met Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu in Downing Street today.

The two leaders confirmed their commitment to a strong UK-Israel relationship, including through trade, cooperation on intelligence and security and cultural links between the two countries.

Both Prime Ministers agreed on the need to prevent Iran getting a nuclear weapon and stop wider destabilising Iranian behaviour. The Prime Minister stressed the need for dialogue and a diplomatic solution.

The Prime Minister and Prime Minister Netanyahu also discussed the Middle East Peace Process. The Prime Minister said that he looks forward to seeing the US Administration’s detailed proposals for a viable Israel-Palestinian peace agreement that addresses the legitimate concerns of both parties.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/pm-meeting-with-prime-minister-benjamin-netanyahu-of-israel-5-september-2019>

United Nations

There Is Urgent Need to Safeguard Global Consensus around Question of Palestine, Permanent Observer Stresses, as Palestinian Rights Committee Meets

There is urgent need to safeguard the global consensus on the Palestinian question, the Permanent Observer for the State of Palestine said today, expressing hope that forthcoming elections in both Israel and the United States will offer a path towards shifting the political dynamics around the two-State formula.

Addressing the Palestinian Rights Committee, Permanent Observer Riad Mansour said the current situation is characterized by intensified illegal settlement activities on the part of Israel’s extreme-right Government, in defiance of Security Council resolution 2334 (2016). Besides home demolitions around occupied East Jerusalem, including Area A, he added, such actions prompted his office to send letters encouraging the Security Council to condemn those actions and to shoulder its responsibility. Meanwhile, settler groups escalated their attempts to storm holy sites, disregarding Palestinian worshipers, whether Muslims or Christians, while military operations against the Gaza Strip compounded the situation in that besieged enclave. ...

... Ana Silvia Rodríguez Abascal (Cuba), Committee Vice-President, provided updates on recent activities, recalling that the United Nations Forum on the Question of Palestine was held on 3 April under the theme “The threat of de-facto annexation — What next for Palestine?”. Participants recommended international pressure to push Israel into compliance with Security Council resolutions and to pursue legislative measures to

prevent commercial activities within the settlements. ...

Ms. Rodríguez (Cuba) urged the international community to help foster the resumption of talks on a two-State solution based on the 1967 borders. “The Committee believes there is a need to rethink the Palestinian-Israeli conflict,” she asserted, expressing support for a broad multilateral framework and an integral solution involving regional organizations playing an active role in promoting the resumption of talks.

Advocating an end to the Gaza blockade, she also described unilateral decisions to recognize Jerusalem as Israel’s capital as “null and void” and in violation of Council resolution 476 (1980). She stressed the need to preserve the multireligious nature of Jerusalem, underscoring the Committee’s condemnation of Israel’s indiscriminate use of force against Palestinian protestors. ...

To read the full press release see

<https://www.un.org/press/en/2019/gapal1425.doc.htm>

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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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