



Political Affairs Digest

A daily summary of political events affecting the Jewish Community

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Prime Minister's Questions

The Prime Minister: ... Before the right hon. Gentleman stands up and parades himself as the champion of climate change, the champion of the people or the defender of equality and fairness, he needs to apologise for his failure to deal with racism in the Labour party.

Just today, 60 distinguished members of the Labour party have written in the newspapers: "The Labour party welcomes everyone*...(*except, it seems, Jews)...This is your legacy Mr Corbyn...You still haven't opened your eyes...You still haven't told the whole truth...You still haven't accepted your responsibility...You have failed...the test of leadership."

Apologise now. ...

Jeremy Corbyn (Labour): This party was the first to introduce anti-racist legislation into law in Britain. This party totally opposes racism in any form whatsoever. Antisemitism has no place in our society, no place in any of our parties and no place in any of our dialogues. Neither does any other form of racism.

Some 60% of Tory party members think Islam is a threat to western civilisation. The Prime Minister has said that she will act on Islamophobia within her own party. I hope she does. I look forward to seeing that being dealt with, as we will deal with any racism that occurs within our own party as well. ...

The Prime Minister: ... The right hon. Gentleman, I note, did not apologise in response to my first questions. We deal with Islamophobia in the Conservative party. Any allegations of Islamophobia are dealt with, unlike his way in the Labour party where he is failing to deal with antisemitism. He can stand up and say all he likes about the Labour party introducing anti-racism legislation. Just last week, Trevor Phillips, the former chairman of the Equality and Human Rights Commission, said the following: "Labour today presents like a textbook case of institutional racism."

Jeremy Corbyn: This party opposes racism in any form whatsoever in our society. And coming from a Prime Minister who encouraged the hostile environment, sent "go home"

vans around London, and deported British citizens, which she has now had to compensate them for, I think that she might look to her own party and her own Government's record as well.

The Prime Minister: Still no apology, I note, from the right hon. Gentleman. ...

<https://hansard.parliament.uk/commons/2019-07-17/debates/56E38D7E-BA9C-4922-88F0-8878C3A0566E/Engagements#contribution-10DD16FD-CD8E-4439-9819-28364A75663B>

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Israel

House of Commons Written Answer

Palestinians: Overseas Aid

John Howell (Conservative) [912000] What steps he is taking to ensure that UK aid to the Occupied Palestinian Territories facilitates peacebuilding with Israel.

Andrew Murrison: DFID's people-to-people programme builds support for peace by bringing together Palestinians and Israelis to promote tolerance and work on shared problems.

So far, over 1,200 young Israelis and Palestinians have taken part in holy site tours aimed at increasing understanding of religious tolerance. Ultimately the only way to achieve peace is through a negotiated two-state solution.

<https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Commons/2019-07-17/912000/>

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Foreign Affairs

House of Lords Oral Answers

Interfaith Dialogue

Lord Lea of Crondall (Labour): To ask Her Majesty's Government what plans they have to work with European leaders and the leaders of the Christian, Jewish and Muslim faiths to develop a comprehensive plan for inter-faith dialogue for areas of religious conflict which includes methods for mediation in order to facilitate improved ways of working between communities.

Baroness Goldie: My Lords, we welcome the United Nations *Plan of Action for Religious Leaders and Actors to Prevent Incitement to Violence that Could Lead to Atrocity Crimes*. However, we have concerns over how the plan will be implemented. In the UK, following the publication of the final report of the independent review of FCO support for persecuted Christians, we are working across government to see what else we can do to support members of faith and belief communities around the world.

Lord Lea of Crondall: My Lords, I thank the Minister for that constructive response. The tensions between adherents of different faiths, and subsets within them, are of course an inescapable part of the story of humanity, including between Judaism, Christianity and Islamism. That trio have common roots in the area that centres on Jerusalem, but they are now present in all the continents alongside other faiths. I draw attention to the crucial innovation in Africa of a hotline between the bishop and the imam in the proselytising

borderland of Kaduna in northern Nigeria, which has already saved thousands of lives. Do Her Majesty's Government agree that, in line with the global UN principles that the Minister mentioned, we Europeans have a vested interest in providing wherewithal? I do not mean just in rapid response; I mean helping to engender permanent co-operative arrangements on the ground in critical areas based, inter alia, on the competences from European agencies such as providing help to train mediators and experts in logistics and communications.

Baroness Goldie: I thank the noble Lord for the practical and interesting example he has shared with the House. I am pleased that the Government are committed to preventive diplomacy such as mediation, and are working closely with the most reverend Primate the Archbishop of Canterbury to enhance the UK's work in this area. The UK believes that mediation requires a concerted approach from a range of actors. These include regional and sub-regional organisations, civil society, religious leaders and the meaningful participation of women. The Government are happy to facilitate a telephone conversation between the most reverend Primate and the leader of Nigeria's Muslims, should he require such assistance.

Lord Leigh of Hurley (Conservative): My Lords, I am the president of the Institute for Jewish Policy Research. We have conducted a survey about anti-Semitism among young Jewish people in every EU state. Sadly, we have discovered that nearly half of all those young people have suffered from some form of anti-Semitism activity over the past 12 months. The UK has the second-largest Jewish population in the EU and it is clear that the leadership required to combat anti-Semitism has to start at the top. I therefore salute those members of the Labour Party in this House who signed the letter published in this morning's *Guardian* to try to deal with anti-Semitism in the party. The Government of the United States have appointed a special envoy to deal with global anti-Semitism, Mr Elan Carr. Will the United Kingdom Government consider doing the same?

Baroness Goldie: The noble Lord depicts a troubling scenario in the result of the survey to which he referred. I assure him that the Government are committed to combating anti-Semitism both internationally and domestically. At an event at the United Nations General Assembly last September, my noble friend Lord Ahmad reaffirmed the UK's commitment to education and dialogue to combat the scourge of anti-Semitism in all its forms. Where we are aware of or witness it, it behoves us all to stand up, call it out and condemn it without equivocation.

Lord Palmer of Childs Hill (Liberal Democrat): My Lords, I widen the question: have the Government developed a social cohesion framework or action plan for post Brexit, or post a decision to remain, that ensures that individuals and groups who seek to divide and to promote extremism cannot play to fears within some communities? For example, have the Government any views on Canada's intention to introduce a new digital charter to combat hate speech and misinformation?

Baroness Goldie: The Government have strict laws to deal with such matters, as the noble Lord will be aware. As he will also be aware, my noble friend Lord Ahmad is special envoy on freedom of religion or belief, and I think the Chamber will want to acknowledge his tremendous work. Indeed, the reason he is not here this afternoon is that he is in Washington representing the UK at the US Ministerial to Advance Religious Freedom. That is one example of what the United Kingdom is doing both domestically and globally to address the issues that rightly concern the noble Lord.

The Lord Bishop of Newcastle: My Lords, in April my colleague the most reverend Primate the Archbishop of Canterbury and His Holiness Pope Francis together hosted a spiritual retreat at the Vatican for civil and religious leaders of war-torn South Sudan. This was a clear demonstration of the kind of ecumenical joint initiative between religious leaders that can promote reflection and reconciliation in troubled parts of the world. Does the Minister agree that such initiatives benefit all communities, not only those of faith, and

that the global Anglican Communion would be a valuable partner in any scheme such as that proposed by the noble Lord, Lord Lea?

Baroness Goldie: I thank the right reverend Prelate and pay tribute to the work to which she referred. It is to be commended and is an interesting example of what can be done with both determination and imagination. She is correct that such initiatives can produce broader benefits beyond the immediate arenas of the parties involved.

Lord Chartres (Crossbench): Does the Minister agree that British universities, with their diverse student and staff bodies, are particularly hopeful and unexploited places in which to do precisely what the noble Lord proposes? Is she aware of the work done, for example, by the London School of Economics interfaith centre, especially its oversubscribed faith and leadership programme? Could this be commended more generally?

Baroness Goldie: I thank the noble and right reverend Lord for raising an extremely important point. The FCO has extended training on the influence of faith on foreign policy, commissioning the LSE Faith Centre to deliver a training course on religious literacy and introducing a series of regular seminars. We certainly invite other government departments, including DfID, to join this training.

Lord Turnberg (Non-affiliated): My Lords, I admit to knowing a bit about anti-Semitism and not a little about Islamophobia. Both those pernicious doctrines are on the march across Europe and now, unfortunately, in our tolerant Britain. Will the Minister encourage our religious leaders—the rabbis, imams and bishops—to produce several joint statements in which they show their abhorrence for these doctrines to their followers?

Baroness Goldie: We all listened to what the right reverend Prelate said. It is perhaps not for me to tell communities of faith what to do but everyone will have listened with great sympathy to what the noble Lord said, and I imagine that our communities of faith will want to respond positively.

<https://hansard.parliament.uk/lords/2019-07-17/debates/F9B3222C-5ED5-4AC0-A29D-5899BCC1FDD4/InterfaithDialogue>

The UN Plan of Action referred to above can be read at

<https://www.un.org/en/genocideprevention/documents/Plan%20of%20Action%20Advanced%20Copy.pdf>

The JPR survey referred to above can be read at

<https://jpr.org.uk/documents/FRA-JPR - Young Jewish Europeans - perceptions and experiences of antisemitism.pdf>

The letter referred to above is not available on the Guardian website but can be read at

https://ichef.bbci.co.uk/news/624/cpsprodpb/8A17/production/107915353_labour_peers_ad-nc.png

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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

**** closes in 4 days**

Opt-out organ donation: organs and tissues excluded from the new system (closing date 22 July 2019)

<https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/opt-out-organ-donation-organs-and-tissues-excluded-from-the-new-system>

Civil Partnerships: Next Steps Conversion (closing date 20 August 2019)

<https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/civil-partnerships-next-steps-and-consultation-on-conversion>

Regulation of pre-paid funeral plans (closing date 25 August 2019)

<https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/regulation-of-pre-paid-funeral-plans-consultation-on-a-policy-proposal>

Islamophobia in Scotland (closing date 26 August 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