

Political Affairs Digest

A daily summary of political events affecting the Jewish Community

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House of Commons Written Answers

Religious Hatred: Trials

Richard Burgon (Labour) [1752] To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what the (a) mean and (b) median waiting times were in weeks for trials where the defendants entered a not guilty plea for a racially or religiously aggravated harassment charge in each Crown Court in England and Wales in (i) 2010 and (ii) 2018.

Chris Philp: The information requested about the waiting times for trials where the defendant has entered a not guilty plea for a racially or religiously aggravated harassment charge in 2010 and 2018 can be found in the attached Excel document. Due to the small number of defendants pleading not guilty to these offences at individual Crown Courts, we have not supplied the average waiting times for courts where fewer than five defendants pleaded not guilty. Basing an average on such small numbers can skew the mean and result in the figures being unrepresentative. Performance, demand and waiting times in the courts are constantly reviewed to balance sitting days with waiting times, disposals and receipts. Resources are adjusted when appropriate. Demand has been falling in recent years and sitting days have been reduced accordingly. The abolition of committal hearings in 2013 transferred the file preparation period from the magistrates' court to the Crown Court and so comparisons between pre-2013 data and post-2013 data do not compare like with like.

We will continue to review demand and performance in the Crown Courts and will ensure they have the resource they require.

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<https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Commons/2019-10-17/1752/>

Public Holidays

Gareth Thomas (Labour Co-op) [2643] To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, if she will make an assessment of the potential merits of making (a) Diwali and (b) Eid national public holidays; and if she will make a statement.

Kelly Tolhurst: We welcome the celebration of Diwali, Eid, Vaisakhi and other

religious festivals. All faiths have a home in this country.

The Government regularly receives requests for additional bank and public holidays to commemorate a variety of occasions – such as cultural, history, military and religious events. The current pattern of bank holidays is well established and accepted.

There is a significant cost to business of creating additional public holidays. The estimated cost to the economy of the one-off bank holiday for the Queen's Diamond Jubilee was £1.2 billion.

The Equality Act 2010 makes it unlawful for employers to treat staff from a particular religious group less favourably than those from other religions when considering requests for leave, or requests to refrain from work on particular days.

<https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Commons/2019-10-21/2643/>

Crown Prosecution Service

Tougher hate crime sentences at record levels

Courts are handing down tougher sentences in almost three out of four hate crime cases – the highest proportion ever, according to new figures ...

In the 12 months to March 2019 there were convictions in 10,817 hate crime cases with a record 73.6 per cent receiving a higher sentence, according to figures in the CPS Annual Hate Crime report. This is an increase from two thirds of cases last year, and 34.5 per cent in 2015/16.

Chris Long, Chief Crown Prosecutor and CPS national lead on hate crime, said: "All crimes have a terrible impact but when a crime is motivated by hatred of who a person fundamentally is, it adds another layer of seriousness.

"Hate crimes also affect communities and create a climate of fear.

"When cases get to court more than seven out of 10 defendants plead guilty and we have a conviction rate of 84 per cent - so there is every reason for victims to come forward.

"I urge people to report incidents to the police so we can hold offenders accountable and victims can have justice." ...

In the year covered by the report defendants pleaded guilty in 76 per cent of hate crime cases - the highest proportion ever - equating to 9,757 cases.

As with other types of crime there has been a growing gap between the number of hate crimes reported to the police and the number of cases being sent by forces to the CPS for a charging decision. Prosecutors are working closely with the police to understand the reasons for this fall.

The CPS also works with anti-hate groups including Stonewall, TellMAMA, Galop, and the Community Security Trust to help prosecutors better understand different types of hate crime and the impact on victims.

The relationship has been used to develop face-to-face training for all prosecutors which was rolled out between 2015 and 2018.

Highlights from the 2018/19 report covering April 2018 to March 2019

- The CPS prosecuted 12,828 hate crime cases across England and Wales between April 2018 and March 2019.
 - 10,817 (84.3 per cent) resulted in a conviction, broken down as:
 - 9,757 guilty pleas (76.1 per cent)
 - 1,012 convictions after trial (7.9 per cent)
 - 48 proved in absence (0.4 per cent)
- 2,011 (15.7 per cent) did not result in a conviction, broken down as:
 - 1,124 prosecutions dropped (8.8 per cent)
 - 486 acquitted or dismissed after trial (3.8 per cent)

- 401 administratively finalised (3.1 per cent)
- The highest ever proportion of hate crime cases have received a sentence uplift – 73.6 per cent compared to 67.1 per cent in 2017/18.
- Most cases we prosecuted were for racial (9,931) and homophobic (1,624) hate crimes, followed by religious (605), disability (579) and transphobic (89) offences. ...

To read the full press release see

<https://www.cps.gov.uk/cps/news/tougher-hate-crime-sentences-record-levels-0>

Hate Crime Report 2018–19

<https://www.cps.gov.uk/sites/default/files/documents/publications/CPS-Hate-Crime-Annual-Report-2018-2019.PDF>

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Relevant Legislation ** new or updated today

UK Parliament

Divorce, Dissolution and Separation Bill

<https://services.parliament.uk/Bills/2019-20/divorcedissolutionandseparation.html>

**** Domestic Abuse Bill**

<https://services.parliament.uk/Bills/2019-20/domesticabuse.html>

Notice of amendments

https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/bills/cbill/2019-2020/0002/amend/domestic_rm_pbc_1025.1-4.html

Scottish Parliament

Civil Partnership (Scotland) Bill

<https://www.parliament.scot/parliamentarybusiness/Bills/112997.aspx>

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Consultations ** new or updated today

Welsh Government Strategic Equality Objectives 2020-24 (closing date 19 November 2019)

<https://gov.wales/sites/default/files/consultations/2019-09/strategic-equality-objectives-2020-2024-consultation.pdf>

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