

Political Affairs Digest

A daily summary of political events affecting the Jewish Community

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House of Commons Delegated Legislation Committee

Welfare of Animals at the Time of Killing (England and Northern Ireland) (Amendment) (EU Exit) Regulations 2019

The Minister of State, Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Zac Goldsmith): ... This statutory instrument, which was laid before the House on 7 October, makes simple and technical amendments to domestic legislation so that we meet our obligations under the UK-Ireland common travel area with regards to certificates of competence for slaughterers upon exit.

After exit day, a slaughterer will have to hold a certificate of competence issued by a UK-competent authority in order to work in the UK. This will ensure that any future changes we make will apply equally to all slaughterers operating in the UK. It will also ensure that we can take effective enforcement action, as currently only the member state that issued a certificate of competence can suspend or revoke it.

It is, however, the case that we continue to have reciprocal arrangements with the Republic of Ireland ... This means that when applying for a certificate of competence from the competent authority in England and Northern Ireland, the applicant may refer to training and examination undertaken in the Republic of Ireland to support their application. The applicant will not need to undergo further training or take an exam if they have passed the relevant modules in the Republic of Ireland. ...

Animal welfare is a devolved issue. Each devolved Administration is responsible for its own regulations in this area, but I can inform the Committee that the Scottish and Welsh Governments have made similar amendments. ...

David Drew (Labour Co-op): ... It is important to bear in mind that this is part of a wider debate ... The British Veterinary Association, in which I declare an interest as an associate, is very clear about the need to introduce stunning of all animals killed at slaughter. It would be worth while exploring where we are on this whole issue. We had a petition debate, and it is something that some of us feel very strongly about. I know about halal and shechita religious exemptions, but it important that we have some way of knowing that the Government have in hand the direction of travel that the general public want us to take, which is that only animals that are stunned are slaughtered, and that they are willing to talk to the Jewish community and the Muslim community to see if there is at least some

compromise. ...

The most difficult bit of the meat trade is that animals are slaughtered, and we would hope they are slaughtered as humanely as possible. ...

Zac Goldsmith: ... The hon. Gentleman mentioned the quality of animal welfare standards applied within slaughterhouses. He is right about that. We have done several things, including mandating the use of CCTV in all slaughterhouses. It is hard to imagine that that has not had a significant impact on the behaviour of slaughtermen in those establishments. ...

The hon. Gentleman mentioned the more complicated issue of stunning pre-slaughter. He finished by saying that we should try to find a mechanism to bring the stakeholders together to see if we can find a solution that respects religious freedom and has an eye to animal welfare. The previous Secretary of State initiated a series of roundtables with stakeholders from across the board. Those discussions continue and I am now involved in them. I have had some very good meetings with stakeholders in the last month. It is not the right time to pre-empt what we will deliver as a consequence of that, but we will deliver steps that I think will satisfy the stakeholders' concerns and improve animal welfare at the point of slaughter. I hope the hon. Gentleman will bear with me on that and I hope to talk more about it should I still be in this place in a few weeks' time ... but we are making progress. ...

Question put and agreed to.

[https://hansard.parliament.uk/commons/2019-10-29/debates/a0255034-6340-41e2-b3f2-5df2ae404b25/WelfareOfAnimalsAtTheTimeOfKilling\(EnglandAndNorthernIreland\)\(Amendment\)\(EUExit\)Regulations2019](https://hansard.parliament.uk/commons/2019-10-29/debates/a0255034-6340-41e2-b3f2-5df2ae404b25/WelfareOfAnimalsAtTheTimeOfKilling(EnglandAndNorthernIreland)(Amendment)(EUExit)Regulations2019)

House of Commons Written Answers

Universities: Racial Discrimination

Steve McCabe (Labour) [4255] To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps the Government is taking to protect university staff from racial abuse.

Chris Skidmore: Racial harassment is unacceptable, and we cannot tolerate staff and students being victims of it at our world-leading universities. There is no place in our society - including within higher education - for hatred or any form of harassment, discrimination or racism. Universities have clear responsibilities in this regard.

Higher education providers are independent and autonomous organisations. Like all employers, higher education providers have responsibilities under the Equality Act (2010) in relation to their staff. We expect them discharge their responsibilities fully and have robust policies and procedures in place to comply with the law, and to investigate and swiftly address all hate crime.

We encourage providers to make use of tools such as the Race Equality Charter and the Race at Work Charter to identify and address institutional and cultural barriers that affect minority ethnic staff and students.

The Concordat to Support the Career Development of Researchers recognises the need to create and develop positive environments and cultures in which all researchers can flourish and achieve their full potential. This includes having effective policies and practice for tackling discrimination, bullying and harassment and providing appropriate support for those reporting issues.

By improving the representation, progression and success of minority ethnic staff within higher education we can ensure that everyone who has the potential to thrive at university, both as a student and as a member of staff, does so.

<https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Commons/2019-10-23/4255/>

The Race Equality Charter referred to above can be read at <https://www.ecu.ac.uk/equality-charters/race-equality-charter/>

The Race at Work Charter referred to above is not currently available online

The Concordat referred to above can be read at

https://www.vitae.ac.uk/policy/concordat/Download_Concordat_Print-Ready/@@download/file/Researcher-Development-Concordat_PrintReady.pdf

Armed Forces: Racial Harassment

Jim Shannon (DUP) [2722] To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what steps he is taking to tackle incidences of racial abuse in the armed forces.

Reply from Johnny Mercer: The Armed Forces do not tolerate racist behaviour in any form. All allegations of illegal or inappropriate behaviour are taken extremely seriously and investigated thoroughly. We have a range of initiatives to stamp out this kind of behaviour, including stepping up education programmes including diversity and inclusion training, reviewing our internal disciplinary procedures and raising awareness about available support. However, we recognise we need to do more; earlier this year we adopted the recommendations of Air Chief Marshal (ACM) Michael Wigston's report on inappropriate behaviours, including recommendations on immersive culture and behaviour training at the start of service and at regular intervals throughout, and more training on 'bystanders' so that people have the skills and confidence to intervene when they see inappropriate behaviour. We have established a new team in Defence which will oversee the implementation of ACM Wigston's recommendations.

<https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Commons/2019-10-21/2722/>

The report referred to above can be read at

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/817838/20190607_Defence_Report_Inappropriate_Behaviours_Final_ZKL.pdf

Supreme Court

In the matter of NY (A Child) [2019] UKSC 49 On appeal from [2019] EWCA Civ 1065

This appeal concerns a father's application for an order for the immediate return of his daughter from England and Wales to Israel. ...

The child's parents are Israeli nationals ... She is their only child and is now aged almost three. Her parents lived at first in Israel but moved to London in November 2018. There the marriage broke down. The father returned to Israel, but the mother refused to do so, and remained in London with the child. The father applied under the Convention ... for a summary order for the child's immediate return to Israel. The allegation underpinning his application was that, on 10 January 2019, when the marriage broke down, the mother had wrongfully retained the child in England.

The High Court granted the father's application. On appeal, the Court of Appeal ruled that it had not been open to the judge to make an order under the Convention and set his order aside. It held that there had been no grounds for concluding that the mother's retention of the child in England had been wrongful ... the Court of Appeal made a summary order for the child's return under the inherent jurisdiction. The mother appealed to the Supreme Court. ...

On 14 August 2019, the Supreme Court unanimously allowed the appeal and set aside the Court of Appeal's order. Owing to the urgency of the decision, a judgment giving reasons was not issued at that time. Lord Wilson now gives the unanimous judgment of the court setting out its reasons. ...

To read the full press release see

<https://www.supremecourt.uk/cases/docs/uksc-2019-0145-press-summary.pdf>

To read the full judgement see

<https://www.bailii.org/uk/cases/UKSC/2019/49.html>

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See also the Supreme Court ruling included in the “Home Affairs” section above.

House of Commons Written Answers

Gaza: Health Services

Rushanara Ali (Labour) [3666] To ask the Secretary of State for International Development, what steps the Government is taking to help ensure that medical workers in Gaza can perform their humanitarian functions without risk of attack.

Andrew Murrison: No medical workers anywhere in the world should be at risk of violence, including those assisting Palestinians injured during demonstrations. We regularly raise with the Government of Israel the importance of protecting civilians, including medical personnel, when responding to protests and the importance of adhering to the principles of necessity and proportionality.

<https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Commons/2019-10-22/3666/>

Palestinians: Health Professions

Rushanara Ali (Labour) [3669] To ask the Secretary of State for International Development, what discussion he has had with representatives of the Israeli Government on the compliance with international standards of that Government's internal investigations into the killings of Palestinian health workers.

Andrew Murrison: No health workers anywhere in the world should be at risk of violence, including those assisting Palestinians injured during demonstrations. We regularly raise with the Government of Israel the importance of protecting civilians, including medical personnel, when responding to protests. We welcome the Israeli authorities' decision to conduct criminal investigations into eleven Palestinian deaths during recent protests and urge these to be transparent and, if wrongdoing is found, for those responsible to be held accountable.

<https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Commons/2019-10-22/3669/>

House of Lords Written Answers

UNRWA

Baroness Deech (Crossbench) [HL87] To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of (1) the accuracy of the report on the internal ethics of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency, produced in 2018, and (2) the suspension of aid by Belgium, Switzerland and the Netherlands to that Agency; and what steps they are taking in the light of the allegations of nepotism, bullying and corruption in that Agency.

Baroness Sugg: DFID is not in a position to comment on the accuracy of the internal ethics report referred to. However, we are concerned by the allegations of

misconduct and mismanagement at the United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA) which are currently being investigated by the UN Office of Internal Oversight Services under the authority of the UN Secretary General. The Minister for the Middle East and North Africa wrote to the UN Deputy Secretary General in August urging the UN to conduct a thorough, rigorous and speedy investigation and to act quickly on its recommendations. It would be inappropriate to comment on the allegations ahead of that process reaching a conclusion.

We note that a small number of donors have suspended funding to UNRWA while the investigation is ongoing (representing approximately 0.01% of UNRWA's 2019 budget). The UK has, like the substantial majority of donors, and all major donors, maintained our funding.

<https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Lords/2019-10-15/HL87/>

The report referred to above is not available online.

UNRWA

Baroness Deech (Crossbench) [HL88] To ask Her Majesty's Government what steps they are taking to ensure that the United Nations Relief and Works Agency has published data to the International Aid Transparency Index in order to inform their review of that Agency's performance.

Baroness Sugg: DFID's Memorandum of Understanding with the United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA) requires it to apply transparency standards in line with the UK Aid Transparency Guarantee and the International Aid Transparency Initiative for all funding received from DFID. All of UNRWA's annual reports are published on UNRWA's website. The Aid Transparency Index is an initiative run by the independent organisation 'Publish What you Fund' which selects aid organisations for inclusion based upon its own criteria. The Government has not pressed Publish What you Fund to include UNRWA in its index as we respect its independence and do not seek to influence the index's coverage.

<https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Lords/2019-10-15/HL88/>

Israel: Gaza

Baroness Tonge (Non-affiliated) [HL171] To ask Her Majesty's Government what representations they are making to the government of Israel about reports that the Israeli military have fired live rounds at farmers on their land in Gaza away from the buffer zone.

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: We regularly raise with Israel our concerns about its use of live fire in Gaza, and urge them to reduce restrictions, including reducing movement and access restrictions.

<https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Lords/2019-10-16/HL171/>

West Bank: Archaeological Sites

Baroness Tonge (Non-affiliated) [HL172] To ask Her Majesty's Government what representations they are making to the government of Israel about reports that the Palestinian archaeological sites in Sebastia, within area B of the West Bank are being invaded by Israeli soldiers and settlers and that associated buildings close by are being threatened with demolition.

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: While we have not raised this issue with the Israeli authorities, we condemn any incidence of violence by settlers against Palestinians. We also remain seriously concerned by the continued demolition of Palestinian

property by Israeli authorities. We consistently call for an immediate end to all actions that undermine the viability of the two-state solution, including the demolition of Palestinian property in the West Bank. In all but the most exceptional of circumstances, demolition in occupied territories is contrary to International Humanitarian Law and to UN Security Council resolutions. The practice causes unnecessary suffering to ordinary Palestinians and is harmful to the peace process. The practice causes unnecessary suffering to ordinary Palestinians and is harmful to the peace process.

<https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Lords/2019-10-16/HL172/>

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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>

Scottish Parliament Legislative Consent Memorandum

<https://sp-bpr-en-prod-cdneq.azureedge.net/published/DPLR/2019/10/29/Legislative-Consent-Memorandum--Domestic-Abuse-Bill/DPLR052019R51.pdf>

Public Bill Committee

[https://hansard.parliament.uk/commons/2019-10-29/debates/497ca388-df82-438d-bc93-1d8872352ed1/DomesticAbuseBill\(FirstSitting\)](https://hansard.parliament.uk/commons/2019-10-29/debates/497ca388-df82-438d-bc93-1d8872352ed1/DomesticAbuseBill(FirstSitting))

and

[https://hansard.parliament.uk/commons/2019-10-29/debates/ee0ee6c8-af3e-4aec-ad15-851b93c58874/DomesticAbuseBill\(SecondSitting\)](https://hansard.parliament.uk/commons/2019-10-29/debates/ee0ee6c8-af3e-4aec-ad15-851b93c58874/DomesticAbuseBill(SecondSitting))

includes:

col 48 Nazir Afzal (National Adviser to the Welsh Government): There are roughly 200 marriages of 17-year-olds every year. ...

Vernon Coaker (Labour): Was that figure of 200 for England and Wales?

Nazir Afzal: Yes, but a lot of religious marriages are not registered. A lot more than 200 are not registered because they are religious marriages.

Vernon Coaker: Have the Government made an estimate of the number of non-registered marriages?

Nazir Afzal: I do not know. ...

col 49 Carolyn Harris (Labour): ... is religious marriage a growing issue? Somebody came to see me last week who had been in what she thought was a marriage. When she went to get a divorce because of domestic violence, her marriage certificate was in Arabic. She had been married under sharia law and was not actually married. ...

Nazir Afzal: ... there is another campaign, which is about religious marriages also having to be certified—that is, to become marriages recognised by British law. ... You have given one example; I can probably give you several hundred others of people who did not know that they were married. In any event, if these people were married, their ability to seek a divorce is challenging, to say the least, and abuse is often tolerated in such circumstances.

There is a role for the state to say, “If you enter into a religious marriage, you should also have a civil marriage.” ...

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