



Political Affairs Digest

A daily summary of political events affecting the Jewish Community

Contents

Home Affairs
Israel

Relevant Legislation
Consultations

Home Affairs

House of Commons Written Answers

Hate Crime: Facebook

Rupa Huq (Labour) [33632] To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what assessment her Department has made of the adequacy of Facebook's complaints process for reporting hate crimes.

James Brokenshire: As outlined in the Online Harms White Paper, we intend to establish in law a new 'duty of care' on companies towards their users. The 'duty of care' will ensure companies have appropriate systems and processes in place to deal with harmful content, which includes hate crime, on their services to keep their users safe. The 'duty of care' will apply to companies that provide services which facilitate the sharing of user generated content or user interactions, for example through comments, forums or video sharing.

Companies will be required to have effective and proportionate user redress mechanisms which will enable users to report harmful content and to challenge content takedown where necessary. This will give users clearer, more effective and more accessible avenues to question content takedown, which is an important safeguard for the right to freedom of expression. These processes will need to be transparent, in line with terms and conditions, and consistently applied.

<https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Commons/2020-03-21/33632/>

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

Universities: Religion

Preet Kaur Gill (Labour Co-op) [33644] To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what guidance his Department provides to universities on Articles of Faith.

Michelle Donelan: As independent and autonomous organisations, higher education providers (HEPs) have responsibilities under the Equality Act 2010 in relation to the protected characteristics of their staff and students. These include in relation to religion and belief. We expect them to discharge their responsibilities

fully and have robust policies and procedures in place to comply with the law. HEPs are also responsible for meeting their legal obligations relating to free speech, and this includes expressing religious views. HEPs have a duty to take reasonably practicable steps to secure freedom of speech within the law for members, students and employees of the establishment and for visiting speakers.

<https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Commons/2020-03-23/33644/>

Home Office

Home Office grants £14 million funding for security at Jewish institutions

The Home Office has granted the Community Security Trust (CST) £14 million for security measures to help keep members of the Jewish community safe in their daily lives.

The grant will cover protective security for the next financial year at Jewish institutions such as schools and synagogues. ...

Home Secretary Priti Patel said: Antisemitic incidents are not just an attack on the Jewish community, but on everyone who believes in a free and open society.

This funding will help Jewish people practise their religion and way of life without fear of attack or persecution.

Minister for Countering Extremism Baroness Williams said: No one should feel afraid for practising their religion. We are committed to ensuring our places of worship remain safe spaces for worship, contemplation and reflection.

Only by working together can we ensure that hateful behaviour like antisemitism can be fully eliminated from our society. ...

CST Chief Executive David Delew said: The British Jewish community is deeply grateful for the renewal of Home Office funding for security guards at Jewish schools and other communal premises facing the continuing threat of terrorism.

CST will continue managing this grant, which alleviates a serious financial security burden from Jewish communities across the country.

Most of the funding will go towards protective measures for Jewish schools. While the funding period commences today (April 1), all synagogues remain closed and schools only remain open for the children of those conducting essential work, as part of government efforts to tackle coronavirus (COVID-19). ...

The Home Office has also recently launched a [consultation](#) to see what more can be done by the government to improve security for faith groups.

To read the full press release see

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/home-office-grants-14-million-funding-for-security-at-jewish-institutions>

TOP

Israel

House of Lords Written Answers

Palestinians: Textbooks

Lord Pickles (Conservative) [HL2551] To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of whether the reported antisemitic and extremist content in Palestinian Authority school textbooks adhere to (1) the Palestinian Authority–Department for International Development Memorandum of Understanding, and (2) the Palestinian Authority's commitment to take action against incitement to violence.

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: Our partnership with the Palestinian Authority (PA) is underpinned by a Memorandum of Understanding and our 'partnership principles'. We continue to judge that the PA are demonstrating a credible commitment to this Memorandum and the 'partnership principles'. Related to education, the Palestinian Authority's Education Minister has announced that he is currently revising the textbooks in time for the next academic year. The Palestinian Authority have also agreed to engage constructively with the review of the textbooks that we secured through our European Partners.

<https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Lords/2020-03-12/HL2551/>

Palestinians: Curriculum

Lord Pickles (Conservative) [HL2552] To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of whether reported antisemitic content in the Palestinian Authority's school curriculum is in breach of the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance's working definition of antisemitism.

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: The UK government is deeply concerned about the allegations of incitement in Palestinian Authority's school textbooks. The International Development Secretary reiterated our concerns in a call to the Palestinian Authority's Education Minister just last month.

In order to assess the concerns highlighted in this question, the UK took the lead in calling for an independent review of Palestinian textbooks, as a result of which an independent review of the alleged incitement to violence and hatred in the textbooks is underway with the support of our European partners. We expect interim findings in Spring 2020 and full findings later in the year.

<https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Lords/2020-03-12/HL2552/>

Palestinians: Teachers

Lord Polak (Conservative) [HL2553] To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of teacher training programmes supported by UK aid in the Palestinian Territories.

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: DFID supports teacher training in the Occupied Palestinian Territories through the UK's 'Connecting Classrooms through Global Learning Programme', which is co-funded by DFID and the British Council. The programme focuses on core and transferable skills, and global citizenship.

The content is centrally designed by UK-based experts and delivered on the ground across the world by trainers who are validated and quality assured by the British Council. The British Council undertakes quality assurance visits to ensure the content delivered is appropriate and high quality. The British Council also monitors feedback from participants and has commissioned an independent evaluation of the effectiveness and quality of the training.

<https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Lords/2020-03-12/HL2553/>

Palestinians: Curriculum

Lord Polak (Conservative) [HL2554] To ask Her Majesty's Government whether UK aid is distributed to employees of the Palestinian Ministry of Education's Curriculum Development Centre.

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: Our money to support education and health provision in the West Bank goes into a special, dedicated bank account and is only paid to individuals vetted through the Palestinian-European Socio-Economic Management Assistance Mechanism (PEGASE) to ensure they have no connections to any

proscribed groups and are still in employment.

Employees of the Palestinian Ministry of Education's Curriculum Development Centre are included on the PEGASE list, alongside teachers and other public sector education professionals.

Each payment is independently audited to ensure it has been transferred to the declared bank account of the intended recipient. This rigorous process means we are confident no UK aid is being diverted.

<https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Lords/2020-03-12/HL2554/>

Palestinians: Textbooks

Lord Polak (Conservative) [HL2555] To ask Her Majesty's Government which textbooks are used by the teachers in the Palestinian Territories that are funded by UK aid.

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: The UK does not fund textbooks in the Occupied Palestinian Territories. Our education funding to the Palestinian Authority (PA) contributes to the salaries of carefully vetted teachers. Teachers in PA schools teach the Palestinian curriculum. Following allegations of incitement in the PA's school textbooks, the UK secured agreement from our European partners to lead an independent review of the textbooks which is underway. We expect interim findings in Spring 2020 and full findings later in the year.

<https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Lords/2020-03-12/HL2555/>

Israel: Golan Heights

Lord Grocott (Labour) [HL2684] To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the government of Israel's activities in the Golan Heights.

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: The UK's position on the status of the Occupied Golan Heights is clear and has not changed. In line with international law, and relevant UN Security Council Resolutions, notably Resolutions 242 and 497, we do not recognise Israel's sovereignty over the territories occupied by Israel since June 1967, including the Golan Heights, and we do not consider them part of the territory of the State of Israel.

<https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Lords/2020-03-17/HL2684/>

Israeli Settlements

Baroness Tonge (Non-affiliated) [HL2720] To ask Her Majesty's Government what representations they have (1) made, and (2) intend to make, to the government of Israel about reports that the Israeli Defence Force has declared Israeli ownership over land documented as belonging to Palestine in Wad Fukin.

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: While we have not made representations on these reports, we are encouraging both sides to maintain calm and avoid taking actions which make peace more difficult to achieve.

<https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Lords/2020-03-17/HL2720/>

United Nations

Despite Israeli-Palestinian Cooperation to Tackle COVID-19 Outbreak, Renewed Talks on Two-State Solution Remain Elusive, Special Coordinator Warns Security Council

While Israeli and Palestinian authorities have shown exemplary cooperation in protecting

their populations from the COVID-19 pandemic, there are no clear signs indicating a return to sorely needed negotiations towards a two-State solution, the Secretary-General's Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process told the Security Council ...

"As the region continues to confront the enormity of the challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic and the broader geopolitical tensions, the situation on the ground remains fragile," said Nickolay Mladenov ... Credible negotiations have yet to be launched that will end the occupation and realize a negotiated two-State solution. Nor has Israel taken steps to cease all settlement activities and respect related legal obligations during the reporting period.

"In the absence of a renewed commitment of the parties to pursue concrete measures that will lead to genuine political progress, the situation, I am afraid, will continue to deteriorate," he said, noting that such factors as Israel's ongoing military occupation of Palestinian territory and the persistent risk of military escalation are collectively eroding prospects for peace. ...

Still, he said, a "fragile calm" prevails in Gaza, stemming from understandings brokered by Egypt and the United Nations ... However, both Israeli and Palestinian authorities have continued to make dangerous, discriminatory and provocative statements ...

In addition, no progress has been made towards intra-Palestinian reconciliation or elections, he continued ... The only sustainable solution to challenges in Gaza is political, he said. This requires concrete steps to ensure that Gaza and the occupied West Bank are reunited under a single legitimate Palestinian national authority, in accordance with the recommendations of the 2016 Middle East Quartet Report. Also, Palestinian leaders must engage positively with Egypt, reverse the negative trajectory, take concrete steps to end division and schedule elections.

Council members roundly commended Israeli-Palestinian cooperation on tackling the COVID-19 pandemic and the work of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA). ...

To read the full press release see

<https://www.un.org/press/en/2020/sc14149.doc.htm>

TOP

Relevant Legislation ** new or updated today

UK Parliament

Assisted Dying Bill

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

Divorce, Dissolution and Separation Bill

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

Education (Assemblies) Bill

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

Genocide Determination Bill

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

Marriage Act 1949 (Amendment) Bill

<https://services.parliament.uk/Bills/2019-20/marriageact1949amendment.html>

Marriage and Civil Partnership (Minimum Age) Bill

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

Scottish Parliament

**** Civil Partnership (Scotland) Bill**

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

Equalities and Human Rights Committee, Stage 1 Report

<https://sp-bpr-en-prod-cdnep.azureedge.net/published/EHRiC/2020/3/31/Civil-Partnership--Scotland--Bill-Stage-1-Report/EHRiCS052020R1.pdf>

Coronavirus (Scotland) Bill

<https://www.parliament.scot/parliamentarybusiness/Bills/114929.aspx>

[TOP](#)

Consultations

** new or updated today

Electing a more diverse Assembly (closing date 22 April 2020)

<http://www.senedd.assembly.wales/mgConsultationDisplay.aspx?ID=389>

Amendments to the organ donation regulations (Wales) (closing date 30 April 2020)

<https://gov.wales/amendments-organ-donation-regulations>

Regulating Independent Educational Institutions (closing date 8 May 2020)

<https://consult.education.gov.uk/school-frameworks/regulating-independent-education-institutions/>

Protecting places of worship (closing date 10 May 2020)

<https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/protecting-places-of-worship-consultation>

[TOP](#)

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