



Political Affairs Digest

A daily summary of political events affecting the Jewish Community

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House of Lords Debate

Education (Assemblies) Bill: Second Reading

col 1075 **Baroness Burt of Solihull (Liberal Democrat):** ... The world 50 or even 20 years ago looks very different from the one we inhabit today. We have become a diverse, multicultural society and we put more store on children and their rights—except in the UK, and in this matter of compulsory religious worship. The UN Committee on the Rights of the Child recently recommended the repeal of all collective worship in UK schools as a contravention of children’s human rights, but the UK remains the only sovereign state in the world to impose Christian worship as standard and, unfortunately, there is no sign that the UK Government are contemplating a change. On the contrary, only this March, Sir John Hayes MP asked what steps the Government were taking to ensure that daily acts of worship were conducted each school day. Education Minister Nick Gibb responded that any school reported not to be fulfilling its obligation to provide daily religious worship “will be investigated. Where needed, the Department will remind schools of their duty on this matter and advise on how this can be met.” ...

col 1076 In April, a *Times Education Supplement* informal survey found that less than half of non-religiously affiliated primary schools were providing acts of religious worship. ... Every generation since the Education Act 1944 has been less religious than the one before. All this compulsory school worship seems to have borne little fruit. The British Social Attitudes survey shows that, in 2019, just 1% of 18 to 24 year-olds were affiliated to the Church of England. The same survey reveals that 62% of British adults are non-Christian and, more importantly, 72% of those in the age bracket most likely to have school-aged children are non-Christian. ...

... a third of our state-funded schools are Christian, and this Bill does not propose to remove the requirement for Christian worship at those schools—although, regardless of whether they are from Christian or non-Christian families, are not all children entitled to assemblies that include them and do not make them feel like outsiders?

In 2019, YouGov asked parents what activities they thought should take place in school

assemblies. The environment and nature came top, followed by equality and non-discrimination, and physical and mental health came third. Collective worship came 13th out of 13 options. ...

[This Bill] covers schools without a religious character that are state-funded in England and Wales. Faith schools are not affected by the Bill except that, for any children withdrawn from collective worship, they will be required to provide an equally meaningful school assembly in line with those available to other children. It repeals the requirement for schools of no religious character to carry out a daily act of collective worship.

Pupils and teachers at these schools may organise voluntary acts of collective worship for children who want to attend, as long as their parents permit them to do so, but the school may not insist that children attend and neither may parents—so children who do not want to attend an act of worship cannot be forced to do so, even if their parents want them to. ... However, the Bill would take away the right of pupils not to participate in school assemblies—no more being withdrawn, isolated or ostracised. It would be inclusive, bringing all children together in a community to reflect on matters that affect them and us all. ...

col 1077 Baroness Morris of Yardley (Labour): ... On the face of it, the Bill seems very sensible. It is reasonable and not aggressive, and it seems to make sense in modern 21st-century society. However, it is part of a far more complicated relationship between church and state, in a nation that has an established church, and between the state and the role that churches have always played in schools. ...

This is not about our personal faith. It is about what we together decide should be the knowledge, skills and values that we pass on to the next generation. ... I must admit that, of all the knotty relationships between church and state over education, I find collective worship the most bizarre and the most difficult to justify ... There are advantages and disadvantages to it, but I think we would lose something if we abolished it ...

col 1078 Cultural heritage and the ceremonies that pepper our lives are important. Although many of us do not have a faith, most of us choose to go through a ceremony at key points. ... in terms of baptism, marriage, funerals or whatever, we turn to faith institutions. If we never had any experience of worship, service and ceremony based on faith, I do not know how we would cope with turning to those institutions at key points in our life and in the decisions that we make.

We have cultural experiences and occasions in common. Most children would not know about Christmas carols if they did not sing them at school. As harvest approaches, one of the reasons why we probably all know the hymns of harvest is that we sang them in school. I would not want a society where children did not know about Christmas carols because, although Christmas is often not celebrated as a faith occasion in many homes, that is its origin and that is what it means. That is what it stands for, and children need to learn and understand that so that they can make their own decisions. ...

In terms of disadvantage ... it is the only time in our state system when we are legally allowed to separate children according to their faith. If we put children of one faith in one room and children of another faith in another room, we would get hauled over the coals and taken to court, and rightly so, yet that is what we do when we allow children not to attend assemblies. ...

The Earl of Clancarty (Crossbench): ... There has been no Ofsted inspection of this provision for 17 years. The reality is that collective worship, certainly in non-religious schools, is on the wane and, more broadly and importantly ... so is the desire for it. ...

col 1079 I am not saying that religion should not be taught in schools. It is hugely important within the world, as are other beliefs, but it is time that we removed every aspect of religious instruction from schools, so that religion is understood as simply another topic of study, to sit within history or geography or alongside philosophy ...

There are too many faith schools in the country. In England in 2017, they were 37% of primary schools and 19% of secondary schools, percentages which have been creeping

up. A new study by the National Secular Society has found that three out of 10 families in England have little choice but a faith school, meaning that children are pushed into these schools against their parents' wishes ...

col 1081 Lord Lilley (Conservative): ... humans are essentially religious animals, in the sense that we are the only creatures who face the essentially religious questions. Who or what created us, and why? Is there a purpose to our existence? Are there absolute moral values or just our own preferences? Whether we answer yes, no, "don't know" or even "don't care", we are taking a religious position, because these questions cannot be answered by the approach of physical sciences, nor can answers be derived logically from self-evident axioms.

Ultimately, we answer on the basis of our own perceptions and personal spiritual experience, or we adopt the current fashion or rely on the accumulated wisdom of our forebears. But initially, the answers we present to the next generation—explicitly or implicitly, and whether Christian or secular—will be in that sense essentially religious. The pretence that there is a choice between an upbringing based on science or abstract reason and one based on faith is essentially false ...

I am a terribly inadequate Christian, but even I can see that at the core of the Christian faith is the belief that God is love; that the whole of religion can be boiled down, in Christ's words, to "love God and love your neighbours as yourselves—there are no commandments greater than these" and that, although we fall short of these laws, God wants to forgive us.

I frankly do not understand why the most sceptical, let alone humanists, should be upset about us teaching that belief to our children ...

col 1082 Lord Harries of Pentregarth (Crossbench): ... It was entirely natural that, when our society was a predominantly unified one, the beliefs of the society as a whole should be expressed in state-funded institutions. However, as is obvious, this is no longer the case. As we know, worship has to be wholly or predominantly of a Christian character, but there are millions of people of other religions: Muslims, Hindus, Sikhs and Jews. Even more significant than that: we know that about half the population now say that they have no religion at all ...

col 1083 Baroness Massey of Darwen (Conservative): ... The Bill is not anti-religious or anti-belief. It supports parental wishes and opens up opportunities for greater involvement for children on the issues that concern them, such as mental health, relationships, the environment and so on. I see from a survey that religious worship in assemblies was ranked last by parents in a list of possible topics. In addition, 62% of people in Britain do not identify as Christian, yet assemblies are supposed—indeed, obliged—to have a Christian character. ...

col 1084 Children's rights are important. The UNCRC specifies that children and young people are free to be of any or no religion. Without invoking charters, the Bill makes sense in relation to what education is about. ...

Baroness Meacher (Crossbench): ... It is of the utmost importance that children are encouraged to respect good values: kindness, generosity, tolerance of difference and more. ...

col 1085 If these important values are conveyed within a religious narrative with which the children simply do not identify at all, there is an extremely high risk, in my view, that children will therefore somehow disregard the values themselves that are being conveyed within that religious narrative. ...

The Lord Bishop of Oxford: ... Worship and spirituality are a vital part of what it means to be human, and it is absolutely right, for all the reasons that have been given, that it be carefully reviewed and, possibly, that some changes should be introduced. But my reason for in conscience finding this Bill difficult goes back to my experience of leading assemblies as a local parish priest many years ago in Halifax. I put a great deal of time and energy

into rehearsing the parable of the good Samaritan and the stories of Joseph and Moses, only for the otherwise extremely good and gifted head teacher of the school to reinterpret my assembly with the phrase, "Of course, what the vicar really means is don't run in the corridors, and pick up the litter in the playground." It is the reduction, without a serious faith tradition, of the fantastic values that are being articulated, to simple practical motifs which I fear is the danger of a Bill like this.

col 1086 There are many benefits to collective worship in schools ... as a time to pause and reflect, to gather in community, to mourn in times of tragedy, as we have seen recently, to foster common values, to celebrate festivals, not just Christian, and to build religious literacy, which is vital. ...

If the Bill is passed, one effect may be to make anything that is more than secular assembly not legal and contested in our schools. I fear that one risk of the Bill is that it will weaken the protection around this valuable space for reflection in the school day, that the life of our schools will move in an ever more utilitarian direction, and that children will grow up in ignorance of the possibilities and depth of the faith traditions which ... have formed our society and culture and the societies of the world, where faith still plays a massive role.

Is it right in a pluralist society that worship remain wholly or mainly Christian? I believe it is, and for the following reason. The alternative to rooting collective worship in the Christian tradition is to root it in a largely invented contemporary gathered syncretic tradition, which lacks depth or authority, is unconnected to any faith community and will quickly be abandoned. The effect of the Bill may be to replace a tolerant, humane and hospitable Christian faith as the main strand of worship in our schools, combined with other faith traditions, with a largely manufactured cluster of ideas with few roots in our stories or culture and varying enormously from school to school. I do not think that the majority of the nation's children and young people should be denied the experience of spiritual, moral, social and cultural development connected to a living tradition, which research shows they value. ...

col 1087 Lord Dubs (Labour): ... what happens to children who are not in assembly? They are almost excluded if their parents do not want them to be there, because there is nothing for them. One parent said, "We don't think it is acceptable that they be left to play with an iPad because they have been withdrawn". There has to be something to fill that gap; otherwise, it puts young people in an invidious position, which is not very proper. ... There are moral standards, beliefs and views in terms of morality that do not depend upon a Christian imprint, but which are there because they are the right and proper way forward. ...

Baroness Murphy (Crossbench): ... personal prayer from a heartfelt faith is something that should not be forced on children, particularly in a society where so many people are not religious. ...

col 1088 Lord Desai (Non-affiliated): ... What harm have Christians and Buddhists and Muslims done to not be able to escape assemblies every day, or whenever it is? It is a very strange idea that moral and various spiritual educations can be learned only by getting people together and haranguing them. ...

col 1089 Lord Singh of Wimbledon (Crossbench): My Lords, business in the House is always preceded by Christian Prayers. We are reminded that, at all times, we should lay aside "private interests, prejudices, and partial affections".

Unfortunately, this laudable advice is soon forgotten as we begin to debate controversial issues, but at least the thought is right. As a Sikh, I can understand reference to God in Christian worship, but I have never been able to understand who or what is the Holy Ghost. My attitude to Prayers in the Lords is to go along with sentiments close to Sikh teachings and respect the right of Christians to their beliefs.

Assemblies in schools, however, are different, because of the age and vulnerability of children. In the past, when most children were of the Christian faith, assemblies provided

a sense of oneness and unity of thought and purpose. Today, children are often from different religious backgrounds. Assemblies couched in the teachings of one faith as gospel truth can cause confusion and hurt, particularly if stress is laid on literal texts. For example, in the Gospel according to John, chapter 14, verse 6, Jesus Christ is reported as saying: "I am the way ... No one comes to the Father except through me."

This can be quite upsetting to young children of other faiths. It can cause a lack of confidence in a child's own belief and work to brainwash sensitive minds, sometimes with damaging family upset.

Although I believe that the Bill is right in suggesting that school assemblies should be changed in line with changing times, the proposal to replace them with vague spiritual and moral teachings is unhelpful and does nothing to enhance understanding of different faiths, when this is needed now more than ever before. Today, we live in a world in which we are reminded daily that most conflicts have their origin in religious bigotry. We need to recognise that what passes for religion is often a complex mix of ethical teachings overlaid with the culture of thousands of years ago—culture that frequently demeans women and people of other faiths.

col 1090 Never has the need to understand the beliefs of other people and what motivates them been greater. Never before has there been such ignorance and reluctance to talk openly about religion and its good and not so good practices. This ignorance extends to all levels of society—to civil servants and politicians and to educators, particularly in our school lessons, where emphasis is often laid on the size and shape of places of worship and artefacts of different religions, but much less on ethical teachings. If we want a better and more cohesive society, the best place to begin is in the school assembly, with a multifaith assembly showing respect for common ethical imperatives in all our different faiths.

Baroness Hamwee (Liberal Democrat): ... Schools should bring students together, whether they are in reception or sixth form, not cause some to feel excluded because it is not their religion or because they do not really understand what is going on, think they will be in trouble if they do not conform or feel a conflict between home and school. The current position simply does not reflect the equality and diversity which we so often talk about. ... Sorting out one's beliefs may coincide with adolescence and is all very complicated and unsettling. It is very hard for parents who find that their child's school is setting up an educational context which does not accord with home. ...

col 1091 My own school's traditions were pretty conventionally middle-of-the-road C of E and there were a lot of Jewish girls. We were separated off for assemblies, or large parts of them, and when I was deputy head girl, I was expected to take Jewish prayers. I was singularly ill-equipped for it and had no support. It did not do me any harm but I do not think it was very helpful to those who attended. I have no doubt that the school thought that this was very advanced. I hated it and resented it, and not only on the occasion when the meat ran out at lunchtime and I was called up to explain why the Jewish girls had been eating the ham. ...

Lord Watson of Inbergowrie (Labour): ... [the Bill concerns] the requirement for collective worship in schools in England. For that reason, I have to say that it is somewhat incongruous that the schedule makes several references to Wales, although collective worship in the Principality ... is the legislative responsibility of the Senedd. ...

col 1093 Can [the Minister] say whether the Government are satisfied that schools are aware of their rights to seek a determination allowing them to hold multifaith assemblies, assemblies of a different faith or no faith assemblies at all under the current legislation? Does the DfE know how many schools have applied for determinations? ... Do those unsuccessful have the right to appeal that decision and, if so, where is that appeal heard? What steps are schools taking to ensure that parents are aware that they may also withdraw their children from collective worship and that sixth-form students may withdraw themselves? ...

The DfE has said that collective worship “encourages pupils to reflect on the concept of belief”. I entirely accept that premise, but surely that is the purpose of religious education being part of the curriculum ... Yet the figures show that the proportion of schools providing RE at GCSE level has decreased, while parents are increasingly opting their children out of RE to study other subjects. Is that a matter of concern for the Government? ...

col 1094 Baroness Chisholm of Owlpen (Conservative): ... The Bill’s aims are well intentioned and attempt to address provision of collective worship in a number of different settings, a topic that has long been considered contentious. While I understand the intention of the Bill, I must express strong reservations on its contents and would like to clarify to noble Lords how the current legislation relating to collective worship already affords us the sufficient flexibility that the Bill tries to achieve.

We believe that collective worship is an important part of school life. It encourages pupils to reflect on the concept of belief and the role that it plays in the tradition and values of this country. Importantly, the legislation around collective worship is inclusive and allows all schools to tailor their provision to suit their pupils’ spiritual needs, as well as providing an opportunity for schools and academies to develop and celebrate their ethos and values.

There can be no doubt that there has been a shift in belief in Britain over recent decades. ... legislation already allows for schools to seek an exemption from wholly Christian worship in cases where the principal religion of the pupils or community is not Christianity. They can provide collective worship that is predominantly of another faith, such as Islam or Judaism. It does not permit replacement of collective worship with a non-religious option, and the Government stand by that policy. ...

I now turn to the Bill itself. It seeks to replace the daily act of collective worship with an assembly aimed at “furthering the spiritual, moral, social and cultural education of the pupils” in schools without a religious character. However, the Government do not think this is necessary given that, under the Education Act 2002, schools are already required to ensure the SMSC development of all their pupils. ...

col 1095 State-funded schools are subject to the public sector equality duty and asked to follow that path. They are also required to actively promote the fundamental British values of democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty, and mutual respect and tolerance of those with different faiths and beliefs. This is broader, perhaps, than what is typically covered by daily collective worship in schools and, along with SMSC provision, effectively provides much of what has been suggested in this Bill. ...

col 1096 Baroness Burt of Solihull: ... The Minister in her remarks said that assembly is hugely valuable—she acknowledges that. The question is how much an assembly is enhanced, or the opposite, by the imposition of collective worship. She mentioned the exemption that schools can apply for, which is called a determination. However, that does not exempt schools from some form of religious worship, so it does not change the fact that we still would have compulsory worship in all schools.

The Minister says that the children are not forced to worship, but the alternative to being withdrawn from religious worship is to be excluded—to be alienated. ... You cannot be inclusive when a lot of children have been withdrawn from school, and it is important that we focus on those children. ...

Bill read a second time and committed to a Committee of the Whole House.

To read the full transcript see

[https://hansard.parliament.uk/lords/2021-09-10/debates/1F8305FD-63BA-4E38-99C4-774928DED5AA/Education\(Assemblies\)Bill\(HL\)](https://hansard.parliament.uk/lords/2021-09-10/debates/1F8305FD-63BA-4E38-99C4-774928DED5AA/Education(Assemblies)Bill(HL))

House of Commons Written Answers

Hate Crime

Alex Cunningham (Labour) [44339] To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, if she will make it her policy to support the appointment of a hate crime commissioner.

Kit Malthouse: There are currently no plans to appoint a hate crime commissioner. The Law Commission is examining the pros and cons of such a role as part of their review of hate crime laws. We will consider the Law Commission's recommendations and respond to their report when it is complete.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2021-09-07/44339>

Information about the Law Commission review referred to above can be read at

<https://www.lawcom.gov.uk/project/hate-crime/>

Hamas

Brendan Clarke-Smith (Conservative) [41286] To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what recent assessment she has made of whether Hamas is conducting any financial activities in the UK.

Damian Hinds: The Government does not routinely comment on intelligence matters. Hamas is subject to an asset freeze under the Counter-Terrorism (International Sanctions) (EU Exit) Regulations, 2019.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2021-08-18/41286>

Hezbollah: Drugs

Chris Green (Conservative) [37489] To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what recent assessment she has made of Hezbollah's potential involvement in the illegal drug trade in the UK.

Damian Hinds: Investigations into the activities of proscribed organisations are an operational matter for the police and intelligence agencies. It would not be appropriate to comment further.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2021-07-21/37489>

TOP

Holocaust

House of Commons Written Answers

The following two questions both received the same answer

National Holocaust Memorial Centre and Learning Service

Peter Bottomley (Conservative) [41605] To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, what plans he has for the ownership of Victoria Tower Gardens following the proposed construction of the Holocaust Memorial and Learning Centre.

Peter Bottomley (Conservative) [41606] To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, what plans he has for the management of the parts of Victoria Tower Gardens not required for the proposed Holocaust Memorial and Learning Centre; and what his timetable is for announcing detailed arrangements.

Caroline Dinenage: The site will continue to be owned by Government. We are in discussion with the Ministry for Housing, Communities and Local Government and The Royal Parks about the future management arrangements for Victoria Tower Gardens.

Israel

See also House of Commons written answers 41286 and 37489, “ Hamas ” and “ Hezbollah: Drugs ” included in the Home Affairs section above.

House of Commons Written Answers

Palestinians: Coronavirus

Philippa Whitford (SNP) [44362] To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what recent assessment his Department has made of the financial capacity of the Palestinian Ministry of Health to respond to ongoing needs during the covid-19 pandemic.

James Cleverly: We welcome the steps that the Israeli and Palestinian authorities have taken so far to coordinate responses to the COVID-19 pandemic and encourage further dialogue in this regard. The UK is committed to global equitable access to effective vaccines as demonstrated by our £548 million contribution to the COVAX Advance Market Commitment (AMC) - the international initiative to support global equitable access to vaccines. The Occupied Palestinian Territories (OPTs) were among the first to benefit from the COVAX scheme with its first delivery of vaccines on 17 March 2021. Since that initial shipment, we are pleased that several further deliveries have arrived in the OPTs, including most recently on 25 August 2021.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2021-09-07/44362>

Gaza: Health Services

Philippa Whitford (SNP) [44361] To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what recent assessment his Department has made of the (a) local availability of cancer services in Gaza and (b) access to treatment outside Gaza for cancer patients.

James Cleverly: We have made clear our concern about the ongoing humanitarian situation in Gaza, including the significant damage and destruction of civilian infrastructure, hospitals and clinics. The UK Embassy in Tel Aviv regularly raises the importance of access to healthcare, including critical health services, with the Israeli authorities, most recently on 1 June. We are urging the Government of Israel to ensure this access is maintained. The long-lasting movement restrictions and the serious constraints imposed by the occupation can impact the provision of medical care. The wounded and critically ill in Gaza should be able to access the urgent medical care they need.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2021-09-07/44361>

Occupied Territories: War Crimes

Layla Moran (Liberal Democrat) [41193] To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what his policy is on the determination by the International Criminal Court that it has jurisdiction to investigate war crimes in the occupied Palestinian Territories.

James Cleverly: We do not consider that the ICC has jurisdiction in this instance as the UK does not currently recognise Palestinian statehood.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2021-08-18/41193>

Israel: Palestinians

Diana Johnson (Labour) [44247] To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, pursuant to his Answer of 20 July 2021 to Question 36520 on Israel: Palestinians, if he will provide the cross-border peacebuilding projects that the UK supports in Israel and the Palestinian Territories; and how much UK funding each of those projects receives.

James Cleverly: The Cabinet Office publishes Conflict Security and Stability Fund annual programme summaries on GOV.UK at

<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/conflict-stability-and-security-fund-programme-summaries>

They outline the annual budget, a short summary of the programmes, and a breakdown of the projects in the programme. The cross-border peacebuilding projects Constituencies for Peace and Support for Israeli NGOs continue to be funded in Financial Year 2021/2022 though exact spend figures are not yet available.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2021-09-07/44247>

The answer referred to above can be read at

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2021-07-20/36520>

Conflict, Stability and Security Fund

Diana Johnson (Labour) [44248] To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether the scheduled reductions to the Conflict, Security and Stability Fund will impact programmes supported by his Department in the West Bank.

James Cleverly: Conflict Security and Stability Fund (CSSF) allocations are decided on an evidence-based assessment of impact of programmes as well as their strategic fit with HMG objectives. The CSSF-funded Middle East Peace Process (MEPP) programme is continuing in Financial Year 2021/2022 and includes projects which provide support in the West Bank. As CSSF spend shifts in-year to meet evolving needs, exact programme spend is not yet available.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2021-09-07/44248>

The following two questions both received the same answer

Palestinians: Israel

Louise Haigh (Labour) [37522] To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether he has received any representations on the reported use of internationally prohibited ammunition by the Israeli Defence Force in Beita.

Palestinians: Demonstrations

Louise Haigh (Labour) [37523] To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether he has received any representations on the recent protests in Beita.

James Cleverly: According to UN OCHA (United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs), since the beginning of May, seven Palestinians, including two children, have been killed around Beita as a result of live fire from Israeli Security Forces. On 5 August the British Consul General and Heads of Mission and representatives from a number of likeminded countries visited Beita.

In instances where there have been accusations of excessive use of force, we urge the Government of Israel to conduct swift and transparent investigations. We also

continue to stress the importance of the Israeli security forces providing appropriate protection to the Palestinian civilian population, in particular the need to protect children, and urge restraint in the use of live fire.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2021-07-21/37522>

and

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2021-07-21/37523>

Hamas

Scott Benton (Conservative) [38446] To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what recent assessment he has made of whether Hamas is meeting the Quartet Principles.

James Cleverly: The Quartet Principles call on parties to renounce violence as a means of achieving their goals. Hamas continues to embrace violence. We continue to call upon Hamas and other terrorist groups to permanently end their incitement and indiscriminate rocket fire against Israel. Hamas' military wing has been proscribed as a terrorist organisation by the UK since 2001 and the UK maintains a no contact policy with Hamas in its entirety.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2021-07-22/38446>

Israel: Hamas

Nicola Richards (Conservative) [41396] To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what recent assessment he has made of the implications for regional security of alleged remarks by Hamas leader Yahya Sinwar that God has decreed that we must attack Tel Aviv.

James Cleverly: Hamas' ongoing decision to embrace violence lies at the heart of the Gazan tragedy. We continue to call upon Hamas and other terrorist groups to permanently end their incitement and indiscriminate rocket fire against Israel. Hamas' military wing has been proscribed as a terrorist organisation by the UK since 2001 and the UK maintains a no contact policy with Hamas in its entirety.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2021-08-18/41396>

Iran: Hamas

Bob Blackman (Conservative) [37436] To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what recent assessment he has made of Iran's (a) financial, (b) material and (c) military support for Hamas.

James Cleverly: We have long been clear about our concern over Iran's continued destabilising activity throughout the region including its political, financial and military support to a number of militant and proscribed groups. We regularly raise Iran's destabilising role in the region at the UN Security Council.

Hamas' military wing has been proscribed as a terrorist organisation by the UK since 2001. Hamas' ongoing decision to embrace violence lies at the heart of the Gazan tragedy. We continue to call upon Hamas and other terrorist groups to permanently end their incitement and indiscriminate rocket fire against Israel. The UK maintains a no contact policy with Hamas in its entirety.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2021-07-21/37436>

Lebanon: Palestinians

Stuart C McDonald (SNP) [37487] To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps his Department will take to support the provision of (a) health and (b) education services for Palestinian refugees in Lebanon.

James Cleverly: The UK is one of the leading donors in supporting Lebanon in hosting both Syrian and Palestinian refugees. Since 2011, the UK has allocated over £780 million in humanitarian and development funding to Lebanon. Our

humanitarian assistance will continue to promote access to education and provide those most in need with timely, flexible assistance and protection services to cover their basic survival needs and reduce gender-based violence, saving lives and reducing suffering.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2021-07-21/37487>

Lebanon: Palestinians

Andy Slaughter (Labour) [37399] To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what recent assessment his Department has made of the impact of the economic crisis in Lebanon on (a) poverty rates, and (b) access to healthcare for Palestinian refugees in Lebanon.

James Cleverly: Lebanon faces a severe economic and political crisis, a result of the failure of Lebanon's political elites to form a government and deliver much-needed and long-promised reforms, exacerbated by the public health crisis caused by COVID-19 and the aftermath of the Beirut port explosion of August 2020. This crisis has had a severe impact on healthcare provision and poverty rates in the country, for both Lebanese citizens and the most vulnerable refugee populations. The UK and members of the International Support Group for Lebanon are clear that Lebanon's leaders need to form a capable government and implement a credible reform process as the only sustainable way to address this crisis.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2021-07-21/37399>

TOP

Foreign Affairs

House of Commons Written Answer

South America: Hezbollah

Chris Green (Conservative) [37488] To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what recent assessment he has made of Hezbollah's potential involvement in the narcotics trade in South America.

James Cleverly: Illegal drugs are a global threat. The UK works with partners around the world to coordinate action and combat organised crime groups operating across borders. The UK proscribes Hizballah in its entirety as a terrorist organisation and has an asset freeze in place against the entire organisation.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2021-07-21/37488>

TOP

Relevant Legislation ** new or updated today

UK Parliament

Assisted Dying Bill

<https://bills.parliament.uk/bills/2875>

Charities Bill

<https://bills.parliament.uk/bills/2877>

Education (16 to 19 Academies) (Religious Character) Bill

<https://bills.parliament.uk/bills/2946>

**** Education (Assemblies) Bill**

<https://bills.parliament.uk/bills/2878>

Second Reading, House of Lords

[https://hansard.parliament.uk/lords/2021-09-10/debates/1F8305FD-63BA-4E38-99C4-774928DED5AA/Education\(Assemblies\)Bill\(HL\)](https://hansard.parliament.uk/lords/2021-09-10/debates/1F8305FD-63BA-4E38-99C4-774928DED5AA/Education(Assemblies)Bill(HL))

**** Higher Education (Freedom of Speech) Bill**

<https://bills.parliament.uk/bills/2862>

Notice of Amendments

https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/bills/cbill/58-02/0012/amend/HigherEd_day_pbc_0913.pdf

Israel Arms Trade (Prohibition) Bill

<https://bills.parliament.uk/bills/3025>

Marriage Act 1949 (Amendment) Bill

<https://bills.parliament.uk/bills/3017>

Marriage and Civil Partnership (Minimum Age) Bill

<https://bills.parliament.uk/bills/2900>

Nationality and Borders Bill

<https://bills.parliament.uk/bills/3023>

**** Online Safety Bill (Draft)**

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/draft-online-safety-bill>

Home Affairs Committee evidence session

<https://committees.parliament.uk/oralevidence/2678/html/>

Palestine Statehood (Recognition) Bill

<https://bills.parliament.uk/bills/2942>

Northern Ireland Assembly

Organ and Tissue Donation (Deemed Consent) Bill

<http://www.niassembly.gov.uk/assembly-business/legislation/2017-2022-mandate/primary-legislation---bills-2017---2022-mandate/organ-and-tissue-donation-deemed-consent-bill/>

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Consultations

** new or updated today

**** closes in 2 days**

Domestic Abuse Act statutory guidance (closing date 14 September 2021)

<https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/domestic-abuse-act-statutory-guidance>

Higher Education (Freedom of Speech) Bill (closing date not stated, but no later than 23 September 2021)

<https://www.parliament.uk/business/news/2021/july/have-your-say-on-the-higher-education-freedom-of-speech-bill/>

Dispute Resolution in England and Wales (closing date 30 September 2021)

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1008174/dispute-resolution-call-for-evidence.pdf

Equality and Human Rights Commission Strategic Plan for 2022 to 2025 (closing date 30 September 2021)

<https://www.equalityhumanrights.com/en/our-work/our-strategic-plan-2022-2025-have-your-say>

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