



Political Affairs Digest

A daily summary of political events affecting the Jewish Community

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House of Commons Written Answers

Antisemitism: Demonstrations

Robert Halfon (Conservative) [901026] What steps [is the Minister] taking to tackle anti-Semitism at public demonstrations.

Priti Patel: The grotesque antisemitic scenes to which my Rt Hon Friend refers were utterly chilling and disgraceful. And this sort of behaviour will not be tolerated. The police must take the toughest possible action against any form of antisemitism. Jewish people must feel safe.

Everyone has freedom of speech and the right to protest peacefully. That does not include the right to be racist, to harass anyone, or to incite hatred or violence. Moreover, holding Jewish people collectively responsible for the actions – real or imagined - of the Israeli state is antisemitic. Anyone who engages in antisemitic behaviour must feel the full force of the law.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2021-06-07/901026>

Schools: Religion

Sarah Olney (Liberal Democrat) [7894] To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether his Department plans to take steps in response to the recommendations of the National Secular Society's report entitled Religiosity inspections: the case against faith-based reviews of state schools, including repeal of section 48 of the Education Act 2005.

Nick Gibb: Section 48 of the Education Act 2005 places a duty on the governing body of maintained schools that are designated as having a religious character, to arrange for the inspection of any denominational education and collective worship. This requirement applies to maintained faith schools and academies (via the funding agreement). In arranging the inspection, the school must consult with the appropriate religious body, specified in regulations. This approach brings a consistency of approach and oversight to the inspections.

The Government greatly values the contribution that faith schools make to the education sector by providing high quality school places and choice for parents. Section 48 inspections provide assurance in relation to the religious education and

collective worship provided in these schools. There are no plans to change the current arrangements for the inspection of designated faith schools.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2021-05-26/7894>

The report referred to above can be read at

<https://www.secularism.org.uk/uploads/religiosity-inspections-the-case-against-faith-based-inspections-of-state-schools.pdf>

Universities: Racial Discrimination

Julian Lewis (Conservative) [7724] To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether he plans to take steps in response to the reported planned introduction by the Vice-Chancellor of Cambridge University of arrangements (a) defining racism as an exclusively white phenomenon, (b) encouraging the anonymous reporting of perceived microaggressions by named individuals and (c) other related measures; and what steps the Government plans to take through forthcoming legislative proposals to tackle such arrangements in UK universities.

Michelle Donelan: I understand that the Vice Chancellor of the University of Cambridge has issued a statement setting out that the website referred to has been temporarily taken down while some material is removed, and I welcome this decision.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2021-05-26/7724>

The statement referred to above can be read at

<https://www.cam.ac.uk/notices/news/statement-from-the-university-of-cambridge-on-the-change-the-culture-campaign>

House of Lords Written Answer

Schools: Equality

Lord Woolley of Woodford (Crossbench) [HL547] To ask Her Majesty's Government what steps they are taking to support schools which seek to create (1) equal, (2) racially diverse, and (3) inclusive, environments for their pupils.

Baroness Berridge: All schools must offer a balanced and broadly based curriculum, which promotes the spiritual, moral, cultural, mental and physical development of pupils at the school and of society, and prepares pupils at the school for the opportunities, responsibilities and experiences of later life.

In November 2018, the department published Respectful School Communities, a self-review and signposting tool to support schools to develop a whole-school approach which promotes respect and discipline:

<https://educateagainsthate.com/school-leaders/?filter=guidance-and-training-school-leaders>

This can combat bullying, harassment and prejudice of any kind. It will help schools to identify the various elements that make up a whole school approach, consider gaps in their current practice, and get further support.

Citizenship education also plays an essential role in developing knowledge and understanding about the world today through teaching politics, democracy, power, the law, human rights, justice and the economy, as well as the changing nature of communities, identities, diversity in the UK and the UK's relations with the wider world.

From September 2020, relationships education became compulsory for all primary school pupils, relationships and sex education compulsory for all secondary school pupils, and health education compulsory for pupils in all state-funded schools:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/relationships-education-relationships-and-sex-education-rse-and-health-education>

These subjects are designed to give pupils the knowledge they need to lead happy, safe and healthy lives and to foster respect for other people and for difference. The teaching workforce has become steadily more racially and ethnically diverse over the last decade, which is the period for which we have comparable data, although we know there is further to go to attract and retain diverse teachers who are representative of the communities they serve:

<https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/find-statistics/school-workforce-in-england>

Our recruitment campaigns are targeted at audiences of students/recent graduates and potential career changers of all ethnicities and characteristics.

Finally, it is important all children and young people are treated fairly and there is no place for discrimination in our education system. The Equality Act 2010 ensures that schools cannot unlawfully discriminate against pupils or staff because of their sex, race, age, sexual orientation, disability, religion or belief. The department has published guidance on the Equality Act 2010 for schools, which includes advice on how they can meet their duties under the act:

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/315587/Equality_Act_Advice_Final.pdf

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2021-05-24/hl547>

Office for National Statistics

Coronavirus and vaccination rates in people aged 70 years and over by socio-demographic characteristic, England : 8 December 2020 to 9 May 2021

Includes estimates factors such as ethnic and religious group.

Report

<https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/healthandsocialcare/healthinequalities/bulletins/coronavirusandvaccinationratesinpeopleaged70yearsandoverbysociodemographiccharacteristicengland/8december2020to9may/pdf>

Data

<https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/healthandsocialcare/healthinequalities/datasets/covid19vaccinationratesandoddsratiosbysociodemographicgroup>

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Israel

House of Lords Written Answers

Israel: Palestinians

Lord Hylton (Crossbench) [HL438] To ask Her Majesty's Government what plans they have to call on the government of Israel to meet the cost of repairing (1) health centres in Gaza that have been damaged by recent air and artillery attacks, (2) the central laboratory for COVID-19 testing, and (3) schools supported by the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East.

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: The UK priority is ensuring timely humanitarian access into and out of Gaza; we are urging the Government of Israel to ensure this access is maintained. We have made clear our concern about the ongoing humanitarian situation in Gaza, including significant damage and destruction of

civilian infrastructure including homes, schools, hospitals, and clinics. We have not made representations to the Government of Israel on the issue of reconstruction. The United Kingdom is also providing an initial £3.2 million of UK aid to UNRWA's emergency flash appeal, which launched on 19 May 2021. This appeal will address the immediate humanitarian needs of vulnerable Palestinians living in Gaza. We understand that 47,000 displaced people are currently seeking shelter in schools run by UNRWA. We remain in close contact with UN agencies and key partners on the ground and will monitor the situation closely.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2021-05-20/hl438>

Israel: Palestinians

The Marquess of Lothian (Conservative) [HL443] To ask Her Majesty's Government whether the Prime Minister has spoken to President al-Sisi of Egypt since the recent outbreak of violence between Israeli forces and Palestinian militants in Gaza; and, if so, whether they discussed the possibility of Egyptian mediation between the government of Israel and Hamas to secure a ceasefire.

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: The UK worked actively to urge the parties to work with mediators towards an immediate ceasefire. The Minister for the Middle East and North Africa engaged the Egyptian Ambassador in London, and the British Embassy Cairo worked closely with the Government of Egypt. We fully supported Egyptian, Qatari and UN efforts to mediate, working closely with the US.

The UK welcomes the announcement of a ceasefire in Israel and Gaza on 20 May, which is an important step to ending the cycle of violence and loss of civilian life. Hamas must end all attacks on Israel. It is also now important for Israel to facilitate rapid humanitarian access in and out of Gaza. As the Prime Minister and Foreign Secretary have made clear, this cycle of violence must stop, and every effort must be made to avoid loss of life.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2021-05-20/hl443>

UK Parliament Early Day Motion

Kenny MacAskill (Alba) [145] **Irish Dail policy on the the annexation of Palestinian territories** – That this House praises the historic decision by the Irish Dail to condemn the illegal annexation of Palestinian lands by Israel; notes that the Dail Motion condemned the recent and ongoing forced displacement of Palestinian communities in the occupied Palestinian territory and described the annexation of Palestinian territory as a violation of international law; recognises that this historic moment is a victory for justice and recognition of the right of the Palestinian people to self-determination; and calls on the UK Government and devolved legislatures to replicate said decision.

<https://edm.parliament.uk/early-day-motion/58586>

The Dáil Motion and associated debate and vote referred to above can be read at

<https://www.oireachtas.ie/en/debates/debate/dail/2021-05-25/9/>

and (resumed)

<https://www.oireachtas.ie/en/debates/debate/dail/2021-05-26/>

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Foreign Affairs

House of Lords Written Answers

The following two questions both received the same answer

UN World Conference against Racism

Lord Shinkwin (Conservative) [HL452] To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of reports about the possibility of (1) antisemitism, and (2) anti-Israel sentiment, at events marking the anniversary of the 2001 World Conference Against Racism in Durban

Lord Shinkwin (Conservative) [HL453] To ask Her Majesty's Government what plans they have to make a statement regarding the Durban IV event commemorating the 2001 World Conference Against Racism in Durban.

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: The United Kingdom is committed to combatting all forms of racism, including anti-Semitism, both at home and abroad. We believe that one of the most effective ways to tackle injustices and advocate respect among different religious and racial groups is to encourage all states to uphold their human rights obligations. Some of the anti-Semitic actions and speeches in and around the 2001 Durban conference and its various follow-up events gave rise to serious concerns. We will consider UK attendance in the light of developments between now and the commemoration event, including the likelihood of any recurrence of anti-Semitism.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2021-05-20/hl452>

and

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2021-05-20/hl453>

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Relevant Legislation ** new or updated today

UK Parliament

Animal Welfare (Sentience) Bill

<https://bills.parliament.uk/bills/2867>

Assisted Dying Bill

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

Charities Bill

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

Education (Assemblies) Bill

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

Higher Education (Freedom of Speech) Bill

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

Online Safety Bill (Draft)

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

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Consultations

** new or updated today

**** closes in 9 days**

Race Equality Action Plan: An Anti-racist Wales (closing date 17 June 2021)

<https://gov.wales/race-equality-action-plan-anti-racist-wales>

Evidence for Equality National Survey (EVENS) (closing date 30 June 2021)

<https://evensurvey.co.uk/>

Protect Duty (closing date 2 July 2021)

<https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/protect-duty>

**** Strategy on combating antisemitism and fostering Jewish life in the EU**

(closing date 5 July 2021)

https://ec.europa.eu/info/law/better-regulation/have-your-say/initiatives/13068-Strategy-on-combating-antisemitism-and-fostering-Jewish-life-in-the-EU_en

Curriculum for Wales Religion, Values and Ethics (RVE) guidance (closing date 16 July 2021)

<https://gov.wales/sites/default/files/consultations/2021-05/consultation-document-curriculum-for-wales-religion-values-and-ethics-guidance.pdf>

Social Distance, Digital Congregation: British Ritual Innovation under COVID-19

(closing date not stated)

<https://bric19.mmu.ac.uk/take-the-survey/>

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