



# Political Affairs Digest

A daily summary of political events affecting the Jewish Community

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### House of Lords Debate

#### **Animal Welfare (Sentience) Bill: Second Reading**

*col 1899* **The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Lord Benyon):** ... There has never been any question that this Government believe animals are sentient beings. We are now recognising this formally in domestic law and introducing a proportionate accountability mechanism to help reassure people that central government policy decisions take this into account. ...

*col 1900* The Bill proposes three things. First, it provides a recognition in law that any animal with a spine—any vertebrate—is sentient. Sentience is about animals having feelings, both positive and negative, such as pain or joy. ...

Secondly, the Bill establishes a committee—the animal sentience committee—tasked with reporting on whether individual central government policy decisions have paid all due regard to their effect on the welfare of animals as sentient beings. ...

Thirdly and finally, the Bill obliges the relevant Minister to respond to each report from the committee through a Written Statement to Parliament. ...

*col 1905* **Lord Etherton (Crossbench):** ... The remit of the committee is fixed by statute. It is a clearly limited remit dealing with adverse effects on the welfare of animals and recommendations in particular circumstances. The committee therefore has no power to take into account wider policy considerations, such as would have complemented or do complement Article 13 of the Lisbon treaty, which the United Kingdom played a major role in. Those exceptions include, but are not limited to, religious rites, cultural traditions and regional heritage. ...

Bearing in mind that, as has been pointed out, Ministers and Secretaries of State come and go and that the Secretary of State has sole control over the appointment of people on the committee—we do not yet know who they will be or what their views may be—I ask the Minister for a specific confirmation, in line with many assurances that have been given in recent years. Can he confirm—this will deflate a degree of anxiety—that it remains government policy, to which the Government foresee no change, that there will be no prohibition of or restriction on Jewish religious slaughter—shechita? I am not in any sense suggesting that there is anything contrary to the welfare of animals—there is a great deal

of evidence about how humane that method of killing is, but that is not the point—I am simply asking for confirmation today that the present policy will continue and that the Government see no reason why it would change in the future. ...

*col 1906* **Baroness Hodgson of Abinger (Conservative):** ... Our knowledge of the sentience of different animals, birds and living creatures continues to grow, so it is important that the Bill allows future extensions of the definition to be incorporated without having to pass more primary legislation. ...

*col 1911* **Baroness Mallalieu (Labour):** ... In this country, every year, 40 million farm animals are slaughtered without pre-stunning. The expert view is that many of them suffer unnecessarily. ... other countries in Europe and around the world have stopped this practice and more are doing so. I pay special tribute to the noble Lord, Lord Trees ... and to those working with him, who are looking at ways of pre-stunning that are acceptable to the religious communities for whom it is important. I also pay tribute to the Muslim community, which is working with them, and I hope the Jewish community will follow. There are ways in which religious sensitivities and stopping unnecessary suffering at slaughter can be combined. So I ask the Minister for a commitment that there will be real and urgent progress on this, because that would be a real advance in animal welfare, and not just a gesture. ...

*col 1913* **Lord Forsyth of Drumlean (Conservative):** ... There is no threat here to religious rites, or to my fly-fishing either. ...

*col 1914* **Baroness Deech (Crossbench):** ... There is already in existence the Animal Welfare Committee, which is an expert committee of Defra. ...

*col 1915* It is not proven that a new law would improve animal welfare, but the risks in it are considerable. ... The European animal welfare law in the Lisbon treaty, although it now seems pretty ineffective in protecting animals in Europe, was on paper more balanced than the remit of the committee in the Bill. Article 13 of the treaty says that animal welfare should be balanced against customs relating to “religious rites, cultural traditions and regional heritage.” whereas there is no such balance in the Bill. ...

Despite the requirement in European law on balance, the European Court of Justice upheld last year a Belgian ban on Jewish and Muslim practices of slaughter without stunning. The argument that stunning is less injurious than non-stunning does not hold water. We should not apply double standards. The Food Standards Agency survey of 2017 estimated that hundreds of millions of animals were killed without effective stunning; gassing, in particular, causes great distress to animals killed that way. The European Food Safety Authority reported that 180 million chickens and other poultry were killed in the most recent count using insufficient electric charge. ...

*col 1916* Fish are not included in the Bill, but there is certainly a case for including crustaceans, which have been shown to react to pain and yet are killed by being broken to pieces alive or boiled alive ... Nor should we apply double standards—on which note I refer to the fact that kosher killing is carried out with the utmost attention to care and science. I follow my noble and learned friend Lord Etherton in noting that, in the past, the Government have committed not to ban traditional Jewish slaughter methods. Will the Minister now repeat that commitment? ...

*col 1917* **Baroness Foster of Oxtou (Conservative):** ... On the issue of slaughter, some European countries have insisted on stunning for both halal and kosher slaughter. If other European countries can do that, I see no reason at all why it should not take place in the United Kingdom. It is something to work towards. ...

*col 1923* **Lord Sheikh (Conservative):** ... The intention of the Bill is to ensure that all animals continue to have adequate recognitions and protections now that we have left the European Union. This must be ensured by appropriate domestic legislation. We were previously subject to Article 13 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union, which stated that “administrative provisions and customs of the Member States” must

respect the “religious rites, cultural traditions and regional heritage” of their citizens.

I ask your Lordships to note the words “religious rites”. ...

There are nearly 1.9 billion Muslims in the world and over 3.4 million Muslims in the UK, and we make up over 5% of the British population. A number of Muslims, including me, will eat only halal meat, and their beliefs need to be respected. Animal welfare is very important in Islam. The Holy Koran and Hadith state that we must recognise animals as being sentient, and we are provided with guidance regarding how to care for, handle and farm them. In addition, we are told how they should be slaughtered for food. Islam forbids mistreatment of animals and their welfare is enshrined in Muslim beliefs. The Prophet Muhammad—peace be upon him—said: “A good deed done to an animal is like a good deed done to a human being, while an act of cruelty to an animal is as bad as cruelty to a human being.” Islam permits slaughter of animals for food but dictates that such slaughter must be exercised humanely.

There has never been conclusive scientific evidence to suggest that religious slaughter is less humane than conventional methods. In halal slaughter, the animal ceases to feel pain due to the brain immediately being starved of oxygenated blood. For the first few seconds after the incision is made, the animal does not feel any pain. This is followed by a few seconds of deep unconsciousness as a large quantity of blood is drained from the body. Thereafter, EEG readings indicate no pain at all.

*col 1924* I have spoken previously in your Lordships’ House about halal slaughter, and had discussions with then Defra Minister and corresponded with David Cameron, the then Prime Minister. Will the terms of reference of the committee to be appointed under the Bill include looking at the religious practices of halal and shechita? ... Furthermore, I suggest that the committee holds full consultations with the communities and appropriate organisations to take account of the feelings of the people. ...

**Lord Trees (Crossbench):** ... Animal sentience was incorporated into Article 13 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the EU by virtue of the Lisbon treaty of 2009. That article requires member state Governments to have full regard to animal welfare in formulating and implementing policy, as animals are sentient beings. Article 13 differs from the Bill in that it defines a limited number of policy areas to which it applies, whereas, as has been mentioned, the Bill applies to all government policy. Moreover, Article 13 significantly exempted “religious rites, cultural traditions and regional heritage” ...

*col 1925* This Bill does not define sentience. Defra has commissioned a report from LSE Enterprise on this issue—which is germane to this debate but which, regrettably, is not yet available. Definitions of sentience range from “having the power of perception by the senses” to “the quality of being able to experience feelings”.

The Global Animal Law Project says: “Sentience shall be understood to mean the capacity to have feelings, including pain and pleasure, and implies a level of conscious awareness.” ...

*col 1927* **Lord Bellingham (Conservative):** ... as the Bill stands at the moment, the committee will have the task of roaming across the whole of government. It will have to be well resourced, and it will have to have a lot of staff. What will its relationship to the AWC be? Will it work alongside it? Will it complement it? Which will be the more senior committee of the two? ...

I want to look quickly at the Bill’s provenance because, as a number of noble Lords have pointed out, it all stems from Article 13 of the Lisbon treaty. That article refers to animals as “sentient beings” and makes it clear that, in stated areas of policy, member states must “pay full regard to the welfare ... of animals”.

However, it is restricted in scope to certain key areas. ... it also includes a requirement to balance animal welfare with “customs ... relating ... to religious rites, cultural traditions and regional heritage.”

In other words, there is an absolutely crucial counterbalance to allow for particular traditions and aspects of religious heritage ...

I personally support halal and kosher killing, and I would like to see CCTV in slaughterhouses. But what would happen if, for example, the committee decided to wage a campaign against these two particular types of slaughterhouse? ... There is no counterbalance in the law that will set up this committee to prevent it doing that. ...

**col/ 1938 Lord Pearson of Rannoch (Non-affiliated):** ... And so, finally, to non-stun halal and kosher slaughter. I wonder whether the Government can explain why they are even vaguely thinking of banning electric dog collars through this new committee while tolerating the colossal suffering inflicted by these practices. Figures from the Foods Standards Agency tell us that in 2018 some 3.1 million sheep had their throats cut without being pre-stunned—one-quarter of all sheep killed—and 22,000 cattle suffered the same fate. Of course I understand that the Government and our elected politicians generally may be too frightened of the Muslim and Jewish vote to tackle this practice head-on and simply ban it. But, if that is so, why do they not require all meat sold in this country to say on its wrapping whether it comes from a pre-stunned animal? After all, cigarette packets are required by law to tell the purchaser that smoking damages your health, so why not the same for meat? I understand that some schools and hospitals now serve nothing but halal and kosher meat, because it is so vociferously demanded by their relevant Muslim and Jewish patients. This is very unfair to our Hindus, Sikhs and Buddhists, who are forbidden to eat halal or kosher meat, and it is also unfair to the rest of us who do not want effectively to be forced to eat it or go without. So I suggest that the Government re-examine their priorities in this matter ...

**col/ 1946 Lord Benyon:** ... the noble and learned Lord, Lord Etherton, and others have raised the issue of religious slaughter. The committee may decide a particular point on this, but a Minister will have to take into account the wider considerations of cultural and religious organisations and form a view in accordance with that. The same can be applied to farm animals: as my noble friend Lord Robathan said, taking an animal to slaughter is not a pleasant experience for it, to say the least. However, there is a wider issue with regard to producing meat and the benefit that that brings to our environment and people in this country. ...

**To read the full transcript see**

[https://hansard.parliament.uk/lords/2021-06-16/debates/81851658-6B9F-4739-8199-22398F81085F/AnimalWelfare\(Sentience\)Bill\(HL\)](https://hansard.parliament.uk/lords/2021-06-16/debates/81851658-6B9F-4739-8199-22398F81085F/AnimalWelfare(Sentience)Bill(HL))

## House of Commons Written Answers

### Hate Crime

**Navendu Mishra (Labour) [12324]** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many instances of hate crime were reported in (a) 2016, (b) 2017, (c) 2018, (d) 2019 and (e) 2020.

**Victoria Atkins:** The Home Office collects and publishes statistics annually on the number of hate crime offences recorded by the police in England and Wales by five centrally monitored strands: race, religion, sexual orientation, disability and transgender.

Information on the number of hate crime offences recorded by the police can be found in 'Hate Crime, England and Wales, 2019/20' statistical bulletin, available here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/hate-crime-england-and-wales-2019-to-2020>

Information has not previously been collected on the race or ethnicity of victims but will be during 2021/22 and published in due course.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2021-06-08/12324>

### Urban Areas: Racial Discrimination

**Rachael Maskell (Labour)** [8670] To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, whether he plans to support cities establish anti-racism charters.

**Luke Hall:** The Government is clear that no one in this country should have to endure racism and we are committed to building a fairer Britain and taking the action needed to address disparities wherever they exist.

The Government welcomes community-led action which tackles racism. It is for local leaders, including local authorities and other local partners, to decide how best to take this forward in their communities.

The Commission on Race and Ethnic Disparities was appointed by the Prime Minister to conduct a detailed, data-led examination of inequality across the entire population, and to set out a positive agenda for change.

The Commission reported at the end of the March and the Government will respond to this in due course.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2021-05-27/8670>

*The report referred to above can be read at*

[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/974507/20210331 - CRED Report - FINAL - Web Accessible.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/974507/20210331_-_CRED_Report_-_FINAL_-_Web_Accessible.pdf)

### Demonstrations: Luton

**Michael Fabricant (Conservative)** [10157] To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what reports she has received of members of the Jewish community in Luton being advised to avoid parts of the town on 29 May 2021 when the Luton Council of Mosques organised a demonstration in solidarity with Palestine; and if she will make a statement.

**Kit Malthouse:** We understand that a local statement was issued by Luton United Synagogue, which referred to concerns about a protest on 29 May 2021 and incorrectly stated that Bedfordshire Police were advising members of the Jewish community to avoid parts of Luton. This statement was subsequently retracted. The protest did take place with approximately 100 attendees. No disorder was reported

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2021-06-04/10157>

## Department of Health and Social Care and Public Health England

**COVID-19: updated guidance for arranging or attending a funeral or commemorative event during the coronavirus pandemic**

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-guidance-for-managing-a-funeral-during-the-coronavirus-pandemic/covid-19-guidance-for-managing-a-funeral-during-the-coronavirus-pandemic>

## Welsh Government

**Updated guidance for weddings and civil partnerships: receptions and celebration events**

<https://gov.wales/guidance-weddings-and-civil-partnerships-receptions-and-celebration-events-html>

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## Israel

### House of Commons Written Answer

#### **Gaza: Israel**

**Stephen Timms (Labour)** [14132] To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what enquiries he has made of the Government of Israel about whether arms purchased under export licences from the UK were used in the recent action against Gaza; and if he will make a statement.

**James Cleverly:** HM Government takes its export control responsibilities very seriously and operates one of the most robust arms export control regimes in the world. We consider all export applications thoroughly against a strict risk assessment framework and keep all licences under careful and continual review as standard. HM Government will not grant an export licence if to do so would be inconsistent with the Consolidated EU and National Arms Export Licensing Criteria.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2021-06-11/14132>

### House of Lords Written Answer

#### **Football: Flags**

**Lord Triesman (Labour)** [HL825] To ask Her Majesty's Government what advice they are providing to national teams visiting the UK for the upcoming UEFA European Football Championship tournament about the public display of partisan flags or other signs in the context of conflict in the Middle East and the implications for crowd unrest.

**Baroness Barran:** Advice to competing national teams at EURO 2020 is a matter for UEFA. Any crowd unrest will be addressed through effective policing and stewarding, as is the case at all football matches

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2021-06-07/hl825>

### Downing Street

#### **PM meeting with HRH the Crown Prince and Prime Minister of Bahrain Salman Bin Hamad al-Khalifa**

The Prime Minister welcomed HRH the Crown Prince and Prime Minister of Bahrain Salman Bin Hamad al-Khalifa to Downing Street this morning. ...

They also spoke about regional security issues and defence collaboration, and the Prime Minister commended the Bahraini government's steps to normalise relations with Israel. ...

**To read the full press release see**

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/pm-meeting-with-hrh-the-crown-prince-and-prime-minister-of-bahrain-salman-bin-hamad-al-khalifa-17-june-2021>

### Scottish Parliament Petition

#### **PE1879: Provide an accessible and professionally developed learning and teaching resource on Israel and Palestine**

Calling on the Scottish Parliament to urge the Scottish Government to acknowledge the right of Scotland's pupils to a bias-free education on the topic of Israel-Palestine by: ensuring Education Scotland hosts an accessible and professionally developed learning and teaching resource on its national intranet service; re-establishing a 'strategic

review group' to oversee any revision of the original resource developed in 2016.  
Hugh Humphries on behalf of Scottish Friends of Palestine  
<https://petitions.parliament.scot/petitions/PE1879>

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## Relevant Legislation \*\* new or updated today

### UK Parliament

#### **\*\* Animal Welfare (Sentience) Bill**

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

Second Reading, House of Lords

[https://hansard.parliament.uk/lords/2021-06-16/debates/81851658-6B9F-4739-8199-22398F81085F/AnimalWelfare\(Sentience\)Bill\(HL\)](https://hansard.parliament.uk/lords/2021-06-16/debates/81851658-6B9F-4739-8199-22398F81085F/AnimalWelfare(Sentience)Bill(HL))

#### **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 today**

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