



Political Affairs Digest

A daily summary of political events affecting the Jewish Community

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Elections: Proof of Identity

Cat Smith (Labour) [23232] To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, with reference to the Government's proposals on voter ID, what plans are in place for people that wear face coverings for religious or cultural reasons when presenting photo ID.

Chloe Smith: Everyone who is eligible to vote will have the opportunity to do so. Those whose appearance has significantly changed in comparison to their existing identification documents can apply for a free, local Voter Card that matches their current appearance.

Polling station staff will be given appropriate training and there will be a requirement for privacy screens to allow electors who wish to have their form of identification viewed in private able to do so.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2021-06-28/23232>

Churches: Coronavirus

Theresa Villiers (Conservative) [23100] To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, if he will amend covid-19 restrictions to permit congregations to sing hymns in churches.

Eddie Hughes: Places of worship play an important role in providing spiritual leadership and bringing communities together, however their communal nature makes them particularly vulnerable to the spread of coronavirus.

Congregational singing is under restrictions due to the increased risk of transmission through small droplets and aerosols. This means that those partaking in these activities are at higher risk of transmitting the virus and thus, spreading infection even if the individual is vaccinated.

On 17 May we entered step 3 on the Prime Minister's roadmap, reintroducing indoor singing in a place of worship for a performance or rehearsal, for a group of up to 6 amateur signers. This is in line with all amateur choirs and singing groups. Outdoors, the congregation may join in with singing in multiple groups of up to 30.

Congregation members should continue to follow social distancing rules.

There are currently no plans to allow congregational singing indoors, with or without masks, before Step 4 of the roadmap in England, which would be no earlier than 19 July.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2021-06-28/23100>

TOP

Israel

Westminster Hall Debate

Palestinian School Textbooks: EU Review

col 43WH Caroline Ansell (Conservative): ... Very recently, yet more Palestinian and Israeli lives were lost to conflict and citizens left traumatised. The ceasefire has held, mercifully, but in the words of Mahatma Gandhi, “If we wish to create a lasting peace, we must begin with the children.” ...

... my right hon. Friend the Member for Chipping Barnet (Theresa Villiers) first raised the alarm about radicalisation in the Palestinian curriculum in the European Parliament, 20 years ago. Last year, a debate in this House on the same subject highlighted shocking examples in the educational materials in use by British-funded teachers in Palestinian Authority schools. The answer to this, we were told then, would be found in the EU review—the long-awaited work of the Georg Eckert Institute for International Textbook Research. Ministers publicly vowed to take action if the report found evidence of material that incites violence. The report on that review has just been published, and it does. ...

col 44WH The EU review rests on an analysis of a sample of 156 textbooks and teacher guides published between 2017 and 2019 by the Palestinian Ministry of Education and, later, a further 18 that were released online in 2020. ...

The EU report clearly identifies evidence of anti-Jewish racism within the curriculum. It says of a chapter in one textbook that it “sends the message that the Jews as a collective are dangerous and deceptive, and demonises them. It generates feelings of hatred towards Jews and...must be characterised as anti-Semitic.” ...

The report identifies examples of terrorists glorified as role models, most notably Dalal Mughrabi, who was responsible for the murder of 38 Israelis in one of the country’s worst ever terror attacks. The report highlights maps of a territorially whole Palestine as an imagined homeland that negates the existence of the state of Israel—a denial of reality. The report finds that one history textbook features a doctored copy of a landmark letter sent by Yasser Arafat to his Israeli counterpart during the Oslo peace process, with Arafat’s commitment to peaceful co-existence free from violence and all other acts that endanger peace and stability removed. ...

At first glance, there appears to be positive change and an increased focus on human rights coverage. There is a recognition that human rights are a universal notion, but there is no carry-through or discussion of the rights of Israelis. ... The report states that what is problematic is the phrasing, “which implies *systematic* violations of children’s rights reaching all the way to torture and murder, and this has the potential to dehumanise the (Israeli) ‘other’.”

It goes on: “Above all, the textbooks fail to engage with the question of whether violence carried out by Palestinian actors might equally constitute a violation of human rights.”

col 45WH Textbooks call for tolerance, mercy, forgiveness and justice, but they are not applied to Israel and the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. The position of the international community is considered unfair because it sides with the “Zionist occupier” by keeping

quiet about its crimes. At the end of a lesson on children's rights, pupils are asked in an exercise to monitor and list Zionist violations against children in Palestine by following news pages or social media, and then read them to classmates. ...

The report states: "In the entire body of textbooks examined for this Report...the depiction of peaceful attempts to resolve the conflict is limited to a few pages". ...

The report's findings on material are deeply problematic, but there are also problems with the report itself. Glaring omissions, phantom changes, the scale of the review and the seeming mismatch between the review's conclusions and the evidence on which it rests are all in the frame.

Alistair Carmichael (Liberal Democrat): The hon. Lady is right to highlight the deficiencies of the material, which are outlined comprehensively and in a very balanced way in the Georg Eckert report, but does she accept that the overall conclusion of the report is that, "the textbooks adhere to UNESCO standards and adopt criteria that are prominent in international education discourse, including a strong focus on human rights"? If she is inviting the House to accept the material that she quotes, should she not also invite the House to accept the conclusions of the authors of the report?

Caroline Ansell: ... although there is increased coverage and focus on human rights, that does not extend to the Israelis. ...

Stephen Crabb (Conservative): ... is it not the case that when we read the report ... it appears that there is a disconnect between what the executive summary says and the conclusions and the real evidence, which is contained deep in the body of the report? ...

Caroline Ansell: I concur entirely. ... the executive summary does not seem to reflect that evidence. In fact, it must be contested that the textbooks adhere to the UNESCO standards when they simultaneously espouse a narrative of resistance to Israel and display antagonism towards it. ...

col 46WH There are other issues with the report. A wider analysis highlights glaring omissions—or apparent omissions. The justification of the Munich Olympics terrorist attack as an attack on Zionist interests abroad is not covered.

On the 2020 claims, the report suggests positive editing and improvement in the most recently published textbooks, but are these criticisms put forward? Are these phantom changes? Are they based on books that reportedly are not in the curriculum, or on books that do not appear on the Palestinian Authority's official Education Ministry online portal? Is the scale and scope of the review sufficiently robust? ...

Education is absolutely at the heart of this process; it is mission-critical to establishing a peaceful resolution in the region. Change is possible where there is political will and leadership. ...

Positive change could also be inspired through engagement with the International Fund for Israeli-Palestinian Peace. This project, which has widespread cross-party support here and in the US, is exactly the sort of programme that the UK could also support if it wished to deliver on its goal of a lasting and meaningful peaceful two-state solution for Israel and Palestine. ...

col 47WH As things stand, British taxpayers have been directly funding the teaching of a curriculum that actively undermines the peaceful two-state solution that the Government strive to support. Surely, in the light of the violence of recent months, there must be renewed urgency in our resolve to promote peaceful co-existence, and that must focus on the curriculum and textbooks. ...

Julie Elliott (Labour): ... The research for the review started in September 2019, and the textbooks were published between 2017 and 2019, so the report it is looking at a picture of several years ago, and the picture it paints is complex. I agree with the hon. Lady that there is conflicting evidence in the report, but its conclusion is that the Palestinian Authority have shown a commitment to improving the quality of textbooks, and notes that in recent textbooks things have improved. ...

There has been much discussion of this issue ... In that context, use was made of a report by IMPACT-se—the Institute for Monitoring Peace and Cultural Tolerance in School Education—but that is a completely discredited organisation. Former UK Minister Alistair Burt said in a written answer on 12 September 2018: “Our assessment is that the IMPACT-se report was not objective in its findings and lacked methodological rigour. ...

col 48WH I feel strongly that our country and Government must do everything we can to try to stop the incitement of violence among children and to head towards a two-state solution ... but I firmly believe that, rather than textbooks, taken out of context, the biggest issue is the reality of Palestinian children’s daily lives.

This year, up to 66 Palestinian children have been killed in Gaza, with 600 wounded. Palestinian children have been beaten up and arrested in the west bank, and they still endure midnight raids, interrogation, detention and military trial. They go to school under threat from Israeli settlers, and 53 Palestinian schools in the west bank are subject to threats of demolition. ... I believe they have far more impact on the reality of inciting violence among Palestinian children. ...

Mary Robinson (Conservative): ... Although the recent EU report on Palestinian textbooks recognises that some improvements have been made, it shows that the Palestinian Authority still has some way to go to live up to those goals. Both the 2019-20 curriculum and the textbooks of the most recent school year are riddled with antisemitism, glorification of terrorism as heroic struggle, and negation of the state of Israel, including in maps that erase Israel’s presence; references to the Oslo accords have been removed. ... the report serves only to confirm what we have known for some time about the Palestinian curriculum. The contention by the authors of the EU report that the curriculum meets UNESCO standards and that improvements were seen in the 2020 editions is false; close reading of the main body of the report proves as much. When arguing that the textbooks have improved, the EU report cites a particularly egregious example of incitement that has been removed, in which fourth-grade pupils are asked to calculate the numbers of martyrs, including suicide bombers, from the first and second intifadas. On the face of it, that would be a welcome change, but the reviewers show that it has been replaced by a maths question about Israel stealing land from Palestinians. That is not an improvement, and the reviewers concede that they were unable to verify that it is even in circulation in hard-copy textbooks. It turns out that the maths question about terrorists is still in use, as confirmed by the PA’s official Ministry of Education portal online. ...

col 49WH **Chris Green (Conservative):** We could understand it if, in the history curriculum or other elements of the curriculum, contentious issues were presented in a way that was unfavourable to Israel. That would be understandable, albeit unwelcome. But to get such things into the maths curriculum indicates a conscious will and effort to do so. ...

Mary Robinson: I do agree. ...

I am, however, grateful and thankful that the report has provoked an international discussion about linking aid to the PA and UNRWA—which runs a number of schools in the west bank and Gaza and uses the same curriculum as the PA—to the removal of antisemitic incitement from the Palestinian curriculum. ... In the light of this report, it may be time for this country to look again at our aid to the PA, ensure that we do not fund the curriculum that is in place while also encouraging the PA to reform their curriculum in a more positive and constructive manner. ...

The need to tackle Hamas in particular is as clear as ever, but a lasting peace depends on a Palestinian Authority who take seriously their commitment to co-existing alongside Israel. ...

col 50WH **Alistair Carmichael:** ... if we accept the report and the bona fides and independence of the Georg Eckert Institute, we do not do great service by picking and choosing those parts of the report that we like. The report’s overall conclusion, having examined extensively the material that was made available to the institute, was that the

materials of the Palestinian Authority did conform to UNESCO standards. That is important. I would hope that nobody who has read that report would say that the materials were beyond reproach, but the conclusion reached by the institute through its independent analysis should not be dismissed so lightly. ...

I want to put on the record my concern that ... there has not been the same rigorous analysis of educational standards within Israel. It is often said, and other analyses have highlighted, that maps often include the lands of the west bank as part of Israel as a whole, rather than the 1967 borders, which are generally regarded internationally as the ones to adhere to. ...

It is a sobering fact that a 15-year-old in Gaza will have endured five major wars, as well as several others, in their lifetime. ...

Just this week, the Save the Children Fund issued its report on the impact of home demolition on Palestinian children, titled "Hope under the rubble". ...

Let me give a few key findings from that report. Some 80% of children feel abandoned by the world and have lost faith in the ability of anyone, from their parents to authorities and the international community, to protect them and their rights. Some 78% of older children said they feel hopeless when they think about the future. Some younger children told the Save the Children Fund that they often take their toys to school out of fear that they might lose them in the rubble during the day. Some 70% of children reported feeling socially isolated, with no connection with their communities and land after losing their home. Some 60% of children reported that their education had been jeopardised or interrupted following the demolition.

If we really are concerned about the impact on young Palestinians, I say to the hon. Member for Eastbourne, and in particular to the Minister, that we should be considering that many Palestinian children may soon be fortunate to have any schools at all in which to have textbooks, because the hard fact is that no fewer than 53 Palestinian schools are slated for demolition by the Israeli Government. ...

col 51WH John Howell (Conservative): ... The teaching of Palestinian children to hate Israel and Jews and the incitement of violence within the Palestinian Authority's official curriculum are unacceptable and are having and will have extraordinary real-life consequences on Palestinians and Israelis today and in the future. At least 31 Palestinian schools are named after terrorists, and three after Nazi collaborators. They teach young Palestinian children that such actions are honourable and will be rewarded with respect and glory. In addition, children are taught about Newton's second law through textbook images of a boy aiming a slingshot at an Israeli soldier.

The EU report contends that the presence of national resistance fighters masked by a traditional keffiyeh scarf "suggests that the liberation of Palestine might be achievable through violent resistance."

It concedes that these images present "highly escalatory potential". Addressing concerns about the prevalence of references to jihad across the curriculum, the EU report also finds: "One in eight references to jihād in Social Studies...relates to the ongoing conflict in the Middle East: 'the Palestinian freedom struggle as jihād'." ...

Those alarming examples have a tangible effect on Palestinian children. Students at UNRWA schools have been quoted as saying things such as: "I am ready to stab a Jew and drive over them", and: "I am prepared to be a suicide bomber".

They have also said that everyone needs to attack the Jews until there will not be one left in the land, and called the Jews liars and dogs.

The words in these textbooks must have no place in an UNRWA school, nor in a peaceful future for the middle east. Sadly we have seen, all too painfully, how this belligerent rhetoric has even led children to commit acts of violence and terror. In the last five years, Palestinian minors have been involved in as many as 116 terror attacks, which killed five Israelis and injured dozens. Stone and Molotov cocktails, stabbings and shooting attacks on Israeli citizens have been undertaken by Palestinians as young as 11. Along with his

14-year-old cousin, a young boy from East Jerusalem's Shuafat neighbourhood stabbed a light-rail security guard in November 2015. Once detained, he recounted how he wanted to "die as a martyr", while his cousin said: "I wanted to kill the Jews who are torturing us." ...

col 52WH Andy Slaughter (Labour): ... The report generally comes to positive conclusions, saying that "the textbooks adhere to UNESCO standards and adopt criteria that are prominent in international education discourse, including a strong focus on human rights ...

It adds: "The Israeli opponent is portrayed as aggressive and hostile. The language is however, for the most part, objective in tone and avoids inflammatory expressions."

There are regrettable passages. The report notes that one textbook has antisemitic motifs, but that is one out of 156 examined and it has been addressed by the 2020 analysis. The Palestinian Minister for Education has said that any recommendations in the report will be implemented. ...

... there are problems and issues, but there is a willingness to address them and it would be wrong and counterproductive to exaggerate them. We should be building bridges. There are faults on both sides. The issue of maps has been mentioned. In the same way as it is clearly wrong not to include Israel on maps in Palestinian textbooks, it is wrong for many in Israel to show the non-existence of the Palestinian state. ...

Above all, there is an inequality of arms. What the Israelis have been able to do to the Palestinians over 53 years of military occupation, with 650,000 Israelis in illegal settlements, and many other things during this crisis, needs to be addressed. That is the real root of the problem ...

col 53WH Stephen Crabb (Conservative): ... I have sat down with different Ministers and officials over the years to talk about these issues, and at different times the responses have ranged from trying to downplay the seriousness of some of the examples that we raised, to suggesting that the problem was historical and had been fixed, or was in the process of being fixed, to suggesting that, because the UK Government do not fund educational materials directly—we only fund the salaries of Palestinian teachers—it is somehow less of a problem for us to be concerned about. ...

The review we are debating was supposed to be the critical moment when an objective look could be taken and the UK Government, in partnership with other Governments around the world, could take a strong and unified approach. The contents of the report are problematic, as has been said, and I am pleased that Members with different viewpoints on this subject agree that there are problematic examples. ...

For years, when Palestinian Authority Ministers have reassured us and suggested that we should move along and that there is nothing to see, we have wanted to give them the benefit of the doubt. The truth is that there is something to see, and we need a clear and well-defined position from the Government about what we intend to say and do with our friends in the Palestinian Authority. ...

col 54WH Jim Shannon (DUP): ... On countless occasions, these issues have been raised here and in the main Chamber, and Ministers have consistently refuted any suggestion that UK aid funds have been used to support incitement and violence. Most of those assertions offered by former Ministers did not convince then; they certainly do not convince me now. ...

On countless occasions, the link between generous UK aid funds and payments to terrorists has been denied. Even when the FCDO claimed it was paying the salaries of some 85,000 named Palestinian civil servants listed through the EU's PEGASE system, with no evidence that such a list existed, it has yet to justify such claims as to why UK aid directed funds elsewhere without being sanctioned. ...

... education for children is critical, and there are books that denigrate Israel, acknowledging human rights for others, but seemingly not for Israel. ... I believe that funding should be conditional on the change that should be brought about. ...

col 55WH Bob Blackman (Conservative): ... It has become abundantly clear that the children of the Palestinian territories have been cruelly let down by those who have responsibility for their education. As we have heard, there are extensive examples within the EU report that the Palestinian curriculum is deeply flawed and, sadly, rife with material that passes hatred and prejudice on to the new generation of young people. ...

It is exacerbated by the fact that the educational resources are essentially the same as those used by the United Nations Relief and Works Agency. Last year, we gave around £20 million to fund Palestinian teachers' salaries, and £63.6 million to UNRWA to support the education of 320,000 children in 370 schools. In January this year, it was discovered that the additional educational material produced and published by UNRWA for schools in the west bank and Gaza, and distributed to the Palestinian children to aid home learning during covid, glorified terrorism and incited violence against Israel. Those supplementary resources—three in Gaza and one in the west bank—were even more extreme than the official PA curriculum, and again in breach of the UN values.

UNRWA has tried to defend the existence of that so-called “inappropriate” material, saying that it was “mistakenly” distributed to students at the beginning of the coronavirus pandemic. It has been widely available now for more than eight months. ...

In one exercise, pupils in the ninth grade were taught to condemn Arab-Israeli peace and normalisation initiatives and to claim that they serve only to weaken the resolve of Palestinians. It goes without saying that that is in direct contravention of the UN values. In the light of that, I ask our Minister what the Government will do to pressurise UNRWA into pursuing those very necessary reforms. ...

col 56WH Christian Wakeford (Conservative): ... The report concludes shockingly that textbooks refer to violence against Israelis, including civilians, and acts of heroic struggle, as part of a narrative of resistance. One textbook for year 8 pupils presents the wounding, or even killing, of the opponent in a positive light. It is striking to observe that the state of Israel is rarely mentioned by name. The EU report actually outlines how Israelis are consistently referred to in a pejorative way. Elsewhere, it details one antisemitic exercise in which students learn that “the Jews” desecrated the tombs of Muslims. That was altered for the 2020 edition. The report fails to mention, however, that the words “the Jews” was replaced with the equally offensive and inflammatory “the Zionist occupation”.

This Government have a proud record of taking decisive action to tackle antisemitism wherever and whenever it occurs. The UK's recent decision not to attend the notorious Durban conference is a welcome and important announcement. The Government also deserve praise for their untiring efforts to promote the adoption of the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance definition of antisemitism across the UK. There appears to be a blind spot, however. The Palestinian Authority's promotion of antisemitic ideas, which I have identified, goes largely unchecked—that is indefensible. If we know one thing about fighting prejudice, it is that it must be stamped out everywhere and immediately, no ifs, no buts. ... If it is right that we are stamping out antisemitism in the UK, how can we fund it abroad?

col 57WH Chris Green (Conservative): ... The evidence in the report is clear that in the textbooks, as well as in the teaching guides, those materials should be characterised as antisemitic. They delegitimise and deny the state of Israel. ... room can be found in the mathematics curriculum to promote or highlight the use of slingshots—that is absolutely extraordinary, and it is not by accident, but by design. ...

Miriam Cates (Conservative): ... During the recent escalation of violence in the region, we even saw the consequences of inflammatory rhetoric on the streets of the UK, as the Jewish community faced a deplorable rise in antisemitic attacks as a result of events occurring thousands of miles away in another country.

We must look at what is fuelling the hatred and division between the Israeli and Palestinian peoples. Why has this conflict continued for so long, throughout the generations? ... it

need not remain like that if the next generation of children and young people, both Palestinian and Israeli, grow up to believe that peace is possible and desirable. For that shift to happen, it is vital that children in the region are taught about their history and heritage in a way that is truthful and neutral, and does not stoke hatred of the other side. *col 58WH* Yet sadly, we see that the opposite is happening. The findings of the EU review point to what is being taught in schools as a major contributing factor to the ongoing conflict. ...

There has been a move across the middle east and north Africa towards a more progressive, peace-driven narrative ... These changes are not perfect, but they are a clear step in the right direction. So why are young Palestinian minds continuing to be poisoned with the rhetoric of violence, division and hatred? This situation is prolonged as long as Governments around the world continue to tolerate it by failing to hold the Palestinian Authority to account. ...

Brendan O'Hara (SNP): ... Despite highlighting some legitimate areas of concern, the Eckert report says that, while still not perfect, the changes recently made to the curriculum show that the Palestinian Authority are heading in the right direction, and the report significantly tempers some of the wilder accusations and allegations that we have heard from certain quarters about the PA routinely using the curriculum to incite violence and hatred or promote antisemitism. ...

col 59WH In terms of antisemitism, the report specifically mentions two examples, both of which were deemed to be and were rightly condemned as antisemitic. They should never have been there, and it is absolutely right that both have now been positively altered as the report says, or removed completely from the latest editions of the books—a fact recognised by the Georg Eckert Institute.

Let me be clear: we in the SNP believe that wherever antisemitism is found, it must be called out and condemned absolutely and unequivocally. There must be zero tolerance of antisemitism and we must all be vigilant in guarding against it. Although not complacent in any way, I am reassured that in the context of Palestinian school textbooks, the Eckert report says that, while there is recognition of the long-standing political and military conflict, antisemitism does not seem to be as widespread as was first feared, there are signs of improvement and it does not appear to be the endemic problem that some would have us believe.

... the Eckert report does identify other areas of concern, but when addressing whether the textbooks are guilty of promoting or glorifying violence, it says that although there are “escalatory” examples in the textbooks, it did not find that, in the context of a region where, for the best part of a century, there has been active armed conflict, the depiction of the “other side” in the school textbooks as an aggressor or as violent necessarily equated to that igniting hatred. ...

As we have heard, one of the main sources of the allegations is the Israeli organisation IMPACT-se, the Institute for Monitoring Peace and Cultural Tolerance in School Education ... On page 15 of the Eckert report, it says that IMPACT-se research is “marked by generalising and exaggerated conclusions based on methodological shortcomings.” ...

col 60WH Yet, immediately on publication of the Georg Eckert Institute’s lengthy and nuanced report last week, IMPACT-se was straight out of the blocks, telling anyone who would listen that the report supported its claim that “the Palestinian Authority systematically incites...a million children to antisemitism, hate and violence every school day.”

It is a ridiculous analysis of a serious report and one that probably tells us more about IMPACT-se and how it operates than anything else. ...

We have heard many times this morning that anti-Palestinian groups have been raising in the contents of these books for years. As the Eckert report makes clear, there are areas of legitimate concern and some important changes are needed. However, attempts to portray Palestinians as somehow uniquely hateful and violent are utterly nonsensical. Ironically, those making them have been engaging in exactly the same sort of

demonisation and distortion that they allege of the Palestinian textbooks. ...

I have seen the ruins of a Palestinian school. I have walked among the rubble of the demolished school buildings of the Bedouin village of Abu Nuwar. I have seen the pain, the fear, and the devastation that the demolition of a school causes for an already weak, poor and defenceless community. I cannot help but wonder where the outrage on the Benches opposite is when Palestinian schools are demolished by the Israeli army in order to make way for more illegal settlements? Why are they so silent when Palestinian children are being killed, beaten, arrested and detained without trial? Often their homes are being bulldozed. Where is the condemnation and outrage about the 66 Palestinian children who were killed, or the 600 who were injured during the bombardment of Gaza? Where are the debates and demands for action about the 141 schools in Gaza that were damaged, or the 53 schools in the west bank that have been earmarked for demolition?

Perhaps we would pay greater heed to the howls of protest from the Benches opposite about the content of Palestinian children's schoolbooks if they were equally vociferous in calling out the outrageous human rights abuses that those same Palestinian schoolchildren face every single day of their young lives.

col 61WH **Wayne David (Labour):** ... To truly understand what Palestinian children are subjected to, one must understand the repressive and unfair nature of the Israeli military occupation and the impact of the Israeli military detention system on young Palestinian people. ...

Today, however, we are discussing the EU report. It is a detailed report, and I believe it is objective in its approach. That is what I would expect from an expert, specialist institution such as the Eckert Institute. ...

In its examination of the textbooks and other educational material, the institute found that there was extensive coverage of global citizenship education. Throughout the textbooks, calls for tolerance, mercy, forgiveness and justice are to be found. There are positive examples of progressive representations of various social, cultural and religious groups living together. These include a diversity of skin colour, gender and physical abilities. The report says that the textbooks "affirm the importance of human rights in general", but that the universal idea of human rights is "not carried through to a discussion of the rights of Israelis".

col 62WH The textbooks rightly support international conventions with regards to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, but in many cases they unfortunately adopt what can only be described as a one-sided representation of Israel. In fact, the term "Israel" is seldom used. We see more regularly the use of the terms "Zionist" and "Zionist occupation", which are frequently found in the textbooks examined. What is also worrying is the unsatisfactory way in which Israel, and the renunciation of terror, is dealt with. ...

Although there are accurate and positive references to Jewish people historically and contemporaneously, there are also disturbing references that can only be described as antisemitic. The report also found disturbing references to the concept of jihad. ...

The report also found that references to violence were treated differently, depending on who or what was being described. In the report's words, textbooks in the Arabic language "contain emotionally leading depictions of Israeli violence that tend to dehumanise the Israeli adversary".

Not only is this approach dominant when it comes to covering conflict; it is also the case when discussing the British mandate. Throughout the textbook for history, geography and social studies, the Israeli opponent is portrayed as aggressive and hostile. That is surely wrong, if we are concerned about movements towards peace and realising our long-standing commitment to a two-state solution for Israel and Palestine. ...

In the newer textbooks, there was an increase in the representation of women and Christians and a reduction of the text and images that had the ability to cause escalatory potential, including the removal of antisemitic content in several points of the narrative. ...

col 63WH Under the MOU, the Department for International Development — now the

Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office—is required to take action when the PA is not adhering to those principles. In December 2018, DFID stated that it expects textbooks “to be academically rigorous and they must not incite racial hatred or violence under any circumstances.” ...

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs (James Duddridge): ... The Government welcome the publication of this report, which has taken some time. ...

We urged our European partners to publish these findings, and I am happy that they have done so. It has been a long time coming. ...

col 64WH **Christian Wakeford:** I recognise that changes to the curriculum will be immensely difficult, but what hope does the Minister have that we will see changes when the Palestinian Prime Minister has vowed to continue the printing of the textbooks, and to pay for them with water, telephone and electricity bills if that is what it takes?

James Duddridge: Reflecting on the report, the Georg Eckert Institute is a specialist organisation that looks at textbook analysis. It was instructed to undertake a robust and impartial review of the contents of those textbooks. ...

The aim was to provide a comprehensive and objective basis for the dialogue with the Palestinian Authority and to promote quality education, addressing the issues of incitement. ... It is positive that the textbooks analysed were found to adhere to UNESCO guidelines on human rights and generally to promote political pluralism and cultural, social and religious values that support co-existence. However, it is very clear from the examples used today that there are concerns. ...

There is an acceptance that the report found that there continues to be anti-Israel, antisemitic comment in those textbooks. That clearly is not acceptable to the House or to the Government. The UK Government continue to have zero tolerance for incitement to hatred and antisemitism in all forms. ...

... we agree with the broad thrust of the report that there has been progress and there are still areas where progress needs to be made. ...

col 65WH I put on the record, as others have done, that the Government do not—I repeat, do not—fund textbooks in the Occupied Palestinian Territories, but, as hon. Members have referred to, we do provide money for teachers. ...

... there clearly needs to be ongoing work—this is not the end of the process, with some clear conclusions that are going to put an end to the matter. That may be through our EU partners. We work with other international partners. We work with the UN, the Americans and we will continue to work with the EU.

I reassure the House that teachers are carefully vetted. Our money to support education and health went into a specially dedicated bank account. It is only paid to individuals who have gone through the vetting process through the EU mechanism. ...

Each payment is independently audited to make sure it goes to the intended recipients. Although I do not want to negate the points made about textbooks, it is the teachers who are absolutely crucial.

We remain committed to a two-state solution. Making sure that children are educated in the best way is very much part of that. The contrary is also the case. There is a real risk, if children are not educated in an inclusive way, that it will make life worse.

col 66WH **Caroline Ansell:** ... I thank the Minister for affirming that the UK taxpayer funds teachers, but teachers are delivering lessons and exercises based on the very textbooks that are of concern. To separate teachers from their teaching materials is to try to separate bone from marrow. The textbooks underpin the curriculum. They reflect its aims and objectives. They are more far-reaching than a mere teaching aid or prop. They are incredibly important.

I am pleased that there was not a formal acceptance as such of the conclusion of the report, because while the report finds “generally” or “overall”, if we are to maintain a

position of zero tolerance, we cannot tolerate the evidence brought forward by this esteemed institute—evidence that reflects antisemitism and hatred of Jews and does not provide the understanding or the opportunity to reflect and learn to the youngest generation in Palestine.

This youngest generation are the leaders of tomorrow. They are the teachers of tomorrow. They are the peacemakers we need to look to. My hon. Friend the Member for Penistone and Stocksbridge (Miriam Cates) made an excellent point. She said it is vital that peace is seen not just as possible, but as desirable. Currently, it is not seen at all. Unless and until that is part of the education experience of Palestinian children, there will be a ghost train. ...

I find the report conflicting. I find it difficult to reconcile. In the body of the report, and in the words of the esteemed institute, there is example after example of inciting hatred ... It talks about how “Jews as a collective are dangerous and deceptive”.

How can that be reconciled with a conclusion that says the curriculum meets standards? It clearly does not. Zero tolerance is the position of the Government, and that must be our aspiration for the Palestinian curriculum.

To read the full transcript see

<https://hansard.parliament.uk/commons/2021-06-30/debates/E477230F-58A0-4C3F-A6C5-43F42D330043/PalestinianSchoolTextbooksEUReview>

The EU-funded report that is the subject of this debate can be read at
<https://owncloud.gei.de/index.php/s/FwkMw8NZqCAJqPW/download>

The 2020 debate referred to above can be read at
<https://hansard.parliament.uk/commons/2020-03-10/debates/C9D591A4-1B68-4D6B-8AD3-5BBC90398051/PalestinianSchoolCurriculumRadicalisation>

IMPACT-se reports, referred to above, can be read at
<https://www.impact-se.org/reports/palestinian-territories/palestinian-authority/>

The 2018 written answer referred to above can be read at
<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2018-09-07/171640>

The Save the Children report referred to above can be read at
https://www.savethechildren.es/sites/default/files/2021-06/Hope_under_the_rubble_STC.pdf

House of Commons Written Answers

Hezbollah

Andrew Gwynne (Labour) [23110] To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what assessment her Department has made of Hezbollah's Foreign Relations Department since its full proscription.

Kevin Foster: The Government assesses proscription is a powerful tool within the counter-terrorism toolkit. In addition to the criminal offences associated with proscription, the tool can have a powerful impact on behaviour and disincentivise people from becoming members or supporters of a proscribed organisation, as well as supporting other forms of disruptive activity, including asset freezing and the take down of online content.

Since the extension of Hizballah's proscription in 2019, the Government has also extended the UK's domestic asset freeze to cover the group in its entirety.

Investigations into the activities of proscribed organisations, or individuals who may be members or supporters of proscribed organisations, are an operational matter for the police and intelligence agencies. It would not be appropriate to publish data on intelligence related matters.

The Government does not routinely comment on intelligence matters, including whether groups are, or are not, being considered for proscription.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2021-06-28/23110>

Palestinians: International Assistance

Theresa Villiers (Conservative) [23098] To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what discussions he has had with the United Nations Relief and Works Agency on designing programmes to help Palestinians registered with the agency to achieve economic independence.

James Cleverly: We are clear that the status of Palestinian refugees must be agreed as part of wider peace negotiations. Until that time, the UK remains firmly committed to supporting the UN Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA) and Palestinian refugees across the Middle East. We are a leading donor to UNRWA and our economic development programme aims to lift the overall standard of those living in Gaza by increasing trade and job creation and enabling greater movement and access for people and goods.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2021-06-28/23098>

Israel: Palestinians

David Jones (Conservative) [23103] To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what assessment he has made of the impact of the Government of Israel's demolitions policy on the rights of children in the Occupied Palestinian Territories, including their right to education.

James Cleverly: The UK opposes Israel's demolitions of Palestinian schools and we continue to urge Israel to cease such policies. The Foreign Secretary raised ongoing evictions, demolitions and settlement activity with the Israeli Authorities during his visit to the region on 26 May. The UK is clear that in all but the most exceptional of circumstances, demolitions are contrary to International Humanitarian Law. It is essential to have a strong and thriving Palestinian education system to provide opportunities for the next generation. UK aid works to support the Palestinian education system; in financial year 2020/21 we provided £20 million in funding to the Palestinian Authority to support the salaries of education workers in the West Bank. Our ongoing programme support to UNRWA also helps to provide education to children across the Occupied Palestinian Territories (OPTs), including virtually since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2021-06-28/23103>

Israel: Palestinians

David Jones (Conservative) [23104] To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what discussions he has had with his Israeli counterpart on the escalation in the rate of demolitions of homes and other property belonging to Palestinians on the West Bank.

James Cleverly: The UK regularly raises the issue of demolitions and forced evictions of Palestinians from their homes with the Government of Israel. The Foreign Secretary raised ongoing evictions, demolitions and settlement activity with the Israeli Authorities during his visit to the region on 26 May. The UK is clear that in all but the most exceptional of circumstances, demolitions are contrary to International Humanitarian Law.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2021-06-28/23104>

Gaza: Israel

Andrew Rosindell (Conservative) [20593] To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what discussions officials in his Department

have had with their Israeli counterparts on the effect of recent airstrikes on the ceasefire in Israel and Gaza.

James Cleverly: The UK welcomed the announcement of a ceasefire in Israel and Gaza on 20 May. As the Prime Minister has made clear, Israel, the Palestinians and leaders in the region must now work together to find a durable solution to the Israeli Palestinian conflict that prevents terrorism, ends the cycle of violence, and delivers a sustainable and just peace based on a two state solution. The UK continues to work with the parties and regional partners to urge de-escalation and efforts to tackle the drivers of conflict.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2021-06-22/20593>

Hamas: Israel

Wayne David (Labour) [23088] To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, with reference to the recent outbreak of violence between Hamas and Israel, what discussions he has had with his international counterparts on co-ordinating efforts to encourage Hamas to (a) disclose the fate of the two Israeli civilians seized and (b) release the bodies of the two Israeli soldiers claimed as a result of that violence.

James Cleverly: The UK welcomed 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. The UK position is clear: we urge all sides to treat the dead with respect and urge Palestinian authorities to return any bodies they are holding. The UK maintains a no contact policy with Hamas in its entirety.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2021-06-28/23088>

Ahmed Eriqat and Mai Afaneh

Wayne David (Labour) [23087] To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what discussions he has had with the new Government of Israel on ensuring that the bodies of (a) Mai Afaneh and (b) Ahmed Eriqat are returned to their families.

James Cleverly: The UK continues to urge all sides to treat the dead with respect and Israel to return any bodies that they are holding.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2021-06-28/23087>

UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights

Bachelet urges Palestinian authorities to ensure the safety of protesters ahead of planned demonstrations in Ramallah

UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Michelle Bachelet ... urged the Government of the State of Palestine to ensure the safety of protesters ahead of further demonstrations planned for Saturday in Ramallah, following the violent suppression of protests last weekend by Palestinian security forces, both uniformed and plain-clothed, and other armed individuals.

“The Government of the State of Palestine is obliged to ensure freedom of opinion, expression and peaceful assembly. Palestinian Security Forces must act to provide safety and security for the exercise of human rights, including peaceful assembly,” Bachelet said. “Any unnecessary or disproportionate use of force must be promptly, transparently and independently investigated.”

Protests were sparked by the death on 24 June of Nizar Banat, a prominent critic of the Government, in a violent operation by the Palestinian Security Forces. ...

Bachelet welcomed assurances given by Palestinian Prime Minister Mohammad Shtayyeh to the UN Human Rights Office’s representative regarding due process in the investigation

into Mr. Banat's death, as well as respect for protesters' rights to freedom of assembly and expression.

"Last weekend, we witnessed Palestinian Security Forces using force against initially entirely peaceful protesters, including beating them with batons and firing teargas and stun grenades," the High Commissioner said.

The High Commissioner expressed particular concern at the presence of large numbers of non-uniformed people acting in a seemingly organized and coordinated manner with the Palestinian Security Forces. She said the failure by the uniformed Palestinian Security Forces present to intervene was of serious concern. ...

"We have also witnessed and received credible reports of specific targeting of women present in the demonstrations - women protesting, reporting for media or merely bystanders," ... There have been threats, including death threats, and harassment, including of sexual nature, against them on social media.

"We call for an immediate end to any gender-based targeting, harassment, threats or violence and call on the Government to ensure the safety and security of all without discrimination," she said.

To read the full press release see

<https://www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=27247&LangID=E>

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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 (16 to 19 Academies) (Religious Character) Bill

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

Education (Assemblies) Bill

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

Higher Education (Freedom of Speech) Bill

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

**** Marriage Act 1949 (Amendment) Bill**

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

First Reading, House of Lords

[https://hansard.parliament.uk/lords/2021-06-30/debates/3D3DA23D-2601-4ED8-9666-B07DC64E19A8/MarriageAct1949\(Amendment\)Bill\(HL\)](https://hansard.parliament.uk/lords/2021-06-30/debates/3D3DA23D-2601-4ED8-9666-B07DC64E19A8/MarriageAct1949(Amendment)Bill(HL))

Marriage and Civil Partnership (Minimum Age) Bill

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

Online Safety Bill (Draft)

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

Palestine Statehood (Recognition) Bill

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

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Consultations

** new or updated today

**** closes today**

Protect Duty (closing date 2 July 2021)

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

**** closes in 3 days**

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>

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