



Political Affairs Digest

A daily summary of political events affecting the Jewish Community

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House Lords Debate

Animal Welfare (Sentience) Bill: Committee Stage, House of Lords

col 272GC Lord Moylan (Conservative): ... On Second Reading, I tried to say that there is definitely an attempt here—one may support it, one may not—to shift the hierarchical balance, if you like, between humans and animals to put us more on the same level. ... Of course, part of being human—not for everybody, but for many parts of humanity—is an awareness of, an adherence to and a sensibility about religious belief. With religious belief inevitably comes community adhesion and a certain amount of ritual practice. It takes things too far for the committee to be able to trample over that in the interests of animal welfare, with or without sentience being taken into account. That area should be preserved. ...

col 279GC Lord Etherton (Crossbench): ... On religious rites, particularly at issue in the present context is religious animal slaughter. The importance of expressly preserving in the Bill the right of citizens to adhere to their religious practices is perfectly clear. That right, which falls within Article 9 of the European Convention on Human Rights is expressly and necessarily stated in Article 13 of the Lisbon treaty. The jurisprudence of the European Court of Human Rights in Strasbourg has highlighted in many cases the importance of the rights protected by Article 9 in a pluralist, democratic society. Our Human Rights Act 1998, which enabled disputes on convention rights to be resolved in our own courts, contains the specific provision in Section 13 that: “If a court’s determination of any question arising under this Act might affect the exercise by a religious organisation (itself or its members collectively) of the Convention right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion, it must have particular regard to the importance of that right.”

It is not necessary for present purposes to go into the nature of religious animal slaughter in the form of shechita or its Muslim equivalent. There is scientific evidence on both sides of the debate about the humanity of this, but it is clear that the protection of the right to manifest religious belief is enshrined in the treaty obligations we already have and in our own domestic legislation. Therefore, there can be no good reason why, as in the case of Article 13 of the Lisbon treaty, the considerations and recommendations of the sentience committee should not be made expressly subject to respect for religious rites. This would

provide balance, clarity, certainty and compliance with Article 9 and Section 13 of the Act. ...

col 281GC Lord Sheikh (Conservative): ... I should now like to speak to Amendment 31. As we have left the European Union, we must commit to animal welfare standards and uphold any recommendations or protections that were applied previously under Article 13 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union. The article stated that the administrative provisions and customs of member states must respect the religious rites, cultural traditions and regional heritage of their citizens. We should not dilute that.

I am a practising Muslim and eat only halal meat. In addition to me, there are 3.4 million Muslims in the United Kingdom and we make up 5% of the British population. Among the Islamic community in the United Kingdom, a number of British Muslims eat only halal meat. It is important that they are allowed to do so and there should be no interference on the issue of religious slaughter.

I have received representations from a number of Muslim communities that have asked me to make the points that I have raised today. In addition to Muslims, a number of members of the Jewish community would like the practice of shechita to be maintained. Unfortunately, some members of the British population are critical of halal and other slaughter practices, perhaps due to misconceived ideas of what religious slaughter entails. I should emphasise that Islam forbids the mistreatment of animals and guarantees their welfare and well-being. That is enshrined in our deeply held Muslim beliefs.

Islam, of course, prescribes how an animal can be slaughtered for food and we would like that to continue. I and other Muslims believe that when we undertake halal slaughter, we are acting humanely. Indeed, there is no evidence to suggest that halal or other forms of religious slaughter are less humane than conventional methods. I have spoken in your Lordships' House previously on the issue of halal slaughter and discussed it with the then Ministers from Defra. I also corresponded with David Cameron when he was Prime Minister and was assured that the practice of halal and shechita would be continued. I very much hope that such matters will remain an integral part of the slaughtering process. We should therefore include Amendment 31 in the Bill in order that those practices and other matters are preserved for the sake of our religious communities. ...

col 283GC Baroness Deech (Crossbench): ... Turning to Amendments 31 and 35, I fully support the remarks of my noble and learned friend Lord Etherton. These amendments are designed to restore to the remit of the committee to be established by the Bill the balance that used to be reflected in European law. The committee will have retrospective powers—that is, it can look back over past animal issues and reopen them. If the committee were to raise issues with Jewish methods of killing animals, the Secretary of State would have to lay a response to those views before Parliament. The Government have in the past stated their commitment to protecting that custom, but the Bill could undermine that. The proposers need the Government's assurance in this debate that, were such a situation to arise, they would guarantee their commitments to religious communities. In saying this, I support the noble Lord, Lord Sheikh.

There are arguments about the least cruel method of putting animals to death. The Jewish way, after much consideration, is regarded as effective because it causes an immediate loss of cerebral perfusion. Stunning, however, is driven by speed and commercial utility and goes wrong in many more millions of cases of animal deaths than ever take place in Jewish killing.

Despite the requirement in European law on balance, the European Court of Justice last year upheld 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, in the most recent count, 180 million chickens and other poultry

were killed using insufficient electric charge. We do not kill our animals with great attention to their welfare, leaving aside the Jewish and Muslim methods. Rabbits' necks are broken and fish starved and suffocated. We even mistreat our pets, breeding them to a lifetime of ill health and depriving them of their natural habitats. If the new committee in the Bill is to do any good, it should concern itself with making sure that slaughter methods as they exist are carried out as they should be and existing welfare standards are enforced.

Will the Minister accept these amendments and ensure that Jewish slaughter practices are protected? Not to do so would be seen as an unwillingness to make a home for those elements of the Jewish community—and the Muslim community—to whom this is of major importance. ...

col 287GC The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Lord Benyon): ... I fully agree ... that policy must be made with culture, religion and both local and national heritage in mind. Ministers are, and will remain, responsible for judging the right balance between these and various other considerations. Nothing in the Bill will affect that. ...

col 291GC I give the assurance that the noble Lord, Lord Sheikh, the noble and learned Lord, Lord Etherton, and the noble Baroness, Lady Deech, required on religious slaughter. The Government would much prefer that animals were stunned before slaughter but we respect the traditions and the culture of communities that wish to see slaughter carried out in a certain way. The committee and the Bill will not change that. Ministers accountable to Parliament through legislation could or would change anything, and the Government are committed to working with those communities on these issues. ...

col 327GC Lord Mancroft (Conservative): ... The late Lord Jakobovits was strongly of the view that the enhanced status of animals in Nazi Germany allowed that regime to reduce and ultimately ignore the rights of human beings, and thus contributed to the Holocaust. ... Those who support animal rights often deliberately seek to muddle up the rights of animals with their welfare, knowing that most people are in favour of promoting the welfare of animals. But animal rights is an extreme doctrine; those who believe in animal rights are opposed to all use of animals for food, science, medicine and sport and the ownership of pets. ...

To read the full transcript see

[https://hansard.parliament.uk/lords/2021-07-06/debates/B8CBC730-DC86-4D6C-B915-C145CF158B80/AnimalWelfare\(Sentience\)Bill\(HL\)](https://hansard.parliament.uk/lords/2021-07-06/debates/B8CBC730-DC86-4D6C-B915-C145CF158B80/AnimalWelfare(Sentience)Bill(HL))

Cabinet Office and Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government and Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy

Updated guidance: Coronavirus (COVID-19): How to safely plan a wedding or civil partnership, or funeral, wake or commemoration

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/coronavirus-covid-19-how-to-safely-plan-a-wedding-or-civil-partnership-or-funeral-wake-or-commemoration>

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Israel

House of Commons Written Answers

International Assistance

Theresa Villiers (Conservative) [23099] To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign,

Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps he is taking to ensure that recipients of aid from the United Nations Relief and Works Agency are evaluated on criteria based on need.

James Cleverly: The UK is a longstanding supporter of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA). We recognise UNRWA's unique mandate from the UN General Assembly (UNGA), to protect and provide protection and core services to Palestinian refugees across Gaza, the West Bank, Jordan, Lebanon and Syria. Officials are in regular contact with UNRWA to ensure high quality aid delivery and judge that UNRWA is effective in allocating resources on the basis of need.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2021-06-28/23099>

Israel: Palestinians

David Jones (Conservative) [23102] To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what representations he is making to his Israeli counterpart on the displacement of Palestinian children and their families under its policy of home demolitions and forced evictions.

James Cleverly: The UK regularly raises the issue of demolitions and forced evictions of Palestinian families 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/2021-06-28/23102>

House of Lords Written Answers

Israel: Human Rights and Torture

Baroness Sheehan (Liberal Democrat) [HL1322] To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the report by Adalah - The Legal Center for Arab Minority Rights in Israel What happened in the 'torture room' at Israel's police station in Nazareth, published on 7 June.

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: We are aware of the Adalah Legal Center for Arab Minority Rights report released on 7 June and will review the findings.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2021-06-22/hl1322>

The report referred to above can be read at

<https://www.adalah.org/en/content/view/10351>

Israel: Demolition

Baroness Sheehan (Liberal Democrat) [HL1323] To ask Her Majesty's Government what representations they plan to make to the government of Israel about reports of plans to demolish Lifta and to construct a new settlement in its stead.

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: The UK regularly raises the issue of demolitions and forced evictions of Palestinians from their homes with the Government of Israel. The Fourth Geneva Convention, which applies to all occupied territories, prohibits demolitions or forced evictions absent military necessity. The UK is clear that in all but the most exceptional of circumstances, evictions are contrary to International Humanitarian Law. The practice causes unnecessary suffering to Palestinians and is harmful to efforts to promote peace. We are monitoring the situation in Lifta closely, and we continue to urge Israel to cease such actions.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2021-06-22/hl1323>

Israel: Palestinians

Baroness Sheehan (Liberal Democrat) [HL1324] To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they made of reports of the use of live fire by the government of Israel against Palestinians protesting the building of settlements.

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: The UK continues to urge the Israeli Government to respect the fundamental rights and freedoms of peaceful, legal protestors.

In instances where there have been accusations of excessive use of force, we continue to urge Israel to ensure that its investigations are transparent, swift and comprehensive. We also continue to stress the importance of the Israeli security forces providing appropriate protection to the Palestinian civilian population.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2021-06-22/hl1324>

Palestinians: Land and Property

Baroness Sheehan (Liberal Democrat) [HL1325] To ask Her Majesty's Government whether they still hold deeds of land or property in Palestine from prior to 1948.

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: We do not have any record of holding any deeds of land or property in Palestine from prior to 1948.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2021-06-22/hl1325>

Department for International Trade

Updated Trade and Investment Factsheet: Israel

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/998597/israel-trade-and-investment-factsheet-2021-07-07.pdf

Updated Trade and Investment Factsheet: Occupied Palestinian Territories

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/998674/occupied-palestinian-territories-trade-and-investment-factsheet-2021-07-07.pdf

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Other Relevant Information

European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA)

Encouraging hate crime reporting: The role of law enforcement and other authorities

Report

https://fra.europa.eu/sites/default/files/fra_uploads/fra-2021-hate-crime-reporting_en.pdf

Infographic

<https://fra.europa.eu/en/publications-and-resources/infographics/hate-crime-reporting-infographic>

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Relevant Legislation ** new or updated today

UK Parliament

**** Animal Welfare (Sentience) Bill**

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

Committee Stage, House of Lords

[https://hansard.parliament.uk/lords/2021-07-06/debates/B8CBC730-DC86-4D6C-B915-C145CF158B80/AnimalWelfare\(Sentience\)Bill\(HL\)](https://hansard.parliament.uk/lords/2021-07-06/debates/B8CBC730-DC86-4D6C-B915-C145CF158B80/AnimalWelfare(Sentience)Bill(HL))

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>

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>

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 9 days**

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