



# Political Affairs Digest

A daily summary of political events affecting the Jewish Community

## Contents

Home Affairs

Holocaust

Israel

Foreign Affairs

Relevant Legislation

Consultations

Back issues

## Home Affairs

### House of Commons Debate

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

**Consideration of Bill as amended in the Public Bill Committee, and Third Reading col 71 The Minister for Higher and Further Education (Michelle Donelan):** ... A number of important issues were raised in Committee. Opposition Members expressed concerns that the Bill would protect hate speech on campus. I have been clear throughout the passage of the Bill and will make the point once again: the Bill is only about lawful free speech. Let me be clear that this cheap shot has no actual validity. ... The Bill does not override the existing duties under the Equality Act 2010 regarding harassment and unlawful discrimination, nor the public sector equality duty and the prevent duty. Nor does it give anyone the right to be invited to speak at a university. ...

*col 74* Government amendments 3 and 4 and 6 to 10 make provision on the payment of security costs for events. The amendments place a duty on higher education providers, colleges and student unions not to pass on security costs unless in exceptional circumstances to secure freedom of speech within the law. The Government want to put an end to the practice of no-platforming by the back door ...

We have seen reports that a student society faced a £500 security bill from Bristol University student union to allow the Israeli ambassador to give a talk, while charging nothing to allow his Palestinian counterpart to do the same. The Union of Jewish Students has reported to me that some Jewish societies have even been billed for security costs for having stalls at freshers' fairs. That is outrageous. If a university has a culture on campus in which security is required for inviting routine speakers, it has a culture in which intimidation, threats and violence are seen as acceptable. That does not constitute promoting free speech. The solution is to stamp that unacceptable culture out and stop student societies paying the price for those who break the law. ...

*col 76* **Matt Western (Labour):** ... Last month, we discovered that Lord Wharton had chosen to speak at the Conservative Political Action Conference in Hungary. ... In his speech, he endorsed Viktor Orbán's far-right, autocratic regime—the regime that had

forced George Soros's Central European University to leave Budapest in 2019. ... He also shared a platform with Zsolt Bayer, a television talk show host in Hungary who has been widely denounced for his aggressive racism ...

Despite widespread condemnation from student groups here such as the Union for Jewish Students, and cross-party calls for the Government to take action against the chair, it is telling that Ministers have so far refused to do so. ...

*col 79* ... I want to address Government amendments 1, 2 and 16, which would remove the words "and within their field of expertise" from the definition of academic freedom. Although, both on Second Reading and in Committee, we expressed our concerns and those of the sector about how the Bill in its current form would in fact curtail academic freedom, only now have the Government moved on this. ...

Before the Minister tabled an amendment to remove the words "and within their field of expertise", coupled with plans to repeal the Human Rights Act, that would have left academics less protected than those in Europe. Nothing can be more important in this Bill than the scope of academic freedom ...

*col 80* I now want to turn to amendment 18, which recognises that in many cases where freedom of speech is called into question there are competing freedoms at play. It would therefore require the director to consider the right of students to feel safe, along with other legal duties of the provider when reaching a decision about a particular case. The Minister herself acknowledged on Radio 4 that the Bill emboldens holocaust deniers and other purveyors of hate speech by giving them the power to make vexatious complaints against universities. ...

Freedom of speech is not a trump card. Students also have a right not to be harassed, a right not to be subjected to hate speech and, perhaps most importantly, a right to protest. The right for students to feel safe on campus sometimes requires greater protection than that afforded to them under the Equality Act, especially in instances of reprehensible but lawful speech, such as holocaust denial. Professor Stephen Whittle from Manchester Metropolitan University acknowledged as much in the Bill Committee, recognising that the Equality Act would afford protection only if the speech were directly addressed to the complainant. That is important because front groups such as Hizb ut-Tahrir, which is not a proscribed organisation but which often espouses antisemitic views, could come on to campus under the guise of freedom of speech. That point was not lost on the director of the Antisemitism Policy Trust, Danny Stone, who views it as a "real concern". In such cases, the right of students—in this example, Jewish students—to feel safe on campus clearly must be considered. ...

*col 91 John Hayes (Conservative):* ... Free speech is complex ... The ability to say things which, as I said earlier, alarm, disturb, or even shock, and hear things with which we disagree is the very nature of what good universities are all about. I fear that that is jeopardised by some of the thinking that permeates universities, particularly university leaders and managers. For example, Professor Ahmed also spoke of "issues to do with race, with transgender, and with Israel and Palestine on which they were simply unwilling to say what they thought"—[\[Official Report, Higher Education \(Freedom of Speech\) Public Bill Committee, 7 September 2021; c. 13, Q22.\]](#)

people fear the consequences of doing so. It is not just those issues, although those are notable among the list of things that people now regard as beyond the scope of free and open debate.

*col 92 Miriam Cates (Conservative):* ... Does he not agree that much of the controversy surrounding this Bill comes from a conflation of physical safety with emotional and intellectual safety? Although students should have the right to be physically safe on campus, there is no right to feel safe and, as he rightly says, universities are the place where we should feel emotionally and intellectually challenged and, perhaps, unsafe at times.

**John Hayes:** ... Part of developing intellectually and personally, particularly for young people at university ... is exactly that. It is being stimulated, sometimes being excited, sometimes being challenged and, yes, sometimes being offended. ...

**Emma Hardy (Labour):** ... On the issue of the need to challenge and to shock, there is always a line to be drawn somewhere. In Committee we talked about the offensiveness of holocaust denial. Okay, there is not a physical threat from holocaust denial, but I think that we would all agree that it is very offensive and it is therefore very hurtful. A line will always have to be drawn when it comes to free speech, but we have the difficulty, which I keep going back to, of who makes the decision on where that line is drawn—what experience do they have, what criteria is set, what is their knowledge, and what is their understanding of the subject. ...

**col 119 Jim Shannon (DUP):** ... I could give examples of Christian conferences not having their dates renewed at universities, or of young Christian unions being pigeonholed by activists into expressing an opinion based on their sincerely held belief, only for it to be cited as hate speech. ... The Bill will make a difference and protect Christians and other religious groups. ...

**col 120** I support the Bill in the hope that we will have freedom of speech, freedom of religion or belief and the freedom to choose no belief, if that is what people want, and that that will be enshrined in our universities rather than this seemingly insidious desire by a select few to shut down debate and oppose anyone who cannot agree with their “enlightenment”. ... Jews deserve the right to practise their religion in so far as it does not harm others, as do Muslims, Sikhs and Buddhists. They deserve the right to express their beliefs—as they still do—in a way that does not harm anyone. This is about respect, and I am browned off with seeing so much disrespect for people.

We must also legislate, increasingly, to ensure that those who wish to speak of Christ and His teachings have the right to do so in the halls of their university student unions, and not just in their churches or chapels. ...

**To read the full transcript cols see**

[https://hansard.parliament.uk/commons/2022-06-13/debates/C2676807-573C-4BD1-9F12-4E0C0BCBAE5D/HigherEducation\(FreedomOfSpeech\)Bill](https://hansard.parliament.uk/commons/2022-06-13/debates/C2676807-573C-4BD1-9F12-4E0C0BCBAE5D/HigherEducation(FreedomOfSpeech)Bill)

*The amendments referred to above can be read at*

[https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/bills/cbill/58-03/0001/amend/higherEd\\_day\\_rep\\_0613.pdf](https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/bills/cbill/58-03/0001/amend/higherEd_day_rep_0613.pdf)

## House of Lords Debate

### Schools Bill, Committee Stage

**col 1360 The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Department for Education (Baroness Barran):** ... Amendment 40 relates to academy trust standards. Clause 7 allows the Secretary of State to replace an entire trust board with a board of interim trustees. The amendment makes specific provision for the Secretary of State to consult the relevant religious body where the trust includes academies designated as having a religious character. It takes account of the fact that religious bodies have a particular interest in the governance of academies with a religious character, as reflected in those academies’ articles of association. Where the Secretary of State intends to appoint an interim trustee board, the religious authority will rightly wish to be assured that arrangements are in place to safeguard academies’ religious character. The amendment will ensure that religious bodies are able to make representations before any decision is made to appoint an interim trustee board. ...

I turn to Amendments 148 and 153. It is a criminal offence to conduct an unregistered, independent educational institution. Those who are responsible for these unregistered settings may knowingly expose the children in their care to a risk of harm and could be a

safeguarding risk. Since 2016, fewer than 20 people have been convicted of this offence, but other measures in the Schools Bill should make it easier to identify and prosecute such people. This measure tackles what we have identified to be a risk in our current regulatory regime. There is insufficient practical impediment to those who have been prosecuted for running an unregistered school restarting their operations immediately and, again, exposing children to risk. These amendments tackle that weakness.

*col 1361* Those in receipt of one of these orders will be restricted from a wide range of activities, if these are necessary, to reduce the risk of harm to children. The intent is to make it easier to target and bring prosecutions against those who, through their previous behaviour, have demonstrated themselves willing to expose children to a risk of harm. Any application of these orders will be proportionate to the threat posed. The intent is to prevent reoffending and someone reopening a previously identified illegal school. ...

*col 1365* **The Lord Bishop of Bristol:** ... I ... welcome Amendment 40 in this group, which offers real clarity on the issue. We welcome the recognition it shows that the religious body must be involved in giving an interim trustee notice to the proprietor of an academy school with a religious character. ...

*col 1371* Amendment 33 to Clause 3 “ensures that the religious designation of church schools could not be removed by secondary legislation.” ...

We believe that this amendment strengthens that intention and provides a further safeguard.

A necessarily broad approach is undertaken in this Bill in applying legislation for maintained schools to academies through amending regulations. While we can appreciate the need to do this, it is unusual to see primary legislation which enables power to be applied or disapplied by secondary legislation. This short amendment would ensure that the “religious designation” of “schools could not be removed by secondary legislation.”

I appreciate that Clause 3(3) provides for the protection of the status of an academy “with a religious character” by prohibiting regulations for “arrangements for collective worship and the provision of religious education”.

*col 1372* However, these are just some of the outworkings of the religious character of a school, and we believe that this additional safeguard is necessary to safeguard the very designation of its character. It would be inappropriate to allow secondary legislation to have such impact on the designation of character of so many schools. ...

**Baroness Wilcox of Newport (Labour):** ... our Amendment 35 removes the Secretary of State’s power to apply legislation “relating to further education colleges to academies” by removing “further education” from “the definition of ‘educational institution’”. As it stands, these clauses signal a further power grab, empowering a future Secretary of State unilaterally to remove religious designation from a faith school, as noted in the right reverend Prelate the Bishop of Durham’s Amendment 33. ...

**Baroness Barran:** ... the Government are a strong supporter of schools provided by the Church of England and by other religious bodies. We believe strongly that they bring great richness and diversity to our school system. That is why we have included measures in the Bill to ensure that statutory protections are in place for academy schools with a religious character, to ensure that their unique powers and freedoms are appropriately safeguarded. The power to designate a school with a religious character is already enshrined in existing legislation. I give a clear commitment that the Government will not use the powers in Clause 3 to affect the designation of academy schools with a religious character.

*col 1376* I appreciate that the right reverend Prelate’s concern extends beyond the intentions and commitments of this Government. However, we are committed to ensuring that schools with a religious character remain an important element of our school system in the future. I offer my reassurance that we will give further consideration to ensuring that the powers in Clause 3 could not be used to undermine this. ...

*col 1417 Lord Addington (Liberal Democrat):* ... I appreciate what the right reverend Prelate has said about Amendment 39C. I was going to ask the Minister whether she could give us some description of what this would mean in practice if it was implemented. I appreciate that there may be problems with it. There are a series of arguments and messages running around the place about certain smaller religious groups that are getting very worried about this. What would be the result here and what is the Government's thinking about how smaller religious schools will fit in? ...

*col 1422 Baroness Barran:* 40: Clause 7, page 8, line 7, at end insert—

“(3A) Where the Secretary of State proposes to give an interim trustee notice to the proprietor of one or more Academy schools with a religious character, the Secretary of State must first consult the relevant religious body for each Academy school with a religious character in the proprietor's care.”Member's explanatory statement

This amendment requires the Secretary of State, before giving an interim trustee notice to the proprietor of an Academy school with a religious character, to consult the relevant religious body for the school.

*Amendment 40 agreed.*

*Clause 7, as amended, agreed. ...*

**Baroness Blower (Labour):** ... On Amendment 55, clearly, there are many parents who choose schools with a religious character, whatever that may be. However, equally, there are parents and carers who would seek to avoid institutions of a religious character, believing that for them education should be in institutions with a secular ethos. Nothing in this amendment is designed to undermine, or otherwise interfere with, existing arrangements. However, given the intention that all schools should be part of a MAT [Multi Academy Trust] by 2030, there should be a requirement that schools that have hitherto enjoyed a secular ethos should be required to consult widely before considering an application to a MAT with a religious character. Such consultation should be carried out in a timely fashion and deal with how joining a religious-character MAT would affect the existing school's ethos. ...

*col 1439 The Lord Bishop of Chichester:* ... The language used in Amendment 55 is unhelpful. It should be noted that church academy trusts are based on church model articles which have a religious object, but that does not make them religious trusts. Church model articles provide a commitment to supporting the individual ethos of the school, whether it is a designated school or not. The requirement for additional consultation would add an unnecessary level of bureaucracy. ...

*col 1443 Baroness Barran:* ... I turn to Amendment 55. I thank the noble Baroness, Lady Blower, for her amendment relating to academies without a religious character joining a MAT with a majority of or all academies with a religious character. The process by which an academy joins another trust is a matter for agreement between the two trusts and is subject to the approval of the Secretary of State in the person of the regional director. When considering any application for a stand-alone academy to join a trust, the regional director will consider what stakeholder engagement has taken place and take account of views expressed. It is neither necessary nor appropriate to provide specific consultation requirements in legislation. ...

*col 1449 Baroness Penn (Conservative):* ... The Government entirely appreciate that the governance protections in Clause 20 are incredibly important to the Church of England and all other religious denominations. They will provide reassurance to local authority-maintained schools with a religious character that their religious character, which is maintained and developed through their governance arrangements, will continue to be protected once they become academies. ...

Clause 20 applies to all academy trusts which contain academies with a religious character. It also covers a much wider range of governance matters than the specific point in Clause 19. For example, regulations made under Clause 20 may include who can be

appointed into different governance roles and the connection they must have to the relevant religious body. It may also include alterations to the articles of association, the composition of committees and the delegation of responsibilities. ...

*col 1450* ... to be clear, the Government do not intend to avoid making regulations under Clause 20. Instead, I assure the right reverend Prelate of our absolute commitment that, after consultation, the Government will make regulations under Clause 20 which apply to all academy trusts with an academy school of any religious character.

The regulations made under Clauses 19 and 20 will make clear the circumstances in which certain governance arrangements must be in place. For example, this could be when a trust must ensure that the majority of directors are appointed by the relevant religious body. However, this does not mean that similar arrangements cannot be used in other circumstances. For example, an academy trust in which fewer than half the academies are former voluntary aided Church of England schools can still adopt articles of association in which the majority of directors are appointed by the relevant religious body.

In addition, as stated in the clause, the Secretary of State will consult before the regulations are first made. This consultation will include appropriate stakeholders, including religious bodies. ... we will continue to work constructively with dioceses and other religious bodies to agree the most appropriate governance arrangements for academy trusts comprising different types of academies with a religious character. ...

*col 1451* **Baroness Meacher (Crossbench):** ... Some 62% of people in this country do not identify as Christian, according to the most recent British Social Attitudes survey in, I think, 2022. More than 50% say they are of no religion. In this context, is it really appropriate that all schools in England require pupils to take part in a daily act of Christian worship? Surely not. Also, under the Human Rights Act 1998 and the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, younger children have the right to freedom of religion or belief. We do not seem to provide that in this country at the moment.

Many parents send their children to a faith school because the school has a good academic reputation or a good reputation for discipline, for example. They may not be people of religion at all. Others find that they have no option but to send their child to a religious school; it is the only nearby school suitable for their child. The law needs to take account of these situations. In reality, many children in faith schools for whom Christian worship has no meaning do not opt out of the collective worship events because they do not wish to attract attention to themselves or to be ostracised by others.

In my view, the lack of any organised alternative activity for these children increases the child's reluctance to draw attention to themselves and opt out. At present, children who have withdrawn from collective worship often just have to sit outside the door—almost like a naughty child—or are left in an empty classroom with nothing to do.

These three amendments [53, 57, and 58] would ensure that the needs of all children are met. They are supposed to be not anti-religion but in favour of the needs of all children. Amendment 53 would require faith academies to provide a meaningful alternative assembly for pupils who have withdrawn from collective worship. ...

Amendment 57 would replace collective worship in academy schools “without a religious character” with a requirement to hold inclusive assemblies. The UK is the only sovereign state in the world to impose worship in all state schools, including schools without a religious character.

*col 1452* The majority of parents do not support this, according to the findings of a YouGov poll. Most parents were not aware of the law but, when made aware of it, 60% of parents opposed it being enforced.

Amendment 57 would free up schools to hold assemblies on subjects that parents do want to see covered. A YouGov poll from 2019 found that religious worship came bottom, surprisingly, of a list of 13 possible topics that could be covered in assemblies, with fewer than one third of parents considering it to be appropriate. The topics that parents wanted to be covered in assemblies included, for example, the environment and nature, equality

and non-discrimination, physical and mental health and celebration of achievements. The topics could include religious content but not in the form of veneration of a divine being; it would be more like religious discussion, debate about different religions and so on, with more of an educational content.

Very importantly, the amendment would reflect the recommendations from the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child, which has urged the UK to repeal our collective worship laws. ...

Amendment 58 ... would significantly reduce discrimination against teachers applying for a job in a faith-based academy. The law already maintains that faith academies cannot discriminate on grounds of religion during the hiring or promotion of teaching staff unless there is a “genuine occupational requirement”. However, the current law is confusing. The English educational law, Section 124AA of the School Standards and Framework Act 1998—sorry to be so tedious—and paragraph 4(d) of Schedule 22 to the Equality Act 2010, appear to allow faith schools to discriminate on the basis of religion or belief for the purposes of appointment, promotion, remuneration or termination of employment of teachers, even where there is not an occupational requirement. The result is that many schools currently do discriminate even where the employment equality directive makes it clear that this is not allowed.

Amendment 58 would remove any ambiguity in the law and make it clear across legislation that discrimination is allowed only where there could be said to be a genuine occupational requirement ...

*col 1453* **Baroness Whitaker (Labour):** ... as the arrangements stand for what the Bill calls worship and religious education, there is no recognition of the fact that many parents will have an ethical and moral code that is not based on faith. As the noble Baroness said, current figures suggest that it is actually over half of our population. Why should these parents not have their values recognised and their children enabled to learn them?

I hasten to add that these amendments in no way disparage religious education. It is simply that there are other sets of beliefs, and indeed other religions than Christianity, that have a long and influential tradition, have helped to form our national identity and should not be sidelined in an education worthy of the name.

I will add only that we now live in a diverse society, which I believe the Government welcome. One corollary of that is that we need to develop and strengthen the bonds that unite us in our differences. We will not do this by neglecting the elements of our various faiths and beliefs in the education of our children. To live with each other, we need to understand each other within a framework of human rights; we need to learn to respect where our fellow citizens are coming from. I suggest that this is a better way to avoid extremism—from any side—than excluding the traditions that people value. Among those are values that establish a moral code that is not faith-based. ...

*col 1454* **Lord Knight of Weymouth (Labour):** ... We have heard ... the stats from the British Social Attitudes survey regarding the number of those now identifying as non-religious, non-Christian and so on. It is particularly high, at 72%, among those in the age bracket 25 to 44 —that is, those most likely to have school-age children—yet over one-third of our state-funded schools have a religious ethos, and I respect them. The vast majority of those, 99%, are Christian, and I respect that too. Indeed, in 2020 the Church of England’s own Statistics for Mission revealed that the number of places in Church of England schools now outstrips the Church’s entire worshipping community.

The DfE’s associated memorandum declares that it is not compulsory for a child to attend a school with a religious designation, but of course this ignores the fact that, as we have heard, thousands of parents are effectively having to send their children to faith schools every year because there is no suitable alternative locally. ...

... while you could get assistance with transport if you wanted to send your child to a different faith based-school, you certainly could not get such assistance if you wanted to send them to a comprehensive non-faith-based school if that was what in accordance with

your views.

It is that kind of discrimination against people who are not of faith which I am keen to try to do something about ... Amendment 54 provides a remedy. It would mean that children who do not share the religion of the school they attend will have access to an “objective, critical and pluralistic” version of the subject that does not seek to indoctrinate them into one religious perspective.

*col 1454* Amendment 56 would make it explicit that RE outside of faith academies must be inclusive of non-religious worldviews such as humanism, in line with what is already required by case law, and rename the subject accordingly to “religion and worldviews”. RE is a statutory subject in all schools. However, recent figures from the National Association of Teachers of Religious Education found that 50% of academies without a religious character, which make up approximately two-thirds of academies, do not meet their legal requirements to provide the subject as set out in their funding agreements. ...

Finally, I stress that the new “religion and worldviews education” would still reflect the fact that the religious tradition in Great Britain is, in the main, Christian. This is not at all an attempt to whitewash out teaching about religious traditions. Those are really important if we want to have an inclusive society that respects each other’s traditions and faiths. ...

**The Lord Bishop of Chichester:** ... I strongly urge noble Lords not to support the proposal set out in Amendment 53. It is framed as a mandatory requirement. However, it is unclear what would satisfy the definition of “a meaningful alternative” for pupils. Furthermore, it does not consider the resourcing implications in terms of staff and accommodation, depending on the number of pupils opting out.

Amendments 54 and 56 provide no definition of what constitutes such an “objective, critical and pluralistic” education. This would require a much fuller consensus to be achieved about the purpose and content of the RE curriculum, which is not the purpose of the Bill ... The wording around acts of worship and “religious observance” in Amendment 57 is open to interpretation, which is subjective. It would be very difficult to define or apply it consistently. A prohibition as proposed under this amendment would appear excessive and it is unclear how it would be monitored.

Amendment 58’s removal of provisions may conflict with church school trust deeds and governance documents that require certain staff in a church school to have particular attributes as a genuine occupational requirement; for example, fitness and competence to teach religious education because of their religious opinions, attendance at religious worship, and/or willingness to teach in accordance with religious tenets. ...

*col 1456* **Baroness Meacher:** ... does the right reverend Prelate really feel he should be persuading Ministers not to adopt these amendments when religious communities as well as non-religious communities support them? Secondly, he said that teachers must not be discriminated against if they have a requirement in their job, but the amendment allows for that very clearly. If there is an occupational requirement to have religious knowledge, that teacher will be expected to have religious knowledge ...

**Baroness Fox of Buckley (Non-affiliated):** ... Maybe I could raise a non-religious voice with some concerns I share against these amendments.

I am particularly worried about Amendments 53 and 57 and the idea of alternative assemblies “directed towards furthering the spiritual, moral, social and cultural education of the pupils”. I fear this would become a secular version of religion, with all its preaching of things I do not particularly like. ...

While I am not religious and consider myself a humanist, I feel queasy because we have a problem in this country of religious illiteracy. I think we want a secular society that understands religion and shows some regard for religion and its tradition. Religion seeps into the public sphere and a lack of religious literacy can be problematic. ...

*col 1457* I think all pupils, including those of religious faiths, would benefit from reading John Locke’s *A Letter Concerning Toleration* and understanding the philosophical roots

and importance of religious freedom for a secular society, ironically, and from reading *On Liberty* by John Stuart Mill. This might counter, for example, the shocking events we saw in Batley, where a religious education teacher is still in hiding for his life over the allegation of blaspheming—despite the fact there is no blasphemy law. ...

I was glad to see in Amendments 54 and 56 an acknowledgement that Christianity is the predominant religion in Great Britain, because I think people have got a bit queasy about saying that for some reason. It is important to understand that the Christian tradition does not just inform faith or even a moral framework for the country, but has provided centuries of cultural imagery in art and literature. I remember, as an English teacher, standing in front of a group of A-level students and asking, “What might that apple symbolise?” I was met with blank faces because they could not understand what I meant: the apple did not symbolise anything to them. ...

Finally, I worry about some of the comments made that assumed that people of faith or introducing pupils to faith—within faith schools, for example—equals indoctrination. That is the wrong way to see it. ...

It is also wrong to associate religion with extremism per se, or to imagine that the problems of political extremism that we might see in society are to do with religion ... We should also be concerned about a mood of intolerance to Christianity, or even a squeamishness, with people feeling embarrassed by Christianity in this country; ... we should be careful not to demonise religion, religious people or faith in our aspiration to widen education and give more options for non-religious families. ...

**col 1458 Lord Lucas (Conservative):** ... We know that religion is an immensely powerful and deep force for people. The Church of England is very civilised and easy to get on with; it is part of our community and history. ...

If you are sending your child to a school run by the Church of England or the Catholic Church, for goodness' sake, you know what you are getting. Although I have come out the far side of religion some long time ago, I very happily sent a couple of my children to schools with a strong Church of England ethos, and it did not do them any harm any more than it did me harm to go to church twice a day for 15 years of my life. Religion is not a poisonous thing; it is an enriching thing. ...

**The Lord Bishop of Chichester:** ... I am very aware of the important statement that the Queen made in her Diamond Jubilee about the vocation of the Church of England, which is not to promote itself but to promote faith, the practice of faith and respect for people of faith. The noble Baroness's comments on religious literacy are very timely, particularly if we are taking seriously the education of our young people as they face not only a global issue in which religious literacy is of increasing importance but also, of course, as we prepare them for a pluralistic society here in England, in Britain, where, once again, religious literacy is increasingly important because of the range of places from which people come and the faiths that they bring with them. ...

**col 1459 Lord Shipley (Liberal Democrat):** ... these amendments are not aimed at diluting the approaches of faith schools or undermining their rights to maintain the faith ethos taught in them. They simply mean that students who opt out of faith-based RE and all students at non-religious schools have a more inclusive subject available to them. ...

As I understand it, these amendments would not actually change the legal position but place existing case law into statute. In 2015, in the case of *Fox v Secretary of State for Education*, the High Court ruled against the DfE and in favour of three humanist parents and their children who challenged the Government's relegation of non-religious world views in the new subject content for GCSE religious studies. The court stated that religious and non-religious world views, such as humanism, must be afforded equal respect in the RE curriculum. I have concluded that the amendments would simply ensure that equal respect becomes a statutory requirement. Does the Minister see it in the same way? ...

**Baroness Wilcox of Newport:** ... RE becomes RVE in Wales this September—religion,

values and ethics. There is a great deal to learn from what the devolved nations are doing.

*col 1460* The place of religion and belief in the education system is incredibly complex ... coming from a time when our society was much less diverse and much more religious than it is now. The amendments are targeted at ensuring that children of no faith do not miss out if they opt out of collective worship. They should not have to sit at the back of the classroom while everyone else is in assembly; they need a meaningful alternative provided for them during this time. These are admirable aims, to ensure that cultural education is balanced and non-exclusionary; in a modern and increasingly secular society, where children are exposed to all kinds of things, particularly in the online sphere, it should be a right that we promote. We should provide an excellent opportunity to discuss a variety of topics and issues. It is important to break down stigmas, and non-religious children in faith schools should not be made to feel left out if they opt out. The Government should think carefully about how to encourage this here. The amendments and the work in Wales are a way forward to do this. ...

**Baroness Penn:** ... The Government view collective worship as central to life in a school with a religious character. The right to withdrawal from collective worship is also important, as it provides choice for families as to whether or not their children participate. The amendment seeks, where children are withdrawn from collective worship, to provide an alternative assembly aimed at furthering the spiritual, moral, social and cultural—SMSC for short—education of pupils in schools with a religious character. The Government do not believe that the amendment is necessary, as all state-funded schools are already required to ensure the SMSC development of their pupils. Collective worship is one way to promote SMSC education, but there are areas of the curriculum in which schools can meet this requirement, such as religious education, history and citizenship.

On Amendment 54, when children are admitted to a school with a religious designation, their parents are aware of this and expect it to be part of the school's ethos and culture. The Government support the right of such schools to provide religious education that aligns with their religious character. ... I am unaware of significant demand from parents who withdraw their children from religious education to have this replaced by education representative of a wider range of religious and non-religious beliefs. There are many examples of academies with a religious designation taking care to ensure that their provision, to some degree, reflects a diversity of religions. We also expect schools to promote fundamental British values, which includes encouraging mutual respect and tolerance of those with different faiths and beliefs, including non-religious beliefs. ...

*col 1461* ... academies without a religious designation must already teach RE, reflecting the fact that the religious traditions in Great Britain are, in the main, Christian, and must take account of the teachings of the other principal religions in Great Britain. On nonreligious belief, this can be covered within RE. There is no obligation for schools to give equal time to the teaching of each religion or the teaching of nonreligious worldviews. ...

On Amendment 57, collective worship is important in encouraging pupils to reflect on the concept of belief and its role in the traditions and values of this country. ... As I have set out, there are already plentiful opportunities for schools to further children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural education regardless of religion or belief. This includes holding nonreligious assemblies ...

Amendment 58 would repeal specific sections from the Schools Standards and Framework Act 1998. This would have the effect of removing statutory freedoms and protections regarding the recruitment, promotion and remuneration of teachers by reference to their religious practice, belief or knowledge at academies with a religious character. The Government support the freedoms and protections associated with academies with a religious character, including their freedoms to continue to appoint, promote and remunerate their teachers and deal with their employment with reference to the relevant religion or religious denomination. The Government do not intend to change this position

for any school with a religious character, including academies. ...

**To read the full transcript cols 1358–1423 see**

[https://hansard.parliament.uk/lords/2022-06-13/debates/32E4B974-EE5B-44E8-B492-4D4CEBE438D0/SchoolsBill\(HL\)](https://hansard.parliament.uk/lords/2022-06-13/debates/32E4B974-EE5B-44E8-B492-4D4CEBE438D0/SchoolsBill(HL))

**To read the full transcript cols 1435–1462 see**

[https://hansard.parliament.uk/lords/2022-06-13/debates/B6BE0E00-6B9D-473D-8DDE-498A1198A9D0/SchoolsBill\(HL\)](https://hansard.parliament.uk/lords/2022-06-13/debates/B6BE0E00-6B9D-473D-8DDE-498A1198A9D0/SchoolsBill(HL))

*The amendments referred to above can be read at*

<https://bills.parliament.uk/publications/46728/documents/1921>

## Crown Office and Procurator Fiscal Service (COPFS)

### COPFS Committed to Tackling Hate Crime

The report on Hate Crime in Scotland 2021-22 shows there has been a marginal decrease of 0.2% in the total number of charges reported to COPFS containing at least one element of hate crime.

Commenting on the annual publication for the first time as Lord Advocate, Dorothy Bain QC, said: “Hate crime has damaging consequences for individuals, our communities and society as a whole. No one should find themselves targeted or abused for the simple act of being who they are.

“Offences which are fired by hatred and prejudice against race, religion, disability, transgender identity or sexual orientation will not be tolerated. ...”

The majority of hate crime charges contain a racial element. However, the proportion that contain a racial element has generally decreased over the last ten years, from 75% in 2012-13 to 55% in 2021-22.

The proportion of hate crime charges that relate to sexual orientation has increased from 13% to 32% over the same period.

In 2021-22 for the first time the proportion relating to disability (12%) was higher than the proportion relating to religion (9%).

Cabinet Secretary for Justice Keith Brown said: “Hate crime is a corrosive form of offending that has hugely damaging effects on victims, their families and the wider community. These latest figures show that we all must redouble efforts to tackle hatred and prejudice in Scotland – it will not be tolerated.

“That is why the Scottish Government has committed to developing a new hate crime strategy, for publication later this year. Building on the successful delivery of the Tackling Prejudice and Building Connected Communities Action Plan, the new strategy will look at where we need to bolster approaches to effectively confront hate crime offending in Scotland. ...

**To read the full press release see**

<https://www.copfs.gov.uk/about-copfs/news/copfs-committed-to-tackling-hate-crime-1/>

### Hate Crime in Scotland, 2021-22

<https://www.copfs.gov.uk/media/d3jnt5t2/hate-crime-2021-22-publication-final.pdf>

## Senedd Written Answer

**Tom Giffard (Conservative)** [WQ85195] What is the Welsh Government doing to support the Welsh Jewish Heritage Centre in Merthyr Tydfil?

**Deputy Minister for Climate Change (Lee Waters):** Our Transforming Towns Regeneration Programme was launched in January 2020 to address the decline in

town centres and the reduced demand for high street retail. The focus of the Programme is the sustainable growth of our town centres, through interventions that include improved biodiversity and green infrastructure; reuse of derelict buildings and increasing the variety of services on offer in towns.

We have received an application from Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council for support from the Transforming Towns programme to bring the former Synagogue in Merthyr Tydfil town centre back into use. The Synagogue is a key historic building in Merthyr Tydfil Town Centre and was identified as a priority site for Regeneration within the Merthyr Tydfil Regeneration Masterplan 2008 – 2015.

The application seeks support for a feasibility assessment, survey and design work in preparation for potential re-development of the Synagogue in the future. Officials have been working closely with Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council on a number of town centre Regeneration projects and a decision regarding the former Synagogue application is expected shortly.

<https://record.senedd.wales/WrittenQuestion/85195>

TOP

## Holocaust

*See the speech by President von der Leyen at the Ben-Gurion University of the Negev that is included in the Israel section below.*

TOP

## Israel

### House of Commons Written Answer

#### **Data Protection: Regulation**

**Chi Onwurah (Labour)** [13709] To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, whether she had discussions with the Secretary of State for Justice, prior to publication of that Department's proposals in the document entitled Human Rights Act Reform: a Modern Bill of Rights, on the potential risks to the adequacy agreement from proposals in that document relating to the human rights regime that affect the UK General Data Protection Regulation and Data Protection Act 2018, as identified by the Information Commissioner.

**Julia Lopez:** As was set out in the Bill of Rights consultation, the UK remains fully committed to the international human rights treaties to which it is party.

The Bill of Rights will ensure those rights in the European Convention on Human Rights can be interpreted in the UK context, with respect for our legal traditions and the will of elected lawmakers.

The UK has two EU adequacy decisions, under the General Data Protection Regulation and the Law Enforcement Directive. As the European Commission itself has made clear, a third country is not required to have exactly the same rules as the EU in order to be considered adequate. Indeed, there are thirteen other countries which have EU adequacy, including Israel, Japan, New Zealand and Canada. All of these nations pursue independent and varied approaches to data protection and human rights.

The UK is firmly committed to maintaining high data protection standards and ensuring that rights and liberties are protected - this will not change. Our view is

that reform of UK legislation on human rights is compatible with maintaining free flow of personal data from international partners.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2022-06-07/13709>

*The proposals referred to above can be read at*

<https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/human-rights-act-reform-a-modern-bill-of-rights/human-rights-act-reform-a-modern-bill-of-rights-consultation>

## UK Parliament Early Day Motion

**Tommy Sheppard (SNP) [153] Israeli Flag Day in Occupied East Jerusalem** – That this House condemns the annual Israeli flag march through Palestinian neighbourhoods of occupied East Jerusalem marked by widespread racist chants, including death to Arabs and we will burn your village; further condemns the frequent attacks on Palestinian residents of East Jerusalem by marchers, and attacks on journalists, including this year a BBC crew filming the event; notes with deep concern the endorsement and participation in the march of members of successive Israeli Governments; further notes the failure of the Israeli Government to issue its own condemnation of these events and to take action to prevent them, and believes this failure is indicative of broader discrimination against Palestinians in government policy which Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch, and the UN Special Rapporteur for human rights in the occupied Palestinian territory have all concluded to be the crime of apartheid against the Palestinian people.

<https://edm.parliament.uk/early-day-motion/59857>

## European Commission

### **Speech by President von der Leyen at the Ben-Gurion University of the Negev**

... I feel honoured and humbled by this recognition. The fact that the honorary doctorate comes from this prestigious institution, the Ben-Gurion University of the Negev, has a very special meaning for me. ... I am a European woman of German nationality. And not longer than 80 years ago, millions of Jewish people were murdered by Germans, in the greatest crime of all human history. We, in Germany, take historical and enduring responsibility for this inhuman disruption of civilisation. It is an indelible stain on my country's conscience, which we must never and will never forget. So it seems like a miracle that a German like me is welcomed and honoured here, in the State of Israel, as a friend among friends, only a few generations after the Shoah.

But it is no miracle. My being here is the consequence of a choice made by the State of Israel, and by one man above all: The great David Ben-Gurion. It was he who took the first, historic step towards reconciliation with the Germans. He believed that the best way to honour the victim's memory was to build a better future. It is also to the credit of David Ben-Gurion that my country looked the victims of our crimes in the eyes for the first time. The young German democracy grew stronger because of its developing friendship with the new State of Israel. We faced our guilt and our responsibility. ... The very reason why the European Union was founded lies in two simple words: Never again. A new generation of Germans was raised with that premise, including myself. I can say, without reservation, that I would not be here today if it was not for David Ben-Gurion.

As long as I can think, I was convinced of two very simple facts. First, there is no Europe without European Jews. And second, Europe and Israel are bound to be friends and allies. Because the history of Europe is the history of the Jewish people. ... Europe is the values of the Talmud, the Jewish sense of personal responsibility, of justice and of solidarity.

Today, almost 80 years after the Shoah, Jewish life in Europe is thriving again. ... And yet,

European Jewish life is also embattled and endangered. Anti-Semitism has not disappeared. It still poisons our societies. And anti-Semitic attacks happen today in Europe. It is a new threat, but it is the same old evil. Every new generation must take responsibility so that the past does not return. This is why I have put the fight against anti-Semitism and fostering Jewish life in Europe at the core of the European Commission's agenda. Our democracy flourishes if Jewish life in Europe flourishes, too. Throughout the centuries, the Jewish people have been 'a light unto the nations'. And they shall be a light unto Europe for many centuries ahead.

We have more in common than the geography would suggest. Our shared culture and values have created a deep connection between Europe and Israel. ... The strongest bond we share is our belief in democracy and in democratic values. And here again, Ben-Gurion's legacy is enduring. Ben-Gurion believed that Israel's strength depends on its democratic institutions. And only in a democracy, would citizens feel compelled to take responsibility for their common home. He is so right. Thanks to this conviction, the State of Israel has flourished ever since. You have become a prosperous nation, even in the most challenging of circumstances and in a complicated region. You championed women's rights in unlikely times, and Golda Meir's leadership inspired women across the world. ... Your freedom of thought has turned a small country of just a few million into a global trailblazer for science and innovation. And democracy has strengthened our special bond of friendship through the decades. Today, more than ever before, democracies like Europe and Israel should come closer together. Not because our democracies are perfect. They are not. No democracy is. Democracies offer the environment in which a diverse society can thrive. And they are challenged like never before. And we can help each other to overcome these challenges. ...

Today, I would like to focus briefly on three of these challenges. The first is the challenge stemming from autocracies, the second is climate change, and the third is democratic backsliding. The most direct of these challenges comes from authoritarian regimes outside our borders. ... It could not be more symbolic that the first Russian bombs on Kyiv fell right by the gate of a Holocaust memorial and that the Russian propaganda is built on the abominable rhetoric of 'denazification' against a democratic Ukraine. We see with great worry the age-old threat of scapegoating the Jewish people in times of war. I know that Israel has helped Ukraine with tonnes of humanitarian aid and a field hospital, and you have welcomed tens of thousands of Ukrainian refugees to your land. ...

But the Kremlin's behaviour only strengthened our resolve to break free of our dependency on Russian fossil fuels. For instance, we are now exploring ways to step up our energy cooperation with Israel. ...

Climate change is the great challenge that our democracies are fighting. And no one understands that better than you, here in the Negev. David Ben-Gurion believed that here in the Negev, Israel's creativity and its pioneering spirit would be tested, as he said. He always spoke about 'the duty to make the desert bloom'. And that is exactly what you have done ever since. ... I marvel at how you are testing new building materials that can withstand the desert heat – nature-based solutions – and how you have managed to adapt food crops to the desert climate. ...

A few weeks ago, I was in Davos, where President Herzog spoke exactly about that. It was an important speech, which resonated well beyond our region. President Herzog called for a new alliance – and I quote – 'to shape not only a new Middle East, but a renewable Middle East. A Middle East that thrives as a global hub of sustainable solutions in food, water and health, and as a source of solar energy to Europe, Asia and Africa.' I could not agree more with his vision. ...

The third and final challenge to democracy that I would like to address is perhaps the most subtle one. This challenge is within. It is the risk of backsliding that all our democracies face. Democracy is necessarily a work in progress. It must be exercised and renewed, each and every day. Each of our democracies is different and unique. But ultimately,

democracy in all its forms comes down to the same thing. As Ben-Gurion always said: 'The outstanding attribute of democracy is not government for the people. It is government by the people.' Democracy gives people a voice. It gives them the power to change things with their vote. In democracies, we even fight for other people's freedom to disagree with us. The freedom to speak your mind; the freedom to change your mind. The freedom to be yourself – so that if you are different from the majority, you are always equal before the law. And this is what binds democracies together. The recognition that we are all different, yet all equal. ...

Israel is a vibrant democracy, its resilience is admired worldwide. Israeli society is incredibly diverse. For example, I was impressed to learn that over 800 students from the Bedouin community are studying here at the Ben-Gurion University. Israel is a small slice of land where people of all faiths and born on all continents live together. Families who have lived here for generations, and families who have just arrived. Diversity can be an immense strength. Yet the path towards peaceful coexistence is long. And democracy is never accomplished once and for all. This is also true for the European Union. Like other democracies, Europe faces external threats ranging from disinformation to interference in our elections; as well as challenges from within our societies, ranging from nationalism to xenophobia, from revisionism to anti-Semitism. We must strengthen our democracies and democratic way of life every single day. We must nurture our openness, and our diversity. ...

Ben-Gurion said in the early days of the State of Israel: 'Independence does not mean only liberation from a foreign yoke. Independence has a positive meaning, and that is the most important. The positive content of independence means responsibility. It is independence of the heart. And it is independence of the will.'

Long live Europe.

Am Israel Chai.

**To read the full transcript see**

[https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/SPEECH\\_22\\_3685](https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/SPEECH_22_3685)

### **Statement by President von der Leyen with Palestinian Prime Minister Shtayyeh**

Thank you very much, dear Prime Minister, for welcoming me here in Ramallah. ... For many years now, the European Union has been supporting Palestine and the Palestinian people. As Team Europe, we are the largest donor in Palestine, with around EUR 600 million per year. And indeed now, I am very glad to announce that the EU funds for 2021 can be disbursed rapidly. All the difficulties are gone. ...

It is important to have this EU funding to support the people, especially the most vulnerable. It also helps create the right conditions for economic opportunities. ... For example, by enabling clean water and reliable energy supply, and many other topics that we could think of working on together. Palestine now slowly exits the pandemic, but it suffers the consequences of the next crisis that we have, and that is the Russian war against Ukraine. The Russian aggression has a devastating impact on food prices and on energy supply. And indeed, Palestine is dependent on imports of Ukrainian cereals ...

Of course, we will also discuss the important peace process. We welcome all efforts towards peace and remain committed to a negotiated two-state solution. A solution that gives the Palestinian people a perspective. This is so important. An independent, democratic and viable Palestine existing side by side in peace with Israel.

And finally, I wish to convey, dear Prime Minister, sincere regret for the death of Shireen Abu Akleh. The EU strongly condemns the killing of the journalist. And we call for a thorough, independent investigation. ...

**To read the full transcript see**

[https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/STATEMENT\\_22\\_3709](https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/STATEMENT_22_3709)

**TOP**

## Foreign Affairs

### Senedd Oral Answer

#### International Strategy for Wales

**Darren Millar (Conservative):** First Minister, football, and sport in general, of course, is a huge opportunity for Wales to make itself known on the international stage, but one opportunity that your international strategy really has missed is the opportunity that exists between faith communities in Wales because of their links with faith communities overseas. There are many churches, chapels and mosques across this country that enjoy excellent links in nations overseas and could easily afford an opportunity for Wales to raise its profile in those nations. Why is it that 'faith' does not appear as a word, apart from in terms of the title of the BBC programme *Keeping Faith*, that tremendous series—? Apart from that, the word 'faith' does not appear in the international strategy at all. Is that something that you will look at in order that we can ensure that these opportunities are not missed?

**The First Minister (Mark Drakeford):** Llywydd, I agree with what Darren Millar said, that we have many faith communities here in Wales who have important links with communities elsewhere in the world, and that brings with those connections opportunities to enrich people's understanding and to develop those connections between people that are to the benefit of us all. The international strategy, though, I think does have a different focus. It is essentially an economic focus, because most of the efforts of our overseas offices and most of the things that you will see in the international strategy are about making sure that there is strong support there for firms in other parts of the world who might be interested to come to Wales, and particularly for firms based in Wales to develop those export opportunities that they are looking for. It may be that there are connections that could be made between the agendas that are set out in the international strategy and the work of those wider communities. And, of course, we don't turn our back on those possibilities at all.

<https://record.senedd.wales/Plenary/12876#C431842>

TOP

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

### UK Parliament

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

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

Commons consideration of Bill as amended in the Public Bill Committee

[https://hansard.parliament.uk/commons/2022-06-13/debates/C2676807-573C-4BD1-9F12-4E0C0BCBAE5D/HigherEducation\(FreedomOfSpeech\)Bill](https://hansard.parliament.uk/commons/2022-06-13/debates/C2676807-573C-4BD1-9F12-4E0C0BCBAE5D/HigherEducation(FreedomOfSpeech)Bill)

Third Reading, House of Commons

[https://hansard.parliament.uk/commons/2022-06-13/debates/C2676807-573C-4BD1-9F12-4E0C0BCBAE5D/HigherEducation\(FreedomOfSpeech\)Bill#contribution-374F3437-A7F5-491E-A68C-8711C5EF5DB2](https://hansard.parliament.uk/commons/2022-06-13/debates/C2676807-573C-4BD1-9F12-4E0C0BCBAE5D/HigherEducation(FreedomOfSpeech)Bill#contribution-374F3437-A7F5-491E-A68C-8711C5EF5DB2)

#### Online Safety Bill

<https://bills.parliament.uk/bills/3137>

## **\*\* Schools Bill**

<https://bills.parliament.uk/bills/3156>

Committee Stage, House of Lords

[https://hansard.parliament.uk/lords/2022-06-13/debates/32E4B974-EE5B-44E8-B492-4D4CEBE438D0/SchoolsBill\(HL\)](https://hansard.parliament.uk/lords/2022-06-13/debates/32E4B974-EE5B-44E8-B492-4D4CEBE438D0/SchoolsBill(HL))

and

[https://hansard.parliament.uk/lords/2022-06-13/debates/B6BE0E00-6B9D-473D-8DDE-498A1198A9D0/SchoolsBill\(HL\)](https://hansard.parliament.uk/lords/2022-06-13/debates/B6BE0E00-6B9D-473D-8DDE-498A1198A9D0/SchoolsBill(HL))

Notice of amendments

<https://bills.parliament.uk/publications/46782/documents/1944>

## **Scottish Parliament**

### **Gender Recognition Reform (Scotland) Bill**

<https://www.parliament.scot/bills-and-laws/bills/gender-recognition-reform-scotland-bill>

TOP

## **Consultations**

\*\* new or updated today

### **\*\* closes in 9 days**

**Independent Review of Social Cohesion and Resilience** (closing date 23 June 2022)

<https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/independent-review-of-social-cohesion-and-resilience-call-for-evidence/independent-review-of-social-cohesion-and-resilience-call-for-evidence>

**Public Participation at the Scottish Parliament** (closing date 30 June 2022)

<https://yourviews.parliament.scot/cppp/participation-2022/>

TOP

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