Home Affairs

House of Commons Home Affairs Committee

Prevent Review

Q2 Tom Tugendhat (Minister for Security, Home Office): … The current threat is substantial, as you will know, and the reason for that determination is because of the level of threat we see around the nation. …

Q3 Chair (Diana Johnson, Labour): Where is the threat coming from?

Tom Tugendhat: The threat is varied. We are aware, first of all, of Islamist terrorism, which has been an issue in the UK over many years, and extreme right-wing terrorism. …

Q4 Tom Tugendhat: … As we know, Baroness Smeeth required police protection due to antisemitic threats. Others have faced extreme ideological violence against them and have required police assistance to keep them safe. I am afraid this is not a problem that has gone away. While it is certainly extremely present, sadly, among the parliamentary community, it is also present in the wider community.

We are seeing an increasing connection between state violence and terrorism and ideological connections. You will be aware that we recently identified the threat that Iran-connected activists pose to the Jewish and Israeli community in the United Kingdom. Sadly, the level of antisemitism has increased in recent years, as we all know. …

Q5 Tom Tugendhat: … Some 3,800 have been referred [to Prevent] and have come out the other end. It is not only high; it is also productive. This is a system that has worked. It has diverted mostly young people away from extremist ideology. …

We should see this very clearly for what it is, which is an attempt to protect everybody in our society, including most particularly those who are referred. …

Q6 Chair: [William Shawcross] seemed to be of the view that some people were not making referrals to Prevent because they might be accused of being racist. You have accepted that.

Tom Tugendhat: … Of course, it is possible that it is simply the case that those who are doing the referrals notice one and not the other, and the police later notice the other and pick it up. But it is also possible that, in a misplaced cultural relativism, people are allowing a soft bigotry to tolerate a cultural misunderstanding that pretends there is in
some way a tolerance for Islamist extremism, in a way that there quite rightly should not be for right-wing extremism. …

Q7 Tom Tugendhat: Let us be absolutely clear. Referring people to Prevent for being radicalised into Islamism is something many in the Islamic community are doing very actively. …

Q9 Paula Barker (Labour): In 2020-21, there were more referrals made for extreme right-wing concerns than for Islamist concerns. Why was that?

Tom Tugendhat: … It is hard to be absolutely certain, but we think people in some communities are more likely to refer extreme right-wing terror concerns than they would Islamist terror concerns. There are many suppositions as to why that might be the case. One is that there is a misunderstanding of what is culturally acceptable and what, therefore, might be an inspiration to radical ideology in some communities rather than others. That is what I mean by the bigotry of low expectations. We have to be very careful that we are not just holding everybody to the same standard … but also protecting everybody equally. …

Q14 Tom Tugendhat: … The ISC [Intelligence and Security Committee] has done some really important work on this; others have done work on this. I am afraid we have found, admittedly in anecdotal evidence, that in some areas people are less willing to refer when it may be Islamist in a Muslim context. …it is absolutely unacceptable to suggest that Islamism is acceptable in Islam; that is as wrong as suggesting right-wing views are acceptable in any other culture. …

Q24 Tim Loughton (Conservative): … Is it the case that Prevent drives extremism underground?

Tom Tugendhat: No, I do not think that is true. … Some loudmouths may say that their community feels like this is victimisation, but the communities themselves choose to engage with it. …

Q25 Tim Loughton: We took evidence some years ago in a different inquiry— I think it was to do with hate crime and racism—from university academics, who were very concerned that Prevent was effectively snuffing out free speech on university campuses because people did not want to express views that could be construed as extremist, which could make them candidates for the Prevent programme. …

Tom Tugendhat: No, we have not seen any serious evidence of that.

Michael Stewart (Director, Prevent, Home Office): … The Department for Education produces statistics on its safeguarding programmes for university speakers. The number of people who are refused an opportunity to speak on Prevent-related grounds is really tiny. We have not seen any broader indication that a chilling effect does exist. …

Q26 Tim Loughton: I am not talking about cancelling speakers. … I am talking about ordinary students who may be harbouring extremist views. They may have previously been engaged in debate or slightly more offensive behaviour, which would have revealed those extremist views, and they are now hesitant to do so and they seek other fora.

Q28 Tim Loughton: Can we touch on the issue about the proportions of Islamist extremism and right-wing extremism? That was one of the major observations by Shawcross. His figures say that, out of the 4,915 referrals to Prevent, 22% related to Islamist radicalisation and slightly more, 25%, related to extreme right-wing ideology. Yet in terms of the people who ended up being in custody on remand for terrorism-related offences, 70% are categorised as Islamist and 22% as extreme right wing. He claims that the Islamist threat is severely under-represented in Prevent referrals. Is he right on that?

Tom Tugendhat: I accept his report. … We need to find out the reasons for that misallocation and seek to make sure it is better represented. …

Q28 Tom Tugendhat: … today is the first day of Ramadan. Many people will be practising their faith in ways that will stand out in some communities. To stand out is not to be
extremist or to be in any way a danger or threat. To stand out is merely, in some cases, to be practising your religion. On Ash Wednesday, many of us Catholics will have a black mark on our forehead. That is hardly an extremist symbol. There are many other things people do culturally that may simply be a reflection of the cultural practices they follow either religiously or personally. …

To read the full transcript see
https://committees.parliament.uk/oralevidence/12904/html/

House of Lords Written Answers

Faith Schools

Lord Warner (Crossbench) [HL6437] To ask His Majesty's Government, further to the written answer by Baroness Barran on 9 March (HL5960), what further checks they have made to the 81 settings that claimed to have changed their operations; what steps they have taken to ensure that the 21 settings that have closed their operations have not reopened in another location; what powers local authorities have to close settings that are not compliant with safeguarding requirements; and whether, in the consultation to be launched later this year, they will seek to define "school" so as to enable Ofsted to close unsatisfactory settings more speedily.

Baroness Barran: It is a criminal offence under Section 96 of the Education and Skills Act 2008 to conduct an independent school which is not registered with the Department. Her Majesty’s Chief Inspector of Schools (HMCI) may, under Section 97 of that Act, inspect without notice any setting which they have ‘reasonable cause to believe’ is the site of an unregistered independent school. Settings that have previously been inspected under Section 97 and where the proprietor has been issued with a warning notice are likely to be inspected again under Section 97 to check compliance. This includes settings where the second inspection confirms closure or a change to compliant operation. A setting may not be inspected again under Section 97 where HMCI no longer has reasonable cause to believe that an unregistered school is being conducted. This may occur, for example, if the setting has registered as a school and is then subject to inspection as such. Ofsted considers all intelligence it receives about unregistered independent schools and will undertake a Section 97 inspection where it has reasonable cause to believe that an unregistered independent school is operating. This includes where new intelligence is received about previously closed sites or where proprietors that have received warning notices may be operating on alternative sites.

The department has consulted on expanding the categories of full-time institutions that will be regulated in the same way as independent schools, as well as defining what is ‘full-time’ for these purposes. Following this consultation, the government intends to legislate in this area at the next available opportunity.

Local authorities have overarching responsibility for safeguarding children and young people in their area, whether these children attend a school (either registered or unregistered), or an out-of-school setting (a setting not offering full-time education). They have a range of legal powers already in place to support them in this responsibility. The department will continue to work with authorities to ensure they are utilising the existing legal powers available to them. The department will also be reviewing and strengthening our existing guidance for local authorities on unregistered schools and out-of-school settings to support them to do this.

https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2023-03-13/hl6437

The answer referred to above can be read at
https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2023-02-27/hl5960
Schools: Bible and Koran

Lord Pearson of Rannoch (Non-affiliated) [HL6265] To ask His Majesty’s Government whether (1) the National Curriculum, and (2) other guidance provided to schools, requires that copies of the Koran and the Bible should receive equal respect; and if not, what plans they have to ensure that they are treated equally.

Baroness Barran: Every school should actively promote mutual respect and tolerance for those of different faiths and beliefs. Amongst other criteria, Ofsted will inspect pupils’ knowledge of, and respect for, different people's faiths, feelings, and values.

All schools must offer a broad and balanced curriculum, which promotes the spiritual, moral, cultural, mental, and physical development of pupils.

In response to recent incidents, the government has been repeatedly clear that there is no blasphemy law in the United Kingdom. The department has no plans to give specific guidance on the respect that should be shown to specific religious texts. However, the Home Office is drafting guidance on blasphemy incidents, which the department will support with as needed.

[Link to Parliament website]

Home Office

Commission for Countering Extremism end of year report 2022 to 2023

[Link to Government website]

Holocaust

Department for Culture, Media and Sport


... The keystone of the case made by the claimant is that the work now in the possession of the Museum and entitled La Ronde Enfantine was seized from the flat of Robert Léo Michel Lévy Bing at 8/10 rue Oswaldo Cruz, Paris on 5 May 1941 by two members of the Einsatzstab Reichsleiter Rosenberg (“ERR”) as part of the Nazi dispossession of Jews in occupied France...

... the claimant argues that it was probably acquired by his maternal grandmother, Clara Simonette Ballin (1845-1930). ...

... the ERR entered the apartment of Robert Bing at 8/10 Rue Oswaldo Cruz, Paris on 5 May 1941. They recorded in a document located by the claimant in the federal archive held at Koblenz in Germany, file B323-267, a file recording the looting of the property and describing the painting as “Courbet signed Waldlandschaft”. ...

It was held in the Jeu de Paume for the benefit of the leading Nazi collector, Hermann Goering. At one point he proposed to exchange it as part of a transaction involving the German Foreign Minister, Ribbentrop, but either the latter or his wife disliked the work and that transaction did not proceed. ...

... there was a further deliberate looting of Mr Bing’s apartment on 14 May 1941 when a large part of his furniture was loaded on to two trucks by French furniture removers under
German orders. Subsequently a piano and the remaining items were looted in December 1942 and March 1943. …
As soon as the Museum was alerted to the spoliation claim in July 2021, curatorial research was instigated to clarify provenance. … The Museum says that the research conducted by it on provenance at the time of receipt of the gift was consistent with the methods and norm of the time. …
The Panel having considered all the evidence adduced by the claimant and the Museum is satisfied that La Ronde Enfantine in the possession of the Fitzwilliam Museum is indeed the painting seized by the Nazi Institution ERR from the flat of Robert Bing on 5 May 1941. …
In light of the circumstances set out above, including paragraph 25, in which Robert Bing was deprived of the painting, we consider consistent with our approach in our previous decisions that the only appropriate remedy is restitution of the work. …
The Panel recommends that La Ronde Enfantine by Gustave Courbet currently in the possession and legal ownership of the Fitzwilliam Museum, University of Cambridge, be restituted to Mondex Corporation representing and on behalf of the heirs of Robert Bing. This recommendation implies no criticism of the Museum or the original donor … The Museum has cared for the work so that it can now be restored to the heirs of the original owners. …

To read the full report see:

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**Israel**

**House of Commons Written Answers**

**Israel: Diplomatic Service**

Steve McCabe (Labour) [167038] To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what assessment he has made of the implications for his policies of reports of staff from the Consulate General in Jerusalem wearing t-shirts which erase Israel's existence at a marathon race event in Jerusalem on 10 March 2023.

David Rutley: There is no implication for UK policy. The UK's position is long-standing - we wish to see a viable two-state solution with Israelis and Palestinians living side by side in peace, prosperity and security.

https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2023-03-16/167038

**Israel: Palestinians**

Sam Tarry (Labour) [168104] To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, if he will make representations to his Israeli counterpart on recent reports of violence in Huwara and Nablus.

Leo Docherty: The UK condemned in the strongest terms the retaliatory incidents of violence by settlers against Palestinians, and we have stressed the importance of the Israeli security forces providing appropriate protection to the Palestinian civilian population. The Foreign Secretary echoed this message of de-escalation in his meeting with Israeli Foreign Minister Cohen on 21 March. The Minister of State for the Middle East, Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon, set out the UK's position at the
Home of Lords Oral Answers

Occupied Palestinian Territories

Baroness Janke (Liberal Democrat): To ask His Majesty’s Government what assessment they have made of (1) the recent transfer of governance powers in parts of the Occupied Palestinian Territories from Israeli military authorities to Israeli civilian ministries, and (2) the implications of this transfer for securing a lasting peace in the region.

The Minister of State, Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (Lord Goldsmith of Richmond Park): My Lords, as the occupying power in the West Bank, Israel’s presence is governed by the provisions of the Geneva convention, and we call on Israel to abide by its obligations under international law. We are still examining the consequences of the recent transfer of some governance powers in the Israeli Ministry of Defense related to the occupation. The UK remains of the belief that there is no better alternative than a two-state solution for peace and for realising the national aspirations of both the Palestinians and Israelis.

Baroness Janke: I thank the Minister for his response. However, in the negotiation of the recent trade deal with Israel, which, according to the Prime Minister, was based on the common values of democracy, what assurances did the UK Government seek from the Netanyahu Government over compliance with international law in the Occupied Palestinian Territories and the avowed intent of the Netanyahu Government to remove democratic safeguards by emasculating the judiciary, in the face of massive opposition from Israeli citizens? What assurances did they receive?

Lord Goldsmith of Richmond Park: As noble Lords will know, our Prime Minister spoke to Mr Netanyahu just a few days ago as part of the development of the road map. The road map does not in any way change our support for a two-state solution. Our position on the settlements is clear: they are illegal under international law, they present an obstacle to peace and they threaten the physical viability of a two-state solution. Our position is reflected in our continued support for UN Security Council Resolution 2334.

Lord Hannay of Chiswick (Crossbench): My Lords, does the Minister recognise that, last week, a Minister in the Netanyahu Government opined that the Palestinians are neither a people nor a nation? Is that the view of His Majesty’s Government? If not, did that view get communicated by the Prime Minister to Prime Minister Netanyahu when he saw him? Also, what line did the Prime Minister take on the intention of the present Israeli Government to expand the scale of illegal settlements?

Lord Goldsmith of Richmond Park: My Lords, the remarks that the noble Lord refers to absolutely do not reflect the position of the UK Government and nor, I believe, do they reflect the view of the vast majority of people in Israel. High-level members of the current Government there have found themselves having to speak out on the same issue.

Lord Pickles (Conservative): My Lords, I draw attention to my interests in the register, particularly those relating to friendship with Israel. Does my noble friend agree with the sentiments of Golda Meir, who said that it is very difficult to negotiate with people who are trying to kill you? Looking for a secure and lasting peace in the region, does my noble friend think it would be sensible for the Palestinian Authority to cease the “pay to slay” policy whereby Palestinians are rewarded financially for the murder of an Israeli, whether it is an army officer or a child?
Lord Goldsmith of Richmond Park: My Lords, I fully subscribe to the comments my noble friend quotes. It is very hard to negotiate if one side does not believe that you have the right to exist, and it is clear from the security situation today that things are particularly fragile. Last year, a very large number of Palestinians and Israelis were killed by acts of violence, and 2023 started the same way. We are all appalled by the recent terror attacks near Jerusalem that killed two Israelis, and the attack on Sunday 26 February, which killed two Israelis on the West Bank. We condemn these attacks, as we do all such attacks, in the strongest possible terms, and we condemn the glorification of violence that so often happens among those in Gaza.

Lord Grocott (Labour): Does the Minister acknowledge that for years, if not decades, Ministers in his position on that Front Bench have reiterated support for a two-state solution and opposition to illegal settlement by the Israelis in the Palestinian territories? Can he confirm that there has been no progress whatsoever on either of those fronts in all the time that Ministers have been expressing those wishes and desires? Does he further agree that there is a diminishing prospect of any kind of two-state solution so long as the illegal Israeli occupation of parts of Palestinian territory continues?

Lord Goldsmith of Richmond Park: My Lords, the UK’s long-standing position on the Middle East peace process is clear and remains clear. We support a negotiated settlement leading to a safe and secure Israel living alongside a viable and sovereign Palestinian state, based on the 1967 borders, with equal land swaps to reflect the national security and religious interests of the Israeli and Palestinian peoples. That is our position and always has been our position. Regarding the settlements, there too our position remains unchanged. We want to see a contiguous West Bank, including east Jerusalem, as part of a viable sovereign Palestinian state, based on those same 1967 lines. We recognise that many such settlements are contrary to international law.

Lord Harries of Pentregarth (Crossbench): In his Answer to the noble Baroness, Lady Janke, the Minister said that the occupation should be governed by the Geneva convention and that the question of whether the transfer from military to civilian rule contravened or agreed with the convention was still being examined. When that examination has taken place, will the Minister kindly put the result in the Library?

Lord Goldsmith of Richmond Park: I will convey that perfectly reasonable request to my colleague who normally handles this brief.

Lord Purvis of Tweed (Liberal Democrat): My Lords, previously the Foreign Office indicated that it would not engage at ministerial or official level with Itamar Ben-Gvir and Bezalel Smotrich—the Minister referred to by the noble Lord, Lord Hannay. In a recent debate, the noble Lord the Minister said from the Dispatch Box that we would now engage with them and all Ministers in the Israeli Government, so why has there been this change of approach? Also recently, the noble Lord, Lord Johnson, the Trade Minister, said that human rights will not now be part of trade agreements. So can the noble Lord answer my noble friend’s Question and confirm that British Ministers, including the Prime Minister, have stated that the long-held protection for the illegally occupied territories in trade relations with the UK will be maintained in a specific chapter in any Israel-UK FTA?

Lord Goldsmith of Richmond Park: The noble Lord asked a lot of questions and I doubt whether I will be able to answer them all. In both this House and the other House, the UK has repeatedly and strongly condemned the comments of the Israeli Finance Minister, who, as the noble Lord will know, called for the Palestinian village of Huwara to be “wiped out”. We condemn his recent comments, which deny the very existence of the Palestinian people, their right to self-determination, their history and their culture. The UK has been unequivocal in its condemnation of that language.

Lord Leigh of Hurley (Conservative): My Lords, I was in the West Bank last week and I talked to Palestinians. They said—and this was supported by surveys—that they no longer
believe in the two-state solution. They saw what happened in Gaza, they do not trust their leadership and they want the advantage that Israeli benefits in health and so on can give them. Now is perhaps the time for the FCDO to lead the way and come up with a more imaginative solution, possibly modelled on the United Kingdom, where we have separate Governments for separate countries, because the two-state solution is a very long way away.

Lord Goldsmith of Richmond Park: My noble friend is vastly more knowledgeable about and qualified to speak about this issue than I am, and he makes a fascinating contribution. The reality is that, wherever things end up, a prerequisite has to be the cessation of terrorism and violence on both sides.

Lord Collins of Highbury (Labour): My Lords, in last week’s exchanges on the road map for future relationships with Israel, the Foreign Secretary also met with Eli Cohen, the Israeli Foreign Minister. The Foreign Office said that the recent spike in violence would be discussed, so can the Minister tell us what the outcome of those discussions was and whether any practical steps were agreed to support de-escalation?

Lord Goldsmith of Richmond Park: My Lords, I am afraid that I cannot give details on the nature of the exchange; I will have to get back to the noble Lord with that information. However, I do know that the concerns that both sides of this House have raised were raised in strong terms by both the Prime Minister and the Foreign Secretary in their respective discussions.

https://hansard.parliament.uk/lords/2023-03-27/debates/84A16D34-A3A5-4CC0-9820-93ECF1D58166/OccupiedPalestinianTerritories

The Roadmap referred to above can be read at https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/2030-roadmap-for-uk-israel-bilateral-relations/2030-roadmap-for-uk-israel-bilateral-relations

The UN Security Council Resolution referred to above can be read at https://www.un.org/webcast/pdfs/SRES2334-2016.pdf

The Minister’s comments during a recent debate, referred to above, can be read at col 786 at https://hansard.parliament.uk/lords/2023-03-07/debates/4D8A8A9C-2123-40A2-ABA7-CF717B55ACA3/IsraelAndPalestine#contribution-4721B280-33EF-40D3-A32E-E282AE81127D

Lord Johnson’s comments, referred to above, can be read at col 1038 at https://hansard.parliament.uk/Lords/2022-12-19/debates/34665408-3196-4DE9-8FE9-0B53A99B2AF3/CentralAmericaTradeAndInvestment#contribution-469B232F-11C8-4B53-A853-246BD38F26FF

The Israeli Finance Minister’s comments, referred to above, can be heard at https://twitter.com/MatanHodorov/status/163087014630301696

Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office

Foreign Secretary statement on pause to judicial reform in Israel

Foreign Secretary James Cleverly said: The UK welcomes the decision today by Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu to pause legislation to reform Israel’s judiciary.

The UK enjoys a deep and historic relationship with Israel. As the Prime Minister stressed in his meeting with PM Netanyahu last week, it is vital that the shared democratic values that underpin that relationship are upheld, and a robust system of checks and balances are preserved.

We urge all parties to find common ground and seek a long-term compromise to this sensitive issue.

Updated Travel Advice: Israel
https://www.gov.uk/foreign-travel-advice/israel

Updated Travel Advice: The Occupied Palestinian Territories
https://www.gov.uk/foreign-travel-advice/the-occupied-palestinian-territories

Department for Business and Trade

Updated Trade and Investment Factsheet: Israel

Updated Trade and Investment Factsheet; Occupied Palestinian Territories

Relevant Legislation  ** new or updated today

UK Parliament

Bill of Rights Bill
https://bills.parliament.uk/bills/3227

Education (Non-religious Philosophical Convictions) Bill
https://bills.parliament.uk/bills/3186

** Higher Education (Freedom of Speech) Bill
https://bills.parliament.uk/bills/2862
House of Commons Library Briefing: Progress of the Bill

Holocaust Memorial Bill
https://bills.parliament.uk/bills/3421

Marriage Act 1949 (Amendment) Bill
https://bills.parliament.uk/bills/3325

** Online Safety Bill
https://bills.parliament.uk/bills/3137
Notice of amendments
https://bills.parliament.uk/publications/49991/documents/3228

Palestine Statehood (Recognition) Bill
https://bills.parliament.uk/bills/3217
Private Burial Grounds and Cemeteries Bill
https://bills.parliament.uk/bills/3188

Same Sex Marriage (Church of England)
https://bills.parliament.uk/bills/3438

Schools Bill
https://bills.parliament.uk/bills/3156

Universal Credit (Removal of Two Child Limit) Bill
https://bills.parliament.uk/bills/3163

Scottish Parliament

Charities (Regulation and Administration) (Scotland) Bill

Gender Recognition Reform (Scotland) Bill

Consultations

Prospective Scheme of Delegation for the Charity Commission for Northern Ireland
(closing date 15 May 2023)

** Review of the Race Relations (NI) Order 1997 (closing date 18 June 2023)

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