Home Affairs

House of Lords Written Answers

The following two questions both received the same answer

Marriage

Baroness Cox (Crossbench) [HL9547] To ask His Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the urgency of the need for marriage law reform, with particular reference to protection and prevention for women whose religious marriage ceremonies do not comply with legal requirements and may not be legally recognised.

Marriage: Ceremonies

Baroness Cox (Crossbench) [HL9550] To ask His Majesty's Government, further to the Written Answers by Lord Bellamy on 8 November 2022 (HL2958 and HL2957) when their response to the Law Commission’s report Celebrating Marriage: A New Weddings Law published on 19 July 2022 will be published.

Lord Bellamy: The Government shares the concern that some people, and disproportionately women, may have a religious wedding that is not legally binding, and does not provide legal protections, without appreciating the consequences. We are carefully considering the Law Commission’s recommendations on weddings reform. As part of its review, the Law Commission has considered ways of ensuring there are fewer religious wedding ceremonies that result in a marriage which the law does not recognise.

Marriage will always be one of our most important institutions, and we have a duty to consider the implications of any changes to the law in this area very carefully. We are now taking the time to consider the report’s recommendations and will publish a response shortly.

https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2023-07-20/hl9547

and

https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2023-07-20/hl9550

The answers referred to above can be read at

https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2022-10-27/hl2957

and
The following two questions both received the same answer

**Marriage: Ceremonies**

Baroness Cox (Crossbench) [HL9548] To ask His Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the adequacy of current marriage law in an inclusive multi-faith society.

Baroness Cox (Crossbench) [HL9549] To ask His Majesty's Government what is their assessment of the compliance of the Marriage Act 1949 and other marriage law with the right to freedom of religion or belief, when Church of England and Church in Wales marriage ceremonies fulfil legal requirements and are legally recognised, while other religious ceremonies may not be.

Lord Bellamy: The law makes provision for couples to marry in registered places of worship in a way that gives them legal rights and protections. Couples may choose instead to have a religious-only celebration alongside a legally binding civil ceremony.

However, the Government does share the concern that some people may have a wedding ceremony that does not give them legal rights and protections, without appreciating the consequences.

As part of its review, the Law Commission made recommendations which seek to ensure that, insofar as possible, couples are provided the same opportunities to legally marry in a way that reflects their beliefs. This would mean fewer ceremonies conducted according to religious rites result in a marriage that the law does not recognise.

The Government is considering its report carefully and will respond in due course.

The Law Commission review, referred to above, can be read at https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2023-07-20/hl9548 and https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2023-07-20/hl9549

Other Relevant Information

**Community Security Trust (CST)**

Antisemitic Incidents Report January-June 2023

CST’s Antisemitic Incidents Report January-June 2023 ... shows 803 instances of anti-Jewish hate recorded across the UK in the first six months of this year. This is a 2% decrease from the 823 incidents reported in the first half of 2022, and is the sixth-highest total ever recorded by CST in the January to June period. CST recorded 1,371 antisemitic incidents in the first six months of 2021, 875 in the first half of 2020, and 911 between January and June 2019. ...

Over 100 antisemitic incidents were recorded in each of the first six months of the year. This is the second consecutive year in which this has occurred, and the sixth year in the last seven. The substantial level of reports in 2023 is not a consequence of any single
trigger event, but is simply consistent with the high reporting averages that have become typical. …

Incidents affecting the school sector rose by 29%, from 52 in the first half of 2022 to 67 between January and June 2023. Many of these incidents are counted among the 103 instances in which the offender was under the age of 18 – 25% … This is the highest proportion of child offenders reported in the first six months of any year since 2015 …

… this persistent strain of increased anti-Jewish hate among young people appears to run deeper than a desire to direct anti-Israel feeling at Jewish people. Fifty per cent of incidents perpetrated by minors showed evidence of at least one political, religious, or racist rhetoric, conspiracy theory or ideology. The most common of these discourses made reference to Hitler, the Nazis, the Holocaust, or used discourse and imagery associated with that period in history. …

CST Chief Executive Mark Gardner said: “Every single month, British Jews are reporting over 100 antisemitic hate incidents to CST. It shows the base level of anti-Jewish hatred, but it also shows the importance of the tone and policies that are set by leaders and influencers. …”

HM Government’s Independent Adviser on Antisemitism Lord Mann said: “CST is recognised across government and policing as the reliable source of evidence about the nature and scale of antisemitism across the country. Anyone who thinks the issue has gone away needs to read this report and see how antisemitism manages to persist and find new outlets to threaten, abuse and harm Jewish citizens of all ages. …”

To read the full press release see
https://cst.org.uk/news/blog/2023/08/03/antisemitic-incidents-report-january-june-2023

Antisemitic Incidents January-June 2023

Relevant Legislation ** new or updated today

UK Parliament

Economic Activity of Public Bodies (Overseas Matters) Bill
https://bills.parliament.uk/bills/3475

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

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
Nakba Commemoration Bill
https://bills.parliament.uk/bills/3461

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

Terrorism (Protection of Premises) Draft Bill

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

Universal Jurisdiction (Extension)
https://bills.parliament.uk/bills/3454

Scottish Parliament

Charities (Regulation and Administration) (Scotland) Bill

Gender Recognition Reform (Scotland) Bill

Consultations ** new or updated today

Economic Activity of Public Bodies (Overseas Matters) Bill (closing date not specified – no later than 14 September 2023 but may be earlier)

UK international development white paper (closing date 16 September 2023)
The Scottish Council of Jewish Communities (SCoJeC) is Scottish Charitable Incorporated Organisation SC029438

A Human Rights Bill for Scotland (closing date 5 October 2023)

The future of population and migration statistics in England and Wales (closing date 26 October 2023)
https://consultations.ons.gov.uk/ons/futureofpopulationandmigrationstatistics/