

The Rt. Hon. Nadhim Zahawi MP
Secretary of State for Education
House of Commons
London SW1A 0AA

Dear Minister

The School Bill [HL], which is currently on the table in Parliament, contains suggestions attempting to dictate how we should operate our independent religious settings, known as yeshivas, and what should be taught there.

Jews have, thank G-d, lived in England for hundreds of years, and the British Government has graciously allowed us to practice our religion freely. To this day, the United Kingdom is proud to be a country that allows people of all faiths to live peacefully in accordance with their religious principles. But unfortunately, the proposed bill flies in the face of this great tradition by attempting to alter fundamental facets of Jewish practice.

The Charedi education system is very successful; its graduates are law-abiding and prosperous citizens. Everyone who knows our beautiful settings first-hand can testify that they provide an excellent environment. Our children feel safe and happy with their experience there.

Crime rates in our communities are disproportionately low across the board. Our neighborhoods are known to be safe. We follow the ways of our parents and grandparents, passed down by tradition, in a chain leading back to the Giving of the Torah by G-d at Mount Sinai. Throughout the centuries, the yeshivas, educating the next generation, have been an integral part of that tradition, and the foundation of our existence as a people.

We cannot change the way the yeshivas are run; this is our sacred tradition inherited from past generations. **Any suggested changes to our yeshiva system would be in conflict with our religious principles and beliefs.**

All those who say otherwise, even if they are Jewish by descent, such as the 'Board of Deputies of British Jews', cannot claim to represent us or speak in our name. They are non-Charedi Jews whose goal is to rewrite our traditional education system. Their remarks come from an opposite angle to Charedi Jewry. In fact, no group claiming to represent the Jewish community as a whole - even an Orthodox group - should give the impression that we are ready to negotiate or make compromises over this issue, which is dearer to our hearts than any other. Those who offer to accommodate the Government's suggested demands are talking for themselves.

We, the undersigned, members of the orthodox Jewish community, continue serving G-d in the same manner handed down to us by our parents and teachers of past generations

We want to make it clear that the Torah is our way of life and values, and that our community's goal is to keep the Torah and educate our sons and daughters without any change whatsoever. The Torah is not our private possession; the Torah with its endless intelligence and ethics is a precious jewel entrusted to our safekeeping, we must keep it, hand it down unchanged to our children after us, and we do not have the authority to make any compromises in its observance and teaching.

No one else can dictate to us, how to practice our religion. The yeshivas are independent and non-Government funded, tampering with our yeshiva system is undermining our religious practice.

It is well-known in our history that religious Jews have put their very lives in danger to continue the yeshiva system. The bill, if passed, would make it impossible for us to continue fulfilling the will of G-d by transmitting our traditions and values to the next generation, without breaching the law. It would be tantamount to a declaration by the government of the United Kingdom that it no longer wishes Charedi Jewry to live within its borders heaven forbid.

In light of the above, we address our sincere plea to the British Government to continue to allow Charedi Jews in Great Britain complete freedom of religion within the law and to continue to grant us the liberty to educate our children in accordance with our sacred religious principles.

Simultaneously, we hereby declare that we wish our views to be conveyed to you through our Rabbinical authorities regarding the education of our children to all relevant government departments.

We are confident in the help of the Almighty and trust that our words will find favour in your heart and the hearts of all those with the power to act, and that you will do all in your ability to protect our basic human rights. And for this we will remain deeply indebted to you.

Sincerely,