

Political Affairs Digest

A daily summary of political events affecting the Jewish Community

Scottish Council of Jewish Communities

SCoJeC

Contents

[Holocaust](#)

[Israel](#)

[Foreign Affairs](#)

[Relevant Legislation](#)

[Consultations](#)

Holocaust

Scottish Parliament Motion

S5M-03330 Angus MacDonald: Braes High School Pupils and Holocaust Memorial Day – That the Parliament commends Braes High School pupils, Jessica Reid and Callum Docherty, for taking part in the Holocaust Educational Trust's Lessons from Auschwitz project; understands that the project has been running since 1999 and has seen over 30,000 students and teachers take part; acknowledges that the project includes hearing at first-hand from a Holocaust survivor, visiting Auschwitz 1 and Birkenau, and seminars before and after visiting in order to provide knowledge about the Holocaust and what can happen if prejudice, racism and intolerance become acceptable; recognises the importance of Holocaust Memorial Day, which falls on 27 January 2017, in helping to remember why everyone should continue to tackle racism and intolerance; anticipates Time for Reflection in the Parliament on 24 January, which will be led by Jessica and Callum in preparation for Holocaust Memorial Day, and sends its best wishes to them for the day and for their future.

<http://www.parliament.scot/parliamentarybusiness/28877.aspx?SearchType=Advance&ReferenceNumbers=S5M-03330>

[TOP](#)

Israel

House of Commons Oral Answers

Topical Questions: Foreign Secretary

Eric Pickles: Does my right hon. Friend share my disappointment that the Palestinian authorities did not issue a prompt condemnation of the murder of Israeli soldiers over the weekend? Does he believe that the Palestinian Authority's glorification of violence, refusal to recognise Israel and refusal to meet face to face is one of the major obstacles to a two-state solution?

Boris Johnson: I am very grateful to my right hon. Friend for that point because it is absolutely true. Yes, resolution 2334 has been characterised as a settlements resolution. As I have explained to the House, it also contains some valuable

language about terrorism. But there can be no lasting solution for that part of the world unless there is better leadership of the Palestinians and unless they renounce terror.

<https://hansard.parliament.uk/commons/2017-01-10/debates/56CEAB29-4A85-4FFC-84CB-DC7635885482/TopicalQuestions#contribution-EA787BD4-9C29-476E-A8B4-30CF534DAFD2>

Topical Questions: Foreign Secretary

Mike Gapes: The Foreign Secretary referred to the middle east process. Secretaries of State Clinton and Kerry failed in their efforts to get a bilateral agreement between Palestinians and Israelis. Is it not now time to go to the international sphere, in the sense of the Arab initiative originally introduced by Saudi Arabia in 2002?

Boris Johnson: The only way forward is for both sides to get to the negotiating table and recognise that a two-state solution is the way forward.

<https://hansard.parliament.uk/commons/2017-01-10/debates/56CEAB29-4A85-4FFC-84CB-DC7635885482/TopicalQuestions#contribution-7321A53B-EB1A-423D-B8CB-3F3EF7E5CA27>

Topical Questions: Foreign Secretary

Helen Goodman: Earlier this morning, the Under-Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, the hon. Member for Bournemouth East (Mr Ellwood), said that the Government only support UN Security Council resolutions when they know they can be enforced. So, if the Israelis continue with the settlement programme, what steps will the Foreign Secretary take to enforce resolution 2334?

Boris Johnson: The hon. Lady will know very well that we are working with our international counterparts to persuade both sides to get to the table, to persuade the Palestinians to drop their violence and recognise the existence of the state of Israel and show some leadership, and to persuade both sides to understand that a two-state solution is the only way forward. I believe that that is the best thing for the Government to do.

Oliver Dowden: Many of my constituents are concerned that the recent UN vote marks a change in the British Government's stance towards Israel. Will the Foreign Secretary confirm that that is not the case, and that we remain steadfast allies of that beacon of liberalism and democracy in the middle east?

Boris Johnson: As is well known, the state of Israel is just about the only democracy in that part of the world. It is a free and liberal society, unlike many others in the region. I passionately support the state of Israel. It was very important that, in resolution 2334, the UK Government not only stuck by 30-year-old UK policy in respect of settlements, but underscored our horror of violence against the people of Israel.

<https://hansard.parliament.uk/commons/2017-01-10/debates/56CEAB29-4A85-4FFC-84CB-DC7635885482/TopicalQuestions#contribution-18638BF0-1B9C-44A7-B6E3-AD4CE1F627F5>

West Bank: Illegal Settlements

5. **Paula Sherriff:** What recent discussions he has had with his counterpart in Israel on illegal settlements in the west bank. [908034]

The Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs (Boris Johnson): I spoke to the Israeli Prime Minister, Mr Netanyahu—he is also the Israeli Foreign Minister—on 23 December and raised the subject of illegal settlements. I probably spoke for a large majority of Members when I said that I am a strong and passionate supporter of the state of Israel, but I also believe that the continued expansion of illegal settlements in the west bank is by no means conducive to peace.

Paula Sherriff: I thank the Secretary of State for his response. Will he further advise us

on what assessment his Government have made of the Israeli Government's intent to comply with UN Security Council resolution 2334 on illegal Israeli settlements?

Boris Johnson: That is clearly a matter for the Israeli Government, but I repeat our position that we believe—this is a long-standing view of the UK Government—that settlements in the west bank are illegal, and that the 20% expansion we have seen in those settlements since 2009 is a threat to the peace process. That was why we resolved as we did. Of course, there has been a certain amount of argument about that and a certain amount of push back from the Israeli Government, but the hon. Lady will find that there is a wide measure of international support for that view, which in no way diminishes this Government's strong support for a Jewish homeland in Israel.

Crispin Blunt: Is there anything in the substantial analysis presented by Secretary Kerry on 28 December, following the adoption of Security Council resolution 2334, with which the Foreign Secretary does not agree?

Boris Johnson: Let me repeat my point: John Kerry was completely right to draw attention to the illegal settlements and to the substance of resolution 2334. I remind the House that the UK was closely involved in its drafting, although of course it was an Egyptian-generated resolution. We supported it only because it contained new language pointing out the infamy of terrorism that Israel suffers every day, not least on Sunday, when there was an attack in Jerusalem. I was glad that the resolution identified that aspect of the crisis in the middle east, and John Kerry was absolutely right to point out the rounded nature of the resolution. May I pay tribute to John Kerry, who is shortly to step down as Secretary of State, for his tireless work for peace not just in Israel-Palestine, but across the wider middle east?

Hilary Benn: I welcome the Government's vote in favour of UN Security Council resolution 2334, not least because it stated that "the cessation of all Israeli settlement activities is essential for salvaging the two-State solution".

Following the Foreign Secretary's discussions in the past couple of days with members of the incoming Administration in the United States, does he think that that view is shared by President-elect Trump?

Boris Johnson: I think it is a widespread view in Washington, and across the UN Security Council, that settlements are illegal, which was why the resolution went through as it did, without any opposition. To answer the right hon. Gentleman's question directly, I think it is too early to say exactly what the Administration will decide on this matter, but he can rest assured that the British Government will continue to make the points that we have, not because we are hostile to Israel—on the contrary—but because we wish to support the state of Israel.

Hugo Swire: Let me try to get this right: the British ambassador is summoned formally in Israel because of the way the UK voted at the UN Security Council; meanwhile, in the UK, an employee of the Israeli embassy is caught on film conspiring with a British civil servant to take down a senior Minister in the Foreign Secretary's Department, the Chairman of the Foreign Affairs Committee and other Members of this House; and the Israeli ambassador makes a couple of phone calls and all is forgiven and forgotten. Can the Foreign Secretary enlighten us on the thinking behind all this?

Boris Johnson: I certainly can enlighten the House, in the sense that, as my right hon. Friend points out, the Israeli ambassador made a very full apology for what had taken place and the diplomat in question no longer seems to be a functionary of the embassy in London. Whatever that person might exactly have been doing here, his cover can be said to have been well and truly blown, and I think we should consider the matter closed. ...

Alex Salmond: But if a UK embassy official had been caught on film in Tel Aviv talking about "taking down" an Israeli Government Minister, they would have been booted out of the country without any further ceremony, so why did that not happen to Mr Masot? If the Foreign Secretary showed even a teensy-weensy bit of resolve in such matters, perhaps

Israeli diplomats would not talk about him in such disparaging terms.

Boris Johnson: The right hon. Gentleman seems, alas, to have been failing to pay attention to the salient point, which is that the Israeli diplomat in question is no longer doing his job in London—whatever his job is, he is no longer doing it in this city. The Israeli ambassador has made a full apology for the matter and I am happy to consider it closed.

Theresa Villiers: Will the Secretary of State agree to meet me and colleagues to discuss our grave concerns about resolution 2334, which my constituents believe will make peace in the middle east harder to achieve by imposing a complex set of preconditions that the Palestinians will use to avoid serious engagement in negotiation?

Boris Johnson: I am very grateful for that question, and I am happy to offer exactly such a consultation with colleagues. I know that the Under-Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, my hon. Friend the Member for Bournemouth East (Mr Ellwood), has already undertaken to do just that.

Fabian Hamilton: I am sure that the whole House will join me in condemning the horrific attack on Israeli soldiers in Jerusalem on Sunday. We will never achieve a lasting peace in the middle east until the state of Israel, its soldiers and civilians are free from the threat of terror. Nor will we achieve that lasting peace until all sides accept a two-state solution and a viable Palestinian state can be built, free from illegal settlements. In his allegedly frank discussions with the incoming Trump Administration on Sunday, was the Foreign Secretary frank about those points, too? If so, what response did he receive?

Boris Johnson: The answer to the first question is yes, and the answer to the second is wait and see.

<https://hansard.parliament.uk/commons/2017-01-10/debates/2426B132-3CB5-4307-B244-2728824B7AF0/WestBankIllegalSettlements>

Middle East Peace Talks

10. **Louise Ellman:** What steps he is taking to promote the resumption of peace talks between Israel and the Palestinian Authority. [908039]

The Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs (Boris Johnson): We are using every forum at our disposal to try to encourage both sides to get to the negotiating table. It is deeply frustrating. I join hon. Members on both sides of the House who have condemned the appalling attack on—the murder of—four Israeli soldiers at the weekend. All I can do is repeat what we have said: the only way forward has to be a two-state solution, and that is why it was important to restate the Government's position in resolution 2334.

Louise Ellman: The General Secretary of the UN has warned about Iran's activities in arming Hezbollah in Lebanon through its base in Syria. What can the Foreign Secretary do to combat this growing menace to the prospects of any peace in the region?

Boris Johnson: It is very important to recognise that Iran is a malign influence across the region, and we must be very vigilant about what it is doing. On the other hand, we have to engage with Iran. I think the JCPOA—joint comprehensive plan of action—does represent, still, a substantial and valid way forward, and it would be regrettable if we were to junk that process now.

22. **John Howell:** In looking at the steps to promote peace talks, what effect does the Foreign Secretary think the current level of Palestinian violence is going to have on that process? [908052]

Boris Johnson: As my hon. Friend will know, the level of violence, as we have discussed, has been down by comparison with 2015, but it is still too high. I think it was important, therefore, that the resolution, which has been so much discussed this morning, had that balance in it and that language in it pointing out the threat that Israel faces. It is important that we stress that, and that we encourage the Palestinians to understand that there can be no hope of peace unless they get their extremists under control.

Tom Brake: I am pleased that the Foreign Secretary is using every forum to bring peace.

Will he, therefore, be attending the Paris conference, and what new initiative will the UK Government be putting forward there?

Boris Johnson: I can certainly assure the right hon. Gentleman that the UK Government will be attending the Paris talks and we will be reinforcing our message, which is that we think that both sides must get round the table and negotiate. That is the only way forward. It would be folly now to abandon a two-state solution, because, in the end, a one-state solution is not in the interests of Israel.

<https://hansard.parliament.uk/commons/2017-01-10/debates/34CCBC57-4365-4C82-BF4E-37CAA3F0392B/MiddleEastPeaceTalks>

House of Commons Written Answer

Israel: Palestinians

Craig Tracey [908051] To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, what assessment he has made of (a) trends in the level and (b) the causes of recent violence in Israel and the West Bank.

Tobias Ellwood: I strongly condemn Sunday's terrorist attack in Jerusalem which killed four Israeli soldiers. I understand the deep frustration on all sides at the lack of progress on the Middle East peace process but there can be absolutely no justification for terrorism.

<http://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Commons/2016-12-20/908051/>

United Nations

Interview with Robert Serry: "The Endless Quest for Israeli-Palestinian Peace: A Reflection from No Man's Land"

<https://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=55938>

Scottish Parliament Motions

S5M-03343 Sandra White: Israeli Embassy Employee Inquiry – That the Parliament condemns the recent actions of Shai Masot, an Israeli Embassy employee, following a covert operation in which he was filmed suggesting that he could "take down" certain MPs who have been critical of Israel; is concerned that these revelations may have had a bearing on domestic politics in Scotland, and calls on the UK Government to carry out an immediate inquiry.

<http://www.parliament.scot/parliamentarybusiness/28877.aspx?SearchType=Advance&ReferenceNumbers=S5M-03343>

[TOP](#)

Foreign Affairs

House of Commons Oral Answers

Topical Questions: Foreign Secretary

Liz McInnes: On Sunday, the Foreign Secretary met Steve Bannon, Donald Trump's chief strategist, a man whose website is synonymous with anti-Semitism, racism,

misogyny, homophobia, the hero worship of Vladimir Putin and the promotion of extremist far-right movements across the world. May I ask the Foreign Secretary how he and Mr Bannan got on?

Boris Johnson: I do not wish to embarrass any member of the incoming Administration by describing the friendliness or otherwise of our relations. What I can say is that the conversations were genuinely extremely productive. There is a wide measure of agreement between the UK and the incoming Administration about the way forward, and we intend to work to build on those areas of agreement.

<https://hansard.parliament.uk/commons/2017-01-10/debates/56CEAB29-4A85-4FFC-84CB-DC7635885482/TopicalQuestions#contribution-38D05698-145B-4099-BC25-FC8E06510599>

Middle East (Persecution of Christians)

11. **Kevin Foster:** What recent reports he has received on the persecution of Christians in the middle east. [908040]

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs (Tobias Ellwood): The Government regularly receive reports of sectarian attacks on Christian and other religious communities in the middle east. We want to work with all Governments across the middle east and north Africa to ensure that freedom of religion or belief is respected.

Kevin Foster: Although the genocide of Christians in the areas ruled by Daesh has rightly taken the most attention, my hon. Friend will be only too aware that the persecution of Christians across the region is way too common. Will he join me, therefore, in welcoming the work done by Open Doors to highlight that, and what plans does he have to consider its latest report, which is due to be launched in the House tomorrow?

Tobias Ellwood: May I briefly say that I very much welcome the work that is done by organisations such as Open Doors, and the work that my hon. Friend has done to promote them? I look forward to reading the report, which I think is due out tomorrow. Open Doors makes a major contribution to that work and the Government's thinking to try to support Christians and other religious communities in the middle east and north Africa.

Danny Kinahan: Given all these crimes against Christians in the middle east, will the Government ensure that we do everything we can to make sure that this is recognised as genocide in the international courts?

Tobias Ellwood: I have said in this House that I personally believe that acts of genocide have taken place, but it is not my view that counts; it is whether we can legally prove that. As we have debated here before, it is important that we collect the evidence. I am sure that the House will be delighted to know—it has been confirmed already—that the Foreign Secretary joined other countries, including Iraq, at the United Nations General Assembly to launch the work to be done to collect the evidence to make sure that we can hold those who have conducted these horrific activities to account.

[https://hansard.parliament.uk/commons/2017-01-10/debates/2823FAB6-E47C-4589-AA63-1D38C5F9F96E/MiddleEast\(PersecutionOfChristians\)](https://hansard.parliament.uk/commons/2017-01-10/debates/2823FAB6-E47C-4589-AA63-1D38C5F9F96E/MiddleEast(PersecutionOfChristians))

[TOP](#)

Relevant Legislation ** new or updated today

UK Parliament

Arbitration and Mediation Services (Equality) Bill

<http://services.parliament.uk/bills/2016-17/arbitrationandmediationservicesequality.html>

Assisted Dying Bill

<http://services.parliament.uk/bills/2016-17/assisteddying.html>

Cultural Property (Armed Conflicts) Bill

<http://services.parliament.uk/bills/2016-17/culturalpropertyarmedconflicts.html>

Lobbying (Transparency) Bill

<http://services.parliament.uk/bills/2016-17/lobbyingtransparency.html>

**** Wales Bill**

<http://services.parliament.uk/bills/2016-17/wales.html>

Report Stage, House of Lords

<https://hansard.parliament.uk/lords/2017-01-10/debates/E628A72A-D24B-4678-80C9-7DBC09010F3B/WalesBill>

and

<https://hansard.parliament.uk/lords/2017-01-10/debates/5EDB628C-359B-49B3-B003-E76B12FA4CBF/WalesBill>

[TOP](#)

Consultations ** new or updated today

**** closes today**

Draft Referendum Bill (closing date 11 January 2017)

<http://www.gov.scot/Resource/0050/00507743.pdf>

**** closes in 2 days**

Introduction of the medical examiner role and reforms to death certification (Wales)

(closing date 13 January 2013)

<https://consultations.gov.wales/consultations/introduction-medical-examiner-role-and-reforms-death-certification>

Welsh Assembly Inquiry into Lobbying (closing date 31 January 2017)

<http://senedd.assembly.wales/mgConsultationDisplay.aspx?id=236&RPID=1507974161&cp=yes>

Consolidation and revision of the school governance regulatory framework in Wales

(closing date 17 February 2017)

<https://consultations.gov.wales/consultations/consolidation-and-revision-school-governance-regulatory-framework-wales>

Organ and Tissue Donation and Transplantation: increasing numbers of successful donations (Scotland) (closing date 14 March 2017)

<http://www.gov.scot/Resource/0051/00511160.pdf>

Workplace Diversity (Wales) (closing date not stated)

<https://www.surveymonkey.co.uk/r/wtucdiversity>

[TOP](#)