

Political Affairs Digest

A daily summary of political events affecting the Jewish Community

Scottish Council of Jewish Communities

SCoJeC

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House of Commons Written Answer

Hate Crime

Jack Dromey [58059] To ask the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government, with reference to paragraph 9 of the evidence submitted by his Department to the Home Affairs Select Committee Inquiry on hate crime and its violent consequences, what training he plans to provide to editors and journalists; and when such training will be implemented.

Marcus Jones: The cross-Government Anti-Muslim Hatred Working Group has engaged with the Society of Editors and Independent Press Standards Organisation to discuss ways to tackle the negative portrayal of Muslims in the media. These discussions have considered suitable options for supporting journalists, including on matters of religious literacy such as appropriate terminology. This work is ongoing.

<http://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Commons/2016-12-16/58059/>

The evidence referred to above can be read at

<http://data.parliament.uk/writtenevidence/committeeevidence.svc/evidencedocument/home-affairs-committee/hate-crime-and-its-violent-consequences/written/44074.pdf>

House of Lords Oral Answers

Assisted Dying: Legislation

Baroness Meacher: To ask Her Majesty's Government whether they have any plans to legalise assisted dying for terminally ill capacitous adults, with appropriate safeguards.

The Advocate-General for Scotland (Lord Keen of Elie): My Lords, the short Answer to the Question is no. Like previous Governments, we have always made it clear that such legislation is a matter for Parliament, not the Government. When the other House considered a Bill to legalise assisted dying in September 2015, it rejected it by 330 votes to 118.

Baroness Meacher: ... As he indicated, there has never been a Government-supported Bill on this issue. The Minister will be aware of Noel Conway, a terminally ill mentally capacitous patient who is taking his case to the High Court and, no doubt, ultimately to the Supreme Court. Noel is challenging the current law, which denies him his fundamental human right, when his suffering becomes unbearable, to have help to

achieve a dignified death. Does the Minister agree with the 82% of the population and the 86% of disabled people who support Mr Conway and want a change in the law so that when their turn comes to face death, they can live their last months in peace, safe in the knowledge that if their suffering becomes unbearable, they can have professional help to end it? Will the Minister seek the support of his colleagues for an ethical Bill along these lines in the future?

Lord Keen of Elie: My Lords, it remains the Government's view that any change to the law in this area is an issue of individual conscience and a matter for Parliament to decide, rather than one for government policy. I am aware of the case of Noel Conway. As it is now in court, it would not be appropriate for me to comment on the circumstances of that case.

Lord Ribeiro: My Lords, this subject has been debated in this House on many occasions and, as my noble and learned friend said, has been rejected. Should it ever be considered again, it is important that the medical profession be excluded. The majority of doctors do not wish to be associated with taking life. Their responsibility is to save lives. While it is possible that there are those who might volunteer to undertake such a task, it is important that it should not be legislated that the majority of doctors are required to undertake it.

Lord Keen of Elie: I note what the noble Lord has said and understand the reasoning behind his observations. I can reiterate only that this Government do not intend at this time to legislate in respect of this matter.

Lord Watts: ... Can I suggest that the Government need to accept responsibility for this matter? They should not duck the decision to give people the opportunity to make this important decision about how they die.

Lord Keen of Elie: ... I would observe that Parliament has twice addressed this issue in the recent past and has determined not to relax the provisions of Section 2 of the Suicide Act.

Baroness Campbell of Surbiton: My Lords, is the Minister aware that the campaign to legalise assisted suicide or assisted dying is not supported by one single organisation for people with progressive conditions, including the motor neurone disease organisation and the MS Trust, the very people who would be the main beneficiaries of assisted dying, and that growing numbers of disabled people and their organisations are campaigning against such a Bill because they feel that it is desperately unsafe?

Lord Keen of Elie: I entirely understand the noble Baroness's observations in this context. The whole question of risk associated with such legislation was addressed by the Supreme Court when it opined in 2014 in the case of Nicklinson and Lamb. The President of the Supreme Court and Lord Sumption both observed that the data on risk were plainly way short of establishing that there was no risk in such legislation. Lord Sumption went on to observe that there were further societies engaged in this area which had clear reservations about the development of any legislation on this matter.

Lord Dholakia: My Lords, the Minister will be aware that the CPS updated its policy in cases of assisted suicide in February 2010 and in October 2014. Whereas I well understand the reluctance to change any particular legislation, will the Minister consider in consultation with his colleagues and the CPS what further reforms are necessary in relation to the CPS policy on assisted dying?

Lord Keen of Elie: My Lords, the matter of CPS policy must be left to the CPS to determine independently of Parliament. It is not for government to dictate what that policy, which is regularly reviewed, should be. For example, in the period from 2009 to 2016 the very large majority of cases referred to the CPS were not proceeded with in the context of prosecution.

Lord McColl of Dulwich: My Lords, does the Minister agree that we have to be very chary of these surveys that support the subject in hand? For instance, one survey stated that 96% of the British people wished for a pain-free death. Does that not leave us wondering what the other 4% wanted?

Lord Keen of Elie: My Lords, it may be that the other 4% were not referring to themselves. Nevertheless, it is of course important that any such surveys should be carried out rigorously and by reference to defined terms, otherwise their results can be misleading.

Lord Winston: My Lords, are the Government concerned that in an overburdened health service with a large number of old people, there is a considerable risk to the attitudes of healthcare staff within the NHS?

Lord Keen of Elie: My Lords, I do not believe that any challenges faced by our health staff in hospitals will alter their view as to issues of life and death. I do not believe that for one moment.

Lord Dobbs: My Lords, the Supreme Court judgment in 2014 that the Minister quoted a moment ago, among other things, implied very strongly that the current law is incompatible with human rights legislation and hinted that Parliament should resolve this issue, otherwise the courts themselves would. If there is an incompatibility between the blanket ban on assisted dying and human rights legislation, should it not be resolved in Parliament rather than by judges?

Lord Keen of Elie: My Lords, in the case of Nicklinson, the Supreme Court determined by a majority of seven to two that there should be no declaration of incompatibility with the convention on human rights. It did of course observe that this was a matter that should be looked at by Parliament, and since that judgment, it has been looked at by Parliament on two distinct and separate occasions. Parliament has expressed its views on this matter.

<https://hansard.parliament.uk/lords/2017-01-16/debates/14337E8C-5D11-45C3-AD3B-66A6A2C3AF7A/AssistedDyingLegislation>

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Israel

House of Commons Written Answers

Palestinians: Equality

Ivan Lewis [58704] To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, what steps his Department is taking to work with the Palestinian Authority to promote gender equality in the Palestinian territories.

Tobias Ellwood: I refer the Hon. Member to my answer of 24 October 2016 (PQ 48760).

<http://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Commons/2017-01-06/58704/>

The answer referred to above can be read at

<http://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Commons/2016-10-14/48760/>

The Foreign and Commonwealth Office works closely with other government departments, including the Department for International Development (DFID), and with the Palestinian Authority to enhance gender equality in the Occupied Palestinian Territories. DFID has supported interventions to tackle violence against women and girls by working with the Palestinian security and justice sectors. Under the UK's Conflict, Stability and Security Fund (CSSF) programme, we attach great importance to gender sensitivity in project design and implementation. Our Consulate General in Jerusalem host events to celebrate the achievements of Palestinian women, including during last year's International Day of Women.

Israeli Settlements

Matthew Offord [58870] To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, what discussions his Department held with 10 Downing Street before the UN Security Council Resolution 2334 vote took place in December 2016.

Tobias Ellwood: The Foreign and Commonwealth Office discussed the UK's voting position on UNSCR 2334 with 10 Downing Street prior to the vote in the UN Security Council. The UK's support for UNSCR 2334 is consistent with our long held position that Israeli settlement activity is illegal and undermines the viability of two states for two peoples. As the Prime Minister, my Rt Hon. Friend the Member for Maidenhead (Mrs May) stated in her speech to the Conservative Friends of Israel in December, the UK remains one of Israel's strongest friends, but it is important as a true friend to stress that settlements are illegal.

<http://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Commons/2017-01-06/58870/>

Israeli Settlements

Matthew Offord [58875] To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, what formal and informal discussions his Department had with the US administration before the UN Security Council Resolution 2334 (2016) vote was taken.

Tobias Ellwood: The resolution was an Egyptian draft and not UK co-sponsored. The UK engaged with security council members before the UN Security Council Resolution 2334 (2016) vote, as we do with all Security Council products. Where we did engage we worked to secure a balanced text that includes calls to end incitement and terrorism .

<http://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Commons/2017-01-06/58875/>

Israeli Settlements

Matthew Offord [58876] To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, what support his Department provided in the drafting process for UN Security Council Resolution 2334 (2016).

Tobias Ellwood: The resolution was an Egyptian draft and not UK co-sponsored. The UK engaged with the text, as we do all Security Council products. Where we did engage, we worked to secure a balanced text that includes calls to end incitement and terrorism We would not have voted for any text without those balancing elements.

<http://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Commons/2017-01-06/58876/>

Israeli Settlements

Matthew Offord [58877] To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, whether Ministers of his Department were made aware of the final text of UN Security Council Resolution 2334 (2016) before the vote on that resolution took place.

Tobias Ellwood: The relevant UK ministers were aware of the text of the resolution before the vote took place. The UK voted for UN Security Council Resolution 2334 because of our support for the two state solution and commitment to Israel as the Jewish homeland.

<http://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Commons/2017-01-06/58877/>

Israeli Settlements

Barry Sheerman [58927] To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, what contribution his Department made to the drafting and promoting of UN Security Council Resolution 2334.

Tobias Ellwood: The resolution was an Egyptian draft and not UK co-sponsored.

The UK engaged with the text, as we do all Security Council products. Where we did engage we worked to secure a balanced text that includes calls to end incitement and terrorism. We would not have voted for any text without those balancing elements.

<http://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Commons/2017-01-06/58927/>

Palestinians: Politics and Government

Nicholas Soames [58985] To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, what the objectives of the Government's diplomatic and political policy on Palestine are for 2017; and if he will make a statement.

Tobias Ellwood: The UK's longstanding position is clear: we support a negotiated settlement leading to a safe and secure Israel living alongside a viable and sovereign Palestinian state based on 1967 borders with agreed land swaps, Jerusalem as the shared capital of both states, and a just, fair and agreed settlement for refugees. We are encouraging both sides to resume direct bilateral negotiations and we work through international organisations, including the UN and EU, to encourage Israel and the Palestinian Authority to take steps that rebuild trust.

<http://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Commons/2017-01-06/58985/>

Israel: Palestinians

Nicholas Soames [59631] To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, what the Government's policy is in respect of the two-state solution for Israel and Palestine.

Tobias Ellwood: The UK Government's longstanding policy on the Middle East peace process is well known. We support a negotiated settlement leading to a safe and secure Israel living alongside a viable and sovereign Palestinian state.

<http://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Commons/2017-01-11/59631/>

Israel: Diplomatic Service

Nicholas Soames [59543] To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, what recent assessment he has made of the compliance of Israel's diplomatic representatives in the UK with their obligation under article 41 of the 1961 Vienna Convention on Diplomatic Relations on not interfering in the internal affairs of another signatory state; and if he will make a statement.

Tobias Ellwood: Foreign and Commonwealth Office Ministers considered the Vienna Convention implications of the alleged behaviour of an Israeli Embassy official. The Israeli Ambassador has made a full apology and we consider the matter closed.

<http://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Commons/2017-01-11/59543/>

Shai Masot

Nicholas Soames [59632] To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, what the immigration status is of Shai Masot.

Tobias Ellwood: Mr Shai Masot, who was notified to Her Majesty's Government as a member of the Israeli Embassy's administrative and technical staff, is exempt from UK immigration control.

<http://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Commons/2017-01-11/59632/>

Israel: Palestinians

Ivan Lewis [58677] To ask the Secretary of State for International Development, what plans she has to provide support to projects intended to foster coexistence between Israelis and Palestinians in the Palestinian territories.

Rory Stewart: DFID is developing a programme of support to coexistence in Israel and the OPTs. UK support will help Israelis and Palestinians work together to achieve tangible improvements in their lives and build understanding between people on both sides of the conflict. The programme is now in its final design phase, aiming for launch in due course.

<http://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Commons/2017-01-06/58677/>

Israel: Palestinians

Ivan Lewis [58678] To ask the Secretary of State for International Development, what steps her Department is taking to support the creation of an international fund for Israeli-Palestinian peace.

Rory Stewart: DFID and FCO officials are assessing the viability of an international fund for Israeli-Palestinian peace and its alignment with the UK's objectives on the Middle East Peace Process.

<http://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Commons/2017-01-06/58678/>

House of Commons Point of Order

Tommy Sheppard: ... Last Tuesday at Foreign and Commonwealth Office questions, the Foreign Secretary was asked whether the UK would be participating in yesterday's summit in Paris on the Israeli-Palestine peace situation. He told us that we would be participating and would "reinforce our message", yet we read in press reports today that, alone among the western nations, the UK had no Minister present, and only a civil servant was sent to observe without the authority to sign the final communiqué. Have you been given notice that the Foreign Secretary intends to make a statement on the summit, and if not, what can Members do to compel the Foreign Secretary to divulge the full intentions of his Department when answering questions?

Mr Speaker: ... I am, of course, grateful to the hon. Gentleman for giving me notice of his intention to raise this matter. He has registered it with force, and what he has said will have been heard on the Treasury Bench. If the Foreign Secretary feels that inadvertently the House has been misled—it is not immediately clear to me that the words were inaccurate; it may be that there has been a change of mind, which is not without precedent in our proceedings—no doubt he will take steps to correct the record. ...

<https://hansard.parliament.uk/commons/2017-01-16/debates/0BED11EB-AA64-47DD-8EDC-7E784DE9BF69/PointsOfOrder#contribution-50C526BE-5A81-4AB1-B5E5-3635C743BEE2>

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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>

**** Organ Donation (Deemed Consent) Bill**

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

First Reading, House of Commons

<https://hansard.parliament.uk/Commons/2017-01-16/debates/0BED11EB-AA64-47DD-8EDC-7E784DE9BF69/PointsOfOrder#contribution-6B468EEF-B8C5-48ED-B195-DCE388CAB09E>

Wales Bill

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

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Consultations ** new or updated today

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>

Racism at work (closing date 27 February 2017)

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

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>

**** Adoption and Children (Northern Ireland) Bill** (closing date 10 April 2017)

<https://www.health-ni.gov.uk/consultations/adoption-and-children-northern-ireland-bill>

Workplace Diversity (Wales) (closing date not stated)

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

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