

# Political Affairs Digest

*A daily summary of political events affecting the Jewish Community*

Scottish Council of Jewish Communities

SCoJeC

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## Holocaust

### Scottish Parliament Time for Reflection

**Dr Maureen Sier (Interfaith Scotland):** ... It was on 17 January 1945 that SS units began the final evacuation of prisoners from Auschwitz and marched them on foot away from the camps. Those death marches caused thousands to perish. SS guards shot anyone who fell behind. Prisoners suffered from starvation and exposure. It is hard for us to imagine what was endured in the depth of winter 72 years ago today.

Next week, Scotland will remember the Holocaust and subsequent genocides. Saskia Tepe, who is the daughter of a Holocaust survivor, and Umutesi Stuart, who is a survivor of the Rwandan genocide, will speak at the national memorial event ...

The theme this year is "How can life go on?" Survivors must ask themselves that question. It is a question that we in Scotland must also ask ourselves when we consider the asylum seekers who arrive in our country. Many have already suffered war, deprivation and trauma. Just how can life go on when any sense of normality is removed?

The Holocaust survivor Elie Wiesel said: "For the survivor death is not the problem. Death was an everyday occurrence. We learned to live with Death. The problem is to adjust to life, to living."

I have often thought how difficult it must be to adjust to life after devastating trauma. My mother-in-law struggled to adjust to life after being sent on the Kindertransport to the United Kingdom and then learning that her parents had been killed in Hitler's gas chambers. Later, unable to adjust to family life, she walked out on her children while they were still infants. It was only at her funeral 12 years later that the children learned that they were Jewish. ...

Scotland is home to many who are living on away from their homeland. Sometimes they face discrimination, and they always live with memories and loss. It is easy for us to feel overwhelmed by the magnitude of suffering and become paralysed by it, but I have read stories of how small acts of kindness during the Holocaust gave people the will to live on, and I have witnessed asylum seekers weep at a kindly gesture. ...

**To read the full transcription see**

<http://www.parliament.scot/parliamentarybusiness/report.aspx?r=10733&i=98465&c=1965203#ScotParlOR>

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## House of Commons Written Answers

### Israel: Diplomatic Relations

**Nicholas Soames** [59355] To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, how many meetings Government special advisers had with Israeli embassy officials in 2016.

**Tobias Ellwood:** The special advisers to the Foreign Secretary, my Rt Hon. Friend the Member for Uxbridge and South Ruislip (Mr Johnson) did not have any meetings with Israeli Embassy officials during 2016.

<http://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Commons/2017-01-10/59355/>

### Israel: Diplomatic Service

**Nicholas Soames** [59356] To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, what representations he has made to the Israeli authorities as a result of recently reported comments made by an Israeli diplomat in respect of a Government Minister.

**Tobias Ellwood:** The Israeli ambassador has apologised and been clear these comments do not reflect the views of the embassy or Government of Israel. The UK has a strong relationship with Israel and we consider the matter closed.

<http://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Commons/2017-01-10/59356/>

### Israel: Diplomatic Relations

**Nicholas Soames** [59358] To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, how many meetings he has had with Israeli embassy officials since taking office.

**Tobias Ellwood:** The Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, my right hon. Friend the member for Uxbridge and South Ruislip (Mr Johnson) met the Israeli Ambassador to London in Jerusalem on 30 September.

<http://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Commons/2017-01-10/59358/>

### Foreign and Commonwealth Office: Conservative Friends of Israel

**Nicholas Soames** [59357] To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, how many meetings he has had with representatives of the Conservative Friends of Israel since taking office.

**Tobias Ellwood:** The Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, my Rt Hon. Friend the Member for Uxbridge and South Ruislip (Mr Johnson) has not had any face-to-face meetings with Conservative Friends of Israel since taking office, but did speak at an event organised by Conservative Friends of Israel during the Conservative Party Conference in October 2016.

<http://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Commons/2017-01-10/59357/>

### Israeli Settlements

**Matthew Offord** [59064] To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, what assessment his Department has made of the effect of UN Security Council Resolution 2334 (2016) on progress towards a two-state solution to Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

**Tobias Ellwood:** UN Security Council Resolution 2334 (2016) is a clear reinforcement of the international community's conviction that a two state solution remains the only viable route to sustained Arab-Israeli peace. The resolution supports progress towards a two state solution by calling on all parties to exert

collective efforts to launch credible negotiations on all final status issues and urging the intensification and acceleration of international and regional efforts to support a comprehensive peace.

<http://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Commons/2017-01-09/59064/>

#### **Israel: Palestinians**

**Matthew Offord** [59065] To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, what assessment his Department has made of progress made in achieving the objectives set out in the Paris Initiative in June 2016 on ending Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

**Tobias Ellwood:** Ultimately, an agreement can only be achieved by direct negotiation between the parties. Solutions cannot be imposed from the outside - they need to be mutually agreed between the parties. But international action can play a role in supporting those bilateral efforts. The French conference in June 2016 identified economic incentives, civil society, and Palestinian capacity-building as key objectives. Working groups were set up for these areas but progress is ongoing.

<http://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Commons/2017-01-09/59065/>

#### **Gaza and West Bank: Elections**

**Ivan Lewis** [59251] To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, what steps his Department is taking to support free and fair elections in the West Bank and Gaza.

**Tobias Ellwood:** We continue to call on the Palestinian leadership to work towards genuine and democratic elections for all Palestinians. Strong, inclusive and democratic institutions, based on respect of the rule of law and human rights, are crucial elements in establishing a viable and sovereign Palestinian State. Our Consulate General in Jerusalem has regularly discussed the local elections with senior Palestinian ministers and officials over the past months. Following the postponement of the elections, we have continued to urge all sides to make efforts to hold genuine and democratic local elections in the West Bank and Gaza in accordance with the law.

<http://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Commons/2017-01-10/59251/>

#### **Palestinians: LGBT People**

**Ivan Lewis** [59252] To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, what reports he has received on the Palestinian Authority's commitment to equality for LGBT people in the Palestinian territories; and if he will make a statement.

**Tobias Ellwood:** We are deeply concerned about the treatment of the LGBT community in the Occupied Palestinian Territories (OPTs), particularly in Gaza where they are subject to widespread social discrimination for cultural and religious reasons. Homosexuality remains a taboo subject in the OPTs. In some places, such as Ramallah, these taboos are relaxed, but in more conservative areas the situation is very challenging. There are no laws protecting LGBT people, although we are not aware of any recent legal cases targeting the LGBT community.

<http://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Commons/2017-01-10/59252/>

#### **Israel: Palestinians**

**Tom Brake** [59347] To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, if he will attend the Paris conference on Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territories in January 2017.

**Tobias Ellwood:** The UK decided to attend the Paris Conference only as an observer and, in that capacity, we did not sign up to the Communiqué. Britain welcomes France's efforts to promote peace but we have been clear for some time that a conference so close to the change of US administration, and without the attendance of the two main parties, would not be the best way to make real progress on this complex issue.

<http://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Commons/2017-01-10/59347/>

## House of Lords Oral Answers

### Israel: Ambassador

**Baroness Tonge:** To ask Her Majesty's Government, in the light of the apology by the Israeli Ambassador for remarks made by an embassy official concerning a Foreign Office Minister, whether they intend to conduct an inquiry.

**The Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office (Baroness Anelay of St Johns):** My Lords, the Israeli ambassador has apologised and it is clear that these comments do not reflect the views of the embassy or of the Government of Israel. The UK has a strong relationship with Israel and we consider the matter closed.

**Baroness Tonge:** I thank the Minister for that response, but will she please tell us what action would be taken if, for example, Chinese embassy staff were discovered to be interfering in our political process in this way? Will she agree that the very serious charge of anti-Semitism is devalued if it is used against anyone who criticises the actions of the Government of Israel?

**Baroness Anelay of St Johns:** My Lords, I shall not speculate on what might happen; I deal with what does happen. It is clear that in this case unacceptable activity was undertaken by one person who is no longer in this country, and appropriate action was taken by the Israeli embassy.

**Lord Anderson of Swansea:** My Lords, a junior embassy official made a stupid remark at a gossipy lunch and was sacked, and our Government say that that is the end of the matter. Does the Minister share my puzzlement at any possible benefit that would result from raising the matter now? Is it seriously suggested, for example, that the Israeli embassy wants to bump off Sir Alan Duncan?

**Baroness Anelay of St Johns:** My Lords, I am delighted to say that my right honourable friend is alive and well and an excellent Minister at the Foreign Office.

...

**Baroness Northover:** The Government accepted the Israeli ambassador's explanation but, on Sunday, the UK failed to send a Minister to the Paris meeting on the peace process and yesterday the UK vetoed the EU's support for the conclusions of that meeting. Can the Minister assure us that on Israel/Palestine the Government are not distancing themselves from our European neighbours and seeking favour with a very unpredictable new US President?

**Baroness Anelay of St Johns:** My Lords, the UK position on the Middle East peace process has not changed. I appreciate that there has been some speculation over the recess—that happens during a recess period. But the noble Baroness rightly raises specific points, and I would like to address the two main points of those specific issues.

First, with regard to the Paris conference, we made it clear to the French, whom we congratulate on trying to take the process of peace forward, that decisions made at this stage without the presence of the only ones who can come to a settlement—the Palestinians and the Israelis—were not going anywhere and could simply harden opinions. It was nothing to do with the incoming President of

the United States. However, we have to recognise that the US plays a crucial role in these negotiations, and has done so. With regard to Paris, while welcoming the French efforts, we made it clear that we would not attend the meeting at ministerial level, although we had a senior representative there—the head of our Near East department—and as such it was not appropriate for us to sign up to that communique.

I would like to put on record a clarification about the misunderstanding in the press to which the noble Baroness referred. We did not veto anything yesterday in Brussels. Federica Mogherini, the High Representative of the European Union for foreign affairs confirmed yesterday that the UK, “did not stop or prevent any decision of the European Union”. From her mouth, I hope that the House will accept that we did not veto anything.

**Lord Wright of Richmond:** Can the Minister confirm nevertheless that the Government are still firmly in favour of a two-state solution to the Arab-Israel question? Can she add to her explanation why the British delegate to the meeting in Paris—and, indeed, the Foreign Secretary himself, at a meeting of his European Union colleagues—both failed to go along with a statement in support of the two-state process?

**Baroness Anelay of St Johns:** First, it was not an occasion for making a statement. Yesterday was a discussion over lunch—it was not a position from which one makes a statement. What we have made clear, and the Prime Minister has made it clear, is that we continue to be in favour of a two-state solution. The importance is to concentrate on the range of issues which both of those who will come to the settlement table need to sign up to. My grammar is getting a little awry there but, clearly, our policy has not changed. We want to see 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 those states and a fair, just, agreed settlement for refugees. We are constant in our policy.

<https://hansard.parliament.uk/lords/2017-01-17/debates/04255DFD-B0F7-4E19-BD74-DEA5B9678670/IsraelAmbassador>

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## Other Relevant Information

### European Union

#### **High Level Forum on Anti-Muslim Discrimination and Hatred**

... The High Representative/Vice President Federica Mogherini said: “When one minority comes under attack, everyone’s freedom is at stake. When people are discriminated because they are Muslims, or Jews, or for their ideas – it is not only a violation of their human rights, but an attack against the very fabric of our societies. ...

The Forum’s main message was to promote diversity as a richness instead of a threat, to fight against all forms of discrimination, and to build bridges between different communities – religious and otherwise. ...

**To read the full press release see**

[https://eeas.europa.eu/headquarters/headquarters-homepage/18773/high-level-forum-anti-muslim-discrimination-and-hatred\\_en](https://eeas.europa.eu/headquarters/headquarters-homepage/18773/high-level-forum-anti-muslim-discrimination-and-hatred_en)

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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>

#### **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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