

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 Debate

Equality and Human Rights Commission

col 396 Chris Stephens: ... we can see a rise in hate crimes and a dramatic reduction in the number of people taking cases to employment tribunals. There has also been a 71% drop in the number of cases challenging sex discrimination, a 58% drop in race discrimination cases, and a 54% drop in disability discrimination cases. Surely that all adds up to a mismatch between workload and resource. When the commission is only employing three caseworkers to provide advice and representation to the victims of discrimination and human rights abuses in England, Scotland and Wales, it calls into question the ability of the organisation to tackle discrimination and enforce the law. ...

col 398 **Jack Dromey:** ... The position that we have now reached is nothing short of scandalous, just when hate is on the march. It is on the march against black, Asian and ethnic minority people, against the disabled and against women. The signs of what is happening in our country are profoundly disturbing. We have never needed a strong Equality and Human Rights Commission more, but it is now being reduced to a rump of its once great self. It is quite extraordinary that its budget has been reduced from £70 million in 2007 to £17 million now. ...

col 401 **The Minister for Universities, Science, Research and Innovation (Joseph Johnson):** ... The Government are also working generally to combat hate crime. Other hon. Members asked about the impact of the restructuring on the commission's ability to deal with instances of hate crime. The Government are working generally with the police to provide a breakdown of data on religion-based hate crime to help them target resources and increase understanding. We recently published the hate crime action plan, in July 2016, and are now delivering locally-based projects to tackle hate crime. We have announced additional funding for communities to increase reporting, with £2.4 million to protect places of worship and £900,000 to support community projects. We are engaging with groups to ensure we understand the public's experience of hate crime and make it easier for victims to come forward. ...

To read the full transcript see

<https://hansard.parliament.uk/commons/2017-03-01/debates/35FBCC69-5F6B-498A-A22F-6D77774E99D0/EqualityAndHumanRightsCommission>

House of Commons Oral Answers

Prime Minister's Questions: Sir Gerald Kaufman

col 286 **The Prime Minister (Theresa May):** ... I am also sure that the whole House will want to join me in paying tribute to our former colleague, Sir Gerald Kaufman, who died over the weekend. He was an outstanding parliamentarian and a committed MP who dedicated his life to the service of his constituents. As Father of the House, his wisdom and experience will be very much missed right across this House. I am sure that our thoughts are with his friends and family. ...

col 287 **Jeremy Corbyn:** ... I echo the Prime Minister's tribute to Gerald Kaufman who served in this House since 1970 and was the longest serving Member. He started in political life as an adviser to Harold Wilson in the 1960s. He was an iconic, irascible figure in the Labour party and in British politics. He was a champion for peace and justice in the middle east and around the world. Yesterday at his funeral, Mr Speaker, the rabbi who conducted the service conveyed your message on behalf of the House to his family, which was very much appreciated. Afterwards, I spoke to his family and to his great nephews and great nieces and asked them how they would describe Gerald, and they said that he was an "awesome uncle". We should remember Gerald as that, and convey our condolences to all of his family. ...

<https://hansard.parliament.uk/commons/2017-03-01/debates/62A8D14B-06F5-461B-B9F9-D20941A86413/Engagements#contribution-0EBC0F2B-3E9B-4A21-9540-9CE7DF8A6F84>

Prime Minister's Questions: Antisemitism

Q11. **Bob Blackman:** We are rightly proud that young people can study at our colleges and universities regardless of race, creed or colour, yet this week Jewish students are being subjected to intimidation, fear and anti-Semitism as the result of the so-called Israeli apartheid week. What action can my right hon. Friend take to make sure that chancellors and principals ensure that anti-Semitism is not allowed to prosper on campuses? [908993]

The Prime Minister: First, I want to assure my hon. Friend that higher education institutions have a responsibility to ensure that they provide a safe and inclusive environment for all students. We expect them to have robust policies and procedures in place to comply with the law, and to investigate and swiftly address hate crime, including any anti-Semitic incidents that are reported. I know that my hon. Friend the Minister for Universities, Science, Research and Innovation has recently written to remind institutions of these expectations, and he has also urged them to follow the Government's lead in adopting the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance definition of anti-Semitism.

<https://hansard.parliament.uk/commons/2017-03-01/debates/62A8D14B-06F5-461B-B9F9-D20941A86413/Engagements#contribution-366A0E88-F597-4BCE-AD13-B88F691C81AE>

House of Commons Written Answers

Antisemitism: Prosecutions

Gregory Campbell [65328] To ask the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government, how many people were charged with offences related to Anti-Semitism between 24 June and 24 December in (a) 2015 and (b) 2016.

Marcus Jones: There are five monitored strands of hate crime covering hostility on the basis of disability, sexual orientation, transgender identity, race and religion. There is no disaggregation beyond this, although police systems are currently being developed to cover the disaggregation of religion.

Under the Code for Prosecutors, Crown Prosecution Service prosecutors must have regard to whether the offence was motivated by any form of discrimination. This is over and above the requirements of the specific legal framework for hate crime. Prosecutors are supported to identify appropriate evidence in any such case by legal guidance and material developed with the input of the Community Security Trust.

<http://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Commons/2017-02-23/65328/>

Hate Crime: Wales

Stephen Doughty [65502] To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many incidents of hate crime have been (a) reported and (b) prosecuted in each of the last 12 months in each police force area in Wales.

Sarah Newton: The Home Office collect and publish statistics on the number of hate crimes recorded by the police on an annual basis. In 2015/16, the most recently published data, the police recorded 2,405 hate crimes in Wales. The statistical bulletin, which includes the number of hate crimes recorded by police force area (Appendix Table 2.01), can be found here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/hate-crime-england-and-wales-2015-to-2016>.

The Home Office does not hold data on the number of hate crimes prosecuted in the last 12 months. Data for the number of prosecutions for the year ending March 2016 is to be published by the Ministry of Justice in May 2017. The Home Office does hold some data on the outcomes of hate crimes recorded by the police, which can be found in the hate crime bulletin referenced above, but it is not broken down by police force area.

<http://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Commons/2017-02-24/65502/>

Organs: Donors

Rehman Chishti [65022] To ask the Secretary of State for Health, what plans he has to hold a public consultation on organ donation and consent law in England.

Nicola Blackwood: A seven year United Kingdom-wide organ donation and transplantation strategy was jointly published by the four UK health ministers and NHS Blood and Transplant in July 2013. The strategy aims to increase consent rates, encourage people to be proud to donate and to make the UK system comparable with the best of the world. In 2015/16, the highest ever deceased donor rate in the UK was recorded with 1,364 deceased donors resulting in 3,529 transplants.

On 1 December 2015, Wales introduced deemed consent (opt-out) for organ and tissue donation. We will monitor closely how these changes in legislation in Wales affect donation rates.

<http://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Commons/2017-02-22/65022/>

House of Lords Research Briefing

Assisted Dying Legislation: North America and England and Wales

<http://researchbriefings.files.parliament.uk/documents/LIF-2017-0019/LIF-2017-0019.pdf>

Home Office

Home Secretary speech to Community Security Trust annual dinner

... A huge thank you to you Gerald [Ronson] as the Community Security Trust would not be the success it is without you and your determination. Thanks also to David Delew and to the staff of CST. And in particular, I want to pay tribute to the thousands of volunteers for their amazing commitment to keep the community safe – some of whom are outside, protecting us all on this cold, wet evening.

Since CST was established in 1994, the charity has fought hate and prejudice. It is a valued and trusted government partner which administers over £13 million of government grants for security guards and equipment at hundreds of Jewish schools, synagogues and other Jewish venues.

There are now over 5 and a half thousand security volunteers throughout the UK who have been trained by CST and day in, day out, these volunteers work with the government, the police, other religious groups and local communities to keep people safe and to fight hate crime.

And we only need to look at recent events – bomb hoaxes and the desecration of Jewish graves in America and the evacuation of the Jewish museum in north London this week following a bomb threat, to know how important this type of work is every day. ...

... we've seen terrorists target Jews specifically in recent years including in Paris, Brussels, Toulouse and Copenhagen.

Just last month a 16-year-old girl was charged with terrorism offences in Denmark after she was caught planning to blow up a Jewish school.

And Daesh literature continues to identify the Jewish community as a 'desirable and legitimate' target. ...

Far right and extreme right wing groups have become increasingly sophisticated in the ways they use social media for recruitment and promotion and we have seen that around a quarter of the people referred to our deradicalisation programme Channel last year were referred because of links to far right extremism.

But it's essential that you all feel safe where you live, work and spend your leisure time.

That is why at this very dinner in 2015, David Cameron announced over £11.5 million of new money to provide for security measures at Jewish schools, colleges, nurseries and other locations.

That is why last year, Theresa May continued the funding, announcing £13.4 million for that same purpose for 2016 to 2017.

And that is why today I would like to announce our continued support. We will be continuing the funding of the Jewish community protective security grant for 2017 to 2018.

We will provide £13.4 million for security measures in the Jewish community in the coming year.

This money will go towards security guards and protection at independent and state Jewish schools, nurseries, synagogues and community sites. ...

But security measures alone are not enough.

We must deal with those who promote hatred, intolerance and violence.

That's why in 2015 this government introduced our [Counter Extremism Strategy](#) ...

But we must also do more to tackle hate crime and anti-Semitism.

As recent CST statistics have shown, there was a rise in the number of antisemitic hate crime incidents recorded last year. 1,309 were recorded – that's 36% more than the year before.

The most common type of incident involved verbal abuse randomly directed at visibly Jewish people in public as they went about their daily business.

Wearing a kippah, a sheitel or a star of David is a sign of faith and it's absolutely despicable if there are those who respond to these with aggression or abuse. And they will not get away with it.

In Britain we have some of the strongest legislation on hate crime anywhere in the world and one of the first things I did when I was appointed as Home Secretary was to introduce a new hate crime action plan which focuses on reducing hate crime, increasing reporting and improving support for victims. ...

Social media is changing where hate crime happens. It has become an essential tool for coordinated campaigns of antisemitic harassment, abuse and threats.

According to CST research there were 287 antisemitic incidents involving social media in 2016, compared to 185 the year before. ...

It can't be right that when you type Gena Turgel's name into search engines, instead of her story of surviving the Holocaust, you bring up Holocaust denial stories.

And of course, it goes without saying that I wish antisemitism was a subject of the past – something for historians to be baffled by and scholars to debate the origins and demise of, but sadly that's not the case. ...

My thanks to CST, the Board of Deputies, the Jewish Leadership Council and all the other representatives from the Jewish community who engage so proactively with us on this.

Thanks to Sir Eric's [Pickles] remarkable work, the UK has also become the first European country to adopt the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance working definition of antisemitism. This means that there is now one definition of it – in essence language or behaviour that displays hatred towards Jews because they are Jews. We have adopted this definition so that culprits won't be able to get away with being antisemitic because the term is ill-defined or because different organisations or bodies have different interpretations of it.

I'm very pleased that Barnet Council has become the first UK local authority to adopt the definition and I urge others to follow their example. Because antisemitism has no place in Great Britain's diverse and tolerant society and we know all too well where it can lead. ...

Gerald [Ronson] – something you said at this dinner last year really sticks with me. You said that Jews are "the canary in the coal-mine. But this is one canary that has no intention of ending up dead in its cage".

This is a pertinent reminder that antisemitism must never be ignored, not least because it can indicate wider problems within society. It is also a reminder that the Jewish community is strong, resilient and resourceful.

Our Jewish community has made an immense contribution to all areas of life in Britain – from the arts – to architecture. From medicine to philanthropy. ...

If you feel threatened we will listen to you and if you are victimised we will defend you.

And we will strive to build a Britain that Jews are proud to call home. ...

To read the full transcript see

<https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/home-secretary-speech-to-community-security-trust-annual-dinner>

Scottish Parliament Motion

S5M-04298 Anas Sarwar: Sir Gerald Kaufman – That the Parliament pays tribute to the life of Sir Gerald Kaufman, who passed away on 26 February 2017; notes that Sir Gerald, who was the father of the House of Commons, became an MP for the Manchester Ardwick constituency in 1970 and then for Manchester Gorton, the people of whom he served since 1983; acknowledges his immense contribution and recognises that he passionately devoted himself to social justice, equality and peace; considers that he was a principled defender of human rights and was always a brave voice for Palestine and the Middle East peace process, and sends its condolences to his family.

<http://www.parliament.scot/parliamentarybusiness/28877.aspx?SearchType=Advance&ReferenceNumbers=S5M-04298>

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House of Commons Written Answers

Palestinians: Capital Punishment

Bob Blackman [64883] To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, what representations his Department has made to the Palestinian Authority on death sentences imposed on Palestinians for the alleged collaboration with the Israeli Authorities.

Tobias Ellwood: We have not raised this issue with the Palestinian Authority (PA), as the PA, at this present time, has no control over the Gaza Strip. The increasing use of the death penalty in Gaza is a worrying trend. The UK maintains a no contact policy with the de facto authority in Gaza, Hamas.

The local EU Heads of Mission issued a statement on 21 February condemning the use of the death penalty in this case and calling on the de facto authorities in Gaza to refrain from carrying out any executions in line with the PA's moratorium on executions.

<http://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Commons/2017-02-21/64883/>

The statement referred to above can be read at

https://eeas.europa.eu/headquarters/headquarters-homepage_en/21102/The%20EU%20and%20Swiss%20Missions%20in%20Jerusalem%20and%20Ramallah%20condemn%20death%20sentences%20issued%20in%20Gaza

West Bank: Israeli Settlements

Julie Elliott [64925] To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, if he will discuss with his Israeli counterparts the effect of the Land Regularisation Bill recently passed by the Israeli Knesset on the number of Israeli settlements on the West Bank.

Tobias Ellwood: I issued a statement on 7 February condemning the land regularisation law. We are gravely concerned by the law, which will retroactively legalise 53 outposts and pave the way for significant growth in settlements deep in the West Bank, threatening the viability of the two-state solution. The Prime Minister, my Rt Hon. Friend the Member for Maidenhead (Mrs May) and the Foreign Secretary, my Rt Hon. Friend the Member for Uxbridge and South Ruislip (Mr Johnson) both expressed concerns about settlement activity when they met Prime Minister Netanyahu in London on Monday 6 February.

<http://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Commons/2017-02-21/64925/>

The statement referred to above can be read at

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/minister-for-the-middle-east-tobias-ellwood-statement-on-israels-land-regularisation-bill>

Scottish Parliament Motions

S5M-04374 John Finnie: Israeli Apartheid Week – That the Parliament welcomes the 13th annual Israeli Apartheid Week; understands that the week is an international series of events that seeks to raise awareness of what it sees as Israel's settler-colonial project and apartheid system over the Palestinian people and to build support for the growing Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions (BDS) movement; understands that the 2016 Israeli Apartheid Week included a wide range of events, from lectures, film screenings, cultural performances and BDS actions; welcomes that these actions took

place in more than 225 cities across the world, and acknowledges that, despite attacks on BDS internationally, the Israeli Apartheid Week and the BDS movement continue to build linkages and solidarity with other struggles to achieve freedom, justice and equality globally.

<http://www.parliament.scot/parliamentarybusiness/28877.aspx?SearchType=Advance&ReferenceNumbers=S5M-04374>

S5M-04292 Ross Greer: Bedouin Villages in Israel – That the Parliament condemns the plans by Israel to demolish the Bedouin villages, Khan al Ahmar and Umm al Hiran; expresses concern at the violence that has accompanied the demolition of Bedouin villages, including the deaths of two individuals following a pre-dawn raid in Umm al Hiran on 18 January 2017; understands that there are at least 35 Bedouin villages considered illegal by Israel and that this causes hardship, including restricted access to basic infrastructure, the continued threat of demolition and the need to construct essential structures, such as schools from car tyres and mud to circumvent bans on construction material, and urges Israel to legally recognise these Bedouin villages as home to native peoples who have a right to live without harassment from the Israeli state, cease what it sees as threats of demolition and financial sanctions, and permit these villages to be integrated into national infrastructure.

<http://www.parliament.scot/parliamentarybusiness/28877.aspx?SearchType=Advance&ReferenceNumbers=S5M-04292>

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Foreign Affairs

House of Lords Written Answers

Religious Freedom

Lord Alton of Liverpool [HL5421] To ask Her Majesty's Government what progress they have made in fulfilling their 2015 manifesto commitment to "Stand up for the freedom of people of all religions—and non-religious people—to practice their beliefs in peace and safety, for example by supporting persecuted Christians in the Middle East".

Baroness Anelay of St Johns: It is the Government's policy to promote freedom of religion or belief in all parts of the world where it is challenged or undermined. We do this in many different ways. Through our bilateral work we continue to lobby host governments, to raise individual cases and highlight practices and laws that discriminate against people on the basis of their religion or belief.

Multilaterally, we work to sustain consensus on the adoption and implementation of two important Resolutions: the European Union's resolution on 'Freedom of Religion or Belief' and the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC)'s resolution on 'Combating Religious Intolerance'.

We also support a number of projects through the Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO's) Magna Carta Fund. For example, we continue to support a network of human rights defenders in South Asia.

In October 2016, the FCO hosted a groundbreaking international conference to draw attention to the importance of freedom of religion or belief to global efforts to counter violent extremism. In the Middle East, our principal policy designed to prevent the persecution of religious minorities - including Christians - is our support for the international effort to defeat Daesh and return the region to stability and peace.

<http://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Lords/2017-02-20/HL5421/>

Religious Freedom

Lord Oates [HL5462] To ask Her Majesty's Government, further to the Written Answer by Baroness Anelay of St Johns on 29 September 2016 (HL1930), whether they will increase spending on projects which promote freedom of religion or belief as a proportion of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office's Magna Carta Fund from the current level of 6.3 per cent to at least 10 per cent.

Baroness Anelay of St Johns: The Foreign and Commonwealth Office uses its Magna Carta Fund to support projects across a wide range of human rights and democracy-building themes, including freedom of religion or belief, which has a prominent place in the Fund's published strategy. For that reason, we welcome the fact that enough strong project proposals have been put forward by our posts and implementing partners to ensure that expenditure under this theme can continue. Project proposals are judged on merit and value for money. We therefore do not have specific targets for the proportion of expenditure dedicated to specific human rights themes.

<http://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Lords/2017-02-20/HL5462/>

The answer referred to above can be read at

<http://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Lords/2016-09-14/HL1930/>

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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>

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>

Promotion of Israeli-Palestinian Peace (United Kingdom Participation)

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

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Consultations ** new or updated today

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>

The UK's policy towards the Middle East Peace Process (closing date 30 March 2017)
<http://www.parliament.uk/business/committees/committees-a-z/commons-select/foreign-affairs-committee/news-parliament-2015/middle-east-peace-process-inquiry-16-17/>

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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The Scottish Council of Jewish Communities (SCoJeC) is Scottish Charitable Incorporated Organisation SCO29438