

Political Affairs Digest

A daily summary of political events affecting the Jewish Community
Scottish Council of Jewish Communities
SCoJeC

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General Election: Party Leader messages to the Jewish Community

Nicola Sturgeon

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5XfFBXInfKc>

Theresa May

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wjzfYwP8Phw>

Jeremy Corbyn

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mvORNIoF5qM>

Tim Farron

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=m3MZddmpBRY>

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Israel

Foreign and Commonwealth Office

Minister Ellwood statement on death sentences in Gaza

Minister for the Middle East Tobias Ellwood said:

I strongly condemn the three death sentences carried out in Gaza on 25 May. This decision reflects a worrying trend of increasing use of the death penalty in Gaza.

It is the long-standing position of the UK to oppose the death penalty in all circumstances. We have repeatedly called for the de facto authorities in Gaza to respect the Palestinian Authority's moratorium on implementation of the death penalty.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/minister-ellwood-statement-on-death-sentences-in-gaza--2>

United Nations

Constraints on movement in occupied territory at root of Palestinian hardship – UN report

Israeli constraints on movement and economics, along with the blockade on the Gaza Strip and internal political strife, are at the root of Palestinian suffering in the occupied territory, according to two separate United Nations reports released as the Israeli occupation enters its fiftieth year.

“Occupation policies and practices remain the key cause of humanitarian needs in the oPt [occupied Palestinian territory],” the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) said in its annual report.

David Carden, the head of OCHA in the occupied territories, attributed the hardship to a “pervasive” lack of protection and accountability for international law. ...

Among the issues raised in the report were the restriction on Palestinian movement and access to basic services. Despite some easing of measures, OCHA noted that the number of Palestinians who Israeli officials allowed to leave Gaza had declined in the second half of 2016. The Rafah crossing – the sole crossing between Gaza and Egypt – was only opened for 44 days last year. While in the West Bank, OCHA recorded 572 movement obstacles, with an additional 110 obstacles in the Israeli-controlled Hebron city.

In addition, Israeli authorities in 2016 demolished or seized some 300 donor-funded structures provided as humanitarian aid to Palestinians, with a value estimated at more than \$730,000. ...

The “stringent” restrictions on movement and economic activities are also cited by the International Labour Organization (ILO) ...

The report noted that while economic growth is taking place in West Bank and Gaza, it “is not enough to improve livelihoods, and it barely translates into employment gains.”

“The harsh reality facing all efforts to strengthen the Palestinian labour market is the control that the occupation exercises over the Palestinian borders and the access to land, water and natural resources,” ILO Director-General, Guy Ryder, says ...

To read the full press release see

<https://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=56872#.WTFiRROGOnY>

Occupied Palestinian Territory: Fragmented Lives

http://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/fragmented_lives_2016_english.pdf

The situation of workers in the occupied Arab territories

http://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---ed_norm/---relconf/documents/meetingdocument/wcms_554441.pdf

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Other Relevant Information

European Parliament: press release

Rise in anti-Semitism demands stronger action, urge MEPs

The recent rise in anti-Semitism across the EU requires more and stronger action, MEPs say in a resolution approved on Thursday.

Hate speech and violence against Europe’s Jewish citizens are incompatible with EU values, so all EU member states must take measures to ensure the security of their Jewish citizens, say MEPs. They call on leading national politicians to oppose anti-Semitic statements systematically and publicly, and urge every member state to appoint

a national coordinator to combat anti-Semitism. ...

Racist motives should be deemed an aggravating factor in criminal offences. And anti-Semitic acts committed on the internet should also be prosecuted, says the resolution.

MEPs also call for good cross-border cooperation in prosecution especially in the case of terrorist acts. Police forces should set up special anti-hate crime units, and to make prosecution more efficient and effective, all member states should adopt the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance definition of what constitutes anti-Semitism. ...

To read the full press release see

<http://www.europarl.europa.eu/news/en/press-room/20170529IPR76235/rise-in-anti-semitism-demands-stronger-action-urge-meps>

European Parliament Debate

Combating anti-semitism

[Note that only speeches in English have been included in this abstract]

Matti Maasikas (President-in-Office of the Council): Let me start by expressing my deep concern about the current situation in Europe. Evidence from different sources, including the EU Agency for Fundamental Rights and the Council of Europe, shows an alarming increase in intolerance and hatred. There exists specific data collected by the Fundamental Rights Agency confirming that every fourth Jew in Europe has experienced verbal or physical violence. It is difficult to believe and understand that so many in our society reject the fundamental values of tolerance, respect and liberty, and instead choose to hate. ...

The EU has adopted specific legislation on combating intolerance and hatred, namely the 2008 Framework Decision on combating racism and xenophobia. This decision outlaws Holocaust denial and anti-Semitic hate speech inciting violence. In particular, it prohibits under criminal law condoning, denying or grossly trivialising the Holocaust. ...

... countermeasures will be in vain if we forget the important role of education and youth work. More precisely, it is crucial to know the history of our continent to understand the value of tolerance and to be able to counter anti-Semitism when confronted with it. ...

Věra Jourová (Member of the Commission): ... Data show a clear spike in anti—Semitic incidents. There was more than one incident a day in Austria and three incidents per day in the United Kingdom in 2016, in both cases the highest numbers ever recorded. We are particularly worried about discrimination and harassment against Jewish youngsters, who are more likely to experience anti-Semitism in schools and universities. ...

We must learn from the past, in order to ensure that nobody is persecuted for what he or she is, stands for or believes in. ...

Branislav Škripek (on behalf of the ECR Group): ... For years, hate speech and hate crimes against Jews were the domain of marginal groups and political movements. Unfortunately, anti-Semitism is becoming a strong political stream in Europe. It is accepted and followed by many, often in ignorance of its real impact on people in our communities.

Populist, anti-establishment movements use any kind of motivation to gain attention. This includes so-called 'discussion' of the Holocaust, and verbal and physical violence against Jews in European cities and the presence of Jews in the Middle East.

This dangerous political rhetoric, however, leads us back to dubious discussion and debate about the legitimacy of the State of Israel. Democracy cannot be an excuse for allowing undemocratic forces to act. Jews in Europe have the right to live freely without fear. The State of Israel has the right to exist and protect itself. Any kind of questioning of this legitimacy cannot be part of a debate in this House or anywhere else. ...

Cecilia Wikström (on behalf of the ALDE Group): ... 'Paris 2015': four persons dead in a terrorist attack against a Jewish kosher grocery store. In this city, Brussels, four people

were killed in a terrorist attack against Belgium's Jewish Museum. This resolution we are discussing today shows that we, the elected Members of European countries and citizens in this institution, do not tolerate anti-Semitism in our continent. The memories of the Holocaust should never be forgotten. We should do anything we can to combat anti-Semitism in all its ugly forms. ...

Gerard Batten (on behalf of the EFDD Group): ... Studies show that European Muslims are 10 times more likely to hold very unfavourable views about Jews than non-Muslims. There are two main reasons for the growth of the current strains of European anti-Semitism. The first is the anti-Semitic content of the Islamic tracts, the Qur'an, the Hadith and the Sunnah. The second is the dramatic growth in the number of Muslims in Europe over the last 50 years, a growth that is now spiralling upward.

The problem is that many Muslims take literally what is written in their works of fiction. These works are full of exhortations for discrimination, hatred and violence, and not just against Jews, but Christians too. ...

If European governments were serious about combating this problem, they would do two things immediately. First, stop all overseas funding of mosques and imams. Second, end the mass immigration of Muslims into European countries. ...

Steven Woolfe (NI): ... I have spoken many times, in this Chamber and beyond, about the ways that Israel, a beacon of freedom across the globe, has been attacked from all quarters. But I am afraid that the definitions in this motion have caused me grave concern: my concern is that they will enhance those who wish to do the Jews and Israel harm. In particular, I am concerned about the adoption of the definition from the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance. The definition is extremely broad and wide. Let me, for example, cite this quote to you: 'Palestine belongs to the Arabs. It is wrong and inhuman to impose the Jews on the Arabs.' The author of this quote would have to be imprisoned if we adopt this definition. The author of the quote was Mahatma Gandhi. ...

Jussi Halla-aho (ECR): ... historically anti-Semitism in Europe has been connected to extreme nationalism. However ... The new rise in anti-Jewish hatred and violence is linked to immigration from Muslim countries. Research shows that anti-Jewish attitudes are mainstream in Muslim communities. Unfortunately these communities, together with the so-called liberals, have been very successful in portraying Muslims as victims and victims only, thereby placing them beyond justified criticism. ...

Lars Adaktusson (PPE): ... Terrorist attacks like those in Toulouse, Brussels, Paris and Copenhagen are aimed at individuals only because they are Jewish. Threats and harassment are also increasing. ... Earlier this spring, the synagogue in the city of Umeå closed down due to systematic threats. In the city of Malmö, Jewish individuals risk being attacked if they wear a necklace with the Star of David around their neck.

In order to confront today's anti-Semitism in Europe, we have to acknowledge the problem and its roots. ... The aim is to find a common European definition of anti-Semitism and to use the EU institutions for exchange of information in the fight against this kind of racism. The issue of definition is important because the lack of agreement on how to define anti-Semitism makes it impossible to monitor and prevent anti-Semitic hate crime, which is a precondition for an effective fight against these evil acts. ...

Margrete Auken (Verts/ALE): ... Racism and anti-Semitism are generally covered by specific legislation in each European country and should be dealt with resolutely under these statutes. Endorsing the highly contentious and flawed IHRA document will not aid our collective endeavour to combat anti-Semitism. In our view, endorsement would significantly undermine defences against anti-Semitism by expanding the concept in a politically motivated way. ...

Věra Jourová (Member of the Commission): ... as I said at the beginning this is a very important debate on a very alarming topic. Some of you mentioned that it must be a matter of solidarity to help and to protect people who are affected by anti-Semitism, but I must say that solidarity is not enough. We need to ensure security for all people, and

speaking about security, we are in the field of criminal justice. ...

I must say that for me, criminal justice is the last resort. We must do much more, because here in Europe we face the situation where we have a high number of people who are able to commit criminal offences against people of another race or another religion. Unfortunately, I have to say this is a happening in Europe due to the passivity of society and the silent acceptance by society.

This is something we have already witnessed several times in our history and we need to do much more than prohibit criminal wrongdoing. ...

Matti Maasikas (President-in-Office of the Council): ... Much is at stake here: responsibility for the history of our continent and the essential democratic rights that shape our societies today. Crimes motivated by racism and xenophobia affect not only the victim, but also society as a whole. ...

To read the full transcript see

<http://www.europarl.europa.eu/sides/getDoc.do?pubRef=-//EP//TEXT+CRE+20170531+ITEM-015+DOC+XML+V0//EN&language=EN>

European Parliament Resolution adopted

European Parliament resolution of 1 June 2017 on combating anti-Semitism (2017/2692(RSP))

... A. whereas the number of anti-Semitic incidents in EU Member States has risen significantly in recent years ...

B. whereas it has been reported that targeted security measures, once put in place, have helped to prevent and decrease the number of violent anti-Semitic attacks;

C. whereas combating anti-Semitism is a responsibility for society as a whole;

[the European Parliament]

1. Stresses that hate speech and all kinds of violence against European Jewish citizens are incompatible with the values of the European Union;

2. Calls on the Member States and the Union institutions and agencies to adopt and apply the working definition of anti-Semitism employed by the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA)(4) in order to support the judicial and law enforcement authorities in their efforts to identify and prosecute anti-Semitic attacks more efficiently and effectively, and encourages Member States to follow the example of the UK and Austria in this regard

3. Calls on the Member States to take all necessary steps to actively contribute to ensuring the security of their Jewish citizens and Jewish religious, educational and cultural premises, in close consultation and dialogue with Jewish communities, civil society organisations, and anti-discrimination NGOs;

4. Welcomes the appointment of the Commission Coordinator on Combating Anti-Semitism, and urges the Commission to provide all the necessary tools and support to make this function as effective as possible;

5. Calls on the Member States to appoint national coordinators on combating anti-Semitism;

6. Encourages members of national and regional parliaments and political leaders to systematically and publicly condemn anti-Semitic statements and to engage in counter-speech and alternative narratives, and to set up cross-party parliamentary groups against anti-Semitism so as to strengthen the fight across the political spectrum;

7. Stresses the important role of civil society organisations and education ...

8. Calls on the Member States to encourage the media to promote respect for all faiths and appreciation of diversity ...

10. Insists on the need to provide enforcement authorities with targeted training on combating hate crime and discrimination, and on the need to set up dedicated anti-hate crime units in police forces where such units do not yet already exist ...

11. Encourages cross-border cooperation ... in the prosecution of hate crimes ...

12. Calls for the EU and its Member States to step up efforts to ensure that a comprehensive and efficient system is put in place for the systematic collection of reliable, relevant and comparable data on hate crimes, disaggregated by motivation and including acts of terrorism;
13. Calls on the Member States, regarding the Code of Conduct agreed between the Commission and leading IT companies, to urge online intermediaries and social media platforms to take expeditious action to prevent and combat anti-Semitic hate speech online;
14. Highlights that schools offer a unique opportunity to transmit the values of tolerance and respect ...
15. Encourages the Member States to promote the teaching about the Holocaust (the Shoah) in schools and to ensure that teachers are adequately trained for this task and equipped to address diversity in the classroom; also encourages the Member States to consider reviewing school textbooks to ensure that Jewish history and contemporary Jewish life are presented in a comprehensive and balanced way and that all forms of anti-Semitism are avoided;
16. Asks the Commission and the Member States to increase financial support for targeted activities and educational projects ...
17. Calls on the Commission to closely liaise with international actors such as UNESCO, the OSCE and the Council of Europe, as well as other international partners, in order to combat anti-Semitism at international level;
18. Calls on the Commission to request advisory status within the IHRA;
19. Encourages each Member State to officially commemorate International Holocaust Remembrance Day on 27 January; ...

To read the full text of the Resolution see

<http://www.europarl.europa.eu/sides/getDoc.do?pubRef=-//EP//TEXT+TA+P8-TA-2017-0243+0+DOC+XML+V0//EN&language=EN>

European Commission

Code of Conduct on countering online hate speech – results of evaluation show important progress

... the European Commission is releasing the results of an evaluation of the [Code of Conduct](#). ... Some of the key points are:

- On average, in 59% of the cases, the social media platforms responded to notifications concerning illegal hate speech by removing the content. This is more than twice the level of 28% that was recorded six months earlier.
- The amount of notifications reviewed within 24 hours improved from 40% to 51% in the same six months period. Facebook is however the only company that fully achieves the target of reviewing the majority of notifications within the day.
- Compared to the situation six months ago, the social media platforms have become better at treating notifications coming from citizens in the same way as those coming from organisations which use trusted reporters channels. However, there are still some differences in the removal rates. The overall removal rates remain lower when a notification originates from the public. ...

To read the full press release see

http://ec.europa.eu/newsroom/just/item-detail.cfm?item_id=71674

Factsheet: Code of Conduct on countering illegal hate speech online: One year after

http://ec.europa.eu/newsroom/document.cfm?doc_id=45032

Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights

OSCE/ODIHR and EU Institutions hold Joint Day of Action against Anti-Semitism and Anti-Muslim Hatred and Discrimination

... “Today’s Joint Day of Action serves as an opportunity to remind us that concrete and urgent action is needed to ensure that manifestations of all forms of intolerance do not tear at the fabric of social stability across the OSCE region,” said Cristina Finch, Head of the ODIHR Tolerance and Non-Discrimination Department. “While the primary responsibility for addressing acts of intolerance and discrimination rests with OSCE participating States, including their political representatives, initiatives addressing these issues are more effective when a broad range of actors are involved in the process, including the media and civil society. ...

“Combating racism, xenophobia and intolerance goes to the very heart of our common European project,” said Frans Timmermans, First Vice-President of the EC. “By taking responsibility for each other, the Jewish and Muslim communities are sending out a strong signal about the crucial importance of working together towards a common cause.”

To read the full press release see

<http://www.osce.org/odihr/320471>

Understanding Anti-Semitic Hate Crimes and Addressing the Security Needs of Jewish Communities: A Practical Guide

<https://www.osce.org/odihr/317166?download=true>

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Consultations ** new or updated today

Caste in Great Britain and Equality Law (closing date 18 July 2017)

<https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/caste-in-great-britain-and-equality-law-a-public-consultation>

Workplace Diversity (Wales) (closing date not stated)

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

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