

# Political Affairs Digest

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

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### Downing Street: Ministerial Appointments

#### Parliamentary Under Secretaries of State

##### Department for Work and Pensions

Caroline Dinenage

##### Department for Communities and Local Government

Jake Berry

##### Department for Transport

Jesse Norman

##### Wales Office

Guto Bebb

#### In addition

##### Solicitor General

Robert Buckland QC

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/election-2017-ministerial-appointments>

## Scottish Parliament Oral Answers

### Islamophobia (Schools)

**Ben Macpherson:** To ask the Scottish Government what it is doing to tackle Islamophobia in schools. (S5O-01106)

**The Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills (John Swinney):** There is no place in Scotland for any sort of discrimination, prejudice or bullying in schools or elsewhere, and that includes Islamophobia. The Government is clear that schools should be peaceful and safe environments that have a positive influence on children and young people by promoting inclusion and equality and challenging discrimination. That is why all young people in Scotland experience religious and moral education as part of curriculum for excellence, helping them to understand the world's major religions and allowing them to be challenged by different beliefs and values, as well as developing their own capacity for moral judgment.

We have established and funded respectme, our national anti-bullying service,

and are working with a range of stakeholders, including the Parliament's Equalities and Human Rights Committee, to refresh our national approach to anti-bullying for Scotland's children and young people.

**Ben Macpherson:** I thank the cabinet secretary for that comprehensive and reassuring answer. Has he seen the recent report "Islamophobia in Edinburgh Schools" by Samena Dean, which was released on 2 June at Annandale Street mosque? Does the cabinet secretary share my concerns about its content, and will he agree to meet me, Samena Dean, the imam of Annandale Street mosque and, potentially, other stakeholders to discuss the report's findings and how to tackle Islamophobia in our schools?

**John Swinney:** I welcome the material that Ben Macpherson has drawn to my attention, and I will certainly look at it. The Government finds it completely unacceptable that any individuals experience Islamophobia and we have to ensure that we take the steps within our education system to ensure that our approach to the tackling of bullying in that respect is comprehensive and effective. I will be very happy to hear further from Mr Macpherson on the material and those questions, and look forward to exploring in detail the material that he has drawn to my attention.

**Annie Wells:** Statistics released last week showed that cases of religiously aggravated crimes have increased by 14 per cent over the past year. In Edinburgh, funding has been made available by the Scottish Government, in collaboration with the council and police, to eradicate Islamophobia at a local level through the shared vision project. Are there plans to extend such projects beyond Edinburgh to cities such as Glasgow?

**John Swinney:** The Government will look with great care at the steps that are taken across my portfolio and across those of the Cabinet Secretary for Justice and the Cabinet Secretary for Communities, Social Security and Equalities to ensure that we have in place all the necessary interventions and programmes to tackle issues of discrimination. The Government has on-going reviews of the projects and proposals that it funds to ensure that it can deliver on its ambitions.

<http://www.parliament.scot/parliamentarybusiness/report.aspx?r=11005&i=100576#ScotParlOR>

## Scottish Parliament Motion

**S5M-06097 Elaine Smith: Religiously Aggravated Offending in Scotland 2016-17 –** That the Parliament regrets that there has been a 14% increase in crimes with a religious aggravation in Scotland in 2016-17 from the previous year; understands that the report, Religiously Aggravated Offending in Scotland 2016-17, cites Roman Catholicism as the religion most often the subject of reported abuse, with 384 charges for 2016-17, constituting 57% of all reported offences, an increase of 28% from the previous year; considers it regrettable that any religious aggravation is on the rise in Scotland, however expresses specific concern that abuse against Catholics far outstrips that of any other group, and believes that, in order to adequately tackle all acts of religious aggravation, the Scottish Government must make further efforts to understand why one group features disproportionately in these results.

<http://www.parliament.scot/parliamentarybusiness/28877.aspx?SearchType=Advance&ReferenceNumbers=S5M-06097>

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## Israel

### United Nations

#### **Immediate action needed as Gaza power cuts spark humanitarian crisis, UN expert warns**

The humanitarian situation in Gaza is deteriorating to unprecedented levels as new reductions in the already extremely limited power supply have been announced, a United Nations expert has warned.

Michael Lynk, Special Rapporteur on the human rights situation in the Palestinian territories occupied since 1967, said the situation was “extremely distressing” and getting worse with every passing week.

“All the parties with a direct hand in the crisis – Israel, the Palestinian Authority and Hamas – must act immediately with the best interests of the population in Gaza in mind to resolve this human-made problem,” the expert said.

“I call on them to put aside their differences, live up to their legal and political obligations, and to ensure that electricity needs are fully met, with immediate critical infrastructure requirements addressed,” he said. “This unprecedented reduction of power is increasing the already intolerable levels of misery being endured by Gazans, particularly for the poor and vulnerable.” ...

He also noted that the plant was badly damaged by Israeli military action in 2014, and that Israel had restricted the importation of replacement parts.

“This entirely avoidable power crisis has had significant repercussions for people living in Gaza,” said the Special Rapporteur.

“The health sector is able to provide only the absolute minimum standard of care – hospitals are being forced to cancel some operations, are cutting back on maintenance, and are dependent on the United Nations for emergency fuel to run their generators,” Mr. Lynk said.

“Raw sewage cannot be treated and is pouring into the Mediterranean. Desalination plants are functioning at one-seventh of their capacity, and drinking water is becoming increasingly scarce,” he stressed. ...

**To read the full press release see**

<http://www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=21746&LangID=E>

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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/aste-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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