

Political Affairs Brief

A daily summary of political events affecting the Jewish Community

Scottish Council of Jewish Communities

SCoJeC

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UK Parliamentary Questions

Higher Education: Anti-Semitism

Mr. Amess: To ask the Minister of State, Department for Business, Innovation and Skills what steps he (a) has taken and (b) plans to take to deal with anti-Semitism (i) on university campuses and (ii) in student unions; what recent discussions he has had on this issue; and if he will make a statement. [321837]

Mr. Lammy: This Department has set up a group on Anti-Semitism and higher education to facilitate discussions between the Jewish community and higher education stakeholders, which I chair. This group covers all issues relating to anti-Semitism on campus and plays an important role in helping to tackle anti-Semitism in higher education. The two meetings that have taken place have resulted in practical actions to be taken forward by higher education stakeholders and Jewish Community representatives working collaboratively.

I also attended the recent Jewish student Lobby of Parliament in February 2010 where I heard from students about their experiences at university and made clear once again the Government's strong opposition to anti-Semitism and any form of racism in higher education.

I was appalled at the rise in total anti-Semitic incident figures shown in the recent Community Security Trust annual report, in particular the very disturbing 38 incidents against one academic.

However, the overall trend in HE showed a 13 per cent. decrease from 2008.

Mr. Amess: To ask the Minister of State, Department for Business, Innovation and Skills what meetings have been held of the higher education sub-group of the cross-government working group on anti-Semitism since January 2009; who from each Civil Service grade attended each meeting; what was discussed at each meeting; what further meetings are planned; and if he will make a statement. [321838]

Mr. Lammy: There have been two meetings of the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills' (BIS) anti-Semitism and higher education group, in April 2009 chaired by me and in November 2009 chaired by my noble Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Postal Affairs and Employment Relations and by Martin Williams, the Director for Higher Education in BIS. At each meeting a ministerial private secretary was present and also a policy official (higher executive officer). A further meeting is due to be arranged for spring 2010. The first meeting discussed anti-Semitic incident monitoring in higher education (HE), and how this was reported by students. The second meeting included updates from members of the group on their wider work on equality and diversity,

including tackling anti-Semitism, and on the recent guidance for students, "A Student's Guide to Antisemitism on Campus", produced by the Union of Jewish Students and the Community Security Trust. Both meetings resulted in agreement to a number of practical actions which are being taken forward by HE stakeholders and the Jewish community.

We are committed to encouraging higher education institutions to ensure discrimination has no place in any of their policies or practices and to act swiftly when incidents or complaints are brought to their attention. One of the most important ways of tackling any form of racism in our universities is to ensure there is a dialogue between the universities, students and minority communities and this Department has been instrumental in fostering communication between the Jewish community and higher education. An important part of this work has been the establishment of the BIS anti-Semitism and higher education group, which brings together student representatives, representatives of the Jewish community and key HE sector bodies.

<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm200910/cmhansrd/cm100315/text/100315w0030.htm#10031538000032>

Census

Lord Laird: To ask Her Majesty's Government further to the Written Answer by Baroness Crawley on 13 January (WA 155-6), what criteria were used in the 2011 census ethnic question prioritisation exercise; what was the scoring system used to decide only to add the category of Gypsy or Irish Traveller to White ethnic group; what other categories were considered; and why an Irish category was included in 2001 and will be maintained it in 2011. [HL2489]

Baroness Crawley: The information requested falls within the responsibility of the UK Statistics Authority. I have asked the authority to reply.

Letter from Stephen Penneck, director-general for ONS, to Lord Laird, dated March 2010.

As the director-general for the Office for National Statistics (ONS) I have been asked to reply to your recent Question asking further to the Written Answer by Baroness Crawley on 13 January (WA 155-6), what criteria were used in the 2011 census ethnic question prioritisation exercise; what was the scoring system used to decide only to add the category of Gypsy or Irish Traveller to white ethnic group; what other categories were considered; and why an Irish category was included in 2001 and will be maintained in 2011.(HL2489)

The ethnic group question is already the longest in the census questionnaire. However, there were still demands for additional response categories. For the 2011 census, there was space only for two additional tick-boxes. As explained in answer to the previous Question referred to above, ONS developed a tool to prioritise requests for additional ethnic group tick-boxes. The ethnic group prioritisation exercise scored each ethnic group under consideration against seven criteria, which were grouped into four broader themes. These were:

1 Strength of need for information on that group

1.1 Group is of particular interest for equality monitoring or for policy development (for example, particularly vulnerable to disadvantage)

1.2 Group is of particular interest for service delivery

2 Lack of alternative sources of information

2.1 Write-in answers are not adequate for measuring this group

2.2 Other census information is inadequate as a suitable proxy

3 Clarity and quality of the information collected and acceptability to respondents

3.1 Without this tick-box respondents would be unduly confused or burdened and so the quality of information would be reduced (for example, if a large, well known or highly distinct group was left out and instead respondents from this group ticked a variety of options instead)

3.2 The addition of the tick-box and/or revised terminology is clear and acceptable

to respondents (both in wording and in the context of the question, for example providing mutually exclusive categories) and provides the required information to an acceptable level of quality

4 Comparability with 2001 data

4 There will be no adverse impact on comparability

Potential tick-box categories were identified throughout the extensive period of consultation with users. A score of either 2, 1 or 0 was given to each category for each principle in accordance with the level of supporting evidence and analysis, ensuring a level of consistency in relation to each principle. The scoring method equated to:

2 High level of evidence 1 Medium level of evidence 0 Low level or no evidence

This was the system that was used to decide which tick-boxes to add to the ethnic group question, including Gypsy or Irish Traveller. Full details of the prioritisation tool can be found in an information paper on the website: <http://www.ons.gov.uk/census/2011-census/2011-census-questionnaire-content/question-and-content-recomnendations-for-2011/index.html>.

Other categories considered are listed in the summary of scores shown at Annexe A in the information paper referred to above and as listed in a previous Answer in December 2009 (WA230-31).

A particular case was made for the inclusion of an Irish category in the 2001 census by representatives of the Irish community in Britain to provide a more accurate and reliable basis for identifying and dealing with problems of disadvantage, such as health inequality, facing the Irish community. The inclusion of an Irish category was supported by the then Commission for Racial Equality as well as central government departments and Irish community groups.

The 2005 consultation showed a continuing requirement for information on the Irish community and found that statistics users were happy with the ethnic populations measured in the 2001 census. ONS therefore recommended that the "Irish" category, and all other categories from the 2001 census, be retained. Consultation on the 2011 census content identified a strong need for comparison of ethnic group statistics with the 2001 census. Consultation also showed that statistics users were happy with the ethnic populations measured in the 2001 census and the 2001 categories have therefore been retained for the 2011 census.

<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/ld200910/ldhansrd/text/100315w0002.htm#10031553000779>

Foreign and Commonwealth Office

First Papal State Visit to the UK announced for September 2010

The UK Government and the Catholic Bishops' Conferences of Scotland, England and Wales today welcomed the forthcoming visit to the United Kingdom of His Holiness Pope Benedict XVI. At a joint press conference, they said that the Papal Visit represents an unprecedented opportunity to strengthen ties between the UK and the Holy See on global initiatives, as well as the important role of faith in creating strong communities.

Her Majesty The Queen announced earlier today that the visit will take place from 16-19 September. It will be the first ever official Papal Visit to the UK – the visit by Pope John Paul II in 1982 was a pastoral visit only. The Pope will be received at the Palace of Holyroodhouse by Her Majesty The Queen. His Holiness will give a major speech to British civil society at Westminster Hall. He will also visit the West Midlands to beatify the nineteenth century theologian and educationalist Cardinal John Henry Newman at a public mass in Coventry. Other key elements of the visit will include a public mass in Glasgow, a prayer vigil in London and an event focusing on education. Relations between the Christian Churches will be a theme of the visit as will the relations between the major faiths. ...

Rt Hon Jim Murphy MP, Secretary of State for Scotland, is the Government Minister leading the preparations for the visit. He said:

“This is an historic visit at an important time. ... A defining feature of Pope Benedict's teaching has been to remind Europe of its Christian roots and culture and to give us guidance on the great moral issues of our day and it is my hope that we all open our hearts to his words.” ...

To read the full press release see

<http://www.fco.gov.uk/en/news/latest-news/?view=News&id=21896206>

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UK Parliamentary Questions

Israel: EU External Trade

Dr. Starkey: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer for what reasons HM Revenue and Customs (a) refused preference for and (b) investigated consignments of imports from Israel under the EU-Israel Trade Agreement in respect of (i) two consignments with commodity code 33079000, refused in August 2009, (ii) one consignment with commodity code 34013000, refused in November 2009 and (iii) one consignment with commodity code 34013000, under investigation. [322387]

Mr. Timms: HM Revenue and Customs refused preference for the three consignments in question as documentary checks confirmed that the place of production was in the Occupied Palestinian Territories. For the remaining consignment with commodity code 34013000, HMRC are awaiting confirmation of the place of production.

<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm200910/cmhansrd/cm100315/text/100315w0021.htm#10031532000047>

Middle East: Navy

Mr. Andrew Turner: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will use the assets of the Royal Navy to protect Free Gaza ships in international waters. [321680]

Bill Rammell [*holding answer 11 March 2010*]: I refer the hon. Member to the answer given by the Minister of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs (Mr. Ivan Lewis) on 11 March 2010, *Official Report*, column 428W.

<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm200910/cmhansrd/cm100315/text/100315w0003.htm#10031512000043>

The answer to which Bill Rammell refers was reported in PAB 12-3-2010 and be found at

<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm200910/cmhansrd/cm100311/text/100311w0007.htm#10031146000074>

UK Parliament Early Day Motion

Jeremy Corbyn 1093) Demonstrations and Gaza -That this House acknowledges the right of the citizen to express lawful views about the unlawful acts of others at peaceful demonstrations; notes the disproportionate and unusually harsh sentences imposed on many young Muslims, most of exemplary character, who demonstrated against the Israeli attack on Gaza in December 2008 and January 2009; and calls for an independent inquiry into the conduct of the police and public and the unwarranted collective conduct of the courts relevant to these demonstrations.

<http://edmi.parliament.uk/EDMi/EDMDetails.aspx?EDMID=40726&SESSION=903>

Scottish Parliament Motion

S3M-5960 Sandra White: Build Trust not Homes—That the Parliament welcomes efforts by the US administration to establish proximity talks between Palestinians and Israelis aimed at reinvigorating the peace process; notes the comments by US Vice President Joe Biden in response to Israel's announcement to approve planning permission for 1,600 new homes in East Jerusalem, considered by the international community to be occupied territory and therefore illegal to build on, that "The substance and timing of the announcement, particularly with the launching of proximity talks, is precisely the kind of step that undermines the trust we need right now and runs counter to the constructive discussions that I've had here in Israel" whose sentiments were echoed by the United Nations, the European Union and the British Foreign Secretary, David Miliband, who commented that "This is a bad decision at the wrong time. It will give strength to those who argue that Israel is not serious about peace", and hopes that all those interested in a peaceful resolution to the conflict will accept that the need for trust and goodwill as a precursor to meaningful discussions is a fundamental prerequisite.

<http://www.scottish.parliament.uk/Apps2/business/motions/Default.aspx?motionid=18597>

European Parliament

Middle East conflict: build trust and freeze settlements, says EMPA

The stalled Middle East peace talks dominated the sixth plenary session of the Euro-Mediterranean Parliamentary Assembly (EMPA), in Jordan (12-14 March). The Israeli policy of settlement building and the new housing projects in East Jerusalem were condemned as jeopardising the two-state solution. ... In the debate on the peace process, Chair of the EP delegation to the Palestinian Legislative Council Pronsias De Rossa (S&D, IE), said "mutual trust is key to this conflict. Building trust entails putting an end to the siege of Gaza and finding a solution for Palestinian prisoners detained outside the constraints of the Geneva Convention". "That's why I believe that the recommendations of the Goldstone are important. If implemented, these recommendations could be the starting point for building the trust that this region needs", added De Rossa, who was backed by Hélène Flautre (Greens/EFA, FR).... The recent Israeli decision to list sacred sites in Hebron, Bethlehem and Jerusalem in an Israeli national heritage restoration plan caused concern among MEPs and Assembly MPs. The parliamentarians decided debate this issue thoroughly at a joint meeting of the Political and Culture Committees in Istanbul in May 2010.

To read the full press release see

http://www.europarl.europa.eu/news/expert/infopress_page/030-70608-074-03-12-903-20100315IPR70607-15-03-2010-2010-false/default_en.htm

European Union Institute for Security Studies

Engaging Hamas: Rethinking the Quartet Principles

http://www.iss.europa.eu/uploads/media/Engaging_Hamas.pdf

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Relevant Legislation ** New or updated

UK Parliament

Children, Schools and Families Bill

<http://services.parliament.uk/bills/2009-10/childrenschoolsandfamilies.html>

Constitutional Reform and Governance Bill

<http://services.parliament.uk/bills/2009-10/constitutionalreformandgovernance.html>

Crime and Security Bill

<http://services.parliament.uk/bills/2009-10/crimeandsecurity.html>

Equality Bill

<http://services.parliament.uk/bills/2009-10/equality.html>

**** Flood and Water Management Bill**

<http://services.parliament.uk/bills/2009-10/floodandwatermanagement.html>

amendment paper

<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/ld200910/ldbills/028/amend/ml028-i.htm>

Prosecution of Offences Act 1985 (Amendment) Bill

<http://services.parliament.uk/bills/2009-10/prosecutionoffencesact1985amendment.html>

Scottish Parliament

End of Life Assistance Bill

<http://www.scottish.parliament.uk/s3/bills/38-EndLifeAssist/index.htm>

Draft Census Order

http://www.opsi.gov.uk/legislation/scotland/ssi2010/draft/pdf/sdsi_9780111008379_en.pdf

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Consultations ** new or updated

2011 Census Statistical Outputs (England and Wales) (closes 26 March 2010)

<http://www.ons.gov.uk/census/2011-census/consultations/open-consultations/2011-output-consultation---main-statistical-outputs/index.html>

Equality Bill: Draft Codes of Conduct (closes 2 April 2010)

<http://www.equalityhumanrights.com/legislative-framework/equality-bill/equality-bill-codes-of-practice-consultation/#1>

Equality Bill: Draft Guidance (closes 16 April 2010)

<http://ehrc-consult.limehouse.co.uk/portal>

Death Certification, Burial, and Cremation (Scotland) (closes 21 April 2010)

<http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Resource/Doc/300112/0093686.pdf>

Call for Evidence on the End of Life Assistance (Scotland) Bill (12 May 2010)
<http://www.scottish.parliament.uk/s3/committees/endLifeAsstBill/currentInquiries.htm>

Humanitarian Assistance Strategic Guidance (closes 14 May)
http://www.culture.gov.uk/images/consultations/HA_strategic_guide_draft.pdf

2011 Census Statistical Outputs (Scotland) (closes 14 May 2010)
<http://www.gro-scotland.gov.uk/census/censushm2011/preparations/consultation-and-research/formal-consultations/spring-10-consultation.html>

Reform of the coroner system (closes 1 July 2010)
Includes questions as to when it may be appropriate to carry out a non-invasive post-mortem examination, for example by means of MRI scan.
<http://www.justice.gov.uk/consultations/reform-coroner-system.htm>

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