

Political Affairs Brief

A daily summary of political events affecting the Jewish Community

Scottish Council of Jewish Communities

SCoJeC

Contents

[Home Affairs](#)

[Relevant Legislation](#)

[Israel](#)

[Consultations](#)

Home Affairs

House of Lords Debate

British Humanist Association: Reports

Moved By Lord Harrison: To call attention to the British Humanist Association's reports *Quality and Equality: Human Rights, Public Services and Religious Organisations* and *The Case for Secularism: A Neutral State in an Open Society*; and to move for papers. ... the Church of England has continued unwarrantedly to enjoy and increase its privileges within the state-in education, in employment practices, law and public broadcasting-as statutory public services continue to be contracted out to religious organisations.

The consequences have been to imperil the take-up of public services and to encourage discrimination against users of such services and against employees who owe allegiance to another religion or to none at all. ... Career prospects have stalled for some attached to the wrong religion or to no religion at all. Religious harassment has had an open goal to shoot at, while the status of religious organisations has been undeservedly advanced under the cover of the public purse. ... the Church of England is a mere fraction within a fraction, even within the declining Christian communion. It still has a position in our nation and society, however, that is wholly incommensurate with its numbers, and nowhere more so than in your Lordships' House, where 26 privileged places are preserved. Other religions are gradually being represented here, including by our colleagues from the Muslim community and, more lately, the noble Lord, Lord Sacks, representing part of the Jewish community. The House of Lords is becoming secularised accidentally.

<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/ld200910/ldhansrd/text/100318-0003.htm#10031838000669>

col 679 **Lord Patten:** ... As the state moves from being a universal service provider to becoming more and more a service commissioner, it would be wrong to try to exclude religious bodies from being commissioned to provide services, as the British Humanist Association seeks to do, for the following three reasons. First, it would be rank, outright discrimination, plain and simple. Secondly, it is philosophically bankrupt and inept, for it assumes automatically that, while faith-based projects are not value-neutral, by definition secular projects are inherently value-neutral. That is nonsense. All bodies are rooted in a particular place or places and have a set of values. ...

col 680 **Baroness Miller of Chilthorne Domer:** Yesterday, the Minister John Denham announced that the Government have set up a new £1 million fund to help faith groups get their voices heard by government and public bodies. This is occurring just at the moment when other public services and local councils are facing real and deep cuts. Council tax will rise by the lowest amount possible since it was introduced and certainly well below the inflation level. It is extraordinary that the Government have £1 million to

dispense in this way. In addition to that fund, the Government have set up a £50,000 social action prize fund to help publicise and reward faith-based projects, and only faith-based projects, that are finding new ways of meeting local problems, bringing people together and meeting the needs of local communities. ...

col 682 Baroness Massey of Darwen: ... It has been shown time and time again that faith schools actually decrease parental choice. The increase in faith schools replacing comprehensive schools has led to a situation where parents in some areas do not have the choice of whether to send their child to a faith school. ... What worries me is the notion that faith schools encourage community cohesion. I cannot see this to be the case when children are divided up and removed from their communities. ...

<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/ld200910/ldhansrd/text/100318-0004.htm>

col 688 Lord Taverne: ... Believers often tell us that teaching religion is to be nurtured because it provides a moral basis to education, and that without God there is no basis for morality. This often-proclaimed belief not only shows a degree of arrogance, but has no logical justification. It is arrogant because it suggests that believers are somehow morally superior, for which there is no evidence whatever. It is also illogical. To put it briefly, when the likes of Christopher Hitchens point out that the Old Testament God is nasty, bloodthirsty and vengeful, Christians reasonably answer that their God is the god of the Sermon on the Mount, which is one of the most admirable moral texts. ...

<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/ld200910/ldhansrd/text/100318-0005.htm>

col 705 The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Department for Communities and Local Government & Department for Work and Pensions (Lord McKenzie of Luton): ... in July 2008 we published *Face to Face and Side by Side*, a framework for partnership in our multifaith society. This was part of our overall response to *Our Shared Future*, the report of the Commission on Integration and Cohesion, and in particular, its recommendation that there needed to be more constructive relationships between those who are religious and those who are not. As the document itself says, we believe that the building blocks set out in *Face to Face and Side by Side* represent the key enabling factors for effective dialogue and social action involving people with different faiths and beliefs and those with none. We recognise that the commission's highlighting of the importance of going beyond interfaith dialogue to encourage meaningful dialogue between people of faith and no faith and people of different ethnic backgrounds and cultures, has been echoed by those who feel excluded from the table of interfaith dialogue. It is aware that the key rubbing point for many interfaith forums is the role of people who profess no religious belief in this dialogue. ... With individual faith communities there is often diversity, and there are challenges both for faith communities engaging in interfaith activity and for local authorities. It can be all too easy to take the simplistic route of conflating faith, ethnicity and culture, but faith is a distinctive category in its own right. Some faith communities have much to offer in helping to eradicate disadvantage, and the Government seek to enable them to use that capacity for the wider benefit of society. More on that shortly, but our work with faith communities is not about privileging religious groups or discriminating against those with non-religious beliefs or no belief. It continues to be a priority of the Government to ensure that those with a non-religious perspective are also able to participate in constructive debate on policy issues and to inform the development of legislation.

<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/ld200910/ldhansrd/text/100318-0007.htm>

col 708 Lord McKenzie of Luton: ... It is sometimes argued that funding for a single group has negative implications for community cohesion. The fact is that although faith-based organisations can be funded to deliver services to a wide cross-section of the community, in particular circumstances they and other identity-focused, cause-focused or issue-focused bodies may be funded to work primarily with their own community.

It is not illegal for a local authority to contract with an organisation to provide a service to a particular community—for instance, kosher meals on wheels for Jewish old people—as part of service provision for the local population as a whole. Sometimes that can enhance service access to especially vulnerable groups in society.

Another myth is that funding will imply support for the religious views or doctrines of the organisation. Of course, such an implication would not be confined to faith-based organisations, and although the Government agree that local authorities and other bodies may want to include a disclaimer with any grant emphasising that funding does not imply support for an organisation's views or doctrines, this implication is in any case unlikely to be drawn. Funding to organisations to deliver services does not imply endorsement of their overall organisational aims, whether they are religious or not. ...

<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/ld200910/ldhansrd/text/100318-0007.htm>

UK Parliamentary Question

Arrest Warrants: War Crimes

Dr. Starkey: To ask the Secretary of State for Justice (1) which (a) individuals and (b) organisations have been sent copies of his Department's Better Trials Unit's consultation note, Arrest warrants - universal jurisdiction; [322816]

(2) for what reasons the consultation on Arrest warrants - universal jurisdiction is not listed on his Department's website; [322817]

(3) what steps his Department has taken to include countries whose citizens are at risk of arrest for war crimes in his Department's consultation on Arrest warrants - universal jurisdiction. [322818]

Claire Ward: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Justice and Lord Chancellor (Mr. Straw) wrote on 6 March to the Chairman of the Justice Select Committee, inviting the Committee to consider proposals that were set out in a short paper, 'Arrest warrants-universal jurisdiction'. The Chairman replied on 10 March with the suggestion that the Government should first seek views from appropriate sources directly, which the Committee would then consider.

Copies of the paper have now been sent to interested parties, including the Lord Chief Justice, the Senior Presiding Judge, the Senior District Judge (Chief Magistrate), the Justices' Clerks' Society, the Criminal Bar Association, the Law Society, Liberty, *JUSTICE*, and Amnesty International. It has also been placed on the Ministry of Justice website. We have not sought the views of foreign Governments, but will take note of any that may be offered.

<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm200910/cmhansrd/cm100318/text/100318w0011.htm#10031851000134>

UK Parliament Early Day Motion

Colin Challen (1134) State funding for faith and secular organisations – That this House notes that the Government has announced a £50,000 fund for a prize to uncover and reward the best examples of faith projects and a £1 million fund which national representative faith bodies can bid for to support them in developing their capacity to engage with Government, and play their part in delivering public services; further notes that a majority of the population in the UK neither practices nor adheres to any religion; and therefore calls upon the Government to fund secular groups for similar purposes to at least a matching level, or withdraw taxpayer funding for these projects altogether.

<http://edmi.parliament.uk/EDMi/EDMDetails.aspx?EDMID=40776&SESSION=903>

[TOP](#)

UK Parliamentary Question

Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development: Israel

Dr. Starkey: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what account the Government plans to take of Israel's observance of OECD rules on (a) corruption, (b) intellectual property rights and (c) extraterritorial economic activity in determining its policy on Israel's application for OECD membership. [322902]

Mr. Ivan Lewis: The UK supports Israel's bid for accession to the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD).

On the specific points raised:

(a) Israel became a party to the OECD Anti-Bribery Convention on 10 May 2009, and has made significant progress in this field, amending its legislation on sanctions for, and jurisdiction over, the offence of bribery of foreign public officials, in response to the recommendations of the Working Group on Bribery. We now look to Israel to address the remaining recommendations of the Working Group

(b) During the accession process, Israel made significant commitments to make changes in its regulatory framework for the protection and enforcement of intellectual property rights.

(c) There are a small number of issues, in particular the scope of statistical data, which are being resolved in the course of the accession process.

<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm200910/cmhansrd/cm100318/text/100318w0002.htm#10031851000048>

United Nations

UN-backed Quartet calls for immediate resumption of Middle East peace talks

The United Nations-supported diplomatic group promoting peace in the Middle East today called on the Israeli and Palestinian sides to resume negotiations as soon as possible with the aim of reaching a settlement within two years.

“The Quartet believes these negotiations should lead to a settlement, negotiated between the parties within 24 months, that ends the occupation which began in 1967 and results in the emergence of an independent, democratic and viable Palestinian State living side by side in peace and security with Israel and its neighbours,” the group said in a statement issued after their meeting in Moscow. The Quartet, comprising the UN, the European Union (EU), the United States and Russia, reiterated its call on Israel and the Palestinians to act on the basis of international law and on their previous agreements, particularly adherence to the Roadmap – the plan championed by the Quartet and which calls for two States, Israel and Palestine, living side by side in peace and security.

“The Quartet urges the Government of Israel to freeze all settlement activity, including natural growth, dismantle outposts erected since March 2001; and to refrain from demolitions and evictions in East Jerusalem.” Last week the group issued a statement condemning Israeli moves to expand settlements in the occupied Palestinian territory of East Jerusalem, after the Government approved plans to build 1,600 new homes there.

<http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=34130&Cr=&Cr1=>

[TOP](#)

Relevant Legislation ** New or updated

UK Parliament

**** Children, Schools and Families Bill**

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

Notice of amendments

<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/ld200910/ldbills/036/amend/am036-d.htm>

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>

notice of amendments

<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/ld200910/ldbills/039/amend/am039-c.htm>

**** Flood and Water Management Bill**

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

Notice of amendments

<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/ld200910/ldbills/028/amend/su028-ira.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

[TOP](#)

Consultations ** new or updated

**** closes in 7 days**

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>

Arrest warrants – universal jurisdiction Note by the Ministry of Justice

(closes 6 April 2010)

<http://www.justice.gov.uk/about/docs/arrests-warrants.pdf>

Draft clause: Prosecution of certain extra-territorial offences: England and Wales

<http://www.justice.gov.uk/about/docs/private-prosecutions-draft-clause.pdf>

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>

[TOP](#)

The Scottish Council of Jewish Communities (SCoJeC) is Scottish Charity SCO29438