

Political Affairs Brief

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

SCoJeC

Contents

[Home Affairs](#)

[Holocaust](#)

[Israel](#)

[Relevant Legislation](#)

[Consultations](#)

Home Affairs

UK Parliamentary Questions

Universal Jurisdiction Offences (Prosecution)

Mr Matthew Offord (Hendon) (Con): Whether he plans to bring forward proposals to change the law so that only the Crown Prosecution Service will be able to initiate prosecutions for universal jurisdiction offences. [9425]

The Lord Chancellor and Secretary of State for Justice (Mr Kenneth Clarke):

The Government consider it unsatisfactory that an arrest warrant for such offences can be issued on the application of a private prosecutor on the basis of evidence that would be insufficient to sustain a prosecution. We are urgently considering how to proceed and expect to make an announcement shortly.

Mr Offord: Does my right hon. and learned Friend agree that Britain is unable to play a leading role in the diplomatic world if foreign politicians cannot visit this country without fear of arrest?

Mr Clarke: Of course we must enforce properly in respect of war crimes and other matters of universal jurisdiction where proper cases arise, but I agree with my hon. Friend that it is not in any sense in this country's interests that people can be arrested upon arrival on a level of evidence that would not remotely sustain a prosecution, which is why we intend to address this matter and to make an announcement in the very near future.

<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201011/cmhansrd/cm100720/debtext/100720-0001.htm#10072029000029>

Topical Questions

Chris Bryant (Rhondda) (Lab): ... the Lord Chancellor has responsibility for marriage law, and he will know that the law forbids civil weddings from including religious readings or music, even though many people who are not able to get married in church or who do not want to do so would like to have such readings. The Government say that they will allow that for civil partnerships, but not for civil weddings. Can we not have a little more equality for heterosexuals?

The Minister of State, Ministry of Justice (Nick Herbert): ... The Equality Act 2010 removed the express prohibition on civil partnership registrations taking place on religious premises. In response to that amendment of the law, the Government are committed to talking to those with a key interest in how to take this forward. That will include consideration of whether civil partnerships should be allowed to include religious readings, music and symbols, and the implications for marriage will have to be considered as part of that.

<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201011/cmhansrd/cm100720/debtext/100720-0001.htm#10072029000033>

Faiths Consultative Council

Tony Baldry: To ask the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government who the members are of the Faiths Consultative Council; and when it last met. [5595]

Andrew Stunell: The full Council last met on 12 January 2010, however a further two special meetings of the Council were convened on 3 March and 18 March 2010 to discuss specific topics. At that time the membership comprised:

- Al - Khoei Foundation
- Bahá'is Community of the United Kingdom
- Board of Deputies of British Jews
- British Muslim Forum
- British Sikh Consultative Forum
- Catholic Bishops' Conference of England and Wales
- Church of England
- Churches Together in Britain and Ireland
- Evangelical Alliance, UK
- Faith Based Regeneration Network UK
- Free Churches Group, Churches Together in England
- Hindu Council UK
- Hindu Forum of Britain
- Interfaith Council, Wales
- Inter Faith Network for the UK
- Jain Samaj Europe
- Methodist Church
- Minority Ethnic Christian Affairs, Churches Together in England
- Muslim Council of Britain
- Network of Buddhist Organisations
- Network of Sikh Organisations
- Northern Ireland Interfaith Forum
- Office of the Chief Rabbi
- Scottish Churches Parliamentary Office
- Zoroastrian Trust Funds of Europe.

<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201011/cmhansrd/cm100720/text/100720w0002.htm#10072058000032>

VAT: Religious Buildings

Sajid Javid: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will take steps to ensure that listed places of worship will be able to reclaim value added tax incurred on repairs and maintenance following the closure of the Listed Places of Worship Scheme in March 2011. [8244]

John Penrose: The Listed Places of Worship Grant Scheme makes grants equivalent to the VAT incurred in making repairs to listed buildings mainly in use for worship. The scheme is currently in place until the end of March 2011. A decision on the future of the scheme can be taken only as part of wider spending review discussions, and will be announced as soon as possible.

<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201011/cmhansrd/cm100720/text/100720w0003.htm#10072068000069>

[TOP](#)

Holocaust

Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights

OSCE rights office, Holocaust education task force formalize co-operation on combating anti-Semitism

The Director of the OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR), Ambassador Janez Lenarcic, today formalized the office's partnership with the Task Force for International Cooperation on Holocaust Education, Remembrance and Research (ITF) by signing, together with ITF chair Dan Tichon, a memorandum of understanding aimed at intensifying joint efforts to combat anti-Semitism.

At the signing ceremony in Jerusalem, Lenarcic stressed that ODIHR and the ITF, currently chaired by Israel, can build on several years of fruitful co-operation: "With the signing of this memorandum, we want to open a new chapter in our common work to promote Holocaust education."

Earlier this year, ODIHR published an overview of government activities on Holocaust memorial days across the OSCE region, which was developed in co-operation with the ITF. In November 2008, ODIHR and the ITF jointly hosted a meeting with international organizations in Vienna marking the 70th anniversary of the November pogroms in 1938. ODIHR is tasked by OSCE participating States to advise them in their efforts to combat anti-Semitism. Participating States have repeatedly stressed the importance of education on anti-Semitism and committed themselves to encourage educational programmes in that field.

http://www.osce.org/odihr/item_1_45417.html

Holocaust Memorial Days in the OSCE Region: An Overview of Good Governmental Practices

http://www.osce.org/documents/odihr/2010/01/42482_en.pdf

[TOP](#)

Israel

UK Parliamentary Questions

Passports

Lord Kilclooney: To ask Her Majesty's Government whether they have received recent evidence of Israeli authorities using fake United Kingdom passports.[HL1161]

The Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office (Lord Howell of Guildford): We cannot accept the fraudulent misuse of British passports. In March this year, my right honourable friend the Foreign Secretary welcomed the previous Government's request for formal assurance that in the future the state of Israel would never be party to the misuse of British passports. We continue to seek these assurances from the Government of Israel.

<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/ld201011/ldhansrd/text/100720w0001.htm#10072024000500>

Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty

Mr Sanders: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what recent representations he has made to the government of (a) India, (b) Pakistan and (c) Israel to sign the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty. [9538]

Alistair Burt: We continue to call on all three countries to sign the non-proliferation treaty (NPT). Most recently the final document agreed at the NPT

Review Conference in May 2010 called again for India, Pakistan, and Israel to accede to the treaty as non-nuclear-weapon states and to place all their nuclear materials and facilities under International Atomic Energy Agency safeguards. Universalisation of the NPT is a long-standing UK and EU objective.

<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201011/cmhansrd/cm100720/text/100720w0001.htm#10072052000014>

Palestinians: Politics and Government

Mr Ward: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether he has discussed with his counterpart in (a) the government of Israel and (b) the Palestinian Authority the evacuation notices served on members of the Palestinian Legislative Council; and if he will make a statement. [9075]

Alistair Burt: We regard East Jerusalem as occupied territory. Its Palestinian population has rights under the Geneva conventions. Forcibly transferring people out of the city for political reasons-however much we may find their views abhorrent-as Israel appears to be trying to do in this case, is illegal. The EU has raised the matter with the Israeli Government and the British ambassador to Tel Aviv has raised this with the Israeli Deputy Foreign Minister-Danny Ayalon.

<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201011/cmhansrd/cm100720/text/100720w0001.htm#10072052000015>

UK Parliament Early Day Motion

Jeremy Corbyn (571) Mordechai Vanunu - That this House notes Amnesty International's recognition of Mordechai Vanunu as a prisoner of conscience and condemns without reserve that he is once again being held in isolation in a small cell with no windows, in a special unit for dangerous prisoners in Ayalon prison, one of the most notorious in Israel, for a civil offence; further notes that these intolerable conditions are a harsh Israeli response to a dispute over where Vanunu should do community service, and are a real threat to his health; and calls on the Government to recognise Vanunu as a prisoner of conscience who should be transferred to a less severe prison without delay, and insist to the Israeli authorities that they stop this vindictive harassment of Vanunu and immediately show more respect for international human rights legislation by allowing Vanunu the right to freedom of expression and association and the opportunity to leave Israel, if he wishes, to live in the country of his choice.

<http://edmi.parliament.uk/EDMi/EDMDetails.aspx?EDMID=41528&SESSION=905>

United Nations

UN to spotlight media's role in promoting Middle East peace

The role of the media in fostering dialogue and understanding between Israelis and Palestinians will be the focus of a two-day United Nations meeting to be held later this week in Portugal's capital, Lisbon. ... Some 120 people from the Middle East, including both Israelis and Palestinians, and from around the world are set to attend, including Government officials, representatives of civil society organizations, academics, journalists and others. Five panel sessions will be held during the seminar on topics such as the role of the Israeli and Palestinian media in reducing tensions, the use of new media to bring about positive change, and the part that mayors from both sides can play in advancing peace.

To read the full press release see

<http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=35371&Cr=palestin&Cr1=>

[TOP](#)

Relevant Legislation ** New or updated

UK Parliament

**** Academies Bill**

<http://services.parliament.uk/bills/2010-11/academieshl.html>

Notice of amendments

<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201011/cmbills/057/amend/pbc0572107m.75-81.html>

Daylight Saving Bill

<http://services.parliament.uk/bills/2010-11/daylightsaving.html>

Face Coverings (Regulation) Bill

<http://services.parliament.uk/bills/2010-11/facecoveringsregulation.html>

Identity Documents Bill

<http://services.parliament.uk/bills/2010-11/identitydocuments.html>

Scottish Parliament

End of Life Assistance Bill

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

[TOP](#)

Consultations ** new or updated

Taking action on rights, support and protection of victims of crime and violence
(closing date 30 September 2010)

http://ec.europa.eu/justice_home/news/consulting_public/news_consulting_0053_en.htm

Data protection legislative framework (closes 6 October 2010)

<http://www.justice.gov.uk/dpa-call-evidence-02-07-2010.pdf>

Guidance on Concessionary Schemes for Surface Water Drainage Charges

Applies in England only (closes 22 October 2010)

<http://www.defra.gov.uk/corporate/consult/surface-charges/index.htm>

[TOP](#)

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