

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 Question

Crime: Anti-Semitism

Mr Amess: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if she will bring forward proposals to treat anti-Semitic crimes as distinct from other crimes of racial hatred; what recent representations she has received on this issue; and if she will make a statement. [R] [8577]

James Brokenshire: The Government are committed to tackling hate crime. The police, CPS and courts have a wide range of legal powers to deal with racial and religious hatred and incitement to hatred. We currently have no plans to bring forward proposals to treat anti-Semitic crimes as distinct from other crimes of racial hatred. We have not received any recent representations on this specific issue.

The Association of Chief Police Officers (ACPO) National Community Tension Team collect anti-Semitic data. We are working with them to assess whether it is possible to publish this.

<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201011/cmhansrd/cm100721/text/100721w0006.htm#10072150000089>

Cabinet Office

Government publishes referendum question and confirms plans to change boundaries

... The wording of the question is contained in the Parliamentary Voting System and Constituencies Bill, which will also reduce the size of the Commons from 650 to 600 MPs and establish boundary reviews to create more equal sized constituencies. ... Voters will be asked: Do you want the United Kingdom to adopt the 'alternative vote' system instead of the current 'first past the post' system for electing Members of Parliament to the House of Commons? ...

The Fixed-term Parliaments Bill, also introduced today, provides for general elections to occur every five years on the first Thursday in May, removing the power of the Prime Minister to call an election without Parliament's consent. ...

To read the full press release see

http://www.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/newsroom/news_releases/2010/100722-boundaries.aspx

Prime Minister to launch National Citizen Service pilots for young people

The Prime Minister will today announce plans for 16 year olds to take part in [National Citizen Service \(NCS\)](#) pilots next summer. Government-backed pilots for the scheme will start next summer and will provide around 10,000 places. Aimed at school leavers aged 16, the pilots will take place from June to September, following the end of the exam period, and will last for seven to eight weeks. NCS aims to give every 16 year old the chance to learn new skills that will help them to make a positive contribution to their community. ...

Activities are expected to include an outdoor challenge, a set of structured tasks involving visiting and helping the local community and developing skills and, in consultation with local communities, designing a social action task. ...

To read the full press release see

http://www.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/newsroom/news_releases/2010/100722-citizenservice.aspx

Ministry of Justice

New rules on universal jurisdiction

The Government is proposing new rules about how courts in England and Wales deal with people accused of serious human rights violations. There are a small number of offences over which the United Kingdom has 'universal jurisdiction'. That means that a suspect can be prosecuted regardless of where the crime was committed, or the nationality of the perpetrator or victim. Offences covered include some of the most serious under international law, such as:

- war crimes under the Geneva Conventions Act
- torture, and
- hostage-taking.

A person accused of committing these very serious crimes in another country can be brought to justice in UK courts.

At the moment anyone can apply to the courts for an arrest warrant. That is a right that the Government wants to protect. However, because the evidence necessary to issue an arrest warrant may be far less than would be needed for a prosecution, the system is open to possible abuse by people trying to obtain arrest warrants for grave crimes on the basis of flimsy evidence to make a political statement or to cause embarrassment.

In the past, attempts have been made to obtain warrants to arrest visiting foreign dignitaries such as Henry Kissinger, Chinese Trade Minister Bo Xilai and Tzipi Livni, former Foreign Minister and now leader of the Opposition in Israel.

Announcing plans to bring forward legislation, Justice Secretary Kenneth Clarke restated the Government's commitment to upholding international law and said:

'Our commitment to our international obligations and to ensuring that there is no impunity for those accused of crimes of universal jurisdiction is unwavering. It is important, however, that universal jurisdiction cases should be proceeded with in this country only on the basis of solid evidence that is likely to lead to a successful prosecution – otherwise there is a risk of damaging our ability to help in conflict resolution or to pursue a coherent foreign policy. The Government has concluded, after careful consideration, that it would be appropriate to require the consent of the Director of Public Prosecutions before an arrest warrant can be issued to a private prosecutor in respect of an offence of universal jurisdiction.'

The Government will bring forward legislation as soon as Parliamentary time allows. ...

To read the full press release see

<http://www.justice.gov.uk/news/newsrelease220710b.htm>

Communities and Local Government

Communities are ready for the Big Society

Only a minority of people feel that they can influence local decisions or have engaged in some form of civic participation in the last year, according to survey findings published today. ... The survey asked 16,000 people for their views on civic engagement, volunteering, community cohesion and discrimination. The results, covering the year 2009-10, show that a large majority of people thought their community was cohesive, agreeing that their local area was a place where people from different backgrounds got on well together. While trust in Parliament was at its lowest level since the survey began, people's satisfaction with their local area has increased and there was an overall reduction in the number of people who felt that racial harassment is a problem. ...

To read the full press release see

<http://www.communities.gov.uk/news/corporate/1647385>

Citizenship Survey: 2009-10 (April 2009 - March 2010), England

<http://www.communities.gov.uk/documents/statistics/pdf/164191.pdf>

Foreign and Commonwealth Office

Foreign Office appoints new Permanent Under Secretary

Simon Fraser has been appointed Permanent Under Secretary of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office ...

To read the full press release see

<http://www.fco.gov.uk/en/news/latest-news/?view=News&id=22579537>

Scottish Parliamentary Questions

Racism

Ken Macintosh (Eastwood) (Lab): To ask the Scottish Executive what information is collected on the incidence of anti-Semitism in Scotland. (S3W-34776)

Fergus Ewing: The Scottish Government publishes annual statistics on racist incidents recorded and cleared up by Scottish police forces:

<http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Topics/Statistics/Browse/Crime-Justice/PubRacistIncidents>.

The Crown Office and Procurator Fiscal Service also publishes statistics for crimes of racial and religious prejudice in Scotland which have been reported to them:

<http://www.copfs.gov.uk/About/Departmental-Overview/diversity/racist-crime/Statistics0506>

<http://www.copfs.gov.uk/About/Departmental-Overview/diversity/racist-crime/Analysis>.

Information on incidents related specifically to anti-Semitism is not held centrally.

<http://www.scottish.parliament.uk/Apps2/Business/PQA/default.aspx?pg=S3W-34776>

Ken Macintosh (Eastwood) (Lab): To ask the Scottish Executive whether there is evidence to suggest that recent anti-Semitic graffiti at Glenduffhill cemetery can be considered an isolated incident. (S3W-34777)

Fergus Ewing: The Scottish Government has no information to suggest that the incident was anything other than an isolated incident of anti-Semitic graffiti at this cemetery.

<http://www.scottish.parliament.uk/Apps2/Business/PQA/default.aspx?pg=S3W-34777>

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Relevant Legislation ** New or updated

UK Parliament

**** Academies Bill**

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

Committee Stage, House of Commons

<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201011/cmhansrd/cm100721/debtext/100721-0002.htm#10072126000004>

Notice of amendments

<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201011/cmbills/057/amend/pbc0572207m.97-103.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>

**** Fixed Term Parliaments Bill**

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

Identity Documents Bill

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

**** Parliamentary Voting System and Constituencies Bill**

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

Scottish Parliament

End of Life Assistance Bill

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

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Other Relevant Information

BBC

BNP leader Nick Griffin banned by Buckingham Palace

BNP leader Nick Griffin has been denied entry to a Buckingham Palace garden party over claims he "overtly" used his invitation for political purposes. A spokesman said his behaviour had "increased the security threat and the potential discomfort" to other guests. But Mr Griffin, who had been invited to the event along with all the UK's Euro MPs, told BBC News the ban was an "absolute scandal". The anti-immigration party's other MEP, Andrew Brons, is attending the party.

Before the ban was imposed Mr Griffin, an MEP for North West England, described the Buckingham Palace invitation on the BNP website as a "highly symbolic breakthrough" for the party and e-mailed supporters asking for questions they would like him to ask the Queen...

... Buckingham Palace said: "Nick Griffin MEP will be denied entry to today's garden party at Buckingham Palace due to the fact he has overtly used his personal invitation for

party political purpose through the media. ... The decision to deny entry is not intended to show any disrespect to the democratic process by which the invitation was issued. However, we would apply the same rules to anyone who tried to blatantly politicise their attendance in this way."

To read the full report see

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-politics-10723764>

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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>

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