

Political Affairs Digest

A daily summary of political events affecting the Jewish Community

Scottish Council of Jewish Communities

SCoJeC

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House of Commons Written Answers

Universities: Antisemitism

Graham Evans [59998] To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps she is taking to tackle anti-Semitism and holocaust denial on university campuses.

Joseph Johnson: This Government takes anti-Semitism extremely seriously.

There is no place in our society - including within higher education – for hatred or any form of harassment, discrimination or racism, including anti-Semitism.

The Government has recently adopted the non-legally binding definition of anti-Semitism, to help clarify how anti-Semitism can manifest itself in the 21st century.

Universities have a responsibility to provide a safe and inclusive environment for all students. The legal obligation for ensuring that students do not face discrimination, harassment, abuse or violence rests with individual institutions. Universities should have robust policies and procedures in place to comply with the law, and to enable them to investigate and address swiftly any anti-Semitic incidents that are reported.

The Government asked Universities UK (UUK) to set up an Harassment Taskforce in 2015, to consider what more can be done to address harassment on campus, including on the basis of religion and belief. The Union of Jewish Students, Jewish Leadership Council, Board of Deputies of British Jews and the Community Security Trust were part of its wider advisory group. The taskforce published its report: 'Changing the Culture', on 21 October 2016.

The Government has asked UUK to monitor progress. UUK plan to establish more baseline evidence, and to assess institutions' progress in implementing the recommendations and report later this year.

<http://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Commons/2017-01-16/59998/>

Antisemitism

Kirsten Oswald [60634] To ask the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government, what recent steps he has taken to tackle anti-Semitism; and if he will make a statement.

Marcus Jones: The Government recently published an update to the All-Party Parliamentary Group against Anti-Semitism detailing our progress in tackling anti-

Semitism. Details can be found at:

https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/576563/161212_APPG_-_Progress_Update.pdf

The Government has recently adopted the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance definition of anti-Semitism which is an important tool for criminal justice agencies and other public bodies to understand how anti-Semitism manifests itself in the 21st century. In addition, representatives from Jewish community organisations sit on the cross-Government Working Group on anti-Semitism which ensures that we remain alive to any issues of concern.

<http://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Commons/2017-01-18/60634/>

Hate Crime

Lyn Brown [60301] To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what recent assessment her Department has made of the extent of the under-reporting of hate crimes.

Sarah Newton: The Crime Survey of England and Wales estimated that there were 222,000 hate crimes on average each year from 2012/13 to 2014/15. This represents a decrease of 56,000 since the previous period covered by the survey. At the same time, the number of hate crimes recorded by the police rose from 44,471 in 2013/14 to 52,528 in 2014/15. This increase in recorded crime is welcome as it is likely to reflect improved police practice and victim confidence in coming forward to report crimes.

The difference between the crime survey figures and the police recorded figures shows that hate crimes continue to be significantly under-reported. The Hate Crime Action Plan published on 26 July 2016 includes action to increase the reporting of hate crime, including making greater use of third party reporting centres.

<http://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Commons/2017-01-17/60301/>

Hate Crime: Internet

Craig Whittaker [60863] To ask the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government, what discussions he has had with his international counterparts on tackling online hate crime.

Marcus Jones: Formal negotiation with the internet industry has been led by officials from across Government, primarily within the Cyber-Hate Working Group and latterly within the Internet Sub-Group of the European Commission High Level Group on Hate Crime. Both of these have led to voluntary agreements being drawn up concerning the code of conduct of industry bodies and their response to complaints from members of the public, for example:

http://ec.europa.eu/justice/fundamental-rights/files/hate_speech_code_of_conduct_en.pdf

The Government's Hate Crime Action Plan, published last July, includes a commitment to bring Ministers from across Whitehall together with industry bodies, victims and academics to discuss challenges and future opportunities to collaborate.

<http://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Commons/2017-01-19/60863/>

House of Lords Written Answers

Prisons: Religious Practice

The following two questions both received the same answer

Lord Murphy of Torfaen [HL4424] To ask Her Majesty's Government how they are working with prison chaplains and faith groups to protect prisoners' right to practise their faith.

Prisons: Ministers of Religion

Lord Murphy of Torfaen [HL4425] To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the barriers to accessing chaplaincy in prisons.

Lord Keen of Elie: The Prison Service is committed to enabling prisoners to practice their religion, and all prisons have multi faith chaplaincy teams to enable and facilitate this. Instructions and guidance on religious practice in prisons is set out in PSI 5/2016 (Faith and Pastoral Care for Prisoners).

Formal assurance visits (which include a focus group with prisoners) are made to each prison regularly by a member of the Chaplaincy HQ team to assure the Governor/Director and Head of Chaplaincy of compliance with the PSI. In this way, and through the use of the application system by which prisoners can request to see a Chaplain, any issues or barriers can be identified in a systematic way by local prison management and HQ. The Head of Chaplaincy meets regularly with Faith Advisers for the National Offender Management Service, as well as faith based organisations.

<http://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Lords/2017-01-09/HL4424/>

and

<http://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Lords/2017-01-09/HL4425/>

Counter-terrorism

Lord Murphy of Torfaen [HL4674] To ask Her Majesty's Government what action they are taking to prevent the exclusion of particular faith communities when delivering the Counter-Extremism Strategy.

Baroness Williams of Trafford: The Counter-Extremism Strategy makes it clear that tackling extremism is not something that Government can do alone. The Government is engaging with a wide range of faith communities on delivery of the Strategy. Faith groups play a vital role in tackling hatred and intolerance in our communities and in promoting positive values. The Government will work in partnership with any group or individual that stands up to extremism and the harm it causes in our society.

<http://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Lords/2017-01-16/HL4674/>

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Holocaust

House of Commons Written Answer

Holocaust Memorial Day

Kirsten Oswald [60633] To ask the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government, what plans his Department has to mark Holocaust Memorial Day on 27 January 2017.

Marcus Jones: The Department for Communities and Local Government funds

the Holocaust Memorial Day Trust to deliver the United Kingdom's annual Holocaust Memorial Day. This year the commemorative ceremony will be taking place in London on 26 January. The Trust also supports thousands of local commemorative events across the country and devolved nations.

<http://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Commons/2017-01-18/60633/>

Scottish Parliament Time for Reflection

Callum Docherty (Braes High School, Falkirk): ... In November, we participated in the lessons from Auschwitz project. It was one of the most significant experiences of my life. We heard the testimony of Holocaust survivor Eva Clarke, who was born, against all odds, on the steps of Mauthausen concentration camp. It was such a personal story. I learned a great deal from Eva about the impact of the Holocaust on real people—a type of understanding you cannot get from a textbook. ...

What I saw at Auschwitz will stay with me for ever. I saw 2,000kg of human hair that had been taken from victims for use in the manufacture of clothing and bedding. I could not believe it. Jews had been persecuted to the point where they were not even viewed as human.

To see the horrors that mankind is capable of is often incomprehensible, but we must always remember what happened in the past, so that we can learn from it.

Jessica Reid (Braes High School, Falkirk): ... The importance of fighting prejudice is never more evident than when we consider those people who did nothing to speak out. In a world where racism and prejudice are still rising, it is vital to educate others to recognise the consequences of not fighting anti-Semitism, racism and hatred.

When I think about Holocaust memorial day's theme, "How can life go on?", I think about my generation. It is we who must tell people what happened 77 years ago. When survivors can no longer tell their stories, it is we who must ensure that they live on. We must spread the message of acceptance of all cultures, religions and races. ...

To read the full transcript see

<http://www.parliament.scot/parliamentarybusiness/report.aspx?r=10747&i=98590&c=1967657#ScotParlOR>

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Israel

House of Lords Written Answers

Israeli Settlements: Crimes of Violence

Baroness Tonge [HL4490] To ask Her Majesty's Government, further to the Written Answer by Baroness Anelay of St Johns on 5 December 2016 (HL3820), what action they will take regarding the ongoing Israeli settler violence against Palestinians.

Baroness Anelay of St Johns: We will continue to raise our concerns with the Israeli authorities over this issue. These concerns include the importance of bringing extremist settlers who are responsible for violence and intimidation to justice.

<http://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Lords/2017-01-10/HL4490/>

The answer referred to above can be read at

<http://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Lords/2016-12-05/HL3820/>

Marah Jawdat Moussa Bakr

Baroness Tonge [HL4491] To ask Her Majesty's Government what representations they are making to the government of Israel regarding the reported prison sentence given to Marah Jawdat Moussa Bakr for the attempted stabbing of an Israeli border guard.

Baroness Anelay of St Johns: We are not planning to make any representations to the Israeli authorities over this issue.

<http://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Lords/2017-01-10/HL4491/>

Israeli Settlements

Lord Hylton [HL4505] To ask Her Majesty's Government what consideration they are giving to freezing the assets of, and imposing travel bans on, individuals responsible for undermining Palestinian territorial integrity in the Occupied Territories by expropriations and settlement expansions.

Baroness Anelay of St Johns: The Government has made its position clear. We are firmly opposed to sanctions or boycotts against Israel. Such moves would not support the progress we need towards resolution of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

<http://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Lords/2017-01-10/HL4505/>

Israel: Palestinians

The Marquess of Lothian [HL4541] To ask Her Majesty's Government what is their assessment of the remarks on Middle East Peace made by US Secretary of State John Kerry on 28 December 2016, whether those remarks were in line with the UK Government's policy on this issue, and if so, whether UK policy has changed.

Baroness Anelay of St Johns: The UK Government's longstanding policy on the Middle East peace process is well known. We support a negotiated settlement leading to a safe and secure Israel living alongside a viable and sovereign Palestinian state. It has long been the UK Government position that Israeli settlement activity is illegal and undermines the viability of two states for two peoples which is why we supported in the United Nations Security Council Resolution 2334 (2016). But we have also always been clear that settlements are far from the only obstacle to peace: terrorism and incitement must also end.

<http://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Lords/2017-01-10/HL4541/>

European Union

Statement by the Spokesperson on the Israeli announcement to build 2.500 settlement units

The announcement by the Israeli government on 24 January to build 2.500 settlement units across the West Bank, and the approval of building permits for 566 settlement units in East Jerusalem on 22 January, further seriously undermine the prospects for a viable two-state solution. It is regrettable that Israel is proceeding with this policy, despite the continuous serious international concern and objections, which have been constantly raised at all levels.

Continued settlement expansion, illegal under international law as reaffirmed by UN Security Council Resolution 2334, goes directly against long-standing EU policy and the recommendations of the Quartet Report. A negotiated two-state solution is the only way to fulfil the legitimate aspirations of both parties and to achieve enduring peace.

https://eeas.europa.eu/headquarters/headquarters-homepage/19146/statement-spokesperson-israeli-announcement-build-2500-settlement-units_en

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Relevant Legislation ** new or updated today

UK Parliament

Arbitration and Mediation Services (Equality) Bill

<http://services.parliament.uk/bills/2016-17/arbitrationandmediationservicesequality.html>

Assisted Dying Bill

<http://services.parliament.uk/bills/2016-17/assisteddying.html>

Cultural Property (Armed Conflicts) Bill

<http://services.parliament.uk/bills/2016-17/culturalpropertyarmedconflicts.html>

Lobbying (Transparency) Bill

<http://services.parliament.uk/bills/2016-17/lobbyingtransparency.html>

Organ Donation (Deemed Consent) Bill

<http://services.parliament.uk/bills/2016-17/organdonationdeemedconsent.html>

Promotion of Israeli-Palestinian Peace (United Kingdom Participation)

<http://services.parliament.uk/bills/2016-17/promotionofisraelipalestinianpeaceunitedkingdomparticipation.html>

**** Wales Bill**

<http://services.parliament.uk/bills/2016-17/wales.html>

'Ping Pong': Commons consideration of Lords amendments

<https://hansard.parliament.uk/commons/2017-01-24/debates/20C30310-9289-4ECC-A323-D4777AD310D8/WalesBill>

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Consultations ** new or updated today

**** closes in 6 days**

Welsh Assembly Inquiry into Lobbying (closing date 31 January 2017)

<http://senedd.assembly.wales/mgConsultationDisplay.aspx?id=236&RPID=1507974161&cp=yes>

Consolidation and revision of the school governance regulatory framework in Wales

(closing date 17 February 2017)

<https://consultations.gov.wales/consultations/consolidation-and-revision-school-governance-regulatory-framework-wales>

Racism at work (closing date 27 February 2017)

<https://www.surveymonkey.co.uk/r/RacismAtWork>

Organ and Tissue Donation and Transplantation: increasing numbers of successful donations (Scotland) (closing date 14 March 2017)

<http://www.gov.scot/Resource/0051/00511160.pdf>

Adoption and Children (Northern Ireland) Bill (closing date 10 April 2017)

<https://www.health-ni.gov.uk/consultations/adoption-and-children-northern-ireland-bill>

The Scottish Council of Jewish Communities (SCoJeC) is Scottish Charitable Incorporated Organisation SCO29438