

Political Affairs Digest

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

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Jackie Doyle-Price

Steve Brine

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In addition:

Captain of the Honourable Corps of Gentleman at Arms (Lords Chief Whip)

Lord Taylor of Holbeach

Captain of the Queen's Bodyguard of the Yeoman of the Guard (Deputy Chief Whip)

Earl of Courtown

Advocate General for Scotland

Lord Keen of Elie

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/election-2017-ministerial-appointments>

House of Commons Briefing Papers

General Election 2017: results and analysis

<http://researchbriefings.parliament.uk/ResearchBriefing/Summary/CBP-7979>

What happens after an indecisive election result?

<http://researchbriefings.files.parliament.uk/documents/CBP-7163/CBP-7163.pdf>

Marriage venues

<http://researchbriefings.files.parliament.uk/documents/SN02842/SN02842.pdf>

Marriage: residence requirements

<http://researchbriefings.files.parliament.uk/documents/SN00644/SN00644.pdf>

Reuse of Graves

<http://researchbriefings.files.parliament.uk/documents/SN04060/SN04060.pdf>

Scottish Parliament Ministerial Statement and Q&A

Independent Advisory Group on Hate Crime, Prejudice and Community Cohesion

The Cabinet Secretary for Communities, Social Security and Equalities (Angela Constance):

There is absolutely no excuse for hate crime and prejudice. The Scottish Government is committed to tackling it wherever it happens, whenever it happens and whomever it happens to.

An attack on one is an attack against us all, and recent events have emphasised the importance of unity in the face of those who would seek to divide us. The terrorist atrocities in Manchester and London serve to remind us not just of the terrible dangers of hatred and intolerance, but of the hugely inspiring way in which whole communities can rally round to demonstrate unity, to support each other and to stand up to hatred. ...

We know that inclusive and cohesive communities that embrace diversity provide a better quality of life for everyone. Communities thrive when they feel a shared sense of belonging, when they learn and grow together, and when they feel able to live their lives in peace. However, cohesion is weakened when the things that push us apart come to the fore: isolation and loneliness, poverty and inequality, and intolerance and prejudice. Those are the issues that need to be tackled if we are to remain united. We have therefore worked tirelessly to promote equality and tackle discrimination, and I think that Scotland is in a relatively good place. We know that social attitudes have changed for the better, and equality is very much at the forefront of how we do our business. However, it is absolutely vital that we are not complacent. Last week's hate crime statistics show that we still have work to do. A minority of the population still think that it is acceptable to be prejudiced, and we know that people continue to experience hate crime and discrimination. That experience is all too real for too many people....

The advisory group's recommendations are wide ranging, so breadth and depth are required in the approach to implementation. Important though the matter is, dealing with it is not the sole responsibility of the justice system; rather, it requires a truly cross-Government endeavour in which the communities, education, transport and justice portfolios work together to tackle the issues. That is why I am announcing today that we are establishing a multi-agency delivery group, which will have ministerial oversight, to ensure that the advisory group's recommendations are progressed. In particular, the delivery group will carefully consider the barriers to reporting hate crime and how to remove them. ...

Important as having strong services and quick responses to hate crime are, we know that they are not enough on their own. Awareness of hate crime needs to increase. In November last year I announced that we would run a public awareness campaign on hate crime in 2017. It aims to raise awareness, to help people to understand the impact of their actions and to increase wider societal understanding. ...

Later this month, I will be announcing funding, through the equality budget, to promote equality and cohesion across Scotland. We will continue to support interfaith dialogue,

and we are formally adopting the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance's working definition of anti-Semitism. We will ensure that the advisory group's recommendations are locked into our work to promote race equality and the rights of disabled people. ...

Adam Tomkins: ... In 2015, the Scottish Council of Jewish Communities published a report called "What's Changed About Being Jewish in Scotland?" I will read two quick quotations from that report.

"For the first time in 62 years I did not attend high holiday services this year due to my security concerns."

"I'm scared to tell people at work that I'm Jewish—I talk about going to church instead". Figures that were released last week show that, since that 2015 report, both offensive conduct towards Jews and offensive communication about Jews have increased in Scotland. What, specifically, is the Scottish Government doing to address the on-going rise of anti-Semitism in Scotland? ...

Angela Constance: ... I received a copy of the report that SCoJeC prepared in 2015 and I am very familiar with its content; indeed, I am very familiar with SCoJeC, which is an organisation that I have met on more than a few occasions across various portfolios. Charges for hate crime against Jews or Judaism are indeed up by 28 per cent. That is an increase from 18 to 23 charges. The figures remain very low; nonetheless, I accept that we must not be complacent and that there may well be underreporting. Underreporting is raised as an issue time and time again in relation to other hate crime, disability-related hate crime being another example. The interfaith work is particularly important in that regard, as is work done through our equality budget. ...

Pauline McNeill: ... Religiously aggravated offences have increased and we need to understand in some detail the nature of crimes that are committed because of anti-Semitism or Islamophobia—indeed, all offences that are committed on the ground of faith. When will more detailed figures be available so that we can all have a more detailed analysis of the issue? ...

Angela Constance: ... it is imperative that we ensure that no community is scapegoated for the actions of a mindless minority. Although we have not seen an increase in community tension following the tragic events in London and Manchester, it is vital that we are focused on that issue. ...

Emma Harper: Last week, a gentleman who is a citizen of the European Union came into my regional office in Dumfries because he had been on the receiving end of extreme verbal abuse at work and had been quite affected by it. Can the cabinet secretary confirm that the further action outlined will reassure EU citizens who are living in the south of Scotland that tackling hate crime is an extremely important priority for the Scottish Government? ...

Angela Constance: ... We always need to get behind the headline statistics. For example, religiously aggravated offences have indeed increased, although there has been a decrease in the number of charges for hate crime committed against the Muslim community. However, we need to be hypervigilant around underreporting and emphasise the need to engage with our communities and the organisations that represent them. In addition, there can be absolutely no scapegoating. ...

John Finnie: ... Anti-Semitism has been touched on, and the rise of the far right has clearly played a part in that unacceptable and heinous crime. On the redefinition of anti-Semitism, will the cabinet secretary outline the deficiencies of the previous definition, say whether she also has plans to redefine Islamophobia and give her response to concerns that the definition of anti-Semitism could be abused to stop legitimate criticism of the apartheid state of Israel?

Angela Constance: I reassure Mr Finnie that we engage with all communities without fear or favour, whether it is the Jewish or the Muslim community. If the

Muslim community approached the Government about reshaping definitions that have a practical impact on how it is supported on the ground, there would be an open door for that. We looked at the definition of anti-Semitism very carefully. We spoke to a range of stakeholders and were persuaded coolly and calmly of the merits of the definition. ...

To read the full question and answer session see

<http://www.parliament.scot/parliamentarybusiness/report.aspx?r=11003&i=100547&c=2008181#ScotParIOR>

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United Nations

UN aid official warns of 'disastrous consequences' of power cut in Gaza

A senior United Nations humanitarian official in the occupied Palestinian Territory warned today about the disastrous consequences of a further reduction in electricity supply to the Gaza Strip on the living conditions of two million Palestinians.

“A further increase in the length of blackouts is likely to lead to a total collapse of basic services, including critical functions in the health, water and sanitation sectors,” [said](#) UN Humanitarian Coordinator Robert Piper in a statement.

“The people in Gaza should not be held hostage to this longstanding internal Palestinian dispute,” he added, calling on the Palestinian Authority, Hamas and Israel to put the welfare of Gaza's residents first. ...

Early this week, the Israeli cabinet agreed to a reduction in the supply of electricity to the Gaza Strip, following a decision by the Palestinian Authority to reduce its monthly payments for that supply by 30 per cent.

The reduction will bring most households and service-providers down to 2 hours or so of power per day, he said.

Hospitals, water supply, waste water treatment and sanitation services have already been dramatically curtailed since mid-April and depend almost exclusively on a UN emergency fuel operation. ...

To read the full press release see

<http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=56967#.WUFLrBOGM5s>

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Consultations ** new or updated today

Caste in Great Britain and Equality Law (closing date 18 July 2017)

<https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/caste-in-great-britain-and-equality-law-a-public-consultation>

Workplace Diversity (Wales) (closing date not stated)

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

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