

Political Affairs Digest

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

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Westminster Hall Debate

UK Elections: Abuse and Intimidation

col 152WH **Simon Hart (Conservative):** ... since the election the Conservative Whips Office has been dealing with at least three credible threats to colleagues every week, including death threats, criminal damage, sexism, racism, homophobia, anti-Semitism and general thuggishness around and after the election. ...

Paula Sherriff (Labour): ... I have been an MP for just over two years, and I cannot remember a single day that has gone by without me receiving some sort of abuse ...

col 155WH **Andrew Percy (Conservative):** I have had death threats for a number of years ... What is different about what happened at this election—in which I was subjected to anti-Semitic abuse, my staff were spat at and my boards and property were attacked—is that the abuse has been politically motivated. The elephant in the room is that it has been motivated by the language of some of our political leaders, when they accuse people of one political side of murder, and when they dehumanise them in the way that is happening at the moment. ...

col 157WH **John Mann:** Four years ago the all-party parliamentary group against anti-Semitism produced a detailed set of recommendations on an all-party basis about conduct in elections and asked every political leader to endorse it. To date, none has. ...

col 159WH **Diane Abbott:** ... We have to be clear that we are talking not about robust debate, however robust it is, but about mindless abuse. ... I have had death threats, and people tweeting that I should be hanged “if they could find a tree big enough to take the fat bitch’s weight”.

There was an English Defence League-affiliated Twitter account—#burnDianeAbbot. I have had rape threats, and been described as a “Pathetic useless fat black piece of shit”, an “ugly, fat black bitch”, and a “nigger”—over and over again. One of my members of staff said that the most surprising thing about coming to work for me is how often she has to read the word “nigger”. ...

col 160WH ... there is a relationship between online abuse and mainstream media commentary; in my office, we always see, at the very least, a spike in abuse after there has been a lot of negative stuff in the media. ...

col 161WH **Lisa Cameron (SNP):** ... I have had very personal attacks, including anti-Semitic comments because I have friends and family who are Jewish. ...

col 162WH **Luke Pollard (Labour):** ... During the election, I spoke to a young LGBT person who said, “I get abuse online; I am scared to go online. If Members of Parliament

aren't getting justice for the abuse they get, what chance do I have?" ...

col/ The Parliamentary Secretary, Cabinet Office (Chris Skidmore): ... The Prime Minister has been very clear that there is no place in our democracy for the harassment of parliamentary candidates and that abuse will not be tolerated. That is why today she has asked the non-partisan Committee on Standards in Public Life to carry out a review of the intimidation experienced by parliamentary candidates ... The review will gather evidence of harassment and consider what action needs to be taken to ensure the integrity of the future of our democratic process. ...

col 167WH Rehman Chishti: ... Does [the Minister] ... agree with my earlier point that if a third party makes to someone in office a threat of violence directed towards another person running for office—myself in this case—and makes points that are grossly offensive, anti-Semitic and homophobic, the individual to whom that is reported has a responsibility to notify the authorities? To do nothing ... is completely unacceptable. ...

Chris Skidmore: I entirely agree that we, like all legislators, cannot be silent on this issue. ...

col 168WH Hate crime of any kind, directed against any community or any person, has absolutely no place in our society ... The Prime Minister has made it very clear that hate crime of any kind is completely unacceptable. It divides communities, destroys lives and makes us weaker. Britain is thriving precisely because we welcome people from all backgrounds, faiths and ethnicities, and that is something we must strive to protect.

The fact that one of the first actions the Home Secretary took in her new role last summer was to launch the hate crime action plan shows how important tackling hate crime is for the Government. The Home Secretary has also asked Her Majesty's inspectorate of constabulary to carry out an inspection of all five monitored strands of hate crime, to build up a national picture of how effectively and efficiently police forces are dealing with it. The inspection will take place during 2017-18, and the Government will be keen to see the findings and then consider how they should be taken forward. ...

To read the full transcript see

<http://hansard.parliament.uk/commons/2017-07-12/debates/577970DD-1AEF-4071-8AE0-3E3FC6753C6A/UKElectionsAbuseAndIntimidation>

House of Commons Written Answer

Schools: Hate Crime

Anna Turley (Labour) [3599] To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what systems are in place for schools reporting hate incidents occurring in the classroom.

Nick Gibb: Schools are required by law to have behaviour and safeguarding policies. Schools should record and deal with incidents according to those policies and are held to account for how they do so by Ofsted. The Department for Education's statutory safeguarding guidance, 'Keeping children safe in education' (September 2016), is clear that if staff have any concerns about a child, or think that the child is in danger, they should speak to the school's designated safeguarding lead.

The Department's 'Preventing and Tackling Bullying' guidance (July 2017) sets out that some types of harassing or threatening behaviour or communications could constitute a criminal offence. When school staff feel that an offence may have been committed, they should seek assistance from the police.

<http://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Commons/2017-07-06/3599/>

"Keeping children safe in education" referred to above can be read at

https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/550511/Keeping_children_safe_in_education.pdf

“Preventing and Tackling Bullying” referred to above can be read at https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/623895/Preventing_and_tackling_bullying_advice.pdf

UK Parliament Ministerial Statement

Extremism

The Secretary of State for the Home Department (Amber Rudd): I am today announcing the main findings of the Home Office’s internal review into the nature, scale and origin of the funding of Islamist extremist activity in the UK, including any overseas sources. The review was commissioned by the former Prime Minister, David Cameron, on 30 November 2015. It gives us the best picture we have ever had of how extremists operating in the UK sustain their activities. The review did not include either the funding of terrorism, which is a better understood area, or the funding of extremism overseas from UK sources.

Having taken advice, I have decided against publishing the classified report produced during the review in full. This is because of the volume of personal information it contains and for national security reasons. We will be inviting Privy Counsellors from the Opposition parties to the Home Office to have access to classified report on Privy Council terms.

The main finding of the review is as follows:

The most common source of support for Islamist extremist organisations in the UK is from small, anonymous public donations, with the majority of these donations most likely coming from UK-based individuals. In some cases these organisations receive hundreds of thousands of pounds a year. This is the main source of their income. Those giving may not know or support the organisations’ full agenda.

The review also made the following findings:

Some Islamic organisations of extremist concern portray themselves as charities to increase their credibility and to take advantage of Islam’s emphasis on charity. Some are purposefully vague about their activities and their charitable status.

Regulation can be effective in improving transparency. There is some evidence of organisations of extremist concern seeking to avoid regulatory oversight.

For a small number of organisations with which there are extremism concerns, overseas funding is a significant source of income. However, for the vast majority of extremist groups in the UK, overseas funding is not a significant source.

Overseas support has allowed individuals to study at institutions that teach deeply conservative forms of Islam and provide highly socially conservative literature and preachers to the UK’s Islamic institutions. Some of these individuals have since become of extremist concern.

Fundamentally, no single measure will tackle all the issues of concern raised in the review. A comprehensive approach focused particularly on domestic sources of support for all forms of extremism is needed. The Government have looked carefully at the review’s findings and will build on existing work by:

Continuing to deliver public awareness campaigns to encourage people to understand the full aims of the organisations that they give to, reducing the amount of funding organisations of extremist concern are able to raise from the public in the UK.

Raising awareness across the financial services sector and grant making trusts and foundations of extremism concerns. These organisations have an interest in ensuring they are not inadvertently supporting extremist individuals or organisations.

Reducing the ability of organisations of extremist concern to avoid official scrutiny by increasing the proportion of organisations subject to regulatory oversight. We are strengthening our work with the Charity Commission, which includes addressing the abuse of charities for terrorist or extremist purposes as one of its strategic priorities.

The Charity Commission will be introducing a requirement on charities to declare overseas funding sources. The Commission has been discussing this issue with charities over recent months.

Directly raising issues of concern, supported by evidence, with specific countries as part of our wider international engagement on countering extremism and violent extremism.

[HCWS39]

<http://hansard.parliament.uk/commons/2017-07-12/debates/1707123600006/Extremism>

Department for Exiting the European Union

Exiting the EU with certainty

... The Secretary of State for Exiting the European Union, David Davis, said: This Bill means that we will be able to exit the European Union with maximum certainty, continuity and control. That is what the British people voted for and it is exactly what we will do – ensure that the decisions that affect our lives are taken here in the UK.

It is one of the most significant pieces of legislation that has ever passed through Parliament and is a major milestone in the process of our withdrawal from the European Union. ...

The Repeal Bill is a mechanism to achieve three simple aims:

- Repeal the European Communities Act, remove supremacy of EU law and return control to the UK.
- Convert EU law into UK law where appropriate, giving businesses continuity to operate in the knowledge that nothing has changed overnight, and providing certainty that rights and obligations will not be subject to sudden change.
- Create the necessary temporary powers to correct the laws that no longer operate appropriately so that our legal system continues to function outside the EU. ...

The Bill will ensure that nothing changes for Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland – they will not lose any of their current decision-making powers.

The Government expects there will be a significant increase in the decision-making power of each devolved administration. ...

To read the full press release see

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/exiting-the-eu-with-certainty>

Scottish Parliament Written Answer

Antisemitism

S5W-09962 John Finnie (Green): To ask the Scottish Government, further to the answer to question S5W-09667 by Angela Constance on 26 June 2017, whether it will provide the information that was requested regarding which organisations asked it to adopt the International Holocaust Memorial Trust's working definition of anti-Semitism, and what issues it identified with the previous definition.

Angela Constance: Scottish Government officials met with the Scottish Council for Jewish Communities and the Community Security Trust to discuss the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA) working definition of anti-Semitism, which is based on the definition published by the European Monitoring Centre on Racism and Xenophobia (EUMC) in 2005.

Adopting this definition will help to inform our work in this area and as I confirmed in my previous answer, the Scottish Government will continue to work with representatives to support the needs of the Jewish communities to build strength and eliminate fear in Scotland.

<http://www.parliament.scot/parliamentarybusiness/28877.aspx?SearchType=Advance&ReferenceNumbers=S5W-09962>

The written answer referred to above can be read at

<http://www.parliament.scot/parliamentarybusiness/28877.aspx?SearchType=Advance&ReferenceNumbers=S5W-09667>

Scottish Government

EU (Withdrawal) Bill

Responding to the introduction of the European Union (Withdrawal) Bill, First Minister of Scotland Nicola Sturgeon and First Minister of Wales Carwyn Jones have today issued the below joint statement. ...

We have repeatedly tried to engage with the UK Government on these matters, and have put forward constructive proposals about how we can deliver an outcome which will protect the interests of all the nations in the UK, safeguard our economies and respect devolution.

Regrettably, the Bill does not do this. Instead, it is a naked power-grab, an attack on the founding principles of devolution and could destabilise our economies. ...

The European Union (Withdrawal) Bill does not return powers from the EU to the devolved administrations, as promised. It returns them solely to the UK Government and Parliament, and imposes new restrictions on the Scottish Parliament and National Assembly for Wales.

On that basis, the Scottish and Welsh Governments cannot recommend that legislative consent is given to the Bill as it currently stands. ...

To read the full press release see

<https://news.gov.scot/news/eu-withdrawal-bill>

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Israel

House of Commons Oral Answers

Topical Questions: DFID

Alex Cunningham: With 95% of its drinking water now unsafe to drink, Gaza is fast approaching the point of becoming uninhabitable, as predicted by the United Nations. What are the Government doing to ensure that we do not reach that point and to push the EU plans to fund a desalination plant there?

The Minister of State, Department for International Development (Alistair Burt): According to the UN Office for the Co-Ordination of Humanitarian Affairs, most homes in Gaza are getting water for only a few hours every three to five days. The availability of safe drinking water has become worse. The UK is urging all parties to find a sustainable solution to the current situation, and in the longer term continues to urge the Israeli authorities to ensure fair distribution of water across the Occupied Palestinian Territories.

<http://hansard.parliament.uk/commons/2017-07-12/debates/E5EDA795-A362-44B0-9EA1-5EFE03876E41/TopicalQuestions#contribution-D30D158A-CC93-4338-B38A-DFB3B77E4427>

Topical Questions: DFID

Joan Ryan: Does the Minister agree that recent proposals in Israel on the construction of a Gaza sea port, such as those advanced by the Israeli Labor Knesset Member Omer Barlev and discussed last month by the Israeli Cabinet, would offer a much-needed route to easing the situation in Gaza? Will he support that initiative?

Alistair Burt: Yes, a new sea port at Gaza could open up all sorts of things in

Gaza and change the situation for the people there quite materially. It is an interesting proposal and I am of course interested to see how far it is taken.

<http://hansard.parliament.uk/commons/2017-07-12/debates/E5EDA795-A362-44B0-9EA1-5EFE03876E41/TopicalQuestions#contribution-AF50B06B-427D-4492-AAB1-4DBCEB9A48F3>

House of Lords Written Answers

Israel: Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions

Baroness Tonge (Non-affiliated) [HL243] Her Majesty's Government, whether following the High Court ruling that pursuing boycott, divestment and sanctions against Israel is legal, they will change their guidance governing investment by local government pension schemes.

Lord Bourne of Aberystwyth: The Government is strongly opposed to boycotts, which undermine its work to support the peace process and achieve a negotiated solution. We have received permission to appeal the judgement on the guidance to administering authorities on preparing an investment strategy statement for Local Government Pension Scheme funds, and will submit an appeal shortly. Pending the outcome of the appeal we will amend the guidance.

<http://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Lords/2017-06-28/HL243/>

Israel: Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions

Baroness Tonge (Non-affiliated) [HL244] Her Majesty's Government, following the High Court decision that pursuing boycott, divestment and sanctions against Israel is legal, what assessment they have made of this as non-violent means to end the conflict in Israel and Palestine.

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: The Government's position on boycotts is clear. While we do not hesitate to express disagreement with Israel whenever necessary, we are strongly opposed to boycotts. We believe that open and honest discussions, rather than imposing sanctions or supporting anti-Israeli boycotts, best supports our efforts to help the peace process and achieve a negotiated solution. The Government has received permission to appeal the judgement on the judicial review of the guidance to administering authorities on preparing an investment strategy statement for Local Government Pension Scheme funds.

<http://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Lords/2017-06-28/HL244/>

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Relevant Legislation ** new or updated today

UK Parliament

** **European Union (Withdrawal) Bill**

<http://services.parliament.uk/bills/2017-19/europeanunionwithdrawal.html>

Bill as introduced

<https://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/bills/cbill/2017-2019/0005/18005.pdf>

Explanatory Notes

<https://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/bills/cbill/2017-2019/0005/en/18005en.pdf>

Delegated Powers Memorandum

[https://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/bills/cbill/2017-2019/0005/delegated%20powers%20memorandum%20for%20European%20Union%20\(Withdrawal\)%20Bill.pdf](https://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/bills/cbill/2017-2019/0005/delegated%20powers%20memorandum%20for%20European%20Union%20(Withdrawal)%20Bill.pdf)

Information about the Repeal Bill

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/information-about-the-repeal-bill>

Technical note on implementing the EU withdrawal agreement

https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/628116/Technical_note_implementing_the_withdrawal_agreement_FINAL.pdf

Guidance for businesses and organisations on the Repeal Bill

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/guidance-for-businesses-on-the-repeal-bill>

Privileges and immunities - position paper

https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/627908/FINAL_HMG_Privileges_and_immunities_Position_Paper.pdf

Marriage Act 1949 (Amendment) Bill

<http://services.parliament.uk/bills/2017-19/marriageact1949amendment.html>

Scottish Parliament

Offensive Behaviour at Football and Threatening Communications (Repeal) (Scotland) Bill

<http://www.parliament.scot/parliamentarybusiness/Bills/105269.aspx>

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Consultations

** new or updated today

Caste in Great Britain and Equality Law (closing date 18 September 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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The Scottish Council of Jewish Communities (SCoJeC) is Scottish Charitable Incorporated Organisation SC029438