

# Political Affairs Digest

*A daily summary of political events affecting the Jewish Community*

Scottish Council of Jewish Communities

SCoJeC

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### Scottish Parliament Debate

#### Holocaust Memorial Day 2018

17.04 ... **Adam Tomkins (Conservative)**: The Holocaust was a new order of criminality, the like of which the world had never previously witnessed. In the very heart of Europe, it was Government policy to eradicate the Jewish people—to wipe them from the face of the earth.

The policy failed, but not before 6 million men, women and children were murdered by the Nazis. That is more than the entire population of Scotland. That did not happen a long, long way away; it happened here in Europe. It did not happen a long time ago; it happened within living memory.

The Holocaust is an exceptionally difficult thing to talk about, and that is precisely why we must. As this evening's motion notes, the theme of this year's Holocaust memorial day is the power of words—the power of words to do both ill and good. We all know that the children's nursery rhyme “Sticks and stones may break my bones, but words can never hurt me” is untrue. Words can wound. They can damage relationships, destroy reputations and darken any conversation, but words can also enlighten, inform, educate and inspire. ...

That that happened and how it was allowed to happen are stories that we must tell and keep telling. Somehow we must find the words. The Nazis used words to mask the truth. They spoke of the “final solution” instead of extermination, of “transfer” instead of deportation, and of “special treatment” instead of death in the gas chambers. We must use words not to mask the truth but to reveal it. ...

One of the most disturbing truths revealed by those who have sought to find the words to write about the Holocaust is that, even though it was a crime on a monstrous scale, it was perpetrated not by monsters but by ordinary, even banal, men and women, who were organising train travel across Europe not as if they were mobilising a million murders but as if they were simply taking goods to market. ...

17.12 **Kenneth Gibson (SNP)**: ... The power of our words is boundless, and we can choose to use that power to do something positive, such as sharing the life stories of those who were murdered or, indeed, those who resisted, witnessed and survived genocide. We can use our words to remember, challenge and evoke change. ...

Over the past year, Jewish Human Rights Watch and the Scottish Council of Jewish Communities have highlighted growing levels of hate speech, anti-Semitism and Holocaust denial across Facebook and Twitter here in Scotland, right now. Those platforms are used by a small minority to share fabricated global Jewish conspiracy

theories and classic anti-Semitic tropes, which cumulatively represent an attack on Jewish faith and culture within our society. ...

We are now more careful than ever about the language that we use to refer to our peers, and many of us would be quick to challenge a friend if they were to share homophobic, racist, sexist or Islamophobic slurs online, so why do we let anti-Semitism slip under the radar? In 2018, I hope that we can all make more effort to monitor the language that is used to discredit and to disparage the Jewish faith and Jewish people.

Holocaust memorial day is not just an opportunity to remember and mourn what has passed but a time when we should seek to learn lessons and to prevent discrimination, racism and hatred from taking hold once more. ...

**17.17 Jackson Carlaw:** ... The Deputy First Minister ... visited Auschwitz before Christmas for the first time. Anyone who has been there cannot have failed to have been profoundly moved—it is particularly true at this time of year when it is so bitterly cold—by the realisation of the reality that Auschwitz represented, and its closeness to the main roads through the immediate neighbourhood and the town that sits alongside it. That realisation confounds any expectation or hope that one might have that the camp existed in isolation—somewhere away from a population centre and away from people who must have understood what was going on. ...

A great many of my Jewish constituents ... believe that because they survived, they have a duty to live. They determined to make a full contribution to the life of Scotland in the years following the Holocaust, and to live life to the full. They are modest and quiet in their recollections, but the memory of the Holocaust hangs like a cloud over everything that they do. In the spring, on the anniversary of Yom HaShoah, those families will list on screens in the constituency all the family members who were lost. ...

**17.22 Johann Lamont (Labour):** ... It is important to mark the Holocaust itself and what it meant for individuals, families and communities, and to understand fully what anti-Semitism led to in Europe at the time. We cannot overstate the power of the testimony and courage of the survivors who have relived the horrors of their experience so that we all might learn. ...

... genocide in all its forms can overwhelm us. It can feel as if it is beyond us, because it reveals people's capacity to step away from their own humanity and to engage in systematic cruelty, violence, torture and murder, often of people who live in the same communities as them. Sometimes, when we think of genocide, we feel that it is beyond our comprehension and beyond being tackled. However, comprehend it and tackle it we must. Genocide can happen here—it can happen anywhere.

It is significant that this year's theme for Holocaust memorial day is the power of words. Genocide does not start with monsters or begin with the outrageous, and it does not appear as a fully formed assault on others. Instead, it creeps towards us step by step. The Jewish communities across Europe did not suddenly wake up and discover that they were under attack. What happened began with cruel words, with grievances, with their being separated, with talk about "the other" and about differences, and with people being described in the cruellest terms. Genocide is a long journey: it is a journey that we, in our modern society, have the power to break. ...

**17.28 Patrick Harvie (Green):** ... The words that we use to remember the past matter, but if we want to prevent such things from happening again we need to talk about the words that we use to define the present and to shape the future. On that front, we are allowing the forces of hatred to regroup. When those forces act, it is the power that their words have gained in a culture that can make the difference between individual acts of hate crime and the wave of violence that can carry a whole society with it.

As Johann Lamont referred to, for years before the industrial-scale mass murder of the Nazi regime, both word and image were used to dehumanise Jewish people, queer people, intellectuals, disabled people, the left and any other target that the regime had in mind. That is what created the conditions in which a whole society could permit atrocity. In just the same way, for many years, the British empire used the same kind of

dehumanising words and ideas about racial, religious and national groups in order to make atrocities possible. ...

Today, we can see that same attempt to use the power of words to dehumanise groups of people who are the chosen targets of today's far right—whether that is though anti-Semitism or any other form of hatred or prejudice. That happens not just on the Facebook pages and Twitter profiles of far-right activists, but in the pages of so many national newspapers and on the broadcast airwaves, too. Muslims, immigrants, refugees and trans people are often the groups at the sharpest end of such abuse of the power of words today. ...

**17.24 Richard Lyle (SNP):** ... The reality of the Holocaust is inescapable. Between 1933 and 1945, when the Nazis were in power, 6 million Jewish people were slaughtered at the hands of hatred and intolerance. Adolf Hitler and the Nazis displaced countless families into Jewish ghettos and separated loved ones in concentration and extermination camps throughout eastern Europe. As we know, entering those camps was a death sentence. Their inhabitants were welcomed with inhumane living conditions and with poisonous gas and fire. If they were not murdered on arrival, those in the concentration camps were worked day and night. Starvation and exhaustion permeated the camps and fear infiltrated Europe. ...

**17.39 Jamie Greene (Conservative):** ... We teach our children about the second world war and the ensuing Holocaust as history; as a distant period in the past. Let us not forget that the events took place less than 80 years ago. There remain among us those who drew breath in 1940, whose boots laid prints on the battlefields of Europe and who still bear the scars and memories of the horrors of that war. ...

the genocide of 6 million Jews took place within living memory and barely a stone's throw away from where we are, but it still somehow feels like something so distant from the modern day. Holocaust memorial day addresses that very issue. It stands as a stark reminder of what happens when society lets hatred and division grow like a cancerous political ideology. It was something that seemed almost acceptable to the common man in its early incarnation, but which grew as fascist hatred and racial and ethnic dominance. It grew into an ugly and hateful act of crime against humanity—all of humanity: gay people, disabled people, Jewish people, Romany people, Slavs, Poles, Jehovah's Witnesses, Catholics, Freemasons, communists and even speakers of Esperanto. ...

The truth is that we are still faced with the blight of anti-Semitism in the UK today. In July, we learned that anti-Semitic hate offences in Scotland had reached their worst levels on record, and across the UK official police figures marked the third consecutive year in which anti-Semitic incidents were on the rise.

It would be easy for me to stand here and say, "Isn't this terrible? We must do more. They must do more." However, as politicians and, by default, as members of political parties, we too have a duty to address anti-Semitism, just as we call out anti-Islamic rhetoric and anti-Christian, anti-Hindu or any other forms of religious or racial hatred. Free speech is one of the wonders and marvels of our modern democratic society, but in my view Holocaust denial should never be up for debate.

The Holocaust will soon no longer be part of primary history or living memory. There will soon be no survivors to tell their stories. As such, it is more important than ever that we educate our children about what happened and, more important, why. The scourge of anti-Semitism is ever dangerous, ever real and ever so apparent. We should never forget that so many died to protect the freedom that we have to protest, demonstrate and disagree in political discourse, but modern-day anti-Semitism should not hide behind thinly veiled campaigns. It cannot and should not jump on the bandwagons of commercial sabotage or the boycott of cultural events or come under the guise of political freedom fighting. ...

**17.45 Stewart Stevenson (SNP):** ... It is as well to remember that the Holocaust was not a single event but the aggregation of millions of decisions to execute millions of people who had committed no crime.

The world's legal systems have worked over the decades since 1945 to deliver justice for the missing millions, their families and friends, but that on its own cannot be enough. We cannot undo the injustice done by the Nazis. We cannot restore life and liberty to those from whom such basic rights were removed by the Nazis. We simply cannot reset the world that the Nazis destroyed.

However, we can remember those whom we lost to the Holocaust. ...

We have to use the example of the Holocaust to remind our contemporaries of the injustices that came from it and to educate new generations about the dangers of demagoguery designed to characterise ethnic or religious difference as somehow less worthy. ...

Those who lost their lives in the Holocaust were not an undifferentiated group. Each was an individual of worth. Each had individual views and potential. Each could disagree with his or her neighbour, as we do with each other in this place. ...

**17.50 The Minister for International Development and Europe (Alasdair Allan):** ... International Holocaust memorial day provides an important moment for us all to remember and reflect upon the terrible events of the Holocaust and the 11 million people who were murdered in it, including 6 million Jews. It is important that we remember that, above all else, the Holocaust was a criminal enterprise. Those lives were lost as the result of the systematic denial of the most basic human rights and freedoms to particular groups in society. We must remember the unspeakable persecution by the Nazis of the Jewish community and their concerted and systematic effort to destroy every last Jew in Europe. ...

We must all ... take action to tackle hatred and intolerance as well as promote the positive vision of the society that we all aspire to be.

That is why, every year, we in Scotland have funded a major event to commemorate international Holocaust memorial day. ... The Scottish Government works in partnership with the Holocaust Memorial Day Trust, along with our intermediary partner, Interfaith Scotland, to deliver Scotland's national Holocaust memorial day event each year. ...

It is also why we continue to support the lessons from Auschwitz project, which is an incredibly powerful way for young people to gain some insight into the horrors of the Holocaust and, just as importantly, to learn about why it happened. ... I am extremely proud that, since 2009, we have enabled more than 3,200 young people from Scotland to visit Auschwitz to find out about what happened there and to share their experiences with friends, classmates and others. That visit to Auschwitz brings home the reality of what happened far more vividly and effectively than any amount of speaking can achieve. ...

One area that I particularly want to—and must—emphasise is the approach that I hope that we all take to tackling anti-Semitism. We appreciate the significant contribution that our Jewish communities make to this country, and the Scottish Government continues to support the important work of the Scottish Council of Jewish Communities. We know, from our regular engagement with community leaders, that Jewish people continue to experience anti-Semitism and discrimination. That is unacceptable. It is why, last year, the Scottish Government adopted the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance's definition of anti-Semitism. We are working with key partners to consider how that can support practical steps to tackle anti-Semitism in all its forms. More broadly, we will continue to implement our action plan "Tackling Prejudice and Building Connected Communities". ...

The Holocaust is the outstanding, chilling example of what human beings are capable of doing when fundamental human rights are disparaged and bigotry and intolerance are given free rein. It seems that, today, the message that we send out on Holocaust memorial day is more important than ever. ...

**To read the full transcript see**

<http://www.parliament.scot/parliamentarybusiness/report.aspx?r=11297&i=102814#ScotParlOR>

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## Israel

### UK Parliament Early Day Motion

**Mary Glendon (778) Death sentence verdict in case of Hamed Bin Haydara** – That this House notes the death sentence verdict in Sana'a on 2 January 2018 in the case of Hamed bin Haydara, a Yemeni Baha'i; observes reports that Mr bin Haydara was convicted on grounds of communication with the international governing body of the Baha'i faith, located in Haifa, Israel and that Mr bin Haydara endured over four years of detention, including torture, before this verdict; and requests the UK Government to call on the Houthi authorities to overturn the verdict against Mr bin Haydara and to release him and all Baha'i prisoners in Yemen.

<http://www.parliament.uk/edm/2017-19/778>

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## Relevant Legislation \*\* new or updated today

### UK Parliament

#### **Draft Animal Welfare (Sentencing and Recognition of Sentience) Bill**

[https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/666576/draft-animal-welfare-bill-171212.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/666576/draft-animal-welfare-bill-171212.pdf)

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

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

#### **Marriage Act 1949 (Amendment) Bill**

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

#### **Organ Donation (Deemed Consent) Bill**

<http://services.parliament.uk/bills/2017-19/organdonationdeemedconsent.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

**\*\* closes in 6 days**

**Draft Animal Welfare Bill** (closing date 17 January 2018)

<http://www.parliament.uk/business/committees/committees-a-z/commons-select/environment-food-and-rural-affairs-committee/news-parliament-2017/draft-animal-welfare-bill-17-19/>

**Draft Animal Welfare (Sentencing and Recognition of Sentience) Bill** (closing date 31 January 2018)

<https://consult.defra.gov.uk/animal-health-and-welfare/consultation-on-the-animal-welfare-bill/>

**Introducing 'opt-out' consent for organ and tissue donation in England** (closing date 6 March 2018)

<https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/introducing-opt-out-consent-for-organ-and-tissue-donation-in-england>

**Promoting Organ Donation and Transplantation in Northern Ireland** (closing date 9 March 2018)

<https://www.health-ni.gov.uk/consultations/promoting-organ-donation-and-transplantation-northern-ireland>

**Electoral Reform (Scotland)** (closing date 12 March 2018)

<http://www.gov.scot/Resource/0052/00529431.pdf>

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The Scottish Council of Jewish Communities (SCoJeC) is Scottish Charitable Incorporated Organisation SC029438