

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: Freedom of Expression

Jo Stevens (Labour) [121648] To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what his Department's policy is on the no-platforming at universities of (a) Al-Muhajiroun, (b) the British National Party, (c) the English Defence League, (d) Hizb-ut-Tahir, (e) the Muslim Public Affairs Committee and (f) National Action; and if he will make a statement.

Sam Gyimah: Al-Muhajiroun and National Action are proscribed under the Terrorism Act 2000. Membership is illegal and these groups should not be given a platform at universities.

Universities have a legal duty to take reasonable steps to ensure freedom of speech, including for visiting speakers (under the Education Act (No 2) 1986). The government therefore, does not support blanket no-platforming of individuals or organisations who are legally exercising their right to freedom of speech; it is for universities to balance their legal duties on a case-by-case basis.

The government's position on this issue has been publicly stated on a number of occasions.

<http://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Commons/2018-01-09/121648/>

Coroners

John Spellar (Labour) [121252] To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what guidance is issued to Coroners on respect for religious beliefs which require speedy burial following death.

Philip Lee: Guidance for coroners is issued by the Chief Coroner.

The needs of those faiths which require early burial can only be fully met if coroners provide an out of hours service. In his Annual Report for 2016-2017 the Chief Coroner recommended that coroner areas should provide an out of hours service but that they should normally do so on a 'light touch' basis. He went on to say however that "in some areas an out of hours service will require more, particularly in order to assist families who seek early burial for their loved ones".

In addition, the Ministry of Justice's *Guide to Coroner Services*, which is available on gov.uk and is aimed in particular at bereaved families, says that "the coroner's office will take account where possible of individuals' views and expectations,

including family and community preferences, traditions and religious requirements relating to mourning, post-mortem examinations and funerals”.

<http://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Commons/2018-01-05/121252/>

The Annual Report referred to above can be read at

https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/663823/chief-coroner-report-2017.PDF

The Guidance referred to above can be read at

https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/363879/guide-to-coroner-service.pdf

Gambling: Internet

The following five questions all received the same answer

Hywel Williams (Plaid Cymru) [121365] To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what recent discussions she has had with online gaming platform providers on ensuring that moderators identify and remove hate speech and ban offending users.

Hywel Williams (Plaid Cymru) [121366] To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, whether she has had recent discussions with online gaming platform providers on strengthening user guidelines to ensure that hate speech is removed and that offending users are banned.

Hywel Williams (Plaid Cymru) [121367] To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, whether she has had recent discussions with online gaming platform providers on the creation of a voluntary code of conduct for online gaming; and if she will make a statement.

Hywel Williams (Plaid Cymru) [121368] To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, if she will include online gaming platforms in the UK Government’s code of practice for social media providers and if she will make the code legally binding.

Hywel Williams (Plaid Cymru) [121369] To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what her Department’s policy is on tackling the use of hate speech on online gaming platforms.

Margot James: On 11 October the Government set out plans to make the UK the safest place in the world to be online. The Internet Safety Strategy green paper considers options for working with online platforms, game publishers, game developers and with agencies such as the Video Standards Council Rating Board, to continue to improve online safety in games.

Through the Strategy consultation we have sought views on a number of online safety initiatives, including working with the video games industry to share guidance and best practice to help ensure their consumers can have a safe and enjoyable experience online. The Strategy also highlighted the announcement made by Home Secretary to create an Online Hate Crime Hub that will ensure that victims of online hate crime have their cases effectively and efficiently investigated. The consultation closed in December and we are now analysing the responses. A government response will be published in due course. Details of Ministerial meetings can be found on Gov.uk.

<http://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Commons/2018-01-05/121365/>

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The Green Paper referred to above can be read at

https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/650949/Internet_Safety_Strategy_green_paper.pdf

Welsh Assembly Oral Answer

Business Questions

col 163 **Darren Millar (Conservative):** ... It was reported widely in the media yesterday that, last year, teachers from 16 of the 22 local authorities had reported incidents of racism. ... Also, there's been quite a spike, of course, in religious hate crime that has been recorded in Wales.

I think lots of schools are trying to do a good job in educating young people about different ethnic groups and religions, but of course, clearly we're not tackling the problem as effectively as we could be. ...

col 166 **Julie James (Leader of the House and Chief Whip):** ... in terms of reporting racist hate crimes, faith hate crimes, and so on ... one of us will be bringing forward a statement to say where we've got with that. That will include a number of things, not just the curriculum and teachers' issues, but the wider issue in Wales, which is very important. ...

<http://record.assembly.wales/Plenary/4896?lang=en-GB#C50621>

Children's Commissioner for Wales

Tackling Islamophobia: A children's rights resource for secondary schools in Wales

<https://www.childcomwales.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2018/01/Tackling-Islamophobia.pdf>

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Holocaust

House of Commons Library

Briefing: Holocaust Memorial Day 2018

<http://researchbriefings.files.parliament.uk/documents/CDP-2018-0010/CDP-2018-0010.pdf>

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Israel

UK Parliament Early Day Motion

Grahame Morris (798) Dumping of Israeli waste in the West Bank – That this House

expresses deep concern over the allegations raised by the human rights organisation B'Tselem that Palestinian land in the West Bank is being used for the treatment of Israeli waste, including hazardous waste; notes that Israel is using the occupation of the Palestinian Territories to deny the Palestinian people dignity and is putting Palestinian residents health at risk; further notes that the exploitation of the occupied territories is illegal under international law; and calls for an immediate end to this unjust practice and for steps to be taken to prevent waste treatment facilities being operated by Israel in the Occupied Palestinian Territories.

<http://www.parliament.uk/edm/2017-19/798>

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Foreign Affairs

House of Lords Oral Answers

Commonwealth Summit: Faith Leaders

Baroness Berridge (Conservative): To ask Her Majesty's Government how they will ensure the engagement of faith leaders in events around the Commonwealth Summit in April.

The Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office (Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon): My Lords, we look forward to hosting the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting in London in April this year, when faith leaders, civil society, business leaders and young people will come together to debate, celebrate and renew the Commonwealth. I shall engage fully with faith leaders in encouraging them to hold side events and to participate directly in activities in the run-up, because it is important that we offer important faith perspectives on ensuring a fairer and more secure, prosperous and sustainable Commonwealth.

Baroness Berridge: ... What plans do Her Majesty's Government have to support the Commonwealth Secretary-General's faith in the Commonwealth initiative, in particular to meet those UK faith leaders who are of Commonwealth heritage or whose communities are of Commonwealth heritage to promote the fact of the summit and outline how they can engage practically?

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: I assure my noble friend that we are working directly with the Secretary-General and the Commonwealth Secretariat on the very important point that she raises about faith communities. I believe that we all would acknowledge—indeed, celebrate—the fact that over the decades and centuries we have seen diaspora communities contribute incredibly to Britain. The faith communities are part and parcel of that. I look forward to working with them in the run-up to the Commonwealth summit, during the summit and, indeed, afterwards, when the UK has the chair for two years. ...

Lord Singh of Wimbledon (Crossbench): My Lords, does the Minister agree that the presence of faith representatives should go beyond the side events to actual opportunities to discuss human rights conditions and infringements of religious liberty in different Commonwealth countries, and engage with representatives of the countries concerned?

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: I assure the noble Lord that faith representatives will play a key role. I would add that, as I am sure he recognises, when we talk about the Commonwealth 52 there is a wide representation of people of different faiths and strong convictions, who will of course participate in all elements of the discussion around the Heads of Government Meeting and the surrounding fora. ...

Lord Hughes of Woodside (Labour): Has the Minister had meetings with the British Humanist Association and other non-religious groups?

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: The importance of freedom of religion and belief is a priority for this Government. As the Minister responsible I am meeting with all groups, including people of no faith and the humanist society, to ensure that the agenda at the Commonwealth summit and the programme for the UK's two-year chairmanship of the Commonwealth reflect those priorities.

<http://hansard.parliament.uk/lords/2018-01-15/debates/7B896232-1C5A-49D3-BB69-0468A1528160/CommonwealthSummitFaithLeaders>

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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

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 tomorrow**

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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