

Political Affairs Digest

A daily summary of political events affecting the Jewish Community

Scottish Council of Jewish Communities

SCoJeC

Contents

Home Affairs

Israel

Foreign Affairs

Relevant Legislation

Consultations

Home Affairs

House of Lords Written Answer

Faith Schools: Admissions

Lord Patten (Conservative) [HL5309] To ask Her Majesty's Government, further to the Written Answer by Lord Agnew of Oulton on 23 January (HL4568), why the Department for Education has not collected data about the preferences of parents from different faiths in relation to the schools they choose for their children.

Lord Agnew of Oulton: Schools designated with a religious character are permitted to collect information about parents' faith in a supplementary application form. Schools that do not have a religious character will not require information about parents' religious beliefs or practice as this will be irrelevant to their choice of school. Only schools with a religious character might hold this data and so, if collected by the department, this would not provide an accurate picture across all schools.

We do, of course, keep this general approach to the collection of data under constant review.

<http://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Lords/2018-01-31/HL5309/>

The answer referred to above can be read at

<http://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Lords/2018-01-09/HL4568/>

TOP

Israel

House of Commons Written Answers

Israel: Technology

Jim Shannon (DUP) [126893] To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, what recent steps he has taken to strengthen trade cooperation with Israel in the high tech sector.

Alistair Burt: The UK is a close friend of Israel and we enjoy an excellent bilateral

relationship, built on decades of cooperation between our two countries across a range of fields such as education, hi-tech research, business, arts and culture. Trade between our countries is at record levels. The British Government helped to establish the UK-Israel Tech Hub, a non-profit organisation based in Tel Aviv and London, to help British companies looking for cutting-edge innovation or Israeli start-ups seeking to grow through the UK. Over the last 5 years the Tech Hub has generated deals worth £62 million.

<http://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Commons/2018-02-06/126893/>

Israel: Medicine

Ian Paisley (DUP) [127029] To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, what steps he is taking to increase trade in medical research and development with Israel.

Graham Stuart: The UK and Israel have a strong and important trading relationship, and we are committed to strengthening it. We have a dedicated team in our Embassy in Tel Aviv which actively promotes UK-Israel trade. They have succeeded in increasing the export of medical devices to Israel.

The UK-Israel Tech Hub, based at the Embassy, helps to create tech and innovation partnerships across several sectors, including healthcare. One of their projects, the UK-Israel Dangoor Healthcare Initiative, aims to create a pipeline of digital innovation for the NHS. There is also extensive bilateral collaborative medical research between the UK and Israel.

<http://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Commons/2018-02-06/127029/>

Israel: Agriculture

The following two questions both received the same answer

Ian Paisley (DUP) [127030] To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, what steps he is taking to increase trade in the agricultural technology sector with Israel.

Israel: Technology

Ian Paisley (DUP) [127033] To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, what steps he is taking to strengthen trade cooperation in the high-tech sector with Israel.

Graham Stuart: The UK and Israel have a strong and important trading relationship, and we are committed to strengthening that relationship.

We have a dedicated team based in our Embassy in Tel Aviv which actively promotes trade cooperation between UK and Israeli companies.

We have also established a UK-Israel Tech Hub, which helps to create partnerships between British companies and world class Israeli innovators across a wide range of tech sectors, including agriculture.

<http://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Commons/2018-02-06/127030/>

and

<http://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Commons/2018-02-06/127033/>

Israel: Gaza

Ian Paisley (DUP) [127036] To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, what recent assessment he has made of the effect on the Middle East Peace Process of renewed rocket firings from Gaza into Israel.

Alistair Burt: We are gravely concerned by the increase in rocket fire since December 2017. Rocket attacks threaten the daily lives of Israelis indiscriminately and make achieving peace more difficult. We call on all parties to refrain from violence and to commit to a negotiated solution to end the conflict.

<http://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Commons/2018-02-06/127036/>

Foreign and Commonwealth Office

Alistair Burt: Great news that the best of Israeli tech will bring real benefit to the NHS, through the UK-Israel Dangoor Health Initiative [@UKinIsrael](#) [@UKIsraelHub](#)

UK initiative seeks Israeli digital health tech to assist NHS

The British embassy in Israel said on Tuesday it has launched a program designed to help incorporate Israeli digital health technology into the UK and its National Health Service.

<https://twitter.com/AlistairBurtUK/status/963871144146292736>

with a link to

<https://www.reuters.com/article/us-britain-israel-health-tech/uk-initiative-seeks-israeli-digital-health-tech-to-assist-nhs-idUSKBN1FX1AQ>

TOP

Foreign Affairs

House of Commons Written Answers

Diplomatic Service: Religious Freedom

Gavin Shuker (Labour Co-op) [126803] To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, if he will make Religious and Freedom of Religion or Belief Literacy training compulsory for diplomats serving in countries where violations are most prevalent.

Mark Field: A specific course in Religion and Diplomacy is available to FCO staff designated to take up roles where an understanding of religion is key to their work. We will keep attendance at the course under review, but so far we do not see a need to make this training mandatory.

The FCO also runs seminars on specific themes. For example, Bishop Jonathan Goodall spoke to the FCO about Orthodox Christianity and foreign policy.

<http://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Commons/2018-02-06/126803/>

Magna Carta Fund for Human Rights and Democracy: Religious Freedom

Gavin Shuker (Labour Co-op) [126804] To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, what positive outcomes for freedom of religion or belief were achieved from Magna Carta Fund funding in 2016-17.

Mark Field: There have been a number of positive outcomes for freedom of religion or belief (FoRB) from projects supported through the Magna Carta Fund for Human Rights and Democracy in financial year 2016-17. These include:

A project delivered by the Non-governmental Organisation (NGO) Hardwired Inc has promoted tolerance in secondary school curricula in 50 schools in Iraq, Morocco and Lebanon. The Kurdish Regional Government has also asked for it to be shared with all children in their region.

The NGO Christian Solidarity Worldwide is running a project to support human rights defenders in a number of countries including India, Bangladesh, Nepal, Sri Lanka, Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan. This project is raising awareness at the national, regional and international level of the unique challenges human rights defenders campaigning for FoRB face in South and Central Asia. The project is advocating for better protection for them by state authorities.

A project run by the Salzburg Global Seminar is increasing the capacity of institutions with educational missions in Africa, Asia, and the Middle East to combat extremism, prevent genocide and promote tolerance. There is particular emphasis

on Rwanda, South Africa and Cambodia.

The Magna Carta Fund for Human Rights and Democracy was also used to support projects to promote FoRB and tolerance in Burma, Tunisia, Egypt, Tajikistan and Turkmenistan. These projects have strengthened civil society actors in those countries.

A project carried out by Cumberland Lodge has promoted greater understanding of FoRB issues and challenges amongst overseas students in the UK. This is sensitising them to these matters before their returning to their native countries where it is hoped they will act as informal advocates for human rights, including FoRB.

<http://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Commons/2018-02-06/126804/>

Magna Carta Fund for Human Rights and Democracy: Religious Freedom

Gavin Shuker (Labour Co-op) [126805] To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what projects in which countries were funded from his Department's Magna Carta Fund to support freedom of religion and belief in 2016-17.

Mark Field: Her Majesty's Government places great importance on defending and promoting the right to freedom of religion or belief. The Magna Carta Fund for Human Rights and Democracy is one of the tools we use to achieve this goal. In 2016-17 we funded the following projects that supported freedom of religion or belief:

- Creating Advocates for Freedom of Religion or Belief in developing countries (including, India and Indonesia)
- Defending Freedom of Religion or Belief in South And Central Asia (including in India, Bangladesh, Nepal, Sri Lanka, Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan).
- Upholding Freedom Of Expression and Promoting Stable Pluralistic Societies In the MENA region (including Egypt).
- Promoting Social Stability and Security through Advancing Freedom of Religion or Belief in Central Asia (Tajikistan & Turkmenistan)

Due to sensitivities, we are unable to disclose details of all our projects to support freedom of religion or belief.

<http://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Commons/2018-02-06/126805/>

House of Lords Written Answers

Religious Freedom

Baroness Anelay of St Johns (Conservative) [HL5268] To ask Her Majesty's Government, further to the remarks made by the Rt Hon Mark Field MP on 26 October 2017 (HC Deb, col 233 WH) that in partnership with Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon he would write to the embassies and high commissions in key countries for which he had responsibility, asking them to report on precisely what they are doing to promote freedom of religion or belief, which embassies and high commissions responded; and what they reported.

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: To date, I have received substantive replies to the letter of 26 October 2017 from our Embassies or High Commissions in Bangladesh, China, India, Indonesia, Burma, Nepal, Malaysia, Pakistan and Sri Lanka.

As requested in the letter of 26 October, these letters report on the main current and planned activities of those Embassies and High Commissions in the defence and promotion of freedom of religion or belief (FoRB). Due to the sensitivities of some of the material contained in those letters it would not be appropriate to disclose their contents in detail. In general terms, the responses received show that those

Embassies and High Commissions are using a variety of diplomatic tools to defend and promote FoRB as appropriate for the country in which they are operating.

<http://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Lords/2018-01-31/HL5268/>

Mark Field's remarks, referred to above, can be read at

<http://hansard.parliament.uk/commons/2017-10-26/debates/B47C75F3-35B7-434E-9DB3-0F6F6AA6E323/InternationalFreedomOfReligionOrBeliefDay#contribution-5B6E317C-1AA8-445F-8FB2-2F3DC99348A6>

Religious Freedom

Baroness Anelay of St Johns (Conservative) [HL5269] To ask Her Majesty's Government, further to the remarks made by the Rt Hon Mark Field MP on 26 October 2017 (HC Deb, col 233 WH) that in partnership with Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon he would reissue the freedom of religion or belief toolkit to all ambassadors and high commissioners, what training has been given to staff in post overseas in the use of that toolkit; and whether the toolkit is publicly available.

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: The Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) reissued the freedom of religion or belief (FoRB) toolkit to all Embassies and High Commissions on 10 October 2017. The aim of the toolkit is to provide British diplomats with guidance on the human right to FoRB. The toolkit sets out what FoRB means, how it is commonly denied, and how the right to FoRB can be defended and promoted. The toolkit is therefore designed as a self-standing resource for use by British diplomats in any post.

To complement the educational value of the toolkit itself, the FCO runs a variety of learning and development activities to help our staff to develop their religious literacy and their understanding of the way in which religion affects public policy across the world. Furthermore, officials from the FCO's Human Rights Policy Unit maintain very regular contact with a network of colleagues working on FoRB issues in many posts, offering guidance and support as required.

<http://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Lords/2018-01-31/HL5269/>

Mark Field's remarks, referred to above, can be read at

<http://hansard.parliament.uk/commons/2017-10-26/debates/B47C75F3-35B7-434E-9DB3-0F6F6AA6E323/InternationalFreedomOfReligionOrBeliefDay#contribution-5B6E317C-1AA8-445F-8FB2-2F3DC99348A6>

The freedom of religion or belief toolkit referred to above can be read at

https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/561516/Freedom_of_Religion_or_Belief_Toolkit_-_2016.pdf

Religious Freedom

Baroness Anelay of St Johns (Conservative) [HL5270] To ask Her Majesty's Government what training in the use of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office's freedom of religion or belief toolkit is given to UK employed staff before deployment to posts overseas; and how frequently that training is updated.

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: The aim of the freedom of religion or belief (FoRB) toolkit is to provide British diplomats with guidance on the human right to FoRB. The toolkit sets out what FoRB means, how it is commonly denied, and how the right to FoRB can be defended and promoted. The toolkit is therefore designed as a self-standing resource for use by British diplomats in any post.

We are also increasing the focus on FoRB across our diplomatic network and have encouraged a number of our missions, including those in Asia to have a greater focus on FoRB.

<http://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Lords/2018-01-31/HL5270/>

The freedom of religion or belief toolkit referred to above can be read at [https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/561516/Free_dom_of_Religion_or_Belief_Toolkit - 2016.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/561516/Free_dom_of_Religion_or_Belief_Toolkit_-_2016.pdf)

TOP

Relevant Legislation ** new or updated today

UK Parliament

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>

TOP

Consultations ** new or updated today

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>

Human Rights (Scottish Parliament) (closing date 16 March 2018)

<http://www.parliament.scot/parliamentarybusiness/CurrentCommittees/106453.aspx>

Creating a Parliament for Wales (closing date 6 April 2018)

<http://senedd.assembly.wales/mgConsultationDisplay.aspx?ID=292>

TOP