

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 Answer

Britain First

Paula Sherriff (Labour) [116420] To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what assessment she has made of the threat level of the group Britain First; and if she will make a statement.

Ben Wallace: We have been clear that Britain First is an extremist organisation which seeks to divide communities through its use of hateful narratives which spread lies and stoke tensions. Where a group is viewed as posing a terrorist risk then we will take action to prosecute them. This is done on a case by case basis.

<http://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Commons/2017-11-29/116420/>

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Israel

House of Lords Written Answers

Israel: UN Convention on the Rights of the Child

Baroness Tonge (Non-affiliated) [HL5391] To ask Her Majesty's Government whether they intend to call for international sanctions to encourage Israeli observance of the UN Convention of the Rights of the Child; and if so, what form of sanctions they propose.

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: The Government has no plans to call for international sanctions on Israel. We continue to encourage the Israeli authorities to meet their obligations under the UN Convention of the Rights of the Child.

<http://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Lords/2018-02-05/HL5391/>

Visas: Occupied Territories

Baroness Tonge (Non-affiliated) [HL5392] To ask Her Majesty's Government, further to the Written Answer by Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon on 29 January (HL4714), what assessment they have made of the reasons why (1) their immigration statistics show that

19 per cent of Israeli settlers living illegally on Palestinian land were refused entry to the UK in 2017 whereas 32 per cent of Palestinians were refused entry, and (2) in the last four years the Palestinian refusal rate has been over three times the Israeli refusal rate.

Baroness Williams of Trafford: All applications are assessed on a case by case basis, according to the individual circumstances and against the part of the Immigration Rules which relates to the purpose for which they are seeking entry. The nationality of the applicant only determines whether an application is decided before departure or on arrival.

All non-EEA citizens seeking to enter the UK are assessed against the criteria set out in the published Immigration Rules (<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/immigration-rules>). These are the same regardless of nationality.

<http://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Lords/2018-02-05/HL5392/>

The answer referred to above can be read at

<http://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Lords/2018-01-15/HL4714/>

Israel: EU External Relations

Baroness Tonge (Non-affiliated) [HL5393] To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment (1) they, and (2) the EU, have made of Israel's compliance with the conditions in the EU–Israel Association agreements, concerning human rights and democracy.

While we have not made an assessment of Israel's compliance with the conditions in the **Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon:** EU–Israel Association agreements, concerning human rights and democracy, the UK is firmly committed to the promotion and protection of human rights and compliance with international law especially in regard to the Occupied Palestinian Territories (OPTs). We have a regular dialogue with the Government of Israel with regard to the implementation of their obligations under international law and regularly and robustly raise our serious concerns on issues relating to Israeli actions in the OPTs.

<http://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Lords/2018-02-05/HL5393/>

Laith Abu Naim

Baroness Tonge (Non-affiliated) [HL5395] To ask Her Majesty's Government what representations they are making to the government of Israel following the death of an unarmed 16 year-old, Laith Abu Naim.

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: While we have not discussed this specific issue with the Israeli authorities, the UK has repeatedly made clear to Israel our longstanding concerns about the manner in which the Israel Defense Forces (IDF) police non-violent protests and the border areas, including use of live ammunition. The Government is very concerned at the numbers of Palestinians killed by Israel Defense Forces in the West Bank and Gaza. We have raised the issue with the Israeli authorities, encouraging them to carry out transparent investigations whether use of live fire had been appropriate. We understand that the IDF are investigating this death.

<http://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Lords/2018-02-05/HL5395/>

Scottish Parliament Motion

S5M-10526 Sandra White (SNP): Glasgow Protest in Support of Ahed Tamimi –That the Parliament acknowledges the Stand for Ahed Tamimi protest, which took place on 17

February 2018 at Buchanan Street steps in Glasgow; understands that the student-led protest was organised by Strathclyde Students for Palestine and the Glasgow University Palestine Society and was supported by the Ah Al-Bait Society, Stop The War Coalition, Palestine Alliance and Muslim Council of Scotland; understands that Ahed Tamimi is a Palestinian child prisoner who has been held in detention by Israeli forces that it considers have been illegally occupying Palestine since 19 December 2017, following concerns of violence, intimidation and harassment of the Tamimi family; condemns what it sees as the oppressive imprisonment of children by a foreign government in which their rights are not guaranteed, and the operation of what it believes are secret military courts in which they are tried; supports calls by UNICEF and Amnesty International to release all Palestinian child prisoners, and welcomes efforts by Scottish activists to highlight and campaign on this issue.

<http://www.parliament.scot/parliamentarybusiness/28877.aspx?SearchType=Advance&ReferenceNumbers=S5M-10526>

United Nations

Surviving Gaza: one mother tells us her community could go “over the edge” without UN support (*audio recording*)

<https://news.un.org/en/audio/2018/02/1003081>

UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights

UN expert alarmed at Israeli Supreme Court's "license to torture" ruling

The UN Special Rapporteur on torture, Nils Melzer, expressed his utmost concern after a December 2017 ruling by Israel's Supreme Court exempting security agents from criminal investigation despite their undisputed use of coercive "pressure techniques" against a Palestinian detainee.

"This ruling sets a dangerous precedent, gravely undermining the universal prohibition of torture," the expert said. "By exempting alleged perpetrators from criminal investigation and prosecution, the Supreme Court has essentially provided them with a judicially sanctioned 'license to torture'.

"I urgently appeal to all branches of Israel's Government to carefully consider not only its own international obligations, but also the consolidated legal and moral views of the international community, before whitewashing methods of interrogation that are more closely associated with barbarism than with civilization."

In 2007, Assad Abu Gosh, a Hamas affiliate from Nablus in the West Bank, was arrested and interrogated by the Israeli Security Agency (ISA) about laboratories producing explosives for Hamas, and about possible plans for terrorist attacks.

The Supreme Court acknowledged that, during his interrogation, Mr. Abu Gosh had suffered coercive "pressure techniques" but said these techniques did not amount to torture because they had not caused sufficiently severe pain or suffering.

"This argument is unacceptable," said the Special Rapporteur. "Any interrogation technique that intentionally inflicts pain or suffering of sufficient intensity to make the victim confess or cooperate amounts to torture, and this certainly is the case for the methods used during Mr. Abu Gosh's interrogation. ...

Mr. Melzer also criticized the court's acceptance of the so-called "necessity defence", under which the interrogation techniques were held to be warranted because of grave suspicions that Mr. Abu Gosh had information about life-threatening terrorist activities.

It was "completely irrelevant" whether the torture had yielded useful counter-terrorist intelligence in this case, the Special Rapporteur said. ...

"The absolute prohibition of torture and ill-treatment is one of the most fundamental

achievements in human history, and its violation is listed among the most serious international crimes, including crimes against humanity and war crimes. No circumstances, however exceptional and well argued, can ever justify torture." ...

To read the full press release see

<http://www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=22675&LangID=E>

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Foreign Affairs

House of Commons Written Answer

Hezbollah

Paul Masterton (Conservative) [124805] To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what criteria the Government uses to distinguish between the political and military wings of Hezbollah.

Ben Wallace: The Government distinguishes between those parts of Hizbollah which are involved in Lebanese politics (and that maintains a social welfare network that encompasses education and health services) and those which are actively concerned in terrorism (and are responsible for the planning, coordination and execution of terrorist attacks). The activity an individual in Hizbollah is engaged in will contribute to what part of the organisation they belong to.

<http://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Commons/2018-01-24/124805/>

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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>

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

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>

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