

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 Commons Written Answer

Coroners

Matthew Offord (Conservative) [123372] To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what guidance his Department has issued to coroners on ensuring that bodies are released for burial as soon as possible as per religious tradition.

Phillip 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/2018-01-17/123372/>

The Guide referred to above can be read at

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

Police Service of Northern Ireland

Incidents and Crimes with a Hate Motivation Recorded by the Police in Northern Ireland: Quarterly Update 31 December 2017

<https://www.psni.police.uk/globalassets/inside-the-psni/our-statistics/hate-motivation-statistics/2017-18/q3/quarterly-hate-motivations-bulletin-period-ending-dec17.pdf>

Israel

House of Commons Oral Answers

Topical Questions: International Trade

T3. **Philip Davies (Conservative)**: There is immense potential for growth in bilateral trade and investment between the UK and Israel after we leave the EU. Does the Minister share my hope for yet greater levels of trade with the start-up nation, and will he update the House on the progress being made by the UK-Israel trade working group? [903916]

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for International Trade (Graham Stuart): Britain's relationship with Israel is stronger than ever, with record levels of bilateral co-operation in trade, investment, science and technology. As my hon. Friend rightly says, the UK-Israel trade working group is making good progress in ensuring continuity in our trading relationships as we leave the EU.

T2. **Jim Shannon (DUP)**: Bearing in mind the upcoming Israel Apartheid Week in universities, of which a boycott of Israel and its products is a big component, will the Minister outline how he intends to enhance trade with Israel for our mutual benefit and offset that destructive campaign by the anti-Israel movement? [903915]

Graham Stuart: We strongly welcome our ties with Israel, as does the hon. Gentleman. As has just been said, the Department has established a joint trade working group, and we continue to liaise closely with the Israeli Government to strengthen trade, investment and other ties between this country and Israel.

<https://hansard.parliament.uk/commons/2018-02-22/debates/4F0027FC-34CC-41FD-BEB6-EAA877622311/TopicalQuestions#contribution-21F0EBC6-6472-4F33-AFEA-1191746B8075>

House of Commons Written Answers

Israel: Security

Ian Austin (Labour) [127245] To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, what recent discussion he has had with his Israeli counterpart on the security situation in those Israeli cities within range of rocket and terror attacks.

Alistair Burt: The Government regularly discusses the security situation with Israeli officials at all levels. Our commitment to Israel's security is unwavering. We recognise that Israel has the right to ensure its own security, and that its citizens have the right to live without fear of attack. Rocket attacks threaten the daily lives of Israelis indiscriminately and make achieving peace more difficult. The UK continues to support a negotiated agreement between the Israelis and the Palestinians which will protect Israeli citizens and ensure their safety. We call on all parties to refrain from violence and commit to a negotiated solution to end the conflict.

<http://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Commons/2018-02-07/127245/>

Gaza: Borders

Richard Burden (Labour) [128449] To ask the Secretary of State for International Development, what assessment she has made of the effect on health outcomes of the time taken to grant exit permits for Palestinians in Gaza seeking medical treatment elsewhere in the Occupied Palestinian Territory or abroad; and if she will make a statement.

Alistair Burt: The World Health Organisation (WHO) recently reported that 2017 saw the lowest rate of approvals of security permits for patients wishing to access healthcare outside of Gaza since WHO began monitoring in 2008, with 54% of patient applications approved on time. They report this has resulted in delays in care for patients, with potentially life threatening consequences. We continue to monitor the situation in Gaza closely and call on the Israeli government to ease restrictions further and for Israel, the Palestinian Authority and Egypt to work together to ensure a durable solution for Gaza.

<http://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Commons/2018-02-19/128449/>

Gaza: Borders

Richard Burden (Labour) [128458] To ask the Secretary of State for International Development, what recent estimate she has made of the number of humanitarian and development items that have been delayed in entering or denied entry to Gaza by the Israeli authorities in the last 12 months.

Alistair Burt: The Department is aware of delays and denials of entry of items into Gaza. The UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) is not currently consolidating data on these delays. We have requested UN OCHA to establish a mechanism for the collection of this data. DFID enables reconstruction efforts in Gaza through our support to the Materials Monitoring Unit of the Gaza Reconstruction Mechanism to monitor the import, storage, supply and use of construction materials. We welcome recent Israeli announcements to ease restrictions on the importation of material into Gaza for much needed infrastructure projects such as the proposed Central Gaza Desalination Plant and other waste water plants under construction, which many international donors are supporting.

<http://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Commons/2018-02-19/128458/>

Gaza: International Assistance

Richard Burden (Labour) [128469] To ask the Secretary of State for International Development, which multilateral projects in the Gaza Strip her Department helps fund; and how much is disbursed from the public purse for each such project.

Alistair Burt: In Gaza, the UK has provided £1.9 million to the UN Children's Fund (UNICEF) to support approximately 1 million Gazans by providing clean water, rehabilitating sanitation facilities and promoting hygiene standards to stop the spread of disease. Additionally, the UK is a long-term supporter of the UN Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA), which provides basic services to 1.3 million people in Gaza. In 2017/18 we have so far provided around £50 million to UNRWA across the region.

The European Union (EU) is currently supporting six development projects in Gaza through multilateral bodies including UNICEF and UNRWA, totalling over €58 million. The EU is also supporting a number of humanitarian projects in Gaza. The UK's financing share of EU expenditure varies year on year but has been approximately 15%.

The UK also provides core un-earmarked contributions to multilateral bodies such as UNICEF and the International Committee of the Red Cross and is a shareholder in a number of major international financial institutions, such as the

International Bank for Reconstruction and Development and the European Investment Bank, which are working across the West Bank and Gaza.

<http://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Commons/2018-02-19/128469/>

Palestinians: Overseas Aid

Richard Burden (Labour) [128510] To ask the Secretary of State for International Development, what assessment she has made of the effect of the reduction of bilateral funding from her Department to the Occupied Palestinian Territories from £83,358,000 in 2014 to £22,729,000 in 2016.

Alistair Burt: The figures quoted in the question are from the Statistics for International Development (SID) publication

(<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/statistics-on-international-development>).

SID publishes the UK's Overseas Development Assistance (ODA) on a calendar year basis in line with the Organisation for Economic Development and Cooperation, Development Assistance Committee's definitions. However, DFID allocates budgets on a financial year basis (1 April – 31 March). This can result in some discrepancies between financial data presented according to the calendar year compared to the financial year.

In 2014 and 2015 DFID's spend in the Occupied Palestinian Territories (OPTs) spiked due to our provision of immediate humanitarian assistance for those affected by the Gaza conflict in the summer of 2014 and subsequent early recovery and reconstruction assistance. In the 2016/17 financial year DFID provided over £68 million in funding to the OPTs to help build Palestinian institutions, deliver essential services and support economic development. We remain committed to providing support to the OPTs.

<http://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Commons/2018-02-20/128510/>

UN Human Rights Council

Richard Burden (Labour) [128516] To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, what the Government's priorities are for the UN Human Rights Council in Geneva in March 2018.

Mark Field: The UK is strongly committed to the protection and promotion of human rights worldwide. As such, the government's priority for all sessions of the UN Human Rights Council is to ensure that it holds to account those responsible for human rights violations and abuses, that it effectively addresses threats to human rights, and strengthens safeguards and protections for the future.

At the 37th session, the UK will again table a resolution on Syria and host a panel event considering the impact of attacks against schools on access to education, and will negotiate resolutions on Burma, Iran, DPRK, Libya, South Sudan, the Occupied Palestinian Territories, among others. Thematic resolutions will include texts on privacy, torture, and freedom of religion or belief.

<http://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Commons/2018-02-20/128516/>

Technology: Israel

Bob Blackman (Conservative) [903868] What steps [is the Minister] taking to strengthen trade co-operation with Israel in the high-tech sector.

Graham Stuart: The UK and Israel have an important trading relationship; which we are committed to strengthening through our dedicated trade promotion team at our Embassy in Tel Aviv.

We have also established a UK-Israel Tech Hub, which helps to create partnerships between British companies and Israeli technology innovators.

Foreign Affairs

House of Commons Written Answers

Religious Freedom

Bob Blackman (Conservative) [127423] To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, if he will make freedom of religion or belief a strategic priority.

Mark Field: The protection of freedom of religion or belief (FoRB) is a priority of the Government's foreign policy and will continue to be so. In their interactions with foreign governments, and Embassies/High Commissions overseas, the Foreign and Commonwealth Office ministers and officials routinely raise individual cases and highlight practices and laws that discriminate against people on the basis of their religion or belief.

The United Kingdom also actively promotes FoRB through multilateral forums. At the most recent United Nations Human Rights Council, the UK worked successfully to help maintain consensus on the adoption and implementation of the European Union sponsored Resolution on 'Freedom of Religion or Belief' and the Organisation for Islamic Cooperation sponsored Resolution on 'Combating Religious Intolerance'. The FCO also continues to support a number of projects to promote tolerance through the Magna Carta Fund for Human Rights and Democracy. Current projects include work to promote religious tolerance through secondary school curricula in Iraq, Morocco and Lebanon.

<http://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Commons/2018-02-07/127423/>

Religious Freedom

Bob Blackman (Conservative) [127554] To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, if he will provide additional compulsory training on religion and freedom of religion or belief for diplomats and Government officials working in countries where violations of those freedoms 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/2018-02-08/127554/>

Relevant Legislation ** new or updated today

UK Parliament

** European Union (Withdrawal) Bill

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

Committee Stage, House of Lords

[https://hansard.parliament.uk/lords/2018-02-21/debates/E919EDEC-6738-4CFC-9653-DD1B3D381611/EuropeanUnion\(Withdrawal\)Bill](https://hansard.parliament.uk/lords/2018-02-21/debates/E919EDEC-6738-4CFC-9653-DD1B3D381611/EuropeanUnion(Withdrawal)Bill)

and

[https://hansard.parliament.uk/lords/2018-02-21/debates/890B383C-A9FD-44C0-BFA3-C9559A2A3861/EuropeanUnion\(Withdrawal\)Bill](https://hansard.parliament.uk/lords/2018-02-21/debates/890B383C-A9FD-44C0-BFA3-C9559A2A3861/EuropeanUnion(Withdrawal)Bill)

Notice of amendments

<https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/bills/lbill/2017-2019/0079/18079-II.pdf>

and

[https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/bills/lbill/2017-2019/0079/18079-II\(a\).pdf](https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/bills/lbill/2017-2019/0079/18079-II(a).pdf)

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>

Second Reading, House of Commons

... *col 446* **Theresa Villiers (Conservative)**: I am here to support the hon. Gentleman's Bill, but I ask him to engage with the Jewish community to see whether he can allay their concerns about how it might affect observance with their religious teachings.

col 447 **Mr Robinson (Labour)**: ... I remember that one of the former Prime Ministers who supports us—Gordon Brown—wanted to introduce an opt-out system, but came up against a fairly immovable block in the then Chief Rabbi, Rabbi Sacks, who said then that at no cost could he commit the Jewish community to supporting it. That rather held matters up and the Government were then overtaken by other matters with that Bill, but yes, we will do that. I have been in touch, and we believe that the council itself has made an official statement supporting the Bill. ...

col 467 **Sandy Martin (Labour)**: Mention has been made of religiously inclined Jewish people in this country. Some people will feel uncomfortable about the concept of donation. Does my hon. Friend agree that people from various religious traditions—not just one—might feel uncomfortable about this and that it is entirely right to give them the opportunity to opt out, if they wish to do so?

col 468 **Dan Jarvis (Labour)**: I wholeheartedly agree with my hon. Friend. He makes an incredibly important point. This is absolutely not about shaming anybody into doing anything they do not want to do. If anybody, for whatever reason, decides they do not wish to be part of the scheme, they have the right to opt out. It is incredibly important that we be clear about that. ...

col 476 **Matthew Offord (Conservative)**: ... It has been said that there are religious differences on donation, but that is incorrect. Both Islam and Judaism allow organ transplants from live and deceased patients in order to continue and save lives. One factor that perhaps some are not aware of, and that might influence the decision-making process of some families, is how the point of death is decided. Some people regard death as defined by cardiovascular criteria, which is when the heart ceases to function. Others use cessation of brain function—brain stem death—as their criterion. Those two distinctions sometimes make people uncomfortable with donation. ...

col 477 The Government are aware of the issues around transplantation, and they cannot plead ignorance in that our religious communities are being unresponsive to human need. In 2013, leading Muslim and Jewish groups wrote jointly to the Government suggesting a way forward in which an enhanced and improved opt-in system could be introduced that would alleviate their concerns. Improvements would include a Government-backed statement that Jews and Muslims could sign, which would enable them to donate organs in a manner compatible with their beliefs. If that approach were to be adopted, it would

enable the two communities to be even more supportive of an opt-in system than they have been in the past. That proposal has been raised on several occasions, but I am afraid it has been ignored. The hon. Member for Coventry North West mentioned former Chief Rabbi Lord Sacks, who he said opposed such measures. As I understand it, however, the current Chief Rabbi, Rabbi Mirvis, is in favour of the proposal I have just outlined. ...

col 480 Mrs Hodgson: ... Of course, there are some concerns among some religious communities. We heard about that earlier from the hon. Member for Hendon (Dr Offord), and I know that my hon. Friend the Member for Leicester South (Jonathan Ashworth), the shadow Secretary of State for Health, has met representatives of one particular Jewish community to discuss their concerns. There are also concerns among black and minority-ethnic communities ...

[https://hansard.parliament.uk/commons/2018-02-23/debates/9673B445-2159-4C6C-AA4B-45ACD6A0E2AB/OrganDonation\(DeemedConsent\)Bill](https://hansard.parliament.uk/commons/2018-02-23/debates/9673B445-2159-4C6C-AA4B-45ACD6A0E2AB/OrganDonation(DeemedConsent)Bill)

Scottish Parliament

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

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

Stage 2: Notice of amendments

[http://www.parlamaid.scot/Offensive%20Behaviour%20at%20Football%20and%20Threatening%20Communications%20\(Repeal\)%20\(Scotland\)%20Bill/SPBill19MLS052018.pdf](http://www.parlamaid.scot/Offensive%20Behaviour%20at%20Football%20and%20Threatening%20Communications%20(Repeal)%20(Scotland)%20Bill/SPBill19MLS052018.pdf)

TOP

Consultations

** new or updated today

**** closes in 9 days**

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