

# Political Affairs Digest

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

Scottish Council of Jewish Communities

SCoJeC

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## Home Affairs

### House of Commons Written Answers

#### Coroners

**Richard Burgon (Labour)** [128598] To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what assessment his Department has made of whether changes are required to the rules governing coroners' discretion to accommodate religious burial requirements.

**Phillip Lee:** 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."

Ministers will be interested to see whether, in due course, the Courts have anything to say on the matter when judgment is given in the judicial review that has been brought against the Inner North London Coroner.

<http://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Commons/2018-02-20/128598/>

The Guide referred to above can be read at

[https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/363879/qui-de-to-coroner-service.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/363879/qui-de-to-coroner-service.pdf)

#### Office for Students

*The following two questions both received the same answer*

**Alex Sobel (Labour Co-op)** [128714] To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether his Department held meetings with or otherwise engaged representative groups from the (a) Muslim, (b) Jewish, (c) Hindu, (d) Sikh and (e) Christian communities as part of the consultation process on the remit of the Office for Students.

**Alex Sobel (Labour Co-op)** [128718] To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether his Department held meetings or otherwise engaged with (a) LGBTQ+ community, (b) disability rights, (c) sex and gender equality and (d) anti-racist representatives or organisations as part of the consultation process on the remit of the Office for Students.

**Sam Gyimah:** The department launched seven consultations on aspects of the remit of the Office for Students. These consultations were open to all individuals, representative groups and organisations for response.

A full list of all respondents will be included in the responses to these consultations, which will be published shortly.

<http://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Commons/2018-02-20/128714/>

and

<http://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Commons/2018-02-20/128718/>

### **Office for Students**

**Alex Sobel (Labour Co-op)** [128719] To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what powers are planned for the Office for Students to investigate incidents of racism on campuses.

**Reply from Sam Gyimah:** Providers have a responsibility to ensure that they provide a safe and inclusive environment for all students, and that students do not face discrimination, harassment or victimisation.

The responsibility for investigating racist incidents sits with the provider and, where appropriate, it would make use of its internal complaints and disciplinary processes for tackling racist behaviour by individuals or groups of individuals.

Where a complaint regarding a racist incident was not resolved through a provider's internal processes, it could be investigated by the Office of the Independent Adjudicator. Should an incident constitute a criminal offence, it would be investigated by the police.

Failure by a provider to fulfil its responsibilities under the Equality Act 2010 would be a matter for the Equality and Human Rights Commission as the enforcer of equality legislation rather than for the Office for Students.

<http://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Commons/2018-02-20/128719/>

### **Faith Schools: Truancy**

**Layla Moran (Liberal Democrat)** [128517] To ask the Secretary of State for Education, how many faith schools are in the highest decile for persistent absence in (a) England and (b) the South East.

**Anne Milton:** The number of faith schools in the highest decile for persistent absence rate is shown in the attached table.

[128517 Attachment](#)

<http://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Commons/2018-02-20/128517/>

### **Faith Schools: West Midlands**

**Jim Cunningham (Labour)** [128896] To ask the Secretary of State for Education, how many faith schools in (a) the West Midlands and (b) Coventry are in the highest decile for persistent absence.

**Anne Milton:** The number of faith schools in the highest decile for persistent absence rate is shown in the attached table.

[Attachment 1](#)

<http://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Commons/2018-02-21/128896/>

## **Charity Commission**

### **Charity Inquiry: The Reb Moïshe Foundation**

On 18 November 2014 the Charity Commission ('the Commission') opened a compliance case into the charity regarding a loan made by the charity to a private commercial

company ... which was connected to one of the trustees.

Correspondence received by the Commission on 26 January 2015 from the charity's accountants detailed that a loan facility for £2,000,000 was made by the charity to the company in March 2006 repayable at an interest rate of 24%, at a time when one of the then trustees (trustee A) was a secretary of the company. ...

The Commission established that at the time of the filing of the accounts the charity was operating with just one trustee ('trustee A'), and this had been the case since 15 October 2013 when the second trustee ('trustee B') had been removed from the charity's online records (prior to trustee's A notification of her death in February 2014). ...

Based on the information obtained, the inquiry considered that the charity's trustees had

- placed the charity's funds at risk from the point that the loan facility was made in March 2006
- failed to take sufficient steps to protect the charity's interests or recover the charity assets particularly since the expected returns from the loan did not materialize ...

The inquiry found that the trustees had not discharged their legal duties in terms of the governance and administration of their charity, particularly in relation to protection of its funds and how they were expended. ...

... the annual returns for the fye [financial year ending] 2014 and 2015 contained information which the Commission considered to be false or misleading in that trustee A had advised that the charity had relevant policies and procedures in place. During the course of the inquiry it was established that no such policies existed. ...

Following submission of the appeals, the Commission and trustee A came to an agreement regarding repayment of the funds and the regularisation of the charity's governance and financial administration. As a result of that agreement ... the total funds recovered to £2,137,368.50, which represented the full amount of the loan facility originally made and some interest ...

As part of the agreement, the Commission obtained a written undertaking from trustee A that he would resign from the charity and not take on any trustee position in another charity in the future. ...

The Commission concluded that there was serious misconduct and mismanagement in the administration of the charity ...

**To read the full decision see**

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/charity-inquiry-the-reb-moishe-foundation/the-reb-moishe-foundation>

*For information about the Charity see*

<http://apps.charitycommission.gov.uk/Showcharity/RegisterOfCharities/CharityWithoutParIB.aspx?RegisteredCharityNumber=1106737&SubsidiaryNumber=0>

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## Israel

### House of Commons Written Answers

#### **Palestinians: UNRWA**

**Paul Masterton (Conservative)** [128475] To ask the Secretary of State for International Development, what assessment her Department has made of the effectiveness of spending in the Palestinian Territories by the UN Relief and Works Agency to which her Department contributes funds; and how her Department measures that effectiveness.

**Alistair Burt:** The UK's contribution to the United Nations Relief and Works Agency's (UNRWA) Programme Budget is based on the Agency meeting rigorous performance indicators. In the last financial year we assessed that UNRWA

performed well against our indicators, as measured through annual review processes. The annual review is publically available on DFID's Development Tracker. The UK has engaged closely with UNRWA on the development of a Medium Term Strategy for 2016-21 to help UNRWA deliver its mandate. This is supported through our technical assistance to UNRWA's department of Internal Oversight. We engage with other donors and host countries on value for money at a high level through the UNRWA Advisory Commission and Sub-Committee.

DFID has due diligence assessment processes to provide assurance over the expenditure of our funds, and DFID's Occupied Palestinian Territories spending is subject to regular auditing by DFID's Internal Audit Department and the UK National Audit Office. In the last five years, UNRWA has also been reviewed by the Independent Commission for Aid Impact and the UK International Development Committee. The UK is a long-term supporter of UNRWA, which provides basic services, including basic healthcare, to over 800,000 Palestinian refugees in the West Bank and 1.3 million Palestinian refugees in Gaza.

<http://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Commons/2018-02-20/128475/>

### **Gaza: Hospitals**

**Richard Burden (Labour)** [128512] To ask the Secretary of State for International Development, what recent assessment her Department has made of the provision of fuel for hospitals in Gaza; and if she will make a statement.

**Alistair Burt:** We remain concerned about the humanitarian situation in Gaza. In January 2018 the World Health Organization (WHO) assessed that power shortages are placing an increasing burden on the health sector, and has recently reported that some hospitals and clinics have been partially closed in order to rationalise fuel. The UK will continue to monitor the effect electricity shortages are having on the health sector and is tracking the UN's emergency indicators. We urge all parties to take the necessary practical steps to improve conditions, including restoring the availability of electricity as a matter of urgency. The UK is supporting approximately 1 million Gazans by addressing critical water, sanitation and hygiene needs through the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), and is a long-term supporter of the UN Relief and Works Agency for Palestinian Refugees (UNRWA), which provides basic services to 1.3 million people in Gaza, including basic health care.

<http://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Commons/2018-02-20/128512/>

## **Foreign and Commonwealth Office**

**Updated Guidance: Overseas Business Risk - Israel**

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/overseas-business-risk-israel/overseas-business-risk-israel--3>

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## **Foreign Affairs**

### **House of Commons Written Answer**

#### **Developing Countries: Religious Freedom**

**Sammy Wilson (DUP)** [128149] To ask the Secretary of State for International Development, how her Department conducts due diligence assessments and evaluates

the commitment of its partners to the partnership principles and to promoting freedom of religion or belief.

**Harriett Baldwin:** All due diligence assessments on civil society organisations consider four areas: corporate governance and internal controls; ability to deliver the programme proposed; financial stability; and ability to manage downstream partners. They check for an ethics policy that includes coverage of human rights. A team of DFID staff under the supervision of a Head of Department carry out the assessment, drawing on specialist external expertise when required.

DFID assesses commitment to each of four Partnership Principles when considering providing funding to a government. This is done by specialist DFID Advisers under the supervision of a Head of Department. One of the Principles is 'commitment to human rights', which includes freedom of religion or belief. Evidence of lack of commitment to the Principles would influence choices on the amount and type of aid. DFID contractual and grant arrangements for organisations other than governments include specific clauses to prevent any discrimination against protected characteristics, including religion or belief.

<http://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Commons/2018-02-19/128149/>

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## Other Relevant Information

### European Commission Against Racism and Intolerance (ECRI)

**General Policy Recommendation No. 2: Equality Bodies to combat racism and intolerance at national level**

<http://hudoc.ecri.coe.int/eng?i=REC-02rev-2018-006-ENG>

**Report on Spain**

<https://www.coe.int/t/dghl/monitoring/ecri/Country-by-country/Spain/ESP-CBC-V-2018-002-ENG.pdf>

**Report on Sweden**

<https://www.coe.int/t/dghl/monitoring/ecri/Country-by-country/Sweden/SWE-CbC-V-2018-003-ENG.pdf>

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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>

Committee Stage, House of Lords

[https://hansard.parliament.uk/lords/2018-02-26/debates/63E4A5E5-118C-49CA-97DF-9EF25C7107E2/EuropeanUnion\(Withdrawal\)Bill](https://hansard.parliament.uk/lords/2018-02-26/debates/63E4A5E5-118C-49CA-97DF-9EF25C7107E2/EuropeanUnion(Withdrawal)Bill)

and

[https://hansard.parliament.uk/lords/2018-02-26/debates/6C8A5D63-CA0F-4393-B028-B914B7F4F495/EuropeanUnion\(Withdrawal\)Bill](https://hansard.parliament.uk/lords/2018-02-26/debates/6C8A5D63-CA0F-4393-B028-B914B7F4F495/EuropeanUnion(Withdrawal)Bill)

## **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 7 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>

### **\*\* closes in 10 days**

**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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