

Political Affairs Digest

A daily summary of political events affecting the Jewish Community
Scottish Council of Jewish Communities
SCoJeC

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Ministry of Justice

Updated: Statistics on Race and the Criminal Justice System 2016

https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/669094/statistics_on_race_and_the_criminal_justice_system_2016_v2.pdf

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Israel

House of Commons Written Answers

Israel: Detainees

Vicky Foxcroft (Labour) [128173] To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, with reference to the recent arrest of Ahed Tamimi, if the Government will seek the establishment of an urgent independent investigation into allegations of ill-treatment of young people in Israel's military detention system.

Alistair Burt: Israel's treatment of Palestinian minors in military detention remains a human rights priority for this Government. While we do not have plans to establish an investigation, we have repeatedly and publicly called on Israel to fulfil its international legal obligations. Israel should implement the protections and due process that children are entitled to under the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, to which Israel is a State Party. We continue to closely follow the case of Ahed Tamimi and, while it is ultimately a matter for the Israeli authorities, we have raised our concerns with the Israeli Ambassador to the UK and the Israeli Ministry of Justice.

<http://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Commons/2018-02-19/128173/>

Palestinians: Health Services

Richard Burden (Labour) [128450] To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, what representations his Department has made to the Government of Israel on the approval of permits for Palestinians seeking medical treatment outside Gaza in 2017.

Alistair Burt: Our Embassy to Tel Aviv raised the issue of medical permits for Gaza with the Israeli authorities on 21 February. As I informed the House on 20 February, we have previously raised concerns about ambulance and permit delays with the Israeli authorities, and we will continue to do so. We have also, consistently urged the Israeli Government to ease movement and access restrictions in the Occupied Palestinian Territories.

<http://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Commons/2018-02-19/128450/>

Palestinians: Health Services

Richard Burden (Labour) [128451] To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, what discussions he has had with his counterpart in the Government of Israel on WHO reports on the number of Palestinian patients who have died while awaiting permits to travel outside Gaza for medical treatment.

Alistair Burt: While we have not raised this specific aspect, our Embassy to Tel Aviv raised the general issue of medical permits for Gaza with the Israeli authorities on 21 February. As I informed the House on 20 February, we have previously raised concerns about ambulance and permit delays with the Israeli authorities, and we will continue to do so. We have, also, consistently urged the Israeli Government to ease movement and access restrictions in the Occupied Palestinian Territories (OPTs). We are supporting the UN Access Coordination Unit to work with the Israeli Government, Palestinian Authority and aid agencies to facilitate humanitarian access in the OPTs.

<http://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Commons/2018-02-19/128451/>

USA: UNRWA

Marie Rimmer (Labour) [129371] To ask the Secretary of State for International Development, whether the Government plans to increase its contribution to UNRWA funding as a result of the decision by the US Administration to reduce its contribution to that body; and if she will make a statement.

Alistair Burt: UK officials are working closely with the UN Relief and Work Agency (UNRWA), the United States and other donors on how best to ensure continuity of essential services to Palestinian refugees at this time, in line with humanitarian principles. The UK remains firmly committed to supporting UNRWA, and has so far provided around £50 million in 2017/18 based on the Agency meeting rigorous performance indicators. The UK is closely monitoring UNRWA's ability to deliver services in all fields of operation and is supporting UNRWA's fundraising efforts. I recently met with the Commissioner General of UNRWA to understand how donors can help. I discussed the importance of UNRWA's services to the region with a senior US official last week.

<http://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Commons/2018-02-22/129371/>

House of Lords Written Answer

Imports: Israel

Baroness Tonge (Non-affiliated) [HL5685] To ask Her Majesty's Government what military and crowd control equipment they purchased from Israel in 2017.

Earl Howe: This information is not held centrally and could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

<http://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Lords/2018-02-20/HL5685/>

Foreign and Commonwealth Office

Minister for Middle East's statement on planned Israeli settlement

Minister Burt said: The UK strongly condemns the Israeli government's decision to 'legalise' the Netiv Ha'avot outpost in the West Bank. The international community has repeatedly stated that settlements are illegal under international law and undermine the physical viability of the two-state solution.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/minister-for-middle-east-statement-on-planned-israeli-settlement>

European Commission

The European Union and the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) reaffirm strong commitment to serving Palestine refugees

The European Union and the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) are holding a Strategic Dialogue on the way forward for their partnership.

The discussion takes place in light of the current financial crisis facing UNRWA and the need to broaden its donor base and continue reforming the Agency. The EU and UNRWA remain committed to protecting the rights of Palestine refugees and continue the delivery of essential services to more than 5 million Palestine refugees in Jordan, Syria, Lebanon, Gaza and the West Bank, including East Jerusalem.

Commissioner for European Neighbourhood Policy and Enlargement Negotiations, Johannes Hahn, has said that "the European Union stands by its commitment to Palestine refugees and UNRWA. We have accelerated our contribution to UNRWA's Programme Budget in 2018 and are committing to maintaining the present level of support to 2020. I recognise the importance of providing predictability to UNRWA in these difficult times. The Agency is a crucial stabilising factor in the Middle East. We stress the need, in parallel, for UNRWA to pursue deep reforms and to focus on the needs of the most vulnerable refugees." ...

The Strategic Dialogue discusses the challenging budgetary situation of UNRWA, which has been exacerbated by the recent announcement by the US government to withhold a considerable part of its funding.

The EU and UNRWA are also discussing the reform agenda of the Agency, agreeing on the need to safeguard the Agency's core services, especially to the most marginalised refugees and exploring joint advocacy opportunities to highlight the plight of Palestine refugees at the global level. ...

To read the full press release see

http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_IP-18-1181_en.htm

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Foreign Affairs

House of Commons Written Answers

Religious Freedom

Gavin Shuker (Labour Co-op) [127894] To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, what steps his Department is taking to support freedom of religion and belief in other countries to meet the strategic commitment to supporting freedom of religion and belief set out in the FCO Departmental Plan 2015-2020.

Mark Field: The Foreign and Commonwealth Office's Departmental Plan 2015-2020 was replaced in December 2017 with the FCO Single Departmental Plan which can be found on gov.uk. In step with the new plan, the FCO continues to promote and defend human rights, including the right to freedom of religion or belief (FoRB).

In our ongoing dialogue with foreign governments and through public statements, the FCO raises individual cases and highlights practices and laws that discriminate against people on the basis of their religion or belief. For example, during my visit to Pakistan in November 2017, I raised the treatment of religious minorities, including discrimination and violence against the Ahmadiyya and Christian communities, with Pakistan's Ministry of Human Rights.

The United Kingdom also actively promotes FoRB through multilateral diplomacy. At the United Nations, we work to 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'.

Through the Magna Carta Fund for Human Rights and Democracy, the FCO continues to support a number of projects to promote tolerance. Current projects include work to promote religious tolerance through secondary school curricula in Iraq, Morocco and Lebanon, and a project which supports a network of human rights defenders in South Asia working on this priority.

<http://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Commons/2018-02-19/127894/>

The Single Department Plan referred to above can be read at

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/foreign-and-commonwealth-office-single-departmental-plan/foreign-and-commonwealth-office-single-departmental-plan>

Religious Freedom

Sammy Wilson (DUP) [128297] To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, how information from his Department's meetings with civil society groups on freedom of religion or belief will inform foreign policy.

Mark Field: Ministers and officials from the Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO), including our network of Embassies and High Commissions overseas, frequently meet representatives of civil society groups to discuss human rights issues, including the right to freedom of religion or belief (FoRB). These meetings include a wide variety of faith leaders, academics, human rights defenders and members of non-governmental organisations. Such meetings enrich policy-makers' understanding of issues and inform the development of better policy.

The FCO Minister of State with responsibility for human rights, Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon, has hosted two roundtables which have allowed for in-depth discussion of themes related to FoRB. The first, on 23 October 2017, looked at the Rohingya crisis. The second, on 12 December 2017, examined the role of women in tackling religiously motivated violent extremism. These roundtables have been excellent opportunities for policy-makers to hear the perspectives and insights of faith leaders and academic experts. This has helped deepen understanding and better prepare officials to respond to policy challenges.

<http://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Commons/2018-02-19/128297/>

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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>

Scottish Parliament Ministerial Statement and Q&A

<http://www.parliament.scot/parliamentarybusiness/report.aspx?r=11385&i=103483#ScotParlOR>

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 6 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 9 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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