

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

Hate Crime

Yasmin Qureshi (Labour) [132314] To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what assessment her Department has made of the effectiveness of the Hate crime action plan 2016.

Victoria Atkins: The Hate Crime action plan, “Action Against Hate”, published in July 2016 is a four year plan, with actions running up until 2020. We are approaching the half way point of the plan, and good progress has been made on many of the actions. This includes Home Office funding of £3.4 million for protective security measures for places of worship and other vulnerable faith institutions, and £900,000 for projects to tackle hate crime in local communities.

The Home Office and Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government will refresh the action plan this year, which will provide an opportunity to fully report on progress.

<http://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Commons/2018-03-13/132314/>

The Hate Crime action plan referred to above can be read at

https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/543679/Action_Against_Hate_-_UK_Government_s_Plan_to_Tackle_Hate_Crime_2016.pdf

House of Lords Written Answer

Schools: Registration

Lord Lucas (Conservative) [HL6113] To ask Her Majesty's Government whether a place where only religious matters are taught to children who do not reside there is required to register as a school; and if not, to what extent the teaching of general subjects, such as English and maths, is necessary before such a place is required to register as a school.

Lord Agnew of Outlon: To be registered as an independent school, an institution must meet the definition of a school in Section 4 of the Education Act 1996, which requires it to provide primary and/or secondary education. The provision of a single discipline, such as religious education alone, does not meet this

requirement.

Registered independent schools are expected to provide the full range of subjects specified in the attached independent school standards as prescribed in regulations - which include linguistic, mathematical, scientific, technological, human and social, physical, and aesthetic and creative education.

[Independent School Standards](#)

<http://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Lords/2018-03-06/HL6113/>

House of Lords Library

Briefing: International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination

<http://researchbriefings.files.parliament.uk/documents/LLN-2018-0031/LLN-2018-0031.pdf>

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Israel

House of Commons Written Answers

Israel: Palestinians

Chris Elmore (Labour) [132346] To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Office, with reference to Children in Military Custody, published in June 2012, how many of that report's recommendations have been implemented by the Government.

Alistair Burt: In June 2016, non-governmental organisations assessed that Israel had implemented only one of 40 recommendations outlined in the 2012 report by British lawyers. We continue to call upon Israel to fully implement all the recommendations and improve the conditions for Palestinian minors in Israeli military detention.

<http://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Commons/2018-03-13/132346/>

The report referred to above can be read at

http://www.childreninmilitarycustody.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2012/03/Children_in_Military_Custody_Full_Report.pdf

Israel: Courts Martial

Chris Elmore (Labour) [132493] To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, what information his Department holds on whether any UK citizens are serving as judges in Israeli military courts in the West Bank; and if he will make a statement.

Alistair Burt: The Foreign and Commonwealth Office does not hold any information on whether any British or British-Israeli citizens are serving as judges in Israeli military courts.

<http://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Commons/2018-03-14/132493/>

House of Lords Written Answers

Jerusalem: Palestinians

Baroness Tonge (Non-affiliated) [HL6141] To ask Her Majesty's Government what representations, if any, they are making to the government of Israel concerning reports of discrimination against Palestinians living in East Jerusalem who pay municipal taxes to Israel but receive fewer municipal and emergency services.

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: We regularly make clear to the Israeli authorities and the Municipality of Jerusalem our serious concerns about the situation in East Jerusalem, both bilaterally and in co-operation with EU partners. These concerns include the evictions of Palestinians and demolition of Palestinian property; the construction of illegal Israeli settlements; removal of residency rights from Palestinians; possible unilateral changes to the municipal borders; and severe difficulties of access to Jerusalem for Palestinians from the West Bank or those residents of Jerusalem who live beyond the Separation Barrier.

<http://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Lords/2018-03-06/HL6141/>

Mohammed Tamimi

Baroness Tonge (Non-affiliated) [HL6142] To ask Her Majesty's Government what representations they have made to the government of Israel concerning reports that a minor, Muhammed Tamimi, had a bullet removed from his skull and then signed a confession without legal or parental representation stating that his injuries were caused by falling off a bike.

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: We are following this case closely and our Embassy in Tel Aviv will raise this case with the relevant Israeli authorities.

<http://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Lords/2018-03-06/HL6142/>

Palestinians: Humanitarian Aid

Baroness Tonge (Non-affiliated) [HL6143] To ask Her Majesty's Government what is their response to the findings by an Israeli economist, Shir Hever, that as much as 78 per cent of the humanitarian aid intended for Palestinians is diverted to Israelis.

Lord Bates: UK officials have seen the report, which claims that 78% of international development aid money for the Occupied Palestinian Territories (OPTs) is used to import goods from Israel. We cannot confirm the validity of this claim, but we note that the report does not claim that international development aid is not reaching the intended Palestinian beneficiaries for humanitarian purposes. DFID implements a robust monitoring and evaluation system to ensure that UK aid reaches the intended beneficiaries and achieves the best development outcomes, with a strong focus on ensuring value for money for the UK taxpayer. As the report notes, the Palestinian economy is highly reliant on Israel for trade, particularly for the imports of goods and services. According to the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development, trade with Israel accounted for around half of Palestinian trade in 2016. The UK consistently calls on the Israeli Government to ease movement and access restrictions in the OPTs to help unlock trade opportunities with other countries.

<http://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Lords/2018-03-06/HL6143/>

The report referred to above can be read at

<https://www.mintpressnews.com/wp-content/uploads/2016/03/InternationalAidToPalestiniansFeedsTheIsraeliEconomy.pdf>

Israel: Palestinians

Baroness Tonge (Non-affiliated) [HL6144] To ask Her Majesty's Government what representations they have made to the government of Israel in regard to reports of the targeting of Palestinian children by Israeli forces.

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: Whilst we have not raised this specific issue with the Israeli authorities, the UK continues to have strong concerns about continued reports of ill-treatment of Palestinian minors in Israeli military detention. While we welcome progress made by Israel following the recommendations of the Children in Military Custody Report, we remain particularly concerned by reports of the continued heavy use of painful restraints and the high number of Palestinian children who are not informed of their legal rights, in contravention of Israel's own regulations. We will continue to push for the implementation of the recommendations of the children in military Custody report in full, and we continue to offer to support to Israel through expert level talks.

<http://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Lords/2018-03-06/HL6144/>

UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights

Human Rights Council holds general debate on the human rights situation in Palestine and other occupied Arab territories

... Kate Gilmore, United Nations Deputy High Commissioner for Human Rights, introduced six reports concerning the human rights situation in the occupied Palestinian territory and other occupied Arab territories. The reports focused on arbitrary detention of Palestinians, expansion of Israeli's settlement activities, the High Commissioner's update on accountability for violations of international humanitarian and human rights law, and a database of business enterprises engaged in Israeli settlement activities. Ms. Gilmore noted that after a decade of blockade, the situation in Gaza had deteriorated to a point that was unbearable for its inhabitants. Two million Palestinians could not leave due to restrictions to freedom of movement, and they lived with electricity cuts lasting up to 20 hours a day. The health system was on the verge of collapse, whereas the exchange of fire between armed groups in Gaza and in Israel had escalated in the past months.

Israel was not present to take the floor as a concerned country.

State of Palestine, speaking as a concerned country, noted that certain recommendations made in the reports were out of context and had not taken into account that the responsibilities and obligations fell upon the occupying power, Israel, which had subjugated the people under its occupation for 50 years. The ongoing Israeli settlements were the problem. ...

In the ensuing discussion, speakers reminded that after 50 years of occupation, the list of human rights violations committed by the occupying power was getting longer and longer. Israel had resumed its practice of collective punishment by withdrawing the residence rights of indigenous land owners in Jerusalem, and it had been able to do so because of the unilateral decision of the United States to recognize Jerusalem as the capital of Israel. Speakers expressed concern that the recommendations in the reports did not adequately portray the entirely asymmetrical nature of the conflict with one party being occupied and besieged, and the other being the occupier and aggressor. ...

To read the full press release see

<http://www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=22859&LangID=E>

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House of Commons Written Answers

Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting: Religious Freedom

Jeffrey Donaldson (DUP) [132802] To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, if he will ensure that the Commonwealth Heads of Government joint communique makes reference to the right to freedom of religion and belief.

Alistair Burt: We are working with fellow member states to negotiate the communiqué for next month's Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting. While it would be inappropriate to comment on those negotiations, the UK considers freedom of religion and belief to be one of the Commonwealth's core values.

Encouraging member states to uphold the values and principles enshrined in the Commonwealth Charter – which include freedom of religion as well as democracy, freedom of expression, the rule of law and opposition to all forms of discrimination – will be an important part of April's summit.

<http://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Commons/2018-03-15/132802/>

Foreign and Commonwealth Office: Religious Freedom

Fiona Bruce (Conservative) [132967] To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, what steps his Department has taken to develop religious literacy among its staff in the past two years.

Harriett Baldwin: Given the importance in global affairs, the FCO would expect British diplomats to be conversant with religious issues as part of their general professional expertise. However, we also offer specific support, notably a course on "Religion and Diplomacy", delivered by the London School of Economics Faith Centre, which has run 4 times in the past two years. Geographic Directorates and posts also arrange ad hoc activities such as courses, seminars and roundtables to allow their staff to explore religious themes with academic experts and faith leaders. Examples include a seminar by General Sir Nicholas Carter, British Army, Chief of the General Staff on 29 March 2017, a course on political Islam organised in January 2017 by FCO's South Asia and Afghanistan Directorate, and a seminar on Islamist ideology: history and contemporary developments in January 2018 by FCO's National Security Directorate.

<http://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Commons/2018-03-15/132967/>

Department for International Development: Staff

Fiona Bruce (Conservative) [132968] To ask the Secretary of State for International Development, what work has been undertaken by his Department to develop religious literacy among its staff in the last two years.

Harriett Baldwin: We have developed a position paper on faith and development; we continue to host seminars (such as the seminar in November on freedom of religion or belief); we have commissioned and circulated research on religion and development and have facilitated formal training. A limited number of DFID staff have already attended the newly re-launched Foreign and Commonwealth Office "Religion and Diplomacy" course. We plan to encourage more DFID staff to attend this course in the future.

<http://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Commons/2018-03-15/132968/>

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Other Relevant Information

European Council

Declaration by the High Representative on behalf of the EU on the International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination

... On the occasion of the International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination, the European Union reaffirms its strong commitment to the values of unity and coexistence, and to the fight against racism, discrimination, xenophobia and exclusion in all their forms, inside and beyond our borders.

Demonstrations of discrimination, hatred and intolerance are still triggering conflicts in many countries around the world, forcing people to flee and generating intolerable human suffering. And are on the rise also in our European Union. ...

As this year marks the 70th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the European Union continues more than ever its dedicated work towards the universalisation of the Declaration's fundamental values ... The EU will keep working until discrimination, hatred and violence will have no more place anywhere.

To read the full press release see

<http://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2018/03/21/declaration-by-the-high-representative-on-behalf-of-the-eu-on-the-international-day-for-the-elimination-of-racial-discrimination/>

European Commission against Racism and Intolerance (ECRI)

Stronger, more independent equality bodies needed to combat intolerance and discrimination in Europe, says Council of Europe anti-racism commission

To better protect and support people exposed to discrimination, states should put in place strong equality bodies established by constitutional or parliamentary legislation, set up as separate legal entities with a wide mandate, enjoying political, financial and operational independence, and provided with adequate resources, says the Council of Europe's anti-racism commission in a new set of recommendations to the European governments launched today, on the International Day against Racial Discrimination. ...

The new General Policy Recommendation defines two key functions for the equality bodies:

- to promote equality and prevent discrimination, in particular by conducting inquiries, pursuing research, raising awareness, supporting good practice, making recommendations and contributing to legislation and policy formation;
- to support those exposed to discrimination and pursue litigation on their behalf. ...

... "People exposed to discrimination and intolerance often have neither the capacity nor the resources to enforce their rights. These persons often need, as a first step, personal and emotional support; and, at the next level, legal advice and assistance. Equality bodies, therefore, have an important role in helping them to restore their rights. A vital aspect here is to ensure that these bodies are accessible to people not only in capitals, but also in the regions, where they can be exposed to even stronger prejudice, discrimination and intolerance." ...

To read the full press release see

<http://hudoc.ecri.coe.int/eng?i=REC-02rev-PR-2018-266-ENG>

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>

United Nations

Promote tolerance, respect diversity, UN chief urges ahead of International Day against racial discrimination

The UN chief made the appeal in [a speech](#) to the General Assembly ...

“It is time all nations and all people live up to the words of [the Universal Declaration of Human Rights](#), which recognizes the inherent dignity and equal and inalienable rights of all members of the human race,” he stated.

Mr. Guterres said while there has been progress since the Declaration’s adoption 70 years ago – for example, in the advancement of the rights of women, children, indigenous people and persons with disabilities – there is still far to go in ending discriminatory attitudes, actions and practices.

He listed pressing issues such as gender inequality; the “alarming rise” in xenophobia, racism and intolerance, and a resurgence in far-right political parties and neo-Nazi viewpoints.

Refugees and migrants are also being denied their rights, in addition to being falsely vilified as threats to the societies they seek to join, he continued. ...

“Let us work to eliminate messages of hatred – the concept of ‘us’ and ‘them’; the false attitude that we can accept some and reject and exclude others simply for how they look, where they worship or who they love.”

Like the Secretary-General, the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights also looked to the landmark Declaration in his address to the gathering.

Zeid Ra’ad Al Hussein highlighted how discrimination against individuals affects society as a whole.

“The Universal Declaration of Human Rights warns very clearly that if rights are not protected, conflict may follow,” he said.

“Experience has repeatedly demonstrated that discrimination, intolerance, prejudice and scapegoating not only lead to disastrous splintering within societies, endangering national cohesion; they also frequently generate threats to regional peace and lead to a conflict.” ...

To read the full press release see

<https://news.un.org/en/story/2018/03/1005462>

UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights

“Unashamed bigotry”: Rise in racism and xenophobia is alarming, say UN rights experts

... “Vile discourses of explicit hate and ideologies of racial supremacy have moved from the fringe to the mainstream,” the experts said in a [joint statement](#) ...

“Racial, ethnic and religious bigotry fuels human rights violations, including extreme violence against minorities, and against refugees, migrants, stateless persons, and internally displaced, including people of African descent, with a particularly acute effect on women, and sexual and gender diverse populations. This bigotry is unashamed.”

The experts said “the assault on the human dignity of millions around the world had reached alarming proportions”. ...

The experts said the language of discrimination and intolerance had now become common-place in the media and even in mainstream national political discourses, and they called on States and other actors to redouble their efforts to address the factors contributing to the increase in racial discrimination and inequality.

“Putting an end to racial profiling by law enforcement agents is just as urgent as putting an end to violent hate crimes perpetrated by private actors,” the experts said.

“Denouncing xenophobic Muslim bans implemented through immigration policies that rely on offensive and flawed assumptions about entire religious groups, is just as urgent as denouncing explicit Islamophobic or anti-Semitic statements made by political leaders.

“Putting an end to the forced displacement and cultural extinction of racial, ethnic, religious and linguistic minorities and indigenous peoples that results from government and multinational corporation-driven extraction and construction projects, is just as urgent as addressing the resurgence of neo-Nazism.”

To read the full press release see

<http://www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=22862&LangID=E>

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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>

Holocaust (Return of Cultural Objects) (Amendment) Bill

<https://services.parliament.uk/Bills/2017-19/holocaustreturnofculturalobjectsamendment.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>

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Consultations ** new or updated today

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

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

Integrated Communities Strategy green paper (closing date 5 June 2018)

<https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/integrated-communities-strategy-green-paper>

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