

Political Affairs Digest

A daily summary of political events affecting the Jewish Community

Scottish Council of Jewish Communities

SCoJeC

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Discrimination: Finance

Yasmin Qureshi (Labour) [132311] To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, how much funding his Department has allocated to tackle (a) Islamophobia, (b) sexual orientation discrimination and (c) antisemitism in each year since 2010.

Heather Wheeler: We treat all hate crime with equal seriousness; there is no place for treating victims differently regardless of their race, religion, sexual orientation, disability or gender identity. Our funding of projects reflects this approach and that is why we fund a number of initiatives that combat hate crime across all five strands and do not allocate specific funding to target specific areas. Our work to combat religiously motivated hatred tackles anti-Muslim hatred and anti-Semitism, alongside hatred directed at any person or group based on their religion.

Since 2010 the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government has provided £3.7 million to local projects to challenge hate crime. We expect to spend a further £1.5 million by March 2018. This includes support for programmes such as the Anne Frank Trust's Switch Off Prejudice programme which encourages young people to consider the consequences of prejudice, persecution and discrimination, support for community organisations such as Tell MAMA and the Community Security Trust, and establishing the Hate Crime Support Group which networks organisations tackling hatred across all five protected categories to share best practice and offer the best support for victims.

<http://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Commons/2018-03-13/132311/>

Islam: Religious Hatred

Yasmin Qureshi (Labour) [132316] To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what steps the Government is taking to prevent the growth of extreme anti-Muslim views in (a) print, (b) broadcast and (c) social media.

Heather Wheeler: The Government recognises the harm caused by anti-Muslim views across all forms of media including print, broadcast and social media and our Hate Crime Action Plan makes clear our commitment to reducing this harm.

We are working with The Society of Editors and the Independent Press Standards Organisation (IPSO) to improve journalists' understanding of minority groups and to devise training to help journalists gain a better understanding of Islam. We have also been instrumental in ensuring that four of the main internet service providers, Facebook, Google, Twitter and Microsoft, remove illegal hate speech including Islamophobic content from their platforms within 24 hours.

<http://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Commons/2018-03-13/132316/>

House of Lords Written Answer

Faith Schools: Admissions

Lord Taverne (Liberal Democrat) [HL6211] To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of (1) the poll conducted by Populus showing that 67 per cent of Catholics, 71 per cent of Christians overall, and 60 per cent of the public as a whole, support keeping the 50 per cent cap on faith-based admissions to religious schools, (2) figures set out in the official 2016 schools census showing that Church of England and other Christian free schools subject to that cap take more than three times as many pupils from Asian backgrounds as Church of England and other Christian schools that select all their places on religious grounds, (3) the extent to which Catholic state schools in England select all their places on the basis of religion, and (4) whether new Catholic schools can be opened when that cap is in place; and whether they intend to review their policy of abolishing that cap.

Lord Agnew of Oulton: The department will consider a range of evidence, including opinion polls and official statistics, as part of the process for deciding how to take forward the proposals contained in the 'Schools that work for everyone' consultation including in relation to the 50% cap on faith admissions.

The department does not collect information about the level of use of faith oversubscription criteria in any school.

The department is considering proposals on the future of the 50% cap and will respond in due course.

<http://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Lords/2018-03-08/HL6211/>

Scottish Parliament Debate

United Nations International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination

13.16 Fulton MacGregor (SNP): ... In 2016, the UN Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination called on Scotland to strengthen its commitments to those international ideals and recommended that the Scottish Government take steps to prevent hate crimes and racist bullying in schools; increase access to legal aid; improve the curriculum on the history of the British empire and colonialism, particularly with regard to slavery; and review stop-and-search powers in law enforcement. As a result, the Scottish Government recently published "A Fairer Scotland for All: Race Equality Action Plan 2017-21", which outlines the steps that the Scottish Government intends to take to promote racial equality in Scotland ...

In recent weeks, we have seen significant coverage of the racism that is experienced by elected officials in Scotland, who call on us to consider the reality of racism in not only our political system but wider Scottish society. If that is the sort of racist abuse faced by elected members, what must other members of ethnic and cultural minority communities be facing? For example, a report from the Crown Office and Procurator Fiscal Service shows that racial crimes were the most commonly reported hate crime in the past year,

with 3,349 charges reported. Although it would be easy to congratulate ourselves for having the lowest number of reported hate crimes in more than 10 years, that is 3,349 charges too many. ...

Scotland has a proud history of challenging racial discrimination and we must share the responsibility of carrying that work forward. The Scottish Parliament should strive to be a leading international voice in reinforcing the support of our institutions for a world that is founded in justice, equality and human rights. ...

13.23 Annie Wells (Conservative): ... Around one in eight people in this country are from Scotland's ethnic and cultural minority communities. Despite the fact that they are part and parcel of the country's make-up, gross inequalities still exist. ...

Scotland is not immune from the everyday racism that we so desperately need to stamp out—from personal attacks online to the ignorant comments that are made in everyday conversation. ...

If Scotland is not to take part in the UK race disparity audit, I renew my call for a robust approach to improved Scotland-specific data and call on the Scottish Government to issue regular updates on how its equality evidence finder is progressing. ...

Language, too, is paramount. That is why, in preparation for the debate, I have reflected on my own use of terms such as BME and questioned whether such abstract groupings can inadvertently create the impression of distance and otherness. ...

13.32 Anas Sarwar (Labour): ... I take this opportunity to send a message of solidarity to all our diverse communities, here in Scotland and right across the world, who are victims of everyday prejudice, bias or abuse. The reality is that if we accept that everyday sexism and everyday homophobia exist in our country—which they do—we must also accept that everyday racism, everyday anti-semitism and everyday Islamophobia are real, too. In the vast majority of cases, that is not something criminal—it is not something that we can report to the police or something that someone can be charged with—but it still impacts on life chances, life opportunities and life outcomes. That is why we have to look at ourselves, our own individual behaviour and our Parliaments, local authorities and institutions to see what more we can do to challenge everyday prejudice in all its forms. ...

13.43 Maurice Corry (Conservative): ... We only have to look at the recent high-profile case that we all have heard of, involving one of our colleagues, Humza Yousaf, who was faced with Islamophobic comments from an elected councillor, to realise that. Humza Yousaf and Anas Sarwar spoke powerfully on the BBC at the weekend about racism and Islamophobia and the threats and abuse that they receive as public figures due to their race and religion—injustices that no one should ever have to face today. It shows that we still have some distance to travel before we are finally able to say that Scotland is free from this despicable form of discrimination. ...

13.48 The Minister for International Development and Europe (Dr Alasdair Allan): ... the Scottish Government is determined that Scotland should do all that it can to advance race equality, tackle racism and address the barriers that prevent people from minority ethnic communities from realising their fullest potential.

With that in mind, we published the race equality action plan in December, which restates our commitment to race equality and outlines the actions that we will take during this parliamentary session to realise the ambitions that are set out in the race equality framework for Scotland, which was published in March 2016. Following the recommendation of Kaliani Lyle, the independent race equality framework adviser, we are establishing a senior level programme board, which will meet quarterly, to oversee the action plan's implementation. ...

More generally, the actions that we need to eradicate racism are of course not just for the Scottish Government alone. As Anas Sarwar rightly said, every individual and organisation in Scotland needs to play their role in creating a fair and equal Scotland that protects and includes people from all backgrounds, whatever their ethnicity. As Annie Wells and others observed, we cannot be complacent just because we have not seen in

Scotland some of the issues that have been evident in other parts of the UK. As recent incidents have shown, Scotland is not immune from the phenomenon of public figures in our communities saying moronic things. Members of the Parliament have been subjected to offensive comments and much worse because of their race or religion. Strong action needs to be taken against all offenders and all political parties and all of us in the Parliament need to adopt a zero-tolerance approach to examples of racist hate crime. ...

To read the full transcript see

<http://www.parliament.scot/parliamentarybusiness/report.aspx?r=11434&i=103868#ScotParlOR>

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Israel

House of Commons Written Answers

Israel: Palestinians

Richard Burden (Labour) [132279] To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, what representations he has made to Israeli counterparts on the continued use of live fire by Israeli naval forces against fishermen off the coast of Gaza.

Alistair Burt: Officials from our Embassy in Tel Aviv have previously raised our concerns with the Israeli authorities over the Israel Defence Force's use of live fire against fishermen.

<http://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Commons/2018-03-13/132279/>

Israel: Palestinians

Chris Elmore (Labour) [132347] To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Office, how many people involved in the transfer of Palestinian children out of the West Bank to prisons inside Israel entered the UK in 2017.

Alistair Burt: The Government does not request or hold the information highlighted.

<http://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Commons/2018-03-13/132347/>

House of Lords Written Answer

Israel: Arabic

Baroness Whitaker (Labour) [HL6185] To ask Her Majesty's Government what representations they have made to the government of Israel regarding the restoration of Arabic as an official state language.

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: Arabic is an official language of the State of Israel.

<http://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Lords/2018-03-07/HL6185/>

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Foreign Affairs

House of Commons Written Answer

Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting

Jeffrey Lefroy (conservative) [132480] To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of including a statement on the right to freedom of religion or belief in the Commonwealth Heads of Government Joint Communiqué.

Alistair Burt: We are currently 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/2018-03-14/132480/>

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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/2018-03-21/debates/98893A73-E5B0-45B9-AAB8-19589FA18E5B/EuropeanUnion\(Withdrawal\)Bill](https://hansard.parliament.uk/lords/2018-03-21/debates/98893A73-E5B0-45B9-AAB8-19589FA18E5B/EuropeanUnion(Withdrawal)Bill)

and

[https://hansard.parliament.uk/lords/2018-03-21/debates/BF5D8A3E-05C4-4EB4-ACC2-0029BB0C8A21/EuropeanUnion\(Withdrawal\)Bill](https://hansard.parliament.uk/lords/2018-03-21/debates/BF5D8A3E-05C4-4EB4-ACC2-0029BB0C8A21/EuropeanUnion(Withdrawal)Bill)

and

[https://hansard.parliament.uk/lords/2018-03-21/debates/3086F22D-22D0-472C-BB22-2462A6FE1F4B/EuropeanUnion\(Withdrawal\)Bill](https://hansard.parliament.uk/lords/2018-03-21/debates/3086F22D-22D0-472C-BB22-2462A6FE1F4B/EuropeanUnion(Withdrawal)Bill)

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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