

# 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 Oral Answer

#### Business of the House

**Philip Davies (Conservative):** We guard our freedom of speech in the House very dearly, and it is something that you rightly and robustly defend on our behalf, Mr Speaker, but we often do not allow our constituents the same freedoms. Recent court cases have put the whole issue of freedom of speech into the public domain. Ricky Gervais and David Baddiel have joined forces on the issue. Ricky Gervais has said: "A man has been convicted in a UK court of making a joke that was deemed 'grossly offensive'. If you don't believe in a person's right to say things that you might find 'grossly offensive', then you don't believe in Freedom of Speech."

May we have a debate about freedom of speech in this country, something that it has long held dear but is in danger of throwing away needlessly?

**Andrea Leadsom:** I commend my hon. Friend on raising this important issue. We do of course fully support free speech; however, there are limits to it and he will be aware that there are laws around what we are allowed to say. I do not know the circumstances of his specific point, but he might well wish to seek an Adjournment debate to take this up directly with Ministers.

<https://hansard.parliament.uk/commons/2018-03-22/debates/91186D84-6A9B-4436-84DB-AB02B51898B7/BusinessOfTheHouse#contribution-9FEFAB19-A0C6-46B0-9F33-F4325C519A54>

Information about the case referred to above can be read at  
<http://www.bbc.com/news/uk-scotland-glasgow-west-43478925>

### House of Commons Written Answers

#### Schools: Collective Worship

*The following five questions all received the same answer*

**Stephen Timms (Labour)** [133192] To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what estimate his Department has made of the number and proportion of (a) maintained primary schools, (b) maintained secondary schools, (c) academies, (d) free schools and (e) sixth form colleges in England which have not fulfilled the legal requirement to organise a daily act of collective worship in each academic year since 2010-11.

**Stephen Timms (Labour)** [133193] To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what Research (a) his Department and (b) other public bodies have commissioned into the

practices of schools in England in relation to acts of collective worship since 2010.

**Stephen Timms (Labour)** [133194] To ask the Secretary of State for Education, how many individual schools have been reported to his Department for non-compliance with the statutory requirement for an Act of Collective Worship in each academic year since 2010-2011.

**Stephen Timms (Labour)** [133195] To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what his policy is for when his Department learns that a school is in breach of its statutory duties relating to acts of collective worship; and if he will make a statement.

### Schools

**Stephen Timms (Labour)** [133198] To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what powers he has to ensure schools comply with their statutory responsibilities.

**Nick Gibb:** All state-funded schools must provide a daily act of collective worship for all registered pupils up to the age of 18. For maintained schools this requirement is enshrined within legislation. For academies the requirement forms part of their funding agreement.

The Department does not gather data on schools' level of compliance with the requirement. Faith schools, however, are required to arrange a separate inspection of denominational religious education and collective worship, leading to published reports.

Since 2010, the Department has not commissioned any research into Collective Worship practices. In November 2015, the Arts and Humanities Research Council published 'Collective Worship and Religious Observance in Schools: an evaluation of law and policy in the UK'. The report can be found at: <http://collectiveschoolworship.com/>. This report references a survey of 500 parents conducted on behalf of the BBC in 2011 in which 64 per cent of respondents reported that their children did not attend school worship.

The Department is not aware of any formal complaints made to it about a school's non-compliance with this requirement in the period since 2010-2011.

If an individual is concerned that a school is not meeting its duty to provide an act of collective worship, they should follow that school's complaint procedure in the first instance. If the complaint is not resolved, then the issue can be escalated to the Department's School Complaints Unit for maintained schools, or the Education and Skills Funding Agency for academies, free schools, university technical colleges or studio schools. Information about the complaint procedures for schools can be found at: [www.gov.uk/complain-about-school](http://www.gov.uk/complain-about-school).

The Secretary of State has a range of powers to ensure schools comply with their statutory obligations. The exact powers used will depend on the nature of the statutory duty in question and the potential impact of any failure to comply. The powers used could include a direction under 497 of the Education Act 1996, a performance and standards warning notice under the Education and Inspections Act 2006 and a referral to Ofsted for an inspection. Where academies are subject to the same statutory duties as maintained schools, the Secretary of State has powers to enforce compliance via the terms of the funding agreement.

<http://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Commons/2018-03-19/133192/>

and

<http://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Commons/2018-03-19/133193/>

and

<http://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Commons/2018-03-19/133194/>

and

<http://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Commons/2018-03-19/133195/>

and

<http://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Commons/2018-03-19/133198/>

### **Universities: Freedom of Expression**

**Andrew Percy (Conservative)** [132444] To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps he is taking to tackle no platform practices at universities.

**Sam Gyimah:** The government does not support blanket no-platforming of individuals or organisations who are legally exercising their right to freedom of speech.

Universities have a legal duty to take reasonable steps to ensure freedom of speech, including for visiting speakers under the Education Act (No 2) 1986. We extended this duty through the Higher Education and Research Act to cover all providers registered with the Office for Students.

The Office for Students will also play a role in championing free speech, which is built into its regulatory framework.

<http://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Commons/2018-03-14/132444/>

### **King's College London: Freedom of Expression**

**Ian Austin (Labour)** [133254] To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether the government has made an assessment of the implications for its policy of restrictions imposed by King's College London on the freedom of speech of Israeli speakers on its campus following disruption by violent students.

**Sam Gyimah:** The government is committed to free speech within the law – this does not include hate speech, incitement to violence or terrorism. Free speech is protected in universities by law (under the Education (no 2) Act 1986) and plays a crucial role in generating rigorous debate, advancing understanding and allowing students to challenge conventional wisdom and discuss controversial subjects.

We would expect universities to take appropriate action against violent incidents or against threats to speaker events, involving law enforcement if necessary. We would be very concerned if a university restricted an individual's freedom of speech within the law due to concerns about reaction.

<http://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Commons/2018-03-19/133254/>

### **Hate Crime: Prosecutions**

**Rehman Chishti (Conservative)** [904519] To ask the Attorney General, what steps the CPS is taking to increase the effectiveness of prosecutions for hate crimes.

**Robert Buckland:** Tackling hate crime is a priority for the CPS and it has taken a number of steps to improve the effectiveness of prosecutions.

The CPS Hate Crime Annual Report shows that the proportion of cases where the CPS was successful in achieving uplifted sentences for hate crime perpetrators increased dramatically last year. The proportion rose from 33.8% in 2015/16, to 52.2% in 2016/17 – reaching 58.2% in the final quarter.

The CPS has delivered mandatory face to face disability hate crime training and racially and religiously aggravated hate crime training, and is in the process of delivering homophobic, biphobic and transphobic hate crime training. In August 2017, the CPS published revised legal guidance for prosecutors on all strands of hate crime. The revised legal guidance and training support prosecutors to more effectively deal with hate crime cases.

<http://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Commons/2018-03-20/904519/>

*The guidance referred to above can be read at*

<https://www.cps.gov.uk/legal-guidance/racist-and-religious-hate-crime-prosecution-guidance>

and

<https://www.cps.gov.uk/legal-guidance/disability-hate-crime-and-other-crimes-against-disabled-people-prosecution-guidance>

### Fascism

**Alex Sobel (Labour Co-op)** [133107] To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, with reference to the findings of the recent report by Hope Not Hate, The state of hate 2018, what steps her Department plans to take to tackle neo-Nazism in the UK.

**Victoria Atkins:** The Government is committed to tackling all forms of extremism and terrorism, whether Islamist or far and extreme right-wing.

In December 2016, the neo-Nazi group National Action became the first extreme right-wing group to be proscribed. Additionally, our latest published statistics showed that around a quarter of all those who received support through Channel were referred because of far right concerns. Channel is a voluntary and confidential programme which supports individuals who are vulnerable to being drawn into terrorism.

Through the 2016 Hate Crime Action Plan the Government has funded additional security measures in 129 places of worship, including places targeted by far and extreme right-wing extremists. The Action Plan will be refreshed later in 2018. The Government has also created a network of 160 civil society partners that are confronting extremism in their communities and is supporting Local Authorities to tackle far and extreme right-wing extremism.

The Government's new Commission for Countering Extremism has been given a clear remit to identify and challenge extremism in all its forms.

<http://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Commons/2018-03-19/133107/>

*An overview of the report referred to above can be read at*

<http://www.hopenothate.org.uk/research/state-of-hate-2018/overview/>

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## Israel

### House of Commons Written Answers

#### Palestinians: Civil Servants

**Joan Ryan (Labour)** [133178] To ask the Secretary of State for International Development, with reference to the Answer of 23 February 2017 to Question 64650, of how many Palestinian Authority Ministry of Education public servants her Department pays the salaries.

**Alistair Burt:** The UK financial disbursement to the Palestinian Authority (PA) in February 2017 contributed towards the salaries of approximately 33,000 public servants under the Ministry of Education and Higher Education.

<http://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Commons/2018-03-19/133178/>

*The answer referred to above can be read at*

<http://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Commons/2017-02-20/64650/>

#### Palestinians: Teachers

**Joan Ryan (Labour)** [133179] To ask the Secretary of State for International

Development, with reference to the Answer of 23 February 2017 to Question 64650, of how many Palestinian Authority Ministry of Education teachers her Department pays the salaries.

**Alistair Burt:** The UK financial disbursement to the Palestinian Authority (PA) in February 2017 contributed towards the salaries of approximately 33,000 public servants under the Ministry of Education and Higher Education. This data cannot be further disaggregated on public record.

<http://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Commons/2018-03-19/133179/>

*The answer referred to above can be read at*

<http://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Commons/2017-02-20/64650/>

### **West Bank: Schools**

**Joan Ryan (Labour)** [133181] To ask the Secretary of State for International Development, which the schools are in the West Bank for which her Department pays the salaries of the teachers.

**Alistair Burt:** UK financial assistance to the Palestinian Authority (PA) contributes to the salaries of individual vetted health and education public servants in the West Bank on the EU Palestinian-European Socio-Economic Management Assistance (PEGASE) list. These individuals are screened against international and ad hoc sanctions lists. They are then deployed to schools across the West Bank by the PA. The EU PEGASE mechanism therefore focuses on ensuring that individuals are comprehensively vetted and that UK funds are traced to the end beneficiary rather than focussing on where each individual is deployed at any one time.

<http://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Commons/2018-03-19/133181/>

### **Palestinians: Civil Servants**

**Joan Ryan (Labour)** [133183] To ask the Secretary of State for International Development, pursuant to the Answer of 23 February 2017 to Question 64650, whether any of those public servants in the West Bank, whose salaries are paid by her Department, are responsible for writing, approving or implementing the 2017 Palestinian Authority schools curriculum.

**Alistair Burt:** According to the Palestinian Authority (PA) Ministry of Education and Higher Education, all of their schools in the West Bank are using the revised 2017 PA curriculum. UK funded public servants and teachers under the Ministry of Education and Higher Education are therefore involved in the implementation process.

<http://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Commons/2018-03-19/133183/>

*The answer referred to above can be read at*

<http://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Commons/2017-02-20/64650/>

### **Palestinians: Teachers**

**Joan Ryan (Labour)** [133184] To ask the Secretary of State for International Development, with reference to the Answer of 23 February 2017 to Question 64650, whether any teachers in the West Bank whom her Department pays the salaries of are teaching at schools that deliver the revised 2017 Palestinian Authority curriculum.

**Alistair Burt:** According to the Palestinian Authority (PA) Ministry of Education and Higher Education, all of their schools in the West Bank are using the revised 2017 PA curriculum. The UK Government is working with the PA Ministry of

Education and Higher Education to maintain the delivery of high quality education, including through its curriculum.

<http://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Commons/2018-03-19/133184/>

The answer referred to above can be read at

<http://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Commons/2017-02-20/64650/>

### **Israel: Palestinians**

**Rosie Cooper (Labour)** [133281] To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, what recent discussions he has had with his counterpart in the Israeli Government on the security of Israeli cities within range of rocket attacks from Gaza.

**Alistair Burt:** The Government regularly discusses the security situation with Israeli officials at all levels. Our commitment to Israel's security is unwavering. Israel has the right to ensure its own security, and its citizens have the right to live without fear of attack. Rocket attacks indiscriminately threaten the daily lives of Israelis 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/2018-03-19/133281/>

## **House of Lords Written Answer**

### **Middle East: Water**

**The Marquess of Lothian (Conservative)** [HL6304] To ask Her Majesty's Government whether they have provided financial assistance to the Red Sea–Dead Sea Water Conveyance Project; if so, how much; and what is the current status of that project.

**Lord Bates:** The UK is not providing direct financial assistance to this project. However, the UK indirectly provides financial assistance to this project, for example through its capital share of the European Investment Bank, which may provide a loan to the project, and through its contribution to the EU budget, which is supporting the project through the Neighbourhood Investment Facility.

<http://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Lords/2018-03-13/HL6304/>

## **Foreign and Commonwealth Office**

### **Statement on the sentencing of Ahed Tamimi**

Minister for the Middle East, Alistair Burt MP said: The conviction and sentencing of Ahed Tamimi is emblematic of how the unresolved conflict is blighting the lives of a new generation, who should be growing up together in peace, but continue to be divided.

The treatment of Palestinian children in Israeli military detention remains a human rights priority for the UK. We will continue to call upon Israel to improve its practices in line with international law and obligations. We have offered to help the Israeli authorities through expert-to-expert talks with UK officials. The offer still stands and we hope Israel will take us up on it. While we recognise that Israel has made some improvements, it needs to do much more to safeguard vulnerable people in its care.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/statement-on-the-sentencing-of-ahed-tamimi>

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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