

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 Answers

Standing Advisory Councils on Religious Education

The following four questions all received the same answer

Stephen Timms (Labour) [134696] To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what assessment his Department has made of the extent to which SACREs and Agreed Syllabus Conferences are fulfilling their statutory responsibilities.

Stephen Timms (Labour) [134697] To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps his Department takes when it learns that an individual SACRE or Agreed Syllabus Conference is experiencing difficulties in fulfilling its statutory duties; and if he will make a statement.

Stephen Timms (Labour) [134698] To ask the Secretary of State for Education, how many SACREs there are; and how many of those SACREs have no representation from humanism or other non-religious beliefs.

Religion: Education

Stephen Timms (Labour) [134699] To ask the Secretary of State for Education, for how many local authorities the agreed religious education standard is provided (a) by the local authority's own Agreed Religious Education Syllabus Conference, (b) by another local authority's Agreed Religious Education Syllabus Conference and (c) on a standard basis by RE Today.

Nick Gibb: Local authorities have a duty to establish a Standing Advisory Council for Religious Education (SACRE), locally representative inter-faith bodies whose role is to support religious education and collective worship in schools. SACREs should advise the local authority on religious education provision, including methods of teaching, resources, and the provision of teachers. They should also produce and publish an annual report on their activity.

Local authorities are responsible for convening an Agreed Syllabus Conference (ASC) every five years, and providing an agreed syllabus which must reflect the fact that the religious traditions in Great Britain are in the main Christian whilst taking account of the teaching and practices of the other principal religions represented in Great Britain. The Department has not made an assessment of whether local authorities are working collaboratively to establish their agreed religious education standard or using RE Today's syllabus template. Local authorities are free to make arrangements that are right for them and their schools

when preparing a locally agreed syllabus.

Local authorities are responsible for appointing representatives to each of four committees on a SACRE. For group A, these should represent Christian denominations and such other religions and religious denominations as, in the local authority's opinion, will appropriately reflect the principal religious traditions in the area. For group B, the Church of England; group C, teacher associations; and group D, the local authority. The Department has not made an assessment of the representation of any religious or non-religious belief on SACREs.

If the Department is informed that an individual SACRE or ASC is experiencing difficulties in fulfilling its statutory duties, the Department will contact the local authority to remind them of their duty to support their activities satisfactorily.

<https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Commons/2018-03-28/134696/>

and

<https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Commons/2018-03-28/134697/>

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<https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Commons/2018-03-28/134698/>

and

<https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Commons/2018-03-28/134699/>

Religion: Education

The following two questions both received the same answer

Stephen Timms (Labour) [135192] To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what discussions his Department has had with Ofsted since 2015 on compliance by schools with their statutory obligation to provide religious education in the curriculum.

Standing Advisory Councils on Religious Education

Stephen Timms (Labour) [135196] To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what discussions he and his Department have had with Ofsted since 2015 on whether Standing Advisory Councils on Religious Education and Agreed Syllabus Conferences are complying with their statutory obligations; and if he will make a statement.

Nick Gibb: Legislation and funding agreements require all state funded schools to deliver Religious Education (RE). Ofsted does not routinely compliance check whether schools, Standing Advisory Councils on Religious Education (SACREs) or Agreed Syllabus Conferences (ASC) are meeting all of their statutory requirements. Where during the course of a school inspection it becomes clear that statutory requirements are not being met, and this is a contributory factor in explaining why pupils are not achieving as well as they should at the school, it will be considered for inclusion in the inspection report as a key point for improvement.

Although Ofsted does not inspect individual curriculum subjects, it is required to report on the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils. Maintained faith schools are required to arrange a separate inspection of denominational RE and collective worship, leading to published reports.

<https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Commons/2018-03-29/135192/>

and

<https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Commons/2018-03-29/135196/>

Radicalism

Alex Sobel (Labour Co-op) [134942] To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, if she will make an assessment of the implications for her policies on

counter extremism of the report from the organisation Hope Not Hate, The state of hate 2018, published in March 2018.

Victoria Atkins: The Government is committed to tackling all forms of extremism. The 2015 Counter-Extremism Strategy sets out a four year programme of work for defeating extremism at source by countering extremist ideology; supporting mainstream voices, especially in faith communities and civil society; disrupting the most harmful extremists; and building more cohesive communities by tackling segregation.

The Government has established an Extremism Analysis Unit (EAU) to support government and the wider public sector to understand the threat from extremism. The EAU will continue to learn from existing capabilities to analyse extremism, including external experts.

In March 2018 the Government launched an independent Commission for Countering Extremism. The Commission has a clear remit to identify and challenge extremism in all its forms, and it will be engaging widely with stakeholders.

<https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Commons/2018-03-29/134942/>

The report referred to above can be read at

<https://www.hopenothate.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2018/03/State-of-Hate-2018.pdf>

The Counter-Extremism Strategy referred to above can be read at

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/470088/51859_Cm9148_Accessible.pdf

Counter-terrorism

Alex Sobel (Labour Co-op) [135163] To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps her Department is taking to ensure that the Prevent strategy and Prevent duty directives do not unfairly target racial and religious minorities.

Ben Wallace: Prevent does not target a specific faith or ethnic group. The Prevent Programme is fundamentally about safeguarding and supporting vulnerable individuals to stop them from becoming terrorists or supporting terrorism. Prevent is implemented in a proportionate manner that takes into account the level of risk in any given area or institution.

The introduction of the Prevent Duty has embedded consideration of the risk of radicalisation in the day-to-day work of frontline statutory partners. We are equipping frontline professionals through Prevent training with the skills and knowledge to help them understand better the role that they can play in countering radicalisation and refer individuals they are concerned about.

<https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Commons/2018-03-29/135163/>

House of Commons Library

Briefing: Antisemitism

<http://researchbriefings.files.parliament.uk/documents/CDP-2018-0095/CDP-2018-0095.pdf>

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Holocaust

UK Parliament Early Day Motion

Patricia Gibson (SNP) (1155) Warsaw Ghetto Uprising – 75th anniversary – That this House commemorates the 75th anniversary of the Warsaw Ghetto uprising, from 19 April to 16 May 1943; notes that after Germany invaded Poland in September 1939, more than 440,000 Jews were confined to just 1.3 square miles of Warsaw, sealed in by a wall patrolled by armed guards; understands Ghetto residents were forced to live in appallingly squalid conditions, with an average of 7.2 people per room, with food rations deliberately insufficient to sustain life; realises many thousands of Ghetto inhabitants died of starvation and disease, while in July 1942, the Nazis began deporting Jews to Treblinka extermination camp, murdering 265,000 in two months; acknowledges that the lightly armed Jewish Combat Organization, led by 23-year-old Mordecai Anielewicz, resisted heroically when on 19 April 1943, SS forces attacked with heavy artillery, tanks and aircraft to liquidate the Ghetto, battling German forces for nearly one month while the SS razed ghetto buildings, destroying bunkers in which thousands of surviving residents had hidden; welcomes the 75th anniversary's commemoration with Warsaw's people laying daffodils upon the grave of Marek Edelman, the last surviving uprising commander; and hopes that the bravery of the Jewish resistance fighters who resisted genocide will be commemorated internationally for years to come.

<https://www.parliament.uk/edm/2017-19/1155>

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Israel

House of Commons Written Answers

Jerusalem: Churches

David Drew (Labour Co-op) [134713] To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, what recent discussions he has had with his Israeli counterpart on ensuring access for Christians to churches in Jerusalem.

Alistair Burt: We have not discussed this specific issue with the Israeli authorities. We welcome the repeated commitments of the Israeli Government to uphold freedom of religion for all faiths in Israel.

<https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Commons/2018-03-28/134713/>

Israel: Palestinians

Richard Burden (Labour) [134885] To ask the Secretary of State for International Development, what consultation her Department had prior to the announcement of the People For Peaceful Change project in Israel and the occupied Palestinian territories .

Alistair Burt: During the scoping phase of DFID's People for Peaceful Change programme, officials consulted with local civil society organisations working in the people-to-people field in Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territories.

<https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Commons/2018-03-28/134885/>

Gaza: Reconstruction

Rosie Cooper (Labour) [135071] To ask the Secretary of State for International Development, what discussions she has had with her Israeli counterpart on economic revitalisation in Gaza.

Alistair Burt: The Secretary of State for International Development has not recently held any discussions with her Israeli counterparts on economic revitalisation in Gaza. The UK remains gravely concerned about the humanitarian and economic situation in Gaza. In August 2017, Minister Burt met with Israeli officials to discuss various issues including the dire need to improve the humanitarian and economic situation in Gaza. We welcome all practical steps to improve conditions as a matter of urgency. HMG officials regularly discuss economic revitalisation in Gaza with their Israeli and Palestinian counterparts. For example, on 13 March, senior HMG officials attended a United States hosted conference on the humanitarian and economic situation in Gaza alongside representatives from 20 countries, including Israel.

<https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Commons/2018-03-29/135071/>

UK Parliament Early Day Motion

Richard Burden (Labour) (1163) Violence against protestors in Gaza – That this House is gravely concerned by recent developments on the Israel-Gaza border and the killing and injuring of Palestinian protestors; affirms the right to peaceful protest and the right to freedom of expression; deplors the actions of those who seek to exploit peaceful protests to engage in violence; notes that Israel's effective control of access into and out of the territory means Gaza remains under occupation, that the health system is on the verge of collapse and that the recent influx of casualties has put the health system under even more pressure; supports the calls by UN Secretary General, António Guterres, and EU Foreign Affairs representative Federica Mogherini for an independent and transparent investigation into the killing and injuring of Palestinians in Gaza during the protests; and urges the Government to call for and support an independent investigation, and, where breaches of international law and international humanitarian law are identified for those responsible to be held to account.

<https://www.parliament.uk/edm/2017-19/1163>

Downing Street

PM calls with Netanyahu, Juncker and Tajani: 14-15 April 2018

A Downing Street spokesperson said:

Over the weekend the Prime Minister had separate phone calls with Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu of Israel, President of the European Commission Jean-Claude Juncker and European Parliament President Antonio Tajani. The Prime Minister updated the leaders on the successful strikes against the Syrian Regime's chemical weapons sites early on Saturday by the UK, France and the United States.

The Prime Minister explained that the action was limited, carefully targeted, and designed to alleviate humanitarian suffering by degrading the Syrian Regime's chemical weapons capability and deterring their future use.

The leaders agreed with the Prime Minister on the importance of restoring the international norm that the use of chemical weapons is never acceptable.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/pm-calls-with-netanyahu-juncker-and-tajani-14-15-april-2018>

Scottish Parliament Motion

S5M-11645 Jackson Carlaw (Conservative): 70th Yom Ha'atzmaut, Israel Independence Day – That the Parliament recognises that the 70th Israel independence

day, Yom Ha'atzmaut, begins on 18 April 2018, following the day of remembrance, Yom Hazikaron; welcomes what it sees as the growth of the state of Israel from arid desert to high-tech economy; believes that democratic Israel is a beacon of hope in an otherwise troubled region, and wishes all celebrating Yom Ha'atzmaut in Eastwood and across the country a joyous evening following the reflection of Yom Hazikaron.

<http://www.parliament.scot/parliamentarybusiness/28877.aspx?SearchType=Advance&ReferenceNumbers=S5M-11645>

UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights

UN human rights experts condemn killings of Palestinians near Gaza fence by Israeli security forces

UN human rights experts have condemned the continued use of firearms, including live ammunition, by Israeli security forces against mostly unarmed Palestinian protesters and observers for a third straight week near the fence between occupied Gaza and Israel.

The United Nations and its independent human rights experts, along with the International Criminal Court, have expressed grave concern about the Israeli security forces' use of force, and called for the violence to stop. Israel has pledged to conduct an investigation into the security forces' response to the protests.

"Despite Israel's commitment to investigate the events of the past few weeks, security forces continue to use live ammunition and rubber bullets against the protesters, killing and wounding dozens of mostly unarmed protesters, women, men and children alike," said the UN experts.

"We express our outrage over these shootings that may have resulted in unlawful killings and the incomprehensibly high number of injuries sustained." ...

The experts reiterated Israel's obligation as occupying power to uphold international human rights law and international humanitarian law, emphasising that in the context of law enforcement, security forces may only resort to lethal force when faced with a situation involving an imminent threat to life or risk of serious injury.

"No evidence has emerged showing that such a situation occurred during the demonstrations that would make the lethal force used legal," they said.

"The freedoms of association, assembly, and expression are all fundamental rights under international human rights law. These rights are to be given broad protection, and can only be restricted in narrow and exceptional circumstances. Israel must fully observe these rights, and ensure that their approaches to crowd control and demonstrations are in strict accordance with international law."

Referring to a recent statement issued by the Chief Prosecutor of the International Criminal Court, Ms. Fatou Bensouda, the experts said that the deadly use of force against demonstrators could constitute crimes under the Rome Statute.

The UN experts pointed out that the deaths and injuries since 30 March by the Israeli security forces appeared to be in breach of the *International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights* (1966), *The Basic Principles on the Use of Force and Firearms by Law Enforcement Officials* (1990) and the prohibitions in the *Fourth Geneva Convention of 1949* against wilful killings and the serious injury of the protected population.

The experts reiterated their call on the international community, through the United Nations, to establish an independent commission to investigate the events of the past three weeks.

"While Israel's announcement that it will launch a probe is welcome, we are concerned that the planned probe may lack the independence, impartiality and effectiveness required by the international law," they said. "Coupled with reports that some Israeli officials have suggested the purpose of the investigation is to avoid scrutiny from the international community and the ICC, we believe an independent investigation is the only way to truly address what has happened in Gaza, and to prevent its recurrence."

“Accountability is imperative when the fatal shooting of demonstrators, by security forces has occurred,” the experts said. “If Israel will not take credible and effective steps to investigate, and indeed, where it has congratulated its military forces for their use of force, then the international community must fill the investigatory void to ensure respect for international law.

“Finally, we call for an immediate end to the 11-year-old comprehensive blockade on Gaza, which is imposing untold suffering on the population. We cannot continue to ignore this collective punishment of the people of Gaza, and the undeniable human rights impacts of the blockade,” added the experts. “Collective punishment is prohibited under international law, and there must be international accountability for such actions.” ...

To read the full press release see

<http://www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=22950&LangID=E>

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Other Relevant Information

Court of Justice of the European Union

The requirement of religious affiliation for a post within the Church must be amenable to effective judicial review

Ms Vera Egenberger, of no denomination, applied in 2012 for a post offered by Evangelisches Werk für Diakonie und Entwicklung (Protestant Work for Diaconate and Development, Germany). This was a fixed-term post for a project for producing a parallel report on the United Nations International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination. ... According to the offer of employment, applicants had to belong to a Protestant church or a church belonging to the Working Group of Christian Churches in Germany. Ms Egenberger was not called to an interview. Since she considered that she had been discriminated against on grounds of religion, she sued Evangelisches Werk in the German courts, seeking for it to be ordered to pay her €9 788.65 compensation.

... the Anti-Discrimination Directive ... provides that a church (or other organisation whose ethos is based on religion or belief) may impose a requirement related to religion or belief if, having regard to the nature of the activity concerned or the context in which it is carried out, ‘religion or belief constitute[s] a genuine, legitimate and justified occupational requirement, having regard to the organisation’s ethos’. ...

In today’s judgment, the Court starts by finding that, under the directive, the right of autonomy of churches (and other organisations whose ethos is based on religion or belief), on the one hand, and, on the other hand, the right of workers, inter alia when they are being recruited, not to be discriminated against on grounds of religion or belief must be the subject of a balancing exercise, in order to ensure a fair balance between them.

According to the Court, in the event of a dispute, it must be possible for such a balancing exercise to be the subject of review by an independent authority, and ultimately by a national court.

Thus, where a church (or other organisation whose ethos is based on religion or belief) asserts, in support of an act or decision such as the rejection of an application for employment with it, that by reason of the nature of the activities concerned or the context in which they are to be carried out, religion constitutes a genuine, legitimate and justified occupational requirement, having regard to the ethos of the church (or organisation), it must be possible for such an assertion to be the subject of effective judicial review. ...

The Court observes in this respect that, in principle, it is not for the national courts to rule on the ethos as such on which the purported occupational requirement is founded. They must nevertheless decide, on a case-by-case basis, whether the three criteria concerning

a 'genuine, legitimate and justified' requirement are satisfied from the point of view of that ethos. ...

To read the full press release see

<https://curia.europa.eu/jcms/upload/docs/application/pdf/2018-04/cp180046en.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>

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

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

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

Home Education (closing date 2 July 2018)

<https://consult.education.gov.uk/school-frameworks/home-education-call-for-evidence-and-revised-dfe-a/>

**** Ecclesiastical exemption and guidance on scheduled monuments** (closing date 13 July 2018)

<https://beta.gov.wales/ecclesiastical-exemption-and-guidance-scheduled-monuments>

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