

Political Affairs Digest

A daily summary of political events affecting the Jewish Community

Scottish Council of Jewish Communities

SCoJeC

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Universities: Freedom of Speech

14. **Chris Davies (Conservative):** What steps his Department has taken to ensure that freedom of speech is protected in universities. [906758]

17. **Andrew Bowie (Conservative):** What steps his Department has taken to ensure that freedom of speech is protected in universities. [906761]

The Minister for Universities, Science, Research and Innovation (Sam Gyimah): We want our universities to be bastions of free speech where a free and robust exchange of ideas thrives. I am very encouraged that the Office for Students has made it very clear that, as a regulator, it will be encouraging free speech in our universities and that, if it intervenes, it will never be to restrict it.

Chris Davies: Earlier this summer, the Universities Minister made it clear that free speech on campus should be encouraged and that those attempting to shut it down should have nowhere to hide. Does my hon. Friend agree that hearing, considering and debating different views are a key part of learning?

Sam Gyimah: My hon. Friend is absolutely right. We want free speech, diversity of opinion, diversity of thought and civility in debate, where people do not easily take offence or give offence too easily. That is why I am working with the Equality and Human Rights Commission and key stakeholders to come up with new guidance on free speech to deal with the dizzying array of regulations that wreckers on campus can exploit to frustrate free speech.

Andrew Bowie: My hon. Friend will agree that many of us in the Chamber would not be here today were it not for the culture of free speech and our ability to engage in it on our campuses to develop and hone our political philosophies and arguments for right or wrong. Does he agree that we in this place who have benefited most from that right have a duty to stand up for it wherever we see it under threat on far too many of our university campuses?

Sam Gyimah: We must always stand up for free speech. We must not allow bureaucracy on campus to stifle free speech, and it is our duty to make sure that it is promoted, because if universities are not about free speech, what are they for?

Jim Shannon (DUP): What progress has been made in developing guidance with universities to clarify the rules surrounding free speech for students and for the universities?

Sam Gyimah: New guidance on clarifying all the rules around free speech will be published this autumn.

<https://hansard.parliament.uk/commons/2018-09-10/debates/5EFC0928-32E0-40ED-A7E0-87FD3DC05B64/UniversitiesFreedomOfSpeech>

House of Commons Written Answers

Schools: Racial Discrimination

Laura Smith (Labour) [169781] To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what measures have been put in place for schools to deal with racist incidents.

Nick Gibb: Racism has no place in our schools and any incident is unacceptable. In July 2017 the Department updated its anti-bullying guidance. This guidance makes it clear that where a school thinks an incident might constitute an offence, they should seek assistance from the police. All schools are required by law to have a behaviour policy which sets expectations of behaviour and outlines measures to prevent all forms of bullying, including racist bullying. Schools have the freedom to develop their own anti-bullying strategies appropriate to their environment but are held to account by Ofsted. The anti-bullying guidance refers schools to sources of support on preventing and tackling bullying based on race, religion and nationality. This guidance can be viewed here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/preventing-and-tackling-bullying>.

The Department funds and supports anti-bullying organisations that help schools prevent and tackle bullying. This includes the Free to Be project led by the Anne Frank Trust, which provides a structured approach for young people to discuss the importance of tackling prejudice, discrimination and bullying.

<https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Commons/2018-09-03/169781/>

Social Media: Harassment and Hate Crime

The following two questions both received the same answer

Louise Haigh (Labour) [169548] To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what steps his Department is taking to reduce hate speech and harassment on social media.

Digital Economy Act 2017

Louise Haigh (Labour) [169543] To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what the timeframe is for section 103 of the Digital Economy Act 2017 to come into force.

Margot James: The Government response to the Internet Safety Strategy consultation, published in May 2018, announced our intention to publish a joint DCMS-Home Office White Paper to set out more definitive steps on online harms and safety.

As part of the Government response, we published a draft version of our social media code of practice. As required by the Digital Economy Act 2017, we are now consulting with social media providers and others on the code. We will set out further information relating to the code as part of our forthcoming White Paper.

<https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Commons/2018-09-03/169548/>

and

<https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Commons/2018-09-03/169543/>

The Government response referred to above can be read at

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/708873/Government_Response_to_the_Internet_Safety_Strategy_Green_Paper_-_Final.pdf

Poultry: Animal Welfare

The following five questions all received the same answer

Kerry McCarthy (Labour) [170283] To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, how many and what proportion of slaughterhouses in the UK are not compliant with the European Union regulation EC 1099/2009 Annex I on stunning poultry in electric water baths.

Kerry McCarthy (Labour) [170284] To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what assessment he has made of the effectiveness of electric waterbaths for stunning poultry that use frequencies outside of the parameters set out in Annex 1 of EC 1099/2009.

Slaughterhouses: Animal Welfare

Kerry McCarthy (Labour) [170285] To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, if he will bring forward legislative proposals to require post-cut stunning for animals that are slaughtered without being pre-stunned.

Meat: Ritual Slaughter

Kerry McCarthy (Labour) [170286] To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, if he will bring forward legislative proposals to ensure that the volume supply of non-stun meat meets only the domestic demand of the communities that want to eat it.

Kerry McCarthy (Labour) [170287] To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, pursuant to the Answer of 20 April 2018 to Questions 133445, 133447 and 133449, on Ritual Slaughter, when his Department plans to publish the results of the Food Standards Authority survey of slaughterhouses and the Halal market; and whether survey includes the amount of non-stun meat exported from the UK.

George Eustice: The information that we have received from the Food Standards Agency (FSA) suggests that currently 3 out of the 50 poultry plants in England and Wales are using non Annex 1 water bath stunning parameters for religious slaughter.

Defra and the Welsh Government commissioned the FSA to carry out a survey on our behalf on how animals are sourced, slaughtered and then distributed in England and Wales. We hope to publish the results of that survey shortly. Any further reforms in this area will be considered in light of the FSA survey.

Where stunning is carried out, including for religious slaughter, it must be effective in rendering the animal unconscious and insensible to pain and the animal must remain unconscious and insensible to pain until death. Where animals are not stunned correctly the FSA will take appropriate action to prevent animals from suffering. The legislation in England permits religious slaughter to be carried out by a Muslim or Jewish person for the food of Muslim or Jewish people respectively.

<https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Commons/2018-09-04/170283/>

and

<https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Commons/2018-09-04/170284/>

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<https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Commons/2018-09-04/170285/>

and

<https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Commons/2018-09-04/170286/>

and

<https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Commons/2018-09-04/170287/>

Government Departments: Meat

Ben Lake (Plaid Cymru) [167361] To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, whether Government procurement policies permit for non-stun meat to be procured by government departments for consumption on government premises.

George Eustice: The Government Buying Standards for Food and Catering require central government procurers directly, or through their catering contractors, to apply the mandatory animal welfare standards.

GBSF require meat that is served, whether produced in the UK or elsewhere, to be compliant with UK law on standards of production such as the Welfare of Animals at Time of Killing (England) Regulations.

The Government would prefer to see all animals stunned before they are slaughtered for food. However, we also respect the rights of the Jewish and Muslim communities to eat meat prepared in accordance with their religious beliefs.

<https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Commons/2018-07-23/167361/>

Meat: Imports

The following two questions both received the same answer

Ben Lake (Plaid Cymru) [167362] To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, whether the UK imports any non-stun (a) meat and (b) meat products.

Meat: Exports

Ben Lake (Plaid Cymru) [167363] To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, whether the Government will be permitting the export of non-stun meat as part of its recently announced trade deal with Saudi Arabia.

George Eustice: The Government does not hold information on method of slaughter for imports as certification of religious slaughter is provided directly between importers and exporters. Religious slaughter can either be stun or non-stun and must comply with EU and England rules on animal welfare.

Earlier this year Saudi Arabia lifted disease restrictions on lamb imports from the UK, re-opening that market for UK businesses. Saudi Arabian authorities require lamb imports to be accompanied by a halal certificate issued by an authorised body. Meat from animals stunned at slaughter can be certified as halal.

<https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Commons/2018-07-23/167362/>

and

<https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Commons/2018-07-23/167363/>

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Israel

House of Commons Written Answers

USA: UNRWA

Christine Jardine (Liberal Democrat) [170427] To ask the Secretary of State for International Development, what assessment she has made of the effect of the USA withdrawing funding to the United Nations Relief and Works Agency on the humanitarian situation in Gaza.

Alistair Burt: Any disruption to the essential services delivered by the UN Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees (UNRWA) undermines the stability and economy of Gaza, which worsens living conditions and increases humanitarian

needs. My officials and I are working with UNRWA and our partners to ensure essential services are maintained in Gaza and UNRWA's other fields of operation, despite the US withdrawal of funding. The UK has announced £17 million of funding over the past four months, in addition to our original budget of £28 million, to protect UNRWA's vital services. The Government has also increased humanitarian support to Gaza this year in light of the deteriorating conditions.

<https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Commons/2018-09-04/170427/>

Palestinians: International Assistance

David Drew (Labour Co-op) [168961] To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, what steps his Department has taken to ensure that all people arrested on vessels from the Gaza Freedom Flotilla (a) are released and (b) have their impounded possessions returned to them; and if he will investigate why the vessels were prevented from reaching their destination.

Alistair Burt: Consular officials from our Embassy in Tel Aviv visited the British nationals who were detained to check on their welfare. We understand that all participants have now left Israel. Our Deputy Head of Mission in Israel raised the issue of personal belongings with the Israeli Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

<https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Commons/2018-09-03/168961/>

Gaza: Humanitarian Aid

David Drew (Labour Co-op) [168963] To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, what recent discussions he has had with the Israeli government to ensure that humanitarian aid reaches Gaza; and what representations he has made to seek to prevent any embargo stopping items from reaching people in need.

Alistair Burt: The former Foreign Secretary raised the Israeli embargo of Gaza when he met with Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu in June. I raised the humanitarian situation in Gaza when I last met with Israeli officials in July. Delivery of aid to Gaza should be coordinated with the UN and Israeli and Egyptian Governments. We continue to call on the Israeli Government to ease restrictions further and for Israel, the Palestinian Authority and Egypt to work together to ensure a durable solution for Gaza.

<https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Commons/2018-09-03/168963/>

Foreign and Commonwealth Office

Khan al-Ahmar: France, Germany, Italy, Spain and UK joint statement

A Foreign and Commonwealth Office spokesperson said:

France, Germany, Italy, Spain and the United Kingdom have repeatedly expressed their concern about the village of Khan al-Ahmar, which is located in a sensitive location in Area C, of strategic importance for preserving the contiguity of a future Palestinian state.

We took note of Wednesday's decision by the Israeli Supreme Court leaving a demolition of Khan al-Ahmar up to the discretion of the Israeli government.

We therefore join High Representative/Vice-President Federica Mogherini in reiterating our call to the Israeli government not to go ahead with its plan to demolish the village – including its school – and displace its residents. The consequences a demolition and displacement would have on the residents of this community, including their children, as well as on the prospects of the two-state solution would be very serious.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/khan-al-ahmar-france-germany-italy-spain-and-uk-joint-statement>

UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights

UN experts appalled by Israeli court decision permitting demolition of West Bank Bedouin village

An Israeli High Court ruling giving the Government of Israel the green light to demolish the entire Palestinian Bedouin community of Khan al-Ahmar Ab al Helu, has been described as “appalling” by two UN human rights experts*.

“It is gravely disappointing that a High Court can take a decision that is totally against the fundamental principles of international human rights law and international humanitarian law,” said Michael Lynk, the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Palestinian Territory occupied since 1967 and Leilani Farha, the Special Rapporteur on adequate housing as a component of the right to an adequate standard of living.

“This appalling decision could trigger the eviction of 180 inhabitants, including more than 90 children, putting them at imminent risk of forcible transfer,” they added.

“Forced eviction constitutes a gross violation of the right to adequate housing under international human rights law. In addition, forcible transfer of people who are protected within an occupied territory is a grave breach of the Fourth Geneva Convention, and amounts to a war crime under the 1998 Rome Statute,” the experts said.

“If the demolition of the village goes ahead and results in the residents having to move out of their current location, all those responsible for this international crime should be held accountable.”

The experts’ comments follow a decision on 5 September to dismiss the latest petitions by residents of Khan al-Ahmar, some 15 km northeast of Jerusalem in the West Bank.

The Special Rapporteurs are also urging Israel, as the occupying power, to stop the eviction.

“It is time to regularize their situation and respect the rights of the Khan al-Ahmar residents to remain on the lands they have inhabited for decades,” the experts added.

The residents of Khan al-Ahmar are descendants of Bedouins expelled from the Negev by Israel in the 1950s. They were relocated in the West Bank, on the outskirts of Jerusalem. Their village is situated between two large Israeli settlements, Ma’ale Adumim and Kfar Adumim, and an Israeli industrial zone called Mishor Adumim. The residents have been subjected to constant pressure by the Israeli authorities and neighbouring settlers and have been living in what has been described as an “increasingly coercive environment” that may leave no other choice to the community but to move.

<https://www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=23524&LanglD=E>

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Foreign Affairs

See the written answers relating to “Meat Imports” and Meat exports” in the “Home Affairs” section above.

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Other Relevant Information

Court of Justice of the European Union

Dismissal of a Catholic doctor from a managerial position by a Catholic hospital due to his remarriage after a divorce may constitute unlawful discrimination on grounds of religion

JQ, a Roman Catholic, worked as Head of the Internal Medicine Department of a hospital managed by IR, a limited liability company established under German law subject to the supervision of the Archbishop of Cologne (Germany). When IR discovered that, after his divorce from his first wife, to whom he had been married in accordance with the Roman Catholic rite, JQ had married again in a civil ceremony without his first marriage having been annulled, IR dismissed him. In IR's view, by entering into a marriage that is invalid under canon law, JQ had clearly infringed his duty of loyalty arising under his employment contract. ...

JQ challenged his dismissal before the German labour courts on the ground that his remarriage was not a valid ground for dismissal. ...

By today's judgment, the Court finds that the decision of a Church or other organisation the ethos of which is based on religion or belief and which manages a hospital (in the form of a private limited company) to subject its employees performing managerial duties to a requirement to act in good faith and with loyalty to that ethos that differs according to the faith or lack of faith of such employees must be amenable to effective judicial review. ...

Although, in the present case, it is for the Bundesarbeitsgericht to determine whether those conditions are satisfied, the Court observes that adherence to the notion of marriage advocated by the Catholic Church does not appear to be necessary for the promotion of IR's ethos due to the importance of the occupational activities carried out by JQ, namely the provision of medical advice and care in a hospital setting and the management of the internal medicine department which he headed. Therefore, that does not appear to be a genuine requirement of that occupational activity. ...

To read the full press release see

<https://curia.europa.eu/jcms/upload/docs/application/pdf/2018-09/cp180127en.pdf>

To read the full judgement see

<http://curia.europa.eu/juris/document/document.jsf?jsessionid=9ea7d2dc30d86694e464eaec432ca9fbde77a8b14125.e34KaxiLc3gMb40Rch0SaxyPaxb0?text=&docid=205521&pageIndex=0&doclang=EN&mode=req&dir=&occ=first&part=1&cid=527083>

United Nations

May People Everywhere Enjoy Peace, Prosperity, Says Secretary-General in Video Message for Rosh Hashanah

... I would like to offer my best wishes to the Jewish people on the occasion of Rosh Hashanah.

To all of you, I sincerely wish *L'shanah tovah*. Happy New Year.

May people everywhere enjoy peace and prosperity in the year ahead.

In the spirit of Rosh Hashanah, I hope we can cast away the distrust and disagreements of the past year, and work together for the common good and a better world for all. Thank you.

<https://www.un.org/press/en/2018/sqsm19203.doc.htm>

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Relevant Legislation ** new or updated today

UK Parliament

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>

**** Online Forums Bill**

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

First Reading, House of Commons

<https://hansard.parliament.uk/commons/2018-09-11/debates/BC2267F0-86BB-4746-B822-D6D8A55F31BF/OnlineForums>

**** Organ Donation (Deemed Consent) Bill**

<http://services.parliament.uk/bills/2017-19/organdonationdeemedconsent.html>

Money Motion

[https://hansard.parliament.uk/commons/2018-09-11/debates/6FC769B4-F098-452B-82E5-D9F5046355AB/OrganDonation\(DeemedConsent\)Bill\(Money\)](https://hansard.parliament.uk/commons/2018-09-11/debates/6FC769B4-F098-452B-82E5-D9F5046355AB/OrganDonation(DeemedConsent)Bill(Money))

Notice of amendments

https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/bills/cbill/2017-2019/0012/amend/organ_daily_pbc_0911.1-3.html

Scottish Parliament

Human Tissue (Authorisation) (Scotland) Bill

<http://www.parliament.scot/parliamentarybusiness/Bills/108681.aspx>

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Consultations ** new or updated today

**** closes in 2 days**

20 years of the Human Rights Act (closing date 14 September 2018)

<https://www.parliament.uk/business/committees/committees-a-z/joint-select/human-rights-committee/news-parliament-2017/20-years-human-rights-act-launch-17-19/>

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