

Political Affairs Digest

A daily summary of political events affecting the Jewish Community

Scottish Council of Jewish Communities

SCoJeC

Contents

Israel

Foreign Affairs

Other Relevant Information

Relevant Legislation

Consultations

Israel

Scottish Parliament Debate

Human Rights Defenders (Support and Protection)

16.38 **Gillian Martin) (SNP):** ... I am standing in for Sandra White, who is a human rights defender herself. I know that she wanted to use a Palestinian example and that she was going to speak about Awni Abu Shamsiyya from Hebron in Palestine. When I had a quick look at what he does, I discovered that his whole family are human rights defenders, and that he follows in the footsteps of his mother Faiza and his father Imad. The family have been documenting and filming human rights abuses in Palestine for many years and bearing witness to them so that we can understand them.

I will read out an extract from something that Imad wrote in 2016. He said: "Two ... ambulances rush to the scene. They offer no assistance to the two critically injured Palestinians (one of them was in fact probably dead at this point), and do not even attempt to assess their situation. All their efforts focus on the soldier, whose condition" is "far from critical. At this point another soldier—an army medic, as it turns out—walks forward a few paces, hefts his rifle, and casually shoots the still moving" Palestinian "in the head. Nobody present appears to be surprised or disturbed in any way by what they have just seen. But I was present. And I was disturbed. My name is Imad Abu Shamsiyya. I shot that video."

The recording of such violations helps the rest of the world to see what is really going on. Imad initially decided to start filming because his own family was being attacked. As time went on he began to record things that he saw, although he knew that by doing so he was making his family more of a target. He said:

"As time went on, the attacks against the family continued. Our younger daughter, Marwa, had her hair set on fire. Saleh, the baby of the family, was stabbed in the hand ... there have been the attacks against the whole family. About a year ago I woke up after midnight and realised that there was a fire burning outside of the house which had already reached one of the rooms. The neighbours rushed to help us put it out. Two months after that, by a lucky coincidence, I happened to see a settler on our roof. He was trying to poison our water tank. The video camera meant we were able to document these attacks. And by this time the whole family had started to film, and much of the neighbourhood."

The testimony of the Shamsiyya family is an indication of the danger into which those who record and observe can put themselves in order to let the rest of the world see what

is going on. Their bravery in doing that should not be underestimated. In addition to some of the attacks on the family, Awni, Imad's son, who is another film maker, was falsely accused of crimes and imprisoned. Thankfully, he has now been released, but that was due to him again bearing witness with a camera. Imad said:

"As Palestinians, we never feel safe. We have lived all of our lives in a country where we are made to feel that we are always in the wrong place at the wrong time ... Whenever there is trouble, people call on us to come round with our cameras ... When Faiza stands filming, fearlessly, in front of a gang of violent settlers, it helps to show that we still have our resolve. When you have a camera in your hands, you feel that there is at least something you can do to take control of a situation in which you can easily feel powerless."

The empowerment that those people feel by doing something when they feel that they are up against it is really important. The Shamsiyya family embody the most potent power that there is, which is determination—determination in the face of danger, non-violent involvement where violence is all around and using words and pictures, which is the most powerful weapon in the defence of human rights. ...

16.52 Christina McKelvie (Minister for Older People and Equalities): ... We heard the poignant testimony of Imad in Palestine—I have heard Sandra White talk about Imad on many occasions—and we heard about the attacks on his human rights defender family. ...

To read the full transcript see

<http://www.parliament.scot/parliamentarybusiness/report.aspx?r=11688&i=105871#ScotParlOR>

TOP

Foreign Affairs

Foreign and Commonwealth Office

Lord Ahmad reaffirms UK commitment to stamp out anti-semitism

From attacks on Jewish people, businesses and places of worship and the desecration of Jewish cemeteries, anti-semitism one of the world's oldest hatreds is seeing a worrying resurgence.

In an event on 26 September at the UN General Assembly ... the Prime Minister's Special Representative for Freedom of Religion and Belief Lord Tariq Ahmad reaffirmed the UK's commitment to education and dialogue to combat the scourge of anti-semitism in all its forms.

The Prime Minister's Special Representative for Freedom of Religion and Belief Lord Tariq Ahmad said:

I'm proud to reaffirm Britain's commitment to combatting the scourge of anti-semitism.

Even today, the truth about the Holocaust is distorted and sometimes denied.

So it is fitting that this event should fall a week after Yom Kippur, the holiest day in the Jewish calendar and a day of reflection and atonement.

As global leaders we must act responsibly to ensure future generations reflect on the lessons from the Holocaust and recognise our shared humanity.

Seven decades after the Holocaust, society still cannot say that anti-semitism has been eradicated; nor can it claim that genocide is a thing of the past. As recently as last month, the United Nations concluded that the Burmese military had inflicted genocide against the Rohingya.

The UK government is committed to religious tolerance in the UK and globally. Through the government backed Holocaust Educational Trust and their world-leading Lessons from Auschwitz programme 36,000 students have visited Auschwitz - and then supported

this next generation to share their learning with fellow students and to fight antisemitism and all forms of hatred in every community of the land.

The British government is determined that the genocide of six million Jews will never be forgotten. A spectacular and poignant Holocaust Memorial and Learning Centre, will be erected right next to Parliament, reminding all of us of the depths to which humanity can sink, and the importance of robustly opposing all forms of bigotry.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/lord-ahmad-reaffirms-uk-commitment-to-stamp-out-anti-semitism>

TOP

Other Relevant Information

United Nations

Anti-Semitism Rising Even in Countries with No Jews at All, Secretary-General Tells Event on Power of Education to Counter Racism, Discrimination

... Jews continue to be attacked for no other reason than their identity. And anti-Semitism is not a problem for the Jewish community alone. Where there is anti-Semitism, there are likely to be other discriminatory ideologies and forms of bias - feeding each other in a cauldron of contempt. Today, hatred also targets religious minorities, migrants and refugees and is particularly virulent.

Anti-Semitism threatens all people's human rights. It is a menace to democratic values, to social peace and stability. It spreads through social media, the Internet, and through hate speech and conspiracy theories. Anti-Semitism has often been called "the oldest hatred".

Prejudice against Jews can be found in the earliest chapters of recorded history. Within recent memory, anti-Semitism culminated in genocide. Today, it is on the rise in all parts of the world where Jewish communities live. But it is also present in countries where there are no Jews at all.

Anti-Semitism has evolved, grown more complex and adopted new guises. It is abetted by public discourse that stigmatizes minorities, refugees and foreigners. It traffics in distortions of history and attempts to deny or diminish the fact and horror of the Holocaust. In more recent times, it is expressing itself in attempts to delegitimize the right of Israel to exist, including calls for its destruction, using the pretext of the situation in the Middle East to target Jews and Jewish symbols. The world is also seeing an alarming proliferation of neo-Nazi and white supremacy groups, and of those seeking religious and ethnic domination. This is tribalism run amok. Not only are their vile views coming into the mainstream, but the mainstream unfortunately, sometimes, is coming to them.

Since anti-Semitism always tends to come back, all of us have a duty to fight back. Member States have the primary responsibility to protect their citizens' human rights and address the root causes of intolerance. Education is one of our most powerful tools. Allow me to highlight four possible priorities.

First, to recognize anti-Semitism as a problem to be addressed internationally. I wish to acknowledge the efforts of the 31 member countries of the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance to agree on a common definition of anti-Semitism. Such a definition can serve as a basis for law enforcement, as well as preventive policies. Second, develop education programmes that address anti-Semitism in a framework of human rights and global citizenship. Third, build the capacity of educational systems to address anti-Semitism, conspiracy theories and all other forms of hate speech. Fourth, we must see diversity as a richness. As societies become more multi-ethnic, multi-religious and multi-cultural, we must invest more in social cohesion.

The United Nations, including UNESCO, is leading important work to prevent anti-Semitism and discrimination, including through Holocaust education and guidelines for educators and policymakers. I call on all Member States to join this crucial effort.

Jewish boys should not be afraid to wear yarmulkes in the streets of our cities. Jewish youth should not have to travel to school under the protection of armed military or police. Jewish cemeteries should not be desecrated.

Anti-Semitism has survived across the millennium but should have no place in the twenty-first century. The origins of the United Nations itself are rooted in the need to learn the lessons of the Holocaust. Being true to our Charter means combating anti-Semitism and hatred with all our energy and will. I have fought against intolerance for my entire civic and political life, and you can count on me to continue to be in the forefront as Secretary-General.

<https://www.un.org/press/en/2018/sqsm19252.doc.htm>

TOP

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>

Organ Donation (Deemed Consent) Bill

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

Scottish Parliament

Human Tissue (Authorisation) (Scotland) Bill

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

TOP

Consultations ** new or updated today

Reform of the legal requirements for divorce (closing date 10 December 2018)

<https://consult.justice.gov.uk/digital-communications/reform-of-the-legal-requirements-for-divorce/>

TOP