

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

Fascism: Social Media

Nigel Dodds (DUP) [137486] To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, whether the Government has taken steps to deter the display or sale of Nazi memorabilia on social media marketplace platforms; and if he will make a statement.

Margot Jones: As set out in the Internet Safety Strategy, behaviour which is unacceptable offline is unacceptable online. Therefore, where the sale of memorabilia supports harmful views or could encourage hate crime, we expect social media companies to have robust processes in place to remove this content.

<https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Commons/2018-04-24/137486/>

Broadcasting: Equality

The following two questions both received the same answer

Afzal Khan (Labour) [137661] To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what discussions he has had with broadcasters on the omission of religion as a category in the diversity monitoring system Project Diamond.

Afzal Khan (Labour) [137662] To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what discussions he has had with the BBC on (a) the omission of religion in the diversity monitoring system Project Diamond and (b) the effect of that omission on on-off screen diversity monitoring of faith groups working in or with that public service broadcaster.

Margot Jones: We expect broadcasters to voluntarily publish their data on all diversity characteristics - not just those they are legally obliged to - and the BBC should be leading the way on this. There have been no discussions with broadcasters regarding Project Diamond monitoring categories. Project Diamond is an industry led monitoring scheme owned by the Creative Diversity Network which is made up of all of the UK's major broadcasters. Therefore, the decision to include or exclude categories is for the Creative Diversity Network alone.

<https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Commons/2018-04-24/137661/>

and

<https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Commons/2018-04-24/137662/>

Information about Project Diamond, referred to above, can be read at <https://creativitydiversitynetwork.com/diamond/>

Department of Education

Sam Gyimah hosts free speech summit

Free speech on campus should be encouraged and those attempting to shut it down must have nowhere to hide, the Universities Minister will make clear to sector leaders at a free speech summit he is chairing today ...

Sam Gyimah will call on higher education organisations to stamp out the 'institutional hostility' to unfashionable views that have emerged in some student societies and will urge them to work with the government following recent reports of a rise in so-called 'safe spaces' and 'no-platform' policies that have appeared on campuses. ...

The Universities Minister will demand further action is taken to protect lawful free speech on campus and will offer to work with the sector to create new guidance that will for the first time provide clarity of the rules for both students and universities ...

Universities Minister Sam Gyimah said: "A society in which people feel they have a legitimate right to stop someone expressing their views on campus simply because they are unfashionable or unpopular is rather chilling. ..."

Sir Michael Barber, Chair of the Office for Students, said: "Our universities are places where free speech should always be promoted and fostered. That includes the ability for everyone to share views which may be challenging or unpopular, even if that makes some people feel uncomfortable. ..."

To read the full press release see

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/sam-gyimah-hosts-free-speech-summit>

Scottish Parliament Written Answer

Religious observance, education and freedom of religious belief in schools

S5O-02043 Kate Forbes (SNP): To ask the Scottish Government what its position is on protecting young people's right to religious observance, education and freedom of religious belief in schools.

John Swinney: Freedom of religious belief is an important feature of Scottish life that must also apply in schools.

The Education (Scotland) Act 1980 provides a statutory basis for local authorities to provide Religious Observance and Religious and Moral Education in Scottish schools, with RME also embedded in Curriculum for Excellence. The legislation also gives parents a right to withdraw their child from these activities, with Scottish Government guidance stressing the importance of including children and young people in any decision to opt out.

<http://www.parliament.scot/parliamentarybusiness/28877.aspx?SearchType=Advance&ReferenceNumbers=S5O-02043>

Scottish Parliament Motion

S5M-12040 Mark Ruskell (Green): Dunfermline Central Mosque – That the Parliament notes with grave concern that an Islamophobic incident has taken place at Dunfermline Central Mosque; believes that the entrance to the Woodmill Road Mosque was covered in bacon in an act described as a "deliberate symbol of hatred"; understands that this attack occurred just hours after members of the congregation took part in a race against racism event in the town; believes that the incident has

left worshippers shocked, upset and fearful; welcomes the show of support by the Church of Scotland Presbytery of Dunfermline; condemns this act unequivocally, and stands in solidarity with those of all faiths and none in Scotland in the fight against all forms of racism and bigotry.

<http://www.parliament.scot/parliamentarybusiness/28877.aspx?SearchType=Advance&ReferenceNumbers=S5M-12040>

Welsh Assembly Debate

Standards of Conduct Committee's report 01-18 to the Assembly under Standing Order 22.9

The report which is the subject of this debate can be read at

<http://www.assembly.wales/laid%20documents/cr-ld11514/cr-ld11514-e.pdf>

162 Paul Davies (Conservative): The [Standards of Conduct Committee] considered the report from the commissioner for standards in relation to a complaint made against Michelle Brown, the Member for North Wales, for bringing the Assembly into disrepute, which is a breach of the code of conduct. ...

163 ... Our report sets out the committee's judgment that a sanction is appropriate in this case. ...

166 Leanne Wood (Plaid Cymru): ... how can a Member of this Assembly who has been found to be racist safely represent people of colour in her region? ... Racism is racism. It's unacceptable. It has no place in this institution or, indeed, this country. ...

167 Neil Hamilton (UKIP): ... very few other institutions around the world seek to exclude Members for using objectionable words outside the relevant assembly, let alone, as in this case, in a private telephone conversation between close friends never intended to be made public. ...

175 ... the position is even worse because the conversation was clandestinely recorded ...

176 ... in a world where surveillance technology is everywhere, admitting this kind of evidence in disciplinary proceedings creates obvious dangers of entrapment and prejudice, and not only in relation to words. Such material would not be generally admissible as prosecution evidence in a court of law, and indeed it may breach rights under article 8 of the European convention on human rights, the right to privacy in your private life, and AMs deserve the same protection, I believe, under our rules of procedure here as the law would afford them outside. ...

180 ... This, I believe, is a startling and sinister development that the Assembly seeks the right to police the private lives of Assembly Members, to censor them and, indeed, ultimately, to punish them for bringing the Assembly into disrepute. I don't regard the Assembly as being brought into disrepute by anything that anybody says outside this place. ...

191 Is it any worse than Leanne Wood falsely describing me as a Holocaust denier—a most grotesque libel upon me? It seems to me that the indignation of the Labour group is highly subjective, and on those grounds I would urge the Assembly not to approve this motion. ...

196 Neil McEvoy (Independent): ... I speak as somebody here today who has dealt with racism at the sharp end, growing up and to this day. I get judged. I have been judged because of the way that I look, because of my mum, my dad, my grandparents, my ethnic make-up. I loathe racism. Loathe it. Today, we're here to take a decision to throw out a democratically elected Member of this Assembly. Michelle Brown did make a racist comment in private. She was speaking in private on the telephone without knowing she was being recorded, with a person who liked what she said enough that he decided to work for her. I don't think it's right for me ... to vote to ban an Assembly Member ...

We have a decision for deciding who should and should not be an Assembly Member, and that's called an election. ...

199 Llyr Gruffydd (Plaid Cymru): ... Are you, therefore, suggesting that she's only guilty because she was caught? ...

201 Neil McEvoy: ... Michelle Brown was caught out. ... I think it really is a question of 'let he or she without sin cast the first stone' because I can imagine—I can imagine—if everybody around this Chamber was recorded in private exactly what could be dug up. ...

210 Result of Vote: NDM6710 - Motion to endorse the recommendation in Report 01-18 of the Standards of Conduct Committee: For: 38, Against: 3, Abstain: 1

To read the full transcript see

<http://record.assembly.wales/Plenary/4980#A43215>

Northern Ireland Executive

Appointments to the Charities Advisory Committee

The Department for Communities is seeking to appoint a new Chair and Member to the Charities Advisory Committee for the Northern Ireland Central Investment Fund for Charities ...

The Committee is an Advisory Non-Departmental Public Body sponsored by the Department for Communities. It advises the Department with respect to the investment of the Fund, the aim of which is to provide charities with the opportunity to invest all or part of their assets in a centrally pooled fund, administered by DfC. The Fund is managed by recognised fund managers, with its investment policy and performance reviewed on a quarterly basis by the Committee.

Applications are welcome from across the community, voluntary, business or public sectors, particularly from women, people with a disability, people from minority ethnic groups and young people. ...

To read the full press release see

<https://www.communities-ni.gov.uk/publications/appointments-charities-advisory-committee>

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Holocaust

See the statements from the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, and the United Nations, in the "Israel section below.

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Israel

House of Commons Written Answers

Syria: Military Bases

Jim Shannon (DUP) [137547] To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, what recent discussions he has had with the Israeli Government on removing Iranian military bases from Syria.

Alistair Burt: We have a regular dialogue with the Israeli Government on Syria and the wider regional. The Prime Minister most recently spoke to Israeli Prime

Minister Netanyahu on 14 April. They discussed mutual concerns on Syria, including Iran's destabilising activity in Syria and throughout the region. We will continue to work closely with our international partners to support stability in the region.

<https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Commons/2018-04-24/137547/>

West Bank: Demolition

Jo Stevens (Labour) [138070] To ask the Secretary of State for International Development, what assessment she has made of the humanitarian effects of recent trends in the number of demolitions and evictions in the West Bank.

Alistair Burt: Demolitions of Palestinian homes and buildings, and evictions of the residents, cause unnecessary suffering to ordinary Palestinians, are harmful to the peace process and, in most circumstances, are contrary to international humanitarian law. According to the United Nations Office for Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, 97 structures were demolished or seized in the West Bank in the first quarter of 2018 (January-March), including homes and livelihood structures. The humanitarian effects include impact to children's education, displacement, psychological distress and damage of livelihoods. The UK continues to make clear to the Israeli authorities our serious concerns over the demolitions and evictions of Palestinians from their homes.

<https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Commons/2018-04-25/138070/>

Israel: Arms Trade

Jim Cunningham (Labour) [138944] To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, what the implications are for the sale of arms to Israel of the Palestinians killed and injured during the Great Return March in 2018.

Alistair Burt: The UK is deeply concerned by the ongoing violence on Gaza's borders. The Government takes its defence exports responsibilities extremely seriously and operates some of the most robust export controls in the world. We only approve equipment which is for Israel's legitimate self-defence and when we are satisfied that it would be consistent with the Consolidated EU and National Arms Export Licensing Criteria and other relevant commitments. All applications for export licences are assessed on a case-by-case basis against strict criteria. We will not issue a licence if there is a clear risk that the equipment might be used for internal repression, or if there is a clear risk that it would provoke or prolong conflict.

<https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Commons/2018-04-27/138944/>

House of Lords Written Answers

UNRWA: Finance

Lord Hylton (Crossbench) [HL7165] To ask Her Majesty's Government what plans they have to help prevent UNWRA running out of funds later this year.

Lord Bates: The UK is unequivocally committed to supporting Palestinian refugees across the region. Over the course of the 2017/18 financial year, the UK provided around £50 million to the UN Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA), assisting in their provision of essential services including basic education to around 500,000 children, health services for around 3 million Palestinian refugees and supporting Palestinian refugees from Syria. The UK will deliver its next round of financial support earlier than originally planned, to help meet the growing needs

of Palestinian refugees across the region. We are also working with the international community and UNRWA to explore how best to ensure the continuity of essential services to Palestinian refugees at this time.

<https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Lords/2018-04-23/HL7165/>

Gaza: Medical Equipment

Baroness Tonge (Non-affiliated) [HL7196] To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the lack of medical and surgical equipment in Gaza.

Lord Bates: According to the World Health Organisation, in February 2018 a total of 42% of the 516 essential drugs were completely depleted. This includes drugs used in emergency departments and other critical units. Out of the 853 essential disposables, which include surgical equipment, 23% were completely depleted. According to the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs the health sector is being further strained by the recent deaths and injuries suffered during protests in Gaza.

<https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Lords/2018-04-23/HL7196/>

Foreign and Commonwealth Office

Statement from UK on President Abbas' comments

Minister Burt said:

At a highly sensitive time in the region, when we must all look forwards and work urgently towards a resolution of the longstanding issues between Israel and the Palestinian people, the fundamentals of peace cannot be built on views of the Holocaust which fly in the face of history. Palestinian President Abbas's comments at the Palestinian National Congress were deeply concerning. Any attempt to justify or explain away any element of the Holocaust is unacceptable.

President Abbas has shown a commitment to non-violence and a two-state solution. But his recent rhetoric does not serve the interests of the Palestinian people and is deeply unhelpful to the cause of peace.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/statement-from-uk-on-president-abbas-comments>

United Nations

Statement by UN Special Coordinator Mladenov on President Abbas' speech at the opening of the Palestinian National Council

"Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas chose to use his speech at the opening of the Palestinian National Council to repeat some of the most contemptuous anti-Semitic slurs, including the suggestion that the social behavior of Jews was the cause for the Holocaust. Such statements are unacceptable, deeply disturbing and do not serve the interests of the Palestinian people or peace in the Middle East.

Denying the historic and religious connection of the Jewish people to the land and their holy sites in Jerusalem stands in contrast to reality.

The Holocaust did not occur in a vacuum, it was the result of thousands of years of persecution. This is why attempts to rewrite, downplay or deny it are dangerous.

Leaders have an obligation to confront anti-Semitism everywhere and always, not perpetuate the conspiracy theories that fuel it."

<https://unsco.unmissions.org/statement-un-special-coordinator-mladenov-president-abbas-speech-opening-palestinian-national>

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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>

Report Stage, House of Lords

[https://hansard.parliament.uk/lords/2018-05-02/debates/28839055-F2B2-497C-A4DF-D797224BC747/EuropeanUnion\(Withdrawal\)Bill](https://hansard.parliament.uk/lords/2018-05-02/debates/28839055-F2B2-497C-A4DF-D797224BC747/EuropeanUnion(Withdrawal)Bill)

Notices of amendments

<https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/bills/lbill/2017-2019/0079/18079-R-V.pdf>

and

[https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/bills/lbill/2017-2019/0079/18079-R-V\(a\).pdf](https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/bills/lbill/2017-2019/0079/18079-R-V(a).pdf)

and

[https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/bills/lbill/2017-2019/0079/18079-R-V\(b\).pdf](https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/bills/lbill/2017-2019/0079/18079-R-V(b).pdf)

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>

Measures to further improve the effectiveness of the fight against illegal content online

(closing date 25 June 2018)

https://ec.europa.eu/info/consultations/public-consultation-measures-further-improve-effectiveness-fight-against-illegal-content-online_en

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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