

Political Affairs Digest

A daily summary of political events affecting the Jewish Community
Scottish Council of Jewish Communities
SCoJeC

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Richard Burden (Labour) [164836] To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, what recent discussions he has had with his counterpart in the US Administration on development plans to tackle the humanitarian situation in Gaza.

Alistair Burt: I discussed plans to improve the humanitarian situation in Gaza with the US Administration, during my visit to Washington D.C. on 12-13 July.

<https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Commons/2018-07-17/164836/>

Gaza: Humanitarian Aid

Richard Burden (Labour) [164837] To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, what recent discussions he has had with his counterpart in the Palestinian Authority on development plans to tackle the humanitarian situation in Gaza.

Alistair Burt: The former Foreign Secretary spoke to President Mahmoud Abbas of the Palestinian Authority (PA) on 16 May and raised his concerns about the humanitarian and political situation in Gaza, particularly in relation to protests taking place along the Gaza/Israel security fence. He noted that calm and restraint was required from all sides. Our Consul General in Jerusalem routinely discusses the humanitarian situation in Gaza with PA ministers, doing so most recently with the Minister of Health on 19 July.

<https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Commons/2018-07-17/164837/>

Razan Al Najjar

Faisal Rashid (Labour) [165179] To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, whether he has received information from his Israeli counterpart on the cause of death of the Palestinian medic Razan Al Najjar.

Alistair Burt: We have not received any information on this issue directly from the Israeli authorities, we understand that the Israeli probe into the death of Razan Al Najjar is still ongoing.

<https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Commons/2018-07-17/165179/>

Palestinians: Overseas Aid

Joan Ryan (Labour) [166052] To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, with reference to the Initial Assessment of the UK National Contact Point for the OECD Guidelines for Multinational Enterprises of 15 June on a complaint against PwC, what assessment the Government has made reports of claims from PwC that it was not required to investigate whether Palestinian Authority funding was used to pay convicted terrorists.

George Hollingbery: The UK National Contact Point has published its Initial Assessment of the complaint made by a UK NGO. This concluded that the issues raised in the complaint merit further examination. The Initial Assessment is not an indication of any wrongdoing by the respondent. The UK National Contact Point is now working with both parties to facilitate mediation on the issues raised. In line with its procedures, the NCP will not be expected to publish further information on the case until this stage of the process is complete and a Final Statement has been prepared.

<https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Commons/2018-07-19/166052/>

House of Lords Written Answer

Israel: Palestinians

Baroness Tonge (Non-affiliated) [HL9573] To ask Her Majesty's Government what discussions the Prime Minister had with President Trump about his Middle East peace plan during his recent visit.

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: A wide range of topics related to the Middle East were discussed. We continue to engage with the US Administration on the Middle East Peace Process.

<https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Lords/2018-07-16/HL9573/>

Scottish Parliament Motion

S5M-13305 Sandra White (SNP): The Basic Law: Israel as the Nation State of the Jewish People – That the Parliament notes with concern the passing of the legislation, The Basic Law: Israel as the Nation State of the Jewish People, by 62-55 in the Knesset on 19 July 2018; understands that the legislation states that "The state views the development of Jewish settlement as a national value and will act to encourage and promote its establishment and consolidation", as well as measures that elevate Hebrew to the official language, with Arabic having only a special status; further understands that this legislation was opposed by Arab members of the Knesset and criticised by the Arab League due to the lack of equality and commitment to democracy; notes the statement by the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, Zeid Ra'ad Al Hussein, that "adoption by Israel of the Nation State Basic Law – which anchors inherent discrimination against non-Jewish communities, most notably the Arab citizens of Israel and residents of occupied East Jerusalem – could also further inflame tensions", and calls on the international community to stand together to condemn this legislation and ensure that tensions are not further increased.

<http://www.parliament.scot/parliamentarybusiness/28877.aspx?SearchType=Advance&ReferenceNumbers=S5M-13305>

Acute lack of funding threatens critical aid for Palestinians : UN agency

... UNRWA Spokesperson Chris Gunness ... [said] Following the United States decision to cut back its funding for UNRWA this year by US\$300 million dollars, the agency worked to mobilise political and financial support around the globe in order to maintain its operations and continue providing essential services to its beneficiaries. ...

“We are still in crisis. Let no one claim otherwise”, stressed Mr. Gunness. “But we are also determined to maintain core services to the millions of Palestine refugees who rely on us in Jordan, Lebanon, the occupied Palestinian territory, and Syria, and preserve what we can of our emergency assistance.” ...

To address the increasingly “alarming” economic situation in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, the World Bank’s Board recommended on Wednesday that US\$90 million be allocated to support economic recovery and job opportunities for Palestinians in Gaza and the West Bank, representing a major increase from its yearly allocation of \$55 million. ...

“Our assistance intends to provide hope and prospects for Palestinians, especially the youth, and to break the vicious cycle of unemployment, poverty, and instability,” said Marina Wes, World Bank Country Director for the West Bank and Gaza. ...

To read the full press release see

<https://news.un.org/en/story/2018/07/1015502>

... Detrimental Impact of Israeli Occupation, Among Texts Adopted as Economic and Social Council Concludes Coordination, Management Meeting

... Economic and Social Repercussions of the Israeli Occupation

Tarik Alami, Director of the Emerging and Conflict Related Issues Division, United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA), introduced the note of the Secretary-General on the economic and social repercussions of the Israeli occupation (document E/2018/69). He said that Palestinians continue to suffer from discriminatory Israeli practices. In violation of international law and standards, the Israeli military continues to use force against the Palestinians, who also suffer from attacks by Israeli settlers. The demolition of Palestinian homes and structures contributes to a coercive environment in the West Bank. More than 80 per cent of those in Gaza rely on humanitarian aid, he said, and the poverty rate there continues to increase. The detrimental effect of more than 50 years of occupation is multi-layered and has far-reaching impacts on the Palestinian population. Cycles of violence will not end and peace will not be attained until the root causes of the conflict are addressed.

The representative of Syria said that Israel is pursuing illegal and discriminatory practices in the Golan. Israel is attempting to “get rid of the Syrian people’s identity” by imposing Israeli citizenship. Israeli efforts to organize elections in four towns in the Golan are a flagrant violation of the relevant Security Council resolutions.

The representative of Israel expressed disappointment in the content of the report, which she said contains false and inaccurate information. There are many examples of cooperation between Israel and the Palestinians, yet those examples are excluded. The report blames Israelis for the challenges faced by the Palestinians, yet there is no mention of Hamas, which is a terrorist regime that denies the Palestinians their basic human rights.

The observer for the State of Palestine stressed that nothing could compensate for a State colonizing the lands of others and preventing the people there from living in dignity. Israel has sought to undermine the contiguity of the Palestinian lands and has overtaken the natural resources found there — actions which make the Israeli occupation illegal. Israeli policies are designed to allow for settlements to flourish at the expense of a Palestinian State.

The representative of Egypt then introduced the draft resolution titled “Economic and

social repercussions of the Israeli occupation on the living conditions of the Palestinian people in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, and the Arab population in the occupied Syrian Golan” (document E/2018/L.19). ... Israel’s illegal policies have deplorable effects on the living conditions of the Palestinian people, he said, adding that Israel’s practices in the occupied Syrian Golan resulted in the Syrian people experiencing restrictions in accessing natural resources and social services. ...

The representative of Israel then introduced the amendment (document E/2018/L.27), stressing that the resolution served no other purpose than to unfairly target his country. The resolution makes no mention of the crimes committed by Hamas, which rules Gaza by an “iron fist”. He proposed an amendment to operative paragraph 13 of the resolution.

Speaking before the vote, the observer for the State of Palestine said that Israel continues to withhold the bodies of Palestinians, which calls into question Israel’s credibility.

The representative of the United States said the resolution makes no mention of the actions of Hamas, which did nothing to better the lives of the Palestinian people. At the very least, the Council should hold Hamas accountable for holding prisoners. ...

The observer for the State of Palestine said that the resolution was not “anti-Israel”, but rather was “anti-colonialism”. ...

The Council then took note of the Secretary-General’s report on assistance to the Palestinian people (document E/2018/72).

To read the full press release see

<https://www.un.org/press/en/2018/ecosoc6946.doc.htm>

Economic and social repercussions of the Israeli occupation on the living conditions of the Palestinian people in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, and of the Arab population in the occupied Syrian Golan (E/2018/69)

<http://undocs.org/E/2018/69>

Egypt: draft resolution – Economic and social repercussions of the Israeli occupation on the living conditions of the Palestinian people in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, and the Arab population in the occupied Syrian Golan (E/2018/L.19)

<http://undocs.org/E/2018/L.19>

Israel: amendment to draft resolution E/2018/L.19 – Economic and social repercussions of the Israeli occupation on the living conditions of the Palestinian people in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, and the Arab population in the occupied Syrian Golan (E/2018/L.27)

<https://documents-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/LTD/N18/230/77/PDF/N1823077.pdf?OpenElement>

Assistance to the Palestinian people: Report of the Secretary-General (E/2018/72)

<https://undocs.org/E/2018/72>

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Other Relevant Information

CST

CST Antisemitic Incidents Report for January-June 2018 published today

This report shows that the number of antisemitic hate incidents reported to CST in the UK fell by 8 per cent in the first six months of 2018 compared to the same period in 2017.

However, the total of 727 antisemitic incidents recorded by CST in the first six months of 2018 was the second-highest total CST has ever recorded for the January to June period of any year. ...

CST recorded over 100 antisemitic incidents in every one of the six months from January to June 2018, continuing a pattern of historically high monthly totals exceeding 100 incidents in all but two months since April 2016. This is unprecedented: for comparison, CST only recorded monthly totals above 100 incidents on six occasions in the decade prior to April 2016. This sustained high level of antisemitic incidents suggests an enduring situation in which people with antisemitic attitudes appear to be more confident to express their views; while incident victims and reporters may be more motivated to report the antisemitism they experience or encounter.

The two highest monthly totals in the first half of 2018 came in April and May, which saw 139 and 160 antisemitic incidents respectively. It is likely that these higher monthly totals were partly caused by reactions to political events in the UK and overseas, involving the Labour Party and violence on the border of Israel and Gaza, during those months. ...

CST recorded 163 antisemitic incidents that involved social media in the first six months of 2018, comprising 22 per cent of the overall total of 727 incidents, compared to 145 incidents on social media in the first half of 2017 (18 per cent of the total). ... The number of incidents on social media recorded by CST in the second quarter of 2018 was roughly double the number recorded in the first three months of the year; whereas incidents involving verbal abuse – which is more likely to reflect street-level anti-social behaviour rather than being politically motivated – only increased by 23 per cent over the same period.

CST recorded a 26 per cent decrease in the number of violent antisemitic assaults, from 80 in the first six months of 2017 to 59 in the first half of 2018. None of these violent incidents were classified by CST as 'Extreme Violence', which would mean they involved potential grievous bodily harm (GBH) or a threat to life. ...

The most common single type of incident recorded by CST in the first six months of 2018 involved verbal abuse randomly directed at visibly Jewish people in public. ...

There were 43 incidents of Damage & Desecration of Jewish property in the first six months of 2018; 544 incidents of Abusive Behaviour, including verbal abuse, antisemitic graffiti, antisemitic abuse via social media and one-off cases of hate mail; 53 direct antisemitic threats; and 28 cases of mass-mailed antisemitic leaflets or emails. ...

To read the full press release see

<https://cst.org.uk/news/blog/2018/07/25/cst-antisemitic-incidents-report-for-january-june-2018-published-today>

Antisemitic Incidents: January–June 2018

<https://cst.org.uk/public/data/file/e/5/Incidents%20Report%20January-June%202018.pdf>

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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>

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>

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Consultations

** new or updated today

Financial Memorandum of the Human Tissue (Authorisation) (Scotland) Bill

(closing date 31 August 2018)

<http://www.parliament.scot/parliamentarybusiness/CurrentCommittees/109042.aspx>

Human Tissue (Authorisation) (Scotland) Bill (closing date 4 September 2018)

<http://www.parliament.scot/parliamentarybusiness/CurrentCommittees/108999.aspx>

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/>

Antisemitism: Survey of European Jews (closing date not stated)

<http://www.eurojews.eu/>

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