

# Political Affairs Digest

*A daily summary of political events affecting the Jewish Community*

Scottish Council of Jewish Communities

SCoJeC

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## Home Affairs

### Downing Street

#### **PM launches series of measures to tackle barriers facing ethnic minorities in the workplace**

... Developed jointly by the government and Business in the Community (BITC), the new Race at Work Charter announced by the Prime Minister today will commit businesses to a bold set of principles and actions designed to drive forward a step-change in the recruitment and progression of ethnic minority employees. ...

Alongside the Race at Work Charter, the Prime Minister will also today launch a consultation on ethnicity pay reporting in response to the Race Disparity Audit's [Ethnicity facts and figures website](#) data, which reveals significant disparities in the pay and progression of ethnic minority employees compared to their white counterparts. ...

Prime Minister Theresa May said: Every employee deserves the opportunity to progress and fulfil their potential in their chosen field, regardless of which background they are from, but too often ethnic minority employees feel they're hitting a brick wall when it comes to career progression. ...

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***To read the full press release see***

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/pm-launches-series-of-measures-to-tackle-barriers-facing-ethnic-minorities-in-the-workplace>

### Cabinet Office

#### **Race Disparity Audit**

[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/686071/Revised\\_RDA\\_report\\_March\\_2018.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/686071/Revised_RDA_report_March_2018.pdf)

## Ministry of Justice

### Tackling racial disparity in the criminal justice system: 2018

[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/747335/tackling-racial-disparity-criminal-justice-system-2018-update-web.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/747335/tackling-racial-disparity-criminal-justice-system-2018-update-web.pdf)

## Department for Business, Energy & Industrial Strategy

### Race at work 2018: McGregor-Smith review - one year on

[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/746970/BITC Race At Work Report.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/746970/BITC_Race_At_Work_Report.pdf)

## Department for Education

### Statement of intent on the diversity of the teaching workforce – setting the case for a diverse teaching workforce

[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/747586/Statement of intent on the diversity of the teaching workforce.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/747586/Statement_of_intent_on_the_diversity_of_the_teaching_workforce.pdf)

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## Israel

### House of Commons Oral Answer

#### Topical Questions: International Development

**Jack Lopresti (Conservative):** Does my hon. Friend share my concern about the Palestinian Authority's continuing naming of schools after terrorists and the payment of salaries to convicted murderers? Can we be sure that UK taxpayers are not facilitating payments?

**Alistair Burt:** My hon. Friend can be absolutely sure that we share his concern in relation to this. The matter is continually raised with the Palestinian Authority. There should be no incitement to terror and no incitement to violence. We make rigorously sure that no UK taxpayers' money is spent on this.

<https://hansard.parliament.uk/commons/2018-10-10/debates/18CB4D32-4696-43B5-AD5D-18000EF0B85A/TopicalQuestions#contribution-7D7B8A18-1530-4629-8811-CCEA7764EE44>

### House of Commons Written Answers

#### USA: UNRWA

**Tom Brake (Liberal Democrat)** [173938] To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, what representations he has made to the US Government on its decision to withdraw funding from the UN Relief and Works Agency.

**Alistair Burt:** The Foreign Secretary discussed the issue of the UN Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA) with the Senior Adviser to the President, Jared Kushner, on 22 August. We are concerned about the impact of the US cutting its funding. The Government has recently increased its support to UNRWA. The UK has so far provided £57.5 million in funding this year for the Agency to help vulnerable Palestinian refugees, as well as £2 million to the United Nations Children's Fund

(UNICEF), to help provide Gazans with access to clean water and sanitation.

<https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Commons/2018-09-12/173938/>

#### **Palestinians: USA**

**Matthew Pennycook (Labour)** [906954] What assessment she has made of the effect on Palestinian refugees of recent reductions in US aid.

**Alistair Burt:** Proactive UK lobbying has helped reduce the UN Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees' (UNRWA) immediate financing shortfall. However, the withdrawal of US funding could exacerbate the future humanitarian needs of Palestinian refugees and threaten regional security. The UK Government has committed to provide £57.5 million to UNRWA this year.

<https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Commons/2018-10-10/906954/>

#### **Israel: Palestinians**

**Jim Shannon (DUP)** [174719] To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, what recent discussions he has had with the Norwegian Refugee Council on Israel and the Palestinian Territories.

**Alistair Burt:** The Foreign and Commonwealth Office officials regularly meet with the Norwegian Refugee Council to discuss the situation in the Occupied Palestinian Territories and to get updates on the progress of the British funded legal aid programme. The programme supports Bedouin communities and Palestinians facing demolition or eviction in Area C of the West Bank to challenge decisions in the Israeli legal system.

<https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Commons/2018-09-13/174719/>

#### **Palestinians: Overseas Aid**

**Jack Lopresti (Conservative)** [906958] What processes are in place to monitor UK aid spending in the Palestinian Territories.

**Alistair Burt:** DFID continuously monitors UK aid spending in the Occupied Palestinian Territories. We rigorously manage delivery partners according to the Supply Partner Code of Conduct, map the flow of funds through the delivery chain, and all our programmes are subject to independent audits. We evaluate and improve our programmes regularly through annual reviews.

<https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Commons/2018-10-10/906958/>

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## **Foreign Affairs**

### **House of Commons Oral Answers**

#### **Freedom of Religion or Belief**

3. **George Howarth (Labour):** What plans she has to promote the right to freedom of religion or belief in developing countries. [906949]

**The Minister of State, Department for International Development (Harriett Baldwin):** The UK promotes and protects the right to freedom of religion or belief internationally. Through our UK Aid Connect scheme, up to £12 million will be available over the next four years for organisations to promote the building of freedom of religion or belief.

**George Howart:** I thank the Minister for her response. Will she give us some information about what she will do to collect better data about religious freedom and minority belief freedom in the countries where her Department supports programmes?

**Harriett Baldwin:** Clearly the right hon. Gentleman raises an important issue. I am delighted to be able to tell him that we are working closely with colleagues in the Foreign and Commonwealth Office on a project that will generate exactly that evidence on the persecution of religious minorities. The project's long-term objective is to generate data to better inform international policymakers to promote freedom of religion or belief more effectively.

**Caroline Spelman (Conservative):** Religious literacy is crucial to understanding the way in which our policies affect developing countries. I am therefore glad that the FCO has relaunched its course on that, but it is only voluntary. What more can be done to encourage DFID staff to take up such courses?

**Harriett Baldwin:** ... [Caroline Spelman] will be aware that the Prime Minister has recently appointed Lord Ahmad as her special envoy on freedom of religion or belief. In that role, he has the important job of ensuring that that is taken up as widely as possible. ...

<https://hansard.parliament.uk/commons/2018-10-10/debates/D92E68C6-4446-4CF4-8307-52DDC32C1247/FreedomOfReligionOrBelief>

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## Other Relevant Information

### Equality and Human Rights Commission

#### **Britain's conflicting attitudes towards equality**

... An extensive survey from the Equality and Human Rights Commission found that despite three-quarters (74%) of people agreeing that there should be equality for all groups, 42% of Britons have experienced some form of prejudice in the last 12 months. There is also resistance to improving equal opportunities for groups such as immigrants and Muslims. ...

Discrimination was seen to vary in seriousness depending on which protected group it related to: 70% saw prejudice on the basis of race as a somewhat, very or extremely serious issue, but only 44% thought the same about age-related prejudice. ...

David Isaac, Chair of the Equality and Human Rights Commission, said: 'It is encouraging that so many people agree that equality should be for everyone, but it's disappointing that a number of others believe that protections have gone too far for certain groups. It's very clear that some people are still conflicted about equality and that prejudices still risk fostering discrimination in Britain.

'It's disturbing that some people feel comfortable expressing negative views about others – especially members of the Gypsy, Roma and Traveller, Muslim and transgender communities. Openly voicing negative attitudes can hinder constructive debate about the barriers people face and creates divisions and mistrust in society. ...

Other findings include:

- around a third of British adults felt that efforts to provide equal opportunities had gone 'too far' in the case of immigrants (37%) and Muslims (33%)
- around one-fifth of respondents said they would feel uncomfortable if either an immigrant or a Muslim person lived next door (19% and 18% respectively), and 14% said they would feel uncomfortable if a transgender person lived next door
- in the past year 70% of Muslims surveyed experienced religion-based prejudice, 64% of people from a black ethnic background experienced race-based prejudice, 61% of people with a mental health condition experienced disability-based

prejudice and 46% of lesbian, gay or bisexual people experienced homophobic prejudice ...

**To read the full press release see**

<https://www.equalityhumanrights.com/en/our-work/news/britains-conflicting-attitudes-towards-equality>

**Developing a national barometer of prejudice and discrimination in Britain**

<https://www.equalityhumanrights.com/sites/default/files/national-barometer-of-prejudice-and-discrimination-in-britain.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>

**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>

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## **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/>

**The future of civil partnership in Scotland** (closing date 21 December 2018)

<https://consult.gov.scot/family-law/the-future-of-civil-partnership-in-scotland/>

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