

# 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

### House of Commons Written Answer

#### Hate Crime

**Jo Stevens (Labour)** [180795] To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what assessment he has made of trends in the level of reported hate crime since January 2015; and if he will make a statement.

**Victoria Atkins:** The Home Office holds hate crime data for all police forces in England and Wales on an annual basis. The number of hate crimes recorded by the police has increased by 79% between 2014/15 and 2017/18, from 52,465 to 98,098 offences. This increase is thought to be driven by general improvements by the police in how they record crime, better identification of hate crimes, willingness of victims to come forward, and a genuine increase in these offences around certain events such as the EU Referendum and the terrorist attacks in 2017.

Better recording is an important part of how to tackle hate crime and support victims. However, it should be seen in the context of the latest data from the independent Crime Survey for England and Wales which shows there has been a downward trend in hate crime incidence with hate crime falling by 40% over the last decade.

On 16 October 2018 the Government published *'Action Against Hate: The UK Government's plan for tackling hate crime: "two years on"'* - a refresh of the 2016 Hate Crime Action Plan, which includes an update on action so far and new commitments in relation to increasing the reporting and recording of hate crime.

<https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Commons/2018-10-17/180795/>

The refresh of the Hate Crime Action Plan referred to above can be read at

[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/748175/Hate\\_crime\\_refresh\\_2018\\_FINAL\\_WEB.PDF](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/748175/Hate_crime_refresh_2018_FINAL_WEB.PDF)

### Welsh Assembly Oral Answer

#### Racism and Hate Crime

**Joyce Watson (Labour):** Could we have a statement on the rise of racism and hate

crime in Wales since 2016? And I'm sure that you'd like to share with me the absolute disgust about the incident that happened on a Ryanair flight at the weekend and say that there is no place for this sort of behaviour, certainly across the world, but more specifically here in Wales.

And the facts are simple, that, since the referendum vote, the figures of race crime and hate crime have shot through the roof. Police figures obtained through a freedom of information request show that incidents surged by 23 per cent, Gwent being the biggest area that was affected, with a rise of 77 per cent—that's a 77 per cent rise in incidents from the previous year. That's an unparalleled rise during the time that these records have been kept. Now, those incidents reported in the past year included a Muslim woman being dragged along the pavement by her hijab, two Polish men being attacked in the street, resulting in the death of one of them, a Muslim man and woman being squirted with acid, leaving them with life-changing injuries—these are the most despicable crimes and they have been fuelled by racism and hatred towards the other. There is no area whatsoever in the UK that hasn't escaped these crimes, even those areas where they have voted very strongly to stay in the EU. And there were—76 per cent of incidents were restricted to verbal abuse; 14 per cent of cases involved threat of actual or physical violence. ...

In terms of hate crime, 40 per cent of them are in terms of religion and over 50 per cent of them are against Muslim people, and just less than that against Jewish people. So, there's a real need, I feel, for us to take hold of this. I raise it now, because the police are bracing themselves for much more of the same and higher levels of incidents once we leave the EU.

**Leader of the House and Chief Whip (Julie James):** Well, Joyce Watson highlights a very worrying set of figures and trends and some of the specific instances that we've all been absolutely horrified to know are happening. I do think there's a small ray of hope in that the number of reported hate crimes is rising, and we feel very strongly that that means that there's more faith in the system so that reporting the crime will actually have some desired outcome. I do want, as I always say, Llywydd, on these occasions, to encourage people who experience any kind of crime to come forward so that we are aware and action can be taken. It's very much our top priority to encourage that they come forward and to ensure that people feel satisfied with how their case is handled once they have come forward. From all of our statistics, we're making very good progress in that regard. We do have a good model in the national hate crime report and support centre, run by Victim Support, who work alongside a network of dedicated staff and the four police forces in Wales. The centre plays a vital role, as I know Joyce Watson knows, in supporting victims of hate crime in Wales, and I've provided funding for the service until 2020. But she's quite right—there's much more that can still be done. This year, we have made £5,000 available to each of the four police and crime commissioners in Wales and Victim Support Cymru to support them in a range of activities to promote hate crime awareness during hate crime awareness week 2018. I was delighted to speak at that last week. I would very much welcome a cross-party debate on the rise of reported hate crime and would very much welcome that initiative coming from the back benches.

<http://record.assembly.wales/Plenary/5359#C129203>

*Information about the first incident referred to above can be read at*

<https://tellmamauk.org/rpitiful-response-from-ryanair-staff-shows-that-staff-need-training-in-dealing-with-racism/>

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## House of Commons Written Answers

### Israel: Bedouin

**Paula Sherriff (Labour)** [180244] To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, pursuant to the oral contribution by the Minister for the Middle East of 4 July 2018, Official Report, column 333, on the demolition of Khan al-Ahmar, what progress he has made on the investigation.

**Alistair Burt:** My officials have looked into the matter and understand that demolitions are carried out by private contractors on behalf of the Israeli authorities. I can assure you that the Government is fully committed to encouraging respect for human rights among UK businesses, including promoting the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights and the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development Guidelines. Where a company decides to trade is however a decision for each company to reach. At Prime Minister's Questions on 17 October, the Prime Minister reiterated the UK's strong opposition to Israel's proposed demolition of Khan al-Ahmar.

<https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Commons/2018-10-16/180244/>

*The Minister for the Middle East's comments referred to above can be read at*

<https://hansard.parliament.uk/commons/2018-07-04/debates/B11012E4-6183-4928-8DE6-A1192AB77665/DemolitionOfKhanAl-Ahmar#contribution-0C3AF56A-C7D5-4515-8CEC-8A9375D1DCFF>

*The Prime Minister's comments referred to above can be read at*

<https://hansard.parliament.uk/commons/2018-10-17/debates/6A796B16-4B20-4822-B244-9FD46D22DEFD/Engagements#contribution-03FEE6B7-A23A-4420-9320-87F441F836CC>

### Israel: Palestinians

**Alan Brown (SNP)** [180249] To ask the Secretary of State for International Development, what estimate she has made of the amount of international aid funding allocated to properties at Khirbet al-Halawah that were demolished by Israeli forces; what (a) discussions she has had with her counterparts in the EU and (b) representations she has made to the Israeli Government on those demolitions; and if she will make a statement.

**Alistair Burt:** According to the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UN OCHA), nine structures have been demolished in Khirbet al-Halawah so far in 2018, of which four were donor funded. We have not made an estimate of the value of international aid allocated to these structures. No structures directly funded by the UK in the West Bank in recent years have been demolished. Whilst we have not raised these specific demolitions with counterparts in the European Union or the Government of Israel, we continue to raise concerns with the Israeli authorities about demolitions and evictions of Palestinians from their homes in general, which cause unnecessary suffering to ordinary Palestinians, calls into question Israel's commitment to a viable two-state solution, and, in all but the most exceptional cases, are contrary to International Humanitarian Law.

The UK supports Palestinian communities at risk of forcible transfer in Area C of the West Bank through a legal aid programme, which helps residents challenge decisions in the Israeli legal system. Additionally, we are supporting Palestinian development in Area C and helping nearly 500 Palestinian families to remain on their land through improving infrastructure and enabling access to education and health services.

<https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Commons/2018-10-16/180249/>

## Israel: Palestinians

**Rushanara Ali (Labour)** [180314] To ask the Secretary of State for International Development, what assessment her Department has made of the effect of Israeli Government restrictions on the movement of goods into Gaza on UNWRA provided aid and humanitarian resources in each of the last five years.

**Alistair Burt:** I remain deeply concerned about restrictions on movement and access in Gaza, and the impact that this is having on the humanitarian situation. We have not made a specific assessment of the effect of these restrictions on UNRWA, which liaises with the Government of Israel directly to coordinate the movement of goods for their operations. Nevertheless, my officials and I regularly raise the need to ease restrictions on Gaza with our counterparts in the Government of Israel.

<https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Commons/2018-10-16/180314/>

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## Other Relevant Information

### Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE)

#### **Participants discuss good practices for combating intolerance and discrimination, especially regarding religion or belief, at OSCE conference in Rome**

Government officials and representatives of civil society and religious communities discussed good practices for addressing racism, xenophobia and other forms of discrimination, including on the basis of gender, and for countering anti-Semitism and intolerance against Muslims, Christians and members of other religions ...

“Despite extensive, long-standing and well-meaning commitments, intolerance and discrimination remain a reality for many members of different religious or belief communities, ethnic or other minority groups in the OSCE region,” the ODIHR Director said. “We need to counter polarization, which in light of history, carries a tremendous risk to peace and security, to the detriment of all. Once the principle of tolerance has been eroded and we start down the slippery slope of allowing intolerance and discrimination to thrive, no group – and I repeat, no group – can assume that they are immune.” ...

**To read the full press release see**

<https://www.osce.org/chairmanship/400703>

### United Nations

#### **France: Banning the niqab violated two Muslim women’s freedom of religion - UN experts**

In two landmark decisions, the United Nations Human Rights Committee found that France violated the human rights of two women by fining them for wearing the niqab, a full-body Islamic veil. ...

France in 2010 adopted a law stipulating that “No one may, in a public space, wear any article of clothing intended to conceal the face.” The law has the effect of banning the wearing of the full Islamic veil in public, which covers the whole body including the face, leaving just a narrow slit for the eyes.

The Committee found that the general criminal ban on the wearing of the niqab in public introduced by the French law disproportionately harmed the petitioners’ right to manifest their religious beliefs, and that France had not adequately explained why it was necessary to prohibit this clothing. In particular, the Committee was not persuaded by

France's claim that a ban on face covering was necessary and proportionate from a security standpoint or for attaining the goal of "living together" in society. The Committee acknowledged that States could require that individuals show their faces in specific circumstances for identification purposes, but considered that a general ban on the niqab was too sweeping for this purpose. The Committee also concluded that the ban, rather than protecting fully veiled women, could have the opposite effect of confining them to their homes, impeding their access to public services and marginalizing them. ...

**To read the full press release see**

<https://www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=23750&LangID=E>

## Natan Fund

**Deadline for letters of inquiry: 21 November 2018**

Grants are available in the following four areas:

Confronting Antisemitism: tackling Europe-based antisemitism, addressing antisemitism education among teenagers, and addressing antisemitic issues with non-Jewish audiences;

Jewish Connections: supporting innovative models for connecting people, especially disengaged Jews, to Jewish practice and experiences, and Jewish culture and ideas;

ROI Entrepreneurs: supporting individual social entrepreneurs, community builders, and very early-stage programmes that engage young Jews in Jewish religion, culture, and community;

Jerusalem: supporting urban renewal efforts in Jerusalem.

**For full information and to apply see**

<http://natan.org/cgi-bin/grants/grants.pl>

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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/>

**2021 Census: Outputs Strategy Consultation for Northern Ireland** (closing date 9 January 2019)

<https://www.finance-ni.gov.uk/sites/default/files/consultations/dfp/2021-census-outputs-strategy-consultation-for-northern-ireland-document.pdf>

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