

Political Affairs Digest

A daily summary of political events affecting the Jewish Community

Scottish Council of Jewish Communities

SCoJeC

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Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government

Lord Bourne encourages schools to celebrate diversity and build inclusive relationships

... Jointly funded with the Department for Education with support from the Pears Foundation, the Schools Linking Programme currently engages with 18,000 children and young people from different backgrounds across the country and provides sustained opportunities for them to meet, build new relationships, work together and contribute to their wider neighbourhoods.

These opportunities include taking part in competitive sports to boost team-working skills, creating collaborative artwork and community volunteering.

Faith Minister Lord Bourne of Aberystwyth said: Schools Linking is a great example of how children and young people from different backgrounds can come together to meet, learn and share interests that help them prepare for life in modern Britain and make them great citizens of the future.

The government is determined to support programmes such as these to ensure young people from all backgrounds have the opportunity to take part in challenging and rewarding experiences.

In March this year, the government set out an ambitious long-term plan of action to tackle the root causes of poor integration and create a stronger, more united Britain.

The [Integrated Communities Strategy green paper](#), to which £50 million will be committed over the next 2 years, sought views on the government's bold proposals to boost English language skills, increase opportunities for more women to enter the workplace, and promote British values and meaningful discussion between young people. ...

To read the full press release see

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/lord-bourne-encourages-schools-to-celebrate-diversity-and-build-inclusive-relationships>

Ministry of Justice

Her Majesty's Prison and Probation Service Offender Equalities Annual Report

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/760093/hmpps-offender-equalities-2017-18.pdf

Police Service of Northern Ireland

Incidents and Crimes with a Hate Motivation Recorded by the Police in Northern Ireland: Update to 30 September 2018

<https://www.psnipolice.uk/globalassets/inside-the-psni/our-statistics/hate-motivation-statistics/2018-19/q2/hate-motivations-bulletin-sep-18.pdf>

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Israel

House of Commons Oral Answer

Prime Minister's Questions

Desmond Swayne (Conservative): Is the Prime Minister concerned about religious persecution in the Holy Land, and will she welcome the visit of the Patriarch of Jerusalem?

The Prime Minister: I thank my right hon. Friend. Of course, he will know that this weekend marks the start of Advent, which is a time of expectation and hope for Christians. Today is Red Wednesday—a day when landmark buildings, including these Houses of Parliament, will turn scarlet as an act of solidarity with persecuted Christians.

I certainly welcome the Patriarch of Jerusalem's upcoming visit. I know that some Israelis can face additional structural challenges, particularly Christian and Muslim Arab Israelis, who experience higher rates of poverty and unemployment, and can face discrimination. We certainly encourage the Israeli Government to do all they can to uphold the values of equality for all enshrined in their laws. I give my right hon. Friend the assurance that I will continue to work with Governments, with the international community and with the United Nations to support the rights of minorities, including Christians.

<https://hansard.parliament.uk/commons/2018-11-28/debates/A39AB374-2392-4150-BB9E-A75543784F52/Engagements#contribution-61F9C856-E916-44CA-94D6-37A18ECCDC3A>

House of Commons Written Answers

Palestinians: Overseas Aid

Ian Austin (Labour) [194657] To ask the Secretary of State for International Development, whether the Memorandum of Understanding between her Department and the Palestinian National Authority signed in 2015 has been extended; and if she will place copies of all ministerial correspondence with the Palestinian Authority amending that agreement in the Library.

Alistair Burt: A Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between DFID and the Palestinian Authority (PA) originally in effect from July 2011 to March 2014 was extended to cover the period up to March 2016. This MoU set out the individual and shared commitments in the development partnership made between DFID and the PA during this time. DFID and the PA now sign MoUs annually, which oversee our programme of financial assistance to the PA.

I will place copies of relevant ministerial correspondence with the PA in the Library.

<https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Commons/2018-11-22/194657/>

The correspondence referred to above is not yet available online.

Palestinians: Overseas Aid

Ian Austin (Labour) [194658] To ask the Secretary of State for International Development, when her Department last made an assessment of the Palestinian National Authority's adherence to the principle of non-violence set out in the Memorandum of Understanding between her Department and that authority; and if she will make a statement.

Alistair Burt: The Palestinian Authority's (PA) commitment to the principle of non-violence is assessed as part of the annual Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) dialogue between DFID and the PA, and is kept under review throughout the year. The last MoU dialogue took place in May 2018. We continue to assess that the PA is committed to the principle of non-violence.

<https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Commons/2018-11-22/194658/>

Palestinians: Overseas Aid

Ian Austin (Labour) [194659] To ask the Secretary of State for International Development, on what date her Department last made an assessment of the Palestinian National Authority's adherence to its human rights commitments set out in the Memorandum of Understanding between her Department and that Authority; and if she will make a statement.

Alistair Burt: As part of our assessment of the Palestinian Authority's (PA) commitment to the Partnership Principles, DFID officials assess the PA's commitment to respecting human rights and other international obligations. This was most recently done in May 2018 as part of a formal annual meeting with the PA. The full Partnership Principles assessment is not public but I am happy to share a summary of the most recent assessment which concluded that the Palestinian Authority continues to demonstrate a credible commitment to the partnership principles under increasingly fragile and volatile conditions.

We are aware of the serious and concerning allegations made in the recent Human Rights Watch (HRW) report about human rights violations by the PA. We have immediately raised our concerns with the PA Ministry of Interior and continue to urge the PA to respect human rights, to ensure complaints of mistreatment or arbitrary detention are properly investigated and to continue to improve the performance of the security sector.

<https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Commons/2018-11-22/194659/>

The report referred to above can be read at

<https://www.hrw.org/report/2018/10/23/two-authorities-one-way-zero-dissent/arbitrary-arrest-and-torture-under>

Department for International Trade

Readout of Liam Fox meeting with Prime Minister Netanyahu

... The Trade Secretary and Prime Minister discussed the growing trade and investment relationship between the UK and Israel – which has reached record levels as more than \$9bn of goods were traded between the two countries last year – and the importance of ensuring bilateral trade continuity post-Brexit.

On continuity, the Trade Secretary welcomed Israeli cooperation in ensuring that trade agreements are rolled over and noted the significant progress that has been made in this regard.

The Trade Secretary briefed the Prime Minister on the Brexit process.

International Trade Secretary, The Rt Hon Dr Liam Fox MP said: I am looking forward to an enhanced and even more ambitious trade and investment relationship with Israel as

we work closer together going forward into the future.

Prime Minister of Israel Benjamin Netanyahu said: Britain is in fact our largest trade partner in Europe, one of our most important trading partners in the world and we value the friendship, we value the prospects for the future.

To read the full press release see

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/readout-of-liam-fox-meeting-with-prime-minister-netanyahu>

United Nations

Israelis, Palestinians Must Take Bold Steps to Restore Faith in Two-State Solution, Secretary-General Stresses, Marking International Day of Solidarity

... More than 40 years ago, the General Assembly established an International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People to remind us of our collective, unfinished task of resolving the question of Palestine. Over the decades, this has become one of the most intractable challenges for the international community, and we know only too well the tragic results.

Demolitions, illegal continued settlement expansion and construction, forced evictions and collective punitive measures will not bring peace. The same goes for violence and incitement, and similarly, unilateral steps will not resolve final status issues or the conflict. Only constructive negotiations, in good faith, and adhering to the long-established and agreed parameters for a two-State solution, will bring the desired, long-lasting solution.

Containing the situation is not sufficient. I call on all actors, and first and foremost the leadership of Israel and the Palestinian Authority, to take bold steps and restore faith in the promise of General Assembly resolution 181, of two States living side-by-side in peace and security, fulfilling the legitimate national aspirations of both peoples, with borders based on the 1967 lines and Jerusalem as the capital of both States - East Jerusalem being the capital of the Palestinian State.

It is the only way to achieve the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people. It is the only option for a comprehensive and just peace, and I call on the international community to intensify its engagement and reiterate its commitment to assist Palestinians and Israelis in reaching the two-State solution.

Today, in particular, our hearts are heavy with the suffering of the people in Gaza. Approximately 2 million Palestinians remain blocked in increasing poverty and unemployment, with limited access to adequate health, education, water and electricity. Young people see little prospect of a better future.

I urge Israel to lift restrictions on the movement of people and goods, which also hamper the efforts of the United Nations and other humanitarian agencies, without jeopardizing legitimate security concerns.

I call on Hamas and other militant groups to halt their military build-up in Gaza, including the indiscriminate launching of rockets and incendiary devices directed at Israel.

The violence during demonstrations at the Gaza fence is a matter of great concern. Palestinians in Gaza have legitimate grievances and the right to demonstrate peacefully. Hamas and the leaders of the demonstrations have a responsibility to prevent violent actions and provocations.

But for its part, Israel has a responsibility to exercise maximum restraint and to not use lethal force, except as a last resort against imminent threat of death or serious injury.

I am encouraged by the recent reduction of violence in Gaza. I commend the efforts of the Government of Egypt and key regional and international partners – together with my Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process – to improve the humanitarian situation in Gaza, restore calm and support intra-Palestinian reconciliation and the return of the legitimate Palestinian Government in Gaza.

I also salute the work of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA), delivering on its mandate despite unprecedented

challenges. I am grateful to all Member States who have stepped up their support to UNRWA to help uphold the dignity of Palestine refugees until the conflict is resolved as part of a final status agreement.

The United Nations will not waver in its commitment to the Palestinian people. On this International Day of Solidarity, let us reaffirm our commitment to upholding the rights of the Palestinian people and to building a future of peace, justice, security and dignity for Palestinians and Israelis alike.

<https://www.un.org/press/en/2018/sgsm19373.doc.htm>

Struggle of Palestinians Directed at Colonial Occupation of Land, People, Not Judaism, Permanent Observer Tells Solidarity Meeting

Cheikh Niang (Senegal), Chair of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People, noted that Israel obtained its independence after the adoption of General Assembly resolution 181 (1947) while Palestine remains pigeon-holed as an Observer State. The Palestinian people are still pursuing their inalienable rights, including the right to self-determination, he said, while highlighting the demolition of their infrastructure and villages, restrictions on their freedom of movement and the disproportionate use of force against Palestinian civilians. An illegal blockade in the Gaza Strip continues to isolate civilians, exacerbating tensions there, he pointed out, calling upon stakeholders to undertake without delay appropriate measures to mitigate the disastrous situation in the enclave. ...

Mario Fernanda Espinosa Garces (Ecuador), President of the General Assembly, said ... The international community owes it to the Palestinians to end their current nightmare and fight the collective numbness that occurs when suffering and death become the constant reality. ...

Riyad Mansour, Permanent Observer for the State of Palestine, spoke on behalf of President Mahmoud Abbas of the Palestinian Authority. Recalling that the General Assembly decided unfairly on 29 November 1947 to partition Mandate Palestine without the people's consent, he said that in the aftermath of that decision, the 1948 "Nakba" befell the indigenous Palestinian people, uprooting them from their lands while dispossessing and dispersing them throughout the region. "When will the international community uphold its obligations regarding this situation?" he asked. ...

He went on to state that the State of Palestine continues to exert efforts to unify its land and people, achieve reconciliation through Egypt's mediation, restore the national consensus and Government control and functions in Gaza and the West Bank "with one law, one Government and one legitimate security force". ... he also urged States that believe in a two-State solution and that recognize Israel to recognize the State of Palestine as well, a step that will help to reinforce justice and give the Palestinian people hope. He appealed to Member States to refrain from providing support or assistance to Israel in terms of entrenching and perpetuating the illegal situation ...

While reiterating the Palestinian people's full commitment to international law, relevant United Nations resolutions and a two-State solution, he emphasized: "But if efforts fail to achieve such a solution, the Palestinian people will not disappear, nor will they accept oppression and injustice as their fate." They will continue their legitimate struggle for the realization of their inalienable rights, striving for equal rights for all without discrimination, he added, reaffirming, however, that his people's struggle is not directed against Judaism as a religion, because they respect all religions. Rather, their struggle is against the colonial occupation of their land and people and the denial of their inalienable rights, including that of self-determination. ...

Marc Lamont Hill, activist and journalist, highlighted the Universal Declaration of Human Rights while calling attention to more than 60 Israeli laws that deny Palestinians their rights simply because they are not Jewish. Noting that Palestinians continue to be physically and psychologically tortured by Israel's justice system, he observed that they are routinely denied due process and placed under administrative detention without being charged. Israel's military courts have a conviction rate of more than 99 per cent,

he added, noting that the rate suggests Israel's Government is unwilling to offer Palestinians fair and impartial trials. Moreover, its new Nation State Law rejects Arabic as an official language and describes settlement expansion as a national value, he said. ... He added that solidarity means recognizing the right of Palestinians to self-defence, stressing that they must not be shamed for resisting in the face of State violence and ethnic cleansing.

To read the full press release see

<https://www.un.org/press/en/2018/gapal1418.doc.htm>

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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>

Palestinian Statehood (Recognition) Bill

<https://services.parliament.uk/Bills/2017-19/palestinianstatehoodrecognition.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>

Extremism in England and Wales (closing date 31 January 2018)

<https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/extremism-in-england-and-wales-call-for-evidence>

Draft guidance to challenge bullying in schools [Wales only] (closing date 15 February 2019)

<https://beta.gov.wales/draft-guidance-challenge-bullying-schools>

One Scotland: Hate Has No Home Here (closing date 24 February 2019)

<https://consult.gov.scot/hate-crime/consultation-on-scottish-hate-crime-legislation/>

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