

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 Answer

Ministry of Defence: Equality

Nia Griffith (Labour) [197453] To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, with reference to his Department's Civilian Personnel Biannual Diversity Dashboard, for what reason the answers that respondents can provide to the question on religious representation are limited to Christian, Non-Christian and secular.

Tobias Ellwood: Statistics on religious representation among Ministry of Defence (MOD) civilian staff, as published in the MOD's '*Civilian Personnel Biannual Diversity Dashboard*', are presented at an aggregate level so they can be reported clearly and reliably.

<https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Commons/2018-11-29/197453/>

The most recent Dashboard referred to above can be read at

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/661293/2017-10-15_-_Diversity_Dashboard_-_Oct_17_Publication_.pdf

House of Lords Written Answer

Hate Crime: Prosecutions

Lord Pearson of Rannoch (UKIP) [HL11726] To ask Her Majesty's Government, further to the reply by Baroness Vere of Norbiton on 6 December 2017 (HL Deb, col 1051), whether Baroness Vere of Norbiton wrote to the Director of Public Prosecutions to ask whether she agrees that the definition of hate crime is broader than what is in statute and on what authority any broadening was based; and if so, what reply she received.

Lord Keen of Elie: Baroness Vere of Norbiton wrote to the Director of Public Prosecutions (DPP) on 13 December 2017. The DPP provided her response on 9 January 2018.

In her response, the then DPP confirmed that the flagging definition for hate crime was agreed between the CPS and the NPCC (ACPO as it was then) in 2007 and that it is wider than the definition set out in legislation to ensure all relevant cases are captured.

The CPS adopted the recommended definition in the Macpherson report

published in 1999 as a result of the inquiry into the murder of Stephen Lawrence. The Macpherson report also recommended that 'this definition should be universally adopted by the Police, local Government and other relevant agencies'. The recommendations of the Macpherson report were welcomed by the Government at the time and the current Government remains in support of this position. The CPS has worked with police to implement the recommended definition across all strands of hate crime. The CPS takes tackling hate crime seriously and recognises the need to increase public confidence to report. The flagging definition is important in achieving this aim.

In order for a crime to be charged and prosecuted as a hate crime, the CPS uses the legal definitions contained in the Crime and Disorder Act 1998 (CDA 1998) and the Criminal Justice Act 2003 (CJA 2003). This means that not every incident that the victim or another person has perceived to be a hate crime will actually be a hate crime in law.

In her letter, the then DPP also confirmed that the CPS legal guidance recognises the potential impact of prosecutions on Article 10 of the European Convention on Human Rights (the right to freedom of expression). The CPS must balance the rights of an individual to freedom of speech against the duty of the state to act proportionately and to protect the rights of others.

<https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Lords/2018-11-22/HL11726/>

The answer referred to above can be read at

<https://hansard.parliament.uk/lords/2017-12-06/debates/2322BFC7-28B5-4D8F-BF90-E847771C422B/FreedomOfSpeechHateCrime#contribution-087C794B-2181-46F4-B2C4-94A715B1039A>

The Macpherson Report, referred to above, can be read at

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/277111/4262.pdf

Welsh Assembly Oral Answers

Bullying in Schools

Caroline Jones (Independent): ... could I ask that the Cabinet Secretary for Education makes an oral statement to the Siambwr regarding your Government's plans to tackle bullying? I am aware that the Welsh Government is consulting on draft guidance on bullying, but I would question whether guidance is sufficient, and I am not the only one. The coroner in the Bradley John inquest has queried whether we need a specific law on bullying. We have seen such terrible incidents of bullying in recent weeks, such as the Syrian refugee waterboarded by school bullies or the incidents of racist bullying at a Cardiff primary school, which shocked Estyn inspectors. ...

Julie James: Yes. The Cabinet Secretary is very, very firm that bullying is not to be tolerated, of any sort, in our schools, but we are particularly concerned about racist bullying, especially with the rise of hate crimes across the UK. Actually, we've got a group called EAST working very hard on a set of guidelines for schools, and we're currently looking at putting a new project into schools exactly on that point. As soon those proposals are fit to be shared with Members then I or my successor in the equalities portfolio will bring forward a statement saying what we're doing.

<http://record.assembly.wales/Plenary/5369#C146982>

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House of Commons Oral Answers

Israel and Palestine

14. **Maria Caulfield (Labour):** What discussions he has had with his Israeli counterpart on the recent escalation of violence in the region.[907999]

17. **Alex Cunningham (Labour):** What recent steps he has taken towards establishing a lasting peace between Israel and Palestine. [908002]

The Minister for the Middle East (Alistair Burt): The recent upsurge of violence in Gaza reminds all of us of the need to ensure that the middle east peace process gets moving, because that is the only thing that will make a difference. Both the Foreign Secretary and I have recently seen US envoy Jason Greenblatt, and we will continue all our efforts.

Maria Caulfield: The UN General Assembly is scheduled to vote on Thursday on the US-sponsored resolution condemning Hamas for the increasing violence and attacks on civilians and for the worsening situation in Gaza. Will the UK Government be supporting that resolution?

Alistair Burt: We do not disclose the intention to vote in advance. What I would say is that it is very clear that we condemn Hamas's action and conduct; we call for a permanent end to its terror and rocket attacks in relation to Israel; and we continue to proscribe the military wing of Hamas, to impose sanctions against individuals and to have no contact with Hamas.

Andy Slaughter (Labour): Given the Government's view, which I know the Minister shares, that Israeli settlements are illegal under international law, why do the Government allow the import of goods from those settlements and investment by British companies?

Alistair Burt: We allow the import of goods, but the labelling makes that clear, so customers can make their own choice about whether to buy goods from those areas.

Bob Blackman (Conservative): What assessment has my right hon. Friend made of the Hezbollah terror tunnels from Lebanon into Israel that have been discovered?

Alistair Burt: The tunnels demonstrate the continual threat to the state of Israel from those who would mean it harm. Again, however, that emphasises the need—I am sure the whole House shares this view—to ensure that there is a resolution of the issues between Israel and its neighbours, so that there can be permanent peace and security for all in the region.

Alex Cunningham: Ministers keep telling us that they want to wait and see President Trump's long-awaited middle east peace plan. In the meantime, we have seen an escalation of violence, death on the Gaza border, a worsening humanitarian crisis, continued demolition of Palestinian homes and the ending of US support for the United Nations Relief and Works Agency. Is it not time that the UK said very clearly, "You cannot have a two-state solution if you only recognise one state"?

Alistair Burt: We have said very clearly that we recognise a two-state solution. We are keen to ensure that when the envoy's proposals come forward, they get a strong reception, and people can work on them to try to bring a resolution to this long-standing crisis. It is the only thing that will deal with the concerns that the hon. Gentleman raises.

<https://hansard.parliament.uk/commons/2018-12-04/debates/FB759762-F9C6-4322-B73C-C688EED4E2E8/IsraelAndPalestine>

Topical Questions: Foreign and Commonwealth Office

T5. **Alex Cunningham (Labour):** Earlier this year, in response to deaths on the Gaza border, the Minister said that the Government would support Israel's investigation into

them and push for an international element to those investigations. How is he getting on with that? [908015]

The Minister for the Middle East (Alistair Burt): We are still pressing the Israeli authorities in relation to exactly what we said previously. That is the best way to try to find an answer to the tragedy that happened in Gaza.

<https://hansard.parliament.uk/commons/2018-12-04/debates/3BA077CD-5BC2-4E13-9E96-4E922259A20E/TopicalQuestions#contribution-5978961A-68F5-4639-9D63-7CF92440DF53>

Topical Questions: Foreign and Commonwealth Office

Ian Austin (Labour): ... What assessment have the Government made of the human rights of Palestinians living under the brutal dictatorship of Hamas, which routinely imprisons people without trial, tortures them, executes people and is reported today to have sentenced six people to death? Does that not show, along with the indiscriminate attacks on Israel, why Hamas is the main barrier to the peace process that we all want to see?

Alistair Burt: Yes; there is all too little emphasis on looking at the rule of Hamas in Gaza and the human rights abuses that are conducted, not least the pushing of people towards the fence during the course of the summer, which led to some of the deaths and woundings that have taken place. That is why we have a long-standing policy of no contact with Hamas.

<https://hansard.parliament.uk/commons/2018-12-04/debates/3BA077CD-5BC2-4E13-9E96-4E922259A20E/TopicalQuestions#contribution-B349EFD3-5A35-4041-8306-974CB8209084>

Human Rights and Freedom of Religion or Belief

10. **Rosie Cooper (Labour):** What steps he is taking to protect (a) human rights and (b) freedom of religion or belief throughout the world. [907995]

The Minister for Asia and the Pacific (Mark Field): The FCO's 2017 human rights and democracy report demonstrates the breadth of the issues we work on and how we mobilise our diplomatic network to champion universal rights. This of course includes freedom of religion or belief. As a testament to that commitment, on 4 July the Prime Minister appointed my FCO colleague, Lord Ahmed, to the role of special envoy on FORB—and end to which I can assure this House he works tirelessly. ...

Caroline Spelman (Conservative): Having recently returned from the Holy Land with a cross-party delegation of women MPs—and, indeed, your Chaplain, Mr Speaker—I am very concerned about the human rights abuses that I saw. Does the Minister agree that there is a renewed urgency to find a solution to the conflict in this area?

Mark Field: I thank my right hon. Friend for her question. I could not agree more. We will continue to work as closely as we can with all parties. As I have pointed out, we do a lot of work underneath the radar. The Foreign Secretary and my right hon. Friend the Minister for the Middle East work very closely in relation to these issues and will continue to do so, looking after the rights of religious minorities

<https://hansard.parliament.uk/commons/2018-12-04/debates/A384B7EF-75A0-4B6C-84B5-494B2AE29F4D/HumanRightsAndFreedomOfReligionOrBelief>

House of Commons Written Answer

Palestinians: Human Rights

Wes Streeting (Labour) [195633] To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, what steps his Department is taking to defend the human rights of Palestinians in the Palestinian Territories.

Alistair Burt: We remain seriously concerned about the human rights situation in the Occupied Palestinian Territories (OPTs). We continue to raise concerns with

the Israeli Government on instances constituting a breach of international human rights and humanitarian law in the context of Israel's occupation of the OPTs, including demolitions, settlement construction, and the treatment of children in military detention. We also raise our concerns over human rights abuses by the Palestinian Authority and oppose the human rights abuses by Hamas in Gaza.

<https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Commons/2018-11-26/195633/>

House of Lords Written Answers

Import Controls: Israeli Settlements

Baroness Tonge (Non-affiliated) [HL11633] To ask Her Majesty's Government how many times goods from Israeli settlements in the Occupied Palestinian Territory have been banned from entering the UK in the last two years.

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: We understand the concerns of people who do not wish to purchase goods exported from Israeli settlements in the Occupied Palestinian Territories (OPTs). It was in order to enable consumers to make a more fully informed decision concerning the products they buy that, in December 2009, the UK introduced voluntary guidelines to enable produce from Israeli settlements in the OPTs to be specifically labelled as such. We also welcomed the European Commission's decision of November 2015 to issue indication of origin guidelines for products produced in Israeli settlements. However the UK does not ban the import of settlement products and as such we do not have a record of how many times goods from Israeli settlements in the OPTs have been banned from entering the UK.

<https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Lords/2018-11-20/HL11633/>

Arms Trade: Israel

Baroness Tonge (Non-affiliated) [HL11634] To ask Her Majesty's Government how many times the Export Control Act 2002 has been breached when arms have been sold to Israel in the last two years.

Lord Bates: HMRC has not prosecuted any cases involving the illegal export of military goods from the UK to Israel in the last 2 years (2016/2017).

DIT have published statistics covering the same period which show that in 2016 they issued 245 export licences for controlled goods to Israel. The goods covered by those licences were worth £128m. In 2017 DIT issued 234 export licences for controlled goods to Israel. The goods covered by those licences were worth £274m.

<https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Lords/2018-11-20/HL11634/>

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Other Relevant Information

European Commission

EU steps up its international cooperation to tackle Holocaust Denial and Antisemitism

On 29 November 2018, the European Commission has become a permanent international partner to the [International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance \(IHRA\)](#). The

participation of the EU in this international body will allow closer cooperation on combating Holocaust denial and preventing racism, xenophobia and Antisemitism. This is a direct follow-up to President Juncker's call for closer international cooperation in his [statement](#) on Holocaust Remembrance Day, this 27 January, as well as the [European Parliament's resolution on combating Antisemitism](#) of June 2017. First Vice-President Frans Timmermans said: *"With a decreasing number of Holocaust survivors and at a time when Antisemitism is on the rise, we need to foster the memory of the darkest chapter in our history. The EU joining the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance will help promote understanding so that future generations will heed the lessons of our past."* Commissioner for Justice, Consumers and Gender Equality, Vera Jourová added: *"This commitment is part of our wider effort to fight against Antisemitism. Our involvement in the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance has special importance at a time when Holocaust denial is spreading."* Today, at the plenary meeting of the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance, the EU Coordinator on Combatting Antisemitism will officially accept the role. As a result, the Commission will represent the EU in this body, which provides expertise on Holocaust denial, distortion or Antisemitism. It will give the Commission access to the expertise of International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance's Working Groups on education, particularly on key challenges like multi-cultural and multi-religious classrooms and inclusive remembrance. More information on the Commission's work on combatting Antisemitism can be found online [here](#).

https://ec.europa.eu/newsroom/just/item-detail.cfm?item_id=640113

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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

**** closes in 5 days**

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>

Racial harassment in higher education (closing date 15 February 2019)

<https://www.equalityhumanrights.com/en/inquiries-and-investigations/racial-harassment-higher-education-our-inquiry>

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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