

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

Middle East: Peace Negotiations

Stephen Crabb (Conservative) [202302] To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, whether he has made an assessment of the effect on the viability of the Middle East peace process of (a)(i) Fatah describing as a hero and (ii) Hamas announcing great pride in a terrorist whose shooting of a pregnant woman led to the death of her child and (b) other recent examples of the culture of radicalisation in Palestinian society; and if he will make a statement.

Alistair Burt: We are gravely concerned by the ongoing and increasing violence in the West Bank. We condemn recent the terrorist attacks in the Old City of Jerusalem and in the West Bank and have called for the cycle of violence to end. We are deeply concerned by continued incitement against Israel by Hamas and other actors we are clear the glorification of terrorists as “martyrs” is a barrier to peace and we condemn such glorifications. The calls for the murder of Palestinian politicians are also completely unacceptable. President Abbas and the Palestinian Authority have repeatedly demonstrated their commitment to non-violence and a negotiated two-state solution. It is important that the Palestinian leadership continue efforts to fully implement the recommendations of the Quartet Report regarding incitement. The Government is committed to making progress towards a two-state solution, and we will continue to press the parties to refrain from actions that make peace more difficult.

<https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Commons/2018-12-14/202302/>

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Foreign Affairs

Foreign and Commonwealth Office

Foreign Secretary announces global review into persecution of Christians

... It is distressingly poignant at Christmas to hear recent warnings that the persecution facing Christians across the globe is now most stark in the region of its birth.

A century ago, 20% of the people of the Middle East were Christian; today the figure is

below 5%. It is not hard to see why. On Palm Sunday in 2017, a suicide bomber in Egypt attacked a Christian Cathedral that has existed since the inception of Christianity, brutally killing 17 of the congregation. This is an extreme example, but it is by no means isolated ... Step by agonising step, we are witnessing the erosion of Christianity as a living religion in its heartland.

Elsewhere, the situation is also deeply perilous. Across the world, about 215 million Christians suffer persecution, according to the campaign group, Open Doors. The International Society for Human Rights has found that Christians are the victims of 80% of all acts of religious discrimination ...

So often the persecution of Christians is a telling early warning sign of the persecution of every minority.

But I am not convinced that our response to the threats facing this particular group has always matched the scale of the problem, nor taken account of the hard evidence that Christians often endure a disproportionate burden of persecution. ...

Whatever the cause, we must never allow a misguided political correctness to inhibit our response to the persecution of any religious community.

So I have asked the Rev'd Philip Mounstephen, Bishop of Truro, to lead an independent review of whether we are doing all we can. ...

Britain has a strong history of standing up for the rights of all religious communities. I am proud of the way the UK has led the world in condemnation of the ethnic cleansing of the Muslim Rohingya community in Burma; as well as our response of passionate anger to the recent resurgence of anti-Semitism in our own society.

It is not in our national character to turn a blind eye to suffering. All religious minorities must be protected and the evidence demonstrates that in some countries, Christians face the greatest risk.

We should be willing to state that simple fact - and adjust our policies accordingly.

The Apostle Paul foretold of the suffering that Christians would face through the ages, but still saw reason to hope: 'We are afflicted in every way, but not crushed; perplexed, but not driven to despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed.'

It is time to echo that message of hope to the persecuted church around the world; with our deeds as well as our words.

To read the full press release see

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/foreign-secretary-announces-global-review-into-persecution-of-christians>

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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

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>

Islamophobia (closing date 11 January 2018)

<https://www.parliament.uk/business/committees/committees-a-z/commons-select/home-affairs-committee/news-parliament-2017/islamophobia-call-for-further-evidence-17-19/>

Connected communities – Tackling loneliness and social isolation (Wales) (closing date 15 January 2019)

<https://beta.gov.wales/connected-communities-tackling-loneliness-and-social-isolation>

The Macpherson Report: Twenty Years On (closing date 16 January 2019)

<https://www.parliament.uk/business/committees/committees-a-z/commons-select/home-affairs-committee/inquiries/parliament-2017/macpherson-report-twenty-years-on-inquiry-17-19/>

Extremism in England and Wales (closing date 31 January 2019)

<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/>

Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission – Draft Strategic Plan 2019-22

(closing date 15 March 2019)

<http://www.nihrc.org/news/detail/ni-human-rights-commission-draft-strategic-plan-2019-2022-consultation>

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