

# Political Affairs Digest

A daily summary of political events affecting the Jewish Community

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### Scottish Parliament Oral Answers

#### First Minister's Questions: Antisemitism

**Jamie Greene (Conservative):** To ask the First Minister what action the Scottish Government is taking to tackle antisemitism. (S5F-02933)

**Reply from the First Minister (Nicola Sturgeon):** The Scottish Government—is hope in common with everybody across the chamber—is committed to tackling hate crime and prejudice, and I want to reassure Scotland's Jewish communities that there is no place in Scotland for any form of antisemitism or religious hatred. We value our Jewish communities. We value the contribution that they make to Scotland, and that is a message that should go out strongly from this chamber. As well as our ambitious programme of work to tackle hate crime and build community cohesion, we have adopted the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance's definition of antisemitism. That sends a strong message that we believe antisemitism to be entirely unacceptable in Scotland.

**Jamie Greene:** The First Minister will be aware of recent press reports of comments made by Ephraim Borowski, director of the Scottish Council of Jewish Communities, in this very Parliament. He said: "Mostly the Jewish community used to feel that Scotland was a good place to be Jewish but for many that has reversed. Many Jews actively discuss leaving Scotland because they feel alienated, vulnerable and not at home."

I hope that the First Minister is as worried and saddened by that assertion as members on these benches are.

What guidance has been issued specifically to Police Scotland to address the scourge of antisemitism in Scotland? Will the First Minister join me in calling for all political parties represented in this Parliament to do everything in their power to make sure that no one in the Jewish community feels vulnerable or unwelcome in Scotland?

**Reply from the First Minister:** I encourage all parties to do exactly what Jamie Greene has called for. As for the police, I believe that they have a good relationship and work very closely with the Jewish community to tackle antisemitism and address its concerns about security.

With regard to Ephraim Borowski's comments, I have huge respect for him and the work that he does, and I have personally discussed this issue with him in the past.

He is more than capable of speaking for himself, but I do not think that there was any suggestion that the very legitimate concerns that he raised at the weekend were in any way unique to Scotland. I think that he was reflecting not only a feeling of the Jewish community across the whole of the United Kingdom, including Scotland, but an apparent rise in antisemitism not just across the UK but further afield. We all have to be very vigilant about that, and my responsibility is to make sure that that is the case, particularly in Scotland. As I have said, I have had and will continue to have discussions with the Jewish community about exactly that.

I made this point when I spoke earlier this week at the reception in Parliament for the Holocaust Educational Trust, and I will say it again here: the Jewish community is a valuable and vital part of our society in Scotland, and if one member of that community feels unsafe here, all of us have a duty to respond to that and do everything possible to change it. It is a responsibility that I take very seriously for the Jewish community and for any other minority community living in our diverse country, and I hope that all members will agree with and echo that. *[Applause.]*

<http://www.parliament.scot/parliamentarybusiness/report.aspx?r=11875&i=107414#ScotParlOR>

*The media report referred to above can be read at*

<https://www.heraldscotland.com/news/17338180.jews-are-actively-considering-leaving-scotland-over-anti-semitism-warns-community-leader/>

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## Israel

### House of Commons Oral Answer

#### Topical Questions: International Development

**Richard Graham (Conservative):** The US decision to stop funding the United Nations Relief and Works Agency support to Palestine risks vital education and healthcare services there. I welcome DFID's decision to increase funding in the short term, but is that sustainable in the longer term?

**Alistair Burt:** We and other donors have moved very rapidly this year to seek to cover a shortfall in UNRWA funding. Work is going on to ensure that, in the long term, UNRWA is sustainable. Ultimately, though, the issue is not UNRWA, but the unresolved situation of refugees.

<https://hansard.parliament.uk/commons/2019-01-09/debates/CDCA04A3-B86C-4537-B1DA-2CF0440885EA/TopicalQuestions#contribution-393704E4-6248-43B3-8895-2B61154DAF94>

### House of Commons Written Answer

#### Palestinians: UNRWA

**Richard Burden (Labour) [908418]** What recent representations she has received on the future of UNRWA funding in Palestine.

**Alistair Burt:** In December, we received representations from Pierre Krähenbühl, UNRWA's Commissioner General, and Jamie McGoldrick, the local UN Humanitarian Coordinator who thanked the UK for our support in reducing UNRWA's unprecedented financial shortfall. We will continue working with UNRWA and other donors to help ensure its essential services are maintained.

<https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Commons/2019-01-09/908418/>

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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>

#### **International Development Assistance (Palestinian National Authority Schools) Bill**

<https://services.parliament.uk/Bills/2017-19/internationaldevelopmentassistancepalestiniannationalauthoritieschools.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 tomorrow**

**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/>

#### **\*\* closes in 5 days**

**Connected communities – Tackling loneliness and social isolation (Wales)**

(closing date 15 January 2019)

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

#### **\*\* closes in 6 days**

**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>

**Scottish charity law** (closing date 1 April 2019)

<https://tinyurl.com/y9ln88df>

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The Scottish Council of Jewish Communities (SCoJeC) is Scottish Charitable Incorporated Organisation SC029438