



Political Affairs Digest

A daily summary of political events affecting the Jewish Community

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House of Commons Written Answer

Community Security Trust: Finance

Tulip Siddiq (Labour) [217673] To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, for what reasons his Department allocates the Jewish Community Protective Security Grant on an annual rather than multi-annual basis.

Ben Wallace: Cabinet Office grant governance standards require grants to be reviewed at least annually, taking into account delivery across the period. This then results in a decision to continue, discontinue, amend funding levels or the scope of the Grant. A multi-year grant process would inhibit the outcomes of these reviews and commercial assurance processes from being implemented.

It is important that the Home Office ensures that the Recipient has managed the Grant in line with Government standards and that the Grant continues to represent value for money for the tax payer.

<https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Commons/2019-02-06/217673/>

Home Office & National Counter Terrorism Security Office

New counter-terrorism information sharing platform announced

A new counter-terrorism project to keep the public safe by enhancing collaboration between business, industry and the public sector has been announced today.

This joint initiative will see a ground breaking interactive online platform developed to provide secure expert advice and training to businesses and public sector organisations to help them develop their own counter-terrorism approaches.

In the event of an attack, the platform will give businesses access to timely and accurate information. ...

Security Minister, Ben Wallace, said: This project is one of the first of its kind – a

collaboration between the police, the insurance sector, and the government that will help to keep the country safe and secure. ...

The national policing lead for Protective Security, Deputy Assistant Commissioner Lucy D'Orsi, said: Since the tragic events of 2017, counter terrorism policing has been working alongside government and the private sector to strengthen our defences against terrorism through greater collaboration and information sharing.

That is why this ground-breaking new platform is so important, as it will allow businesses to access credible information 24/7, connect users to experts, provide accredited online training and send direct messages in the event of an attack – strengthening our frontline against the unprecedented threat. ...

The government's counter-terrorism strategy, CONTEST, is committed to building a more integrated relationship with the private sector to increase the UK's ability to tackle terrorism.

The platform is being developed primarily for the private sector, specifically focused on small and medium-sized businesses for whom access to expert external advice can sometimes be costly. ...

To read the full press release see

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/new-counter-terrorism-information-sharing-platform-announced>

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Holocaust

House of Lords Written Answer

National Holocaust Memorial Centre and Learning Service

Lord Wasserman (Conservative) [HL14031] To ask Her Majesty's Government, further to the Written Answer by Lord Bourne of Aberystwyth on 20 February (HL13503), whether the present Prime Minister has publicly endorsed the commitment of £50 million given by her predecessor in January 2015 to kick-start a society-wide fundraising effort to deliver the UK Holocaust Memorial and Learning Centre and its wider educational objectives; and if so, when.

Lord Bourne of Aberystwyth: The Prime Minister has repeatedly stated her support for the Holocaust Memorial and Learning Centre to which the Government has committed £50 million. The most recent occasion was at Prime Minister's Questions on 5 December.

<https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Lords/2019-02-25/HL14031/>

The answer referred to above can be read at

<https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Lords/2019-02-06/HL13503/>

The statement of support referred to above can be read at

<https://hansard.parliament.uk/commons/2018-12-05/debates/AE0D2D86-28E1-40CC-A4E5-4DAC25733B52/Engagements#contribution-2006DB27-033B-4D17-B5D1-A70DF1960BDC>

UK Parliament, House of Commons Library

Letter from Baroness Goldie to Lord Pickles regarding a misunderstanding relating to the Holocaust Memorial in Victoria Tower Gardens during the Oral Question on

Genocide Prevention

http://data.parliament.uk/DepositedPapers/Files/DEP2019-0293/Baroness_Goldie_letter_to_Lord_Pickles_on_genocide_prevention.pdf

The question and answer referred to above can be read at

<https://hansard.parliament.uk/lords/2019-02-27/debates/06872DAF-DD62-47CD-B3CF-F426E27C376C/GenocidePrevention#contribution-4334C3F8-759C-4B94-A6B4-46548F69294C>

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Israel

House of Commons Written Answer

Israel: Eurovision Song Contest

Nigel Dodds (DUP) [225425] To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, what discussions he has had with his Israeli counterpart on a potential boycott of the Eurovision song contest in that country; and what advice his Department provides to UK citizens planning to attend that event.

Alistair Burt: We are aware of the campaign to boycott the Eurovision song contest in Israel but have not raised this issue with the Israeli Government. While we do not hesitate to express disagreement with Israel whenever we feel it necessary, we are strongly opposed to boycotts which divide people and reduce understanding. We encourage all British nationals to make use of our travel advice, alongside other sources of information available to them, to help them plan for a safe trip.

<https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Commons/2019-02-25/225425/>

Welsh Assembly Oral Question

241 Jenny Rathbone (Labour): ... I just wanted to point out the efforts for peace in Israel-Palestine that are being led by women through an organisation called Women Wage Peace. On Friday, which is International Women's Day, thousands of women from all different communities across Palestine and Israel—Arab, Jewish, Druze, Israeli Palestinians, settlers, as well as women affected by the nation state legislation, which means that Filipino women, for example, who've worked in Israel for many, many years are at threat of deportation, members of Parliament and musicians, will be marching from the museum to Rabin Square erecting a mother's tent in Rabin Square which will stay up until election day on 6 April. Given the really acute situation that is being faced by Palestinians, both on the West Bank and in Gaza, I hope that women will lead the campaign for dialogue, which is the first step to resolution of conflict, which has been going on for far too long in that area. ...

243 Jane Hutt (Deputy Minister and Chief Whip): ... interesting to hear about Women Wage Peace and the movements across the world, and we must welcome that and look at the UN resolutions, which are very clear in terms of how we must move that forward. ...

To read the full transcript see

<http://record.assembly.wales/Plenary/5565#C171342>

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Foreign Affairs

House of Commons Written Answers

Hezbollah

Nigel Dodds (DUP) [225424] To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, what recent discussions has he had with his Middle Eastern counterparts on the role of Hezbollah in the Government of Lebanon.

Alistair Burt: The Foreign Secretary spoke to Lebanese Foreign Minister Bassil on 25 February when he expressed his concerns over Hizballah's actions in the region.

<https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Commons/2019-02-25/225424/>

The following two questions both received the same answer

Hezbollah

David Drew (Labour Co-op) [225375] To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, on how many occasions British embassy staff in Beirut have met representatives of Hezbollah in the last two years.

David Drew (Labour Co-op) [225376] To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, whether he plans to put in place a protocol to ensure that there is no contact between British embassy staff in Beirut and Hezbollah Ministers in the Government of Lebanon; and if he will make a statement.

Alistair Burt: We have had a no-contact policy with the entirety of Hizballah for a number of years. The Home Secretary made clear this position in a Parliamentary debate on 26 February.

<https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Commons/2019-02-25/225375/>

and

<https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Commons/2019-02-25/225376/>

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Other Relevant Information

UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights

Human Rights Council holds clustered interactive dialogue on freedom of religion or belief and on the sale and sexual exploitation of children

Ahmed Shaheed, Special Rapporteur on the freedom of religion or belief, reminded that his reports in the past two years had highlighted that freedom of religion or belief existed in a legal continuum with a range of other rights. It was vitally important to conceptualize the relationship between those rights as being mutually reinforcing, rather than one of tension or hierarchy. ... The current report spoke to growing concern about the implication for freedom of religion or belief of State responses to expressions involving religion or belief that may have been deemed offensive to some, or that incited discrimination or hostility. ...

For many, deeming an affront to religious sensibilities to be a criminal offense stood in stark contrast to the view that freedom of expression was so fundamental, it could only be limited in exceptional circumstances, regardless of its potential to “offend, shock or disturb.” For others, some expression could be so egregiously offensive or hateful that it

felt outside the scope of protection. That debate had provoked a range of States to resort to laws which increasingly sought to protect the “feelings” of individuals, or which attempted to legislate civility. The current report argued that whether they sought to uphold public order, foster interreligious harmony, or combat incitement, laws that punished or prevented criticism of religion or belief per se, or that censored expression which may offend the sensibilities of adherents to a particular belief, effectively undermined the enjoyment of the right to freedom of religion or belief and exceeded the limitations regime under international law. ...

European Union underlined that freedom of religion could only be limited by law in certain strictly defined ways and under specific circumstances defined by international law. ...

Iceland reiterated their worry that anti-Semitism and Islamophobia had increased in Europe, where people were discriminated against simply for their faith, and noted the Special Rapporteur’s attempt to highlight the importance of not curtailing freedom of expression, when addressing issues of incitement to discrimination or hostility on the basis of religion or belief. ...

Israel stated that according to its legislation, any form of sexual suggestions towards children were strictly prohibited in cases of abuse of relationship of authority, punishable by two years of imprisonment even where there was no explicit rejection. They also stated that the Israeli Olympic Committee had adopted rules to prevent sexual harassment in sports, in particular affecting their dignity, health, safety and gender equality. ...

State of Palestine said that report stressed the obligation of States to combat religious hatred and terrorism. In Palestine, Jewish settlers routinely attacked Palestinian villages, mosques and churches, and drew racist graffiti calling for death of Arabs, so the Rapporteur was asked what could be done to compel Israel to end its persistent violation of the right to freedom of religion of the Palestinian people? ...

As for the role of faith-based actors in addressing hate speech and intolerance, [**Ahmed Shaheed**] noted that some of those roles had already been identified, namely in the 18 commitments under the Beirut Declaration. Faith-based actors could use their influence in their communities to speak about human rights and to draw from their traditions to promote and protect human rights. All faiths spoke to tolerance, human dignity and mutual respect. ... The tools for promoting religious tolerance were already there, but it was now necessary to monitor their implementation. ...

Regarding anti-hate speech law, the Special Rapporteur emphasized that it was important to make a context-based assessment on whether or not the speech in question was inciting violence or discrimination against persons. ... Mr. Shaheed emphasized that religions were not protected by human rights law, but rather it was persons that were protected by these laws. ... The Special Rapporteur underscored the importance of education in terms of people being able to understand each other better. This included literacy about what was protected and what was not protected. This also included knowing what different communities stood for, rather than misappropriated ideas about the other. ... The Special Rapporteur also issued a call for submissions from all stakeholders for his upcoming report on anti-Semitism.

To read the full press release see

<https://www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=24260&LangID=E>

Freedom of religion or belief: Report of the Special Rapporteur on freedom of religion or belief

https://www.ohchr.org/EN/HRBodies/HRC/RegularSessions/Session40/Documents/A_HRC_40_58.docx

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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>

House of Commons Library Briefing

<http://researchbriefings.files.parliament.uk/documents/CBP-8409/CBP-8409.pdf>

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 in 9 days**

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