



Representing, connecting and supporting Jewish people in Scotland

Political Affairs Digest

A daily summary of political events affecting the Jewish Community

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UK Delegation to the OSCE

UK statement on freedom of thought, conscience, religion or belief at Human Dimension Implementation Meeting 2019

Promoting and defending human rights, including freedom of thought, conscience, religion or belief, is a priority for the United Kingdom.

Over the past year, the United Kingdom has stepped up our work, focusing not only on combatting intolerance, but also, crucially, on promoting respect and understanding between communities. ...

Working closely with faith and belief leaders has remained a key part of our work. Former Special Envoy Lord Ahmad met the Archbishop of Canterbury; the Chief Rabbi of the United Kingdom; the Grand Mufti Shawki Allam of Egypt; and many others to hear their concerns about freedom of thought, conscience, religion or belief.

The UK also works very closely with individuals and leaders of no religion or belief, such as Humanists and atheists, whose safety is under threat in many parts of the world. ...

In December last year, the former Foreign Secretary announced that he had commissioned an independent review on the support that the FCO provides to persecuted Christians globally. ...

The UK Government accepted all of the recommendations, and work has begun to implement them. We hope that the review will inspire other governments, including those with strong track records on human rights, to look at what else they can do to help some of the most vulnerable people around the world.

Our commitment to freedom of thought, conscience, religion or belief, including the right to change or leave your religion, is unwavering, and we look forward to continuing our work to defend this human right, in line with our OSCE commitments.

To read the full press release see

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/uk-statement-on-freedom-of-thought-conscience-religion-or-belief-at-hdim-2019>

Crown Prosecution Service

Teenage neo-Nazi jailed over 'how to make guns' guides

An 18-year-old racist has been jailed today for four years (20 September) for having a number of terrorism manuals including one that gave step-by-step instructions on how to make a working automatic pistol.

In February, after Jacek Tchorzewski was stopped by police at Luton Airport, violent documents were found on his mobile phone alongside images of extreme right-wing material and symbols.

An expert confirmed that one publication contained enough information for someone to make illegal firearms including machine pistols which are capable of fully automatic or burst fire. Another gave advice on how to make a silencer using a bottle.

On 21 June he pleaded guilty at the Old Bailey to having 10 documents which could be of use to a terrorist. Six of the publications were about building homemade firearms or accessories. The others related to booby-traps and improvised bombs.

While some of the devices could be constructed from materials available from DIY stores others needed more specialised metal working tools.

Other items recovered from his device included a photo of Tchorzewski holding a Nazi flag and doing a Nazi salute.

An audio file titled "Ethnic cleansing" was also found pointing to his interest in far-right ideology.

He also had a collection of writings by a prominent US neo-Nazi who advocates political violence and attacks by individuals acting alone.

Further evidence of his extremist views included posting links on social media to Sonnenkrieg Division, a UK neo-Nazi group which aims to overthrow the current political system.

Tchorzewski's friend Oskar Dunn-Koczorowski, a supporter and promoter of Sonnenkrieg Division, was given an 18 month detention order in June this year for posting messages calling on others to engage in terrorism.

Tchorzewski had been staying with his mother in High Wycombe while visiting the UK.

Jenny Hopkins, Head of the CPS Special Crime and Counter Terrorism Division, said: "It is worrying that someone this young chose to become a neo-Nazi and download terrorist how-to guides.

"Let me be clear, possessing terrorist material is a criminal offence and like Jacek Tchorzewski people who do so risk going to prison."

To read the full press release see

<https://www.cps.gov.uk/cps/news/teenage-neo-nazi-jailed-over-how-make-guns-guides>

TOP

Holocaust

European Parliament Debate

Importance of European remembrance for the future of Europe

Note that only speeches in English have been abstracted below

Tytti Tuppurainen (President-in-Office of the Council): ... The authoritarian and totalitarian regimes across Europe in the last century remain a dark chapter in our continent's history. Remembrance is not just remembering. Remembrance is about keeping a memory alive so as not to allow ourselves to overlook horrors that have happened in the past.

If we are fully to understand the present and shape a better future, an awareness and understanding of the past is crucial. ...

Today we face a number of challenges that put our open societies at risk, be it through xenophobia, nationalism, disinformation or violent radicalisation, to name just a few. ...

Europeans need to remember their own history in order to learn from the past and not repeat our mistakes when shaping tomorrow's Europe. ...

Dimitris Avramopoulos (Member of the Commission): ... This Union was built on the ashes that fell over our continent in the aftermath of what happened 80 years ago, and which opened a dark chapter in European history: the signature of the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact between Nazi Germany and the Soviet Union on 23 August 1939, dividing our continent and creating suffering for so many Europeans under totalitarian regimes. ... More than ever, we need to remember these lessons from the past because if we ignore history we are at risk of repeating past mistakes. ...

Remembrance, as one of the strands of the programme, supports initiatives to reflect on the causes of totalitarian regimes and to commemorate reference points in Europe's modern history. Raising awareness of remembrance, the common history and our own EU values is critical. Projects encourage tolerance, mutual understanding, intercultural dialogue and reconciliation as a means of moving beyond the past and building the future. ...

An example is the Mémorial de la Shoah, a project from 2018. ... it has evolved into a truly European reference network on the Holocaust and other genocides. The Mémorial receives more than 250 000 visitors per year. ...

Michal Šimečka (on behalf of the Renew Group): There is, indeed, no future for Europe without remembering and being aware of our darkest hours. ... we must never forget the victims and we must never forget the heroes who fought and stood up to tyranny. But we must also never forget that the Europe of today came about as a response to the Europe of 1939, and that this union of peace, democracy and shared sovereignty was built as a direct counterpoint to totalitarian atrocities and the partitioning of countries by the raw power of tyrants.

Sven Mikser (S&D): ... earlier this month, we commemorated the 80th anniversary of the beginning of the Second World War. It is important not to forget the millions who perished in that great tragedy, and to honour those who fought to defeat the evil of Nazism. ...

If we forget about the darkest chapters of our history, or allow our memory to become selective, we risk being again vulnerable to threats to our democracy that arise from authoritarianism and illiberalism. These threats may come from the outside, in the form of illegal attempts to interfere in our democratic processes, but they may also come from the inside in the form of extremist political movements preaching homophobic, xenophobic and illiberal ideas and ideologies. Only if we remember are we able to avoid repeating the tragic mistakes of the past and protect the European ideas and ideals. ...

Sergey Lagodinsky (Verts/ALE): ... in my country of Germany, every second German does not want to deal with the history of the totalitarian GDR. We must continue commemorating the victims of the Holocaust – the Jews, the Sinti and Roma, and the homosexuals – but coming from Berlin, I also insist we also must talk about the fate of our Eastern European friends, of the Balts and of the Poles. This is something we owe to those countries as someone who was on the other side in the war.

This is something that we need to bring to life, talking to the young people sitting over there, bringing it to their schools, bringing it to the internet and awakening the history. ...

Tytti Tuppurainen ... Together, we must now tackle the rise of extreme ideas and, for instance, the rise of anti-Semitism across Europe. ... Raising awareness and ensuring appropriate information are key elements for fighting against extremism and disinformation. Education can be a powerful tool in this respect, and we need to continuously make efforts to safeguard our free societies. Our youth, the generations to

come, need to remember and learn from the mistakes made in our common history. ...

To read the full transcript see

https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/CRE-9-2019-09-18-ITM-017_EN.html

Adopted Text: Importance of European remembrance for the future of Europe

https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/TA-9-2019-0021_EN.html

European Parliament Press Release

Europe must remember its past to build its future

- 25 May to be established as International Day of Heroes of the Fight against Totalitarianism
- ban on organisations that glorify Nazism and fascism or any other form of totalitarianism
- All forms of Holocaust denial have to be counteracted, hate speech and violence condemned
- Analysis of the consequences of totalitarian regimes included in schools' curricula and textbooks

... European Parliament paid tribute to the victims of Stalinism, Nazism and other totalitarian and authoritarian regimes in a resolution adopted on Thursday by 535 voices in favour, 66 against, and 52 abstentions.

... MEPs propose to establish 25 May as International Day of Heroes of the Fight against Totalitarianism (the anniversary of the execution of the Auschwitz hero Rotamaster Witold Pilecki) in order to provide future generations with a "clear example of the correct attitude to take in the face of the threat of totalitarian enslavement". ...

They also condemn extremist and xenophobic political forces and organisations in Europe for distorting historical facts, and employing the symbolism and rhetoric of totalitarian propaganda, including racism, anti-Semitism and hatred towards sexual and other minorities. Parliament calls on the member states to "*effectively ban neo-fascist and neo-Nazi groups and any other foundation or association that exalts and glorifies Nazism and fascism or any other form of totalitarianism,*" and to counter hate speech and violence in public spaces and online, and, in particular, to condemn and counteract all forms of Holocaust denial.

To read the full press release see

<https://www.europarl.europa.eu/news/en/press-room/20190917IPR61204/europe-must-remember-its-past-to-build-its-future>

TOP

Israel

United Nations

Settlement Building, Proposal to Annex Palestinian Land Among Factors Threatening Middle East Peace, Delegates Tell Security Council amid Calls for Solutions

... **Nickolay Mladenov, Special Coordinator for the Middle East Process**, updated on developments between 11 June and 11 September, during which time Israel advanced some 3,000 housing units in the occupied West Bank. In addition, the Security Cabinet reportedly discussed on 30 July the advancement of another 6,000 housing units and —

in a rare step — approved construction permits for 715 housing units for Palestinians in Area C. ...

Meanwhile, demolitions and seizures of Palestinian-owned structures by Israel continued across the occupied West Bank, including East Jerusalem ...

... he said worrying levels of violence persist throughout the occupied Palestinian territory. In the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, three Palestinians — among them, one child — and two Israelis, including one child, were killed, while 336 Palestinians and 21 Israelis were injured in clashes, attacks and settler-related violence. Describing cases of young people killed during demonstrations or indiscriminate rocket attacks, he said that on 12 July, a 9-year old Palestinian boy was shot in the forehead by Israel's security forces during clashes in Kafr Qaddum, West Bank, and remains in critical condition. On 8 August, a 19-year old Israeli was stabbed to death in the West Bank, near the Migdal Oz settlement, south of Bethlehem.

In Jerusalem's Old City, clashes between police and worshippers on 10 August reportedly resulted in injuries to 29 Palestinians and four Israel Defence Force members, he said. Also during the reporting period, Israel Defense Forces used riot dispersal means and live ammunition against "Great March of Return" demonstrators. Four Palestinians were killed and 496 were injured by live fire. More broadly, 33 rockets and mortar shells were launched from Gaza towards Israel, and while most were intercepted, 18 landed in Israeli towns. On 27 August, three Palestinian policemen were killed, and three pedestrians injured in two separate apparent suicide explosions. On 6 September, Israel Defense Forces shot and killed two Palestinians, aged 14 and 17, during Great March of Return protests.

On the political front, he said a senior Hamas official on 12 July urged Palestinians to "attack every Jew on the globe by way of slaughter and killing", underscoring that Hamas and other Palestinian factions welcome stabbing, car ramming and bombing against Israelis. Israeli officials continue to make provocative statements, with several politicians publicly minimizing Palestinians' connection to their ancestral land. On 10 September, Israel's Prime Minister declared his intention, if elected, to "apply Israeli sovereignty over the Jordan Valley and the northern Dead Sea".

Turning to Gaza, he welcomed some easing of Israel's import and export restrictions, noting nonetheless that the enclave's health system has nearly collapsed, with essential medicines completely depleted. ...

He condemned all attacks on Palestinian and Israeli civilians and stressed that all perpetrators must be held accountable. The status quo at the holy sites must be upheld, he reiterated, expressing concern over worsening humanitarian and economic conditions in Gaza and pressing all Palestinian factions to engage with Egypt on reconciliation. ...

Riad Malki, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the State of Palestine, said the purpose of the Secretary-General's reports on the Palestinian question is not to listen to the degree of violations of international law or number of civilian casualties. Such reports only point to diminishing prospects for peace amid Israel's continued violations of international law and resolutions from a belief it enjoys exceptional status. ... The occupying Power is creating new facts on the ground so that, in the end, Palestinians will have to accept what remains on offer. However, the rights of the Palestinians are not up for compromise and their just cause is not up for sale. ...

He said any serious negotiations must be based on ending the occupation that began in 1967 within a determined timeframe and addressing all aspects of a final settlement based on the two-State formula. ... He called for supporting Palestinians' inalienable right to self-determination, providing humanitarian and development assistance, not assisting illegal settlement activity, distinguishing between Israeli and occupied territories, and ensuring accountability. The real bias at the United Nations shields Israel from accountability. A State that believes it is above law will be tempted to continue acting as an outlaw ...

Danny Ben Yosef Danon (Israel) said Iran is the greatest challenge to security in the region. ... Iran must be stopped, not with smiles or handshakes, but with economic, political, diplomatic and any pressure necessary ...

Emphasizing that “we must be able to defend ourselves,” he said Israel’s borders are threatened by the same strategy of terror that places the wider region at risk. Recalling the launch of drones from Syria towards his country, he said Iran also operates in Lebanon through Hizbullah, which recently fired anti-tank missiles at an Israeli military outpost and vehicle. Iran turns rockets in Hizbullah arsenals into precision-guided missiles, which cannot be allowed. ... Stressing that Israel cannot have defensive borders without control of the Jordan Valley, he underscored that those borders are necessary for regional stability, a position that is aligned with Council resolutions and the right to self-defence. ... Israel would like to advance the political process and welcomes efforts by the United States to renew meaningful dialogue. It is ready for direct talks with the Palestinians. ...

Kelly Craft (United States) said her country has always — and will always — support Israel ... expressing dismay at the unwarranted criticism of Israel at the United Nations. Since its creation, Israel has served as a refuge and a beacon of democracy, supporting press freedom, gender equality and a robust open economy. It has earned its reputation as a hub for immigration and a leading investor in start-ups the world over. “I believe it critically important that we acknowledge that no country faces such a one-sided barrage of unwarranted criticism,” she said, pledging to fight every effort that seeks to delegitimize Israel’s security and undermine its standing in the global community of peaceful States. ...

Jerry Matthews Matjila (South Africa) reiterated that the only just resolution to the situation in the Middle East is one based on the two-State solution, along 1967 borders and with East Jerusalem as the capital of a sovereign Palestinian State. He characterized Israel’s settlement expansion in the Occupied Palestinian Territory as “deeply disturbing”, a deliberate violation of international law and a contravention of Council decisions. ...

Nicolas de Riviere (France) ... expressed concern over the announcement by Israel’s Prime Minister to annex parts of the Jordan Valley, a move that would only fuel tensions in the region. He urged all parties to refrain from all unilateral actions that would jeopardize the already fragile situation on the ground. Settlement activity is illegal under international law, undermines the feasibility of a two-State solution and must end. ...

Jonathan Guy Allen (United Kingdom) expressed alarm over suggestions that any part of the West Bank can be annexed, reiterating that such a move would damage peace efforts and could not pass unchallenged. He urged both sides to advance Palestinian development, including in Area C, stressing also that Israelis deserve to live free from terrorism and anti-Semitism. Pressing Israel to exercise proportionality and Hamas to stop its provocations, he said that faction must also release the bodies of Israeli soldiers so their families can grieve. He also encouraged the United States to present a detailed proposal for addressing the concerns of both Israelis and Palestinians. ...

Vassily A. Nebenzia (Russian Federation) ... shared concerns about recent statements by Israel’s leaders regarding the expansion of sovereignty to include the Jordan Valley. He added that incessant efforts to put forward alternative arrangements will undermine long-established international parameters. The only way forward is through joint efforts, with the Council playing a central role, he said, adding that the Russian Federation favours using the Middle East Quartet as a unique mechanism for assisting the process. ...

To read the full press release see

<https://www.un.org/press/en/2019/sc13959.doc.htm>

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Other Relevant Information

Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe

ODIHR provides new guidance on freedom of religion or belief and security

Amidst increasing security-driven restrictions on the right to freedom of religion or belief in the OSCE region, the OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR) published *Freedom of Religion or Belief and Security: Policy Guidance* on 19 September 2019. This new publication ... provides guiding principles, practical guidance and recommendations to ensure a human rights-based, gender-sensitive approach to freedom of religion or belief and security for policymakers and security practitioners, civil society organizations, religious or belief communities, and the media.

“This policy guidance seeks to contribute to the much-needed reframing of the discourse on freedom of religion or belief and security in the OSCE region and to inform practice in this area,” said Kishan Manocha, ODIHR Senior Adviser on Freedom of Religion or Belief. “It offers practical guidance to help OSCE participating States ensure their security measures are in line with their international obligations and commitments in this area.” ...

To read the full press release see

<https://www.osce.org/odihr/430463>

Freedom of Religion or Belief and Security: Policy Guidance

<https://www.osce.org/odihr/429389?download=true>

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Consultations

** new or updated today

Islamophobia in Scotland (closing date 30 September 2019)

<https://forms.ncl.ac.uk/view.php?id=13027>

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