



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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Scottish Government

Animal Welfare Commission: New body to protect animals.

The Chair of Scotland's first ever independent Animal Welfare Commission has been confirmed.

Announced as part of the Programme for Government, the Commission will focus on protecting wild and companion animals while also providing scientific and ethical advice to government.

The Commission, which will be chaired by Professor Cathy Dwyer will specifically look at:

- how the welfare needs of sentient animals are being met by devolved policy
- possible legislative and non-legislative routes to further protect the welfare of sentient animals
- the research requirements to provide an evidence base for future policy development

Rural Affairs Minister Mairi Gougeon said: ... "I have tasked the Commission to look specifically at how our current policies take account of the welfare needs of sentient animals, what improvements could be made and report back to me with their conclusions. ...

Professor Cathy Dwyer from Scotland's Rural College said: "... I am delighted that the Scottish Government recognise the importance of animal welfare for wildlife, farmed and companion animals and that acceptance of animal sentience will be central to government policy relating to animals. ...

To read the full press release see

<https://www.gov.scot/news/animal-welfare-commission/>

Welsh Government

Equalities refresh: Wales updates equality aims in a changing world

The Deputy Minister and Chief Whip Jane Hutt has ... published draft objectives to drive progress in advancing equality and inclusion across the nation. ...

The key long term aims which the objectives underpin are to:

1. Eliminate inequalities caused by poverty;
2. Implement strong and progressive equality and human rights protections;
3. Put the needs and rights of people who share protected characteristics at the forefront of public services and public policy;
4. Make Wales a world leader for gender equality;
5. Eliminate identity-based abuse, harassment, hate crime and bullying;
6. Promote a country of cohesive communities which are resilient, fair and equal;
7. Increase the diversity of decision-makers in public life and appointments;
8. Support the Welsh public sector to lead the way as exemplar inclusive and diverse organisations and employers.

Jane Hutt said: At the heart of the Welsh Government's ambitions for our society sits equality of outcome for all. ... Our drive for equality has never been more important than it is today. In this ever-changing world we're living in, the gap between the richest and the poorest in our society continues to widen, while extremist voices exploit social media to spread intolerance and hatred ...

In this context, we must make every effort to affirm and demonstrate our commitment to equality and be vigilant to safeguard the human rights laws and international treaties which protect every one of us. ...

To read the full press release see

<https://gov.wales/equalities-refresh-wales-updates-equality-aims-changing-world>

Strategic Equality Objectives 2020-2024

<https://gov.wales/sites/default/files/consultations/2019-09/strategic-equality-objectives-2020-2024-consultation.pdf>

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Other Relevant Information

United Nations

Secretary-General, at Event on Religious Freedom, Announces Initiatives to Combat Hate Speech, Ensure Safety for Places of Worship

... It is totally unacceptable in the twenty-first century for people to face discrimination and intimidation for their beliefs. The persecution of religious minorities is utterly intolerable. The full scope of their human rights is guaranteed, and States have an obligation to implement policies that ensure their identities are respected and that they feel fully part of society as a whole. ...

Jews have been murdered in synagogues, their gravestones defaced with swastikas; Muslims gunned down in mosques, their religious sites vandalized; Christians killed at prayer, their churches torched. And in many hotspots around the world, entire communities have been targeted because of their faith — including in places where those communities have existed for centuries, if not millennia. ...

We must reject those who falsely and maliciously invoke religion to build misconceptions, to fuel division, to spread fear and hatred — and we must be vigilant about attempts to instrumentalize religion and identity to restrict the full enjoyment of rights by others, and to perpetuate or justify inequalities.

There is richness and strength in diversity; it is never a threat. Profiting from that diversity requires a strong investment in social cohesion policies. We have much wisdom to guide us on our way. All major religions espouse mutual respect and peaceful coexistence in a spirit of shared humanity. And our shared foundational text, the Universal Declaration of

Human Rights, affirms everyone's "right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion". Simply put: the best way to promote international religious freedom is by uniting our voices for good, countering messages of hate with messages of peace, embracing diversity and protecting human rights everywhere.

The United Nations is stepping up action through two new initiatives that I have launched in recent weeks. First, through a strategy on hate speech to coordinate efforts across the United Nations system, addressing the root causes and making our response more effective against hate speech. Second, an action plan for the United Nations to be fully engaged in efforts to support and safeguard religious sites and ensure the safety of houses of worship. ...

We have a collective responsibility to stamp out anti-Semitism, anti-Muslim hatred, the persecution of Christians and other religious groups, and all forms of racism, xenophobia, discrimination and incitement to violence. Hatred is a threat to everyone — and so this must be a job for everyone. ...

To read the full press release see

<https://www.un.org/press/en/2019/sqsm19758.doc.htm>

UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights

Joint open letter on concerns about the global increase in hate speech

Thirty independent UN experts have joined together to publish an open letter calling on States and social media firms to take action to curb the spread of hate speech.

We are alarmed by the recent increase in hateful messages and incitement to discrimination and hatred against migrants, minority groups and various ethnic groups, as well as the defenders of their rights, in numerous countries. Hate speech, both online and offline, has exacerbated societal and racial tensions, inciting attacks with deadly consequences around the world. It has become mainstream in political systems worldwide and threatens democratic values, social stability and peace. Hate-fuelled ideas and advocacy coarsen public discourse and weaken the social fabric of countries. ...

The demonization of entire groups of people as dangerous or inferior is not new to human history; it has led to catastrophic tragedies in the past. Around the world, we observe that public figures are attempting to stoke ethnic tensions and violence by spreading hate speech targeting the vulnerable. Such rhetoric aims to dehumanise minority groups and other targeted people, and, in the case of migrants, fosters discriminatory discourse about who "deserves" to be part of a community. ...

The rhetoric of hatred must be countered, as it has real-life consequences. Studies have established a correlation between exposure to hate speech and the number of hate crimes committed. To curb xenophobic attacks on migrants and prevent incitement to discrimination, hatred, hostility and violence against other marginalised groups, we call on public officials and politicians, as well as the media, to assume their collective responsibility to promote societies that are tolerant and inclusive. ...

This is not a call for further restriction on freedom of expression, which is under attack worldwide; we call for just the opposite, the promotion of free expression. Freedom of expression serves as a vital tool to counter hate speech, and yet those same public figures who deploy hateful rhetoric often seek to restrict individual rights to speak and respond and defend themselves and their ideas. ... We are concerned about the abuse of "hate speech" as a term to undermine legitimate dissent and urge States to address the core problems addressed by human rights law while promoting rights to privacy, culture, non-discrimination, public protest and peaceful assembly, public participation, freedom of religion and belief, and the freedom of opinion and expression. ...

We call on States to double their efforts to hold accountable those who have incited or perpetrated violence against migrants and other vulnerable groups. Traditional and social

media companies should exercise due diligence to ensure that they do not provide platforms for hate speech and for incitement to hatred and violence. States should actively work towards policies that guarantee the rights to equality and non-discrimination and freedom of expression, as well as the right to live a life free of violence through the promotion of tolerance, diversity and pluralistic views...

To read the full text and signatories see

<https://www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=25036&LanglD=E>

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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>

**** Welsh Government Strategic Equality Objectives 2020-2024** (closing date 19 November 2019)

<https://gov.wales/sites/default/files/consultations/2019-09/strategic-equality-objectives-2020-2024-consultation.pdf>

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