



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 hate crime at Human Dimension Implementation Meeting 2019

... Twenty years ago this February, the report of that inquiry (the Macpherson Inquiry) was published.

This is widely recognised as a watershed moment in our journey to fully comprehend and to address racism, discrimination and hate crime in the UK.

Since then we have developed one of the world's most robust responses to hate crime, including our leadership in recognising the needs of victims of hate crimes.

We put victims at the heart of the hate crime definition adopted by the Government. It is based on the perception of the victim or any other person as being a crime motivated by prejudice or hate.

In the UK we treat all hate crimes with equal seriousness. We are clear that no one should be targeted for hatred because of their race, religion, sexual orientation, disability or transgender identity.

We know that hate crimes can cause lasting physical and emotional damage. They can evoke despair, anger, and anxiety in victims, and spread fear and mistrust in communities, thus weakening the glue that binds our society together. They strike at the heart of our democracy by undermining the fundamental rights of equality and non-discrimination.

The Government's Hate Crime Action Plan, which we refreshed in 2018, sets out our approach to combatting hate crime. We focus on five key areas: preventing hate crime, increasing reporting, supporting victims, responding in communities and building our understanding.

We also have a strong legal framework in place with criminal penalties for offences such as incitement to racial hatred and for racially or religiously aggravated assault and criminal damage. As part of the Hate Crime Action Plan we have asked the Law Commission to undertake a review of our hate crime legislation to ensure it works as effectively as possible.

We welcome the important role that civil society and voluntary sector organisations play, including through the use of third party reporting services. The UK is fully committed to engaging with all actors to help build a more inclusive, tolerant and cohesive society, and to ensure that we live up to our OSCE commitments to combat all forms of discrimination.

To read the full press release see

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/uk-statement-on-hate-crime-at-hdim-2019>

The Action Plan referred to above can be read at

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/748175/Hate_crime_refresh_2018_FINAL_WEB.PDF

Scottish Parliament Public Petitions Committee

Hate Crime (Security Funding Scheme) (PE1737)

Puneet Dwivedi (petitioner): ... The main theme of my petition is that all communities should be able to worship at their place of worship free from intimidation, violence or any abusive behaviour. Acts of hatred against anybody based on religion, faith or ethnicity must not be tolerated and the Government must protect those who are vulnerable.

In England and Wales, there is already a place of worship scheme, which was announced in 2016. Last year, it had funding of £1.6 million to improve security to counter the threat of hate crimes at places of worship. I request that the Scottish Government implements the same scheme in Scotland.

The Government should treat all forms of hate crime equally. I have seen politicians being selective and choosing special treatment for particular hate crimes such as Islamophobia or Hinduphobia. Such a myopic view will continue to disregard the prejudice and hate crimes that people of other faiths face. ...

The Convener (Johann Lamont, Labour): ... Why would people not report hate crimes? How big a problem is that? Can you quantify the number of incidents that go unreported?

Puneet Dwivedi: ... If it is just a one-off incident, people probably just ignore it. Another issue is that people think that they will be judged. We do not have much openness and people do not talk about these things openly. People just ignore it, because they might be judged. ...

... all political parties have accepted a new definition of Islamophobia. I think that all religions should be considered equally and that there should be no special treatment for any religion. ... No religion should be treated specially. Followers of every religion can be vulnerable to any kind of hate crime. If there is specific provision for a certain religion, the other issues will never be highlighted and will be disregarded. ...

Brian Whittle (Conservative): The places of worship protective security fund scheme was launched in England and Wales in 2016. Are you aware of the impact that the funding has had on combating hate crime? ...

Puneet Dwivedi: ... I do not know whether hate crime went down after the legislation was implemented, but I am sure that people feel secure and think that, if they are a target of hate crime, it will be reported, because there will be video evidence and so on.

Brian Whittle: You think that the scheme has had a positive impact on people who come to worship by providing them with a feeling of safety.

Puneet Dwivedi: Definitely. People feel secure if the environment in which they come to worship is secure. ...

The Convener: Given the issue of people not reporting hate crime, do we need to do more to encourage people to speak up about instances of hate crime? How do we do that in a way that makes people feel safe?

Puneet Dwivedi: ... the majority of people do not understand the difference between different religions. ... There should be more detailed study of the different aspects of religions so that people are educated and know that there are differences.

The Convener: If funding is provided, how should it be shared out? I hear what you are saying about how there should be no hierarchy and that all faiths should be treated equally.

I have seen some correspondence in which the Jewish community has expressed concern about security in schools, so the issue is obviously something that people across faiths are concerned about. ...

These are important issues. People have spoken about hate crime, about the vulnerability of churches, synagogues, temples and so on, and about the vulnerability of young people who go to those places at other times, not just for worship but for education. You make an important point about people feeling insecure and not reporting incidents. Such issues have been addressed elsewhere, but we want to get a sense of how the scheme works. There is some information in the papers, but perhaps we need a little more. ...

Maurice Corry (Conservative): I know that some faiths have security teams in their places of worship—I have been to one or two in Glasgow that had their own internal security because people are so concerned. Is that approach prevalent among other faiths in Scotland? I am not saying that they are vigilantes—I am not using that word—but you can clearly see six or seven people from the organisation that is holding an event who are there with a watching brief. ...

To read the full transcript see

<http://www.parliament.scot/parliamentarybusiness/report.aspx?r=12272&i=110909#ScotParlOR>

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Other Relevant Information

Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe

Education key to addressing anti-Semitism, intolerance against Muslims and other forms of discrimination, say ODIHR event participants

Educational tools that help effectively prevent and address anti-Semitism, intolerance against Muslims and other forms of discrimination were presented and discussed at an event ... organized by the OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR) ...

The participants highlighted the role educational systems play in building students' resilience to prejudice and discrimination and in fostering an inclusive climate in schools. However, they stressed that practical tools need to be put in place for teachers and school managers to be able to respond effectively to intolerance and discrimination. ...

"Beyond a supportive educational policy framework to address anti-Semitism, intolerance against Muslims and other forms of intolerance and discrimination, teachers and school managers themselves also need training and support," said Christie Edwards, Deputy Head of ODIHR's Tolerance and Non-Discrimination Department. "To this end, ODIHR is developing concrete tools to help them adequately frame and teach about these topics and be able to respond when challenges emerge in classrooms."

The new materials, part of which were developed within ODIHR's project [Turning Words into Action to Address Anti-Semitism](#), include four educational videos to support lesson plans on countering prejudice, discrimination and anti-Semitism and promoting knowledge and understanding of the Holocaust, as well as forthcoming teacher and school management curricula and teaching aids on how to address anti-Semitism, all applicable to diverse country contexts.

The materials presented also include specific curricula and teaching materials for students to address hostility, intolerance and discrimination against Muslims ...

To read the full press release see

<https://www.osce.org/odihr/432158>

Justice for hate crime victims through co-operation with civil society focus of ODIHR event

Hate crime continues to threaten the security of individuals and entire societies, as evidenced by 2018 [data](#) from the OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR) ...

“Victims of bias crimes need to see official recognition of the crime as a hate crime. Their needs differ based on how they were attacked, by whom, and on what grounds. But in these differences, all hate crime victims are also similar – being attacked simply for who they are,” said Cristina Finch, Head of ODIHR’s Tolerance and Non-Discrimination Department. ...

Following an assessment of support for victims of hate crime across the region, ODIHR has concluded that OSCE participating States need to do more to build victim support structures to bridge the state-civil society divide. Police and other officials have to be able to understand the needs of hate crime victims and refer them to a suitable service, which often comes from civil society. ...

To read the full press release see

<https://www.osce.org/odihr/432893>

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Relevant Legislation ** new or updated today

UK Parliament

Following the Supreme Court's judgment that the prorogation of Parliament was unlawful, the 2017-19 parliamentary session resumed on 25 September, and all Bills in progress before the prorogation ceremony remain live.

Divorce, Dissolution and Separation Bill

<https://services.parliament.uk/Bills/2017-19/divorcedissolutionandseparation.html>

Domestic Abuse Bill

<https://services.parliament.uk/Bills/2017-19/domesticabuse.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>

Palestinian Statehood (Recognition) Bill

<https://services.parliament.uk/Bills/2017-19/palestinianstatehoodrecognition.html>

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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