



Political Affairs Digest

A daily summary of political events affecting the Jewish Community

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Scottish Parliament Motion

S5M-18582 John Mason (SNP): Persecution of Religion or Belief – That the Parliament acknowledges the UN’s International Day of Commemorating the Victims of Acts of Violence Based on Religion or Belief, which is on 22 August 2019; recognises the important role religion and belief play in many people’s lives in Scotland and around the world; understands that people’s religion or belief is often strongly held and can be the subject of disagreement with others in any given community; rejects violence that occurs as a result interfaith differences, and stands in solidarity with victims of violence carried out reprehensibly in the name of religion in Scotland and across the world, including in New Zealand and Sri Lanka.

<https://www.parliament.scot/parliamentarybusiness/28877.aspx?SearchType=Advance&ReferenceNumbers=S5M-18582>

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Foreign Affairs

Foreign and Commonwealth Office

PM underlines UK’s commitment to freedom of religion or belief

Prime Minister, Boris Johnson, has proclaimed the UK a champion of religious and other freedoms, and committed the UK to working with partners and friends around the world to ensure that “everyone, everywhere is able to enjoy these freedoms”

The statement was read out by Lord Ahmad, the Prime Minister’s Special Envoy on Freedom of Religion or Belief, during discussion on safeguarding religious minority groups with his international counterparts at the UN in New York today. ...

The Foreign and Commonwealth Office today also announced that research into measures that will help those persecuted for their religion or beliefs will be boosted by more than £200,000 of new funding. The funding is available to those with an interest in exploring the

best ways that the UK Government can tackle the problem of persecution as it affects particular countries or groups.

The UK's Prime Minister Boris Johnson in a statement read out at the meeting said: Freedom of religion or belief is at the heart of what the UK stands for. We will do everything possible to champion these freedoms and protect civilians in armed conflict, including religious, ethnic or other minorities. We are determined to use the tools of British diplomacy in this cause, including our permanent seat on the UN Security Council.

In light of mounting evidence that Christians suffer the most widespread persecution, we asked the Anglican Bishop of Truro to carry out an independent review to ensure that our work in this area matched the scale of the problem. We have accepted, and will implement, all of the Review's challenging recommendations. We will use the UK's global reach and programme funding to improve the lives of persecuted people. Today we are opening a call for bids on how to take this forward.

Lord Ahmad, who is also Minister of State for the Commonwealth UN and South Asia at the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, said: ...

The heinous attacks this year on places of worship from the Philippines to Burkino Faso, New Zealand to Sri Lanka, have reminded us all that the fundamental human right of freedom of religion or belief is increasingly under threat.

Today, as we commemorate the victims of such acts of violence, we demonstrate our commitment to supporting research to change people's lives and help build a world free of religious intolerance and hatred. ...

To read the full press release see

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/pm-underlines-uks-commitment-to-freedom-of-religion-or-belief>

John Bunyan Fund for Freedom of Religion and Belief: call for bids

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/john-bunyan-fund-for-freedom-of-religion-and-belief-call-for-bids>

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Other Relevant Information

Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe

To combat religious hatred, we must recognize its link to other human rights abuses, OSCE human rights head says

... "The hate crimes and intolerance we are seeing against people with a particular religion or belief rarely take place in isolation, but go hand in hand with other human rights violations," said [Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights] Director Ingibjörg Sólrún Gísladóttir. "The negative effect of such violence and discrimination should not be underestimated, on the communities concerned but also on the security situation in the OSCE region overall."

In order to counteract hate crime and discrimination, governments are encouraged to adopt a comprehensive approach that helps to build a culture of mutual respect and understanding through interfaith and interreligious dialogue and partnerships, and education programmes that promote equality and respect for human rights. At the same time, they have to develop a strong support system to assist victims. The efforts of civil society, including religious or belief communities and other community organizations, are vital in this area, making the freedom to carry out their activities and access to funding particularly important. ...

To read the full press release see
<https://www.osce.org/odihr/428384>

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Relevant Legislation ** new or updated today

UK Parliament

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

**** closes today**

Regulation of pre-paid funeral plans (closing date 25 August 2019)

<https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/regulation-of-pre-paid-funeral-plans-consultation-on-a-policy-proposal>

**** closes in 6 days**

Human rights: Freedom of religion and belief, and human rights defenders inquiry (closing date 31 August 2019)

<https://www.parliament.uk/business/committees/committees-a-z/commons-select/foreign-affairs-committee/inquiries1/parliament-2017/freedom-of-religion-and-belief-inquiry-17-19/>

**** closing date extended to 30 September!**

Islamophobia in Scotland (closing date 30 September 2019)

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

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