Political Affairs Digest

A daily summary of political events affecting the Jewish Community

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House of Commons Written Answers

Religion: Education

Sarah Owen (Labour) [183569] To ask the Secretary of State for Education, if she will make an assessment of the potential impact of Religious Education on addressing racial or religious prejudice in schools; and whether she has had recent discussions on improving standards of Religious Education teaching with the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities.

Nick Gibb:The Government recognises the importance of providing good quality religious education (RE) for pupils. RE remains a compulsory subject for all state-funded schools in England, including academies, for all pupils up to the age of 18. The Government's policy is to allow RE curricula to be designed at a local level, whether that is through a locally agreed syllabus or by individual schools and academy trusts developing their own curricula. The Department does not quality assure, approve, endorse or promote locally agreed syllabuses for RE or any associated resources and materials. The Department has therefore made no formal assessment of the potential impact of RE on addressing racial or religious prejudice in schools.

Whilst RE seeks to educate young people on the importance of tolerance and acceptance of those of all faiths and beliefs, it is not the only subject within a school's curriculum that does so. For example, all schools have a duty to promote fundamental British values, which includes mutual respect and tolerance of different faiths and beliefs.

Developing and deepening pupils' understanding of these values is part of the Ofsted inspection framework, alongside expectations that schools develop responsible citizens and promote an inclusive environment that meets the needs of all pupils, irrespective of their characteristics.

The Relationships, Sex and Health Education curriculum has a strong focus on equality, respect and the harmful impact of stereotyping, as well as the importance of valuing difference. Guidance can be found at:

www.gov.uk/guidance/teaching-about-relationships-sex-and-health

Schools should address any intolerant, racist or discriminatory views expressed by pupils through their wider anti bullying and safeguarding policies. All schools are required by law to have a behaviour policy which outlines measures to encourage good behaviour and prevent all forms of bullying amongst pupils. The policy should set out the behaviour expected of pupils, the sanctions that will be imposed for misbehaviour and recognition for good behaviour. This should be communicated to all pupils, school staff and parents. The Department's advice for schools, which outlines schools' responsibilities, is available at:

www.gov.uk/government/publications/preventing-and-tackling-bullying

The Department publishes information, guidance and support for teachers and school leaders on how to challenge radical views, including racist and discriminatory beliefs, on the 'Educate Against Hate' website. These resources include the Respectful School Communities toolkit, a self-review and signposting tool to support schools to develop a whole school approach which promotes respect and discipline. This can help to combat bullying, harassment and prejudice of any kind, including hate based bullying. The toolkit is available at:

<u>www.educateagainsthate.com/school-leaders/?filter=guidance-and-training-school-leaders</u>

The Department is also providing over £3 million of funding between August 2021 and March 2024 to five anti-bullying organisations to support schools to tackle bullying. The Department has deliberately focused this grant programme on preventing and tackling bullying of pupils with protected characteristics. This includes projects targeting the bullying of particular vulnerable groups, such as those who are victims of hate related bullying.

The Department is not aware of any discussions with my right hon. Friend, the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities on improving standards of RE teaching.

https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2023-05-02/183569

Religious Hatred: Internet

Sarah Owen (Labour) [183568] To ask Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, whether she has had recent discussions with the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport on the potential merits of including provisions in the Online Safety Bill on tackling online hate language targeted at religious groups.

Paul Scully: Under the Online Safety Bill, all user-to-user and search services will need to put in place systems and processes to prevent their users from encountering priority illegal offences, including religiously aggravated public order and harassment offences. They must also swiftly remove other illegal content once it has been reported or they become aware of its presence.

Services which are likely to be accessed by children will also be required to protect child users from content and activity that is harmful to children, including content that is abusive or incites hatred on the basis of religion.

Where content does not meet the criminal threshold and is accessed by adults, the Bill will ensure that the largest services remove content that is prohibited in their terms of service, such as hate speech. These services must also offer their adult users tools which reduce the likelihood that they see certain categories of content, or alert them to the nature of it. These tools will specifically apply to content which is abusive, or incites hatred, on the basis of religion.

https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-guestions/detail/2023-05-02/183568

House of Lords Written Answers

Islam

Lord Pearson of Rannoch (Non-affiliated) [HL7540] To ask His Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the paper published by the Commission for Countering Extremism in October 2019 entitled Mainstream Islamism in Britain: educating for the Islamic Revival.

Baroness Barran: The department acknowledges the report published by the Commission for Countering Extremism in 2019. This report raises several issues related to integration, extremism, and relationships, sex and health education (RSHE). The department is clear that education plays a vital role in promoting integration and ensuring children and young people are prepared for life in modern Britain, including through learning about the values that underpin and unite our society. All schools have specific duties to promote the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of their pupils and to prepare them for the opportunities and responsibilities of adult life. Schools are required to promote the fundamental British values (FBVs) of democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty and mutual respect, and tolerance of those of different faiths and beliefs.

The department is committed to keeping children safe from extremism and has taken strong action to prevent extremism from gaining a foothold in our schools across the country, including:

- guidance on the promotion of FBVs so that schools have a clear understanding of what is required and how best to practically deliver these.
- powers to take action against individual teachers or governors who act in a way which undermines FBVs.
- working with Ofsted to strengthen their inspection frameworks, requiring inspectors to assess how well schools protect pupils from the risks of extremism and radicalisation, and how they promote FBVs.
- providing additional resources to Ofsted to inspect suspected unregistered independent schools.
- a counter-extremism helpline and online referral form to ensure those working in the sector and the public can report extremism concerns directly to the department to be investigated where appropriate.
- our Educate Against Hate website providing advice, support, and resources for parents, teachers, and school leaders to help them protect young people from extremism and radicalisation.

Since 2020, relationships and health education has been compulsory in all primary schools, and relationships, sex and health education has been compulsory in all secondary schools. The department set out the topics that schools should teach about in RSHE statutory guidance, which is clear that schools are responsible for what they teach and should ensure that all content is factual, age appropriate and politically impartial, particularly when using materials produced by external organisations. When teaching, schools should take into account the age of pupils and their religious and cultural background. The department's statutory guidance on RSHE is available at:

https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/relationships-education-relationships-and-sex-education-rse-and-health-education

The department continues to keep this area under close review. On 8 March, my right hon. Friend, the Prime Minister announced that the department has started a review of the guidance. This will cover the full scope of the statutory guidance, and we will be working closely with our stakeholders and experts to draw on the best available evidence about high quality RSHE which meets the needs of young people.

https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2023-04-27/hl7540

The paper referred to above can be read at

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment data/file/836571/Mainstream-islamism-in-britain-education-for-the-islamic-revival.pdf

The website referred to abve can be read at

https://www.educateagainsthate.com/

The announcement referred to above can be read at

https://hansard.parliament.uk/commons/2023-03-08/debates/A182F3E8-6CA8-4FBC-B10E-8045D9374E73/Engagements#contribution-621502A9-ADDB-4B38-A5C9-60DCBB841FF6

Muslim Engagement and Development

Lord Pearson of Rannoch (Non-affiliated) [HL7541] To ask His Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of any effect on free speech of the training delivered by Muslim Engagement and Development (MEND) in the workplace training of public sector bodies and charities.

Baroness Neville-Rolfe: Through the Government Campus Curriculum, including the learning framework contracts, the Cabinet Office enables all civil servants to develop the right skills, both to deliver the Government's current priorities and to tackle future challenges.

Training provided by the Muslim Engagement and Development (MEND) is not part of the curriculum. MEND is not a supplier on the learning framework contracts and we have no central records of MEND providing any training within the civil service. We do not monitor training provided to the wider public and charities sectors.

https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2023-04-27/hl7541

Information about the Government Campus Curriculum, referred to above, can be read at https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/the-government-campus-curriculum

Arabic and Religion: Education

Lord Pearson of Rannoch (Non-affiliated) [HL7542] To ask His Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of any effect arising from funding from Qatar Foundation International on the teaching of religious education and Arabic in UK schools.

Baroness Barran: The department does not receive any funding from Qatar Foundation International (QFI) for curriculum programmes that support the teaching of religious education (RE) or Arabic in schools in England. Therefore, no assessment has been made on the potential effects of this.

https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2023-04-27/hl7542

House of Commons Library Briefing

Local elections 2023: Results and analysis

https://researchbriefings.files.parliament.uk/documents/CBP-9798/CBP-9798.pdf

Crown Prosecution Service

Podcast host sentenced for terrorism offences

... James Allchurch, 51, was sentenced ... to 2 years and 6 months for 10 offences of distributing audio material to stir up racial hatred.

The charges followed an investigation by Counter Terrorism Policing-North East into the activities of a website that called itself 'Radio Aryan'.

The website was created in November 2015 and since then, produced content on a daily basis. 'Radio Aryan' was a website where the podcasts Allchurch hosted were published. The content published on the website was racist, anti-Semitic and white supremacist. The CPS proved in court that Allchurch was the proprietor, producer and main host of Radio Aryan and therefore, should be held responsible for the content of the webpages.

Moreover, the CPS proved to the jury that the podcasts were highly abusive and insulting. In one episode, Allchurch suggested creating "safe spaces" outside cities for "indigenous Britons" and questioned that gas chambers were used by the Nazis during the holocaust. Each episode was also accompanied by often racist and insulting cartoons.

Nick Price, Head of the CPS Special Crime and Counter Terrorism Division, said: "The hateful and grotesque views that Allchurch shared on his podcast were a threat to our society, and it is right that the jury found him guilty of his crimes.

"There is no place in society for these beliefs, and the CPS will continue to prosecute all cases involving hate crime where there is sufficient evidence to do so."

https://www.cps.gov.uk/cps/news/podcast-host-sentenced-terrorism-offences

Police Service of Northern Ireland (PSNI)

Incidents and Crimes with a Hate Motivation Recorded by the Police in Northern Ireland: Update to 31st March 2023

https://www.psni.police.uk/system/files/2023-05/443047986/Hate%20Motivations%20Bulletin%20Period%20ending%2031st%20March%202023.pdf

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Israel

House of Commons Library Briefing

Progress on UK free trade agreement negotiations

https://researchbriefings.files.parliament.uk/documents/CBP-9314/CBP-9314.pdf

Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office

Ceasefire in Israel and Gaza: Foreign Secretary statement

Foreign Secretary James Cleverly said: I welcome the announcement of a ceasefire between Israel and militant factions in Gaza, brokered by Egypt. The ceasefire must now be honoured to prevent the loss of further civilian life.

The UK will support all efforts to promote dialogue and create a pathway towards sustainable peace.

https://www.gov.uk/government/news/ceasefire-in-israel-and-gaza-foreign-secretary-statement

Lord (Tariq)Ahmad of Wimbledon The announcement of a ceasefire between Israel & military factions in Gaza, brokered by Egypt, is a vital step towards ending the loss of civilian lives we have seen.

https://twitter.com/tariqahmadbt/status/1657751852069404673

Lord (Tariq)Ahmad of Wimbledon The UK urges both sides to engage in dialogue & we will play our part in helping to build a pathway to a sustainable peace.

Scottish Parliament Motion

Pauline McNeill (Labour) [S6M-08950] Commemorating the 75th Anniversary of the Nakba — That the Parliament acknowledges the 75th anniversary of the Nakba; understands what it sees as the importance of the Nakba in the Palestinian experience and believes that its significance cannot be overstated; further understands that, between 1947 and 1949, Palestinians were forced from their homes, land, villages, towns, and cities, never to be allowed to return; believes that thousands of people lost their lives, whilst many more lost their livelihoods and homeland; further believes that more than 500 villages were destroyed during this time and that some two-thirds of all Palestinians were displaced, giving birth to a Palestinian refugee population that now numbers nearly six million, and considers that the United Nations (UN) recognised the gravity of this event, in 2022, when it adopted resolution A/77/L.24 to mark Nakba Day, and understands that the resolution included plans for a commemoration on 15 May in New York.

https://www.parliament.scot/chamber-and-committees/votes-and-motions/S6M-08950

The resolution referred to above can be read at https://undocs.org/en/A/77/L.24

Welsh Senedd Motion

John Griffiths (Labour) [OPIN-2023-0345] Nakba Commemoration 'Memory of the Catastrophe' – This Senedd:

- 1. Commemorates the some 750,000 Palestinians who fled or were expelled from their homes following the Arab-Israeli war, which began on 15 May 1948, together with the Arab-Israeli fighting in the West Bank and Gaza Strip in June 1967.
- 2. Calls for continued support for the five million Palestinians registered by the UN as refugees who mostly live in Jordan, followed by the Gaza Strip, West Bank, Syria, Lebanon, and East Jerusalem.
- 3. Asks the Welsh Government to press the UK Government for support for reconciliation between Palestinians and Israelis to facilitate establishment of a two-state solution. https://record.senedd.wales/StatementOfOpinion/345

United Nations

Marking Anniversary of Nakba, President Tells Palestinian Rights Committee 'Tragedy Constitutes a Scar on Humanity'

... The epicentre of the Palestine tragedy, the Nakba is a moment in time in 1948 when a majority of a nation was displaced almost overnight, with hundreds of thousands fleeing for their lives as thousands were killed and hundreds of villages and communities were destroyed. However, the Nakba did not end in that moment — to this day, it remains the name given by Palestinians to their dispossession, displacement, collective punishment and the denial of their inalienable rights.

Mahmoud Abbas, President of the State of Palestine, urging the United Nations to restore the rights of his people and establish 15 May as an international day to commemorate their plight, said: "This tragedy constitutes a scar on humanity." With Palestinians around the world commemorating this anniversary, the Palestinian narrative is only now starting to find its way into the consciousness of countries by countering the

false Israeli narrative. A national commemoration monument is being built in the State of Palestine as a witness to this human tragedy. Yet, Israel continues to deny the Nakba and build settlements on lands that are recognized and accepted as Palestine while imposing an apartheid regime.

Despite more than 1,000 resolutions adopted on this issue since 1947 by the United Nations General Assembly, Security Council and Human Rights Council, not a single one has been implemented, he pointed out. Israel's membership in the Organization, he reminded, was predicated on the implementation of Assembly resolution 181 on the establishment of the State of Palestine and Assembly resolution 194 on the return of Palestine refugees. As such, Israel must either respect these resolutions or have its membership in the United Nations suspended, he asserted, spotlighting the double standard within the Organization on implementing resolutions.

By planting another entity in the Palestinian homeland for their own colonial goals, the United States and the United Kingdom bear a political and ethnical responsibility for the Nakba, he emphasized. In detailing the ongoing struggle of the Palestinian people, he noted, among other points, that Palestinians had lived in the area for thousands of years. Palestine was one of the most civilized lands in the Arab region, with a vibrant culture, libraries, newspapers, printing houses, many agricultural exports, green land, lakes and rivers. With weapons from London, the Zionists established the State of Israel, committed massacres, demolished 530 villages and displaced around 957,000 refugees, according to the United Nations. Israel has since repeated its false claims which date back to its denial of the reports issued by the League of Nations, continues to violate holy sites and denies Palestinians the freedom of worship at mosques. Moreover, that Government has not only violated resolutions but also occupies by force with its ongoing blockade of Gaza and nearly 750,000 settlers in occupied land.

"[Israel] continue[s] to lie until people continue to believe their lies," he said, stressing that the biggest lie is that Israel is the only democratic country in the Middle East. He then took to task the false claim that Palestinians do not want peace by pointing out that they have accepted a State on 22 per cent of its historic land and are ready to not only carry out peaceful negotiations but also live alongside Israel in peace and security. In noting that Israel is celebrating the seventy-fifth anniversary of its independence, he asked: "Independence from who[m]?"

He went on to note that the officials of that occupying Government are calling for the killing of Palestinians and the demolition of their homes. Explaining that this situation is reminiscent of the Nakba in 1948, he called on the international community to shoulder its responsibility. "Why aren't you protecting us," he asked, urging Israel to be held accountable. ...

In opening remarks, **Cheikh Niang (Senegal), Chair of the Committee**, stressed that the resilience of the Palestinian people should not absolve the international community from its obligations and responsibility. Reminding the world about the Nakba and the ongoing suffering of the Palestinian people is needed now more than ever, he asserted, highlighting the current dire situation in the Occupied Palestinian Territory. ...

He went on to voice the Committee's grave concern over Israel's de facto creeping annexation as well as its dismay over the grave human rights abuses and discriminatory policies imposed against the Palestinian people. ...

Rosemary DiCarlo, Under-Secretary-General for Political and Peacebuilding Affairs, voiced her deep concern over the continually diminishing prospects towards a two-State solution. ...

The question of Palestine is intimately linked to the history and the Charter of the United Nations, she pointed out, explaining that respect for international law and human rights, self-determination and the peaceful resolution of conflicts constitute the Organization's raison d'etre. As Palestinians deserve a life of justice and dignity, the Organization's position is clear: the occupation must end and a two-State solution that will bring lasting

peace and security must be achieved in line with international law, United Nations resolutions and previous agreements.

Philippe Lazzarini, UNRWA Commissioner ... emphasized that the 1948 war was the beginning of a very long journey of waiting and uncertainty. Against that backdrop, today is a day to highlight how the United Nations and its partners have made a difference in the lives of Palestine refugees, he said. ...

Sulaiman Mohammed S. Alanbar, Permanent Observer for the Cooperation Council for the Arab States of the Gulf, pointed out that Israel's activities are an extension of the Palestinian Nakba, the longest colonization issue. This is a sad moment in the history of the Middle East and the world, he observed, adding that it is also a cause of desperation and anger for Arab Palestinians. ... Highlighting recent examples such as the indiscriminate and violent killings of civilians, he stressed that these actions only exacerbate the current desperation and make the calls for peace in region far-fetched. ...

To read the full press release see

https://press.un.org/en/2023/gapal1453.doc.htm

Resolution 181, referred to above, can be read at

https://daccess-ods.un.org/access.nsf/Get?OpenAgent&DS=A/RES/181(II)&Lang=E

Resolution 194, referred to above, can be read at

https://daccess-ods.un.org/access.nsf/Get?OpenAgent&DS=A/RES/194%20(III)&Lang=E

Statement attributable to the Spokesperson for the Secretary-General – on the ceasefire in Gaza and Israel

The Secretary-General welcomes last night's ceasefire agreement in Israel and Gaza.

The Secretary-General extends his deepest condolences to the families of the victims of the violence. The hostilities have led to needless human suffering.

The Secretary-General commends Egypt's key role in bringing the hostilities to an end, alongside the efforts of Qatar, Lebanon and the United States to reach a ceasefire. He calls on all sides to observe the ceasefire.

The Secretary-General reaffirms the United Nations' commitment to the achievement of the two-State solution based on relevant United Nations resolutions, international law, and prior agreements and the importance of restoring a political horizon. He reiterates that only a negotiated sustainable political solution will lead to lasting peace and end, once and for all, these devastating cycles of violence.

https://www.un.org/sg/en/content/sg/statement/2023-05-14/statement-attributable-the-spokesperson-for-the-secretary-general----the-ceasefire-gaza-and-israel%C2%A0

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Other Relevant Information

European Court of Human Rights

Applicant's conviction for not promptly deleting unlawful comments on Facebook did not breach his right to freedom of expression

... The application concerned the criminal conviction of the applicant, at the time a local councillor who was standing for election to Parliament, for the offence of incitement to hatred or violence against a group or an individual on grounds of religion, following his failure to take prompt action to delete comments posted by third parties on the "wall" of his Facebook account. The applicant alleged that his conviction had breached his right to freedom of expression under Article 10 of the Convention.

The criminal case had turned solely on the applicant's lack of vigilance and failure to react in respect of comments posted by others. It had thus raised the question of the shared liability of the various actors involved in social media. The French criminal courts, applying a "cascading liability" regime ... had convicted the authors for the unlawful messages together with the applicant as the Facebook account holder, being characterised as "producer". ...

... the Court agreed with the domestic courts that the comments at issue ... could be classified as hate speech ... it took the view that the interference with the applicant's freedom of expression pursued not only the legitimate aim of protecting the reputation or rights of others, but also that of preventing disorder or crime. ...

As the applicant had decided to make his Facebook "wall" publicly accessible and had "authorised his friends to post comments", in the Court's view he could not have been unaware, in view of the local tensions and ongoing election campaign around that time, that his choice was clearly not without certain potentially serious consequences.

The Court concluded ... that the decisions of the domestic courts had been based on relevant and sufficient grounds, with regard both to the applicant's liability, as a politician, for the unlawful comments posted by the third parties, who had themselves been identified and prosecuted as accomplices, and to the applicant's criminal conviction. The interference in question could thus be regarded as "necessary in a democratic society". There had therefore been no violation of Article 10 of the Convention. ...

To read the full press release see

https://hudoc.echr.coe.int/app/conversion/pdf/?library=ECHR&id=003-7648098-10537594&filename=Grand%20Chamber%20judgment%20Sanchez%20v.%20France%20-%20Applicant%E2%80%99s%20conviction%20for%20not%20promptly%20deleting%20unla wful%20comments%20on%20Facebook.pdf

To read the full judgement see

https://hudoc.echr.coe.int/eng#{%22itemid%22:[%22001-224928%22]}

Relevant Legislation ** new or updated today

UK Parliament

Bill of Rights Bill

https://bills.parliament.uk/bills/3227

Education (Non-religious Philosophical Convictions) Bill

https://bills.parliament.uk/bills/3186

Higher Education (Freedom of Speech) Bill

https://bills.parliament.uk/bills/2862

Holocaust Memorial Bill

https://bills.parliament.uk/bills/3421

Marriage Act 1949 (Amendment) Bill

https://bills.parliament.uk/bills/3325

** Online Safety Bill

https://bills.parliament.uk/bills/3137

Notice of amendments

https://bills.parliament.uk/publications/51085/documents/3398

** Nakba Commemoration Bill

https://bills.parliament.uk/bills/3461

First Reading, House of Commons

https://hansard.parliament.uk/commons/2023-05-15/debates/D629AC61-5A7A-4FC5-842D-859290B199C1/PointsOfOrder#contribution-ABE1D15C-803C-48A9-ADC1-27ED76B89CFD

Palestine Statehood (Recognition) Bill

https://bills.parliament.uk/bills/3217

Private Burial Grounds and Cemeteries Bill

https://bills.parliament.uk/bills/3188

Same Sex Marriage (Church of England)

https://bills.parliament.uk/bills/3438

Schools Bill

https://bills.parliament.uk/bills/3156

Terrorism (Protection of Premises) Draft Bill

https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/terrorism-protection-of-premises-draft-bill-overarching-documents

Universal Credit (Removal of Two Child Limit) Bill

https://bills.parliament.uk/bills/3163

Universal Jurisdiction (Extension)

https://bills.parliament.uk/bills/3454

Scottish Parliament

Charities (Regulation and Administration) (Scotland) Bill

https://www.parliament.scot/bills-and-laws/bills/charities-regulation-and-administration-scotland-bill

Gender Recognition Reform (Scotland) Bill

https://www.parliament.scot/bills-and-laws/bills/gender-recognition-reform-scotland-bill

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Consultations ** n

** new or updated today

The UK's international counter-terrorism policy (closing date 12 June 2023) https://committees.parliament.uk/call-for-evidence/3120/

Supporting earlier resolution of private family law arrangements (closing date 15 June 2023)

https://consult.justice.gov.uk/digital-communications/private-family-law-consultation/

Review of the Race Relations (NI) Order 1997 (closing date 18 June 2023)

https://www.executiveoffice-ni.gov.uk/consultations/consultation-review-race-relations-ni-order-1997

Charities tax compliance (closing date 20 July 2023)

https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/charities-tax-compliance/consultation-charities-tax-compliance

JPR 2023 Antisemitism in the UK Survey (closing date not stated)

https://www.jpr.org.uk/panel/UKantisemitism2023 (UK except Scotland) and

https://bit.ly/3Vg7DDH (Scotland)

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