



Political Affairs Digest

A daily summary of political events affecting the Jewish Community

Contents

Home Affairs

Israel

Relevant Legislation

Consultations

Back issues

Home Affairs

Scottish Parliament Petition

New Petition: PE2052

Ban child circumcision unless it is medically necessary with no less invasive solutions available

<https://petitions.parliament.scot/petitions/PE2052>

TOP

Israel

House of Lords Written Answer

Israel: Palestinians

Baroness Janke (Liberal Democrat) [HL10315] To ask His Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of (1) reports that leading Israeli public figures such as the former head of the Mossad intelligence agency, Tamir Pardo, and the former speaker of the Israeli parliament, Avraham Burg, have stated that the State of Israel is imposing a form of apartheid on the Palestinian people; and (2) the statement made by members of The Elders organisation, including Mary Robinson and Ban Ki-moon, after visiting the West Bank, of the "ever-growing evidence that the situation meets the international legal definition of apartheid".

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: The UK is committed to making progress towards a two-state solution, as the Foreign Secretary made clear during his recent visit to Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territories on 11-13 September.

However, the UK does not agree with the use of this terminology. Any judgment on whether serious crimes under international law have occurred is a matter for judicial decision, rather than for governments or non-judicial bodies. As a friend of Israel, we have a regular dialogue on human rights. This includes encouraging the Government of Israel to abide by its obligations under international law and do all it

can to uphold the values of equality for all.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2023-09-19/hl10315>

Scottish Parliament Written Answer

Scottish Government: UN Human Rights Office List

Ross Greer (Green) [S6W-21585] To ask the Scottish Government, further to the answers to questions S6W-00207 and S6W-00208 by Ivan McKee on 27 October 2021, whether it will publish (a) a list of any companies that it has written to due to their appearing on the UN Human Rights Office list, (b) a summary of each response, and (c) details of any further actions that it or its agencies have taken as a result.

Richard Lochhead: In December 2021 the Scottish Government wrote to Public Bodies in Scotland to ask that they consider the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights' (OHCHR) list of companies involved in listed activities in illegal Israeli settlements, as part of their Human Rights Due Diligence processes. We also asked Public Bodies to report any existing relationships with companies on the list.

In June 2022, the then Minister for Business, Trade, Tourism and Enterprise wrote to the companies that had been identified, asking what action they had taken or were planning to take to cease those listed activities. The Minister wrote to those companies again in March 2023 to advise them that we would write to Public Bodies again, following the publication of any revised list.

The Scottish Government's response to FOI 202200334471, issued on 9 February 2023, sets out the letters written to the companies in June 2022 and the responses received at that point. The Scottish Government has no plans to publish any further correspondence, pending the publication of a revised list.

<https://www.parliament.scot/chamber-and-committees/questions-and-answers/question?ref=S6W-21585>

The answers referred to above can be read at

<https://www.parliament.scot/chamber-and-committees/questions-and-answers/question?ref=S6W-00207>

and

<https://www.parliament.scot/chamber-and-committees/questions-and-answers/question?ref=S6W-00208>

The FOI response referred to above can be read at

<https://www.gov.scot/publications/foi-202200334471/>

UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights

Human Rights Council Adopts Universal Periodic Review Outcomes of ... Israel

... The Council has before it the reports of the Working Group of the Universal Periodic Review of Israel (A/HRC/54/16), and its addendum (A/HRC/54/16/Add.1)

Israel said since its establishment, Israel had endeavoured to foster a democratic society where the rights of all individuals were upheld, and where co-existence, comprised of a multitude of cultural, religious, racial and ethnic groups, was a cornerstone of its society. Israel had done so in the face of serious security challenges, including rampant acts of terrorism, which threatened the lives of the population on a daily basis. Israel extended great efforts to finding the delicate and proper balance between its commitments to human rights and its obligation to defend its population.

Israel recognised the critical role of international mechanisms in the promotion and

protection of human rights at the national level. Nevertheless, the one-sided and ongoing discriminatory treatment to which Israel was subjected by this Council could not be ignored. This institutional bias had been manifested, for example, in Israel being the only country in the world with a dedicated Human Rights Council agenda item, the infamous item seven; a disproportionate number of condemnatory resolutions and special sessions; and the only country subjected to a permanent Commission of Inquiry with an effectively unlimited mandate. Israel took this opportunity to place on record the urgent need for its discriminatory treatment in the Human Rights Council to end.

Israel remained committed to engaging with international human rights mechanisms as part of its unwavering support for the promotion and protection of human rights, both domestically and globally. Israel was fully engaged in combatting and preventing racism, sexual exploitation, abuse and harassment through all United Nations organizations, agencies and programmes. Israel was here today with a firm belief that this dialogue could provide Israel with an important instrument to further improve its mechanisms for a better implementation of human rights, and had been able to support 171 recommendations, in whole or in part. These included, among others, recommendations to develop and implement public policies and social awareness campaigns to eliminate violence; hate speech; discrimination based on birth, race or religion; and discrimination against minority groups and on the basis of sexual orientation and gender identity.

Some speakers said they appreciated Israel's active cooperation with United Nations human rights mechanisms, civil society and academia. This was a clear commitment to an open and democratic society guaranteeing the protection and promotion of human rights and peaceful coexistence between different cultural, religious, racial and ethnic groups. Israel's steps to safeguard the rights of children and persons with disabilities were highly valued. Speakers noted Israel's renewed commitment to addressing existing challenges in the fight against discrimination, racism and ethnically motivated violence. The State was congratulated on reforms undertaken to close social gaps and to promote the rights of the elderly, and the steps taken to empower women, including within the judiciary.

Some speakers were concerned about systematic human rights violations taking place in the occupied Palestinian territory by Israel. They noted that Israel had rejected numerous recommendations to end the expansion of settlements in the occupied Palestinian territory; to stop the use of force and killing of innocent civilians; and to prohibit ongoing blockades, among others. Speakers said approximately half of the recommendations proposed to Israel had not been accepted. Israel should conduct systematic, credible and transparent investigations into the excessive use of force by Israeli security forces against civilians, including children, in order to prevent security forces from acting with impunity.

A number of speakers encouraged Israel to intensify its efforts to strengthen the respect, protection, realisation and promotion of human rights on the ground. The presence of the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights in the occupied Palestinian territory, as mandated by the Council, was essential to monitor and report publicly on the human rights situation and possible violations by all parties. Speakers wished Israel success in implementing the accepted recommendations and recommended that the Council adopt its report by consensus.

The Vice-President of the Council said out of the 320 recommendations received, 156 enjoyed the support of Israel, and 154 were noted. Additional clarification was provided on another 10 recommendations. ...

The Council adopted the outcome of the Universal Periodic Review of Israel.

To read the full press release see

<https://www.ohchr.org/en/news/2023/10/human-rights-council-adopts-universal-periodic-review-outcomes-barbados-united-arab>

Report of the Working Group on the Universal Periodic Review: Israel (A/HRC/54/16)

<https://undocs.org/en/A/HRC/54/16>

Relevant Legislation ** new or updated today

UK Parliament

Economic Activity of Public Bodies (Overseas Matters) Bill

<https://bills.parliament.uk/bills/3475>

Education (Non-religious Philosophical Convictions) Bill

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

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>

Nakba Commemoration Bill

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

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

Gender Recognition Reform (Scotland) Bill

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

TOP

Consultations

** new or updated today

**** closes tomorrow**

A Human Rights Bill for Scotland (closing date 5 October 2023)

<https://consult.gov.scot/equality-and-human-rights/a-human-rights-bill-for-scotland-consultation/>

The future of population and migration statistics in England and Wales (closing date 26 October 2023)

<https://consultations.ons.gov.uk/ons/futureofpopulationandmigrationstatistics/>

Management of burial grounds, application for burial, exhumation, private burial and restoration of lairs: regulation in Scotland (closing date 17 November 2023)

<https://consult.gov.scot/burial-cremation/regulation-burial-scotland/>

Statutory inspection of burial authorities, cremation authorities and funeral directors (closing date 17 November 2023)

<https://consult.gov.scot/burial-cremation/statutory-inspection-burial-authorities/>

Funeral director licensing scheme for Scotland (closing date 17 November 2023)

<https://consult.gov.scot/burial-cremation/licensing-funeral-directors-scotland/>

Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE) [Northern Ireland] (closing date 24 November 2023)

<https://www.education-ni.gov.uk/consultations/relationships-and-sexuality-education-rse-consultation>

TOP

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