

Political Affairs Digest

A daily summary of political events affecting the Jewish Community

Scottish Council of Jewish Communities

SCoJeC

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Scottish Parliament Written Answer

Anti-Semitism

Jackson Carlaw: To ask the Scottish Government, in light of the recent decision by the UK Government to do so, whether it will adopt the definition of anti-Semitism that has been designated by the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance. (S5W-5829)

Angela Constance: There is no excuse for any form of hate crime; it is not acceptable and will not be tolerated. The definition of anti-Semitism designated by the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance will be considered by the Scottish Government. Officials will also meet with the Scottish Council for Jewish Communities in early 2017 to discuss the definition.

<http://www.parliament.scot/parliamentarybusiness/28877.aspx?SearchType=Advance&ReferenceNumbers=S5W-5829>

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Israel

House of Commons Oral Answers

Topical Questions: Secretary of State for International Development

Graham Evans: The Secretary of State has previously said that she is looking at allocating DFID funding to peaceful co-existence projects, including Save a Child's Heart, whose valuable work brings Palestinians and Israelis together. Can she update the House on that very worthy project?

The Secretary of State for International Development (Priti Patel): I am pleased to confirm that we are indeed working on a range of co-existence programmes in Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territories to support tangible improvements, as my hon. Friend the Minister of State has said. The programme is now in its final design phase and will be launched at the beginning of the financial year.

<https://hansard.parliament.uk/commons/2017-01-11/debates/137CD61B-1CDD-437E-86AA-7B751B63888B/TopicalQuestions#contribution-33302C56-982C-4696-9BF4-2CEABE0A6636>

Topical Questions: Secretary of State for International Development

T2. **Danny Kinahan:** We receive much lobbying on the Israeli and Palestinian need for delivery on the ground, but what is the Minister of State's assessment of the effect of terrorism and how difficult it makes it to deliver on the ground to those in real need, whether it is education or humanitarian aid? [908013]

The Minister of State, Department for International Development (Rory Stewart): The hon. Gentleman makes a fundamental point. We have talked a great deal about demolitions and settlements, but the only long-term stability in that region requires protecting the security of Israel as an absolutely essential plank, along with guaranteeing an autonomous, independent Palestinian state.

<https://hansard.parliament.uk/commons/2017-01-11/debates/137CD61B-1CDD-437E-86AA-7B751B63888B/TopicalQuestions#contribution-7E3AF587-C613-4F3F-BF8E-F0A8D993D0B9>

Topical Questions: Secretary of State for International Development

T5. **Ian Austin:** Will the Secretary of State reconsider her Department's decision to cut every single penny of spending on co-existence projects, which bring the Israelis and Palestinians together, and lay the foundations for a peace process and two-state solution? [908016]

Priti Patel: I thank the hon. Gentleman for his question. He will have heard in the previous responses our commitment to co-existence programmes, and about how they will not just drive the right values, but help to bring the two communities together in a very constructive way—this is in addition to our focus on targeted spending on public schemes such as health and education programmes within the region.

<https://hansard.parliament.uk/commons/2017-01-11/debates/137CD61B-1CDD-437E-86AA-7B751B63888B/TopicalQuestions#contribution-F67EE5D4-906F-4789-B4CC-B2556B973E1C>

Occupied Palestinian Territories

2. **Louise Haigh:** What assessment she has made of the implications of demolitions in the occupied Palestinian territories in 2015-16 for her Department's policies in that region. [907998]

4. **Simon Danczuk:** What assessment she has made of the implications of demolitions in the Occupied Palestinian Territories in 2015-16 for her Department's policies in that region. [908000]

The Minister of State, Department for International Development (Rory Stewart): The Department's assessment, in line with long-standing British Government policy, is that demolitions are illegal under international humanitarian law, and that they undermine the credibility and viability of a two-state solution.

Louise Haigh: The Bedouin village of Umm-al-Hiran remains under threat from a demolition that would cast out 800 villagers, and the number of demolitions in the occupied territories in the first two weeks of January is almost four times greater than the number at this point last year. What support is being given to the people who are being driven out of their homes, and what message is being sent to the Israeli Government that such demolitions are completely unjustifiable?

Rory Stewart: The hon. Lady raises two important issues, the first of which is long standing. Along with our international partners, we continue to lobby the Israeli Government, who are undertaking the demolitions, to stop doing so, both because they are illegal and because they undermine the two-state solution.

The Under-Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, my hon. Friend the Member for Bournemouth East (Mr Ellwood), had a meeting with the Israeli Defence Minister, Mr Lieberman, just before Christmas, and raised the issue of demolitions with him directly.

Simon Danczuk: Will the Minister ensure that human rights non-governmental

organisations operating on the west bank continue to receive support from the British Government?

Rory Stewart: We are absolutely focused on supporting NGOs, but above all we are focused on investment in health and education. It is getting the natural capital right, and providing opportunities and hope for the Palestinians, that will lead to security and stability for both sides in the conflict.

Mark Pawsey: Many of the demolitions occur because it is virtually impossible for Palestinians to obtain building permits. What legal support can the Department give to those who are contesting the process?

Rory Stewart: As I have said, DFID is focusing on health and education, but the Foreign Office has legal support programmes. This issue goes to the heart of the Israeli planning system, and involves controversies with the Israeli Attorney General. As my hon. Friend says, it is very difficult to obtain planning permission, which is one of the reasons why settlements are built and demolitions then take place.

8. **Tommy Sheppard:** Among the buildings that the Israeli authorities have demolished are community facilities, some of which have been funded and developed with money from the Minister's Department. I would welcome his statement, but I think that we need action rather than words. Has the time not come to send Mr Netanyahu the bill for the demolition of structures funded by the British taxpayer? [908004]

Rory Stewart: The British taxpayer has not funded any structures that have been demolished by the Israeli Government. The European Union has funded structures that have been demolished by the Israeli Government, but so far it has not decided to seek compensation.

Tom Brake: Will the Minister confirm that DFID, notwithstanding the efforts of a senior Israeli diplomat to "take down" a Minister, will continue to fight against collective punishment, demolitions in the OPTs and the expansion of the illegal settlements?

Rory Stewart: We are conflating two different issues here. As the Foreign Secretary said yesterday, the Israeli ambassador has already apologised for that incident, and the diplomat concerned has been removed from his post and sent home. I think I have dealt with the overall questions of settlements and demolitions in my answers to the other questions.

Kate Osamor: I thank the Minister for his responses, but I would like him to be a bit clearer and tell us how DFID has supported those people who are now homeless due to the systematic policy of settlement expansion.

Rory Stewart: The central story is that DFID is doing three types of things for Palestinian people. First, we are supporting Palestinian state structures, in particular health and education—doctors, teachers and nurses. Secondly, we are working on making sure that we can create a viable economy and employment, particularly through support to small businesses. Thirdly, we invest in human capital; in other words, we invest in making sure that the Palestinian people are educated, healthy and have opportunities for security and stability in the region in the short term. But in the long term there cannot be a two-state solution unless we address the needs of the Palestinian people.

<https://hansard.parliament.uk/commons/2017-01-11/debates/8AC939B2-70A2-4E33-90AC-5E32AB8CE2F9/OccupiedPalestinianTerritories>

House of Commons Written Answers

Palestinians: Gender

Ivan Lewis [58561] To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, what steps his Department is taking to work with the Palestinian Authority on promoting gender equality in the Palestinian Territories.

Tobias Ellwood: I refer the Hon. Member to my reply to the Hon. Member for Enfield North of 24 October 2016 (PQ 48760).

<http://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Commons/2016-12-20/58561/>

The answer referred to above can be read at

<http://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Commons/2016-10-14/48760/>

The Foreign and Commonwealth Office works closely with other government departments, including the Department for International Development (DFID), and with the Palestinian Authority to enhance gender equality in the Occupied Palestinian Territories. DFID has supported interventions to tackle violence against women and girls by working with the Palestinian security and justice sectors. Under the UK's Conflict, Stability and Security Fund (CSSF) programme, we attach great importance to gender sensitivity in project design and implementation. Our Consulate General in Jerusalem host events to celebrate the achievements of Palestinian women, including during last year's International Day of Women.

UK Parliament Early Day Motion

Mark Durkan (855) United Nations Security Council Resolution 2334 – That this House welcomes the Government's support for UN Security Council resolution 2334 concerning Israel's illegal settlement building in occupied Palestinian territory; notes clause 5 that resolution text which calls on all states to distinguish, in their relevant dealings, between territory of the state of Israel and the Palestinian territories occupied in 1967; calls on the Government to impose a total ban on trade and imports that are proven to either originate or be tied to Israel's illegal settlements in occupied Jerusalem, the West Bank and Golan heights; and further calls on the Government to ensure that the UK acts in compliance with obligations under relevant international laws and treaties which require the Government, along with all third parties, with specific regard to Israel's illegal settlements, to ensure respect for international law, not recognise an illegal situation arising from such breaches and refrain from any activity that would render aid or assistance to serious breaches of peremptory norms of international law.

<http://www.parliament.uk/edm/2016-17/855>

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Relevant Legislation ** new or updated today

UK Parliament

Arbitration and Mediation Services (Equality) Bill

<http://services.parliament.uk/bills/2016-17/arbitrationandmediationservicesequality.html>

Assisted Dying Bill

<http://services.parliament.uk/bills/2016-17/assisteddying.html>

Cultural Property (Armed Conflicts) Bill

<http://services.parliament.uk/bills/2016-17/culturalpropertyarmedconflicts.html>

Lobbying (Transparency) Bill

<http://services.parliament.uk/bills/2016-17/lobbyingtransparency.html>

Consultations ** new or updated today

**** closes tomorrow**

Introduction of the medical examiner role and reforms to death certification (Wales)

(closing date 13 January 2013)

<https://consultations.gov.wales/consultations/introduction-medical-examiner-role-and-reforms-death-certification>

Welsh Assembly Inquiry into Lobbying (closing date 31 January 2017)

<http://senedd.assembly.wales/mgConsultationDisplay.aspx?id=236&RPID=1507974161&cp=yes>

Consolidation and revision of the school governance regulatory framework in Wales

(closing date 17 February 2017)

<https://consultations.gov.wales/consultations/consolidation-and-revision-school-governance-regulatory-framework-wales>

Organ and Tissue Donation and Transplantation: increasing numbers of successful donations (Scotland) (closing date 14 March 2017)

<http://www.gov.scot/Resource/0051/00511160.pdf>

Workplace Diversity (Wales) (closing date not stated)

<https://www.surveymonkey.co.uk/r/wtucdiversity>