

Political Affairs Digest

A daily summary of political events affecting the Jewish Community
Scottish Council of Jewish Communities
SCoJeC

Contents

[Home Affairs](#)

[Israel](#)

[Foreign Affairs](#)

[Other Relevant Information](#)

[Relevant Legislation](#)

[Consultations](#)

Home Affairs

House of Commons Written Answers

Judges: Training

Oliver Dowden [64024] To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, whether the Government has plans to train judges to specialise in the protected characteristic of religion or belief.

Oliver Heald: The Ministry of Justice does not oversee judicial training; the Lord Chief Justice does through the Judicial College.

The issue of religion arises as a factor in a range of cases heard across many jurisdictions. Judges make reasoned and independent decisions based on the evidence presented. If religion is an issue in deciding a case, the parties have the opportunity to present evidence about that to the judge.

<http://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Commons/2017-02-17/64024/>

Faith Schools: Standards

Roger Godsiff [65088] To ask the Secretary of State for Education, with reference to the article in The Times of 14 February 2017 in the name of the Minister of State for School Standards, what the evidential basis is for her statement that there is significant parental demand for good faith schools; and whether she has made an assessment of such demand being for faith schools rather than for good schools.

Caroline Dinanag: In the 2016 secondary school application round non-faith school first preferences to offers ratio was 0.98. For faith schools the ratio was 1.08.

The data, which the Department collects on admissions and school choice, does not enable an assessment to be made as to the specific reason why parents are more likely to make faith schools their first preference.

There are often a range of factors that affect how parents choose a particular school, such as location, type of school, whether a sibling already attends, feeder arrangements, reputation and Ofsted rating. It is therefore not possible to make a precise assessment as to what is the main reason why parents are more likely to make a faith school their first preference.

<http://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Commons/2017-02-22/65088/>

House of Lords Written Answer

Muslim Brotherhood

Lord Pearson of Rannoch [HL5594] To ask Her Majesty's Government what progress they have made, in pursuit of their counter-extremism policy, in assessing the motivation, role and aims of the Muslim Brotherhood, since the publication of the Jenkins Review.

Baroness Williams of Trafford: The Government's 2015 Muslim Brotherhood Review concluded that the movement is a secretive organisation with an ambiguous relationship with violent extremism. The Government remains committed to keeping under review the views promoted and activities undertaken by the Muslim Brotherhood's associates in the UK, in accordance with the review's five commitments, which were outlined in the former Prime Minister's statement to Parliament.

The Government will consider action against the review's commitments if and where legal thresholds are met. It would not be appropriate for the Government to provide a running commentary.

<http://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Lords/2017-02-23/HL5594/>

Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy

Race in the workplace: The time for talking is over. Now is the time to Act.

https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/594336/race-in-workplace-mcgregor-smith-review.pdf

Government response to "Race in the workplace"

https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/594365/race-in-workplace-mcgregor-smith-review-response.pdf

[TOP](#)

Israel

House of Commons Written Answers

Israel: Palestinians

Bob Blackman [64413] To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, pursuant to the Answer of 6 February 2017 to Question 62082, what recent assessment he has made of the implications for his policies of allegations that the Palestinian Authority honours those who have killed Israelis.

Tobias Ellwood: Our clear position is that we do not hesitate to raise instances of incitement whenever it is appropriate. We have a regular dialogue with both the Palestinian Authority and the Government of Israel in which we reiterate the need for both sides to prepare their populations for peaceful coexistence. We consider that the track record of President Abbas and Prime Minister Hamdallah shows their commitment to non-violence.

<http://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Commons/2017-02-20/64413/>

The answer referred to above can be read at

<http://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Commons/2017-01-27/62082/>

Occupied Territories: Non-governmental Organisations

Julie Elliot [64773] To ask the Secretary of State for International Development, what support her Department is giving to non-governmental organisations promoting human rights in the Occupied Palestinian Territories.

Rory Stewart: DFID's bilateral programme in the Occupied Palestinian Territories currently funds human rights NGOs providing legal assistance to Palestinians, through a multi-donor access to justice programme implemented by UN agencies.

<http://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Commons/2017-02-21/64773/>

[TOP](#)

Foreign Affairs

House of Commons Written Answer

Iranian Revolutionary Guard Corps

Bob Blackman [64414] To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, what recent reports he has received on the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps' and the (a) persecution of dissidents and dual nationals in Iran, (b) exporting of terrorism abroad and (c) need to proscribe that organisation.

Tobias Ellwood: The Iranian Revolutionary Guards Corps (IRGC) is a proscribed organisation by the EU, listed due to actions relating to Iran's support for terrorism and human rights violations. There are several reports on the IRGC's role and their involvement in the persecution of individuals in Iran, including the latest report from the UN Special Rapporteur for human rights in Iran.

We remain concerned about IRGC activity in the region, including worrying reports of Iran's links and support (including financial support and the provision of military equipment and training) to militant/proscribed groups, such as Hizballah, Hamas, Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine, and Palestinian rejectionist groups. This support directly undermines prospects for regional security and lasting-peace in the region.

<http://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Commons/2017-02-20/64414/>

Middle East: Minority Groups

Michael Tomlinson [64125] To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, what steps his Department is taking to ensure religious minorities in the Middle East have a sustainable future in the region.

Tobias Ellwood: The Government supports the right to freedom of religion or belief for all communities in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) by regularly urging governments, at senior levels to uphold the rights of all minorities; building international consensus on freedom of religion or belief; and supporting practical projects. For example, in Iraq we are supporting a project inspiring key leaders in society to become defenders of freedom of religion or belief.

We are also working to implement the results of the 2016 Syria Conference, which aims to create over one million jobs in the MENA region, including refugees from religious minorities. We use the Conflict, Stability and Security Fund Programme Funds to support community cohesion, encourage reconciliation and promote tolerance between communities in Iraq. We regularly engage with faith leaders and faith-based Non-Government Organisations (NGOs) in the UK and the MENA region to discuss the situation of religious communities. We will assist NGOs where we can to carry out their work.

Other Relevant Information

European Commission

The meaning of racial or ethnic origin in EU law: between stereotypes and identities
http://ec.europa.eu/newsroom/just/document.cfm?action=display&doc_id=43228

[TOP](#)

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>

Lobbying (Transparency) Bill

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

Organ Donation (Deemed Consent) Bill

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

Promotion of Israeli-Palestinian Peace (United Kingdom Participation)

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

[TOP](#)

Consultations ** new or updated today

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>

The UK's policy towards the Middle East Peace Process (closing date 30 March 2017)

<http://www.parliament.uk/business/committees/committees-a-z/commons-select/foreign-affairs-committee/news-parliament-2015/middle-east-peace-process-inquiry-16-17/>

Adoption and Children (Northern Ireland) Bill (closing date 10 April 2017)

<https://www.health-ni.gov.uk/consultations/adoption-and-children-northern-ireland-bill>

The Scottish Council of Jewish Communities (SCoJeC) is Scottish Charitable Incorporated Organisation SCO29438