

Political Affairs Digest

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

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House of Commons Written Answers

Hate Crime: Convictions

Craig Whittaker [60862] To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many incidences of online (a) hate crime, (b) anti-Semitism and (c) Islamophobia have resulted in convictions in the last (i) 12, (ii) 24 and (iii) 36 months.

Sarah Newton: Conviction data for hate crime does not differentiate between hate crimes committed online and offline.

The Government is committed to tackling all forms of hate crime and we published a new cross-Government hate crime action plan in July last year. This includes action against hate crimes committed both online and offline.

<http://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Commons/2017-01-19/60862/>

Discrimination

John Mann [70430] To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, how many meetings he has had with whom and on what dates to discuss (a) antisemitism and (b) other forms of racism since 2015.

Chris Skidmore: Details of Ministers' and Permanent Secretary meetings with external organisations, including senior media figures, are published routinely on Gov.uk and can be found here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/ministers-transparency-publications>

Information about meetings between officials, businesses and charities are not centrally held and could only be obtained at disproportionate cost.

<http://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Commons/2017-04-13/70430/>

Creationism

Ian Austin [70286] To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what assessment she has made of the number of publicly funded schools that are teaching creationism.

Nick Gibb: The Department does not collect data about the number of schools that are teaching creationism. Creationism does not accord with the scientific consensus or the very large body of established scientific evidence; nor does it accurately and consistently employ the scientific method. Outside of science

lessons, there is scope for young people to discuss beliefs about the origins of the Earth and living things in religious education, providing that these discussions do not undermine the teaching of the established scientific consensus around evolution.

The Government expects pupils in all state funded schools to study the nature of, and evidence for, evolution by the end of Key Stage 4. The Government's expectations are set out in the National Curriculum, which maintained schools are required to follow, and in the funding agreements to which academies must adhere. The Department investigates complaints made about schools that are teaching creationism as a scientific theory contrary to the National Curriculum or their funding agreement.

<http://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Commons/2017-04-13/70286/>

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Holocaust

House of Commons Written Answers

National Holocaust Memorial Centre and Learning Service

Peter Bottomley [69800] To ask the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government, when Westminster residents were first consulted on the use of Victoria Tower Gardens for a National Holocaust Memorial and Learning Centre.

Marcus Jones: The UK Holocaust Memorial Foundation first wrote to local residents on 14 September 2016.

<http://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Commons/2017-03-29/69800/>

National Holocaust Memorial Centre and Learning Service

Peter Bottomley [69801] To ask the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government, who in (a) the Prime Minister's Office and (b) his Department considered the three original proposals for the siting of the National Holocaust Memorial and Learning Centre; and what assessment was made relative to those sites of the potential merits of using Victoria Tower Gardens.

Marcus Jones: As the cross-party body advising government on taking forward the recommendations of the Holocaust Commission, the UK Holocaust Memorial Foundation was tasked with finding the most appropriate location for a national memorial to the Holocaust and an accompanying education centre. The Prime Minister publically said at the annual Holocaust Memorial Day ceremony on 27 January 2017, that government agrees with the Foundation's recommendation that Victoria Tower Gardens, next to Parliament, is considered the most appropriate of the almost 50 sites examined, including those identified by the Commission in Lambeth and at Millbank. The option of locating at Potters Field, referred to in the Holocaust Commission report, no longer exists.

<http://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Commons/2017-03-29/69801/>

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House of Commons Written Answers

Research: Israel

Jim Shannon [69856] To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what funding his Department allocates to the Britain Israel Research and Academic Exchange Partnership.

Joseph Johnson: The Britain Israel Research and Academic Exchange Partnership (BIRAX) is a £10 million initiative supported by the UK Government in Israel. The latest initiative provides research to develop cures for some of the world's most dreadful diseases.

Funding is provided from both nations by medical research foundations, charitable trusts, and philanthropists.

<http://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Commons/2017-03-29/69856/>

Golan Heights: Security

Jim Shannon [71023] To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, what discussions he has had with the Israeli Government on the threat posed by Hezbollah and others on the Golan Heights.

Tobias Ellwood: In our regular dialogue with the Israeli government, we discuss a range of security issues, including the strategic threat picture in the region.

<http://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Commons/2017-04-18/71023/>

USA: Palestinians

Bob Blackman [70994] To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, what recent discussions he has had with his US counterpart on the proposed Taylor Force Act and ending that country's provision of economic aid to the (a) Palestinian Authority and (b) families of those who have died while carrying out terrorist attacks against Israel.

Tobias Ellwood: We have not had any discussions with the US authorities on this issue. We, however, regularly raise the issue of payments to prisoners and their families with senior Palestinian officials. We push them to ensure that such payments are transparent and needs-based.

<http://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Commons/2017-04-18/70994/>

STUC Congress Motions

110. Support trade union activists campaigning for boycott, divestment and sanctions (BDS) against Israel

That this Congress notes that the STUC and many of its affiliates have already pledged support to the campaign of boycott, divestment and sanctions against Israel in support of the Palestinian people. It commends unions and activists, who are taking a lead in support of BDS, in the way that unions and activists took action to end apartheid in South Africa.

Congress continues to condemn Israel's oppression of the Palestinian people, its illegal occupation of Palestinian lands and its detention of Palestinian children in clear breach of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child.

Congress notes, however, that trade union activists, who actively campaign for BDS and who oppose Israeli oppression and apartheid, are increasingly being targeted by

organisations supporting Israel. For example, last year in Aberdeen, a Scottish Palestine Solidarity Campaign (SPSC) member was charged with 'acting in a racially aggravated manner with intent to cause distress and alarm'. His 'crime' was to utter 'Viva Palestina' next to the Jericho Cosmetics stall. There are many other examples.

"Congress strongly believes that this is a tactic to undermine the campaign and that all trade unionists, who act in support of BDS, are at risk. We must be very clear that such tactics will not undermine our activities in support of the Palestinian people. However, it is also important that support is put in place for activists who are targeted individually.

"Congress calls on the STUC General Council to work with affiliated trade unions, with a view to ensuring that financial, legal and other support is available, to defend the rights of their trade union activists operating within their legitimate rights to support the BDS campaign.

Mover: Aberdeen TUC

111. Ending links with Histadrut

That this Congress notes that:

- in 2009, Congress voted to endorse the Palestinian call for a campaign of boycott, divestment and sanctions (BDS) against Israel;
- in 2011, Palestinian General Federation of Trade Unions (PGFTU) called on STUC to boycott Histadrut, but the STUC General Council decided 'that critical engagement [with Histadrut] on the specific issue of Israeli policy on Palestine should be continued';
- in 2015, PGFTU (Gaza) renewed the call to international trade unions to boycott Histadrut, due to its 'blatant complicity in Israel's policies, including occupation, settlement building, apartheid and [robbery] of Palestinian workers rights'; and
- in 2016, a delegation – supported by Aberdeen TUC – visited Gaza, meeting with representatives from PGFTU, who reiterated the call to trade unionists to boycott Histadrut, and made a plea to STUC to support this position.

Congress believes that:

- the ongoing blockade of Gaza is illegal and immoral;
- the level of hardship endured by the Gazan population, including the current unemployment rate of 70% and poverty rate of 60%, is due to Israel's ongoing blockade and regular military operations;
- active campaigning on strategic BDS targets is essential to ensure full Palestinian rights are recognised as having equal priority for any resolution, and to ensure continued pressure on the state of Israel and its sponsors; and
- Histadrut and its role in perpetuating occupation and apartheid is a priority concern for the STUC and its affiliates.

Congress resolves to:

- Recognise Histadrut as a Zionist organisation, supportive of Israeli occupation, settlement building, apartheid and denial of Palestinian workers' rights;
- break all links with Histadrut;
- demand Histadrut return all money due to Palestinian workers;
- encourage all affiliates to actively work with PFGTU and other groups representing Palestinian workers; and
- work with Scottish Palestine solidarity organisations to update the existing STUC BDS position paper and booklet.

Mover: Aberdeen TUC

112. Palestine

That this Congress recognises the continued support from the Fire Brigades Union for Palestinian firefighters. Congress welcomes the most recent project in delivering firefighting equipment and medical aid to Nablus, Hebron, Ramallah and to the volunteer firefighting team in the Shuafat Refugee Camp in East Jerusalem. "Congress further

recognises the work of our late brother, Ken Cameron, in fostering co-operation between Scottish and Palestinian firefighters and his support for the Palestinian people.

Mover: Dundee TUC

113. Palestine – firefighters under occupation

That this Congress supports the Fire Brigades Union (FBU) initiatives in supporting Palestinian fire fighters through material, practical and political support. Following on from the very successful FBU campaign to provide Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) and Fire Service equipment to Palestinian firefighters, a documentary has now been made highlighting firefighters in Palestine under occupation.

This FBU sponsored film has been shown in Palestine, Scottish Parliament, Westminster and throughout many FBU regions.

Congress recognises the importance of documentaries like this and supports wider viewings within our movement. Congress calls upon the STUC General Council to promote the FBU sponsored documentary 'Firefighters Under Occupation' by sending out details to affiliates, in order that further screenings within sister unions can be shown to members and the wider public.

Mover: Fire Brigades Union

<http://www.stuc.org.uk/files/STUC%20Congress/2017/STUC%20Agenda%202017.pdf>

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Foreign Affairs

House of Commons Written Answer

Jordan: Peace Negotiations

Jim Shannon [71021] To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, what discussions he has had with the Government of Jordan on retaining and maintaining peace in the Middle East.

Tobias Ellwood: The Foreign Secretary, has held numerous discussions with the Government of Jordan on retaining and maintaining peace in the Middle East. The Foreign Secretary welcomed His Majesty King Abdullah to London on 26 January during which a wide range of issues were discussed, including the Middle East Peace Process, the Syria conflict, and reconciliation in Iraq. He has also discussed the Syria conflict and countering Daesh with Foreign Minister Al-Safadi in Bonn on 17 February and in Washington on 22 March. In addition to the Foreign Secretary's engagement, the Prime Minister has discussed regional issues with King Abdullah in London on 1 March, and in Jordan on 3 April, where she also met Jordanian PM Al-Mulki.

<http://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Commons/2017-04-18/71021/>

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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>

Lobbying (Transparency) Bill

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

Promotion of Israeli-Palestinian Peace (United Kingdom Participation)

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

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Consultations ** new or updated today

Independent review of hate crime legislation [in Scotland] (closing date 12 May 2017)

<https://consult.scotland.gov.uk/hate-crime/2f6c8d5f/>

Caste in Great Britain and Equality Law (closing date 18 July 2017)

<https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/caste-in-great-britain-and-equality-law-a-public-consultation>

Workplace Diversity (Wales) (closing date not stated)

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

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