

Political Affairs Digest

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

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Home Affairs

House of Commons Debate

Queen's Speech

col 385 **Mr Whittingdale:** ... Many people were quite distressed to see in the streets of London very recently the flags of Hezbollah in the al-Quds day rallies. Hezbollah is a terrorist organisation. The military wing is already proscribed in this country, but there is frankly very little distinction between it and the so-called civilian wing, the political wing. I know the Home Secretary has said she will look at this. It is already proscribed in many countries such as the United States, Canada and the Netherlands. Given the distress that was caused by seeing the flags paraded through London, and people calling for the extermination of Israel and supporting what is a terrorist organisation, I hope she will look at that matter urgently. ...

<https://hansard.parliament.uk/commons/2017-06-26/debates/23371B16-D7B1-40BA-9816-496F482156D9/BrexitAndForeignAffairs#contribution-5A861555-903B-4D5E-9FD8-04B3A2223E4F>

House of Commons Written Answers

Religious Buildings: Security

Paula Sherriff [426] To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what assessment her Department has made of the adequacy of security at places of worship.

Sarah Newton: The government has made available to all crowded places, including places of worship, detailed on-line guidance to help locations understand their own protective security needs and to identify proportionate measures that they can take to reduce their vulnerability while remaining welcoming to worshippers. Many places of worship have also received bespoke security advice from specially trained police advisors.

The places of worship security funding scheme was launched in July 2016 as one of the key actions in the Hate Crime Action Plan to help protect places of worship against hate crime by providing protective security measures, such as CCTV cameras, locks or fencing to places of worship.

On the 22 June we announced an additional £1m will be made available for the protection of places of worship, this will further enable assessments of the adequacy of security available at places of worship. Details of how to apply for this funding will be published shortly.

<http://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Commons/2017-06-21/426/>

The announcement referred to above can be read at

<https://hansard.parliament.uk/commons/2017-06-22/debates/D00D2537-BD22-4E4D-8E65-FE170E02848A/TerrorAttacks#contribution-0C3A539A-9FB7-4EEC-AD30-26DCF76A37FE>

Places of Worship Security Funding Scheme

Paula Sherriff [427] To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether other mosques have been awarded funding in addition to those announced in 2016 under the scheme for security funding for places of worship.

Sarah Newton: To date a total of 55 bids have been received for the second year, 25 of which have been from mosques. An independent advisory panel consisting of faith representatives, police and security advisors will meet on 3 July to consider the bids and recommend to the Home Office which bids to take forward. On the 22 June we announced an additional £1m will be made available for the protection of places of worship. Details of how to apply for this funding will be published shortly.

<http://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Commons/2017-06-21/427/>

The announcement referred to above can be read at

<https://hansard.parliament.uk/commons/2017-06-22/debates/D00D2537-BD22-4E4D-8E65-FE170E02848A/TerrorAttacks#contribution-0C3A539A-9FB7-4EEC-AD30-26DCF76A37FE>

Places of Worship Security Funding Scheme

Paula Sherriff [429] To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many places of worship chosen to benefit from the scheme for security funding for places of worship have had the work relating to that security completed; and what assessment her Department has made of the level of improvement in their security.

Sarah Newton: The first year of the scheme closed on 4 October 2016. 59 places of worship have been approved funding and security works have been completed on 53.

Improvements in the security of places of worship were implemented following a full assessment by a Crime Prevention Design Adviser (CPDA) who makes an assessment of the physical vulnerabilities of the site. The Home Office Security Advisor has undertaken a number of spot-checks to ensure works have been completed to a satisfactory standard.

<http://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Commons/2017-06-21/429/>

Places of Worship Security Funding Scheme

Paula Sherriff [430] To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many applications have been made to the scheme for security funding for places of worship since it was reopened early in 2017.

Sarah Newton: The places of worship security funding scheme opened on 3rd April and closed on 29 May 2017. 55 applications have been received. We also allowed late applications following recent attacks. We have announced this week that an additional £1m will be made available for the protection of places of worship. Details of how to apply for this funding will be published shortly.

<http://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Commons/2017-06-21/430/>

The announcement referred to above can be read at

<https://hansard.parliament.uk/commons/2017-06-22/debates/D00D2537-BD22-4E4D-8E65-FE170E02848A/TerrorAttacks#contribution-0C3A539A-9FB7-4EEC-AD30-26DCF76A37FE>

Hate Crime: Convictions

Paula Sherriff [428] To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many incidents of hate crime resulted in convictions in (a) 2016 and (b) 2017.

Sarah Newton: The Home Office holds and publishes data on the number of hate crimes recorded by the police in England and Wales. Data on the number of these crimes that result in a conviction are not held by the Home Office. Convictions data are the responsibility of the Ministry of Justice.

The most recently published data on hate crime by the Home Office is available here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/hate-crime-england-and-wales-2015-to-2016>

This Government is committed to tackling hate crime. The UK has a strong legislative framework to tackle hate crime. We are working across Government with police, (including National Community Tensions Team), the Crown Prosecution Service and community partners to send out a clear message that hate crime will not be tolerated and we will vigorously pursue and prosecute those who commit these crimes.

<http://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Commons/2017-06-21/428/>

Football: Racial Discrimination

John Mann [828] To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, with reference to the Answer of 25 January 2017 to Question 60970, whether there have been more (a) racist incidents and (b) banning orders than those referred to for 1 July 2015 to 10 July 2016.

Nick Hurd: The Home Office annually publishes statistics on football-related arrests and banning orders connected with regulated international and domestic football matches involving English and Welsh clubs and the national teams.

The football-related arrests and banning orders, England and Wales: season 2015 to 2016 is the most recent publication on this area. The statistics stated in answer of 25 January 2017 to Question 60970 are the most up to date statistics the Home Office holds.

This publication can be found at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/football-related-arrests-and-banning-orders-england-and-wales-season-2015-to-2016>

The Home Office intends to publish figures on football-related arrests and banning orders, England and Wales: season 2016 to 2017 later this year.

<http://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Commons/2017-06-22/828/>

Charities: Lobbying

Steve Reed [76] To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, if she will make an assessment of the effect of the Transparency of Lobbying, Non-party Campaigning and Trade Union Administration Act 2014 on the work of charities.

Tracey Crouch: The changes made to the existing third party campaigning rules by the Transparency of Lobbying Act 2014 do not restrict charities' freedom to campaign to further their charitable purposes in a non-partisan way, but instead make the political system more accountable. At the 2015 general election, 68 organisations were registered with the Electoral Commission as third party campaigners undertaking campaigning activity which could influence the election outcome, of which 11 were charities.

<http://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Commons/2017-06-21/76/>

House of Lords Written Answers

Freedom of religion and belief

Lord Alton of Liverpool [HL81] Her Majesty's Government what action they are taking to promote freedom of religion and belief as part of (1) their Counter-Extremism Strategy, and (2) the UN Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy.

Baroness Williams of Trafford: This Government works to protect and promote pluralistic values – including freedom of religion and belief - through its Counter-Extremism Strategy. Faith communities are crucial to tackling hatred and intolerance. Through our 'Building a Stronger Britain Together' programme we are supporting partners across the country to challenge extremism – including faith groups.

Protecting freedom of religion and belief is also central to the UN Plan of Action to Prevent Violent Extremism and cuts across two of the four pillars of the UN Global CT Strategy: addressing the conditions conducive to the spread of terrorism, and ensuring respect for human rights for all and the rule of law as the fundamental basis for the fight against terrorism.

The new Commission for Countering Extremism will also support our faith communities in stamping out extremism and promoting our fundamental values.

<http://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Lords/2017-06-21/HL81/>

Violence in the name of religion

Baroness Afshar [HL45] Her Majesty's Government, in the light of the attack outside the Muslim Welfare House, near Finsbury Park mosque, what measures they are taking to prevent further violence in the name of religion.

Baroness Williams of Trafford: Violence of any kind is abhorrent and the Government will do what is necessary to ensure the safety of its citizens and protect national security. The Government is taking action against all forms of terrorism and extremism, including the major threat from Islamist violent extremism. Our response includes the Counter Extremism strategy, the new Commission for Countering Extremism, and the hate crime action plan.

We are also reviewing our Counter Terrorism strategy to ensure we have all the powers and measures we need to keep our communities safe. In 2015, the Chancellor announced that cross-government spending on Counter-Terrorism would be increased by 30% - increasing CT spending from the protected £11.7bn over five years to £15.1bn over the same period. We have dedicated funding to help protect places of worship who have been subject or vulnerable to a hate crime.

<http://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Lords/2017-06-21/HL45/>

Counter Extremism Strategy

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The new Commission for Countering Extremism will also support our faith communities in stamping out extremism and promoting our fundamental values.

<http://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Lords/2017-06-21/HL81/>

Downing Street

Prime Minister's statement on Confidence and Supply Agreement with the DUP

A Confidence and Supply Agreement has been made between the Conservative and Unionist Party and the Democratic Unionist Party.

This means the DUP will support the Conservative government on votes on the Queen's Speech, the Budget, and legislation relating to Brexit and national security. ...

I welcome this agreement which will enable us to work together in the interest of the whole United Kingdom, give us the certainty we require as we embark on our departure from the European Union, and help us build a stronger and fairer society at home. In the interests of transparency, the full terms of this agreement have been published. ...

To read the full press release see

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/pm-statement-on-confidence-and-supply-agreement-with-the-dup>

Scottish Government Written Answers

Antisemitism

S5W-09666 John Finnie (Green): To ask the Scottish Government, further to its news release of 13 June 2017, Next steps on tackling hate crime, what work it has carried out since 2007 to tackle antisemitism, including how it works with other countries.

Angela Constance: The Scottish Government is committed to doing all that we can to prevent and eradicate hate crime and prejudice, including anti-semitism. In our response to the Report of the Independent Advisory Group on Hate Crime, Prejudice and Community Cohesion we set out an ambitious yet practical plan of action to make progress in this area.. Our response and these action can be viewed at: <http://www.gov.scot/Publications/2017/06/1336>

Since 2007 the Scottish Government has been supporting the work of the Scottish Council of Jewish Communities to promotes dialogue and understanding between the Jewish community and other communities in Scotland. We have also supported Interfaith Scotland to deliver Scotland's National Holocaust Memorial Day event each year since 2012 in partnership with the Holocaust Memorial Day Trust. This event promotes multi-faith and multi-cultural society based on mutual trust, respect and understanding.

The Scottish Government welcomes the opportunity to engage with international governments as appropriate to raise matters of importance and to hear the views and concerns of other countries.

<http://www.parliament.scot/parliamentarybusiness/28877.aspx?SearchType=Advance&ReferenceNumbers=S5W-09666>

The news release referred to above can be read at

<https://news.gov.scot/news/next-steps-on-tackling-hate-crime>

Antisemitism

S5W-09667 John Finnie (Green): To ask the Scottish Government, further to its news

release of 13 June 2017, Next steps on tackling hate crime, which organisations asked it to adopt the International Holocaust Memorial Trust's working definition of antisemitism, and what issues it identified with the previous definition.

Angela Constance: The Scottish Government engages frequently with the Scottish Council for Jewish Communities and others on a range of issues, and one of these has been the International Holocaust Memorial Trust's working definition of anti-Semitism. The Scottish Government continues to work with representatives to support the needs of the Jewish communities, building strength and eliminating fear in Scotland. We consider the definition to be helpful and it will assist in informing our approach to tackling anti-Semitism.

<http://www.parliament.scot/parliamentarybusiness/28877.aspx?SearchType=Advance&ReferenceNumbers=S5W-09667>

The news release referred to above can be read at

<https://news.gov.scot/news/next-steps-on-tackling-hate-crime>

Antisemitism

S5W-09669 John Finnie (Green): To ask the Scottish Government, further to its news release of 13 June 2017, Next steps on tackling hate crime, what its response is to concerns that adopting the International Holocaust Memorial Trust's working definition of antisemitism could impact on the right to criticise the actions of the Israeli Government and state.

Angela Constance: We note that detailed guidance accompanying the definition states that “ Manifestations might include the targeting of the state of Israel, conceived as a Jewish collectivity. However, criticism of Israel similar to that leveled against any other country cannot be regarded as antisemitic.” We are happy to continue to engage in dialogue on these issues.

<http://www.parliament.scot/parliamentarybusiness/28877.aspx?SearchType=Advance&ReferenceNumbers=S5W-09669>

The news release referred to above can be read at

<https://news.gov.scot/news/next-steps-on-tackling-hate-crime>

Antisemitism

S5W-09670 John Finnie (Green): To ask the Scottish Government, further to its news release of 13 June 2017, Next steps on tackling hate crime, in light of its plan to adopt the International Holocaust Memorial Trust's working definition of antisemitism, whether it plans to redefine other forms of discrimination and, if so, which.

Angela Constance: As set out in our response to the recommendations of the Report by the Independent Advisory Group on Hate Crime, Prejudice and Community Cohesion, the Scottish Government will engage in dialogue around definitions and terminology, taking account of any conclusions that Lord Bracadale's review of hate crime legislation may offer in this regard. We will continue to engage with a wide range of communities to consider how we can tackle all forms of hate crime and prejudice.

<http://www.parliament.scot/parliamentarybusiness/28877.aspx?SearchType=Advance&ReferenceNumbers=S5W-09670>

The news release referred to above can be read at

<https://news.gov.scot/news/next-steps-on-tackling-hate-crime>

Antisemitism

S5W-09671 John Finnie (Green): To ask the Scottish Government, further to its news release of 13 June 2017, Next steps on tackling hate crime, what the practical implications of adopting the International Holocaust Memorial Trust's working definition of antisemitism will be.

Angela Constance: The Scottish Government is determined that there should be no place in Scotland for any form of antisemitism or religious hatred that makes our communities feel insecure or threatened in their daily lives. We are committed to tackling all forms of discrimination and promoting a multi-faith and multi-cultural society based on mutual trust, respect and understanding. Adopting this definition will help to inform our work in this area. We will work with key partners including Police Scotland to explore further how the definition supports efforts to tackle anti-semitism.

<http://www.parliament.scot/parliamentarybusiness/28877.aspx?SearchType=Advance&ReferenceNumbers=S5W-09671>

The news release referred to above can be read at <https://news.gov.scot/news/next-steps-on-tackling-hate-crime>

Welsh Government

First Minister sets out legislative priorities

Wales to introduce legislation to tackle harmful alcohol consumption, provide free childcare for working parents, protect tenants from unfair fees and reform local government. ...

First Minister Carwyn Jones said: "The bills we intend to introduce during the 2nd year of this Assembly will support our efforts to build a Wales that is healthy and active, prosperous and secure, ambitious and learning and united and connected. ..."

To read the full press release see

<http://gov.wales/newsroom/firstminister/2017/170627-first-minister-sets-out-legislative-priorities/?lang=en>

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Israel

House of Commons Written Answer

UN Human Rights Council: Reform

Emily Thornberry [298] To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, what the Government's policy is on reform of the UN Human Rights Council; what discussions he has had with his international counterparts on potential reforms at the 35th session of the UN Human Rights Council; and if he will make a statement.

Boris Johnson: The Government strongly supports the Human Rights Council (HRC), the High Commissioner for Human Rights, and his Office in promoting and protecting human rights worldwide. The UK supports reform aimed at ensuring competitive HRC membership elections, as well as efforts to support and increase the capacity of Small States to strengthen engagement with the Council and its mechanisms. The UK also supports efforts to address Agenda Item 7's disproportionate focus on Israel, which does not improve the prospects for a two-state solution.

<http://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Commons/2017-06-21/298/>

Palestine: Non-Jewish Population

Baroness Tonge: To ask Her Majesty's Government what action they intend to take to ensure the protection of the interests of the non-Jewish population in Palestine as set out in the Balfour Declaration in 1917.

Baroness Goldie: My Lords, the UK has been and continues to be a leading donor to the Palestinian Authority. We recognise that the Balfour Declaration should have called for the protection of political rights of the non-Jewish communities in Palestine, particularly their right to self-determination. Our focus now is on encouraging the Israelis and Palestinians to take steps that bring them closer to peace, and the best way to achieve this is through a two-state solution.

Baroness Tonge: I thank the Minister for what I have to say was the usual sort of Answer. Is she aware that 100 years after the Balfour Declaration and 50 years after the illegal occupation of Palestine by Israel, the Palestinians living in Israel do not have the same rights and services as Jewish citizens? Is she also aware that in the West Bank Palestinians are subjected, and have been for 50 years, to brutal and humiliating treatment and the destruction of their homes and lands, and that in Gaza there is malnutrition, water is undrinkable and electricity is now supplied for only two hours each day? The situation in Gaza is so bad that a United Nations report has said that Gaza will be uninhabitable by 2020. What is the Minister going to do about it?

Baroness Goldie: To go back to the starting premise of the noble Baroness's Question—the Balfour Declaration—many people believed that establishing a homeland for the Jewish people in the land to which they had such strong historical and religious ties was the right and moral thing to do. It will be for historians to assess the declaration in that context. Coming forward to the current day and age, the United Kingdom Government have been very consistent in their approach. We want to see the creation of a viable two-state solution. We think that is possible with determination on both sides. We have firmly made it clear that the occupations are unsustainable, and we need to call for both sides to promote peace, stability and security. That also means pressing both sides on the need to refrain from taking actions which make peace more difficult.

The noble Baroness concluded by referring to the situation in Gaza, which is extremely worrying; certainly, on a purely humanitarian level that has to give concern to anybody viewing what is happening. But again, the powers that have control to deal with that are, essentially, the Palestinian Authority in consultation with Israel. We also hope that Hamas can be persuaded to deal in a more constructive manner with the citizens currently residing in Gaza.

Lord Wright of Richmond: My Lords, in her first reply, the Minister appeared to confirm the Government's support for a two-state solution. Can she therefore confirm that the Government are now in favour of recognising the state of Palestine, and if not, why not?

Baroness Goldie: The noble Lord will not be surprised, I think, by my response. Again, the position of the United Kingdom Government has been consistent and we have said that this is not the time, in our opinion, to accord that recognition. We believe that much more has to be done in negotiating the viable creation of two states and to address the issues of peace and the cessation of activity which is illegal. The United Kingdom will select its moment when it thinks it is appropriate to consider addressing the issue which the noble Lord raises.

Baroness Northover: My Lords, the Balfour Declaration makes it plain that the creation of Israel should neither prejudice the rights of Jewish communities elsewhere, nor those of, "existing non-Jewish communities in Palestine".

What will the Government do, therefore, to ensure that international law is upheld in relation to illegal settlements, which, far from contracting, are being officially sanctioned to expand?

Baroness Goldie: The United Kingdom Government have opposed the settlements on the grounds of contravening international law and, in many respects, contravening international humanitarian law. These representations have been made robustly, not just by the current Government but by previous Governments. What we want to see is the creation of a sovereign, independent, democratic, contiguous and viable Palestinian state living in peace and security side by side with Israel.

Lord Leigh of Hurley: Does my noble friend the Minister agree that while the rights of non-Jewish citizens are, quite rightly, better protected in Israel than in any other part of the Middle East, citizens of Palestine, to whom I believe the Question refers, do not fare so well? Does she agree that we should be addressing the concerns raised by the report from Amnesty International, which points out that Hamas has summarily executed, without trial, a large number of its opponents in Gaza?

Baroness Goldie: Again, the United Kingdom Government have been clear in their attitude to Hamas. We have proscribed the military wing of that organisation since 2001. The United Kingdom Government currently have a policy of no contact with Hamas, including the political wing as well as the military wing. Our position is very clear: Hamas must renounce violence, recognise Israel and accept previously signed agreements.

Lord Collins of Highbury: My Lords, I welcome the Minister's continued commitment to the two-state solution. I also welcome her commitment to promoting peace. One way to commemorate the Balfour Declaration would be to promote intercommunity relationships. Can she give us examples of where the Government will be doing this to mark the centenary, so that they are not talking just with Governments but with people, promoting intercommunity relationships, particularly in schools and among children?

Baroness Goldie: The noble Lord, Lord Collins, makes an important point. I believe that a very positive dividend can often be reaped by such activity as that to which he refers. Certainly, in trying to encourage fresh negotiations to address the current challenges and difficulties, the UK Government are working through multilateral institutions, including the United Nations and the EU, to support resolutions and policies that encourage both sides to take steps that rebuild trust. The Arab League and Arab states also have a key role in that peace process and we are discussing with them ways that we can move the situation forward.

Viscount Waverley: My Lords, will the Minister do all in her power to promote the "Made in Palestine" brand as a way in which to encourage direct development in Gaza and the West Bank?

Baroness Goldie: I do not have specific information on that issue but we certainly think it is right that people have a basic entitlement to determine where they buy goods and from which source. That is up to them. The United Kingdom Government have assisted with labelling in certain cases. If I can ascertain more information, I shall write to the noble Viscount.

<https://hansard.parliament.uk/lords/2017-06-26/debates/D88295FB-C6A0-4512-B0E2-71490B86B308/PalestineNon-JewishPopulation>

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Relevant Legislation ** new or updated today

UK Parliament

Offensive Behaviour at Football and Threatening Communications (Repeal) (Scotland) Bill

<http://www.parliament.scot/parliamentarybusiness/Bills/105269.aspx>

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Consultations ** new or updated today

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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