

# 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 Written Answer

#### Students: Religion

**Matthew Offord (Conservative)** [1726] To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what guidance has been published on supporting religious minorities studying at university.

**Joseph Johnson:** Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) have responsibilities to support their students, ensuring that they do not face harassment, abuse or violence. They are expected to comply with their legal duties under the Equality Act 2010.

The Government published general guidance on the Equality Act 2010 (<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/equality-act-2010-guidance>). Specific guidance for HEIs is produced by the Equality Challenge Unit (ECU) which supports equality and diversity for staff and students in HEIs across the UK. Their publications include guidance on the implications for HEIs of the Equality Act 2010 which is available online ([www.ecu.ac.uk/guidance-resources/equality-legislation/](http://www.ecu.ac.uk/guidance-resources/equality-legislation/)) and guidance on supporting the practice and expression of religion and belief amongst staff and students (<http://www.ecu.ac.uk/guidance-resources/inclusive-environment/providing-support/religion-belief/>).

In September 2015 the Government asked Universities UK (UUK) to set up a Harassment Taskforce, composed of university leaders, student representatives and academic experts, to consider what more can be done to address harassment on campus, including on the basis of religion and belief. The taskforce published its report, '*Changing the Culture*', on 21 October 2016 which makes clear recommendations about steps universities can take to ensure an effective and tailored response to hate crime or harassment based on an individual's religious belief and recommends that institutions adopt a zero-tolerance approach.

(<http://www.universitiesuk.ac.uk/policy-and-analysis/reports/Documents/2016/changing-the-culture.pdf#search=taskforce>).

The Higher Education and Research Act (2017) enables, for the first time, an alternative student finance product to be offered. This would be equivalent to a student loan but will be consistent with the principles of Islamic finance, and should help support equality of opportunity.

<http://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Commons/2017-06-28/1726/>

## Scottish Parliament Written Answer

### Hate Crime

**S5W-09777 Alex Cole-Hamilton (Liberal Democrat):** To ask the Scottish Government, further to the statement by the Cabinet Secretary for Communities, Social Security and Equalities on 13 June 2017 (Official Report, c. 12), whether it will provide an update on what progress it is making in fulfilling the cabinet secretary's commitment to (a) engage with stakeholders on the prevention of online hatred and misogyny, (b) engage with stakeholders to ensure that the term "hate crime" applies to an event from the perspective of both the victim and the perpetrator, (c) build dialogue on the understanding of links between prejudice and hate crime, (d) review the effectiveness of third party reporting, including what action it will use to improve the effectiveness, (e) better protect people who experience hate crime on public transport, (f) implement the action plan on disability to address the underreporting of disability hate crime, (g) develop firmer definitions of "hate crime" and "prejudice" and (h) adopt the international definition for anti-Semitism, including when this will be adopted; which agencies will be included in the multi-agency delivery group to take forward the advisory group's recommendations and when it will publish its refreshed approach to anti-bullying.

**Angela Constance:** We are committed to doing all that we can to prevent and eradicate hate crime and prejudice, and build community cohesion. As set out in my statement on 13 June and in our response to the Independent Advisory Group, the Scottish Government will now take forward an ambitious programme of work in response to their recommendations.

The actions we have set out will be implemented between now and 2020 when we will publish an update on progress. We are currently in the process of establishing the multi-agency delivery group which, amongst other things, will look at how we address barriers to reporting, consider issues around online abuse and how we use the definition of anti-Semitism adopted on 16 June to inform our work in this area. We will continue to implement our disability action plan and take forward the development of a hate crime charter for public transport in partnership with disabled people's organisations. We will also publish our refreshed National Approach to anti-bullying later in 2017.

Link to the Scottish Government's response to the Report of the Independent Advisory Group on Hate Crime, Prejudice and Community Cohesion:

<http://www.gov.scot/Publications/2017/06/1336>

<http://www.parliament.scot/parliamentarybusiness/28877.aspx?SearchType=Advance&ReferenceNumbers=S5W-09777>

*The statement referred to above can be read at*

<http://www.parliament.scot/parliamentarybusiness/report.aspx?r=11003&i=100547&c=2008181#ScotParIOR>

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## Israel

### House of Commons Written Answers

#### Gaza: Hospitals

**Caroline Lucas (Green) [1636]** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, if the Government will support the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs emergency fuel fund for hospitals in the Gaza Strip; and what discussions he has had with his Palestinian and Israeli counterparts on efforts to end the electricity crisis in that region.

**Alistair Burt:** The UK continues to believe that the best solution is a political agreement between all parties on sustainable solution to increase the electricity supply to Gaza. The UK is urging immediate discussions to alleviate the situation. Our Ambassador in Tel Aviv and our Consul-General in Jerusalem have raised our concerns with the Israeli authorities and the Palestinian Authority respectively. I raised the situation in Gaza with the Israeli Deputy Foreign Minister and the Israeli Ambassador to London on 22 and 23 June respectively.

<http://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Commons/2017-06-28/1636/>

### Trade Agreements

**Justin Tomlinson (Conservative)** [1633] To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, which countries he has opened a dialogue with on trade deals after the UK leaves the EU.

**Greg Hands:** We have established a series of working groups and high-level dialogues with key trading partners, to explore the best ways to progress our trade and investment relationships. We have already announced ten working groups with the United States, Australia, China, Israel, India, New Zealand, Norway, South Korea, Turkey and the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC).

<http://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Commons/2017-06-28/1633/>

## Foreign and Commonwealth Office

### Minister for the Middle East statement on settlement plans in East Jerusalem

Following the recent decision of the Israeli authorities (4 and 6 July) to advance plans for 1,600 new settlement units in the illegal settlements in Pisgat Ze'ev, Ramat Shlomo and Ramot in East Jerusalem, Foreign Office minister Alistair Burt said:

I strongly condemn these plans, which are the latest example of an accelerating policy of illegal settlement expansion. I call on the Israeli authorities to reconsider plans to construct further settlement units in East Jerusalem in the coming days, including construction in Sheikh Jarrah involving the demolition of Palestinian homes and displacement of Palestinian residents.

While settlements are not the only obstacle to peace, these actions take us further away from a two-state solution and the shared vision of a safe and secure Israel living side-by-side with a viable, independent and contiguous Palestinian state.

As a strong friend of Israel, we urge the Israeli government to avoid steps that reduce the prospects for peace and security and make it harder to achieve a different relationship between Israel and the Arab world.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/minister-for-the-middle-east-statement-on-settlement-plans-in-east-jerusalem>

## UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights

### UN human rights experts call on Israel to reconsider the charges against Palestinian activist Issa Amro

Israel should carefully reconsider the charges it is pursuing against Palestinian human rights defender Issa Amro, two United Nations independent experts said today.

Mr. Amro, founder of the Hebron-based Youth Against Settlements, is facing trial in an Israeli military court on a number of charges, some of which date back a number of years and have only recently been reactivated.

“On the information available to us, many of the charges against Mr. Amro appear to be

directed squarely at his lawful right to peacefully protest against the 50-year-old Israeli occupation,” said the Special Rapporteur on the occupied Palestinian territories, Michael Lynk, and the Special Rapporteur on human rights defenders, Michel Forst, in a joint statement.

“The non-violent work of human rights defenders must not be disrupted and attacked by the authorities, even under a military occupation,” the experts underscored. “Their rights to freedom of expression and assembly must be respected and protected.” ...

“We are also deeply concerned about the quality of justice available to Palestinians under occupation,” they added. “The Israeli military court system – which all Palestinians in the West Bank are subject to – has a conviction rate above 99%, which raises serious concerns about the system meeting many of the international standards of due process required by human rights and humanitarian law.

“If the Israeli military court convicts Mr. Amro on any of the charges against him, the convictions will be stained by reasonable doubts about the system’s ability to ensure justice,” the Special Rapporteurs said. ...

**To read the full press release see**

<http://www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=21855&LangID=E>

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## **Relevant Legislation** \*\* new or updated today

### **Scottish 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 September 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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