

Political Affairs Digest

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

Contents

Home Affairs

Israel

Other Relevant Information

Relevant Legislation

Consultations

Home Affairs

House of Commons Oral Answer

European Council

Simon Hoare (Conservative): ... My right hon. Friend clearly attended a very busy Council. During the conversations on the margins, was she able to raise with other European leaders the rather ugly rise in the scourge of anti-Semitism in Europe?

The Prime Minister: That was not an issue that I raised at the Council, but I join my hon. Friend in his disquiet at the rise of anti-Semitism that we are seeing, and not just across the European continent. Sadly, we see too many examples of anti-Semitism here in the United Kingdom. There is no place for any racial hatred, hate crime or hate speak in the UK, be it Islamophobia or anti-Semitism.

<https://hansard.parliament.uk/commons/2018-03-26/debates/9EF663FF-689E-42F4-BF49-DDAD825D86EA/EuropeanCouncil#contribution-1C2BB886-4313-4F1C-BEA5-B691B38F6717>

House of Commons Written Answers

Religion: Education

The following four questions all received the same answer

Stephen Timms (Labour) [133477] To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what estimate his Department has made of the number and proportion of (a) maintained primary schools, (b) maintained secondary schools, (c) academies, (d) free schools and (e) sixth form colleges in England which do not fulfill the legal requirement to provide religious education in the school curriculum.

Stephen Timms (Labour) [133480] To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether (a) his Department and (b) other public bodies have commissioned research into the practices of schools in relation to their statutory obligation to provide religious education since 2010; and if he will make a statement.

Stephen Timms (Labour) [133483] To ask the Secretary of State for Education, how many schools have been reported to his Department for non-compliance with the statutory obligation to provide religious education in each academic years since 2010-11.

Stephen timms (Labour) [133484] To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what his policy is in the event of a school being found to be in breach of its statutory obligation to provide religious education in the curriculum; and if he will make a statement.

Nick Gibb: Religious Education (RE) is compulsory for all state-funded schools, including academies and free schools, at all key stages. The Department investigates complaints made about schools not fulfilling their statutory duties in respect of RE.

The Department does not gather data on schools' level of compliance with the requirement. One formal complaint was made to the Department about a school's non-compliance with its statutory duties in respect of RE in the period since 2010-2011.

Faith schools are required to arrange a separate inspection of denominational religious education and collective worship, leading to published reports. Ofsted does not inspect individual curriculum subjects, but is required to report on whether the curriculum offered by the school is broad and balanced and promotes the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils.

If an individual is concerned that a school is not meeting its duty to provide religious education they should follow that school's complaint procedure in the first instance. If the complaint is not resolved, then the issue can be escalated to the Department's School Complaints Unit for maintained schools, or the Education and Skills Funding Agency for academies, free schools, university technical colleges or studio schools. Information about complaint procedures for schools can be found at www.gov.uk/complain-about-school.

My Rt hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Education has a range of powers to ensure schools comply with their statutory obligations. The powers used will depend on the nature of the statutory duty in question and the potential impact of any failure to comply. These powers include a direction under section 497 of the Education Act 1996, a performance and standards warning notice under the Education and Inspections Act 2006 and a referral to Ofsted for an inspection. Where academies are subject to the same statutory duties as maintained schools, the Secretary of State has powers to enforce compliance via the terms of the funding agreement.

<http://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Commons/2018-03-20/133477/>

and

<http://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Commons/2018-03-20/133480/>

and

<http://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Commons/2018-03-20/133483/>

and

<http://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Commons/2018-03-20/133484/>

Religion: Education

Stephen Timms (Labour) [133816] To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what powers he has to require or encourage (a) academies, (b) maintained community schools and (c) schools with a religious character to fulfill the statutory obligation to provide religious education in the curriculum.

Nick Gibb: Legislation in funding agreements require all state funded schools to deliver religious education.

If an individual is concerned that a school is not meeting its duty to provide religious education they should follow that school's complaints procedure in the first instance. If the complaint is not resolved, then the issue can be escalated to the Department's School Complaints Unit for maintained schools, or the Education and Skills Funding Agency for academies, free schools, university technical colleges or studio schools. Information about complaint procedures for schools can be found at www.gov.uk/complain-about-school.

My Rt Hon. friend The Secretary of State has a range of powers to ensure schools comply with their statutory obligations. The exact powers used will depend on the nature of the statutory duty in question and the potential impact of any failure to comply. The powers used could include a direction under section 497 of the Education Act 1996, a performance and standards warning notice under the Education and Inspections Act 2006 and a referral to Ofsted for an inspection. Where academies are subject to the same statutory duties as maintained schools, the Secretary of State has powers to enforce compliance via the terms of the funding agreement.

<http://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Commons/2018-03-21/133816/>

Standing Advisory Councils on Religious Education

Stephen Timms (Labour) [133819] To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what assessment he has made of whether local Standing Advisory Committees for RE are adequately resourced to discharge their statutory responsibilities; and if he will make a statement.

Nick Gibb: The Government is continuing to provide local authorities with funding for Standing Advisory Councils on Religious Education (SACREs) through the Central School Service Block from 2018/19 onwards. Local authorities are expected to ensure that SACREs are funded adequately to perform their duties. SACREs continue to play an important role in supporting schools to teach high-quality religious education.

<http://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Commons/2018-03-21/133819/>

Ritual Slaughter: Labelling

Kerry McCarthy (Labour) [133446] To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, whether the Government plans to introduce method-of-slaughter labelling after the UK leaves the EU.

George Eustice: The Government is aware that there is public concern about meat from animals slaughtered in accordance with religious beliefs being sold to consumers who do not require their meat to be prepared in this way. There are no domestic or European regulations that require the labelling of halal or kosher meat but where any information of this nature is provided, it must be accurate and must not be misleading to the consumer.

The Government believes that consumers should have the necessary information available to them to make an informed choice about their food, and this is an issue the Government is considering in the context of our departure from the EU.

<http://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Commons/2018-03-20/133446/>

Poultry: Slaughterhouses

The following two questions both received the same answer

Kerry McCarthy (Labour) [133450] To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what evidence informed the Government's decision to omit the parameters recommended by the European Food Safety Authority on stunning poultry in electric water baths for animals killed in accordance with religious rites under the Welfare At Time of Killing (England) Regulations 2015.

Poultry: Ritual Slaughter

Kerry McCarthy (Labour) [133451] To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, if he will review the decision to omit the parameters recommended by the European Food Safety Authority on stunning poultry in electric water baths for animals killed in accordance with religious rites under the Welfare At Time of Killing (England) Regulations 2015.

George Eustice: Article 4 (1) of the European Council Regulation 1099/2009 requires all animals to be stunned before slaughter, using the methods and parameters listed in Annex 1 to the Regulation. These methods and parameters in Annex 1 are based on the European Food Safety Authority's advice. The only exception to the requirement for animals to be stunned is for those animals slaughtered in accordance with religious rites, where Article 4(4) specifically states that the requirements in Article 4(1) (e.g. Annex I stunning parameters) do not apply to religious slaughter carried out in a slaughterhouse.

The Welfare of Animals at Time of Killing (England) Regulations 2015 (WATOK) provide the enforcement powers for the European legislation and contain stricter national rules. Prior to the introduction of WATOK, the halal poultry industry had raised concerns that the stunning requirements for waterbaths in the European Regulation were incompatible with halal slaughter. There was, therefore, a risk that more of the halal industry would move over to non-stun slaughter if it had to follow the parameters set out in the EU regulation. The Government considered the position in England and decided to keep existing national rules, where these provided greater protection than the EU regulation, but not to introduce a new national rule to apply Annex I stunning parameters to religious slaughter.

A review of WATOK is scheduled to take place before 2020 and will consider to what extent the objectives of the legislation have been met.

<http://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Commons/2018-03-20/133450/>

and

<http://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Commons/2018-03-20/133451/>

House of Lords Written Answer

Hate Crime

Baroness Deech (Crossbench) [HL6443] To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the strategy of the Equality and Human Rights Commission in combating rising levels of antisemitism and hate crime.

Lourd Bourne of Aberystwyth: The Government deplores all forms of hate crime and is committed to tackling it. We treat all hate crime with equal seriousness; there is no place for treating victims differently regardless of their race, religion, age, gender identity, sexuality or disability.

Our response to anti-Semitism has been built on the solid work of the Cross-Government working group on tackling anti-Semitism which includes Jewish communal stakeholders, ensuring that we are alive to any issues and concerns of the Jewish community and can respond quickly. The Government supports the Community Security Trust (CST) to provide security for Jewish communal buildings, as well as a range of projects to tackle anti-Semitism on campus such as the Union of Jewish Student's Bridges Not Boycotts programme, and the Holocaust Educational Trust's Lessons From Auschwitz.

In 2016, the Government published the Hate Crime Action Plan. The Plan includes a range of actions, including funding for security for places of worship, and the disaggregation of religion-based hate crime data. We have taken further action in education, equipping teachers to have difficult conversations and funding programmes through the Anne Frank Trust and Streetwise. The Plan also brings together the work of a wider range of departments and agencies, including Fire and Rescue Services for the first time. We are now refreshing the plan to ensure that we remain able to respond to all forms of hatred effectively and appropriately. The Equality and Human Rights Commission is an independent public body. I

have therefore asked the Commission's Chief Executive Officer to write to the Hon Member with the information requested. I will place a copy of the letter in the libraries of both Houses.

<http://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Lords/2018-03-19/HL6443/>

UK Parliament Joint Committee on Human Rights

Serious barriers limit free speech in universities

The Joint Committee on Human Rights publishes report into free speech in universities, highlighting serious concerns over barriers to free speech. The Committee has also published its own guidance for universities and students organising events to empower them to protect and promote this vital human right. ...

The Committee say that there are a number of factors which actively limit free speech in universities, including:

- Regulatory complexity
- Intolerant attitudes, often incorrectly using the banner of "no-platforming" and "safe-space" policies
- Incidents of unacceptable intimidating behaviour by protestors intent on preventing free speech and debate
- Student Unions being overly cautious for fear of breaking the rules
- Unnecessary bureaucracy imposed on those organising events
- Fear and confusion over what the Prevent Duty entails
- Unduly complicated and cautious guidance from the Charity Commission. ...

However, as solutions to the above concerns, MPs and Peers are recommending to students, universities and the authorities:

- That an independent review of the Prevent policy is necessary to assess what impact it is having on students and free speech ...
- That student societies should not stop other student societies from holding their meetings. They have the right to protest but must not seek to stop events entirely
- That while there must be opportunities for genuinely sensitive discussions, and that the whole of the university cannot be a "safe space." Universities must be places where open debate can take place so that students can develop their own opinions on unpopular, controversial or provocative ideas
- Groups or individuals holding unpopular opinions which are within the law should not be shut down nor be subject to undue additional scrutiny by student unions or universities. ...

To read the full press release see

<https://www.parliament.uk/business/committees/committees-a-z/joint-select/human-rights-committee/news-parliament-2017/freedom-of-speech-universities-report-17-19/>

Freedom of speech in universities

<https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/jt201719/jtselect/jtrights/589/589.pdf>

Free speech: guidance for universities and students organising events

<https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/jt201719/jtselect/jtrights/589/589-annex.pdf>

Charity Commission responds to Joint Committee on Human Rights

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/charity-commission-responds-to-joint-committee-on-human-rights>

Home Office

New figures show improved referrals to Prevent and a rise in far-right concerns

Figures released by the Home Office ... show that between April 2016 to March 2017, 6,093 individuals were referred to the government's Prevent programme and of those who received support from Channel, over a third were as a result of far-right concerns.

Security Minister, Ben Wallace, said: The Prevent programme is fundamentally about protecting people who are vulnerable to all forms of radicalisation and has stopped hundreds of individuals being drawn towards terrorism and violence.

The figures also show:

- of those referred to Prevent, 332 individuals went onto receive support from Channel as well as 54% of all referrals being signposted to other forms of support
- the proportion of individuals supported by Channel as a result of far-right concerns has risen from a quarter in 2015 to 2016 to over a third in 2016 to 2017
- 79% people left the programme with no further terrorism-related concerns ...

To read the full press release see

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/new-figures-show-improved-referrals-to-prevent-and-a-rise-in-far-right-concerns>

Individuals referred to and supported through the Prevent Programme, April 2016 to March 2017

https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/694002/individuals-referred-supported-prevent-programme-apr2016-mar2017.pdf

UK Labour Party

Letter from the Board of Deputies and the Jewish Leadership Council to Labour Party leader Jeremy Corbyn

Today, leaders of British Jewry tell Jeremy Corbyn that *enough is enough*. We have had enough of hearing that Jeremy Corbyn "opposes antisemitism", whilst the mainstream majority of British Jews, and their concerns, are ignored by him and those he leads.

There is a repeated institutional failure to properly address Jewish concerns and to tackle antisemitism, with the Chakrabarti Report being the most glaring example of this.

Jeremy Corbyn did not invent this form of politics, but he has had a lifetime within it, and now personifies its problems and dangers. He issues empty statements about opposing antisemitism, but does nothing to understand or address it. We conclude that he cannot seriously contemplate antisemitism, because he is so ideologically fixed within a far left worldview that is instinctively hostile to mainstream Jewish communities.

When Jews complain about an obviously antisemitic mural in Tower Hamlets, Corbyn of course supports the artist. Hizbollah commits terrorist atrocities against Jews, but Corbyn calls them his friends and attends pro-Hizbollah rallies in London. Exactly the same goes for Hamas. Raed Salah says Jews kill Christian children to drink their blood. Corbyn opposes his extradition and invites him for tea at the House of Commons. These are not the only cases. He is repeatedly found alongside people with blatantly antisemitic views, but claims never to hear or read them.

Again and again, Jeremy Corbyn has sided with antisemites rather than Jews. At best, this derives from the far left's obsessive hatred of Zionism, Zionists and Israel. At worst, it suggests a conspiratorial worldview in which mainstream Jewish communities are believed to be a hostile entity, a class enemy.

When Jeremy Corbyn was elected leader of the Labour Party, Jews expressed sincere and profound fears as to how such politics would impact upon their wellbeing. Our concerns were never taken seriously. Three years on, the Party and British Jews are reaping the consequences.

Routine statements against antisemitism “and all forms of racism” get nowhere near dealing with the problem, because what distinguishes antisemitism from other forms of racism is the power that Jews are alleged to hold, and how they are charged with conspiring together against what is good.

This is not only historic, or about what Jeremy Corbyn did before being Party leader. It is also utterly contemporary. There is literally not a single day in which Labour Party spaces, either online or in meetings, do not repeat the same fundamental antisemitic slanders against Jews. We are told that our concerns are faked, and done at the command of Israel and/or Zionism (whatever that means); that antisemitism is merely “criticism of Israel”; that we call any and all criticism of Israel “antisemitic”; that the Rothschilds run the world; that ISIS terrorism is a fake front for Israel; that Zionists are the new Nazis; and that Zionists collaborate with Nazis.

Rightly or wrongly, those who push this offensive material regard Jeremy Corbyn as their figurehead. They display an obsessive hatred of Israel alongside conspiracy theories and fake news. These repeated actions do serious harm to British Jews and to the British Labour Party.

Jeremy Corbyn is the only person with the standing to demand that all of this stops.

Enough is enough.

https://www.thejlc.org/letter_to_jeremy_corbyn

and

<https://www.bod.org.uk/enough-is-enough-2/>

Letter from Labour Party leader Jeremy Corbyn to the Board of Deputies and the Jewish Leadership Council

Thank you for your letter to the Labour Party concerning anti-Semitism issued as a press statement last night.

First of all, let me acknowledge the anger and upset that provoked it, and repeat my offer of an urgent meeting to discuss the issues you have raised as soon as possible.

I stated yesterday, and repeat today, that I will not tolerate any form of anti-Semitism that exists in or around our party and movement. I am committed to eliminating anti-Semitism wherever it exists.

As I told the Labour Party conference in 2016, anti-Semitism is an evil that led to the worst crimes of the 20th century. Prejudice and hatred of Jewish people has no place whatsoever in the Labour Party, and every one of us has a responsibility to ensure it is never allowed to fester in our society again.

I recognise that anti-Semitism has surfaced within the Labour Party, and has too often been dismissed as simply a matter of a few bad apples. This has caused pain and hurt to Jewish members of our Party and to the wider Jewish community in Britain. I am sincerely sorry for the pain which has been caused, and pledge to redouble my efforts to bring this anxiety to an end.

While the forms of anti-Semitism expressed on the far Right of politics are easily detectable, such as Holocaust denial, there needs to be a deeper understanding of what constitutes anti-Semitism in the labour movement. Sometimes this evil takes familiar forms - the east London mural which has caused such understandable controversy is an example. The idea of Jewish bankers and capitalists exploiting the workers of the world is an old anti-Semitic conspiracy theory. This was long ago, and rightly, described as "the socialism of fools".

I am sorry for not having studied the content of the mural more closely before wrongly questioning its removal in 2012.

Newer forms of anti-Semitism have been woven into criticism of Israeli governments. Criticism of Israel, particularly in relation to the continuing dispossession of the Palestinian people, cannot be avoided. Nevertheless, comparing Israel or the actions of Israeli governments to the Nazis, attributing criticisms of Israel to Jewish characteristics or to Jewish people in general and using abusive phraseology about supporters of Israel such as "Zio" all constitute aspects of contemporary anti-Semitism. And Jewish people

must not be held responsible or accountable for the actions of the Israeli government. The Labour Party has always opposed anti-Semitism, old and new, and always will. We are proud of our deep historical links with Jewish communities, and to have fought alongside generations of Jewish men and women against fascism, prejudice and discrimination. This is a part of our common heritage from which we will never be separated. But I acknowledge that anti-Semitic attitudes have surfaced more often in our ranks in recent years, and that the Party has been too slow in processing some of the cases that have emerged. Early action has nevertheless been taken, and we will work to speed up procedures, to deal with cases of anti-Semitic abuse or attitudes.

I am committed to making our Party a welcoming and secure place for Jewish people. Zero tolerance for anti-Semites means what it says, and the Party will proceed in that spirit. That demands among other things the overdue full implementation of the recommendations of the Chakrabarti report, including a programme of political education to increase awareness and understanding of all forms of anti-Semitism.

The battle against anti-Semitism should never become a party political issue. It must unite all of us if we are both to honour the memory of the victims of the bestial crimes of the 20th century and build a future of equality and justice for all.

In that spirit, I must make it clear that I will never be anything other than a militant opponent of anti-Semitism. In this fight, I am your ally and always will be.

p1: <https://pbs.twimg.com/media/DZOqb0MWAAABKvK.jpg>

p2: <https://pbs.twimg.com/media/DZOqcmxXcAEQjuS.jpg>

TOP

Israel

United Nations

At Security Council, UN Middle East peace envoy reports on Israel's troubling settlement expansion

Reporting that over the past three months, Israel has advanced 22 plans for some 1,200 housing units for one area of the West Bank, a United Nations envoy warned Monday that such ongoing settlement expansion is eroding the prospect of a two-state solution to the long-standing Middle East conflict.

In a briefing to the Security Council focused mainly on implementation of its [resolution 2334](#), Nickolay Mladenov, the UN Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process, said the text urged Israel to “immediately and completely cease all settlement activities in the occupied Palestinian territory, including East Jerusalem.”

“[However] [no such steps were taken during the reporting period](#),” he added, noting that Israel’s “illegal settlement expansion and related activities continue further threatening the viability of the two-state solution and eroding the prospects for peace.”

Mr. Mladenov also warned that violence and incitement continue to fuel hatred, division, distrust and fear, and continuing terror attacks on Israelis as well as the recent assassination attempt on the Palestinian Prime Minister exemplify the growing risk of destabilization and the empowerment of radicals and extremists.

He further told the 15-member Security Council the reporting period was marked by continuing demonstrations and clashes following to the announcement by the United States, on 6 December 2017, recognizing Jerusalem as Israel’s capital, to the growing tensions in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, and along the Gaza fence.

“Despite the call in [...] resolution 2334 for the parties to refrain from acts of provocation, incitement, and inflammatory rhetoric, such statements continued,” added Mr. Mladenov, calling on all political leaders to refrain from provocative statements and actions that fuel an already tense environment.

Concluding his remarks, the senior UN official called on Israelis, Palestinians and the international community to take concrete steps to reverse the current course of the conflict and advance the goal of a just and sustainable peace.

“Generations of Palestinian and Israeli lives have been shaped by this conflict. It is time to begin constructing a different future, a future built on mutual respect, dignity, and the belief that even the deepest and most painful divisions can be resolved if there is a genuine desire for change,” he said.

<https://news.un.org/en/story/2018/03/1005991>

TOP

Other Relevant Information

European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA)

Updated: Handbook on European non-discrimination law

http://fra.europa.eu/sites/default/files/fra_uploads/fra-2018-handbook-non-discrimination-law-2018_en.pdf

TOP

Relevant Legislation ** new or updated today

UK Parliament

**** European Union (Withdrawal) Bill**

<http://services.parliament.uk/bills/2017-19/europeanunionwithdrawal.html>

Committee Stage, House of Lords

[https://hansard.parliament.uk/lords/2018-03-26/debates/897E48C6-D56A-4042-A6F4-D41AE39D133E/EuropeanUnion\(Withdrawal\)Bill](https://hansard.parliament.uk/lords/2018-03-26/debates/897E48C6-D56A-4042-A6F4-D41AE39D133E/EuropeanUnion(Withdrawal)Bill)

and

[https://hansard.parliament.uk/lords/2018-03-26/debates/567F5B3B-E9EE-4779-8005-3909AB103C09/EuropeanUnion\(Withdrawal\)Bill](https://hansard.parliament.uk/lords/2018-03-26/debates/567F5B3B-E9EE-4779-8005-3909AB103C09/EuropeanUnion(Withdrawal)Bill)

Notice of amendments

<https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/bills/lbill/2017-2019/0079/18079-XI.pdf>

Holocaust (Return of Cultural Objects) (Amendment) Bill

<https://services.parliament.uk/Bills/2017-19/holocaustreturnofculturalobjectsamendment.html>

Marriage Act 1949 (Amendment) Bill

<http://services.parliament.uk/bills/2017-19/marriageact1949amendment.html>

Organ Donation (Deemed Consent) Bill

<http://services.parliament.uk/bills/2017-19/organdonationdeemedconsent.html>

TOP

Consultations

** new or updated today

**** closes in 10 days**

Creating a Parliament for Wales (closing date 6 April 2018)

<http://senedd.assembly.wales/mqConsultationDisplay.aspx?ID=292>

Integrated Communities Strategy green paper (closing date 5 June 2018)

<https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/integrated-communities-strategy-green-paper>

TOP

The Scottish Council of Jewish Communities (SCoJeC) is Scottish Charitable Incorporated Organisation SC029438