

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 Written Answer

Churches: Repairs and Maintenance

Edward Argar (Conservative) [144316] To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what new models of financing the repair and maintenance of church buildings are being considered by the Government as part of the pilot scheme under the Taylor Review on the sustainability of English churches and cathedrals.

Michael Ellis: The Taylor Review: Sustainability of English Churches and Cathedrals, was an independent review that considered how these iconic buildings can become more sustainable and ensure that repair works are undertaken in a timely way. The subsequent pilots are testing, over the next two years, the new model of support proposed by the review.

This involves:

how effective the roles of a Fabric Support Officer and a Community Support Officer can be in both ensuring regular repairs are undertaken and in opening up wider links between listed places of worship and the wider community;

the level of need for a 'minor repairs' and a 'major repairs' fund;

how best practice can be better shared between owners of listed places of worship in ensuring these buildings are properly maintained;

how the Taylor Review model can be applied across all faiths and denominations

<https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Commons/2018-05-15/144316/>

The Taylor Review, referred to above, can be read at

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/669667/Taylor_Review_Final.pdf

House of Lords Written Answers

Schools

Lord Murphy of Torfaen (Labour) [HL7698] To ask Her Majesty's Government what research they have conducted on school twinning programmes and their progress in improving community cohesion and religious understanding.

Lord Agnew of Oulton: We want children and young people to have a greater

awareness and experience of meeting those from backgrounds different to their own.

The Department for Education and the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government are jointly providing funding of over £700,000 for a programme run by the Schools Linking Network. The programme provides sustained opportunities for children and young people from different communities to meet, build new relationships, work together and contribute to the wider community.

This follows the National Foundation for Educational Research report published by the department in 2011 (attached) which showed that schools linking can have a positive impact on many aspects of pupils' skills, attitudes, perceptions and behaviours.

An evaluation strategy for the current programme is in place and we will ensure we learn from its results to develop our approach to school linking.

[Schools Linking Network Final Report](#)

<https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Lords/2018-05-09/HL7698/>

Church Schools

Lord Murphy of Torfaen (Labour) [HL7699] To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the contribution of church schools to community cohesion.

Lord Agnew of Oulton: Church schools are an important part of our diverse education system, play a key role in their local communities and many have mixed intakes. The 2017 School Census shows that in secondary Church of England and Catholic state-funded schools 32.4% and 37.6% of pupils are from non-White ethnic backgrounds, respectively. This is compared to 29.2% in non-faith schools. In primary Church of England and Catholic state-funded schools 22.1% and 39.8% of pupils are from non-white ethnic backgrounds respectively, compared to 34.7% in non-faith schools. There are good examples of church schools participating in linking activities with schools from different faiths or no faith. We aim to work closely with the religious bodies, which oversee church schools to build on their excellent work so far.

<https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Lords/2018-05-09/HL7699/>

TOP

Israel

House of Commons Oral Answers

Topical Questions: International Development

T3. **Joan Ryan (Labour):** Does the Minister agree that the tragic events of last week necessitate urgent action to tackle the plight of the Palestinian people, including the disarmament of Hamas, the return of Gaza to the Palestinian Authority, international donors meeting their reconstruction pledges fully, and Israel assisting in Gaza's economic revitalisation? [905521]

Alistair Burt: One of the main areas of focus at last week's United Nations Security Council meeting was to accept special envoy Nikolay Mladenov's persuasion that Gaza does indeed need more direct assistance and support to ease the circumstances there. Israel will be involved, as will other international donors, working in a very complex situation. The relief of humanitarian issues in Gaza is essential.

<https://hansard.parliament.uk/commons/2018-05-23/debates/83604219-7B3B-4ADC-85E8-AF186F56D86A/TopicalQuestions#contribution-DBDC329A-7542-4E0C-A009-4E0F2B8075F3>

Topical Questions: International Development

T5. Alan Brown (SNP): Not backing the vote for investigation into the Gaza killings is another example of the UK Government not standing up to Israel. Will the Minister's Department show some backbone and demand compensation for aid-funded structures that have been demolished? [905523]

Alistair Burt: The UK is well aware of the circumstances surrounding the issues in Gaza and calls for a transparent and independent inquiry, but we are providing humanitarian aid through UNRWA to the Palestinian people and looking at further possibilities of providing direct aid to the medical situation in Gaza.

<https://hansard.parliament.uk/commons/2018-05-23/debates/83604219-7B3B-4ADC-85E8-AF186F56D86A/TopicalQuestions#contribution-3FC6CFCC-E9B0-467F-9471-C3D68486247D>

House of Commons Written Answer

Exports: Arms Trade

Tonia Antoniazzi (Labour) [144399] To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, if he will rescind all export licences allowing the export of arms to Israel.

Graham Stuart: The Government takes its defence export responsibilities extremely seriously and operates one of the most robust export control regimes in the world.

Export licence applications for all countries, including Israel, are assessed carefully against the Consolidated EU and National Arms Export Licensing Criteria. We will not grant a licence if to do so would be inconsistent with these Consolidated Criteria.

We are keeping the situation in Israel and Gaza under close review and consider the latest circumstances when assessing licence applications. The Government will not grant a licence if there is a clear risk that exports might be used for internal repression or in the commission of a serious violation of international humanitarian law.

Extant licences will be revoked if the exports are no longer consistent with the Consolidated Criteria.

<https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Commons/2018-05-15/144399/>

Scottish Parliament Motion

Motion S5M-12386 Pauline McNeill (Labour): UN Human Rights Council Investigation – That the Parliament condemns the UK Government's abstention on a UN Human Rights Council vote, which took place on 18 May 2018, calling for an immediate investigation into the reported killing of 110 Palestinians by Israeli soldiers on 14 May on the Gaza-Israel border; further condemns what it understands is the UK Government's stance that Israel should hold its own inquiry into the killings; believes that this is a wholly inadequate response to the reported violence carried out by Israel on this occasion; welcomes the resolution by the UN Human Rights Council to investigate the killings, and hopes that the international community will stand up against human rights abuses wherever they take place.

<http://www.parliament.scot/parliamentarybusiness/28877.aspx?SearchType=Advance&ReferenceNumbers=S5M-12386>

United Nations

Gaza on Verge of Collapse, Senior United Nations Official Tells Security Council, Calling for All Parties to Act Urgently, 'Avoid another War'

Calling on the Security Council to view the recent violence along the Gaza border as part of a larger picture — in which political stagnation, frustration and disillusionment were mounting across the wider Palestinian diaspora — the senior United Nations official in Jerusalem today urged all parties to the conflict to rein in provocations, address urgent humanitarian needs and support the resumption of peace talks aimed at ending the long-entrenched conflict.

Nickolay Mladenov, Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process, speaking via videoconference from Jerusalem ... [said]:

“It was a reminder that Gaza is on the verge of collapse,” he stressed, adding that its people — who had lived for more than a decade under Hamas control and with crippling Israeli closures and diminishing hopes — were growing increasingly desperate. “We must act urgently to avoid another war, to alleviate the suffering of the people and to empower the Palestinian Government to take up its responsibilities in Gaza.”

Reiterating his call on Council members to join him in condemning in the strongest terms the actions that had led to so much death and injury, he said Israel bore a responsibility to calibrate its use of force and to refrain from employing lethal force except as a last resort under imminent threat of death or serious injury. While that State had the right to protect its citizens, it must do so only in a proportional manner, and should investigate every incident that led to a loss of human life.

Meanwhile, Hamas must not use protests as cover to attempt to place bombs at the Gaza fence and create provocations, he underscored. Its operatives must not hide among the demonstrators and risk the lives of civilians, he stressed, emphasizing that the Palestinians had the right to protest peacefully. As demonstrations were likely to continue into June, he again called on all sides to exercise restraint.

Recalling Council members' many statements about preventing war, as well as the Secretary-General's call for preventative diplomacy, Mr. Mladenov underscored that “it is time for our words to be tested in Gaza”. Failure to implement assistance projects would guarantee an amplified humanitarian crisis with fewer means to address it effectively. ...

Calling for a unified approach to break the cycle of violence, he urged the Council not to ignore the fragile situation in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, and to work together to bring an end to the long-standing Israeli occupation through a just, lasting and comprehensive resolution. ...

To read the full press release see

<https://www.un.org/press/en/2018/sc13350.doc.htm>

TOP

Other Relevant Information

European Commission Against Racism and Intolerance (ECRI)

Revised Standards for Equality Bodies

<http://hudoc.ecri.coe.int/eng?i=REC-02rev-2018-006-ENG>

TOP

Relevant Legislation ** new or updated today

UK Parliament

European Union (Withdrawal) Bill

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

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

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

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

Measures to further improve the effectiveness of the fight against illegal content online (closing date 25 June 2018)

https://ec.europa.eu/info/consultations/public-consultation-measures-further-improve-effectiveness-fight-against-illegal-content-online_en

Home Education (closing date 2 July 2018)

<https://consult.education.gov.uk/school-frameworks/home-education-call-for-evidence-and-revised-dfe-a/>

Ecclesiastical exemption and guidance on scheduled monuments (closing date 13 July 2018)

<https://beta.gov.wales/ecclesiastical-exemption-and-guidance-scheduled-monuments>

Antisemitism: Survey of European Jews (closing date not stated)

<http://www.eurojews.eu/>

TOP

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