

Political Affairs Digest

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

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Welsh Assembly Debate

Animal Welfare

Motion NDM6863 Gareth Bennett

To propose that the National Assembly for Wales:

1. Believes that Wales should be a world leader in animal welfare.
2. Calls on the Welsh Government to:
 - a) make CCTV surveillance mandatory in all Welsh slaughterhouses; and
 - b) ban the practice of slaughtering livestock without stunning in all Welsh slaughterhouses.
3. Calls on the UK Government to ban live animal exports for the purposes of rearing and slaughter.

16.40 para 348 **Gareth Bennett (UKIP):** ... The points in our motion are supported by professionals and by much academic research in the field of animal welfare. ...

Currently, EU member states have the competence to seek a derogation that allows slaughterhouses to omit the stunning of animals on the grounds of religious practices. The fact that UK law states that animals should be stunned before slaughter in itself recognises that the most humane method is by pre-stunning. Under Islamic law, which relates to halal as a method of slaughter, and under Jewish law, which relates to the shechita method of slaughter, an animal must be considered to be alive at the point of slaughter. Shechita expressly prohibits any stunning of the animal before slaughter. Across the UK, in slaughterhouses where halal slaughter is practised, 80 to 85 per cent of all animals are stunned before slaughter—information from the House of Commons Library. However, this still leaves a significant proportion of animals in the UK that are slaughtered without stunning. There is growing concern that, considering the rapid growth of the halal market, the general public are now regularly consuming both stunned and non-stunned meat.

The British Veterinary Association, the Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals, Compassion in World Farming and the Humane Slaughter Association have all publicly called for the ban of non-stun slaughter in the UK. The BVA has stated: 'pre-stunning is superior from a welfare point of view' on the grounds of scientific evidence. Their research re-evaluated the need to stun calves prior to slaughter.

The study reported: 'Consciousness, and therefore the ability of the animal to feel pain and experience distress after the incision, may persist for 60 seconds or longer in cattle.' I should also point out that non-stun slaughter has already been banned in Denmark, Iceland, Sweden and New Zealand. ...

Recently, the BVA launched a petition to ban non-stun slaughter. It reached over 100,000 signatures ...

So, what is the Welsh Government's position on this? Lesley Griffiths has previously stated in the Chamber that she has had discussions with the BVA regarding the pre-stunning of animals. She said that she would take the advice on board ... The First Minister, in contrast to Lesley Griffiths, during First Minister's questions recently stated that he would not support a ban of non-stun slaughter ...

Regrettably, the UK Government reaffirmed its commitment to the derogation in the law that permits the slaughtering of animals without stunning.

It is becoming increasingly apparent that both the Welsh Government and the UK Government are willing to ignore the advice of experts in the field of animal welfare. On an issue as important as this, where it has been proven that stunning before slaughter is the best practice for welfare standards, we should not allow religious practices to dictate Government policy. ...

Amendment 2—Julie James

Delete all after point 1 and replace with:

Notes action taken by the Welsh Government on ...

c) ensuring any review of food labelling legislation relating to animal welfare must be evidenced based.

Notes that no non-stun slaughter is practiced currently in Wales. ...

16.54 para 380 Neil McEvoy (Independent): ... this is not a Muslim or a Jewish issue. It's got nothing to do with religious practice, so I don't really see the relevance of that being mentioned earlier. This is a matter of animal welfare. ...

17.02 para 393 Llyr Gruffydd (Plaid Cymru): ... A key approach that could secure significant improvements in animal welfare, of course, is informed consumer choice, and this picks up on a point made previously about labelling. The BVA is calling for mandatory methods of production labelling of meat and dairy products and there are currently, I think, seven main farm assurance schemes ... each having a different criteria, and the lack of clarity, therefore, about whether animals are stunned before slaughter isn't addressed as maybe they should do in that respect.

Now, the BVA's Voice of the Veterinary Profession survey found that 94 per cent of vets believe UK consumers of meat and fish should be better informed about slaughter methods. ...

17.06 para 399 Lesley Griffiths (Cabinet Secretary for Energy, Planning and Rural Affairs): ... I'm pleased to be responding to this debate on behalf of the Government. We won't be supporting the original motion. ...

Food Standards Agency records confirm non-stun slaughter does not currently take place in any abattoirs in Wales. ...

17.12 para 415 Gareth Bennett: ... Lesley Griffiths, the Minister, asserted the need for strong animal welfare standards. ... She also stated that non-stun slaughter doesn't take place in Wales. There is also the need to work on the brand values, which she's working on. Again, this relates to the labelling issue, which several people have mentioned. ...

To read the full transcript see

<http://record.assembly.wales/Plenary/5364#C137011>

Amended Motion agreed, For: 49, Against: 3, Abstain: 0

<http://record.assembly.wales/Plenary/5364#C137055>

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House of Commons Written Answer

Developing Countries: Human Rights

Emily Thornberry (Labour) [188039] To ask the Secretary of State for International Development, whether UK official development assistance supports the work of agencies cited for human rights abuses in the October 2018 Human Rights Watch report Two authorities, one way, zero dissent.

Alistair Burt: UK Official Development Assistance does not provide financial assistance or assets to support the Palestinian Authority (PA) agencies implicated in the Human Rights Watch report and continues to have a no contact policy with Hamas in its entirety. The report has made some serious and concerning allegations about human rights violations by the PA and we have immediately raised our concerns with the Palestinian Ministry of Interior. We continue to urge the PA to respect human rights, to ensure complaints of mistreatment or arbitrary detention are properly investigated and to continue to improve the performance of the security sector.

The Ministry of Defence (MOD) currently delivers training courses and supports the development of training institutions across the Palestinian Authority security sector. Participants from two agencies referenced in the report, the Preventative Security Organisation and General Intelligence Service, have attended courses delivered by the MOD and by training institutions that are supported by the MOD. These courses serve to reinforce accountability, responsible governance and a common approach to the upholding of human rights and human rights law.

<https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Commons/2018-11-05/188039/>

The report referred to above can be read at

https://www.hrw.org/sites/default/files/report_pdf/palestine1018_web4.pdf

and the annexes to the report can be read at

https://www.hrw.org/sites/default/files/report_pdf/palestine1018_annexes.pdf

United Nations

Amid Rising Gaza Tensions, Delegates Welcome Ceasefire, as Fourth Committee Concludes General Debate on Israeli Practices in Occupied Arab Lands

... Mohannad Adnan Mousa Shaddad (Jordan), noting that a new round of tensions arose in Gaza yesterday, called upon the international community to help de-escalate the situation and impose a ceasefire. Failure to address the frozen peace process sends a dangerous signal and undermines the hope of peace, he cautioned, adding that it gives terrorist and extremist groups an opportunity to create false legitimacy. ... Emphasizing that responsibility for Al Quds is a historic one shared with the Arab world, he warned that any attempt at dividing such holy sites as Al-Aqsa Mosque will constitute a threat to the stability of the entire region. ...

Isaac Bachman (Israel) said the human rights situation is critical in Areas A and B, over which the Palestinian Authority exercises security control, and in Gaza, where Hamas has de facto control. The rights to life, protest, free expression and safety, as well as the rights of women and girls are in severe danger, he said, citing a statement from a human rights organization. The Special Committee's annual report ignores severe violations by the Palestinian Authority and Hamas against the human rights of Israelis as well as those of their own people, he added, noting that it also fails to lay out the context of historical events that led Israel to gain control over its territory, as well as its attempts to seek

solutions and build bridges. The Special Committee is not about human rights; instead, “it is about railing against Israel and Israel bashing”, he reiterated. ...

[He] went on to recall that the Jordanian-Israeli General Armistice Agreement of 3 April, 1949 explicitly states that the demarcation line, known as the Green Line, is not and should not be considered a border because it is only a military line. Therefore, when Israel took control of the West Bank in 1967, it did not cross any agreed international border, he said, emphasizing that it was taken from the aggressor by the self-defender. “Thus, the Israeli presence there is legitimate,” he added. The claim of the Jews to the region is legitimate and its future status should be negotiated directly and bilaterally, as agreed by both parties and the international community under existing and binding agreements, he emphasized. ...

“If the ongoing Palestinian terror ceased, no restrictions and no blockade would be needed to protect Israeli civilians,” he noted. However, Hamas is piling up an arsenal of rockets actively dedicated to Israel’s destruction, including over the past week, when an unprecedented number of rockets were launched against Israel. In that context, Israel will continue to do whatever is necessary to protect itself ...

... “We are surrounded by countries that couldn’t accept the very existence of the Jewish State,” he said, adding that the people of such countries teach their children hatred of Jews and Israel. When Palestinians fire from densely populated civilian areas towards civilian areas in Israel, that constitutes a double war crime, he said. However, Israel defends its people, investing billions in an iron dome to stop the terrible effects of missiles launched from Gaza ...

Israel does not want to invest so much in its Defence Forces, but it must defend itself in a region that does not want it ...

Unfortunately, Palestinians choose to live in misery, he said, noting that it is in their hands to decide whether to accept the Jewish State. ...

The observer for the State of Palestine ... [emphasised] that the international community should not stand idly by while Israel violates international law, she said it cannot be that everyone is wrong and only Israel is right ... Rejecting the notion that the conflict has anything to do with hatred of Jews, she described it, instead, as ruthless oppression of a people under occupation. ... Claims attributing the situation to some Palestinian inferiority are offensive, she said, pointing out that Palestine has recognized Israel and its right to exist but has not received the same acknowledgement. While Israel pays only lip service to a two-State solution, Palestine has repeatedly drafted legislative proposals ...

The representative of Israel, noting that a majority at the United Nations does not mean the Organization’s positions and decisions are just, cited numerous anti-Israel decisions. Stressing also that Israel is proud to have NGOs in the country that are critical of the Government, he said that would not be possible in Gaza. Expressing incredulity at claims that there is no hatred of Jews, he recounted instances of anti-Semitic propaganda and terrorist attacks around the world. Regarding the name of Palestine, he said it has nothing to do with today’s Palestinians and is based on a Roman decision that had nothing to do with them. ...

The representative of Syria said that Israel lies in order to steal land and wealth, kill, bomb and displace people. Through falsification and lies, Israel’s representative is trying to trick the world, but cannot cover the ugliness of the occupation ... It has built walls of isolation, demolishing housing and practising systematic terrorism, he said, pointing out Israel’s support for Al-Nusra Front and other terrorist groups aligned with Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL/Da’esh). Besides treating their wounded, Israel has destroyed 260 towns, villages and farms in the Syrian Golan, displacing half a million of its inhabitants, he said, adding that it has also planted a million mines in the occupied Golan, with 200 children dying as a result. ...

To read the full press release see

<https://www.un.org/press/en/2018/gaspd687.doc.htm>

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Relevant Legislation ** new or updated today

UK Parliament

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>

Online Forums Bill

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

Organ Donation (Deemed Consent) Bill

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

Scottish Parliament

Human Tissue (Authorisation) (Scotland) Bill

<http://www.parliament.scot/parliamentarybusiness/Bills/108681.aspx>

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Consultations ** new or updated today

Reform of the legal requirements for divorce (closing date 10 December 2018)

<https://consult.justice.gov.uk/digital-communications/reform-of-the-legal-requirements-for-divorce/>

The future of civil partnership in Scotland (closing date 21 December 2018)

<https://consult.gov.scot/family-law/the-future-of-civil-partnership-in-scotland/>

2021 Census: Outputs Strategy Consultation for Northern Ireland (closing date 9 January 2019)

<https://www.finance-ni.gov.uk/sites/default/files/consultations/dfp/2021-census-outputs-strategy-consultation-for-northern-ireland-document.pdf>

Draft guidance to challenge bullying in schools [Wales only] (closing date 15 February 2019)

<https://beta.gov.wales/draft-guidance-challenge-bullying-schools>

One Scotland: Hate Has No Home Here (closing date 24 February 2019)

<https://www.gov.scot/publications/one-scotland-hate-home-here-consultation-hate-crime-amending-current-scottish-hate-crime-legislation/>

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