

# Political Affairs Digest

A daily summary of political events affecting the Jewish Community

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## Israel

### UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights

#### **UN experts condemn Israeli decision to expel Omar Shakir of Human Rights Watch**

UN human rights experts ... criticised a decision by the Israeli Supreme Court upholding the government's decision to revoke the work visa of Omar Shakir, the Israel and Palestine director of Human Rights Watch.

The decision means Mr. Shakir will be required to leave the country by 25 November if the government stands by its decision to deport him.

"The Supreme Court's ruling is a body blow to the protection of human rights defenders, and to the fundamental right to freedom of expression," said the experts. "All countries must defend and encourage the work of human rights organisations as part of their solemn duty to respect human rights, even when – and indeed especially when – those organisations are critical of the human rights practices of that country.

"We call on the Government of Israel to reverse its decision, and allow Mr. Shakir to remain and to continue with his research work for Human Rights Watch." The three UN Special Rapporteurs said the government ruling was part of a disturbing trend of restrictions on the work of human rights organisations.

The experts further point out that the freedom of expression and association protects expressing support for, or opposition to, movements such as the BDS (boycott, divestment and sanctions), which do not incite discrimination, violence or hostility.

The revocation of Mr. Shakir's work visa is based on a 2017 amendment to the Entry to Israel Law, which allows the denial of entry to Israel and the occupied Palestinian territory (OPT) to anyone who calls for a boycott of Israel as defined in the Prevention of Damage to the State of Israel through Boycott Law of 2011. Israel annulled Mr. Shakir's visa on the grounds that he had supported the BDS in the past, and over allegations that he continued to do so through his work with Human Rights Watch.

The Supreme Court ruling on 5 November stated that the activities covered by the law included "a call to boycott Israel (...) even if its reasoning is founded on the protection of human rights or on the norms of international law".

"This Supreme Court ruling is incompatible with the principles guaranteed in the International Bill of Rights, and it marks a significant departure from the protection of democratic liberties," the experts said.

"We note that this is the first time that the 2017 amendment has been used to expel

someone from Israel, although it has been applied to ban people – including two United States congresswomen and several human rights defenders – from visiting Israel and the OPT.

“We urge the Government of Israel to withdraw the 2017 amendment to the Entry to Israel Law, and to allow peaceful critics of its policies to enter the country on the same basis as anyone else.”

<https://www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=25265&LanglD=E>

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## Other Relevant Information

### United Nations

#### **World must Urgently Act before Underground Hatred becomes ‘Alarming New Normal’, Says Secretary-General at Museum of Jewish Heritage**

... Kristallnacht was not just the night of broken glass; it was the night of broken lives, broken families, broken societies, broken dreams. And, as we know, that dreadful night of State-orchestrated terror was followed by days, months and years of incalculable horror, so tragically and movingly displayed here. ...

... hatred, antisemitism and the Holocaust are: “Not long ago. Not far away.” I feel this personally, having grown up in Europe in the aftermath of the continent’s descent into depravity — and knowing that centuries earlier, my own country had reached its own depths of discrimination by expelling the country’s Jews in an act of utter cruelty. And by the way, it was not an act of utter cruelty, that made so many people suffer terribly it was a total stupidity.

Portugal has paid an enormous price for it with the lack of development and countries like the Netherlands, to where many Jews from Portugal left after a long circuit, has enormously benefited from their contribution. ... The same Jewish community that has been expelled by Portugal was completely eliminated by Nazism during the Second World War, which proves that antisemitism goes on and on, repeating itself in history in several and tragic ways.

I also feel it keenly today as head of an Organization dedicated to preventing genocide and other grave crimes, who sees and hears — as you do — chilling daily reminders of the persistence of antisemitism, the resurgence of Nazi slogans and symbols, and the growing menace of white supremacy groups and other forms of intolerance.

So, it is right and necessary that we gather tonight to remember the Holocaust and the events that took place on November 9 and 10 in 1938. ...

In recent months alone, across the world, we have seen the vandalization of Jewish graves, the defacement of a Holocaust memorial, the burning of a yeshiva and the spread of vile propaganda about Jews. And of course, it is just over a year since the worst antisemitic attack in the history of the United States, at the Tree of Life synagogue in Pittsburgh. ...

Decades after the Holocaust, the world’s oldest hatred is still with us. Other forms of intolerance are also taking a deadly toll, from bombings at churches to massacres at mosques to assaults on migrants and refugees.

Hatred kills. But hatred also works in insidious ways to undermine relations between people and the foundations of society.

In their quest for power, some political leaders are cynically bringing the loathsome views of extremist groups into the mainstream. We see this in authoritarian regimes and liberal

democracies alike.

The online world has proven to be a boon for bigotry and violent misogyny. Terrorists and neo-Nazis are ramping up recruitment and radicalization. They are as shrewd as any Madison Avenue marketer. They are as technologically savvy as any modern teenager. ... These groups post videos on the latest platforms and apps — often specifically designed to lure in often unwitting young people. Their messages are filled with false promises of glory, and with real incitement targeting some of society's most vulnerable people. ...

Two months ago, working with my High Representative for the Alliance of Civilizations, I launched a plan of action to support Member States in ensuring that worshipers can observe their rituals in peace. Houses of worship around the world must be safe havens for reflection and peace, not sites of bloodshed and terror. ...

People are not born to hate; intolerance is learned and so can be prevented and unlearned. I will continue to call out antisemitism, racism and other forms of hatred. The exhibition we have seen — “Not long ago. Not far away” — compels us to work in the here and now to safeguard and uphold universal values for all.

**To read the full press release see**

<https://www.un.org/press/en/2019/sqsm19849.doc.htm>

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

### **Scottish Parliament**

#### **Civil Partnership (Scotland) Bill**

<https://www.parliament.scot/parliamentarybusiness/Bills/112997.aspx>

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## **Consultations** \*\* new or updated today

**\*\* closes in 9 days**

**Welsh Government Strategic Equality Objectives 2020-24** (closing date 19 November 2019)

<https://gov.wales/sites/default/files/consultations/2019-09/strategic-equality-objectives-2020-2024-consultation.pdf>

**Draft content of the Human Tissue (Authorisation) (Specified Type A Procedures) (Scotland) Regulations** (closing date 11 December 2019)

<https://consult.gov.scot/population-health/human-tissue-regulations-2019/>

**Civil Partnership (Scotland) Bill** (closing date 31 January 2020)

<https://www.parliament.scot/parliamentarybusiness/CurrentCommittees/113449.aspx>

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