



Political Affairs Digest

A daily summary of political events affecting the Jewish Community

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Scottish Parliament Written Answer

Tackling Islamophobia

S5O-04276 Anas Sarwar (Labour): To ask the Scottish Government what its response is to the findings of the recent inquiry by the Cross Party Group on Tackling Islamophobia, which reported that only one in five victims of anti-Muslim hate crime report it to the police.

Humza Yousaf: There's no place in Scotland for hate crime or prejudice, including Islamophobia. I welcome the findings of the inquiry and remain committed to continue to engage with the CPG as they take forward this important work. We recognise that the under reporting of hate crime remains a significant issue and more needs to be done to tackle Islamophobia in Scotland. Our Tackling Prejudice and Building Connected Communities Action Group has prioritised raising awareness of hate crime and encouraging reporting. We also recently consulted on the UK's All Party Parliamentary Group's definition of Islamophobia to support our work in this area.

<https://www.parliament.scot/parliamentarybusiness/28877.aspx?SearchType=Advance&ReferenceNumbers=S5O-04276>

The findings referred to above can be read at

<https://secureservercdn.net/50.62.174.113/hnv.9d6.myftpupload.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/Public-inquiry-into-Islamophobia-initial-findings.pdf>

Scottish Government

Race equality action plan: year two progress update

<https://tinyurl.com/wkvvtuh>

Racist couple and two others guilty of banned hate group membership

Five people have been convicted of membership of a proscribed organisation, contrary to section 11 of the Terrorism Act 2000. One pleaded guilty in January 2019 and the others were convicted [on Thursday].

Jenny Hopkins, from the CPS, said: "Each of these people continued their membership of National Action after it was proscribed as a terrorist organisation.

"We were able to prove they arranged meetings in different towns, scanned people attending for hidden mobile phones and listening devices and used a number of cyber security apps.

"Their fanatical racism meant they were not prepared to break the bonds that united them in hatred." ...

The prosecution presented evidence that they continued to be active members of National Action after it was banned by the Home Office.

The evidence included their membership of common chat groups, common ideology and mindset, common violent and racist imagery, and an obsession with weapons and paraphernalia found in searches. The only possible conclusion from all of these pieces of evidence combined was that they had continued their membership of the banned organisation. ...

To read the full press release see

<https://www.cps.gov.uk/cps/news/racist-couple-and-two-others-guilty-banned-hate-group-membership>

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Israel

House of Commons Written Answers

Palestinians: Textbooks

Stephen Crabb (Conservative) [28578] To ask the Secretary of State for International Development, what recent discussions she has had with his EU counterparts on the forthcoming publication of the Georg Eckert Institute for International Textbook Research's preliminary report into Palestinian Authority school textbooks undertaken on behalf of the EU; and what representations she has made on publishing that report.

James Cleverly: The UK government is deeply concerned about allegations of incitement in Palestinian Authority's school textbooks. We funded work to develop the methodology for an independent textbook Review sponsored by our European partners. We expect an interim report by June, with a full report later in the year. We have regular discussions with our European Partners on the Review. The issue was most recently raised on 18 February by the UK Consul General Jerusalem with the EU Representative in Jerusalem.

<https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Commons/2020-03-12/28578/>

Israel: Palestinians

Christian Matheson (Labour) [28067] To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, with reference to the testimonies of Israeli army snipers reported in the Ha'aretz newspaper on 6 March 2020, what assessment he has made of the accuracy of reports of the Israeli army's use of live fire on Palestinians.

James Cleverly: We have repeatedly made clear to Israel our longstanding

concerns about the manner in which the Israel Defense Forces police non-violent protests and the border areas, including the use of live ammunition. We encourage Israel to carry out transparent investigations into whether the use of live fire had been appropriate. While Israel has a legitimate right to self-defence, it is vital that all its actions are proportionate, in line with International Humanitarian Law, and are calibrated to avoid civilian casualties.

<https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Commons/2020-03-11/28067/>

Middle East: Peace Negotiations

Alexander Stafford (Conservative) [28742] To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, what recent discussions he has had with his international counterparts on the Middle East peace process.

James Cleverly: We continue to work closely with international partners strongly advocating a two state solution and encouraging a return to meaningful negotiations between both parties. We encourage the Palestinian and Israeli leadership to explore whether the US' proposals might prove a first step on the road back to negotiations. I did so most recently during my meetings with the Head of the Palestinian Mission in London on 11 March and the Israeli Ambassador to the UK on 12 March. We consistently call for an immediate end to all actions that undermine the viability of the two-state solution, including terrorism, anti-Semitic incitement, settlement expansion, and the demolition of Palestinian property in the West Bank. Steps to transform the situation in Gaza are also needed. We are encouraging both sides to maintain calm and avoid taking actions which make peace more difficult to achieve.

<https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Commons/2020-03-12/28742/>

House of Lords Written Answers

Gaza: Coronavirus

Baroness Tonge (Non-affiliated) [HL2465] To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the impact of COVID-19 on the population of Gaza.

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: There are currently no known cases of COVID-19 in Gaza, however DFID is in close contact with the World Health Organisation should an outbreak occur. There are concerns that Gaza's already overburdened healthcare system would not be able to cope with a widespread outbreak of the virus, especially given the lack of reliable access to clean water and energy in the strip. We will continue to monitor the situation closely.

<https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Lords/2020-03-10/HL2465/>

Palestinians: Textbooks

Lord Turnberg (Non-affiliated) [HL2466] To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of reports of school books published by the Palestinian Authority containing incitement to hatred and violence.

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: The UK government is deeply concerned about allegations of incitement in the Palestinian Authority's school textbooks. The UK secured EU agreement to lead an independent review of the textbooks which is underway. We expect interim findings by June 2020 and full findings later in the year.

The International Development Secretary reiterated our concerns in a call to the

Palestinian Authority's Education Minister just last month.

<https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Lords/2020-03-10/HL2466/>

Foreign and Commonwealth Office

Updated travel advice: Israel

<https://www.gov.uk/foreign-travel-advice/israel>

Updated travel advice: The Occupied Palestinian Territories

<https://www.gov.uk/foreign-travel-advice/the-occupied-palestinian-territories>

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Foreign Affairs

House of Commons Written Answer

Iran: Terrorism

Alexander Stafford (Conservative) [28740] To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, what recent assessment he has made of Iran's use of terrorist proxies in the Middle East region.

James Cleverly: We have made clear our longstanding concerns over Iran's links and support for proxy groups and militias across the Middle East region. The Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) and associated entities including the IRGC Qods Force are known to be involved in multiple regional conflicts, including through the provision of financial and military support to militant and proscribed groups such as Hizballah, Hamas and Palestinian rejectionist groups, and the Houthis in Yemen. Such support is in contravention of UN Security Council resolutions and directly undermines prospects for regional security and lasting peace in the region. The Government is clear that Iran should cease disruptive involvement in regional conflicts, and should instead look to play a constructive role in regional stability.

<https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Commons/2020-03-12/28740/>

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Other Relevant Information

United Nations

UN campaign to tap into personal connections in bid to protect religious sites

The United Nations will soon launch a campaign highlighting the personal connections of individuals with religious sites as part of its efforts to protect places of worship around the world.

The campaign is part of the UN Plan of Action to safeguard religious sites, which was launched last September in the wake of a series of horrific attacks, including on mosques in New Zealand, a synagogue in the US city of Pittsburgh, and churches in Sri Lanka.

Developed by the UN Alliance of Civilizations ([UNAOC](#)), the Plan of Action is complemented by another initiative - the Plan of Action on Hate Speech, which coordinates efforts across the UN system to address the root causes of incendiary language and respond effectively.

In a [video message](#), the High Representative for the UN Alliance of Civilizations, Miguel Moratinos, said that the communications campaign seeks to create “personal and emotional connections” with religious sites in order to celebrate their universality. It will also underscore the role of individuals in protecting all religious sites, regardless of religions or beliefs. ...

To read the full press release see

<https://news.un.org/en/story/2020/03/1059872>

Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) European Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA) European Commission against Racism and Intolerance (ECRI)

Societies that stand together are more resilient in times of crisis, say human rights heads on International Anti-Racism Day

... The rapid spread of the novel Coronavirus between continents and countries must not be used as an excuse for racial discrimination or hate crime ... said the heads of the OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR), the EU Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA), and the Council of Europe’s European Commission against Racism and Intolerance (ECRI). “In the current situation, intolerance and discrimination are not only unacceptable but also counterproductive,” ...

Civil society and community organizations have an important role to play in combating prejudice. Nevertheless, it is governments who are primarily responsible for ensuring that victims of hatred are protected and can receive the support they need, particularly in this difficult period. ...

Victims of hate crime often belong to groups that already face discrimination on a daily basis, both off- and online. At the same time, victims often feel misunderstood and marginalised by the criminal justice system. Police and prosecutors therefore need to ensure appropriate and sensitive treatment to ensure that victims neither feel ignored nor forced to re-live the experience of the crime itself. ...

Recognising the importance of assistance to national authorities and civil society in order to deal with hatred and its consequences for victims, ODIHR has developed a number of [practical guides](#) for use by law enforcement agencies as well as also teachers and NGOs. At the same time, [ECRI’s country monitoring](#) help countries to understand gaps in their laws and policies to combat hate crime and suggests ways forward. FRA’s [compendium of practices for combating hate crime](#) collected from across the EU offers further guidance to governments as they seek more effective means of countering hatred. ...

To read the full press release see

<https://www.osce.org/odihr/448903>

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Relevant Legislation ** new or updated today

UK Parliament

Assisted Dying Bill

<https://services.parliament.uk/Bills/2019-20/assisteddying.html>

**** Coronavirus Bill**

<https://services.parliament.uk/Bills/2019-21/coronavirus.html>

Bill as published

<https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/bills/cbill/58-01/0122/20122.pdf>

Explanatory Notes

<https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/bills/cbill/58-01/0122/en/20122en.pdf>

Memorandum from the Department of Health and Social Care to the Delegated Powers and Regulatory Reform Committee

https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/bills/cbill/58-01/0122/Delegated%20Powers%20Memorandum%20Coronavirus%20Bill_Final.pdf

Coronavirus bill: summary of impacts

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-bill-summary-of-impacts/coronavirus-bill-summary-of-impacts>

Notice of amendments

https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/bills/cbill/58-01/0122/amend/coronavirus_daily_cwh_0320.1-7.html

House of Lords Library: Coronavirus: emergency legislation

<https://lordslibrary.parliament.uk/infocus/coronavirus-emergency-legislation/>

House of Commons Library: Coronavirus Bill: What is the sunset clause provision?

<https://commonslibrary.parliament.uk/social-policy/health/coronavirus-bill-what-is-the-sunset-clause-provision/>

Divorce, Dissolution and Separation Bill

<https://services.parliament.uk/Bills/2019-20/divorcedissolutionandseparation.html>

Education (Assemblies) Bill

<https://services.parliament.uk/Bills/2019-20/educationassemblies.html>

Genocide Determination Bill

<https://services.parliament.uk/Bills/2019-20/genocidedeterminationbill.html>

Marriage Act 1949 (Amendment) Bill

<https://services.parliament.uk/Bills/2019-20/marriageact1949amendment.html>

Marriage and Civil Partnership (Minimum Age) Bill

<https://services.parliament.uk/Bills/2019-20/marriageandcivilpartnershipminimumage.html>

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 5 days**

Harassment and sexual misconduct in higher education (closing date 27 March 2020)
<https://www.officeforstudents.org.uk/media/76f6bdd3-bb14-4956-b089-cd1598323d55/consultation-on-harassment-and-sexual-misconduct-in-higher-education.pdf>

**** closes in 9 days**

Hate crime legislation in Northern Ireland: an independent review (closing date 31 March 2020)
<https://www.hatecrimereviewni.org.uk/sites/hcr/files/media-files/Consultation%20Paper%20Feb%202020.pdf>

Electing a more diverse Assembly (closing date 22 April 2020)
<http://www.senedd.assembly.wales/mgConsultationDisplay.aspx?ID=389>

Amendments to the organ donation regulations (Wales) (closing date 30 April 2020)
<https://gov.wales/amendments-organ-donation-regulations>

Regulating Independent Educational Institutions (closing date 8 May 2020)
<https://consult.education.gov.uk/school-frameworks/regulating-independent-education-institutions/>

Protecting places of worship (closing date 10 May 2020)
<https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/protecting-places-of-worship-consultation>

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