



Political Affairs Digest

A daily summary of political events affecting the Jewish Community

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Charity Commission

Charity Commission launches statutory inquiry into MB Foundation

The regulator has opened a statutory inquiry into the MB Foundation (also known as the Mossad Horav Aryeh Halevy) over serious financial and governance concerns. The charity lists its activities as providing financial support to help relieve sickness and poverty.

The MB Foundation was previously part of the Commission's 'double defaulters' class inquiry for failing to submit annual accounts for the financial years ending 31 March 2014 and 31 March 2015. Subsequent scrutiny of the accounts and information received from the trustees raised several concerns about the charity's governance, in particular, the trustees' handling of conflicts of interest.

The charity, whose trustees are all brothers, carried out several transactions with companies and individuals directly connected to the trustees or the trustees' family members. This included a total of four loans to a connected company totalling over £1.7M. The trustees have so far failed to provide the Commission with any formal documentation in relation to these loans. Furthermore, the trustees did not provide information to demonstrate they had adequately identified or managed conflicts of interest. ...

To read the full press release see

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/charity-commission-launches-statutory-inquiry-into-mb-foundation>

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Israel

UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights

Israel must safeguard human rights defenders in Occupied Palestinian Territory and within its borders – UN expert

A UN expert today expressed concern over arrests, harassment, criminalisation and

threats against human rights defenders in the Occupied Palestinian Territory and Israel, and called on Israel to make sure all Palestinian human rights defenders are protected.

“Arrests and raids on the homes of Palestinian human right defenders form part of a wider crackdown against those defending the human rights of Palestinians in the Occupied Palestinian Territory,” said Mary Lawlor, UN Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights defenders.

She said she was alarmed by the arbitrary arrest and detention of Farid Al-Atrash, a human rights defender and lawyer at the Independent Commission for Human Rights (ICHR). He was detained by Israeli military forces after he peacefully participated in a demonstration in Bethlehem on 15 June and was released on bail eight days later.

Lawlor said she was also concerned about the forcible transfer of Palestinians living in the Sheikh Jarrah and Silwan neighbourhoods of Jerusalem. ...

She also cited the situation of Salah Hammouri, a Palestinian-French human rights defender and lawyer at Addameer Prisoner Support and Human Rights Association, who is at risk of having his permanent residency permit in Jerusalem revoked.

“I am shocked that members of the Health Work Committee, who provide health services to Palestinians living in remote areas of the West Bank, were arrested, interrogated and may be criminalised because of their human rights work,” Lawlor added.

The committee’s director, Shatha Odeh and its former project coordinator, Juana Ruiz Sánchez, are being held in Damoun Prison and its accountant, Tayseer Abu Sharbak, in Ofer prison. They are being tried on charges of participating in what is described as “an illegal organisation”.

“I call on Israeli authorities to release all three human rights defenders immediately,” said Lawlor. ...

Lawlor stressed the importance of safeguarding Palestinian human rights defenders in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, especially those who are protecting their communities’ rights to housing, healthcare and freedom of assembly and association.

“I call on the authorities to stop targeting these human rights defenders and allow them to carry out their legitimate and peaceful work free from any kind of restrictions,” she said. ...

To read the full press release see

<https://www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=27375&LangID=E>

Spyware scandal: UN experts call for moratorium on sale of ‘life threatening’ surveillance tech

UN human rights experts today called on all States to impose a global moratorium on the sale and transfer of surveillance technology until they have put in place robust regulations that guarantee its use in compliance with international human rights standards.

“It is highly dangerous and irresponsible to allow the surveillance technology and trade sector to operate as a human rights-free zone,” the experts warned.

“We are deeply concerned that highly sophisticated intrusive tools are being used to monitor, intimidate and silence human rights defenders, journalists and political opponents,” the experts said. “Such practices violate the rights to freedom of expression, privacy and liberty, possibly endanger the lives of hundreds of individuals, imperil media freedom, and undermine democracy, peace, security and international cooperation.” ...

“We also urge Israel, as the NSO Group’s home country, to disclose fully what measures it took to review NSO export transactions in light of its own human rights obligations,” they added. “It is the duty of States to verify that companies like the NSO Group do not sell or transfer technology to or contract with States and entities that are like to use them to violate human rights.” ...

To read the full press release see

<https://www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=27379&LangID=E>

Palestinian Rockets in May Killed Civilians in Israel, Gaza: Indiscriminate Attacks by Gaza-Based Armed Groups Are War Crimes

<https://www.hrw.org/news/2021/08/12/palestinian-rockets-may-killed-civilians-israel-gaza>

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Relevant Legislation ** new or updated today

UK Parliament

Assisted Dying Bill

<https://bills.parliament.uk/bills/2875>

Charities Bill

<https://bills.parliament.uk/bills/2877>

Education (16 to 19 Academies) (Religious Character) Bill

<https://bills.parliament.uk/bills/2946>

Education (Assemblies) Bill

<https://bills.parliament.uk/bills/2878>

Higher Education (Freedom of Speech) Bill

<https://bills.parliament.uk/bills/2862>

Israel Arms Trade (Prohibition) Bill

<https://bills.parliament.uk/bills/3025>

Marriage Act 1949 (Amendment) Bill

<https://bills.parliament.uk/bills/3017>

Marriage and Civil Partnership (Minimum Age) Bill

<https://bills.parliament.uk/bills/2900>

Nationality and Borders Bill

<https://bills.parliament.uk/bills/3023>

**** Online Safety Bill (Draft)**

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/draft-online-safety-bill>

House of Commons Library: Reaction to the draft Online Safety Bill: a reading list

<https://researchbriefings.files.parliament.uk/documents/CBP-9243/CBP-9243.pdf>

Palestine Statehood (Recognition) Bill

<https://bills.parliament.uk/bills/2942>

Northern Ireland Assembly

Organ and Tissue Donation (Deemed Consent) Bill

<http://www.niassembly.gov.uk/assembly-business/legislation/2017-2022-mandate/primary-legislation---bills-2017---2022-mandate/organ-and-tissue-donation-deemed-consent-bill/>

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Consultations

** new or updated today

Domestic Abuse Act statutory guidance (closing date 14 September 2021)

<https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/domestic-abuse-act-statutory-guidance>

Higher Education (Freedom of Speech) Bill (closing date not stated, but no later than 23 September 2021)

<https://www.parliament.uk/business/news/2021/july/have-your-say-on-the-higher-education-freedom-of-speech-bill/>

Dispute Resolution in England and Wales (closing date 30 September 2021)

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1008174/dispute-resolution-call-for-evidence.pdf

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