

Political Affairs Brief

A daily summary of political events affecting the Jewish Community

Scottish Council of Jewish Communities

SCoJeC

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Home Affairs

UK Parliamentary Questions

Non-Domestic Rates: Church Halls

Robert Neill: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer whether the Valuation Office Agency undertakes valuations of church halls hired out for social events unconnected with religious worship; and whether premises thus used are liable for business rates. [308635]

Ian Pearson: As stated in the Local Government Finance Act 1988, if Church halls, chapel halls and similar buildings are used in connection with a place of public religious worship and for the purposes of the organisation responsible for the conduct of public religious worship, they are, like the church or place of public religious worship, exempt from business rates. This exemption usually extends to where they are hired out for social events.

<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm200910/cmhansrd/cm100111/text/100111w0026.htm#10011150000046>

Radicalism

Mrs. Curtis-Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what discussions he has had with (a) the Council of Europe and (b) the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe on measures to tackle extremism; and if he will make a statement. [301465]

Mr. Hanson: The UK is an active, founding member of the Council of Europe, which is a standard setter on democracy, human rights and the rule of law. We are fully engaged in Council of Europe work on the fight against extremism and terrorism.

The UK Government are clear that any form of violent extremism is unacceptable. The Government deplore all attacks, whatever their motivation which are engineered by any extremist group. A key element of CONTEST, the Government's strategy for countering international terrorism, is "Prevent"-that is to stop people becoming terrorists or supporting violent extremism. To do this we need to prevent people supporting violent extremism and the ideology that fuels terrorism. Part of our Prevent work is to challenge those who support violence. But we also want to actively promote the shared values (including democracy and the rule of law) on which our society and the cohesion of our communities depend. We aim to do this by working in partnership with communities to challenge the

ideology of violent extremism and disrupt those who promote it. The Government aim to empower all communities to reject violent extremism. We are also working with police forces, local authorities, schools and universities, and local communities to protect vulnerable individuals from radicalisation.

<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm200910/cmhansrd/cm100111/text/100111w0013.htm#10011128000024>

BBC

Islam4UK Islamist group banned under terror laws

... Mr Johnson said: "I have today laid an order which will proscribe al-Muhajiroun, Islam4UK, and a number of the other names the organisation goes by. It is already proscribed under two other names - al-Ghurabaa and The Saved Sect. Proscription is a tough but necessary power to tackle terrorism and is not a course we take lightly. We are clear that an organisation should not be able to circumvent proscription by simply changing its name. ..."

To read the full report see

<http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/uk/8453560.stm>

European Court of Human Rights

Police stop and search powers under anti-terrorism legislation too wide and not adequately safeguarded by domestic law against abuse

Gillan and Quinton v. the United Kingdom (*application no. 4158/05*)

The case concerned the police power in the United Kingdom under sections 44-47 of the Terrorism Act 2000 ("the 2000 Act") to stop and search individuals without reasonable suspicion of wrongdoing. ... The Court considered that the use of the coercive powers conferred by the anti-terrorism legislation to require an individual to submit to a detailed search of their person, clothing and personal belongings amounted to a clear interference with the right to respect for private life. ... In the Court's view, the wide discretion conferred on the police under the 2000 Act, both in terms of the authorisation of the power to stop and search and its application in practice, had not been curbed by adequate legal safeguards so as to offer the individual adequate protection against arbitrary interference. ... the Court considered that the powers of authorisation and confirmation as well as those of stop and search under sections 44 and 45 of the 2000 Act were neither sufficiently circumscribed nor subject to adequate legal safeguards against abuse. They were not, therefore, "in accordance with the law", in violation of Article 8. ...

To read the full press release see

<http://cmiskp.echr.coe.int/tkp197/view.asp?item=4&portal=hbkm&action=html&highlight=&sessionid=42640964&skin=hudoc-pr-en>

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Holocaust

UK Parliament Early Day Motion

David Blunkett (558) Holocaust Memorial Day 2010 – That this House notes that on 27 January 2010, communities around the UK will mark Holocaust Memorial Day, the 65th anniversary of the liberation of Nazi concentration and death camp Auschwitz-Birkenau; further notes that Legacy of Hope is the theme for Holocaust Memorial Day this year; considers that continuing the legacy of Holocaust survivors is more crucial than

ever as they grow older and less able to speak out about their experiences; lauds the extraordinary contribution to life in Britain made by survivors; celebrates the tireless work of survivors who speak to thousands of young people each year as part of the Holocaust Educational Trust's outreach project; salutes their bravery and determination in telling of their painful and horrific experiences and speaking out for a future where persecution and intolerance are challenged; commends the Holocaust Memorial Day Trust for arranging the national Holocaust Memorial Day commemoration in London; congratulates the Holocaust Educational Trust for organising visits for post-16 students to Auschwitz-Birkenau, enabling thousands to see the site of the largest mass-murder in history at first hand; further notes that a Book of Commitment will be placed in the corridor between the Members' Cloakroom and Members' Staircase between the hours of 14.30 and 16.30 from Wednesday 20 January until Thursday 28 January 2010; and strongly encourages all right hon. and hon. Members to sign the Book and to support Holocaust Memorial Day to safeguard the memory of the Holocaust for future generations.

<http://edmi.parliament.uk/EDMi/EDMDetails.aspx?EDMID=40137&SESSION=903>

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Westminster Hall Debate

Goldstone Report

Extracts from the debate will be included in tomorrow's PAB since the full transcript is not yet available online. A partial transcript is available at

http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm/cmtoday/cmwhall/05.htm#hddr_1

UK Parliamentary Questions

Imports: Israel

Dr. Starkey: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer pursuant to the answers of 10 December 2009, *Official Report*, column 583W, on imports: Israel, whether HM Revenue and Customs has requested from supermarkets the information from their tracking system on the origin of imports when the supermarket is not the importer. [309037]

Mr. Timms: HM Revenue and Customs (HMRC) has not requested any information from supermarkets' tracking systems. I refer the hon. Member to my answer to her of 10 December 2009, *Official Report*, column 583W. HMRC only has access to systems and records which relate directly to the customs declaration and to the person shown as the importer/consignee on it.

Dr. Starkey: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer pursuant to the answers of 10 December 2009, *Official Report*, column 583W, on imports: Israel, what documentation provided in such cases is provided by (a) producers, importers or Israeli authorities and (b) organisations independent of producers, importers or Israeli authorities [309038]

Mr. Timms: The documentation consists of original commercial documents accompanying any customs import declaration: the sales invoice and delivery note/consignment note/packing list issued by the exporter and showing the UK importer/consignee, which in the case of fresh produce is normally an intermediate company, rather than a UK supermarket; plant health documentation (where required); and where a preferential rate of duty is being claimed, either a proof of preferential origin showing the place of production and zip code on the invoice or on a Form EUR1 issued by the exporter and stamped by the Israeli authorities.

Dr. Starkey: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer pursuant to the answer of 10 December 2009, *Official Report*, column 579W, on agricultural products: Israel, what (a)

the importer, (b) the nature of the produce, (c) the name of the settlement in which the consignment originated and (d) the person or organisation responsible for misidentification was in the case of each of the six consignments wrongly claiming Israeli preferential origin; what sanctions were imposed by HM Revenue and Customs in respect of each consignment; and against whom. [309039]

Mr. Timms: For reasons of commercial confidentiality, HM Revenue and Customs (HMRC) cannot disclose the names of specific importers/exporters. The information requested in relation to the name of the settlement is not available because no place of production was shown on the proof of origin and HMRC had firm doubts about the origin of the goods.

The identified products were three consignments of wine, two consignments of snacks/soft drinks and one consignment of chocolates. HMRC refused preferential tariff treatment and the UK importer was required to pay the full rate of customs duty on the consignments concerned.

Dr. Starkey: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer pursuant to the answer of 10 December 2009, *Official Report*, column 579W, on agricultural products: Israel, who (a) the importer, (b) the stated place of origin, (c) the actual place of origin and (d) the person or organisation responsible for mislabelling was in relation to the two labelling irregularities for herbs; what sanctions were imposed by HM Revenue and Customs in each case; and against whom. [309040]

Mr. Timms: For reasons of commercial confidentiality HM Revenue and Customs cannot release the names of specific importers and exporters.

The accompanying proofs of preferential origin showed that the produce had been produced in one case in 19 different locations including Avital, Nir Moshe, Rewaya and Yavne-El, which had not been included in the lists of settlements and accompanying zip codes circulated by the European Commission.

The place of production shown on outer packaging/cartons was the Jordan Valley. The goods were released from customs control upon provision of financial security for the full rate of customs duty payable. Inquiries are under way with the Israeli authorities to establish the true place of origin.

Dr. Starkey: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer pursuant to the answer of 10 December 2009, *Official Report*, column 579W, on agricultural products: Israel, what additional checks HM Revenue and Customs has subsequently required of produce (a) from the same importer, (b) from the same producer and (c) from the same place of origin as the misidentified and mislabelled goods referred to in the answer. [309041]

Mr. Timms: HM Revenue and Customs can confirm that once a duty demand is issued, it is their normal policy to examine further customs entries for the parties involved and to issue additional demands if necessary. They will also target any importer known to have production facilities in the Occupied Territories.

Dr. Starkey: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer pursuant to the answer of 10 December 2009, *Official Report*, column 580W, on cosmetics: Israel, how many of the consignments referred to in the answer came from each post code of place of origin; and for how many of these consignments HM Revenue and Customs was informed that the business's head office address was the place of origin. [309042]

Mr. Timms: The information requested could be obtained only at a disproportionate cost, as HM Revenue and Customs would have to obtain and examine the documents, most of which will be held by the importer, in respect of the 996 customs declarations concerned.

Dr. Starkey: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer pursuant to the answer of 10 December 2009, *Official Report*, column 580W, on cosmetics: Israel, what steps HM Revenue and Customs takes in such cases to ensure the place of production and not the business head office is given as place of origin. [309043]

Mr. Timms: HM Revenue and Customs (HMRC) provide specific guidance to importers, which is available at:

http://customs.hmrc.gov.uk/channelsPortalWebApp/downloadFile?contentID=HMC_E_PROD1_028744

In cases where there is any doubt as to the actual place of production, the claim to preference will be verified with the issuing authority in Israel.

HMRC has also asked the European Commission to ensure that in its routine monitoring of the operation of the Technical Arrangement it checks that the Israeli authorities are including the actual place of production, rather than a Head Office, on the proof of origin.

Dr. Starkey: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer pursuant to the answer of 10 December 2009, *Official Report*, column 580W, on cosmetics: Israel, how many consignments of produce was imported into the UK originated in Mizpe Shalem in each of the last three years; and what the nature of the produce was. [309044]

Mr. Timms: The information requested is not available, as the Israeli settlements in the occupied territories do not have separate country codes.

Dr. Starkey: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer pursuant to the answer of 10 December 2009, *Official Report*, column 579W, on agricultural products: Israel, what steps HM Revenue and Customs takes when it detects mislabelling to share that information with the equivalent authorities in other EU member states. [309045]

Mr. Timms: Any irregularities detected as a result of the application of the EU-Israel Technical Arrangement are reported directly to the European Commission. The Commission is co-ordinating community-wide action in ensuring that only those products which are entitled to Israeli preference receive such benefit, and it disseminates information about the action being taken and the results of those actions to all member states.

<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm200910/cmhansrd/cm100111/text/100111w0025.htm#1001115000042>

Tony Blair

Norman Baker: To ask the Secretary of State for International Development how many officials of his Department are presently seconded to support Tony Blair in his role as Middle East peace envoy; what procedure is in place for those officials to report formally to their home Department; and whether they remain subject to the Civil Service code. [309247]

Mr. Michael Foster: At present the Department for International Development (DFID) has one person seconded to the Office of the Quartet Representative (OQR). This secondee is tasked on a day-to-day basis by the Head of the OQR, but reports formally to the Head of DFID's office in Jerusalem. As the secondee continues to be a UK civil servant, they is still subject to the Civil Service code.

Norman Baker: To ask the Secretary of State for International Development on what date (a) he and (b) other Ministers in his Department last met Tony Blair in his capacity as Middle East peace envoy. [309249]

Mr. Michael Foster: Tony Blair was appointed the Representative of the Middle East diplomatic Quartet (the United Nations, Russian Federation, United States, and European Union) in June 2007. There have been no formal meetings between Tony Blair and the Secretary of State for International Development, or other Ministers in the Department of International Development, since he was appointed to this role.

Staff from the Department for International Development's office in Jerusalem are in regular contact with the Office of the Quartet Representative, which is also based in Jerusalem.

<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm200910/cmhansrd/cm100111/text/100111w0022.htm#10011140000051>

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Foreign Affairs

UK Parliamentary Question

Religion: Defamation

Lord Patten: To ask Her Majesty's Government what is their stance on the resolution promoted by the Organisation of the Islamic Conference before the United Nations General Assembly on the defamation of religion. [HL1038]

The Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office (Baroness Kinnock of Holyhead): The Government share the concern of the Organisation of Islamic Conference that individuals around the world are victimised because of their religion or belief. We all need to do more to eliminate religious intolerance and to ensure that those who incite hatred or violence against individuals because of their religious beliefs are dealt with by the law.

But the Government cannot agree with an approach that promotes the concept of "defamation of religions" as a response. This approach severely risks diminishing the right to freedom of expression. We believe that international human rights law already strikes the right balance between the individual's right to express themselves freely and the need for the state to limit this right in certain circumstances. International human rights law provides that only where advocacy of religious hatred constitutes incitement to discrimination, hostility or violence should it be prohibited by law.

We believe that the concept of "defamation of religions" puts in danger the very openness and tolerance that allows people of different faiths to co-exist and to practise their faith without fear. It risks changing the focus of international human rights law from examining how countries promote and protect the right to freedom of expression to censoring what individuals say. If this happened, people might feel unable to speak out against human rights abuses or hold their government to account. It is also inconsistent with the international human rights legal framework which exists to protect individuals and not concepts or specific belief systems.

For this reason the UK, along with our EU Partners and other like-minded countries, voted against the resolution put forward by the Organisation of Islamic Conference at the 64th session of the UN General Assembly on Combating Defamation of Religions.

<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/ld200910/ldhansrd/text/100111w0004.htm#1001116000945>

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Relevant Legislation ** New or updated

UK Parliament

**** Children, Schools and Families Bill**

<http://services.parliament.uk/bills/2009-10/childrenschoolsandfamilies.html>

Second Reading, House of Commons

<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm200910/cmhansrd/cm100111/debtext/100111-0006.htm#1001119000001>

Parliamentary programme resolution

<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm200910/cmhansrd/cm100111/debtext/100111-0021.htm#10011210000002>

Money resolution

<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm200910/cmhansrd/cm100111/debtext/100111-0022.htm#10011210000003>

Constitutional Reform and Governance Bill

<http://services.parliament.uk/bills/2009-10/constitutionalreformandgovernance.html>

Crime and Security Bill

<http://services.parliament.uk/bills/2009-10/crimeandsecurity.html>

** Equality Bill

<http://services.parliament.uk/bills/2009-10/equality.html>

House of Lords Committee

<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/ld200910/ldhansrd/text/100111-0004.htm#1001113000341>

and

<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/ld200910/ldhansrd/text/100111-0013.htm#10011139000077>

** Flood and Water Management Bill

<http://services.parliament.uk/bills/2009-10/floodandwatermanagement.html>

Public Bill Committee amendments

<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm200910/cmbills/009/amend/psc009120110m.67-73.html>

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Other Relevant Information

Joseph Rowntree Foundation

Impacts of external conflict and local politics on UK communities: call for proposals

This project aims to explore the ways that conflict and politics outside of the UK impact on communities and individuals in the UK. It will explore experiences, trends, impacts and local responses. The project forms part of the JRF programme on globalisation and UK poverty and communities. ... Anecdotal evidence suggests that conflict and local politics taking place outside of the UK impact on UK communities, both in positive and negative ways. But there is limited analysis of how widespread these incidents are, the range of ways they impact and of their implications.

People in the UK are increasingly directly linked to people and political events outside of the UK. Through media, new communication technology and migration both to and from the UK people are directly connected to other countries and places. These include family, friends and social contacts around the world as well as other personal connections to a place such as through experience of living elsewhere. ...

People in the UK, for example, responded to political events outside the UK. There were widespread demonstrations against the bombings in Gaza in 2009 with participation of a diverse range of people. UK Government and other responses (and non-responses) to these demonstrations have their own dynamic and impacts e.g. maybe ignoring the reactions results in demonstrators' feeling of political alienation in the UK. This and other examples illustrate the local UK impacts that British foreign policy can have. ...

A maximum of £50,000 is available under this call for proposals and we expect to fund one project with this sum. Given the relevance and timeliness of this work, we are looking for projects that can deliver interim findings and draft recommendations by 15th September 2010 followed by final outputs by 15th November 2010.

For full details see

<http://www.jrf.org.uk/sites/files/jrf/call-conflict-politics.pdf>

UK Parliament

Parliamentary training for voluntary organisations

Parliamentary Outreach will host free training sessions for voluntary organisations in Manchester, Norwich and Birmingham on 26 January 2010.

For details see

<http://news.parliament.uk/2010/01/parliamentary-training-for-voluntary-organisations/>

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Consultations

** new or updated

Protection of Vulnerable Groups Implementation: Consultation on Significant Draft Secondary Legislation, Guidance and Regulatory Impact Assessment (Scotland only) (closes 2 February 2009)

<http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Topics/People/Young-People/children-families/pvglegislation/Consultation09>

Communities and Local Government: Creating a Single Equality Scheme for 2010 – 2013 (closes 28 February 2010)

<http://www.communities.gov.uk/documents/corporate/pdf/987402.pdf>

Proposal to amend the Licensing Act 2003 to simplify the procedures for Licensing Statements; Interim Authority Notices; and Temporary Event Notices (closes 9 February 2010)

http://www.culture.gov.uk/reference_library/consultations/6498.aspx

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The Scottish Council of Jewish Communities (SCoJeC) is Scottish Charity SCO29438