

# 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 Parliament: Election of Deputy Speakers

Lindsay Hoyle, Nigel Evans, and Dawn Primarolo have been elected as Deputy Speakers.

*For details of the vote see*

<http://www.parliament.uk/business/news/2010/06/mps-elect-deputy-speakers/>

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## Israel

### UK Parliamentary Questions

#### Middle East: Armed Conflict

**Nicholas Soames:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what assessment he has made of the compatibility of Israel's blockade of Gaza with the provisions of the Fourth Geneva Convention. [1190]

**Alistair Burt:** Although there is no permanent physical Israeli presence in Gaza, given the significant control that Israel has over Gaza's borders, airspace and territorial waters, Israel retains obligations under the fourth Geneva convention as an occupying power.

The UK has been clear that the current restrictions are unacceptable and counterproductive and it is the people of Gaza who suffer from them. My right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary made this clear in his conversation with the Israeli Foreign Minister Avigdor Lieberman. We will continue to work with international partners and press the Israeli government to allow unfettered access of humanitarian aid to Gaza.

**Nicholas Soames:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will press the EU to raise the restrictions placed by the government of Israel on access for humanitarian aid and reconstruction materials into Gaza at the next discussion of the Middle East Quartet; and if he will make a statement. [1193]

**Alistair Burt:** As my right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary made clear in his public statement on 5 June 2010, we continue to press the Government of Israel to lift Gaza's closure. The Foreign Secretary is also discussing these issues urgently with our international partners-including during his ongoing visits to EU capitals. We welcome Quartet discussion of these issues.

<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201011/cmhansrd/cm100607/text/100607w006.htm#10060725000009>

### **Middle East: Politics and Government**

**Mr Iain Wright:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what recent steps the Government have taken to increase the level of political stability in the Middle East; and if he will make a statement. [93]

**Alistair Burt:** The UK continues to press both sides to show the courage, commitment and compromise needed to make real progress on the peace process. We remain determined to do everything possible to work towards a two state solution that achieves a viable and sovereign Palestinian state alongside a secure Israel, with its right to live in peace and security recognised by all its neighbours. The proximity talks that are under way are more important than ever to help pave the way towards a comprehensive peace in the region.

My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister underlined our commitment in his recent conversations with Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu and Palestinian President Abbas. And my right hon. friend the Foreign Secretary also made this clear in the House.

<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201011/cmhansrd/cm100607/text/100607w0006.htm#10060725000010>

### **Occupied Territories: Housing**

**Katy Clark:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what recent reports he has received on the proposed demolition of houses in East Jerusalem; and if he will make a statement. [899]

**Alistair Burt:** We are aware of proposals by the Mayor of Jerusalem regarding demolition of homes in East Jerusalem. The Government believe that any attempts by Israel to alter the character or demography of East Jerusalem are unacceptable and damaging to the peace process. House demolitions cause suffering to Palestinians, increase tension within the city and make it more difficult for Palestinians life to continue in East Jerusalem.

Both my right hon. Friends the Prime Minister and the Foreign Secretary have reiterated in contacts with Israeli and Palestinian counterparts, the importance of proximity talks and overall progress on the peace process.

**Katy Clark:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether he has had recent discussions with his Israeli counterpart on the proposed demolition of houses in East Jerusalem. [900]

**Alistair Burt:** I would like to make clear, with few exceptions, house demolitions in occupied territory, including in East Jerusalem, are in direct contravention of article 53 of the fourth Geneva convention. Evictions of Palestinian families and the destruction of Palestinian homes and property are also deeply unhelpful to the wider Middle East Peace Process. Both my right hon. Friends the Prime Minister and Foreign Secretary have reiterated, to their Israeli counterparts, the importance we attach to making progress towards a two state solution.

<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201011/cmhansrd/cm100607/text/100607w0006.htm#10060725000012>

### **Palestinians: International Assistance**

**Nicholas Soames:** To ask the Secretary of State for International Development if he will visit Gaza to assess the humanitarian situation as a matter of urgency. [1189]

**Mr Andrew Mitchell:** I am extremely concerned about the humanitarian situation in Gaza and hope to visit as soon as possible to assess the conditions for myself. Officials from my Department are closely monitoring events on the ground, including through regular visits to Gaza. I also met this week with John Ging, Head of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA)'s operations on Wednesday 2 June, who briefed me in detail on the current situation.

<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201011/cmhansrd/cm100607/text/100607w0011.htm#10060732000013>

## UK Parliament Early Day Motion

### Amendments to Motion

**Richard Burden (127) Israel and Gaza flotilla** - That this House is appalled by the loss of life associated with Israel's attack on the flotilla of ships carrying humanitarian aid to Gaza; notes that UK and other nationals have been held by Israel despite the attack having taken place in international waters; endorses the call of the United Nations Secretary General for a prompt, impartial, credible and transparent investigation conforming to international standards; recognises that Israel's blockade which has destroyed the economy of Gaza and deepened poverty still inflicts widespread suffering and, by imposing collective punishment on the people of Gaza, is itself contrary to international law; and calls on the international community to require Israel to end its blockade and to redouble international efforts to secure a lasting settlement with a secure and independent state of Palestine alongside a secure and independent Israel.

<http://edmi.parliament.uk/EDMi/EDMDetails.aspx?EDMID=41043&SESSION=905>

As Amendments to Richard Burden's proposed Motion (Israel and Gaza Flotilla):  
Robert Halfon

Line 6, leave out 'destroyed' and insert 'damaged'

<http://edmi.parliament.uk/EDMi/EDMDetails.aspx?EDMID=41087&SESSION=905>

Line 6, leave out from 'and' to 'law;' in line 8.

<http://edmi.parliament.uk/EDMi/EDMDetails.aspx?EDMID=41088&SESSION=905>

Line 9, leave out from 'require' to end and add 'note that Hamas has ignored all previous Security Council resolutions calling on them to stop terrorist acts against Israel, to note that Israel, Egypt, the Palestinian Authority and the West have a shared interest in preventing Hamas from being strengthened, and to agree the focus should be on supporting the moderate Palestinian Authority in the West Bank.'

<http://edmi.parliament.uk/EDMi/EDMDetails.aspx?EDMID=41089&SESSION=905>

## Scottish Parliament Public Petitions Committee

*The Committee continued its discussion of PE1324 Israel (Scottish Parliament Exhibition), and agreed to keep it open in order to press the Scottish Parliament Corporate Body to review the rules concerning MSP-sponsored exhibitions. Background information about the petition is available at*

<http://www.scottish.parliament.uk/business/petitions/docs/PE1324.htm>

**John Wilson:** ... I received e-mails from not just pro-Palestine organisations but other organisations, which challenged comments that I had made during a meeting of this committee. I want to put on the record that I made those comments because there are genuine concerns about the current actions of an existing state against other peoples. No civilised nation or elected member can stand back and allow events such as we have heard about during the past 48 hours to take place without making comment. The Parliament and individual members have the right to comment on situations that they find abhorrent. ...

**Bill Butler:** ... a fair point about asking the SPCB to reconsider its policy criteria. ... If we close the petition, the committee cannot ask for a reconsideration of those criteria on the basis of the recent events to which members have referred ... We should keep the petition open and ask the SPCB whether it wants to reconsider its criteria given the tragic events of the past 24 to 36 hours. ...

**To read the full transcript see**

<http://www.scottish.parliament.uk/s3/committees/petitions/or-10/pu10-0902.htm#Col2692>

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## Relevant Legislation \*\* New or updated

### Scottish Parliament

#### End of Life Assistance Bill

<http://www.scottish.parliament.uk/s3/bills/38-EndLifeAssist/index.htm>

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## Consultations \*\* new or updated

#### **\*\* closes in 3 days**

**ACPOS Draft Hate Crime Guidance Manual** (closes 11 June 2010)

[http://www.scojec.org/consultations/current/10vi\\_acpos\\_draft\\_hate\\_crime\\_manual.doc](http://www.scojec.org/consultations/current/10vi_acpos_draft_hate_crime_manual.doc)

#### **\*\* closes in 7 days**

**Revised Guidance on Safeguarding Children and Safer Recruitment in Education (England and Wales only)** (closes 15 June 2010)

<http://www.dcsf.gov.uk/consultations/index.cfm?action=consultationDetails&consultationId=1671&external=no&menu=1>

**Continuing need for a controlled activity category in the Vetting and Barring Scheme (England and Wales only)** (closes 17 June 2010)

<http://www.dcsf.gov.uk/consultations/index.cfm?action=consultationDetails&consultationId=1710&external=no&menu=1>

**Reform of the coroner system** (closes 1 July 2010)

<http://www.justice.gov.uk/consultations/reform-coroner-system.htm>

**Amendments to the Anti-Terrorism Crime and Security Act 2001** (closes 15 July 2010)

<http://www.homeoffice.gov.uk/documents/cons-2010-pathogens-toxins/consultation-paper2835.pdf?view=Binary>

**Welsh Assembly Review of Standing Orders** (closes 16 July 2010)

[http://www.assemblywales.org/bus-home/bus-committees/bus-committees-other-committees/bus-committees-third-bc-home/bus-committees-third-bc-comm/bc3\\_inq\\_so.htm](http://www.assemblywales.org/bus-home/bus-committees/bus-committees-other-committees/bus-committees-third-bc-home/bus-committees-third-bc-comm/bc3_inq_so.htm)

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