

Political Affairs Brief

A daily summary of political events affecting the Jewish Community

Scottish Council of Jewish Communities

SCoJeC

Contents

[Home Affairs](#)

[Holocaust](#)

[Israel](#)

[Relevant Legislation](#)

[Consultations](#)

Home Affairs

UK Parliament Ministerial Statement

Prime Ministerial Appointments

The Prime Minister (Mr David Cameron): The right hon. Lord Patten of Barnes will lead Government arrangements for the papal visit as my personal representative. Pope Benedict XVI will be visiting the UK as both Head of State and the leader of a major denomination. Lord Patten will, on my behalf, oversee and manage Government preparations for the visit alongside the arrangements being made by the Catholic bishop conferences. Lord Patten will oversee the coordination of all elements for which the Government are responsible.

<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201011/cmhansrd/cm100608/wmstext/100608m0001.htm#10060833000011>

Home Office

Migrants marrying UK citizens must now learn English

Compulsory English language tests will be introduced for migrants applying to come to the UK to join their partner or marry, the government announced today. ... The rules will apply to spouses, civil partnerships, unmarried couples, same sex partners and fiancés, and will be compulsory for people applying from within the UK, as well as visa applicants from overseas. ...

Under the current rules spousal visa applicants already have to meet a range of criteria before being allowed to enter the UK. ... Whether ... married in the UK or overseas, the non-UK partner must apply for a two year settlement visa to come and live in the UK as a spouse. At the end of the two years they can apply for indefinite leave to remain.

To read the full press release see

<http://www.homeoffice.gov.uk/media-centre/press-releases/migrants-learn-english>

[TOP](#)

Holocaust

Foreign and Commonwealth Office

UK appoints post-Holocaust Issues Envoy

Foreign Secretary William Hague has appointed Sir Andrew Burns as the United Kingdom's first Envoy for post-Holocaust Issues.

Sir Andrew, a former UK Ambassador to Israel, will be responsible for leading the Government's efforts on a range of important post-Holocaust work. This includes driving forward implementation of the Terezin Declaration on Holocaust Era Assets, resolving outstanding issues related to property and art restitution, and ensuring the UK remains at the forefront of discussions on the vital work of the Task Force for International Cooperation on Holocaust Education, Remembrance and Research and of the International Tracing Service.

The Foreign Secretary said: "The UK is determined to preserve the memory of the Holocaust for future generations. Sir Andrew's appointment will ensure that we continue to support those working to right past wrongs and remain at the forefront of international discussions, to make sure that the lessons of this terrible period in our history are never forgotten. As a former UK Ambassador to Israel and chairman of the Anglo-Israel Association, Sir Andrew's wealth of experience means he is ideally placed to tackle the challenges this post presents."

Sir Andrew Burns said: "I am deeply honoured by the confidence the Government places in me to develop and drive forward policy on such a wide range of post-Holocaust issues. The UK already plays a leading and active role in promoting Holocaust education, remembrance and research, in tackling and resolving outstanding issues and claims and in raising public awareness of the continuing relevance of the lessons and legacy of that terrible moment in European history. I shall make it an early priority to talk to a broad range of experts and others with an interest in or knowledge of post-Holocaust subjects, in Whitehall and Parliament and in the wider community, in order to understand as well as I can the scope and substance of the issues involved and can develop a properly co-ordinated and strategic way forward in international discussions."

Anne Webber, Co-Chair of the Commission for Looted Art in Europe, and Michael Newman, Director of the Association of Jewish Refugees, said: "We have worked closely with the Government to achieve this historic post and very much look forward to working with Sir Andrew at this crucial time with several post-Holocaust issues requiring urgent attention and decisive leadership".

<http://www.fco.gov.uk/en/news/latest-news/?view=News&id=22344006>

Foreign Secretary's statement to the House of Commons on appointment of post-Holocaust issues envoy

I have decided to appoint Sir Andrew Burns as the "United Kingdom Envoy for post-Holocaust issues".

As a signatory to the Declaration of the Stockholm International Forum on the Holocaust the UK is committed to promoting Holocaust education, remembrance and research, both at home and abroad. Sir Andrew will lead the UK's efforts in this field, drawing together activity from across Government and provide a clearer UK international profile, presence and influence. Sir Andrew's work will include driving forward implementation of the Terezin Declaration on Holocaust Era Assets, resolving outstanding issues related to property and art restitution and ensuring the UK remains at the forefront of discussions on the vital work of the Task Force for International Cooperation on Holocaust Education, Remembrance and Research and of the International Tracing Service.

Over the last few years the UK has taken an increasingly active approach to preserving the memory of the Holocaust. For the Foreign and Commonwealth Office this work has included leading the UK delegations to meetings of the Task Force for International Cooperation on Holocaust Education, Remembrance and Research and of the

International Tracing Service. Foreign and Commonwealth Office officials have also represented the Government in discussions on property restitution and Holocaust era assets, frequently with support from other Government departments.

This has worked well to date. But I am concerned that the UK is not taking the leading role it should in these international discussions or best representing the interests of the many Holocaust victims and their families in the UK affected by these issues. For this reason, and in order to drive a more coherent and strategic approach to our work, I have appointed Sir Andrew. He will add a new impetus to the Government's post-Holocaust work, drawing on his considerable experience as Chair of the Executive Committee of the Anglo-Israel Association and previously Her Majesty's Ambassador to Israel.

<http://www.fco.gov.uk/en/news/latest-news/?view=PressS&id=22345446>

[TOP](#)

[Israel](#)

House of Lords Short Debate

Israel and Gaza

Lord Campbell-Savours: To ask Her Majesty's Government what recent discussions they have had about the situation in Israel and Gaza.

The Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office (Lord Howell of Guildford): My Lords, the United Kingdom is in regular contact with the Israeli and Palestinian Governments and our international allies regarding the current humanitarian situation in Gaza and the wider issues relating to the peace process. ... it is essential that there should be unfettered access to Gaza, not only to meet the humanitarian needs of the people of Gaza but to enable reconstruction of homes and livelihoods and permit trade to take place.

Lord Campbell-Savours: ... in the face of threats to intervene and break the blockade by Iranian Revolutionary Guard naval units, why cannot the United Kingdom Government announce that they are prepared to challenge the blockade by providing a naval escort for a flotilla of ships carrying humanitarian aid into Gaza, aid which has been given prior clearance by the European Union ...

Lord Howell of Guildford: ... we do not think that that is the right way to proceed. ...the right way forward is to put maximum pressure on Israel ...

Lord Hylton: I agree entirely with the Minister about unrestricted access to Gaza, but are there not immediate questions to be discussed with the Government of Israel concerning the ships themselves, their cargoes, now under arrest, and possibly the personal possessions of persons who have been arrested?

Lord Howell of Guildford: ... With regard to the humanitarian goods on these ships, the idea is that they should be shipped on into Gaza. However, unfortunately, it appears that the Hamas group has not been very keen on accepting all that aid at the moment. ...

Baroness Ramsay of Cartvale: Does the Minister agree that, while there is a great need to improve the access for aid and commercial goods into Gaza, it still requires any new regime allowing new materials into Gaza to take great care not to allow in weapons that might be used against Israel?

Lord Howell of Guildford: ... Israel does have the right to restrain the import of weapons, bombs and so on into the control of Hamas. At the same time, we all want to see the sufferings of the people of Gaza minimised and the maximum supplies of food, building materials, medical supplies and so on imported into Gaza. ...

Lord Dykes: ... will my noble friend confirm that the peace talks and the proximity talks are proceeding apace ... Will he reassure us that the sinister rumours that George

Mitchell is less than even-handed between Israel and Palestinian lobbies are not true?

Lord Howell of Guildford: ... the Palestinian authorities have shown no inclination to withdraw from the proximity talks or from the talks that might follow them. ...

Lord Anderson of Swansea: The Minister must recognise that Israel has legitimate security concerns and cannot be expected to allow unfettered access. How, then, do the Government respond to the specific proposal from Bernard Kouchner that the European Union offers to provide some form of border monitoring for material entering Gaza to ensure that it is only for humanitarian purposes?

Lord Howell of Guildford: ... All these matters are to be pursued to see whether we can find that key reconciliation between the need to end the suffering of the people of Gaza and Israel's legitimate security concerns.

The Lord Bishop of Bath and Wells: ... while I recognise the appropriate need for Israel to be protected ... What can Her Majesty's Government ... to encourage the Israeli Government to allow building materials to go into that country? ...

Lord Howell of Guildford: ... maximum pressure and encouragement must be placed on the Government of Israel to do what is actually in their own interest, which is to minimise the restrictions, to lift the blockade as far as they can consistent with their security and to continue to expand the amount of provisions already going into Gaza from Israel as well as from Egypt. ...

<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/ld201011/ldhansrd/text/100608-0002.htm#10060837000723>

UK Parliamentary Questions

Palestinians: International Assistance

Jo Swinson: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations he has made to the Israeli government in respect of British nationals who were part of the Free Gaza Movement flotilla and who have subsequently been detained by Israeli forces; and what reports he has received on the level of access to lawyers afforded to those detained. [1142]

Alistair Burt: We are in regular touch with the Israeli Government, in Israel and in London.

My right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary spoke to the Israeli Foreign Minister on 1 June 2010 and I met the Israeli ambassador on 3 June 2010. We made the UK's position very clear. We pressed the Israelis to allow our staff immediate access to those detained, to ensure we could provide proper and timely consular assistance. I understand those detained were not offered access to legal representation by the Israeli authorities. Our consular staff raised the issue of legal representation with those British nationals who they were able to meet in Beer'Sheva prison on 1 June 2010. The responses of British nationals detained there varied; some did not want to engage legal assistance, some asked us to contact the organisers' lawyers, and some asked us to provide lists of English speaking local lawyers. Our consul in Tel Aviv returned the next day with lists of English speaking local lawyers, however due to the speed with which the prisoners were transferred to Ben Gurion airport before they were deported, he was unable to provide this list to those who requested it. Should any British nationals require it, they can obtain the lists from our embassy in Tel Aviv or the embassy website.

Jo Swinson: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what recent reports he has received on the destination of the aid carried by the Free Gaza Movement flotilla. [1143]

Alistair Burt: We are aware of media reports on this issue including that some items are likely to be withheld due to the restrictions in place on import of items to Gaza. We continue to monitor these developments.

As my right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary made clear in his statement to the

House on 2 June 2010, it is essential that there be unfettered access not only to meet the humanitarian needs of the people of Gaza, but to enable the reconstruction of homes and livelihoods and permit trade to take place. We continue to press the Israeli Government to lift Gaza's closure. The Foreign Secretary is also discussing these issues with international partners, including during visits to European capitals this week.

Jo Swinson: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether he has made an assessment of the merits of an international investigation into the actions of the Israeli government in relation to the Free Gaza Movement flotilla. [1144]

Alistair Burt: As my right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary made clear in his statement to the House on 2 June 2010 we want to see a full credible, impartial and independent investigation into events surrounding the interception of boats in the "Free Gaza" flotilla. Our goal is a process that ensures full accountability for the events that occurred and commends the confidence of the international community, including international participation.

<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201011/cmhansrd/cm100608/text/100608w0003.htm#10060849000018>

Gaza

Lord Hylton: To ask Her Majesty's Government what discussions they have had about the reasons for the closing of the two main branches of the Arab Bank in the Gaza Strip. [HL4]

The Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office (Lord Howell of Guildford): We are aware of these closures, but have not had discussions with the Arab Bank regarding its decision to close branches in the Gaza Strip.

<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/ld201011/ldhansrd/text/100608w0002.htm#10060835000165>

Welsh Assembly Statement of Opinion

OPIN-2010-0029 - Israeli Aggression in International Waters - Bethan Jenkins

The National Assembly for Wales: Opposes Israel's recent action in international waters regarding the Freedom Flotilla, which resulted in the deaths of nine people; and Notes the concerns of the people of Wales in relation to Israel's action.

<http://www.assemblywales.org/bus-home/bus-guide-docs-pub/bus-business-documents/bus-business-documents-state-opinion.htm?act=dis&id=185282&ds=6/2010>

Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe

The Political Affairs Committee has requested an urgent debate on the flare-up of tension in the Middle East. This will be decided by the Assembly at the beginning of its next session on 21 June.

To read the full press release see

<https://wcd.coe.int/ViewDoc.jsp?Ref=PR470%282010%29&Language=lanEnglish&Ver=original&Site=DC&BackColorInternet=F5CA75&BackColorIntranet=F5CA75&BackColorLogged=A9BACE>

[TOP](#)

Relevant Legislation ** New or updated

Scottish Parliament

End of Life Assistance Bill

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

[TOP](#)

Consultations ** new or updated

**** closes in 2 days**

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

http://www.scojec.org/consultations/current/10vi_acpos_draft_hate_crime_manual.doc

**** closes in 6 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

[TOP](#)

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