

# 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 Question

#### Schools: Anti-Semitism

**Mr Amess:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education what steps his Department (a) has taken recently and (b) plans to take to reduce levels of anti-Semitism in schools; what recent discussions Ministers and officials in his Department have had on this issue; what representations he has received on this issue since his appointment; and if he will make a statement. [2910]

**Mr Gibb:** Schools are currently under statutory duties to put in place measures to prevent and tackle all forms of discrimination and bullying; and provide an environment where all pupils feel safe and are able to learn and achieve. This Government take very seriously the issue of anti-Semitism and is clear there is no place for it in our schools.

The Department's officials will continue to attend meetings of the Cross-Whitehall Group on anti-Semitism and ensure our future plans for reforming schools and tackling bullying consider steps to reducing levels of anti-Semitism in schools.

<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201011/cmhansrd/cm100629/text/100629w0006.htm#10062964000020>

### Scottish Government

#### Protection for vulnerable groups

A new scheme to better safeguard vulnerable groups and simplify and speed up the disclosure process will come into effect [in Scotland] from November 30 ... A package of training and guidance materials has also been launched, including a new helpline 0870 609 6006 ...

Initial scheme membership will cost £59 with a lower fee of £18 for subsequent records updates ... All PVG Scheme Records Disclosures will continue to be free for volunteers working in regulated work in the voluntary sector. ...

Similar changes have been proposed in England, Wales and Northern Ireland through the Vetting and Barring Scheme - VBS. On June 15, 2010, the UK Government announced it will undertake a review of the scheme.

<http://www.scotland.gov.uk/News/Releases/2010/06/29115039>

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## UK Parliamentary Questions

### Foreign Investment in UK: Israel

**Mr Amess:** To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Innovation and Skills what assistance his Department provides to Israeli businesses wishing to (a) invest in the UK and (b) take part in joint ventures with UK companies; how much was made available for these purposes in each of the last two years; and if he will make a statement. [4330]

**Mr Prisk:** The information requested is as follows.

(a) UK Trade and Investment (UKTI) is the Government organisation that leads on attracting Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) into the UK. It provides consistently excellent, highly professional service throughout the investment process and uses the global network of embassies, high commissions and consulates to assist targeted, high quality investment to come to the UK, including investment from Israel.

(b) UKTI R&D Partnerships can help organisations including Israeli businesses, interested in forming different types of partnership, one of which is a joint venture, involving research and development (R&D) or innovation activity. R&D Partnerships has supported partnership requests from Israel since 1 April 2008 to date by delivering 13 reports in total in the following categories: five in Information Technology Electronics and Communications, three in Performance Engineering Materials Energy and Environment, and five in Life Sciences. Within these reports 215 UK organisations were contacted about the specific partnership opportunity, and 15 expressed a direct interest in opening dialogue with the Israeli organisations in question to discuss the technical details and potential collaborations.

To attract a continuing high level of quality foreign direct investment the net cost globally for 2007-08 was £32,581,000 and for 2008-09 £31,869,000-Departmental Report and Resources Accounts published on: [www.ukti.gov.uk](http://www.ukti.gov.uk)

Information on annual expenditure on investments from Israel is unavailable due to the difficulty of disaggregating these figures.

<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201011/cmhansrd/cm100629/text/100629w0015.htm#10062982000006>

### Israel-British Business Council

**Mr Amess:** To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Innovation and Skills how much was allocated by his Department to the Israel-Britain Business Council in each of the last two years; for what purposes; and if he will make a statement. [4331]

**Mr Prisk:** UK Trade and Investment (UKTI) sets aside £25,000 each year to support the work of the Israel-Britain Business Council (IBBC). £10,000 per annum goes towards secretariat support for the Business Council, while £15,000 per annum is available to support initiatives aimed at helping British companies to win business in key sectors in Israel; or at bringing more Israeli investment into the UK. Such initiatives have included awareness-raising events on export or investment opportunities and trade missions.

<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201011/cmhansrd/cm100629/text/100629w0015.htm#10062982000009>

### Overseas Trade: Israel

**Mr Amess:** To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Innovation and Skills how much trade with Israel contributed to the UK's gross domestic product in each of the last two years; what recent discussions he has had since his appointment with his Israeli counterpart on trade between the UK and Israel; and if he will make a statement. [4328]

**Mr Prisk:** The benefits of international trade to gross domestic product (GDP) result from greater economic efficiency due to a combination of increased competition in markets, relative comparative advantages, economies of scale, increased opportunities for learning, and greater incentives for innovation. Due to the difficulty of differentiating between the impact of trade and other factors on growth, it is not possible to quantify precisely the impact of trade with another country on GDP.

The following table indicates the scale of UK trade in goods and services with Israel for the years 2007 and 2008 as a proportion of GDP:

	2007	2008
<i>Percentage of UK GDP at market prices</i>		
UK exports to Israel	0.12	0.13
UK imports from Israel	0.10	0.10

Geographical data for trade in 2009 are due to be published at the end of July.

I have not had any discussions with my Israeli counterpart since my appointment.

**Mr Amess:** To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Innovation and Skills what steps he (a) has taken and (b) plans to take to increase trade between the UK and Israel; how much his Department (i) has spent since January 2010 and (ii) plans to spend during the next 12 months on the promotion of trade between the UK and Israel; what recent representations he has received on increasing trade between the UK and Israel; and if he will make a statement. [4329]

**Mr Prisk:** UK Trade and Investment (UKTI) provides a range of support services to British companies wishing to trade with Israel, through commercial teams based in both the UK and the British embassy in Tel Aviv. UKTI support focuses, in particular, on business opportunities in high technology sectors, including biotechnology, health care, aerospace, information and communication technology, the environmental industries and financial and legal services.

UKTI supports the work of the Israel British Business Council (IBBC) and also manages a broad range of activities aimed at boosting bilateral trade and investment, including trade missions to Israel, inward missions by Israeli firms to trade fairs in the UK and promotional events aimed at encouraging Israeli companies to list in London and do business which brings benefits to Britain.

Examples of recent UKTI initiatives aimed at boosting business between Israel and the UK include a visit to Israel in May 2009 by the former Minister for Trade, Lord Davies; a British trade mission to the WATEC water and environment trade fair and conference in Tel Aviv in November 2009; a visit to Israel by UKTI's deputy chief executive in December 2009; and the promotion of business opportunities in Israel to over 450 UK companies in London, Manchester and the West Midlands through UKTI's "Partner Middle East" road shows in February 2010. Other activities of this nature will follow over the coming 12 months.

Information on annual expenditure on promoting trade with Israel is unavailable due to the difficulty of disaggregating these figures.

There have been no recent representations on increasing business between the UK and Israel.

<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201011/cmhansrd/cm100629/text/100629w0016.htm#10062982000014>

### **Palestinians: International Assistance**

**Caroline Lucas:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations he has made to his Israeli counterpart on the cases of three British citizens on the Gaza aid flotilla who were taken into custody and whose UK passports have not been returned; and whether he has taken steps to seek to secure the return from the Israeli authorities of the possessions of other British citizens on that flotilla. [4398]

**Alistair Burt:** I have raised these specific issues with Israel's ambassador to the UK. Our ambassador to Israel and other members of the British embassy in Tel Aviv have also raised the matter on a number of occasions with the Israeli authorities. It has also been raised by the EU presidency, on behalf of EU Heads of Mission, with the Israeli Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

I can confirm we have received all three missing passports which will be returned to the holders. We, and the EU, have also been informed by the Israelis that all the personal belongings have now been sent to Turkey, to the organisers of the Flotilla (Foundation for Human Rights and Freedoms and Humanitarian Relief (Insani Yardim Vakfi), (IHH). We understand that the Turkish authorities agree this to be correct. I explained this to the British nationals who I met on 17 June. We have also been informed by the Israeli authorities that the return of magnetic and media equipment is under consideration by the Israeli defence forces. We will continue to press for its return and availability for use in the inquiry, as required by those conducting it.

We have also asked exceptionally asked our consular staff in Istanbul to follow up with IHH who still hold over 300 pieces of unclaimed luggage, including watches, phones and cameras. Our consular staff have taken photos of everything that was seen in IHH's storage, which we will shortly be distributing to the British nationals involved so they can attempt to identify any property that is theirs.

<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201011/cmhansrd/cm100629/text/100629w0011.htm#10062972000009>

## European Commission

### **Statement by High Representative Catherine Ashton on Israel-Palestinian proximity peace talks**

Catherine Ashton, the High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy and Vice-President of the Commission, made the following statement today:

"I am deeply concerned by recent settlement-related activity in East Jerusalem and the recent unrest in Silwan. I recall that the European Union has never recognised the annexation of East Jerusalem. Settlements and the demolition of homes are illegal under international law, constitute an obstacle to peace and threaten to make a two-state solution impossible.

If there is to be genuine peace, a way must be found through negotiations to resolve the status of Jerusalem as the future capital of two states. I would like to call on Israel to refrain from measures which may undermine the ongoing proximity talks. These talks enjoy our full support and the parties need to engage seriously in these negotiations.

I also want to strongly condemn the attack on UNRWA Summer Games recreation facility in Gaza. UNRWA's Summer Games are an excellent initiative to promote the wellbeing of Gaza's children and they will continue to count with our strong support."

<http://consilium.europa.eu/uedocs/NewsWord/EN/foraff/115546.doc>

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## **Relevant Legislation** \*\* New or updated

### **UK Parliament**

#### **Academies Bill**

<http://services.parliament.uk/bills/2010-11/academieshl.html>

## **\*\* Identity Documents Bill**

<http://services.parliament.uk/bills/2010-11/identitydocuments.html>

Notice of amendments

<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201011/cmbills/001/amend/pbc0010629a.9-10.html>

## **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 tomorrow**

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

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

**Identity Documents Bill** (Committee consideration to be completed by 8 July)

<http://www.parliament.uk/business/news/2010/06/identity-documents-bill-committee-issues-call-for-evidence/>

**Equality Act: obtaining information in potential discrimination and equality of term cases** (closes 13 July 2010)

[http://www.equalities.gov.uk/news/new\\_streamlined\\_procedure\\_for.aspx](http://www.equalities.gov.uk/news/new_streamlined_procedure_for.aspx)

**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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