

Political Affairs Brief

A daily summary of political events affecting the Jewish Community

Scottish Council of Jewish Communities

SCoJeC

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UK Parliamentary Questions

Higher Education: Anti-Semitism

Mr Amess: To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Innovation and Skills what steps he plans to take to protect Jewish university students from anti-Semitic attacks; what recent reports he has received of incidents of anti-Semitism on university campuses; what discussions he has had with representatives of the Jewish community on the matter; and if he will make a statement. [4327]

Mr Willetts [*holding answer 29 June 2010*]: There is no place for racism of any form, including anti-Semitism, in higher education. Universities have the primary responsibility for ensuring that their students are not subject to threatening or abusive behaviour on campus and have access to a strong legislative framework and guidance to help them deal effectively with instances of intolerance, racism and harassment in their institutions. Government would expect them to vigorously tackle these issues when they arise and report criminal attacks to the police when they occur on campus, or support students to do so.

I have received correspondence on this issue, and I have had no discussions so far with representatives of the Jewish community. However, I am due to meet with representatives of the Jewish community and the HE sector to discuss anti-Semitism and higher education.

<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201011/cmhansrd/cm100705/text/100705w0005.htm#10070551000009>

Assisted Dying

Lord Alton of Liverpool: To ask Her Majesty's Government what is their stance on (a) assisted suicide, and (b) voluntary euthanasia.[HL781]

The Minister of State, Ministry of Justice (Lord McNally): The Government believe that any change to the law in this emotive and contentious area is an issue of individual conscience and a matter for Parliament to decide rather than government policy.

<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/ld201011/ldhansrd/text/100705w0001.htm#10070516000765>

Pope Benedict XVI

Mr Gregory Campbell: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what estimate he has made of the likely cost to the public purse of the forthcoming visit to the UK by Pope Benedict. [5507]

Mr Bellingham: Pope Benedict XVI will visit the UK not only as the leader of the Catholic Church but as a Head of State, and at the invitation of Her Majesty the Queen. Part of the costs of the visit will therefore fall to the Government.

The total costs can be divided into two categories: policing costs, which will be met by the state from existing policing budgets, and non-policing costs, which will be split between the Catholic Church and the Government. Discussions are under way to finalise these costs and to agree the appropriate levels of contribution from the Government and the Catholic Bishops' Conferences of England and Wales, and of Scotland.

Mr Amess: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what progress has been made on the visit to the UK of Pope Benedict XVI; what recent discussions he has had with his Vatican counterpart on the visit; and if he will make a statement. [5518]

Mr Bellingham: My right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary has not met his Vatican counterpart to discuss the Papal Visit. However, a delegation from the Holy See visited the UK from 21 to 24 June and held discussions with Government officials and representatives of the Catholic Church on preparations for the visit. These included details of the programme and organisation of the various events involved, in addition to accommodation, travel and practical arrangements for the Papal delegation. Our embassy to the Holy See is in close touch with the Vatican over arrangements for the visit.

<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201011/cmhansrd/cm100705/text/100705w0001.htm#10070527000074>

UK Parliament Early Day Motion

Julian Huppert (395) Collective worship - That this House notes the Government's wish to free schools from prescriptive legal regimes; further notes the fact that the law still requires maintained schools to hold a daily act of collective worship wholly or mainly of a broadly Christian character and that teachers and others have repeatedly opposed this provision; further notes the diversity of society and rights to freedom of conscience, thought and belief as protected in domestic law; at the same time notes the educational value of inclusive school assemblies and their role in supporting shared values and the school community and ethos; and calls on the Government to repeal the requirement for compulsory worship in schools and to encourage schools to hold educational assemblies that will include all children.

<http://edmi.parliament.uk/EDMi/EDMDetails.aspx?EDMID=41335&SESSION=905>

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UK Parliamentary Questions

Israel

Baroness Tonge: To ask Her Majesty's Government what representations they have made to the Government of Israel about the deportation from east Jerusalem of four members of the Palestine Legislative Council, who have recently been released from prison in Israel.[HL680]

The Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office (Lord Howell of Guildford): The UK is extremely concerned by recent reports of Palestinians' residency permits being revoked. We can confirm that President Abbas has requested the Israeli Government to rescind their decision.

<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/ld201011/ldhansrd/text/100705w0001.htm#10070516000794>

Gaza

Lord Hylton: To ask Her Majesty's Government whether they will co-ordinate action by the Middle East quartet to remove restrictions on exports from Gaza and on fishing within its territorial waters.[HL638]

The Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office (Lord Howell of Guildford): The UK supports the statement issued by the quartet on 21 June. It re-affirms that the current situation in Gaza is unsustainable and unacceptable and welcomes the new policy towards Gaza announced by the Government of Israel on 20 June. The Quartet statement underlines the need for full and effective implementation of this policy.

We have made no specific representations on the issue of fishing limits. However, whilst my right honourable friend the Foreign Secretary welcomed Israel's announcement on Gaza restrictions as an important step in the right direction, he underlined the need for swift implementation to allow the necessary movement of people, aid and goods in and out of Gaza. It is also imperative to allow Gazans the opportunity to rebuild their economy.

<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/ld201011/ldhansrd/text/100705w0001.htm#10070516000788>

Foreign and Commonwealth Office

Foreign Secretary welcomes easing of Israeli restrictions on Gaza

... The Foreign Secretary said: "The British Government has made clear that the situation in Gaza is a tragedy and unsustainable. Together with the EU and Quartet, we have called on Israel to ease restrictions on access and enable a return to economic normality. I therefore welcome Israel's decision to move from a list of 120 permitted goods to a list of specific prohibited items. This step shows that it is possible to lift the pressure on ordinary Gazans without compromising the security of ordinary Israelis. All parties must now work together urgently to deliver real change on the ground. This will mean building capacity at the crossings, getting vital reconstruction projects up and running and ensuring that Gazans can export as well as import goods. The UK stands ready to support this. This announcement comes at a time when I know thousands are marching through Israel calling for the release of Gilad Shalit. It is despicable that, four years on, he should still be held by Hamas in denial of the most basic of human rights. We continue to call for the immediate release of Gilad Shalit who has been held hostage in Gaza since June 2006."

<http://www.fco.gov.uk/en/news/latest-news/?view=News&id=22482822>

European Union

Statement by Catherine Ashton, High Representative of the European Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy/European Commission Vice-President on announcement by Israel on Gaza blockade

... "Today's announcement by the Government of Israel is another significant step forward in the review of its policy on Gaza. As I have always said, once implemented, Israel's new policy should improve the lives of the ordinary people of Gaza while addressing the legitimate security concerns of Israel.

While the details of the lists will have to be carefully examined, I hope that the complete implementation of these measures will allow for the reconstruction of Gaza and the revival of its economy. Private sector development and commercial activity, including exports, will be crucial for the recovery of Gaza. The movement of persons and trade between Gaza and the West Bank should remain one of the key objectives. To enable the people in Gaza to reconstruct their homes, to build schools, to improve infrastructure and start new businesses, the capacity of crossings must be expanded. As stated by EU foreign ministers last week, the EU is ready to support Israel and the Palestinian Authority in the opening of land crossings.

I reiterate once again that Gilad Shalit must be released immediately

We will continue discussions and examine the details of the proposed changes and their implementation with Israel, the Palestinian Authority and the Quartet Partners."

<http://consilium.europa.eu/uedocs/NewsWord/EN/foraff/115675.doc>

United Nations

Israel moving in right direction by allowing more goods into Gaza

The top United Nations envoy for the Middle East peace process has welcomed the recent measures announced by Israel to reportedly allow more consumer goods into Gaza, calling them important steps in the right direction. "This can only be the beginning of the long road towards reconstruction and a functioning economy in the Gaza Strip," said a statement issued yesterday by the Office of UN Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process Robert Serry.

Mr. Serry hopes the measures will stimulate commercial activities and allow a substantial increase in the amount of construction materials to enter Gaza, where, according to a recent UN report, three quarters of the buildings and infrastructure damaged by the Israeli military offensive carried out a year and a half ago have still not been repaired. He looks forward to continued discussions on exports to stimulate Gaza's economy and on the easing of restrictions on the movement of Palestinians in and out of the Strip, which is home to 1.5 million residents. ...

... the UN stands ready to expand and accelerate its work in Gaza, including addressing chronic shortages of housing, education, water and sanitation and health facilities.

To read the full press release see

<http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=35244&Cr=palestin&Cr1=>

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Foreign Affairs

UK Parliamentary Question

New Zealand: Shechita

Mr Amess: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what recent reports he has received of the prohibition on the practice of shechita in New Zealand; and if he will make a statement. [5516]

Mr Jeremy Browne: I am aware of the prohibition on shechita in New Zealand. This is a matter for the Government of New Zealand and its citizens.

<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201011/cmhansrd/cm100705/text/100705w0001.htm#10070527000072>

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Relevant Legislation ** New or updated

UK Parliament

**** Academies Bill**

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

Notice of amendments

<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/ld201011/ldbills/010/amend/ml010-ir.htm>

Daylight Saving Bill

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

Face Coverings (Regulation) Bill

<http://services.parliament.uk/bills/2010-11/facecoveringsregulation.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/pbc0010607m.15-17.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 in 2 days**

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/>

**** closes in 7 days**

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

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

**** Data protection legislative framework** (closes 6 October 2010)

<http://www.justice.gov.uk/dpa-call-evidence-02-07-2010.pdf>

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