

# 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

#### Extremist Organisations

**Baroness Neville-Jones:** To ask Her Majesty's Government how many people have been (a) deported from the United Kingdom for "fomenting extremism", and (b) barred from coming to the United Kingdom on that ground, in each year since 2005. [HL690]

**The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Home Office (Lord West of Spithead):** I have taken the term "fomenting extremism" as equating to unacceptable behaviour under the policy announced by my right honourable friend the then Home Secretary on 24 August 2005. The powers to exclude or deport an individual on the grounds of their unacceptable behaviour are directed at foreign nationals who foment hatred or violence in support of their extremist beliefs. I can confirm that during the period in question, 106 individuals were excluded and one individual was deported on these grounds and a yearly breakdown is provided below.

2005	(a) 0	(b) 21
2006	(a) 1	(b) 33
2007	(a) 0	(b) 21
2008	(a) 0	(b) 12
2009	(a) 0	(b) 19

These figures do not constitute part of National Statistics as they are based on internal management information. The information has not been quality assured under National Statistics protocols, should be treated as provisional and are subject to change.

<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/ld200910/ldhansrd/text/100105w0005.htm#10010561002993>

### **Terrorism: Hizb-ut-Tahrir**

**Lord Pearson of Rannoch:** To ask Her Majesty's Government whether Mr Tony Blair when Prime Minister undertook that Hizb-ut-Tahrir would be proscribed under the Terrorism Act 2000; and, if so, why that has not happened. [HL739]

**The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Home Office (Lord West of Spithead):** In a speech on 5 August 2005, the then Prime Minister stated an intention to proscribe Hizb-ut-Tahrir (HuT). Proscription is a tough but necessary power to tackle terrorism. Decisions on proscription must be proportionate and based on evidence that an organisation is concerned in terrorism as defined in the Terrorism Act 2000. When HuT was considered for proscription, it was not judged to meet the statutory test contained in the 2000 Act. No further evidence has emerged since which would meet that test.

Hizb-ut-Tahrir, along with other organisations which cause us concern, is kept under continuous review. As and when new material comes to light it is considered and the organisation reassessed as part of that process.

<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/ld200910/ldhansrd/text/100105w0016.htm#10010561003071>

## **UK Parliament Early Day Motions**

**Nigel Evans (529) Al-Muhajiroun demonstration** – That this House notes that Anjem Choudary, the UK leader of al-Muhajiroun, plans to stage a march through Wootton Bassett town carrying empty coffins as a protest against Britain's presence in Afghanistan; considers that such a demonstration would be a gross mark of disrespect to the soldiers who have died or been wounded in Afghanistan, their families and those who continue to fight on active service in Afghanistan; believes that such a march would cause great distress to those who have lost loved ones; further notes that the Muslim Council of Britain has described the proposed march as 'deplorable'; calls on the Home Secretary urgently to investigate the breaching of public order and other related offences; and urges Wootton Bassett Town Council and Wiltshire Police to ensure that any proposed demonstration that breaches the Public Order Act 1986 be rightly refused.

<http://edmi.parliament.uk/EDMi/EDMDetails.aspx?EDMID=40105&SESSION=903>

**John Mann (532) Islam4UK** – That this House notes the organisation Islam4UK has announced plans for a protest in Wootton Bassett; does not believe Islam4UK represents Muslims in the UK; further notes that mainstream Muslim organisations have condemned Islam4UK's move; recognises that Islam4UK calls itself a front for the banned terrorist organisation al-Muhajiroun; and calls for the banning of Islam4UK in the United Kingdom.

<http://edmi.parliament.uk/EDMi/EDMDetails.aspx?EDMID=40108&SESSION=903>

## **Communities and Local Government**

### **Appointment of new faith advisers**

To encourage a deeper and broader relationship between Government and faith communities, Communities Secretary John Denham today announced the appointment of 13 new faith advisers who will act as a 'sounding board' to advise on effective engagement with faith communities, and the impact of Communities and Local Government policy on faith communities. ... The 13 new advisers come from a range of

backgrounds and faith perspectives and include serving Bishops, academics and local activists. They were selected for their commitment to faith and the diverse experience in their chosen careers.

The members of the panel are:

- **Canon Dr Alan Billings** - Formerly Director of the Centre for Ethics and Religion at the University of Lancaster.
- **Dr Harriet Crabtree** - Director of the Inter Faith Network for the UK.
- **Marcia Dixon** - Editor of Keep the Faith, a publication distributed to black majority churches.
- **Dr Doreen Finneron** - Founder and director of the Faith Based Regeneration Network.
- **Jenny Kartupelis** - Director of the East of England Faiths Council and Fellow of the Faiths and Civil Society Unit at Goldsmiths College.
- **Wakkas Khan** - Director of the Exploring Islam Foundation and a founding member of the Radical Middle Way.
- **Alveena Malik** - A Principle Associate at the Institute of Community Cohesion and a Trustee of the Muslim Institute.
- **Mehri Niknam** - Founder and director of the Joseph Interfaith Foundation.
- **Rosalind Preston** - President of the Jewish Volunteer Network and Chair of Nightingale House.
- **Dr Jasdev Singh Rai** - General Secretary of the British Sikh Consultative Forum and Director of the Sikh Human Rights Group.
- **Bishop Tim Stevens** - Anglican Bishop of Leicester and Founder and Chair of the Faith Leaders Forum of Leicester.
- **Arjan Vekaria** - President of Shree Kutch Leva Patel Community (UK) and the Hindu Forum of Britain.
- **Prof Paul Weller** - Head of Research and Commercial Development, Faculty of Education, Health and Sciences and Professor of Inter-Religious Relations, University of Derby.

John Denham continued: "Given that faith plays a defining role in many lives, anyone wanting to build a more progressive society should not ignore the powerful role of faith and the strong values their communities hold. Government needs to have an understanding of this relationship - a relationship that shapes peoples behaviour - in order to help develop public policy that is relevant to our society. The relationship between faith and government will however not always be easy and some faith communities will no doubt sometimes disapprove of government decisions. Likewise Government should not shy away from honest debate or criticism when warranted and that this should not exclude any faith."

<http://www.communities.gov.uk/news/corporate/1426032>

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## Israel

### Prime Minister's Questions

*col 165* **Ms Karen Buck (Regent's Park and Kensington, North) (Lab):** A year on from the devastating conflict in Gaza, which left 1,400 Palestinians dead, the siege continues. Humanitarian relief is hard to come by, and Gaza lies shattered. Although there were undoubtedly war crimes on both sides, does my right hon. Friend agree that what is now happening is the collective punishment of 1 million people? Will he now make urgent representations to ease the siege on Gaza as a critical step towards a peace settlement in that region?

**The Prime Minister:** My hon. Friend is absolutely right, and she speaks for many people. We must not forget the people of Gaza. I have raised with Prime Minister

Netanyahu the speed at which aid and humanitarian assistance can get into Gaza, and we are pressing the Israeli Government to do more to get more aid in. I will look at exactly the points that my hon. Friend has made and see what more we can do in this new year. In the end, this will require a political settlement between Israel and the Palestinian state that gives Israel security and Palestine a viable economic state that it can manage. In the meantime, we must avoid unnecessary suffering.

<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm200910/cmhansrd/cm100106/debtext/100106-0003.htm>

## UK Parliamentary Questions

### Tzipi Livni

**Mr. Lidington:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what assessment he has made of the implications for UK-Israel relations of the decision by Westminster magistrates to issue an arrest warrant for Mrs Tzipi Livni. [308409]

**Mr. Ivan Lewis:** Israel continues to be a strategic partner and a close friend of the UK. We shall continue to foster a close relationship with Israel and are determined to protect and develop these ties. Israeli leaders-like leaders from other countries-must be able to visit the UK.

**Jeremy Corbyn:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what discussions he had with the government of Israel concerning former Israeli Foreign Minister Tzipi Livni's proposed address to the Jewish National Fund Conference on 13 December 2009. [309028]

**Mr. Ivan Lewis:** My right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary spoke with the Israeli Foreign Minister, Avigdor Lieberman, and Tzipi Livni herself on 15 December 2009. He also met the Israeli ambassador Ron Prosor. During these discussions he set out his view that Israeli leaders-like leaders from other countries-must be able to visit and have a proper dialogue with the Government.

The Government are looking urgently at ways in which the UK system might be changed in order to avoid this sort of situation arising again.

<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm200910/cmhansrd/cm100106/text/100106w0020.htm#1001071000061>

### Israel: Borders

**Dr. Starkey:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when HM Ambassador to Israel most recently visited the Karni crossing. [306794]

**Mr. Ivan Lewis:** Officials from our embassy in Tel Aviv regularly visit the Karni crossing. Karni is the largest crossing point between Israel and Gaza and is covered by the 2005 agreement on movement and access between Israel and the Palestinian Authority. It is the only crossing configured to cope with large-scale flows of humanitarian relief and the commercial imports and exports on which the restoration of the Gazan economy will depend.

<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm200910/cmhansrd/cm100105/text/100105w0049.htm#10010611000088>

### Israel

**Baroness Tonge:** To ask Her Majesty's Government how many rockets have been fired by Hamas into Israel since the end of Operation Cast Lead. [HL819]

**The Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office (Baroness Kinnock of Holyhead):** According to the Israeli Ministry of Foreign Affairs, there have been 123 rockets and 70 mortar shells fired into Israel since the end of Operation Cast Lead (to 8 December 2009).

<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/ld200910/ldhansrd/text/100105w0012.htm#10010561003023>

## Israel

**Lord Dykes:** To ask Her Majesty's Government whether they will meet the President and Secretary of State of the United States to discuss an early resumption by Israel and Palestine of substantive peace talks leading to the creation of a Palestine state. [HL784]

**The Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office (Baroness Kinnock of Holyhead):** My right honourable friends the Prime Minister and the Foreign Secretary are in regular dialogue with their US counterparts on a wide range of issues, including the Middle East peace process.

We continue to remain committed to doing everything possible to achieve comprehensive peace in the Middle East, which includes supporting US efforts to launch a process.

<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/ld200910/ldhansrd/text/100105w0012.htm#10010561003024>

## Palestine

**Baroness Tonge:** To ask Her Majesty's Government what reports have they received from the Quartet concerning the industrial zones plan in the occupied West Bank of Palestine. [HL816]

**The Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office (Baroness Kinnock of Holyhead):** The Office of the Quartet Representative continues to work closely with the Palestinian Authority and the Government of Israel to facilitate the creation of industrial parks in the West Bank, at Tarqumiya, the Jenin Industrial Park, the Jericho Agro-Industrial Park and the Bethlehem Industrial Park. The international community is committed to advancing these projects to attract further foreign investment, create jobs and promote overall economic growth.

**Baroness Tonge:** To ask Her Majesty's Government what reports they have received from the Quartet's Representative to the Middle East, Tony Blair, concerning progress in dismantling checkpoints and free movement within the West Bank for Palestinians. [HL818]

**Baroness Kinnock of Holyhead:** The Office of the Quartet Representative (OQR) reports to the Quartet on the progress of its work. Quartet Representative to the Middle East, Tony Blair, and my right honourable friend the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs are in regular contact. There have been significant improvements in the flow of traffic in areas of the West Bank, mainly in urban areas. Some key checkpoints, critical to improving the economy, have been removed, opened or had their opening hours extended. Nablus in particular has benefitted.

We are fully supportive of the work of the Office of the Quartet Representative.

<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/ld200910/ldhansrd/text/100105w0013.htm#10010561003045>

## Palestinians: Territorial Waters

**Dr. Starkey:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what advice he has received on the legal status of territorial waters off Gaza; and if he will make a statement. [306793]

**Mr. Ivan Lewis:** The Israeli-Palestinian Interim Agreement 1995 provides that the territorial jurisdiction of the Palestinian Council (construed in the Agreement as meaning the Palestinian Authority) includes the territorial waters off Gaza, in accordance with the provisions of the Agreement.

The rules of customary international law regarding territorial waters are also applicable.

<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm200910/cmhansrd/cm100105/text/100105w0051.htm#10010611000101>

### **Palestinians: Overseas Aid**

**Mr. Hague:** To ask the Secretary of State for International Development pursuant to the answer of 30 November 2009, Official Report, column 435W, on Gaza: reconstruction, what reasons the government of Israel has given for preventing the entry into Gaza of building materials for reconstruction funded by his Department; and what his policy is on securing entry for such materials. [307176]

**Mr. Michael Foster:** There are two main reasons given by the Government of Israel for preventing entry of reconstruction materials into Gaza.

Firstly, Israel has expressed concerns that materials such as steel pipes or cement could be misused or misappropriated by Hamas and other organisations in Gaza to build weapons or defensive structures. We recognise that Israel has legitimate security concerns and that there is a risk some items could have a dual use. However, we believe with robust monitoring it is possible to address these concerns. The United Nations and other agencies have had extensive discussions with the Government of Israel over practical safeguards against diversion or misuse. Moreover, many items required to repair damaged homes and other infrastructure are not dual-use-such as plastic piping and glass. We have not received specific explanations from Israel of why the import of such items has been blocked or delayed.

Secondly, Israeli Ministers have noted that the continuing detention of Gilad Shalit and Hamas's refusal to renounce violence creates a wider political context for restrictions on movement of people and goods into and out of Gaza. The UK Government continue to call for the immediate, unconditional release of Gilad Shalit and for Hamas to renounce violence and recognise Israel's right to exist in peace and security. We do not accept, however, that access for humanitarian aid and aid workers should be linked to such considerations, nor that the import of materials needed to rebuild houses, schools, medical facilities and other critical infrastructure should be contingent on Hamas's actions.

**Mr. Hague:** To ask the Secretary of State for International Development pursuant to the answer of 30 November 2009, Official Report, column 435W, on Gaza: reconstruction, whether his Department is considering alternative proposals to expedite the reconstruction of homes in Gaza; and if he will make a statement. [307177]

**Mr. Michael Foster:** With the onset of winter, the reconstruction or repair to houses of an estimated 60,000 families in Gaza has been identified by the United Nations as a humanitarian priority. However, the continuing restrictions imposed by the Government of Israel on access for construction materials (including cement, steel reinforcement bars, and glass) have effectively put these reconstruction efforts on hold. The UK Government continue to lobby the Government of Israel for the unrestricted import of these, and other, materials.

At the same time, the Department for International Development (DFID) will consider favourably any alternative construction proposals which are practical, cost-effective, and meet the needs of the beneficiary population.

<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm200910/cmhansrd/cm100105/text/100105w0061.htm#10010655000014>

### **Palestinians: Utilities**

**Mr. Hague:** To ask the Secretary of State for International Development pursuant to the answer of 30 November 2009, Official Report, column 436W, on Gaza: utilities, what remedial action his Department has taken to address the contamination of water supplies in Gaza; and what the Government's policy is on the supply of clean water to Gaza. [307175]

**Mr. Michael Foster:** The Department for International Development (DFID) is supporting a number of projects to increase the supply of clean water in Gaza. DFID is supporting the UN Children's Fund (UNICEF) in coordinating the international response on water and sanitation. We are also providing funding to

Oxfam and Action Against Hunger to supply drinking water to vulnerable communities and carry out emergency rehabilitation of water infrastructure. Projects funded by DFID have helped improve access to water for over 335,000 people.

Restrictions placed on materials entering Gaza have limited the capacity to treat contaminated water or run desalination plants. We continue to lobby the Israeli Government to allow into Gaza the essential materials required to repair Gaza's water and sanitation infrastructure.

<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm200910/cmhansrd/cm100105/text/100105w0061.htm#10010655000015>

### Gaza

**Baroness Tonge:** To ask Her Majesty's Government what progress has been made into the investigation of alleged war crimes during Operation Cast Lead, as called for by the Report of the United Nations Fact Finding Mission on the Gaza Conflict. [HL817]

**The Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office (Baroness Kinnock of Holyhead):** We understand from the Israeli authorities that investigations are under way or completed into 140 separate incidents, including all 34 incidents highlighted by the UN Fact Finding Mission on Gaza report. We await the publication of the conclusions of these investigations.

The Palestinian Authority has formed a high-level committee, drawing on expertise from the Independent Commission for Human Rights (a respected regional organisation). This committee will only be investigating allegations made by the UN Fact Finding Mission on Gaza report directed at the Palestinian Authority in the West Bank.

Media reports indicate that Hamas has also announced its own investigation.

We are clear that any allegations of breaches of international humanitarian law that may have occurred during the Gaza conflict should be addressed through full, credible and independent investigations.

**Baroness Tonge:** To ask Her Majesty's Government what reports they have received from the Middle East concerning helicopter gunship incursions over Gaza since the end of Operation Cast Lead. [HL820]

**Baroness Kinnock of Holyhead:** We have not received specific reports detailing Israeli helicopter movements over Gaza. However, according to the UN, the Israeli Defence Forces have carried out a range of military operations throughout 2009, including air strikes. The targets were mainly tunnels under the border with Egypt. The UK recognises Israel's right to defend itself but calls upon the Israeli Government to act with restraint and in accordance with international law.

<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/ld200910/ldhansrd/text/100105w0005.htm#10010561002997>

### Middle East

**Lord Hylton:** To ask Her Majesty's Government what is their response to the statement by the Swedish Presidency of the Council of the European Union concerning peace in the Middle East. [HL613]

**The Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office (Baroness Kinnock of Holyhead):** We support the conclusions of the EU Foreign Ministers' meeting chaired by the Swedish Presidency, which were agreed by all 27 Member States.

<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/ld200910/ldhansrd/text/100105w0012.htm#10010561003030>

### Middle East: Armed Conflict

**Dr. Starkey:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what advice he has received on whether the blockade of Gaza constitutes collective punishment within the meaning of the Fourth Geneva Convention. [306771]

**Mr. Ivan Lewis:** 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. We are very concerned at both continued Israeli restrictions and the ongoing threat to civilians in southern Israel from indiscriminate rocket attacks. We will continue to press the Israeli Government to ease their restrictions on the crossings into Gaza.

**Dr. Starkey:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether he has reviewed the compatibility of the blockade of Gaza with the obligations of Israel in respect of trade and human rights under (a) the EU-Israel Association Agreement, (b) the EU-Palestinian Authority Interim Association Agreement and (c) its membership of the World Trade Organisation. [306775]

**Mr. Ivan Lewis:** Securing better access to Gaza remains a high priority for the Government.

The relationship between the European Communities, EU member states and Israel set out in the EU-Israel Association Agreement depends on respect for human rights and democratic principles as set out in Article 2. Article 3 of the Agreement establishes a regular dialogue between the EU and Israel which takes place through the annual EU-Israel Association Council, and the preparatory Association Committees and sub-committees. The Government and the EU continue to urge the Israeli Government to open the crossings into Gaza more fully.

The Interim Association Agreement on Trade and Cooperation between the European Community and the Palestine Liberation Organisation (for the benefit of the Palestinian Authority) does not impose obligations on Israel.

The obligations placed upon Israel by its membership of the World Trade Organisation are not relevant to resolving concerns over the Gaza blockade.

**Dr. Starkey:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what his policy is on the introduction of the Israeli buffer zone in Gaza. [306783]

**Mr. Ivan Lewis:** According to UN Food and Agriculture Organisation, the Israeli "buffer zone" inside Gaza makes up approximately 30 per cent. of all arable land. While Israel has the right to defend itself, we are concerned at the impact of the "buffer zone" on Palestinian farmers and the population of Gaza.

**Dr. Starkey:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what steps he has taken to intensify efforts to provide (a) arrangements and (b) guarantees to ensure the sustained reopening of crossing points on the basis of the 2005 Agreement on Movement as required under action 6 of UN Security Council Resolution 1860; and what arrangements and guarantees have been put in place in the last 12 months. [306785]

**Mr. Ivan Lewis:** We continue to urge the Israeli Government to open the crossings into Gaza not only for humanitarian supplies, but also for reconstruction materials, commercial trade and people-as called for by UN Security Council Resolution 1860. My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister made this clear to the Prime Minister of Israel on 14 October 2009.

My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for International Development has also recently written to the Israeli Government about this matter, and my right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary raised this with the Israeli Foreign Minister on 25 November 2009. Securing better access to Gaza will remain a high priority for the Government.

UN Security Council Resolution 1860 was also clear on the need to prevent illicit trafficking in arms and ammunition. We also call on Hamas to cease all rocket attacks and immediately release Gilad Shalit.

**Mr. Hague:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs pursuant to the answer of 30 November 2009, Official Report, column 429W, on the Middle East: armed conflict, what the nature is of (a) the toxic materials that have been identified and (b) the contamination detected; and if he will make a statement. [307178]

**Mr. Michael Foster:** The contamination found in rubble in Gaza since the end of

the conflict comprises items of unexploded ordnance (UXO) and parts or pieces thereof (explosive remnants of war-ERW), as well as small arms ammunition. According to the UN Mines Action Team, 28 per cent. of the UXO/ERW found to early June contained white phosphorus, and 72 per cent. contained high explosives.

With the Department for International Development's (DFID's) support, the UN Mines Action Team is working to remove UXO and other items from destroyed buildings and agricultural land.

**Mr. Hague:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs pursuant to the answer of 26 November 2009, Official Report, column 305W, on the Middle East: armed conflict, what the legal restraints are that apply to implementation of the Prime Minister's proposal of naval assistance to interdict arms smuggling to Gaza. [307179]

**David Miliband:** Maritime interdiction operations concerning Gaza must be carried out in accordance with the applicable rules of international law, including the provisions of the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea. Interdiction operations must be authorised either by the flag state, as well as the coastal state if in territorial waters, or under a resolution of the UN Security Council, or justified for reasons of self-defence. Action to take forward my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister's initiative therefore needs to be carefully considered in light of the facts and circumstances of the particular case.

**Jeremy Corbyn:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations his Department has made at the United Nations General Assembly to ensure that a full investigation is undertaken into the findings of the Goldstone Report on the UN Fact Finding Mission on the Gaza Conflict. [309023]

**Mr. Ivan Lewis:** The UK along with our EU partners played our full part in the 4-5 November 2009 UN General Assembly debate on the Goldstone report. We worked hard before the vote to reach a consensus on a resolution we could support. In the end we had to abstain, with France and 42 others, because voting for would have meant endorsing the report and ignoring its flaws. However, we maintain that the issues raised by the report are serious and the parties should address them. We were fully supportive of the core of the resolution: the need for credible, independent investigations.

<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm200910/cmhansrd/cm100105/text/100105w0050.htm#10010611000092>

### **Middle East: Peacekeeping Operations**

**Mr. Hague:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what proportion of the 32 million euro in European Union funding for the reconstruction in Gaza announced by the Commissioner for External Relations and European Neighbourhood Policy in March 2009 has been disbursed; and if he will make a statement. [307057]

**Mr. Michael Foster:** The €32 million pledge for Gaza made by the Commissioner for External Relations and European Neighbourhood Policy in March 2009 was for humanitarian aid and early recovery activities. Since then, the European Union (EU) has more than exceeded disbursement of its pledge through a range of activities including cash for work and removal of rubble and unexploded ordnance. Like the Department for International Development (DFID), the EU has been unable to spend money on formal reconstruction activities in Gaza due to Israeli restrictions on the import of essential materials.

**Mr. Hague:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what initiatives he has proposed to his overseas counterparts to overcome restrictions on the entry of materials for reconstruction into Gaza; and what his policy is on overcoming such restrictions. [307058]

**David Miliband:** Along with our key international allies, the UK continues to press the Israeli authorities to ease border restrictions into Gaza. It is imperative the

Israeli authorities permit the passage of essential humanitarian aid and reconstruction material. I have raised my concerns during conversations with my counterpart and my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for International Development has similarly raised them. These concerns were also highlighted at the EU Foreign Ministers' meeting on 8 December 2009.

The UK is a strong supporter of the UN's Framework for Humanitarian Assistance to Gaza, a statement of key humanitarian principles on access and non-interference with humanitarian aid. The UN will shortly produce its second report against the Framework, tracking compliance of the parties to the conflict with the principles in the Framework. We have raised the Framework in discussions with the Government of Israel.

<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm200910/cmhansrd/cm100105/text/100105w0050.htm#10010611000093>

### **Tony Blair**

**Norman Baker:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how many (a) civil servants and (b) others are available on a (i) full-time and (ii) part-time basis to support Tony Blair in his role as Middle East peace envoy; what criteria were used to select them; by whom they were appointed; what their salary band is in each case; and if he will make a statement. [309244]

**Mr. Ivan Lewis:** There are four members of the Office of the Quartet Representative who are directly linked to the Government.

The Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) provides the following full time secondees to the Office of the Quartet Representative (OQR): one higher executive officer equivalent (salary range £23,157 to £31,495); and one senior civil servant (salary range £57,300 to £116,000). Standard FCO procedure was followed for advertising, recruiting and appointing to these posts. Mr. Blair held final interviews.

The Department for International Development (DfID) also funds a secondee to provide expert governance analysis (Grade 6 equivalent, salary range £55,814 to £66,873).

A locally engaged secondee to the OQR in Jerusalem was also funded through the Conflict Prevention Pool from October 2007 to August 2008 at a cost of £30,874. After that, this position has been funded by the UN Development Programme Trust Fund.

**Norman Baker:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will itemise how the £400,000 funding allocated by his Department to the United Nations Development Trust Fund in support of Tony Blair in his role as Middle East peace envoy is broken down by (a) salaries, (b) expenses and (c) other costs in the current financial year. [309245]

**Mr. Ivan Lewis:** The Department for International Development made a contribution to the Office of the Quartet Representative of £400,000 in financial year 2008-09. This was disbursed between security, accommodation, project management, support staff and general support (IT, office equipment, insurance, etc).

**Norman Baker:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs 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. [309246]

**Mr. Ivan Lewis:** The Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) provides two secondees to the Office of the Quartet Representative (OQR). Officials from the OQR and FCO meet regularly. The secondees remain subject to the Civil Service Code.

**Norman Baker:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs on what date (a) he and (b) other Ministers in his Department last met Tony Blair in his

capacity as Middle East peace envoy. [309248]

**Mr. Ivan Lewis:** My right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary meets with Mr. Blair in his capacity as the Quartet Representative and regularly speaks to him on the telephone. Their last meeting was on 14 October 2009. Other Foreign Office Ministers have not met Mr. Blair recently in his capacity as Middle East peace envoy.

**Norman Baker:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what checks are in place to ensure that monies made available to the United Nations Development Trust Fund to support the work of the Middle East Peace Envoy are not used for unauthorised or unconnected purposes. [309250]

**Mr. Ivan Lewis:** The work of the Office of the Quartet Representative is set within the context of a UN Development Programme (UNDP) programme and is managed by the UNDP office based in Jerusalem according to UN procedures.

**Norman Baker:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what proportion of the United Nations Development Trust Fund's budget to fund the office of the Quartet Representative was used to meet the office costs of Tony Blair in the current financial year. [309251]

**Mr. Ivan Lewis:** This is a matter for the UN Development Programme and the Office of the Quartet Representative to answer.

**Norman Baker:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what objectives Tony Blair has set in his capacity as Middle East peace envoy; and what the role of his Department was in setting those objectives. [309253]

**Mr. Ivan Lewis:** The Quartet Representative's following aims were set out in a statement from the Quartet:

Mobilise international assistance to the Palestinians, working closely with donors and existing co-ordination bodies;

Help to identify, and secure appropriate international support in addressing, the institutional governance needs of the Palestinian state, focusing as a matter of urgency on the rule of law;

Develop plans to promote Palestinian economic development, including private sector partnerships, building on previously agreed frameworks, especially concerning access and movement; and

Liaise with other countries as appropriate in support of the agreed Quartet objectives.

While the Foreign and Commonwealth Office had no formal role in setting these aims, it has continued to be closely involved in the middle east peace process and supports these aims.

**Norman Baker:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether his Department has authorised the registration of any company in connection with the work of Tony Blair has set in his role as Middle East peace envoy. [309254]

**Mr. Ivan Lewis:** Government funding to the Office of the Quartet Representative is handled by UN Development Programme not by a company.

The Foreign and Commonwealth Office has not authorised the registration of a company in connection with the work of the Quartet Representative, which is a matter for the Office of the Quartet Representative not the Foreign and Commonwealth Office.

**Norman Baker:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what recent assessment he has made of the effectiveness of Tony Blair in his role as Middle East peace envoy. [309255]

**Mr. Ivan Lewis:** The UK supports the aims of the Quartet, which are aligned with UK interests. Mr. Blair has made a significant contribution to these aims through his work as Quartet Representative. I refer the hon. Member to my answer in parliamentary question 309256.

**Norman Baker:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will list the achievements of Tony Blair in his role as Middle East peace envoy. [309256]

**Mr. Ivan Lewis:** We fully support the efforts of the Quartet Representative. He has brought important focus on efforts to create economic development.

We have seen some real progress on the ground. There has been an estimated 5 per cent. real growth in gross domestic product in 2008. This increase is due to a combination of factors especially a strong lead from the Palestinian Authority and strong donor support, but we judge that the Quartet Representative has made a valuable contribution.

The Quartet Representative has also played a strong role on a number of specific projects including the recent launch of Wataniya, the second telephony operator in the Palestinian Territories.

**Norman Baker:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs on how many occasions Tony Blair has provided a written briefing to his Department pursuant to his role as Middle East peace envoy since 1 January 2009. [309257]

**Mr. Ivan Lewis:** The Office of the Quartet Representative regularly reports to Quartet members and donors. The Quartet Representative is also in regular contact with my right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary, as are his officials with our officials at the Foreign and Commonwealth Office.

<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm200910/cmhansrd/cm100107/text/100107w0019.htm#10010768000018>

## UK Parliament Early Day Motions

**Richard Burden (536) Gaza** – That this House calls for the immediate lifting of the blockade of the Gaza Strip, which 12 months on from Israel's invasion of the territory continues to prevent both the unfettered distribution of humanitarian aid and the reconstruction of Gaza's shattered infrastructure; notes that Operation Cast Lead, launched on 27th December 2008, killed 1,300 Palestinians, including 340 children, damaged or destroyed 50,000 homes, 280 schools and kindergartens, as well as numerous hospitals; further notes that under Israel's blockade essential food items and fuel are routinely prevented from entering the territory, whilst over two-thirds of the population live in poverty and require United Nations aid merely to survive; highlights the fact that many Palestinians, now suffering in the grip of winter, are forced to live in temporary shelters or partially destroyed homes; and calls on the Government to apply meaningful pressure upon Israel to abide by UN Security Council Resolution 1860 and end this flagrant abuse of international law.

<http://edmi.parliament.uk/EDMi/EDMDetails.aspx?EDMID=40111&SESSION=903>

## Downing Street

### Letter to Medical Aid for Palestinians

The Prime Minister has written a letter to Medical Aid for Palestinians, in response to an open letter from the charity published in The Observer.

Dear Friends

Your open letter to me of 27 December in The Observer was right to draw attention to the grave humanitarian situation in Gaza, one year after a conflict that cost over a thousand Palestinian lives and those of over ten Israelis.

As I have made clear repeatedly to the Israeli government, it is unacceptable that Israel continues to prevent aid from reaching those who so badly need it in Gaza. EU Foreign Ministers reinforced our call for full humanitarian access earlier this month.

Alongside diplomatic pressure, I pledge that the UK will remain in the forefront of the humanitarian effort. Following the offensive a year ago, we spent £20 million on humanitarian aid for the people of Gaza.

And on 28 December, Douglas Alexander announced a total package of £53.5

million for Palestine, with a particular focus on Gaza - including £5 million of new funding for the United Nations' work with Gazan refugees.

While Hamas' actions can be no justification for preventing aid reaching the people of Gaza, Hamas must remove the menace of rocket attacks against the people of southern Israel, and release Gilad Shalit.

Ultimately, we can only give the people of Gaza real hope when genuine negotiations bring a lasting and just peace settlement. The parameters of such a potential agreement are clear. In the coming year, we must pursue still more vigorously a comprehensive peace based on secure and viable states of Israel and Palestine. For all of our futures, those who oppose justice and peace for the peoples of the region must not be allowed to prevail.

<http://www.number10.gov.uk/Page21953>

## Foreign and Commonwealth Office

### Viva Palestina convoy

UK government condemns the shooting of an Egyptian border guard and has raised the reported violence involving the Viva Palestina convoy with the Egyptian authorities. ... We have raised the reported violence involving the Viva Palestina convoy with the Egyptian authorities, and are also in regular contact with the Viva Palestina organisers. We have also raised reports concerning the possible detention of one or more British Nationals. We will provide appropriate consular assistance to any British National that requests or needs it. Our Travel Advice to all travellers to Egypt is to avoid political gatherings and demonstrations, and respect any advice or instruction from the local security authorities.

The Government's clear advice is against all travel to Gaza and we have repeatedly set this out to the organisers of the Viva Palestina Convoy. Any medical and other essential specialist staff seeking to access Gaza should co-ordinate their entry to Gaza with the major international humanitarian organisations already on the ground. The UK Government has already pledged nearly £47 million of humanitarian aid to these organisations since the start of the conflict.

We have also made clear repeatedly to the Israeli government that it is unacceptable that Israel continues to prevent aid from reaching those who so badly need it in Gaza. EU Foreign Ministers reinforced our call for full humanitarian access in December. The suffering of Gazan people is compounded by the violent and irresponsible actions of Hamas. We are concerned by the recent upsurge in incidents of Hamas confiscating aid and obstructing the efforts of international aid organisations in Gaza.

<http://www.fco.gov.uk/en/news/latest-news/?view=News&id=21535644>

## Scottish Parliament Motions

**S3M-05463 Sandra White (Glasgow) (Scottish National Party): Scottish Development International Trade Mission to Israel**— That the Parliament notes with concern the proposed trade mission on 10 to 15 January 2010 organised by Scottish Development International (SDI) to Israel, a state that is currently in contravention of numerous United Nations General Assembly and Security Council resolutions and stands accused of serious violations of international human rights and humanitarian law during the Gaza conflict, amounting to war crimes and possibly crimes against humanity; notes that this trade mission was postponed in January 2009 after advice from the Foreign and Commonwealth Office in the wake of Israel's December 2008 offensive, and, while welcoming the Scottish Government's clear position on the situation in Gaza and the substantial package of humanitarian aid announced last year by the Deputy First Minister, urges SDI to reconsider its current stance while Israel continues to flout international law and stands accused of possible crimes against humanity.

<http://www.scottish.parliament.uk/Apps2/business/motions/Default.aspx?motionid=18024>

**S3M-05457 Pauline McNeill (Glasgow Kelvin) (Scottish Labour): Gaza Now Exhibition Marks the Anniversary of the War on Gaza**— That the Parliament marks the first anniversary of the bombing of Gaza during the 22-day war that took place between 27 December 2008 and 18 January 2009 by exhibiting the Gaza Now exhibition, hosted by Edinburgh Direct Aid and the Cross-party Group on Palestine; notes with concern that the Gaza war resulted in 1,400 Palestinians and 13 Israelis losing their lives, leaving in its wake a massive humanitarian disaster, with more than 400,000 Gazans left without running water while 4,000 homes were destroyed or damaged, leaving tens of thousands of people homeless; believes that all perpetrators of war crimes during Operation Cast Lead should be brought to justice; recognises the importance of the Goldstone report, which states that facts discovered during the mission led the team to conclude that Israel's objective in the attack was to punish, humiliate and terrorise a civilian population; supports the recommendation in the Goldstone report that, to uphold respect for human rights and show no tolerance of state impunity from international law, there must be an independent and credible investigation of war crimes; reaffirms its support for Israel to withdraw from the occupied territories, and supports the creation of a viable independent Palestinian state.

<http://www.scottish.parliament.uk/Apps2/business/motions/Default.aspx?motionid=18017>

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## Foreign Affairs

### UK Parliamentary Question

#### Hezbollah

**Mr. Gregory Campbell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether he plans to apply any conditions in respect of the abandonment of the use of force by Hezbollah in his Department's contacts with Hezbollah politicians. [308556]

**Mr. Ivan Lewis:** The UK's policy towards contact with Hezbollah remains unchanged. Our objective is that Hezbollah reject violence and play a constructive, democratic and peaceful role in Lebanese politics, in line with UN Security Council Resolutions. We believe that occasional and carefully considered contacts with Hezbollah's politicians, including its MPs, will best advance this goal.

Any contacts will take place on a case by case basis. We are only interested in serious dialogue with Hezbollah and about issues of national importance to Lebanon and the region.

<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm200910/cmhansrd/cm100106/text/100106w0019.htm#1001071000042>

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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>

#### 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>

## **\*\* Flood and Water Management Bill**

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

notice of amendments

<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm200910/cmbills/009/amend/psc0090701a.49-55.html>

## **Scottish Parliament**

### **Census (Scotland) Order 2010**

[http://www.opsi.gov.uk/legislation/scotland/ssi2010/draft/pdf/sdsi\\_9780111007037\\_en.pdf](http://www.opsi.gov.uk/legislation/scotland/ssi2010/draft/pdf/sdsi_9780111007037_en.pdf)

### **Executive Note**

[http://www.opsi.gov.uk/legislation/scotland/ssi2010/draft/en/sdsien\\_9780111007037\\_en.pdf](http://www.opsi.gov.uk/legislation/scotland/ssi2010/draft/en/sdsien_9780111007037_en.pdf)

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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](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