

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

Prime Ministerial Statement

Statement on security and counter-terrorism

The Prime Minister: ... I should like to update the House on the measures we are taking to enhance our security and protection against terrorism. ... The failed attack over Detroit on Christmas day signalled the first operation mounted outside Arabia by "al Qaeda in the Arabian peninsula," the Yemen-based organisation with close links to the al Qaeda core in Pakistan. And we know that a number of terrorist cells are actively trying to attack Britain and other countries.

Earlier this month the Home Secretary and the Transport Secretary made statements to Parliament setting out urgent steps we are taking to enhance aviation security, including new regulations for transit passengers. Today, following the advice the government has received, I want to announce further measures

- to strengthen the protection of our borders and to maximise aviation security
- and to enhance intelligence coordination at home and abroad

... While the UK's borders are already among the strongest in the world I now want to set out how we will further strengthen our protection against would be terrorists:

- first by extending our Home Office Watchlist,
- and second - in partnership with security agencies abroad - improving the sharing of information on individuals of concern.

I can announce today that as well as extending our Watchlist we intend - for the first time - to use the Watchlist as the basis for two new lists: first a no-fly list and second a larger list of those who should be subject to special measures including enhanced screening prior to boarding flights bound for the UK. We will use the new technology we have introduced and our partnerships with police and agencies in other countries to stop those who pose the greatest risk from travelling to this country. ...

... we will by the end of this year be able to check all passengers travelling from other countries to all major airports and ports in the UK, whether they are in transit or whether the UK is their final destination, by checking against the Watchlist 24 hours prior to travel and taking appropriate action. ...

And today my Right Honourable Friend the Home Secretary is meeting with his European counterparts to push for swift agreement at EU level on the ability to collect and process data on passenger records, including on travel within the EU, and to enforce the European Commission's recent approval of the transmission of advanced passenger information to our e-Borders system by carriers based in other member states. ... greater security in our airports, with new body scanners introduced from next week, an increase in explosive trace testing, and use of dogs, must be matched by demanding greater

guarantees about security in those international airports from which there are flights into our country.

I can today inform the House that we have agreed with Yemenia airlines - pending enhanced security - that they suspend their direct flights to the UK from Yemen with immediate effect. ...

I have asked the Cabinet Secretary to lead on intelligence co-ordination, our three intelligence agencies have already begun to set up joint investigating and targeting teams to address potential threats upstream long before the individuals concerned might reach our shores - ensuring that at all times we continue to deliver improvements in the way we collect, share and use intelligence, building on previous reforms including the Joint Terrorism Analysis Centre in 2003, and the Office of Security and Counter Terrorism and the National Security Secretariat in 2007. ...

... since 2001 we have reformed domestic defences against the terrorist threat: trebled our domestic security budget, doubled the staff in the security services, and reformed our security structures to bring greater coordination across government; ... nearly 230 people have been convicted of terrorist or terrorist-related offences since 2001. ...

To read the full statement see

<http://www.number10.gov.uk/Page22206>

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UK Parliamentary Questions

Middle East

2. Andrew Rosindell (Romford) (Con): What [the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs'] most recent assessment is of progress towards peace in the middle east; and if he will make a statement. [311314]

The Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs (David Miliband): There is a huge degree of concern in the middle east and around the world at the deadlock in the drive for a credible route to a credible state for the Palestinians, enabling them to live alongside a secure Israel. The UK shares this concern and therefore strongly supports the efforts of Senator Mitchell to establish such a process with such a goal.

Andrew Rosindell: Does the Foreign Secretary share my horror that the rocket attacks from Gaza against Israel continue unabated? Will he tell us what the Government are doing to put pressure on the Palestinian authorities to end this outrage ...

David Miliband: I am happy to share with the hon. Gentleman a condemnation of rocket attacks, although I think he has to be very careful indeed before he puts those rocket attacks at the door of the Palestinian Authority, which he sought to do. As he will know, the rocket attacks come from Gaza, and the tragedy of the Palestinians is that the Palestinian Authority does not have control over Gaza. I hope that the hon. Gentleman does not want to send a message from the House that there is condemnation of President Abbas or Prime Minister Fayyad-who, frankly, offer the best hope for the Palestinians-rather than of Hamas, which is sending the rockets.

Sir Gerald Kaufman (Manchester, Gorton) (Lab): Is my right hon. Friend aware that I returned yesterday from leading a delegation of 60 European parliamentarians from 13 countries, including 11 from this Parliament, to Gaza where we saw for ourselves the appalling destruction inflicted on civilian life by the Israelis. ... When is action going to be taken to lift this illegal siege and bring justice to the Palestinians?

David Miliband: My right hon. Friend is absolutely right to say that the other side of the coin to the rocket attacks from Gaza is the siege of Gaza. ... resolution 1860, passed by the United Nations Security Council about a year ago under

British sponsorship, calls both for an end to arms smuggling and the firing of rockets and for the lifting of the blockade on Gaza. It is important to say that that applies from the Egyptian as well as the Israeli side.

Mr. Crispin Blunt (Reigate) (Con): Particularly as the Egyptians tighten the border around Rafah, what is the Foreign Secretary's understanding of the responsibilities of the Israelis under the Geneva convention towards Gaza as an occupied territory?

David Miliband: ... The responsibilities of both the Israeli Government and the Egyptians are laid out very clearly in UN Security Council resolution 1860. ...

Mrs. Louise Ellman (Liverpool, Riverside) (Lab/Co-op): Does my right hon. Friend agree that it is outrageous that Tzipi Livni, a strong supporter of the two-state solution, is unable to visit this country to discuss the way through to peace, providing justice for both Israelis and Palestinians, for fear of arrest? When is action going to be taken to stop this deplorable state of affairs?

David Miliband: It is very important that this country, as a permanent member of the Security Council, is able to talk to all leaders from around the world who are involved in conflicts and disputes, including those from Israel, including Mrs. Livni. That is not in contradiction to our determination to uphold our responsibilities for so-called universal jurisdiction; ... We do ourselves no good by preventing ourselves from having a serious discussion with the Israeli Government or the Israeli opposition on these important issues.

Mr. David Lidington (Aylesbury) (Con): Does the Foreign Secretary agree that we will not get peace or reconciliation in the middle east unless the people of Gaza can see some hope not only of reconstruction, but of a normal life in the future? ...

David Miliband: ... Gaza has to be part of the solution of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. It cannot be left until last. However, the Palestinian divisions do neither them nor the prospects of peace any good.

... the Gaza issue has become tied up with the question of the continued detention of Corporal Shalit. This is a further complication, and it is in everybody's interests both that Corporal Shalit is released as soon as possible ...

Richard Burden (Birmingham, Northfield) (Lab): Did my right hon. Friend see last night's "Panorama" report, which sketched very graphically the systematic dispossession and expropriation of Palestinian properties in East Jerusalem? It appears to many of us that Israel feels it can do this without consequence, even though the international community may express displeasure. Will he say what the consequences for Israel could be if it continues with that illegal policy?

David Miliband: I am sorry to have to tell my hon. Friend that I did not watch last night's "Panorama" programme as I was otherwise occupied. The point he makes is important, however, because, as we know, Jerusalem is the tinderbox to beat all tinderboxes, and the process of evictions in East Jerusalem-never mind the settlement building-is a direct threat to the achievement of the sort of peace and stability that would be vital for any peace talks to make progress. It is important that the international community does express displeasure-to repeat the word my hon. Friend used-and it is also very important that all sides honour the commitments required of them under United Nations and other resolutions.

To read the full transcript see

<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm200910/cmhansrd/cm100119/debtext/100119-0001.htm#10011957000020>

Viva Palestina Convoy

11. Paul Rowen (Rochdale) (LD): What recent reports [the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs] has received on the Viva Palestina convoy to Gaza; and if he will make a statement. [311323]

The Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office (Mr. Ivan Lewis): The Government remained in close contact with the convoy organisers and the Egyptian Government. The Government's clear advice is against all travel to

Gaza. We set that out to the Viva Palestina convoy organisers, and we provided appropriate consular assistance to all the convoy members who requested it.

Paul Rowen: ... given that it is now 12 months since the Israelis withdrew from Gaza, what steps are the Government taking to ensure that convoys and aid can reach the stricken people of Palestine?

Mr. Lewis: ... at every opportunity, Britain makes it clear that it is Israel's responsibility-and, indeed, Egypt's responsibility-to remove all obstacles to humanitarian assistance. ... Alongside that, we have made it very clear that we call on Hamas to do everything to stop the rocket attacks that have recently restarted against Israel, and to release Gilad Shalit as a matter of urgency.

Mr. David Winnick (Walsall, North) (Lab): In view of the destruction that Gaza suffered last year, and arising from previous answers by the Foreign Secretary, is my hon. Friend aware that it would be wrong and harmful to Britain's reputation if the law here on suspected war criminals were changed in order to protect former Israeli Ministers or, indeed, former Ministers anywhere, and does he agree that the law should remain as it is?

Mr. Lewis: My right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary has made it very clear that we will uphold our international obligations in terms of those accused of war crimes. However, Israel is an important strategic partner and a close friend of the United Kingdom. If we are to bring peace to the middle east and make a significant contribution to kick-starting the beginning of a political process that will lead to the two-state solution, which all Members of this House fundamentally believe in, it cannot be right that leaders of Israel are unable to enter this country because of what we believe to be an unintended consequence of the universal jurisdiction laws.

To read the full transcript see

<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm200910/cmhansrd/cm100119/debtext/100119-0003.htm#10011957000028>

Topical Questions

col 154 T3. [311340] **Andrew Selous** (South-West Bedfordshire) (Con): On 1 December, the Foreign Secretary said that he would follow up the issue of the 8,000 desks provided by the United Nations for schoolchildren in Gaza that cannot be assembled because Israel will not let in the screws and brackets. Could he kindly tell the House what follow-up action he has taken since then?

David Miliband: I cannot, but I will write to the hon. Gentleman as soon as we get an answer. I asked for the issue to be followed up, and I will certainly write to him and place a copy of the letter in the Library.

col 157 **Rob Marris** (Wolverhampton, South-West) (Lab): The Foreign Secretary today repeated that the UK Government favour sanctions against Iran because that country might be trying to develop nuclear weapons. However, the UK Government do not support sanctions against the state of Israel, which already has nuclear weapons. Will he please explain that contradiction?

David Miliband: I do not think that that is a contradiction because, first of all, we are clear that the possession of nuclear weapons by any state in the middle east is not a contribution towards peace in that region. That is why we have long supported a middle east that is free of nuclear weapons. Secondly, Iran is a signatory to the non-proliferation treaty. I would have liked to see Israel itself sign the NPT a long time ago, but it did not do so. Thirdly, it is very clear in the Arab world that although the Israeli programme may be viewed with disdain, it has not been the basis for mass proliferation in the middle east. The danger of the Iranian programme is that it will be the basis for precisely that sort of proliferation right across the Arab world. ...

<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm200910/cmhansrd/cm100119/debtext/100119-0003.htm#10011957000030>

col 158 **Jeremy Corbyn (Islington, North) (Lab):** May I take my right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary back to the answer that he gave to my hon. Friend the Member for Wolverhampton, South-West (Rob Marris), which contained a huge non sequitur? If my right hon. Friend is condemning Iran, as I would, for developing nuclear weapons, why cannot he-in the same unequivocal terms-condemn Israel for holding and developing nuclear weapons? There is an obvious danger of proliferation in the region simply because there are nuclear weapons there and, therefore, an implied threat.

David Miliband: We do clearly say that that policy of a middle east free of nuclear weapons is the right vision for the future. Equally, I think that it is right to recognise that the development of the Iranian programme is of concern not just in Israel, but right across the Arab world. Now, it is absolutely clear that if the Iranians do go ahead and develop a nuclear weapons capability, the chances of Israel disarming are zero, and that is why the immediate challenge that we face does relate to the Iranian programme. That is why it is very important to stop the rot in the NPT before it gets any deeper.

T7. [311344] **Mr. Mark Harper (Forest of Dean) (Con):** I listened carefully to the Foreign Secretary's answer to the hon. Member for Liverpool, Riverside (Mrs. Ellman). He agreed, I think, that leaders of Israel should be able to come to the United Kingdom without fear of arrest. What I did not hear in his answer was the steps that the British Government will take to ensure that that can happen.

David Miliband: The issue arises in respect of an anomaly in English law with respect to the taking out of arrest warrants on the basis of so-called prima facie evidence—a different test than is required for prosecution. So under English law, arrest warrants can be issued even when there is no chance of a prosecution taking place. The Government are looking at ways to remedy that anomaly, but it is important that we do so in a way that preserves our commitments to pursue war crimes and allows private individuals to make representations in such cases. When we have been through all the legal aspects, we will come forward to the House with an answer.

col 159 **Jane Kennedy (Liverpool, Wavertree) (Lab):** Did my right hon. Friend hear the comments by Khalil al-Hayya yesterday in which he roundly rejected the Egyptian proposals for reconciliation on the Egyptian border with Gaza? Does not that clearly indicate the responsibility that Hamas carries for the suffering of its own people?

David Miliband: My right hon. Friend is right that Hamas bears a strong responsibility for seeking reconciliation on a basis that would allow the Palestinian people to find a way to achieve the state that should be their right, but is not yet their reality. Hamas bears a heavy responsibility in that area. Given that the whole Arab world has endorsed the Arab peace initiative, the question is why Hamas has not, and that question needs to be repeated again and again.

<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm200910/cmhansrd/cm100119/debtext/100119-0004.htm>

Israeli Officials: Arrest Warrants

Lord Anderson of Swansea: To ask Her Majesty's Government what was the outcome of their consideration on preventing the issuing of arrest warrants for senior Israelis visiting the United Kingdom.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Ministry of Justice (Lord Bach): My Lords, Her Majesty's Government are looking at this issue urgently. No decisions have yet been made.

Lord Anderson of Swansea: My Lords, Hamas is an Islamist organisation which does not deal gently with its rivals, the opposition in Gaza. Is it not therefore absurd that it can work with friendly lawyers to obtain an ex parte arrest warrant, in effect preventing the visit to the UK of the leader of the opposition of a friendly and democratic ally? ... Is it true, as reported, that the Government will give the Attorney-General the power to veto

similar applications which harm our diplomatic relations? If so, would that need primary legislation?

Lord Bach: ... no decisions have yet been made on this matter. As for any proposal to limit universal jurisdiction, as a party to certain international conventions, the United Kingdom has legislated to give the courts jurisdiction over some grave offences whether they were committed in the UK or elsewhere, or whether by UK nationals or otherwise. We have no intention of restricting what is called universal jurisdiction. Israel is a strategic partner and a close friend of the United Kingdom. We are determined to protect and develop these ties. Israeli leaders, like leaders from other countries, must be able to visit and have a proper dialogue with the British Government.

Lord Lamont of Lerwick: ... Were the Government not repeatedly warned during proceedings on the International Criminal Court Bill that the imposition of universal jurisdiction had profound implications for diplomacy and would make conflict resolution in certain parts of the world more difficult? ... surely it must be a principle that they are enforced not by the Foreign Secretary or politicians, but by the courts and the courts alone.

Lord Bach: ... It is open to anyone to apply to a magistrate for an arrest warrant in respect of such an offence against a person who is present in the country. While prosecution of these offences requires the consent of the Attorney-General, consent need not have been given before an arrest warrant is issued. All that is necessary is that there is prima facie evidence, which is much less than would be essential for the Attorney-General to instigate a prosecution.

Baroness Northover: My Lords, is this not about the separation of legal and political powers? Yet the Foreign Secretary and the Attorney-General apologised to the Israelis and said that they will seek to change our law on war crimes. ... Will the Minister therefore guarantee that no change will be made to this law because of political pressure?

Lord Bach: ... if one is to arrest on warrant, that does not require the Attorney's consent; if one is to arrest on summons, it does. ... Of course political pressure will not play a part in our decision. ...

Lord Pannick: Does the Minister accept that it is anomalous that a prosecution may be brought in this context only with the consent of the Attorney-General yet an arrest warrant may be issued without the consent of the Attorney-General? That will inevitably have the effect of deterring people from coming here who will not be prosecuted because the Attorney will not give her consent, which will damage the ability of politicians to come to this country for the purpose of discussing the peace process, and it will prevent other persons-military officials and security officials-coming here to aid this country in the fight against terrorism.

Lord Bach: ... It is an anomaly, but it is also, as the law stands, the right of a citizen to bring prima facie evidence before a magistrate in order to effect an arrest. ...

Lord Clinton-Davis: Does my noble friend agree that this delay is unconscionable and intensely damaging to the interests of this country and Israel? Is he aware that Israeli leaders past and present are deterred from coming to this country?

Lord Bach: ... of course it does not affect those currently in the Israeli Government, although it did affect Mrs Livni, who, as has already been said, is a most distinguished leader of the opposition in Israel. I repeat that we have close relations with Israel and intend to continue to do so. The Israelis of course understand that we have a difficulty with our law here....

Lord Dykes: ... Can the Minister say what the Government's reaction was to the striking full-page advert in the *Times* at the beginning of December from respected members of the international Jewish community in Britain and elsewhere saying that Israel should submit to war crimes trials? ...

Lord Elystan-Morgan: Does the Minister not agree that the sweet words of Hamas are not entirely balanced by its deeds in this matter? Is he aware that, since the fighting

ended in Gaza some 11 months ago, 284 rockets and mortar bombs have been fired at the towns and cities of southern Israel, each with the malicious desire and expectation that it would bring about death and destruction?

Lord Bach: I have read about what happened last year in Gaza and what happened to citizens both of Israel and in Gaza. It is certainly not my job to comment on that at this Dispatch Box this afternoon.

To read the full transcript see

<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/ld200910/ldhansrd/text/100119-0001.htm#10011960000545>

West Bank

14. Mr. McCartney: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what recent reports he has received on restrictions on movement of Palestinians in the west bank; and if he will make a statement. [311326]

Mr. Ivan Lewis: The UK welcomes Israel's recent easing of restrictions on movement in the west bank and urges Israel to continue to remove barriers. We also look forward to the implementation of the ruling by the Israeli High Court, on 29 December 2009, which allowed for Palestinians to be able to access Route 443.

<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm200910/cmhansrd/cm100119/text/100119w0016.htm#10011963000004>

Middle East Peace Envoy

18. Norman Baker: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what recent reports he has received from the Quartet's middle east peace envoy on the envoy's activities. [311330]

Mr. Ivan Lewis: The Office of the Quartet Representative reports regularly to Quartet members and donors. The most recent report we received was on 13 January 2010, confirming they had secured an extension of the Tarkumiya commercial goods crossing opening hours.

<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm200910/cmhansrd/cm100119/text/100119w0017.htm#10011963000008>

Palestinians: Overseas Aid

Dr. Starkey: To ask the Secretary of State for International Development how many armoured cars have been purchased with funds from his Department for the use of the UN Relief and Works Agency in Gaza since January 2008; what the total cost was to his Department; how many such vehicles have entered Gaza; how many are stored awaiting permission to enter Gaza; and what the cost to his Department has been to date of such vehicle storage prior to their delivery to Gaza. [311197]

Mr. Michael Foster: The Department of International Development (DFID) donated three armoured cars to the UN following the conflict in Gaza. These arrived in Israel during January 2009. The UN Relief and Works Agency took responsibility for the clearance of the vehicles into Israel. Two of these vehicles entered Gaza in June 2009. The third car has been transferred, with our agreement, to the World Food programme, which expects to transfer it into Gaza in the next month.

The cost of the vehicles was approximately £320,000 and DFID has also spent £101, 000 on freight and handling costs. The UN is liaising with the Israeli authorities on storage costs. DFID has not paid any storage costs to date.

<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm200910/cmhansrd/cm100119/text/100119w0023.htm#10011973000027>

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UK Parliament

**** Children, Schools and Families Bill**

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

Public Bill Committee amendments

<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm200910/cmbills/008/amend/pbc008190110a.65-69.html>

Committee Stage, House of Commons

<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm200910/cmpublic/childsch/100119/am/100119s01.htm>

and

<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm200910/cmpublic/childsch/100119/pm/100119s01.htm>

**** Constitutional Reform and Governance Bill**

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

Committee Stage, House of Commons

<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm200910/cmhansrd/cm100119/debtext/100119-0008.htm#10011957000002>

Supplement to the votes and proceedings

<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm200910/cmbills/004/pro0041901p.79-85.html>

**** Crime and Security Bill**

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

Scottish Parliament Justice Committee

<http://www.scottish.parliament.uk/s3/committees/justice/or-10/ju10-0302.htm#Col2627>

**** Equality Bill**

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

Committee Stage, House of Lords

<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/ld200910/ldhansrd/text/100119-0002.htm#10011960000549>

and

<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/ld200910/ldhansrd/text/100119-0014.htm#10011994000269>

amendments to be moved in Committee: supplement to the third marshalled list

<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/ld200910/ldbills/020/amend/su020-iiib.htm>

**** Flood and Water Management Bill**

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

Public Bill Committee Proceedings

<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm200910/cmbills/009/pro0091901p.17-23.html>

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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

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