

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

Equality Bill (Religious Groups)

2. Andrew Rosindell (Romford) (Con): What recent discussions she has had with religious groups on the provisions of the Equality Bill. [313702]

The Minister for Women and Equality (Ms Harriet Harman): Ministers in this House-in particular my hon. Friend the Parliamentary Secretary, Government Equalities Office-and Ministers in the Lords have had a number of discussions with religious and belief groups and have received a number of representations relating to religion or belief since the introduction of the Equality Bill. Such discussions and representations are ongoing.

Andrew Rosindell: Will the Minister finally admit that were it not for the successful amendment from Baroness O'Cathain in the House of Lords earlier this week, the Equality Bill as unamended would have further restricted employment for people working in religious organisations?

Ms Harman: No, it would not. We thought that it would be helpful for everyone involved to clarify the law, and that is what the amendment that we brought forward aimed to do. That amendment was rejected. However, it would be helpful for the House to understand that there are religious jobs and non-religious jobs within organisations. For example, I would say that a pensions assistant ensuring that the records database is kept up to date was not doing a religious job. I would also say that issuing and processing invoices, even if it is done in the employment of the Church of England, is not a religious job.

To make it clear, the law applies to religious organisations when they employ people in non-religious jobs in the same way that it does to everyone else. We have always been clear that we are not going to insist on non-discrimination in relation to religious jobs such as being a vicar, a bishop, an imam or a rabbi. The law has stepped back from that and said that religious organisations can decide themselves how to do that. However, when it comes to non-religious jobs, those organisations must comply with the law, and that is how the law remains.

Mr. Mark Harper (Forest of Dean) (Con): The Minister will know that before the Government's defeat, her Bill as unamended did not even make it clear that ministers of religion would have to live in accordance with the faith of their religion. Following the Government's defeat in the other place not once but three times, by a coalition led by Conservative peers, bishops and Cross Benchers, the Bill has been improved. Can the Minister confirm that the Government will accept the decision in the other place to enable Churches to insist that key posts be held by those who live in accordance with the tenets of their faith, or will she seek to reverse that defeat in this House?

Ms Harman: I think that the hon. Gentleman is trying to perpetrate a further misunderstanding. We are absolutely clear that we have never intended to extend the non-discrimination provisions to ministers of religion, nor have we ever tried to do so. Therefore they are exempted. We have always made it absolutely clear that they are and will continue to be exempted from the non-discrimination laws, and we have not sought to change that. There has been an issue about what is or is not a religious job, and we sought to clarify that. Our helpful clarification was not regarded as helpful in the House of Lords, and therefore the amendment was defeated. We will consider how to respond to that, but an official announcement will be made in due course, once these things have gone through the machinery, as it were. However, I would reassure hon. Members that the policy will remain as it is, and I would not want to lead them to anticipate that it will be brought forward again in this House.

<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm200910/cmhansrd/cm100128/debtext/100128-0003.htm#10012853000030>

Communities and Local Government

Citizenship Survey: April – September 2009, England

includes a section on racial or religious harassment

<http://www.communities.gov.uk/documents/statistics/pdf/1448135.pdf>

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Holocaust

UK Parliament Debate

Holocaust Memorial Day

includes:

col 964 **The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government (Mr. Shahid Malik):** ... it is right that we stand together as one to send a clear message to those who minimise, dispute or even deny the relevance of these issues today. As someone who has visited the Majdanek death camp, I feel repulsed by some of those individuals.

I am confident that hon. Members will join me in ensuring that the message from the House today is not just to condemn the atrocities of the past, but to affirm their ability to speak to us now. When speaking of the Holocaust, there is a constant risk. To many of us, the sheer scale of the horror is too much to take in. ...

the Holocaust Educational Trust, its chief executive, Karen Pollock, and its chair, Lord Janner, do an amazing job. That is why I am very pleased that between 2006 and 2011 this Government will have invested a total of some £9 million, which has already led to about 4,500 pupils and 1,000 teachers being able to go out there and really experience it.

Mr. Andrew Pelling: ... The Holocaust Educational Trust tells us of the sheer industrial scale of the evil of man to man. I went to Auschwitz-Birkenau, where so much evil was perpetrated in such a dreadful fashion. We must always remember that ...

col 965 **Mr. Malik:** ... We cannot describe the enormity of what we have read about or witnessed on visits to death camps. We cannot begin to relate to the hatred that motivated people to act so barbarically. We cannot understand how people abandoned their own humanity to participate in such horrors. Many others before us have looked at the holocaust and said, "Never again"; but appallingly the Shoah, even if unparalleled in scale, was not the horror that ended all horrors. ... At least 200,000 Roma and Sinti people were killed. It is right that we acknowledge the suffering of all those who suffered

at the hands of the Nazis: some 11 million in total—a conservative figure—and 6 million of them because they were Jewish. ...

Dr. Andrew Murrison: ... the real genius of the trust is its ability to trace the development of anti-Semitism in Germany and to impress upon young people that this happened not simply in isolation but, disturbingly and disquietingly, has parallels with the way that we live our lives today? That brings it home to young people that such things could happen again, and, one hopes, helps us to guard against that. That is the real message of the Holocaust Educational Trust. ...

col 967 **Angela Watkinson:** ... One of the most chilling lessons that I learned from visiting Auschwitz-Birkenau was that, to those who conducted the mass killings, these were not wild, emotional and uncontrolled murders, but dispassionate, calculated, organised and justified. Meticulous records of the killings were kept. Does the Minister agree that we must learn that lesson and be aware of that aspect if we are to ensure that such things never happen again? ...

<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm200910/cmhansrd/cm100128/debtext/100128-0007.htm#10012853000005>

col 968 **Mr. Malik:** ... I pay tribute again to the chief executive of the Holocaust Educational Trust, Karen Pollock, and to its chair, Lord Janner. I pay tribute to them for the work that they have done with all political parties and for the way in which they have captured the imagination of young people throughout the country through their work. I pay special tribute to Stephen Smith, the former chair of the Holocaust Memorial Day Trust, who has gone on to be chief executive of the Shoah Foundation in the USA. That is just recognition of the exceptional skill and commitment he brought to bear in raising awareness of the holocaust, through the trust and elsewhere, in a way that is meaningful to our lives today. The money from the Government has been magnified many times over through his dedication and that of other colleagues. ...

col 969 **Robert Neill:** ... The other thing that struck me at Auschwitz-Birkenau came from looking at many photographs, which I also had the chance to do when I visited the holocaust museum in Israel. I thought back to the photographs that I saw of my parents as young people and my grandparents at about the same time, in the 1930s and '40s. Those in the photographs that I saw were the same type of people, from every rank of society and dressed in much the same fashions of the time. In a sense, it could have been my parents and grandparents. ... I was struck by an interesting article in *The Times* by my hon. Friend the Member for Surrey Heath (Michael Gove), who made the interesting and historically justified point that anti-Semitism is a virus that mutates. The hon. Member for Glasgow, East (John Mason) mentioned the expulsion of the Jews from this country in mediaeval times, and my hon. Friend pointed out in his article that over the years, the rationalisation for anti-Semitism has changed and been twisted. Initially it was perhaps on the basis of religion, the blood libel and so on, and then it was twisted almost in Nietzschean terms to a scientific, race selection reason. Even today, we have to be alert to the fact that it mutates again into a denial of the right of the Jewish people to self-determination and a homeland.

Mrs. Louise Ellman: Does the hon. Gentleman share my concern that the Community Security Trust, in its meticulous collection of data, has shown that there has been a record rise in attacks on Jewish people? Is that not a stain on our society?

Robert Neill: The hon. Lady is absolutely right, and I have been greatly impressed by the impeccable work of the CST. I have come across a number of its organisers and volunteers, and it is right to remember that they do great work. It should be a matter of the deepest concern to all Members that such attacks can continue and that external factors are often perverted to give rise to the increase in anti-Semitism, which I am sure we all condemn. ...

col 973 **Mr. Andrew Dismore:** ... The holocaust is in many ways a living thing in that community. Many debates, discussions and arguments about its implications for modern society go on. However, those discussions are introverted and go on among Jewish

people, and I took the view that we needed to try to turn them outward to engage society as a whole. If there were another holocaust-please God, there will not be-it would not come from within the Jewish community, who would be the victims, but from wider society, as happened in Germany. It would come from people from my sort of background-an ordinary small town in Yorkshire or wherever, where there are not many Jewish people. That is why it is important to turn the debate outwards. ... I pay tribute to Judith Hassan, Jewish Care's director of services for holocaust survivors and refugees, and her staff for the work of the Holocaust Survivors Centre. ...

<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm200910/cmhansrd/cm100128/debtext/100128-0008.htm>

col/ 976 **Mr. Paul Keetch:** ...I too congratulate the Holocaust Educational Trust, Karen Pollock and Lord Janner on the magnificent job they have done in getting the importance of listening and understanding across to young people, who perhaps do not have the same connection that some hon. Members have with those who fought in the war or who remember directly. ...

col/ 978 **Mr. Tony McNulty:** ...I recently did a question time with others at a synagogue in my constituency, and some of the questions asked revolved around the issue of whether it was safe for British Jewry to remain in Britain. The answer is profoundly yes, with qualifications, but if people have to ask that, we have some way to go. ... you cannot equivocate on this issue. You cannot say that you are doing all you can to avoid a subsequent holocaust if you let things slide or pass. I say that not as a partisan point: I genuinely mean it. You cannot indulge Kaminski, given his past. You cannot indulge people who dabble with the history of the Latvian Waffen SS and claim, "That's okay, we don't really mean it and we'll gloss over their history." You cannot do that and mean it when you say, "Never again." The lesson of national Holocaust memorial day must be that you cannot be just a little bit anti-Semitic. You cannot be just a little bit of a holocaust denier, and you cannot be just a little bit in support of terrorism. ... It is a disgrace that at any stage since the inception of national Holocaust memorial day the Muslim Council of Britain has boycotted it. I have said that to its members' faces, so I am not saying anything here that I would not say to them. It is very disappointing that Dr. Abdul Bari decided that Davos was more important than attending the commemorations. That is a matter of profound regret, given the nature and sensitivity of the day. Someone else from MCB attended in a personal capacity, whatever that means, and a rather junior person attended in Dr. Bari's stead. That is a matter for regret for MCB, as well as for the unity that we all seek.

We cannot say "never again" and then indulge Ahmadinejad, the holocaust denier, or others. During the demonstration in London last summer-I was not on it, but I passed it-I saw genuinely sincere people holding banners saying, "We are all Hezbollah now". That made me weep when I saw it. But the leader of that movement thinks that all Jews are the grandsons and granddaughters of pigs and monkeys, he is a holocaust denier and he wants to push Israel into the sea. That is not to say that Israel is above criticism, but that is a different matter. We cannot as a Government or a country equivocate on those points. You cannot be a little in favour of terrorism and fully support national Holocaust memorial day. You cannot, as al-Qaradawi has done, condemn 7/7 here but then say that our little children bombers in the west bank and Gaza will take on Israel because it is a war state and there is no such thing as an Israeli civilian. You cannot equivocate on such matters: you have to condemn, and you have to condemn harshly. ...

col/ 979 **Mr. Lee Scott:** Let me start by paying tribute to Karen Pollock and the Holocaust Educational Trust for the work that it does under her inspirational leadership ...

<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm200910/cmhansrd/cm100128/debtext/100128-0009.htm>

col/ 982 **Mrs. Louise Ellman:** ... The excellent work of the Community Security Trust has revealed record levels of attacks on British Jews. More than 609 incidents were recorded in the first six months of 2009, and increasing numbers of such incidents are

linked with events in the middle east. There is an uneasiness across the Jewish community in this country that has not been felt for generations, and that should be a matter not only for that community but for the whole of our society. British Jews are loyal citizens of this country. They participate in and contribute to all walks of life, yet they feel increasingly uneasy and threatened in their own country.

We should also be concerned about the messages of hate that emanate from various sources, including the internet. We are familiar with the messages of anti-Semitic hate from organisations such as the British National party. We are all aware of those, and we are rightly ready to condemn what those organisations are doing. But are we as ready to condemn the anti-Semitic messages of hate that come from Islamist jihadist sources? They are present in our society, on our university campuses and on the internet.

Are we willing to condemn internet sites such as Hamas's al-Fateh website, which are preaching to British children at this moment messages such as the one in a column entitled "Stories of Uncle Izz al-Din"? The column depicts the Jews "as if they are wolves whose eyes blaze with evil, evil fills their hearts...They are indeed the murderers of the prophets".

Should we allow such a website, with its cartoon headed "Criminal Jews" that depicts a person who is half Israeli soldier, brandishing a gun and with teeth bared, and half stereotyped diaspora Jew, with a skull cap and a big nose, grasping for money? Is it right, as we commemorate Holocaust memorial day, that that internet site should be able to broadcast such messages of hate to children in this country and elsewhere in the world? I am told by the Home Office that it is considering whether there are grounds to stop the website on a voluntary basis. It should make its mind up quickly about that. If we are serious about stopping these messages of hate, we must think not only about the BNP but about Islamist jihadist sources of hate as well. That website is one of them. ...

col 984 **John Mason:** ... The Holocaust Educational Trust is very good at reminding us that we should oppose all discrimination against all minorities and promote understanding and good relationships. ... The Jews have suffered a lot, historically. Back in biblical times, they were treated as slaves in Egypt. They were expelled from Rome during the Roman empire. In 1290, England became the first European country to expel the Jews, and that lasted until 1656. Clearly, I am not a fan of Edward I, for a number of reasons. It was interesting that he expelled the Jews, largely for financial reasons, and that Cromwell brought them back for similar reasons. They were expelled from Spain in 1492, and from Portugal in 1497. It has been said that Scotland is the only European country not to have exercised state persecution of Jews, although there was not a large Jewish population there in the past. Also, I went to the cinema recently with a Jewish friend, and youngsters in the cinema were making anti-Jewish comments, so none of us is exempt from that kind of thing.

As time is limited I shall not go into great detail, but I want to raise the question of why the Jews are the subject of so much hatred historically. There are some superficial reasons such as that the Jews killed Jesus, but, fairly obviously, Jesus was Jewish, all Jesus's early followers were Jewish, and the whole early Christian Church was Jewish. One can say that gentiles such as me who follow the Christian faith are the second-rate believers, and the Jewish ones are the first-rate believers.

What are the lessons to be learned from the holocaust? One is that we need to be peacemakers, not just peacekeepers. As previous speakers have mentioned, it is difficult to separate the Jews from Israel. Clearly, some Jews are opposed to the current existence of Israel, and many are opposed to particular policies of the Israeli Government. I fear that for some people being anti-Israel on the surface is a cover for being anti-Jewish underneath. Among committed Christians, there are those who are pro-Arab, pro-Palestine and anti-Israel, and others who are strongly pro-Israel and seem blind to its failings. ...

col 985 **John Mann:** ... I also urge those on the Front Benches to consider how they can assist the excellent work of Beth Shalom, the only bespoke holocaust centre in this country, which has sadly had to make some staff redundant in recent times. Local

authorities have been unwilling to pay what I would deem an appropriate charge to participate in such educational activities. Engagement by Government and Opposition with James Smith and the team at that centre would be beneficial. In these times of austerity, it is important that such work is not cut back but expanded. ...

<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm200910/cmhansrd/cm100128/debtext/100128-0010.htm>

Welsh Assembly Government

Students to learn lessons from Auschwitz

Students from across Wales will visit Auschwitz- Birkenau in March to learn about the history of the Holocaust and its impact on the world we live in today. The Lessons From Auschwitz Project is run by the Holocaust Educational Trust who have received an £80,000 grant from the Welsh Assembly Government to fund, over time, two students, aged 16-18 years old from every school and college in Wales to take part in the project. ...

First Minister Carwyn Jones said: "It's important that we are able to support this project. It is vital that we remember on Holocaust Memorial Day what can happen if prejudice and discrimination go unchecked. These lessons are as relevant today as they were 60 years ago."

Education Minister Leighton Andrews said: "This Project gives students the opportunity to learn about a harrowing but crucial chapter of European history. Lessons From Auschwitz gives young people the opportunity to gain valuable knowledge of what happened during this terrible period. The scale and devastation of the Holocaust should never be forgotten."

Karen Pollock, Chief Executive of the Holocaust Educational Trust said: "We are delighted that the Welsh Assembly Government has recognised the value of the Lessons from Auschwitz Project and we look forward to working with them to give Welsh students the opportunity to participate in this unique educational opportunity. ...

To read the full press release see

<http://wales.gov.uk/news/latest/100127students/?lang=en>

United Nations

Moroccan Jews the focus of UN event marking legacy of Holocaust survivors

Morocco's tolerance of Jews and its resistance to anti-Semitic policies during World War II were spotlighted today as part of a series of events being held at the United Nations to commemorate victims of the Holocaust.

The North African nation resisted French colonial policies during World War II, refusing to exclude Jews from public functions and not making them wear the yellow Star of David, as had been decreed by the Vichy regime in German-occupied France.

Efforts to whitewash the Holocaust are "a wound to the collective memory, which we know is engraved in one of the most painful chapters in the collective history of mankind," King Mohammed VI said ...

Remembering the Holocaust "strongly imposes ethical, moral and political standards which will, tomorrow, be the true guarantors of this peace – based on equally-shared justice and dignity – and for which most Palestinians and Israelis yearn," he underscored. ... Estimates vary but about 6 million Jews are thought to have been killed in the genocide perpetrated by the Nazis, as well as countless numbers of Roma, Slavs, homosexuals, disabled people, Jehovah's Witnesses, Communists and political dissidents. ...

To read the full press release see

<http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=33609&Cr=holocaust&Cr1=>

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UK Parliament Debate

UK Arrest Warrants (Alleged War Crimes)

includes:

col 1010 **Mr. David Winnick:** ... the right of private individuals, including lawyers, to seek arrest warrants for those suspected of war crimes, including those who are resident abroad but who intend to travel to Britain for various reasons, should be retained. ... The case of the former Israeli Foreign Minister has been put forward by Ministers and shadow Ministers as a reason why a change in the law on private prosecutions for alleged war crimes should be made. ... Anyone currently holding ministerial office would not be subject to any such application, so if the person I have mentioned was the current Foreign Minister-or indeed any Minister-in the Israeli Government, the recent case would not have arisen. ... The former Israeli Minister was in office at the time of the Israeli military action against Gaza, and allegations of the most serious nature have been made, because of the manner in which the Israeli action was conducted and the fact that the person in question held such a senior ministerial position. ... the Goldstone report ... concluded that much of what Israel had done in the military operation in Gaza was disproportionate. The report said that some of the bombings and killings "could not on any basis be justified on military grounds", and that Israel had employed a policy that involved "the direct targeting and arbitrary killing of Palestinian civilians".

So it is not surprising, given the allegations and the findings in the Goldstone report, that the judges in Westminster magistrates court decided to issue an arrest warrant.

<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm200910/cmhansrd/cm100128/debtext/100128-0014.htm#10012863000001>

col 1012 **Barry Gardiner:** ... It concerns me greatly that, at many points, his argument relied on the fact that, ultimately, even though an arrest warrant might have been issued, a prosecution would depend on the Attorney-General. That is a dishonest argument, because it suggests that there must be a strong case-I think "strong" was the word he used-with strong evidence, as well as jurisdiction, to secure the agreement of a magistrate to issue the arrest warrant in the first place. My understanding is that there must be a prima facie case.

My hon. Friend's argument relies on a discrepancy between a prima facie case being heard by a magistrate and reliance on his confidence-or on the assertion that in the case under discussion one could have been confident-that no prosecution would be continued with. That is an intellectually dishonest argument, because it says that someone should be allowed to apply for a warrant on a prima facie case and to abuse the law simply to embarrass a political figure, without the serious intent of believing that a prosecution could follow. ... It is important that we are able to secure prosecutions in this country in a timely fashion ... for war criminals who happen to be in the country. My concern is the way in which this situation has created the possibility of further abuse in the future, which might interfere with the proper workings of Government in holding quite proper discussions with politicians not simply from Israel, but from many parts of the world; something it is important for the Government to be able to do. ...

The abuse is precisely in the fact that this was done for publicity purposes, rather than because of any genuine belief that a prosecution had any chance of being successfully brought in this country. That is an abuse of the law, which is why it is important that the Government move to try to stop it. ... I fundamentally agree with my hon. Friend that it is important that cases involving violations of human rights, extra-judicial crimes and war crimes should be able to be entertained within the UK jurisdiction. However, I do not believe that the law should be able to be abused as it was in this case. ...

col 1015 **Jeremy Corbyn:** ... Those who have read my early-day motion will note that it specifically does not mention any individual case-it does not mention the arrest warrant

sought in the case of Tzipi Livni. It is an attempt to defend a very important principle: the right of British courts to arrest people where there is prima facie evidence that they have committed human rights abuses or violated the appropriate United Nations statutes to which this country is also signed up.

The furore about this matter has arisen-it was, doubtless, what provoked my hon. Friend into obtaining this debate-because a universal arrest warrant was sought in the case of Ms Livni. It was obtained in a divisional court on the basis that there was prima facie evidence that she was a party to crimes against humanity during Operation Cast Lead, when Israel bombed Gaza and 1,400 people died. I was in Gaza two weeks ago and witnessed, still, the remnants of that attack. The arguments for changing the law seem to be coming from friends of Ms Livni who say that to prevent her from coming to this country would damage relations between Britain and Israel. They say that the rights and powers of a court to issue an arrest warrant must therefore be removed and that those powers should be placed in the hands of the Attorney-General, who would decide whether to issue the warrant or not. ... My hon. Friend seems to adopt the position that interested parties, be they relatives or sympathisers of a particular group of wronged citizens, have to be removed. However, if we are to deal with human rights abuses, surely we have to be prepared to ensure that the current situation, which I regard as a huge step forward from what existed previously, is maintained, and that we do not change the law in that respect.

When the Minister replies, I hope she will understand that there are many people-in organisations such as Human Rights Watch, Justice, Redress, the International Federation of Human Rights, Global Witness and others-who are very concerned about the political statements made immediately after the non-visit of Ms Livni to this country because of the arrest warrant that had been issued. They urge that Britain stand on the side of universal jurisdiction, and not disappear from it. ...

<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm200910/cmhansrd/cm100128/debtext/100128-0015.htm>

col 1019 **The Solicitor-General (Vera Baird):** ... The criminal law in England and Wales is primarily territorial. That is to say, it applies to acts committed by people of any nationality who are in England and Wales, not ordinarily extending to offences committed outside its borders, even when committed by British citizens. There are exceptions, which are drawn case by case by Parliament. Some such offences cover British nationals outside England and Wales-for instance, in the case of murder. Some such offences extend to UK residents outside the UK-for example, some sex offences, and war crimes, genocide and crimes against humanity in the International Criminal Court Act 2001.

Exceptionally, some offences go further and apply to persons whatever their nationality and wherever the act was committed-for example, grave breaches of the Geneva Conventions Act 1957, torture, and the taking of hostages. As a general principle, that exceptional jurisdiction is the result of international treaty obligations. This is universal jurisdiction. It is a vital part of our law, to which we are 100 per cent. committed.

It is an unusual, though not unique, feature of the criminal law of England and Wales that a private individual may initiate criminal proceedings. That can be done by applying to a magistrate for a summons, which summonses the person to come to court, or by an arrest warrant, which issues forth to arrest and imprison, at least momentarily, the individual in question. The evidence required before a judge is required to issue such process-a summons or an arrest warrant-is very, very limited. The evidence required before a judge is required at law to issue such process ... is little more than some prima facie evidence that an offence known to the law has been committed by the person named-not a prima facie case, some prima facie evidence. Moving on into this process, there is a possible anomaly at present. A warrant for arrest, which is obviously a more draconian process than a summons, can be issued solely on the basis of that level of evidence. As a generality in the case of very serious offences, including war crimes-those that attract universal jurisdiction-the Attorney-General's consent to a prosecution is required. That is as a generality. Without the consent of the Attorney-General, nobody

can be required to answer such an allegation. Without the Attorney-General's consent, a summons cannot be issued on the application of a private individual. However, in the case of a request for an arrest warrant, perhaps oddly, but because of a provision in the Prosecution of Offences Act 1985, there is no requirement for the Attorney-General's consent to be given until later in the process. ...

There can be a potential impact on our international relations if attempts are made by a private person to arrest one of a foreign state's senior politicians during a visit to the UK. There has been discussion about a particular case. We need to be engaged in the middle east, as in other conflicts and post-conflict situations, if we are to carry out our international role as a member of the UN Security Council and negotiate in the interests of our own security. There are inevitably two sides to a conflict, and we need to engage with those who have been, and are, involved in a conflict if we are to be able to try to bring such a conflict to an end or to ease it. It would not be helpful if the use of such a power of application by a private citizen for a warrant for arrest made a person reluctant to visit the UK, notwithstanding that they may have a leadership role within their country and that we need to talk to them about such a matter. ...

I am glad that we have had the opportunity to discuss the matter and that I have had the chance to set out the current position in the law. ... I do not believe any change could be brought about if it were the Government's will to make a change without primary legislation.

<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm200910/cmhansrd/cm100128/debtext/100128-0016.htm>

UK Parliamentary Questions

Israel

Mr. Soames: To ask the Secretary of State for International Development on how many occasions since the end of Operation Cast Lead Ministers from his Department have visited Israel; and if he will make a statement. [314073]

Mr. Michael Foster: I visited Israel in January 2009 and the Secretary of State for International Development visited in March 2009.

<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm200910/cmhansrd/cm100128/text/100128w0023.htm#10012870000218>

Mr. Soames: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs on how many occasions since the end of Operation Cast Lead Ministers from his Department have visited Israel; and if he will make a statement. [314071]

Mr. Ivan Lewis: I visited both Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territories once each, in August 2009. My right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary last visited the region in November 2008.

<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm200910/cmhansrd/cm100128/text/100128w0024.htm#10012870000227>

Gaza

Mr. Soames: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs on how many occasions since the end of Operation Cast Lead UK diplomats from (a) the UK Embassy in Tel Aviv and (b) the British Consulate in Jerusalem have visited Gaza; and if he will make a statement. [314074]

Mr. Ivan Lewis: British officials based in Jerusalem and, to a lesser extent, Tel Aviv, have visited Gaza on more than 20 occasions since January 2009. Our Consulate General in Jerusalem also has two members of local staff permanently based in Gaza.

<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm200910/cmhansrd/cm100128/text/100128w0024.htm#10012870000224>

Palestinians: Humanitarian Aid

Mr. Soames: To ask the Secretary of State for International Development if he will send a Minister from his Department to Gaza to assess the humanitarian situation there; and if he will make a statement. [314072]

Mr. Michael Foster: There are no immediate plans for a Minister from the Department for International Development (DFID) to visit Gaza. Officials from DFID regularly visit Gaza to assess the humanitarian situation. We also maintain close and regular contact with UN agencies and NGOs who are active in Gaza in order to contribute to our assessment of the situation.

Mr. Soames: To ask the Secretary of State for International Development pursuant to the answer of 21 January 2010, *Official Report*, column 467W, on Palestinians: overseas aid, for how long he was in Gaza on 1 March 2009; and if he will make a statement. [314075]

Mr. Michael Foster: The Secretary of State for International Development spent around three hours in Gaza, where he visited a number of locations which had been damaged during the conflict.

Mr. Laurence Robertson: To ask the Secretary of State for International Development what recent discussions he has had with the (a) Government of Egypt and (b) Palestinian authorities on the delivery of humanitarian aid to Gaza; and if he will make a statement. [313435]

Mr. Michael Foster: The Department of International Development (DFID) has not had any recent discussions with the Government of Egypt regarding the delivery of humanitarian aid to Gaza. We believe Israel continues to have obligations as an occupying power with respect to Gaza, and that the main responsibility for ensuring humanitarian access to Gaza therefore lies with Israel rather than Egypt. In mid-January, DFID's director responsible for the Middle East discussed the issue of support for Gaza with Palestinian Authority (PA) Prime Minister Fayyad and with the PA Minister for Planning and Development. DFID's office in Jerusalem also participates in regular meetings of the Humanitarian Task Force, in which the delivery of humanitarian aid to both Gaza and the West Bank is discussed between the UN, donors and the PA.

<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm200910/cmhansrd/cm100128/text/100128w0023.htm#10012870000219>

Israel and Palestine

Lord Dykes: To ask Her Majesty's Government whether they are considering requesting that the European Union representation in the Middle East quartet be more active in encouraging the resumption of direct talks between the Palestinian Authority and Israel; and whether they have recently made representations to the Government of Israel about delays to such talks. [HL1373]

Lord Brett: The EU is an active member of the Middle East quartet. The recent quartet statements of 24 September and 26 June 2009-drafted jointly by quartet members (US, EU, UN and Russia)-stressed the need for the prompt resumption of peace negotiations.

The EU Foreign Affairs Council conclusions of 8 December 2009 underlined the need for "reinvigorated quartet engagement" on the peace process.

The UK permanent representative on the UN Security Council (UNSC) called publicly for the rapid resumption of peace negotiations at the UNSC open debate on the situation in the Middle East on 27 January 2010.

<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/ld200910/ldhansrd/text/100128w0002.htm#10012858000244>

Israel and Palestine: Quartet

Lord Hylton: To ask Her Majesty's Government what was decided at the recent meeting in Brussels of the Middle East quartet. [HL1427]

Lord Brett: Middle East quartet envoys met in Brussels on 13 January 2010. The meeting was an opportunity to exchange views on latest developments on the ground and how the quartet can best advance the Middle East peace process.

<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/ld200910/ldhansrd/text/100128w0002.htm#10012858000245>

Palestine: Refugees

Lord Hylton: To ask Her Majesty's Government whether they will propose that the terms of reference of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the near east be widened to include responsibility for all Palestinian refugees. [HL1396]

Lord Brett: The Department for International Development (DfID) has no plans to make such a proposal.

<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/ld200910/ldhansrd/text/100128w0002.htm#10012858000250>

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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>

Public Bill Committee proceedings

<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm200910/cmbills/008/pro0082801p.11-17.html>

Notice of amendments

<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm200910/cmbills/008/amend/psc008280110a.201-207.html>

** Constitutional Reform and Governance Bill

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

Notice of amendments

<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm200910/cmbills/004/amend/psc0042801a.575-579.html>

** Crime and Security Bill

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

Public Bill Committee proceedings

<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm200910/cmbills/003/pro0032801p.5.html>

Notice of amendments

<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm200910/cmbills/003/amend/psc0032801a.45-48.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/053/amend/pbc0532801a.645-651.html>

Scottish Parliament

End of Life Assistance Bill

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

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Other Relevant Information

Iraq Inquiry

Video and text report of Tony Blair's evidence to the Iraq Inquiry

http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/uk_politics/8486631.stm

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Consultations

**** new or updated**

**** closes in 4 days**

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

Death Certification, Burial, and Cremation (Scotland) (closes 21 April 2010)

<http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Resource/Doc/300112/0093686.pdf>

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