

Political Affairs Brief

A daily summary of political events affecting the Jewish Community

Scottish Council of Jewish Communities

SCoJeC

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BBC

Gordon Brown demands Dubai 'hit squad' passport inquiry

Gordon Brown has called for a "full investigation" into how fraudulent British passports were used by the alleged killers of a Hamas commander. ... Shadow foreign secretary William Hague has written to ask when the Foreign Office first learned of suspicions about the passports and what contacts Mr Miliband was making with Israeli officials. ...

To read the full report see

http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/middle_east/8520227.stm

Foreign and Commonwealth Office

Sky News interview with David Miliband

Interviewer: As the law stands at the moment a magistrate can issue a warrant for a foreign leader, let's say a Foreign Minister, who comes to this country and that can be issued. That would leave you open to being arrested if, if you went abroad somewhere and in, specifically we're talking of course about Tzipi Livni, the former Israeli Foreign Minister, who had to cancel a trip here when there was a warrant for her arrest.

Now you want to change the law. She's saying she wants to come back within a month. Isn't it the case that somebody in your party is blocking this change in the law and the allegation has been laid that the Justice Secretary Jack Straw is blocking the change.

David Miliband: No, that's not right. I mean for many of your viewers that may sound like a con, like a confusing question. I'm not sure if they want me to get arrested or not. I don't think that's the first time I've heard that suggestion.

What we have is a very strong commitment in this country to laws against war crimes wherever those crimes are committed. It's very important that we stick very strongly to them. However, in the implementation of those laws we have an anomaly in the English system at the moment where someone can be arrested even if there isn't a good chance of them being prosecuted. And it's that anomaly that has caught the situation and caught your attention.

We're absolutely clear that as a Permanent Member of the Security Council, as a country that's committed to promoting conflict resolution around the world we need to be able to talk to leaders from all countries and we need to be able to do so without fear or favour here. That means that we need to address this anomaly that exists in the law.

There's no blockage in your term from the Justice Secretary or anyone else, but what we want to do is make sure that we go through all the legal aspects of this very, very carefully because the worst thing to do would be to rush out an amendment that then didn't address the problem or made the problem worse. And we are absolutely determined to uphold our international commitments both to so called universal jurisdiction, after all this country is the country that prosecuted someone in 2005, a former Afghan warlord, under that legislation. But we're also committed to make sure that we're a country open to engage with leaders from around the world, including Israel to make sure that we are part of conflict resolution around the world and that's what we're determined to do.

<http://www.fco.gov.uk/en/news/latest-news/?view=Speech&id=21759577>

International Committee of the Red Cross

West Bank: no respite from hardship for Palestinians

... "The ICRC has repeatedly called for action to be taken to allow Palestinians to live their lives in dignity," said Béatrice Megevand-Roggo, the ICRC's head of operations for the Middle East and North Africa. "We reiterate our call on Israel to do more to protect Palestinians in the West Bank against settler violence, to safeguard their land and crops, to allow families to repair their houses and to ensure that all Palestinians can get to hospital or to school without delay." ... Harassment or violence perpetrated by Israeli settlers is a regular occurrence, preventing many farmers from cultivating or even setting foot on their own land. Approximately 10,000 olive trees have been chopped down or burnt in the past three years. ...

To read the full press release see

<http://www.icrc.org/web/eng/siteeng0.nsf/htmlall/palestine-news-170210>

Israel and the occupied Palestinian territory: life remains hard for Palestinians in the occupied West Bank

<http://www.icrc.org/web/eng/siteeng0.nsf/htmlall/palestine-update-160210>

West Bank: life on the margins for the E'beed (video)

<http://www.icrc.org/web/eng/siteeng0.nsf/htmlall/palestine-video-170210>

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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>

Scottish Parliament

End of Life Assistance Bill

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

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Consultations

** new or updated

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>

Ecclesiastical Exemption (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Order 2010

(closes 15 March 2010)

http://www.culture.gov.uk/reference_library/consultations/6605.aspx

Equality Bill: Draft Codes of Conduct (closes 2 April 2010)

<http://www.equalityhumanrights.com/legislative-framework/equality-bill/equality-bill-codes-of-practice-consultation/#1>

Equality Bill: Draft Guidance (closes 16 April 2010)

<http://ehrc-consult.limehouse.co.uk/portal>

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

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

**** Humanitarian Assistance Strategic Guidance** (closes 14 May)

http://www.culture.gov.uk/images/consultations/HA_strategic_guide_draft.pdf

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