

Political Affairs Brief

A daily summary of political events affecting the Jewish Community

Scottish Council of Jewish Communities

SCoJeC

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Community Relations

Communities and Local Government

2008-09 Citizenship Survey: Community Cohesion Topic Report

... in-depth examination of community cohesion, attitudes towards the neighbourhood and the local area, belonging to the neighbourhood, fear of crime, social networks, and peoples' interactions with people from different backgrounds. ...

<http://www.communities.gov.uk/documents/statistics/pdf/1473353.pdf>

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Israel

Foreign and Commonwealth Office

Miliband 'determined' to get to bottom of fake British passports

Foreign Secretary, David Miliband, said the Government is taking the Emirati investigation extremely seriously. Speaking on the BBC's Jeremy Vine Show, David Miliband said that "any interference with British passports is an outrage" and said there will be a full investigation. The investigation into the case will be led by the Serious Organised Crime Agency (SOCA) in cooperation with the United Arab Emirates authorities.

Earlier today the Israeli Ambassador to London, Ron Prosor, met with Sir Peter Ricketts, head of the UK Diplomatic Service, at the FCO to discuss the matter. The Foreign Secretary explained that Peter Ricketts "made clear that we wanted to give Israel every opportunity to share with us what it knows about this incident". He added that the Government "hoped and expected that Israel will cooperate fully with the investigation". "We think it's right to have the full investigation that the Prime Minister has launched. We think it's right to make clear to Israel that we want them to cooperate with that inquiry, that is not going through the motions, that is the rightful business of Government when it comes to dealing with serious issues and working with close allies."

David Miliband also stressed that this is a "human story as well as a diplomatic story" and our Embassy in Tel Aviv has been contacting the six British passport holders to provide consular support.

The Foreign Secretary will be in Brussels on Monday along with the Israeli Foreign Minister and will be discussing this matter further with him then.

<http://www.fco.gov.uk/en/news/latest-news/?view=News&id=21781197>

Emirati investigation on defrauding of British passports

The defrauding of British passports is a very serious issue. The Government will continue to take all the action that is necessary to protect British Nationals from identity-fraud. An FCO spokesperson has commented on the Emirati investigation and defrauding of British passports stressing the need for a full investigation which will be lead by the Serious Organised Crime Agency in close cooperation with the Emirati authorities.

The statement said: 'The Government is involved in a number of strands of ongoing activity in relation to this specific case. First, we are providing support to the British Nationals who have been affected by this fraudulent activity. The British Embassy in Tel Aviv is contacting the affected British Nationals, and stands ready to provide them with the support that they need.

Second, as the Prime Minister has said, we need to ensure a full investigation is carried out into the fraudulent use of these passports. The Serious Organised Crime Agency will lead this investigation, in close co-operation with the Emirati authorities. ...

<http://www.fco.gov.uk/en/news/latest-news/?view=News&id=21780866>

FCO response to fraudulent passports

Today's article by [Robert Fisk](#) in *The Independent* alleges that the Dubai authorities informed a British diplomat in Dubai of fraudulent UK passport details almost six days ago and "did not receive an appropriate reply".

The allegation is inaccurate. The fact is that we received the details of the British passports a few hours before the press conference. We were able to respond to the Dubai Authorities on the authenticity of the passports the next day.

<http://foreignofficeviewsonnews.tumblr.com/post/394893218/17-feb-fco-response-to-fraudulent-passports>

Sky News interview with David Miliband

David Miliband: Peter Ricketts has completed his meeting with the Israeli Ambassador, Ambassador Prozor, and he's briefed me on the contents of that meeting. The Permanent Secretary made clear how seriously we take any suggestion of fraudulent use of British passports, he also explained the concern that we have for British passport holders in Israel whose concerns have been well expressed by them, and we're offering them consular support.

The Permanent Secretary said that we wanted to give Israel every opportunity to share with us what it knows about this incident and we hope and expect that they will cooperate fully with the investigation that has been launched by the Prime Minister and is being undertaken by the Serious and Organised Crime Agency.

I will be in Brussels on Monday and the Israeli Foreign Minister will also be there so I look forward to discussing this further with him then.

Let me also say that the Prime Minister made clear yesterday that we're going to have a full investigation through the Serious and Organised Crime Agency and I'm not going to speculate until the conclusion of that investigation about what it might find out.

Interviewer: Did the Head of the Diplomatic Service ask the Israeli Ambassador for any assurances that British passports would not be misused in this manner ever again?

David Miliband: What the Permanent Secretary made clear was that we wanted Israel to cooperate fully with the investigation and wanted the Ambassador to take back to Israel, to send back to his Government, the seriousness with which we were addressing this situation.

Interviewer: Aren't you just going through the motions though; aren't you really not trying to accuse the Israelis of anything? You don't have the threshold of evidence to accuse the Israelis of actually carrying out this execution do you?

David Miliband: Well there's obviously been a very serious incident involving British passports, it's also involved a number of British passport holders who are, have woken up yesterday morning extremely worried. We think it's right to have the full investigation

that the Prime Minister has launched. We think it's right to make clear to Israel that we want them to cooperate with that inquiry, that is not going through the motions, that is the rightful business of Government when it comes to dealing with serious issues and working with close allies.

Interviewer: What do you hope this investigation will achieve?

DM: I think that we want to get to the bottom of the issue of the fraudulent passports or their potential use, that's the most important thing for us.

Interviewer: Why is that important?

DM: Well the integrity of the British passport is something that matters to you and me and every other British citizen. The passports that were used in this case did not have the new chip technology that would make it much more difficult for them to be abused, but obviously we need to make sure that the British passport remains something that everyone has confidence in and countries around the world have confidence in as well.

<http://www.fco.gov.uk/en/news/latest-news/?view=Speech&id=21782448>

Irish Government: Department of Foreign Affairs

Meeting with the Israeli Ambassador to Ireland

The Israeli Ambassador was invited to the Department of Foreign Affairs this morning by Minister Martin where he met with the Secretary General, Mr David Cooney and the Assistant Secretary in charge of the Passport Office, Mr Ray Bassett.

The main issue raised was the fraudulent use of Irish passports by persons believed to have committed a murder in Dubai. Details were provided to the Ambassador of the fake passports and the Israeli authorities were requested to provide whatever information and assistance they could in this matter.

It was stressed that, regardless of who was responsible, the Government takes grave exception to the forgery and misuse of Irish passports which could devalue the standing of the passports and potentially put at risk the safety of Irish citizens travelling abroad.

The Ambassador said that he had no information on the matter and would relay the messages he had received to his authorities.

<http://www.dfa.ie/home/index.aspx?id=83313>

United Nations

Israel tightens vice on Gaza Strip, UN reports

... in January the situation further deteriorated due the total closure of the fuel crossing at Nahal Oz, which turned Kerem Shalom into the single functional crossing for goods, except for a conveyor belt at Karni Crossing, the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs said in its monthly report.

"The gradual channelling of all humanitarian shipments to Kerem Shalom since the imposition of the blockade has significantly increased the cost of humanitarian deliveries due to its location, lack of storage capacity, and requirement of the Israeli authorities to repackage containers within pallets," it added. ...

Israel allows in a limited amount of food and medicines and other basic necessities but has banned the entry of construction materials which it says could be used for aggressive purposes.

Last year's Israeli offensive destroyed or damaged 15 of Gaza's 27 hospitals, and 43 of its 110 primary health-care facilities. ...

To read the full press release see

<http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=33801&Cr=gaza&Cr1=>

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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>

**** Draft Census Order**

http://www.opsi.gov.uk/legislation/scotland/ssi2010/draft/pdf/sdsi_9780111007907_en.pdf

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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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