

Political Affairs Brief

A daily summary of political events affecting the Jewish Community
Scottish Council of Jewish Communities
SCoJeC

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Home Office

Increased risk of Irish-related terrorism

The Security Service has raised the threat level from moderate to substantial. This means an Irish-related terrorist attack is a strong possibility. ...

To read the full press release see

<http://www.homeoffice.gov.uk/media-centre/news/terrorist-threat>

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Israel

UK Parliamentary Questions

East Jerusalem

Baroness Tonge: To ask Her Majesty's Government what representations they have made to the Government of Israel and President Abbas concerning the threat of forcible deportation from east Jerusalem of Mr Muhammed Abu Teir, Mr Ahmad Attoun, Mr Muhammed Totah and Mr Khaled Abu Arafah.[HL1987]

The Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office (Lord Howell of Guildford): Forcible transfer of people out of the city for political reasons, however abhorrent we may find their views, is illegal under international humanitarian law. The EU has raised these specific cases with the Israeli Government, making its views clear. Our Embassy in Tel Aviv has also raised these cases with Israel's Deputy Foreign Minister Danny Ayalon. The UK was part of a joint European delegation that attended the Supreme Court hearing on the case of Mr Muhammed Abu Teir.

Baroness Tonge: To ask Her Majesty's Government what representations they have made to the Government of Israel regarding the transfer and revocation of identification cards of residents of east Jerusalem.[HL1989]

Lord Howell of Guildford: East Jerusalem is occupied territory. Its Palestinian population has rights under the Geneva conventions. Unilateral attempts to change the demographics of the city by forcing people out are illegal under international humanitarian law and an obstacle to peace.

The EU has raised this issue with the Israeli Government. Our embassy in Tel Aviv has also raised this matter with Israel's Deputy Foreign Minister Danny Ayalon.

Baroness Tonge: To ask Her Majesty's Government what representations they have

made to the Government of Israel regarding the construction of a tram line in east Jerusalem.[HL1990]

Lord Howell of Guildford: The UK believes such construction will only undermine and prejudice the negotiating process. We have consistently made it clear that settlements are illegal and a clear violation of international law. We continue to call on the parties to work hard to agree a solution that prevents further settlement construction. EU Higher Representative Cathy Ashton made this clear in her statement of 27 July following the EU Foreign Affairs Council.

Baroness Tonge: To ask Her Majesty's Government what representations they have made to the government of Israel regarding the construction of a park in Silwan, east Jerusalem.[HL1991]

Lord Howell of Guildford: The UK believes such construction will only undermine and prejudice the negotiating process. We have consistently made it clear that settlements are illegal and a clear violation of international law. We continue to call on the parties to work hard to agree a solution that prevents further settlement construction. EU Higher Representative Cathy Ashton made this clear in her statement of 27 July following the EU Foreign Affairs Council.

<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/ld/ldtoday/writtens/20092010.htm#hdg-EastJerusalem>

Palestine

Baroness Tonge: To ask Her Majesty's Government what plans they have to foster democracy in Palestine.[HL1986]

The Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office (Lord Howell of Guildford): It is in the interests of peace that the Palestinians unite behind a single political programme committed to the peaceful resolution of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. The UK supports President Abbas's efforts towards national reconciliation on those terms and his associated call for free and fair presidential and parliamentary elections. At the same time the UK supports a wide range of programmes and projects in the occupied Palestinian territories which are designed to increase accountability, good governance and the rule of law.

Baroness Tonge: To ask Her Majesty's Government what representations they have made to the Government of Israel regarding the 11 members of the Palestine Legislative Council serving prison sentences in Israel since the 2006 election.[HL1988]

Lord Howell of Guildford: The UK continues to follow Israeli detention operations closely and monitor the situation of Palestinian prisoners. We continue to urge the Government of Israel to take immediate action to ensure all cases are reviewed by a court in accordance with fair procedures and that their rights, particularly the rights to a fair trial and family visit, should be upheld.

<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/ld/ldtoday/writtens/20092010.htm#hdg-Palestine>

West Bank and Gaza

Lord Hylton: To ask Her Majesty's Government what recent legal advice they have received concerning the situation in the West Bank and Gaza.[HL2064]

The Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office (Lord Howell of Guildford): We welcome the launch of direct talks and urge the parties to engage seriously and deal directly and urgently with final status issues. We will continue to do all we can to buttress these talks, working with the US and our other EU and international partners.

We have consistently made clear our view that settlements are illegal under international law and an obstacle to peace. The UK along with the international community will continue to urge Israel to freeze all settlement activity.

We have also been clear that the situation in Gaza is unsustainable and counterproductive. We therefore welcome Israel's decision to move from a list of permitted goods to a list of specific prohibited items. This step shows that it is possible to lift the pressure on ordinary Gazans whilst protecting Israel's security.

All parties must now work together urgently to deliver real change on the ground.

Lord Hylton: To ask Her Majesty's Government what provision in the current year and in 2011–12 they are making for emergency assistance, aid and development in respect of the West Bank and Gaza (a) bilaterally, and (b) through the European Union.[HL2065]

Lord De Mauley: We expect bilateral UK aid to the Occupied Palestinian Territories (OPTS) to total £76.5 million in 2010-11. This includes approximately £74 million from the Department for International Development (DfID) and £2.5 million from the Conflict Pool, a tri-departmental fund managed by DfID, the Foreign and Commonwealth Office and Ministry of Defence. All DfID bilateral and multilateral aid programmes are under review and we cannot provide figures for 2011-12.

Figures for total EU assistance to the OPTS, and the UK's share of this, for 2011 and 2012 are not yet available. The EU's financial commitment to the Palestinian people, in 2009 and 2010 (calendar years), is shown in the table below.

Estimated breakdown by programme/sector	2009 €	2010 €
Direct and Indirect Financial Support	219.10	158.50
Institutional Building (1)	12.00	31.00
Infrastructure Development	19.50	21.00
Direct Support to the Private Sector	22.00	11.00
UNRWA	169.59	67.00
Humanitarian Aid, Food Aid, Food Security, Food Facility (excluding UNRWA)	59.15	60.20
East Jerusalem initiatives	4.50	6.00
Support to civil society (i.e. Partnership for Peace, Human Rights and Democracy, NSA, etc.)	3.30	12.40
CFSP actions, Rapid Reaction Mechanism, Instrument for Stability (excluding UNRWA)	9.27	0.00
OVERALL TOTAL	518.41	367.10

(Source: European Commission)

In the current calendar year the EU has committed €367.10 million to Palestinians across the Middle East region. The UK's officially attributed share of this is €51.8 million. In 2009, the EU committed €518.41 million to Palestinians and the UK's share of this spend was €72.52 million.

<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/ld/ldtoday/writtens/20092010.htm#hdg-WestBankandGaza>

Foreign and Commonwealth Office

Foreign Secretary renews call for extension of Israeli Government moratorium on settlement construction

On the eve of the expected Israeli Government announcement on the moratorium, Foreign Secretary William Hague has renewed Britain's call for its extension. The Foreign Secretary said: "Britain has consistently called on the Israeli government to extend the moratorium on settlement construction, and I renew that call today.

It is clear from my many meetings with my colleagues at the UN General Assembly that there is widespread international concern at the impact of this issue on the direct talks between Israeli and Palestinian leaders. The moratorium was a key theme of my meetings with President Abbas, Senator Mitchell, and Foreign Ministers from the Arab world and beyond. I will on Monday meet both Secretary Clinton and Israeli Foreign Minister Lieberman as part of Britain's efforts to ensure that Britain provides all the

support it can to the Middle East Peace Process at this crucial time."
<http://www.fco.gov.uk/en/news/latest-news/?view=News&id=22921145>

Scottish Parliament Motion

S3M-7079 Pauline McNeill: Israeli Flotilla Raid—That the Parliament condemns the Israeli raid on the Gaza-bound flotilla during which 9 people were killed; recognises that Israel's actions were found to be in breach of international law by the United Nations Human Rights Council; acknowledges the report's finding that the violence used was disproportionate and unacceptable; notes with deepest concern that Israel has refused to accept this judgement, and calls for further action from the international community.
<http://www.scottish.parliament.uk/Apps2/business/motions/Default.aspx?motionid=19850>

European Union

Statement by EU High Representative Catherine Ashton on the Middle East peace talks

Catherine Ashton, the High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy and Vice-President of the Commission made the following statement: "... I regret the Israeli decision not to extend the moratorium on settlements. We are examining the consequences of this decision and consulting with the parties and our Quartet and Arab partners. The Quartet welcomed Israel's moratorium and the positive atmosphere it created for the negotiations. Both Palestinians and Israelis have an obligation to act in accordance with previous agreements and obligations, including the Roadmap. The position of the EU is very clear: settlements are illegal under international law, constitute an obstacle to peace and threaten to make a two-state solution impossible. ...The EU stands firm on our full support to the goal of two states, Israel and Palestine, living side by side in peace and security, as part of a just and comprehensive peace. We will do whatever is possible to help both parties choose the path of peace and reach a successful outcome."

To read the full press release see

http://www.consilium.europa.eu//uedocs/cms_data/docs/pressdata/EN/foraff/116778.pdf

United Nations

UN experts call on Israel, Palestinians to abide by rule of law in Gaza conflict probes

A United Nations monitoring committee is concerned that Israel may not have investigated all allegations of serious humanitarian violations during its deadly conflict in Gaza 21 months ago and said there is no indication that Hamas seriously investigated alleged abuses on its part.

But the committee – appointed by the UN Human Rights Council to assess domestic, legal or other proceedings by Israel and the Palestinians over allegations raised in the report of the UN Independent Fact-Finding Mission into the Gaza conflict, known as the Goldstone Report – noted that the Palestinian Authority, in control of the occupied West Bank, was prepared from the very start to cooperate with it. ...

"The committee views its report as a call to both sides to strictly abide by the rule of law," Chairman Christian Tomuschat said today in presenting its findings to the Council. ... The committee noted that Israel had "indeed taken steps to address some of the many complaints made," he added, regretting its refusal to admit committee members to speak with its own investigators, but citing such positive measures as new procedures for the protection of civilians in urban warfare and the establishment of a doctrine on munitions containing white phosphorous which can gravely burn people. "However, the committee

remains concerned that not all allegations of serious violations of international humanitarian law have been investigated.”

Mr. Tomuschat noted lack of information substantiating whether the probe complied with international standards, “a fundamental lack of transparency,” and the issue of impartiality where the military advocate-general is both an adviser to the Government involved in planning the Gaza operations and responsible for referring cases for criminal investigation.

“It also appears that Israel has refrained from conducting a general review of the military doctrine regarding legitimate military targets as opposed to civilian targets,” he said. “The [Goldstone] Fact-Finding Mission rejected the Israeli viewpoint that the entire governmental infrastructure in the Gaza Strip, including the Legislative Council building, was a legitimate target.”

The committee was also unable to visit the Gaza Strip, where Hamas seized power from the Palestinian Authority in 2007. “Unfortunately, the two reports the committee has received from the de facto authorities in Gaza did not indicate that a serious investigation into the violations alleged in the report of the fact-finding mission took place,” Mr. Tomuschat said, noting that they focus primarily on allegations aimed at Israel. ...

To read the full press release see

<http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=36214&Cr=gaza&Cr1=>

Ban ‘disappointed’ at Israel’s move not to extend settlements moratorium

Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon today voiced disappointment at Israel’s move to not extend the moratorium on the building of Jewish settlements in the occupied Palestinian territory, and expressed concern over provocative actions taking place on the ground. ...

Mr. Ban reiterated that settlement activity in the occupied Palestinian territory, including East Jerusalem, is illegal under international law. He urged Israel to fulfil its obligation under the Roadmap obligation to freeze settlement activity. ...

To read the full press release see

<http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=36212&Cr=palestin&Cr1=>

Israel must take urgent steps to solve conflict, Palestinian leader tells UN

Israel must stop all settlement activities, dismantle the barrier and end its “policy of blockade and closures” before a lasting Middle East peace agreement can be reached, Palestinian leader Mahmoud Abbas told the General Assembly as he pledged to nevertheless exert every effort to achieve such a deal within the next year. ... Mr. Abbas ... said his people continued to suffer as a result of “the mentality of expansion and domination, which still controls the ideology and policies of Israel, the occupying Power.”

Mr. Abbas said Israel was deliberately distorting the religious, spiritual and historical identity of the city of Jerusalem; engaged in “an unjust and unprecedented blockade by land, air and sea” of the Gaza Strip”; imprisoned thousands of Palestinians in jails and detention centres; expanded settlements, particularly in and around East Jerusalem; established “the annexation apartheid wall”; and maintained checkpoints and closures that restricted the daily lives of Palestinians. ... But he said that because of Palestinians’ “genuine desire to realizing a future of a comprehensive, just and lasting peace in the region, we have decided to enter into final status negotiations.” ...

To read the full press release see

<http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=36180&Cr=PALESTIN&Cr1=>

Full text of Mahmoud Abbas’ statement

http://gadebate.un.org/Portals/1/statements/634210116872968750PS_en.pdf

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Relevant Legislation ** New or updated

UK Parliament

Daylight Saving Bill

<http://services.parliament.uk/bills/2010-11/daylightsaving.html>

Face Coverings (Regulation) Bill

<http://services.parliament.uk/bills/2010-11/facecoveringsregulation.html>

Fixed Term Parliaments Bill

<http://services.parliament.uk/bills/2010-11/fixedtermparliaments.html>

Identity Documents Bill

<http://services.parliament.uk/bills/2010-11/identitydocuments.html>

Parliamentary Voting System and Constituencies Bill

<http://services.parliament.uk/bills/2010-11/parliamentaryvotingsystemandconstituencies.html>

Scottish Parliament

**** End of Life Assistance Bill**

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

Stage 1 evidence to Committee

<http://www.scottish.parliament.uk/s3/committees/endLifeAsstBill/or-10/ela10-0602.htm#Col127>

Papers for next Committee meeting (28 September 2010)

<http://www.scottish.parliament.uk/s3/committees/endLifeAsstBill/papers-10/elap10-08.pdf>

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Consultations ** new or updated

**** closes in 3 days**

Taking action on rights, support and protection of victims of crime and violence
(closes 30 September 2010)

http://ec.europa.eu/justice_home/news/consulting_public/news_consulting_0053_en.htm

Data protection legislative framework (closes 6 October 2010)

<http://www.justice.gov.uk/dpa-call-evidence-02-07-2010.pdf>

General Medical Council (GMC) Equality Scheme 2011 – 2014 (closes 15 October 2010)

https://gmc.e-consultation.net/econsult/consultation_Dtl.aspx?consult_Id=140&status=2&criteria=1

Guidance on Concessionary Schemes for Surface Water Drainage Charges

Applies in England only (closes 22 October 2010)

<http://www.defra.gov.uk/corporate/consult/surface-charges/index.htm>

Consultation on the change to policy direction for the Big Lottery Fund (closes 29 October 2010)

<http://www.culture.gov.uk/consultations/7313.aspx>

Equality Act 2010: The public sector Equality Duty: Promoting equality through transparency (closing date 10 November 2010)

http://www.equalities.gov.uk/pdf/402461_GEO_EqualityAct2010ThePublicSectorEqualityDuty_acc.pdf

Equality Duty: Detailed Proposals - Consultation on Public Sector Equality Duty Draft Regulations and Order (Scotland) (closes 26 November 2010)

<http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Resource/Doc/324431/0104438.pdf>

Charity Commission: Proposed withdrawal of paper forms for Annual Returns, Registration applications, and forthcoming Charitable Incorporated Organisations (closes 2 December 2010)

http://www.charitycommission.gov.uk/About_us/About_the_Commission/ols_consultation_intro.aspx

**** Equality Act 2010 - Performance of the Public Sector Equality Duties in Wales** (closes 17 December 2010)

<http://wales.gov.uk/consultations/equality/equalityact2010/?lang=en>

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