

Political Affairs Brief

A daily summary of political events affecting the Jewish Community

Scottish Council of Jewish Communities

SCoJeC

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House of Commons Debate on the Queen's Speech

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col 180 **Jeremy Corbyn:** ... Does he not also acknowledge that Israel possesses nuclear weapons and has 200 warheads, so should it not be engaged actively by the western Governments-particularly the big five-in pursuing a degree of nuclear disarmament on its part, in order to bring about the prize of a nuclear-free region?

William Hague: ... one of the proposals on the table at the NPT review conference that is taking place in New York as we speak is to take forward the 1995 commitment to a nuclear-free zone in the middle east, with a conference of all the relevant nations. ...

There will be much agreement across the House on the need to make urgent progress on a two-state solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict before the window for such a solution closes. Our goal is a secure and universally recognised Israel living alongside a sovereign and viable Palestinian state, with Jerusalem the future capital of both states, and a fair settlement for refugees. ...

col 184 **Mike Gapes:** ... During the general election campaign a full-page advertisement was placed in the *Jewish Chronicle* on 16 April by the Conservative party. It stated "Universal jurisdiction will be amended at the earliest opportunity to enable Israelis to visit the UK". I noted that the Queen's Speech contained no reference to "universal jurisdiction". Will the Foreign Secretary clarify whether that is because of a disagreement in the coalition or because the Government are not prepared to introduce legislation in the near future to resolve this matter? ...

Richard Burden: ... On the day following another Israeli attack on Gaza there is some concern about whether or not this Government acknowledge that Operation Cast Lead, which took place last year and caused such carnage in Gaza, was disproportionate. The former Government were clear that it was disproportionate, but do his Government take that view? ...

William Hague: ... I do not want to spend my time redefining any attitude to past conflicts; this is a new Government and we will set out our position on what happens in the future. However, ... we call on the Government of Israel to freeze all settlement activity and to allow unfettered access for aid to Gaza, where we are seriously concerned about the deterioration in the humanitarian and economic situation and about the effect on a generation of young Palestinians. At the same time, of course, the rocket attacks from Gaza must cease and Hamas must make concrete movement towards the Quartet principles; we will have no truck with those who espouse or practice terrorism. ...

... to deal with the question ... how to deal with the totally unsatisfactory situation that has had the effect of barring Israeli politicians, among others, from visiting the UK without weakening our commitment to hold accountable those guilty of war crimes. We will report

to the House in due course. ... Consideration of this will not be long delayed ...

Michael Connarty: ... the inference was that action on Israel was somehow being held back by someone in the coalition. Is he saying that the Liberal Democrats take a softer view on action on Israel or that his own party has a softer view? ...

Sir Malcolm Rifkind: Although most of the comment so far has concerned Tzipi Livni and visitors from Israel, the Foreign Secretary knows as well as I do that these powers could be used against any visitor from many other countries around the world, including the United States. I hope that those who are cautious about making such a change will bear in mind that this is not simply about Israel but about the United Kingdom being able to welcome visitors from many countries and not being prevented from doing so by some technical aberration.

<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201011/cmhansrd/cm100526/debtext/100526-0005.htm>

William Hague: My right hon. and learned Friend is completely right. ... We will set out the way forward quite soon; it is important to get it right and to ensure that we deal with an unsatisfactory situation without weakening our commitment to hold accountable those guilty of war crimes. ...

<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201011/cmhansrd/cm100526/debtext/100526-0006.htm>

col 192 **David Miliband:** ... We want to see direct support of the Fayyad plan to build a Palestinian state within two years. ... In respect of Gaza, the enforcement of resolution 1860 in all the aspects that the right hon. Gentleman mentioned is vital. A "Gaza last" policy will not, in my view, work. ... I hope he will continue to engage the wider region, because unless the Arab states shoulder a share of the responsibility, there will be no solution.

... The Dubai authorities have announced that more British passports were involved and the House will want to know what the Government are doing on this issue. ...

col 193 **Michael Connarty:** ... Australia has taken courageous and correct action by expelling an Israeli diplomat from Australia for the theft of Australian passports. Is it not appropriate that our Government should take similar action over the theft of UK passports? ...

<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201011/cmhansrd/cm100526/debtext/100526-0007.htm>

col 203 **Sir Malcolm Rifkind:** I welcome the right hon. Member for South Shields (David Miliband) to the club of former Foreign Secretaries. ... The country will face the unusual situation of two brothers vying for the highest position in their party. I must tell him that the precedents are not encouraging. I am thinking not so much of Cain and Abel, because so far as we know, the two brothers in this contest are very amiable towards each other, but of Moses and Aaron. The right hon. Gentleman will recall that sadly, Moses never reached the promised land. That was left to Aaron, who turned out to be his younger brother. We must wait and see what the future holds. ...

<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201011/cmhansrd/cm100526/debtext/100526-0009.htm>

col 213 **Jeremy Corbyn:** ... there was an excellent piece of investigative journalism in *The Guardian* on Monday that demonstrated how Israel had involved itself in trying to arm apartheid South Africa with nuclear weapons. The fact that Israel has 200 nuclear warheads at the present time means that, unless there is to be an acceptance of nuclear weapons in the middle east, it is very hard to say that no other countries in that region should ever consider acquiring them if they feel threatened. ... a nuclear-free middle east means that a nuclear weapons convention must be developed. Israel and all the other countries in that region weapons would have to involved. ...

At the heart of that, of course, is the issue of Palestine and the middle east. ... I took part in a delegation that went to Gaza earlier this year. Two things hit us, and the first was the

isolation and poverty of the people of Gaza. We were also struck by the shortages of food, medicine and everything else that they are suffering, and by the sheer hopelessness of the situation facing many young people. The blockade must be lifted, and the EU has an important role to play in that by imposing trade sanctions on Israel, if necessary, to encourage that.

Denis MacShane: Does my hon. Friend acknowledge that there is also an Arab country blockading Gaza—namely, Egypt? Does he agree that many of these problems would be solved if Egypt were to lift its blockade?

Jeremy Corbyn: Egypt does indeed maintain a blockade of Gaza, but it is not the country that is threatening or trying to occupy Gaza. The crossings between Gaza and Israel, where there are endless restrictions on UN trucks, food, medicines, building supplies and everything else, make life intolerable for people in Gaza. At the moment, a peaceful flotilla of vessels is going from Turkey to take aid, support, succour and comfort to the people of Gaza. I hope that the British Government will put all the pressure that they can on the Israeli Government not to interfere with that flotilla and to allow it to land, so that the people of Gaza can receive the support that is being offered by peaceable people from all over the world.

... the United States' policy, announced last week, of giving a further £150 million for a new missile defence system for Israel is a provocative act that will only encourage further armament within the region. ...

... if we go down the road of lifting the universal jurisdiction that applies in British courts to people against whom there is prima facie evidence of war crimes or the abuse of human rights, we diminish ourselves in the eyes of the rest of the world and undermine the whole principle of international law and international jurisdiction. If there are people in any country against whom there is such prima facie evidence, they should be brought before a court and tried for war crimes or the abuse of human rights, as appropriate. If we start being selective about this because we like or dislike a particular person or country, it diminishes our standing in the world. ...

<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201011/cmhansrd/cm100526/debtext/100526-0010.htm>

col 219 **Jeffrey Donaldson:** ... My views on Gaza differ from those of the hon. Member for Islington North (Jeremy Corbyn). Having visited the Israeli town of Sderot on the border with Gaza, I think that the hon. Gentleman should take time to meet the people there, who every day face rocket attacks from Hamas in Gaza. He should also bear in mind that Israel unilaterally withdrew from Gaza. The notion that it wants to occupy Gaza should be dismissed immediately. The security of the people of Israel is important to their Government, and we need to recognise that.

Sandra Osborne: I too have visited that Israeli town, and I agree that its community are under great pressure, but does the right hon. Gentleman not agree that the Israeli response was totally disproportionate, and actually broke international law?

Jeffrey Donaldson: Of course there is a debate about that. It saddens me that innocent people on both sides die in the conflict as a consequence of the failure to reach agreement, and I think we must now concentrate on the need to build such agreement. I simply say this: it is not good enough for the House to point the finger in one direction without recognising that there is wrongdoing in the other direction as well. ...

<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201011/cmhansrd/cm100526/debtext/100526-0011.htm>

col 225 **Sir John Stanley:** ... Although a viable Palestinian state remains the goal, and although that policy remains unchanging, what is changing is the situation on the ground. The prospect of a viable Palestinian state is steadily receding because the Palestinian state is now divided into three. There is Gaza, which is effectively a prison, there is East Jerusalem—a semi-prison where there is relentless Israeli pressure to increase the Israeli population and decrease the Palestinian population—and there is the rest of the west bank, where the viability of farms and businesses owned by Palestinians is being

jeopardised all the time by Israeli security requirements. I urge my right hon. Friends to do everything they can to try to bring home to the Israeli Government the fact that the policy that they have been pursuing for years of effective de facto annexation of East Jerusalem and the west bank will produce not long-term security for Israel, but long-term insecurity. ...

<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201011/cmhansrd/cm100526/debtext/100526-0012.htm>

House of Lords Debate on the Queen's Speech

includes:

col 54 **Baroness Symons of Vernham Dean:** ... [The Middle East] conflict remains one of the most potentially dangerous for the security of all of us, complicated as it is by Iranian aggression and, to a lesser extent, by Syrian uncertainty. It is too important to be left to a US-Israel or US-Palestinian axis. We in the United Kingdom have a key voice in this European mix. I hope we will encourage more European-Arab dialogue as well as pursue our bilateral relationships, and that we will engage in real political relationships with Saudi Arabia, Libya, the Maghreb countries and, yes, even Syria.

We all know that both parties opposite are on a bit of a tightrope over Europe; their original manifestos demonstrate that very clearly. Europe runs like a golden thread through the Liberal Democrat manifesto whereas the Conservative manifesto seems to demonstrate a desire to put it in a box and shut the lid very tightly. Will the noble Lord, Lord Astor of Hever, tell us whether Mr Cameron will now break the relationship with the partners his now deputy described as, "a bunch of nutters, anti-Semites, people who deny climate change exists and homophobes"? He went on to say that it does not help Britain, and he was right. ...

<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/ld201011/ldhansrd/text/100526-0005.htm>

col 199 **Lord Weidenfeld:** ... Iran is still a state that gives us enormous worry because if it were to have an atomic weapon, it would not only be a deadly threat to its neighbours but also to Europe. It is the fashionable concept that Israel is the main target and not Iran's immediate neighbours or Europe, but the arch enemies of Tehran are, in descending order, the Saudi royal family, guardian of the holy shrines; the apostate Sunni clergy, wherever they may be; the great Satan, the United States; and, only fourth, the state of Israel and the Jewish people. Yet it is this fourth foe which allows Ahmadinejad to engage and incite the Arab Street. We in Europe are in just as much danger as Israel—we should take note of this basic fact. ...

Relations between this country and Israel are at a very low ebb. In terms of the attitude of European Governments to the Israel/Arab conflict, Germany is best positioned by being respected by both sides at the same time as being Israel's best friend. It is followed by Italy, the Czech Republic, Poland and Holland. Even France, once one of Israel's sternest critics and still very critical of her Arab policies, is in the forefront of fighting cultural and scientific boycott. It is the common view in Europe that Britain, especially towards the latter stages of the defeated Labour Government, was the most unfriendly of all European countries, followed only by Sweden and Norway. There have been academic boycotts; speakers have been jeered and hauled down from platforms in elitist universities; a ludicrous law that would permit the arrest of a moderate Israeli politician such as Mrs Tzipi Livni as a suspected war criminal with the prospect of extradition to The Hague has not been repealed in spite of assurances by the outgoing Government. It is hoped that the new British Government will make amends. The Liberal coalition partner, both in the other place and in your Lordships' House, has been distinctly cool towards the Israelis. In my 36 years of listening to debates in your Lordships' House, some of the roughest tones have come from the Liberal Benches. I hope that we may not hear more malevolent tongues from a party with such a long-standing tradition of fighting anti-Semitism and discrimination.

Perhaps I may conclude with an up-to-date example of how ruthless propaganda taken up in our most illustrious media, including the BBC, can distort the truth. At this very moment, the so-called "Freedom Flotilla", a nine-ship strong convoy, is heading to Gaza from Turkey with hundreds of passengers and claiming to carry more than 10,000 tonnes of supplies. I gather that it is due to arrive this weekend. It is almost certain to be turned away, for sadly very necessary security reasons. We have, of course, the opportunity to hear choruses of condemnation of the heartless, ruthless, warmongering Zionist enemy. It would perhaps interest noble Lords to learn what actually entered Gaza legally from Israel in the first quarter of 2010, January to March-94,500 tons of supplies transferred in 3,676 trucks. Just this last week, there were 637 truckloads containing 14,000 tonnes of humanitarian aid and 810,209 litres of heavy-duty diesel fuel. I could go on for a long time, but I am aware of the time. However, I am certainly happy to supply details to any the noble Lord who wants to know them, as well as details on the exact sources.

Noble Lords may readily see that mischievous and dangerous propaganda can also sometimes misfire and yield to defensible truth. ...

<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/ld201011/ldhansrd/text/100526-0013.htm>

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Relevant Legislation ** New or updated

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

Revised Guidance on Safeguarding Children and Safer Recruitment in Education (England and Wales only) (closes 15 June 2010)

<http://www.dcsf.gov.uk/consultations/index.cfm?action=consultationDetails&consultationId=1671&external=no&menu=1>

Continuing need for a controlled activity category in the Vetting and Barring Scheme (England and Wales only) (closes 17 June 2010)

<http://www.dcsf.gov.uk/consultations/index.cfm?action=consultationDetails&consultationId=1710&external=no&menu=1>

Reform of the coroner system (closes 1 July 2010)

<http://www.justice.gov.uk/consultations/reform-coroner-system.htm>

Amendments to the Anti-Terrorism Crime and Security Act 2001 (closes 15 July 2010)

<http://www.homeoffice.gov.uk/documents/cons-2010-pathogens-toxins/consultation-paper2835.pdf?view=Binary>

**** Welsh Assembly Review of Standing Orders** (closes 16 July 2010)

http://www.assemblywales.org/bus-home/bus-committees/bus-committees-other-committees/bus-committees-third-bc-home/bus-committees-third-bc-comm/bc3_inq_so.htm

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