

Political Affairs Brief

A daily summary of political events affecting the Jewish Community

Scottish Council of Jewish Communities

SCoJeC

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Foreign and Commonwealth Office

Alistair Burt gives UK reaction to Gaza flotilla attack on the BBC

... We deplore the loss of life. It's clearly a very serious incident. We don't yet know all the facts about how it happened, but certainly it's, it's a very serious matter indeed and the loss of life is deeply tragic and yet, just another part of the loss of, loss of life associated with Gaza and the Middle East. ...

There is international law that supports Israel in taking action to protect its waters and protect the situation in relation to Gaza, but at present the, the details of this are still so unclear. I don't think it's a matter to go in to this evening. What we do need, what we do know is that there was a sequence of events which led to a significant loss of life. This is deplored by all of us. ...

...we do not know all the facts that affected this incident. There are various competing versions out there and I think it's very important to find out exactly what has happened before making any, any conclusive statement in relation to that. What we're concerned about first and foremost is to make sure British citizens are safe and well.

We're pressing the Israeli authorities for all the information in relation to that to make we sure we have full consular access to them and to continue to make the point there has to be humanitarian aid getting in to Gaza.

We want to make sure that's free and unfettered humanitarian access and there needs to be a resolution of the political situation surrounding Gaza because at present the people in Gaza clearly are living in, in, in very unhappy circumstances and insecure and so are the people who feel that they're under threat from the rockets fired from Gaza. ...

To read the full transcript see

<http://www.fco.gov.uk/en/news/latest-news/?view=Speech&id=22302599>

Alistair Burt speaks to Sky News about Gaza flotilla

... the most important thing is to find out exactly what has happened here, but this is a serious incident, of that there's absolutely no doubt, and it confirms us in our view that the situation in Gaza long term is just untenable. It's not safe for the citizens who live in Gaza, it's not safe for Israeli citizens on the border. There must be, there must be a solution to this and we've all got to work very hard for that. ...

... so far we've nothing to suggest that any British citizen has been seriously wounded or, or even killed. But the ships are only just docking at Ashdod. Not all the ships have docked so we don't know all the facts and figures of British citizens. Some of them are not identifying themselves, some have not been identified yet by the Israeli authorities.

...

There are so many different sides to this whole problem, but long term we can't go on as we are. Gaza remains the most unhappy place. ...

As far as our relationship with Israel is concerned it's, it's a strong one, but we know that this is a very serious incident and that's why we need to find out exactly what has happened before jumping to any conclusions. ...

It's always very easy on one particular incident to start swapping who did this, who did that. In the long term interest of everyone who lives in that area we should be supporting the Proximity Talks, supporting more immediate aid to Gaza in the first place, but also supporting all those efforts to find a peaceful solution to the situation in Gaza and Israel because that is the only long term stable situation for Israel and for the Middle East.

To read the full transcript see

<http://www.fco.gov.uk/en/news/latest-news/?view=Speech&id=22302533>

Foreign Secretary answers questions relating to Gaza flotilla

William Hague: ... the British Government deeply deplores the loss of life that has occurred in the interception of the Gaza flotilla ...

It is very important that Israel acts with restraint and in line with international obligations in any case such as this and, of course, we will all want to know more about whether more could have been done to minimise the risks or to reduce the number of deaths and injuries. That is why we agree with our EU partners and other international partners that there must be a full and impartial and independent investigation or inquiry in to these events. ...

I stress there that it's very important they act with restraint, that they act, that there are constraints on them, that they act in line with their international obligations. And so on any initial look of it, look at it you would say that such a conflict at sea was an overreaction but I think we'll have to also see that investigation. ...

... it also requires an end to rocket fire on Israel from within Gaza because that is very important as well. ...

To read the full transcript see

<http://www.fco.gov.uk/en/news/latest-news/?view=Speech&id=22302571>

Scottish Government

Gaza flotilla

Minister for External Affairs Fiona Hyslop ... said: "The Scottish Government adds its voice to the wider international community and condemns the actions taken by the Israeli defence force. We fully support the UN Security Council's recommendation for an impartial inquiry. The use of violence against a humanitarian convoy carrying medicine and other aid is being spoken out against right across the world. The blockade of Gaza is causing untold suffering to ordinary Palestinians and must be brought to an end.

My primary concern is for the safety of all that were on board, particularly the well-being of Scots involved. The Israeli Government must provide immediate reassurance of their current situation and wellbeing. ... "On behalf of the Scottish Government I wish to express our deep sadness at the news of the loss of life on the humanitarian flotilla going to Gaza."

To read the full press release see

<http://www.scotland.gov.uk/News/Releases/2010/06/01141427>

European Parliament

Israeli interception of convoy "unjustified" says EP President Buzek

The President of the European Parliament, Jerzy Buzek, together with the MEPs who visited Gaza at the end of last week as part of an official EP fact-finding delegation, are

deeply shocked by the disproportionate action taken by the Israeli authorities and strongly condemn the attack on six boats bringing essential humanitarian supplies to the Gaza Strip. Despite repeated calls for all involved to act with restraint and responsibility, the interception of the convoy in international waters has resulted in many casualties. This is an unjustified attack, which has claimed at least a dozen lives", said President Buzek. "The European Parliament sends its condolences to the families and close ones of all those who lost their lives and hope for a speedy recovery of those injured.

"It is a clear and unacceptable breach of international law, especially the fourth Geneva Convention. We demand that Israel explain its actions immediately, with the utmost transparency, and guarantees full accountability by co-operating with any full inquiry that is to be set up.

The European Parliament also urges High Representative Ashton to take steps within the Quartet to force Israel to lift the siege on the people of Gaza immediately and unconditionally. We cannot stand by while 80% of the Gazan population is living below the poverty line. The European Parliament has always strongly condemned the continued policy of closure with respect to the Gaza Strip, seeing it as unacceptable and counterproductive."

http://www.europarl.europa.eu/news/expert/infopress_page/030-75347-151-05-23-903-20100531IPR75345-31-05-2010-2010-false/default_en.htm

European Union

Reaction of High Representative Catherine Ashton on Israel's military operation against Gaza flotilla

Catherine Ashton, European Union High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy/European Commission Vice-President, made the following statement in Warsaw today: "During the course of this morning, I have spoken to Israel's Foreign Minister Avigdor Lieberman to express our deepest concern about the tragedy that has happened. I have said there should be an immediate inquiry by Israel into the circumstances, and I have also taken the opportunity to point out, having visited Gaza, the importance of opening the crossings for humanitarian aid to go through, to ensure that ordinary people have a better existence than that which I saw. We will continue to coordinate with member states throughout today, and of course, I express my condolences to the families of those who have lost their lives."

http://www.consilium.europa.eu/uedocs/cms_data/docs/pressdata/EN/foraff/114726.pdf

Council of Europe

Antonio Miloshoski, Chairman of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe, expresses his dismay at Israel's military operation against Gaza humanitarian fleet

"I have learned, with great dismay, of the action conducted by Israeli naval forces against a convoy trying to deliver humanitarian aid to Gaza. The death and injuries caused to a number of civilians during this operation is a great tragedy. I trust that the circumstances of these events will be swiftly investigated, in all transparency, so that the responsibilities are fully established. I also hope that any future acts or statements of the parties involved will not cause further deterioration of the human rights situation of all engaged in providing humanitarian assistance."

<https://wcd.coe.int/ViewDoc.jsp?Ref=PR447%282010%29&Language=lanEnglish&Ver=original&Site=DC&BackColorInternet=F5CA75&BackColorIntranet=F5CA75&BackColorLogged=A9BACE>

United Nations Security Council

Security Council Condemns Acts Resulting in Civilian Deaths during Israeli Operation against Gaza-Bound Aid Convoy, Calls for Investigation, in Presidential Statement

... the Security Council expressed deep regret at the loss of life and injuries resulting from the use of force during the Israeli military operation early on Monday in international waters against the convoy sailing to Gaza, and condemned those acts which had killed at least 10 civilians and wounded many more. ... Oscar Fernandez-Taranco, Assistant Secretary-General for Political Affairs ... said, "it is not possible to state definitively the sequence or details of what happened". The Israeli Government had stated that the demonstrators on-board had used knives and clubs against Israel Defense Forces naval personnel, and possibly live fire, and that a weapon had been grabbed from one of its soldiers. ...

... Turkey's Foreign Minister ... [said] This was an attack on the United Nations and its values, he said, adding that the international system had suffered a sharp blow, and now "it is our responsibility to rectify this and prove that common sense and respect to international law prevails". Israel must be prepared to face the consequences of its crimes. ...

... Israel's representative told the Council that, although the flotilla was portrayed in the media as a humanitarian mission, it was anything but. If that were truly the case, the organizers of the mission would have accepted weeks ago Israel's offer to transfer the aid brought on the flotilla through the Israeli port of Ashdod and through the established Israeli procedures. ... "What kind of humanitarian activists demand to bypass the United Nations, the Red Cross and other internationally recognized agencies?" he asked. "What kind of peace activists use knives, clubs and other weapons to attack soldiers who board a ship in accordance with international law?" he said. He asked what kind of activists embraced Hamas and terrorist organizations that openly shunned a two-State solution and called for Israel's destruction. "The answer is clear. They are not peace activists; they are not messengers of goodwill. They cynically use the guise of humanitarian aid to send a message of hate and to implement violence."

Council members around the table were generally united in strongly condemning the incident, deploring the loss of life and calling for a release by the Israeli authorities of the detainees. They agreed on the unambiguous need for an independent and in-depth investigation, with most suggesting that Israel bore the responsibility to provide a full account of what had occurred and to describe the efforts it had made to minimize the loss of life and injuries. ...

Presidential Statement

The full text of the presidential statement, to be issued as document S/PRST/2010/9, reads as follows:

"The Security Council deeply regrets the loss of life and injuries resulting from the use of force during the Israeli military operation in international waters against the convoy sailing to Gaza. The Council, in this context, condemns those acts which resulted in the loss of at least 10 civilians and many wounded, and expresses its condolences to their families.

"The Security Council requests the immediate release of the ships as well as the civilians held by Israel. The Council urges Israel to permit full consular access, to allow the countries concerned to retrieve their deceased and wounded immediately, and to ensure the delivery of humanitarian assistance from the convoy to its destination.

"The Security Council takes note of the statement of the United Nations Secretary-General on the need to have a full investigation into the matter and it calls for a prompt, impartial, credible and transparent investigation conforming to international standards.

"The Security Council stresses that the situation in Gaza is not sustainable. The Council re-emphasizes the importance of the full implementation of resolutions 1850 (2008) and 1860 (2009). In that context, they reiterate their grave concern at the humanitarian

situation in Gaza and stress the need for sustained and regular flow of goods and people to Gaza, as well as unimpeded provision and distribution of humanitarian assistance throughout Gaza.

“The Security Council underscores that the only viable solution to Israeli-Palestinian conflict is an agreement negotiated between the parties and re-emphasizes that only a two-State solution, with an independent and viable Palestinian State living side by side in peace and security with Israel and its other neighbours, could bring peace to the region.

“The Security Council expresses support for the proximity talks and voices concern that this incident took place while proximity talks are under way and urges the parties to act with restraint, avoiding any unilateral and provocative actions, and all international partners to promote an atmosphere of cooperation between the parties and throughout the region.

To read the full (lengthy) press release see

<http://www.un.org/News/Press/docs/2010/sc9940.doc.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

**** ACPOS Draft Hate Crime Guidance Manual** (closes 11 June 2010)

http://www.scojec.org/consultations/current/10vi_acpos_draft_hate_crime_manual.doc

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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