

Political Affairs Brief

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

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UK Parliamentary Questions

Anti-Semitism

John Mann: To ask the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government what plans he has for the future of the inter-departmental working group on anti-Semitism. [481]

Andrew Stunell: The Department of Communities and Local Government will continue to chair and support the work of the inter-departmental working group on anti-Semitism. The next meeting of this group will take place in July 2010.

John Mann: To ask the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government whether he plans to report on the Government's implementation of the recommendations of the All-Party Inquiry into Anti-Semitism in 2010. [520]

Andrew Stunell: The Department for Communities and Local Government intends to report on the Government's implementation of the recommendations of the All-Party Inquiry into Anti-Semitism by the end of 2010.

<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201011/cmhansrd/cm100603/text/100603w0009.htm#10060347000006>

Welsh Assembly Government

First Minister slams Welsh Defence League rally

First Minister Carwyn Jones has condemned plans by the Welsh Defence League to hold a rally in Cardiff this Saturday saying the demonstration is designed to incite racial hatred and cause ugly scenes on the streets of the Capital.

He said: "We pride ourselves on being a tolerant, multi-cultural society and we are determined that Wales should be a country in which all sections of the community can respect each other's cultures, religions and languages. A demonstration directed at any religious group has no place in our Capital City. We must challenge every manifestation of racism, intolerance and discrimination as we find it and let organisations who peddle racial hatred know that they are not welcome here in Wales."

<http://wales.gov.uk/newsroom/firstminister/2010/100604defenceleague/?lang=en>

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Israel

UK Parliamentary Question

Middle East

Mr Iain Wright: To ask the Prime Minister when he plans to visit the Middle East. [91]

The Prime Minister: As set out in the Queen's Speech, in the Middle East the Government will work for a two state solution that sees a viable state of Palestine existing in peace and security alongside Israel. As I made clear to Prime Minister Netanyahu, we deplore the loss of life off the coast of Gaza in recent days. I will of course update Parliament on progress including any visits to the region.

<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201011/cmhansrd/cm100603/text/100603w0012.htm#10060348000010>

UK Parliament Early Day Motion

Simon Hughes (152) Gaza Aid Flotilla - That this House expresses its deep sorrow at the news of the tragic loss of life resulting from the action of Israeli forces against the aid flotilla bound for the citizens of Gaza and the pain which this has caused to the families of those who have lost loved ones; recognises the anger around the world; understands that while continuing conflicts between Israel and Palestine remain unresolved more lives may well be lost on both sides, further deepening hatred and distrust between many of those involved; urges all parties in the region to renounce violence, including the indirect violence of the blockade of Gaza, to commit themselves to wholly non-violent means of resolving these conflicts and to seek out and employ proven methods, and experienced practitioners, of non-violent conflict resolution to help end and heal the decades of death and suffering between the Israeli and Palestinian peoples.

<http://edmi.parliament.uk/EDMi/EDMDetails.aspx?EDMID=41071&SESSION=905>

Downing Street

Gaza

Asked whether the Irish ship should be allowed to dock in Gaza, the PMS said that the Government's view remained the same; international law should be upheld and the UN Security Council resolution needed to be fully implemented, meaning there needed to be access for humanitarian aid. The UK Government had advised against travel to Gaza given that this was a very unsafe region.

<http://www.number10.gov.uk/news/press-briefings/2010/06/morning-press-briefing-from-4-june-2010-51388>

Scottish Parliament First Minister's Questions

Pauline McNeill (Glasgow Kelvin) (Lab): Given that the First Minister is responsible for the general welfare of all Scots, will he join me in condemning the loss of civilian life due to the Israeli commando attack on the flotilla that was heading for Gaza with international aid in international waters? One of my constituents, Hassan Ghani, who was on board the ship when it was attacked, is now in Istanbul and is traumatised, but at least he is safe. On the BBC's "Question Time" recently, the First Minister called for a review of trading relationships with Israel. How can he take that forward in his Administration? Can he act on that in any way? If he can, he will have my support and that of all Scots who demand that the blockade on Gaza be lifted and that Israel abide by international law.

The First Minister: I am glad that the member's constituent has now been released, albeit that he is not yet home in Scotland. Four Scots have been involved in the recent incident. One is home and the other three are in the same position that her constituent is in.

The Scottish Government strongly condemns the Israeli authorities' actions. We have added our voice to that of the wider international community, and call for the immediate lifting of the Israeli blockade of Gaza. The Deputy First Minister has made statements on the matter, and I have written in the strongest possible terms to the Israeli ambassador.

The issue of the immediate lifting of the blockade has, of course, been debated in the Parliament. I think that motion carried the support of the overwhelming majority of members. It is particularly important at the present moment that the wider international community responds to the atrocity on the high seas. We believe that a ship that is bound for Gaza with a Scottish captain piloting it is at risk if the Israeli Government continues its blockade and actions in international waters. Therefore, the Parliament should speak with an overwhelming majority and say that the Israeli action is unacceptable, insupportable and should stop forthwith.

<http://www.scottish.parliament.uk/business/officialReports/meetingsParliament/or-10/sor0603-02.htm#Col26945>

United Nations

Gaza: UN official voices deep concern as Hamas raids offices of aid groups

A senior United Nations official in the Middle East today expressed deep concern at reports that Hamas has broken into the offices of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in the Gaza Strip this week, confiscated materials and equipment, and forced the offices to shut down.

Robert Serry, the UN Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process, said in a statement issued in Jerusalem that reports indicated Hamas had broken into NGO offices in both Gaza City and Rafah. "This targeting of NGOs, including UN partner organizations, is unacceptable, violating accepted norms of a free society and harming the Palestinian people," he said. "The de facto authorities must cease such repressive steps and allow the re-opening of these civil society institutions without delay."

Hamas, which does not recognize Israel's right to exist, took control of Gaza in 2007 after it ousted the Fatah movement. About 1.5 million Palestinians live in the area, which has been blockaded by Israel for the past three years.

<http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=34903&Cr=palestin&Cr1=>

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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

**** closes in 6 days**

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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