

Political Affairs Brief

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

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Home Affairs

UK Parliamentary Questions

Incitement: Internet

John Mann: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether a Ministerial cross-Government champion on reducing incitement on the internet has been appointed. [2061]

James Brokenshire: The Home Office is looking at the challenges posed by hate crime on the internet. As part of this process, we will look at how work on this issue is led across Government.

<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201011/cmhansrd/cm100614/text/100614w0009.htm#10061411000011>

Hospitals: Food

John Mann: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what guidelines are in place for the provision of hospital meals to patients with (a) kosher, (b) halal, (c) vegetarian, (d) vegan and (e) other dietary requirements. [1767]

Mr Simon Burns: The Department does not provide specific guidelines about provision of these types of meals. However, the Care Quality Commission's publication, "Essential Standards of Quality and Safety"⁽¹⁾ sets out standards of quality that patients have a right to expect in hospital, including those relating to food. In meeting such standards, it requires providers who comply with the regulations⁽²⁾ to provide choices of food and drink for people to meet their diverse needs, making sure it is nutritionally balanced and supports their health. In particular, patients should have a choice for each meal that takes account of their individual preferences and needs, including religious and cultural requirements. Menus are devised and managed by hospital trusts locally. Trusts' catering functions have access to professional advice from hospital dietitians. In addition, information and good practice illustrations about delivering specific meals types are available to the national health service through a range of guidance material, in particular, via the Hospital Caterers Association website⁽³⁾, which accommodates the 'dish selector' guidance and other detailed support to the local NHS.

⁽¹⁾ Published by The Care Quality Commission March 2010.

⁽²⁾ The guidance relates to providers of services that carry "regulated activities". These are defined in the Health and Social Care Act 2008 (Regulated Activities) Regulations 2009.

⁽³⁾ www.hospitalcaterers.org/better-hospital-food/

<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201011/cmhansrd/cm100614/text/100614w0004.htm#1006146000067>

Prisons: Food

John Mann: To ask the Secretary of State for Justice what guidelines are in place for the provision of meals in prisons to inmates with (a) kosher, (b) halal, (c) vegetarian, (d) vegan and (e) other dietary requirements. [1766]

Mr Blunt: Prisons offer a range of meals that enable prisoners to make preferred choices using a multi-choice menu system, including meals suited to their dietary, religious or cultural needs, including kosher, halal, vegetarian, vegan and other dietary requirements. Menu choices should reflect the establishment's population ethnicity.

Full guidance, including mandatory requirements, is set out in Prison Service Order 5000-the Prison Service Catering Manual.

<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201011/cmhansrd/cm100614/text/100614w0016.htm#1006153000024>

Home Office

Vetting and Barring Scheme registration halted

Registration with the Vetting and Barring Scheme (VBS) will be halted to allow the government to remodel the scheme back to proportionate, common sense levels ... Voluntary registration with the VBS for new employees and job-movers working or volunteering with children and vulnerable adults was due to start on 26 July. This registration has now been stopped. The government recognises that many businesses, community groups and individuals see the current scheme as disproportionate and overly burdensome, and that it unduly infringes on civil liberties. ...

Existing arrangements under the Scheme which will continue include the following:

- since January 2009, the Independent Safeguarding Authority (ISA) has been making independent barring decisions. It will continue to maintain two constantly updated lists, one for those barred from working with children, the other for those barred from working with vulnerable adults
- existing requirements concerning Criminal Records Bureau (CRB) and Access Northern Ireland checks will remain in place, and those entitled to such checks can continue to apply for them
- employers are still legally obliged to refer information to the ISA if they have moved or removed an individual because they have harmed or there is a risk of harm to a member of a vulnerable group.

The scope of the remodelling process – to be co-ordinated by the Home Office in partnership with Department of Health and Department for Education – is currently being finalised and will be announced shortly. More than 66,000 employers, charities and voluntary groups are now being informed directly of the change. Up-to-date information is also available to businesses, other organisations and individuals on the [DirectGov Website](#) or on the [Businesslink Website](#) VBS sections. ...

To read the full press release see

<http://www.homeoffice.gov.uk/media-centre/press-releases/Vetting-barring-scheme>

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House of Commons Debate

UK Policy on the Middle East

includes:

col 640 John Baron (Basildon and Billericay) (Con): ... Will [the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs] do what he can, and get his Department on board, to try to impress on the Israelis the fact that Hamas is more than just a terrorist organisation? It is an idea—a frustration-borne out of many disillusioned and disfranchised Palestinians, and the best way of defeating an idea is not by using force but by coming up with a better idea, such as an equitable, two-state solution. ...

Alistair Burt: ... Whatever Hamas might be as an expression of a movement, it also represents a repressive, authoritarian force which has had a grip on Gaza for too long and held Gilad Shalit unfairly as a hostage for too long. ...

... Work to resolve the Arab-Israeli conflict is a foreign policy priority for this Government. As I said earlier, the only long-term solution to the conflict is a secure Israel living alongside a sovereign and viable Palestinian state.

<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201011/cmhansrd/cm100614/debtext/100614-0010.htm#1006149000005>

col 644 Jeremy Corbyn: ... the non-proliferation treaty review conference, which rightly condemned the potential development of any nuclear weapons in the region, but, for the first time, mentioned the existence of Israel's nuclear weapons? Where exactly will the process go now to achieve the aim of a nuclear-free middle east, which must involve Israel's possession of nuclear weapons?

Alistair Burt: This country has consistently asked Israel to join the non-proliferation treaty as a non-weapons-holding state. Israel was mentioned in the non-proliferation treaty review conference in the context of the desire to move the resolution on a middle east free of nuclear weapons and, indeed, weapons of mass destruction. ...

col 646 Ivan Lewis (Bury South) (Lab): ... The central challenge remains the relationship between Israel, the Palestinians and the Arab world. I want to set my response to that challenge in the context of a question that I was asked several times in my ministerial capacity during interviews on al-Jazeera: how could I, as a Jew, undertake my role as British Minister for the middle east independently and objectively? Putting aside the appropriateness or otherwise of the question, my answer was and is straightforward. I am proud to be a friend and supporter of Israel, as well as someone who believes passionately in the right of the Palestinians to dignity, freedom and statehood. Too often in the House and outside, people are required to make a choice, and it does not and should not have to be like that. I sometimes wonder whether there would be more light and less heat if friends of Israel and friends of Palestine came together to form friends of peace in the middle east. In that way, people would be forced to confront their prejudices and certainties and be challenged to build mutual respect, rather than replicate the division and bitterness that have characterised the region for far too long. ...

... I have witnessed for myself the anger and injustice felt by Palestinians on the west bank as their daily lives are interrupted by Israeli checkpoints and a security barrier that, in places, physically divides communities and therefore families. ... I also know families who have been traumatised by the impact of losing a loved one at the hands of suicide bombers who have wreaked carnage in towns and cities in Israel. ... Terrorism is no more legitimate in Tel Aviv and Haifa than it is in London and New York.

Palestinians yearn for freedom and statehood, Israelis for the certainty and guarantee of security. ...

col 649 Louise Ellman (Liverpool, Riverside) (Lab/Co-op): Does my hon. Friend agree that Hamas, with its view that eliminating the state of Israel is a religious

imperative, is a real obstacle to peace?

Mr Lewis: I agree with my hon. Friend in the sense that as long as that remains Hamas's position, it is inconceivable that it will be drawn into any credible peace process.

<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201011/cmhansrd/cm100614/debtext/100614-0011.htm>

col 655 **Gerald Kaufman (Manchester, Gorton) (Lab):** ... If any other country had behaved as Israel is behaving towards the Palestinians in the occupied territories, international action would have been taken long ago. ... Iran's regime is detestable ... but ... it has never invaded another country. Israel does possess nuclear weapons; it is said to have 200 warheads. It has refused to sign the non-proliferation treaty and it recently refused to attend President Obama's conference on nuclear weapons divestment. Israel has invaded Lebanon three times. It facilitated the Sabra and Shatila massacres. It also conducted Operation Cast Lead, the Gaza blockade and the attack on the Gaza flotilla. ... It makes no difference whether the inquiry into the attack on the flotilla is conducted internally by Israel or internationally. Even an international inquiry would not change Israeli policy. The Goldstone inquiry into Operation Cast Lead had no influence at all, and Goldstone was vilified as a Jewish anti-Semite and a self-hating Jew. We have heard mention this afternoon of the dreadful situation involving Gilad Shalit, the young man who was taken into captivity four years ago this week. I feel great sorrow for his family, but he was a soldier on military duty. About 15 members of the Palestine National Council are being held without charge by the Israelis, and about 300 children are being held in prisons by the Israeli Government ...

<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201011/cmhansrd/cm100614/debtext/100614-0012.htm>

col 656 **Gerald Kaufman:** ... It has the most extremist Government it has ever had, under the most extremist Prime Minister it has ever had, and a Foreign Minister who is an avowed racist. Israel is allowed literally to get away with murder. Only punitive international action will make even the tiniest difference. ...

col 657 **Stephen Williams (Bristol West) (LD):** ... Gaza is effectively a parallel society. Ironically, people who can prove their status as a descendant of a 1948 refugee are in a slightly better position than those who have lived in the Gaza strip for generations, because they might get access to UNRWA food parcels. We saw that at a food distribution centre, where families came from all over the Gaza strip and took away their very limited supplies of cooking oil and other cooking materials by donkey cart. It was a medieval scene, and what is happening in Gaza is medieval, too: medieval siege tactics are being used that would have been appropriate at the time of Richard the Lionheart or Saladin but are completely outrageous and unacceptable in the second decade of the 21st century. ...

col 660 **Sandra Osborne (Ayr, Carrick and Cumnock) (Lab):** ... This Government and the previous one are against holding talks with Hamas, because to do so would apparently make it seem more legitimate. However, we must consider the suffering of the people in Gaza, who live in one big prison, subjected to collective punishment and deprived, as the hon. Member for Bristol West said, of everyday necessities and the means to rebuild their infrastructure and economy. That has made people turn to Hamas in the face of an ongoing failure to find a peaceful solution. ... I do not underestimate the danger of Hamas, but the reality is that Hamas is part of the equation, whether we like it or not. Hamas was elected by the people of Palestine and will not go away simply because we ignore it. ...

col 661 **Mr James Arbuthnot (North East Hampshire) (Con):** ... Israel is a country that makes mistakes. Its political system of proportional representation taken to a ludicrous degree is a mistake. Because of its political system, it finds it very difficult to change. ... But what is definitely not a mistake, and what we ought to applaud, is Israel's determination to stand up for its continued right to exist in peace and security. When that peace is destroyed by Hamas kidnapping Gilad Shalit and continuing to hold him

prisoner for years, nobody should expect Israel just to accept it. When that peace is destroyed by rocketing from Gaza, nobody should expect Israel to say, "Yes, flotillas can be allowed to import whatever they like into Gaza, including perhaps explosives and rockets." On one ship, the Karine A, which was not involved in this convoy, the Israelis found tons of weapons for Hamas. Were they simply to assume that this particular flotilla contained no such weapons to be used by Hamas against both Israel and the population of Gaza, whom Hamas treats so cruelly? Surely not. So obviously the flotilla was going to be stopped and boarded. ...

It is against that background that Israel somehow manages to lose the propaganda battle, and I find that completely baffling. What I do not understand-I hope that someone in this debate can enlighten me-is why Israel is so good at fighting wars, but is absolutely atrocious at managing its public relations. Why does Israel-a country the size of Cornwall that was created out of nothing and that is surrounded by oil-rich countries, at least one of which would like to see it wiped off the face of the map-always allow itself to be portrayed as the aggressor? What is it about the right to exist in peace that is so difficult to get across? ...

<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201011/cmhansrd/cm100614/debtext/100614-0013.htm>

col 663 **Mrs Louise Ellman (Liverpool, Riverside) (Lab/Co-op):** ... Hamas's position is not just to do with ideology and rhetoric; it is to do with action as well. It has fired about 11,000 rockets and missiles-directed at Israeli civilians-and now it is receiving weapons from Iran that Israelis fear could reach Tel Aviv. It was only last November that a shipment of more than 500 tonnes of Iranian weapons coming to Gaza was intercepted off the coast of Cyprus. So Israel has every reason to be concerned about the Hamas regime continuing to attack Israeli civilians and working continually with Iran, its backer, which is dedicated to the absolute destruction and annihilation of the state of Israel and its people. ...

col 664 **Sir John Stanley (Tonbridge and Malling) (Con):** ... I start by making it unequivocally clear that I consider that Israel has a totally indisputable right to self-defence as a sovereign national state. Last year, I was able to visit Sderot with the Foreign Affairs Committee. One is left in absolutely no doubt whatever about the intolerable state in which those living in that community and others near the Gaza border are placed by the Hamas rocket attacks. ...

I am at a loss to know why the Israelis believe that depriving hundreds, if not thousands, of Palestinians of viable employment and driving them into the hands of Hamas can be in Israel's interest, but that was the policy that was followed. The policy is justified on the grounds of security, but that argument simply does not hold water, for the simple reason that Hamas has all the building materials it wants. Hamas controls the tunnels through which come all the cement and steel reinforcing rods it wants. Hamas can build bunkers to its heart's content, so the security grounds do not hold up. ...

<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201011/cmhansrd/cm100614/debtext/100614-0014.htm>

col 671 **Andy Slaughter (Hammersmith) (Lab):** ... The Prime Minister of Israel, in announcing the inquiry, said that it is to investigate "whether Israel's Gaza blockade and the flotilla's interception conformed with international law" [and] "investigate the actions taken by the convoy's organisers and participants." In other words the victims-those who were killed and the many who were injured-are to be put on trial. Thanks to the way the Israeli media typically manipulate publicity-we have heard some examples repeated verbatim in the House tonight-there is very little chance of the inquiry being impartial and of the world being presented with what actually happened. ...

col 673 **Bob Blackman (Harrow East) (Con):** ... Israel has fought a number of wars over the years since it was set up in 1948. Its recent experience of rockets and bombings, including suicide bombings, has been traumatic for all residents. The people of Israel have witnessed frequent suicide bombings, and suffered as a result of them. When the Israeli Government set up the wall, the incidence of suicide bombings

dramatically reduced. If one were an Israeli citizen, one would say that the Israeli Government had done a wondrous thing. However, if one were a Palestinian, one would say, "You have done terrible things to us."

Equally, what is Israel's justification of the blockade? It is quite clear that since the blockade was implemented, the incidence of bombings and rockets coming into Israel has reduced, although such incidents have not ceased. The reality is that given the state of war between Israel and Hamas, Israel has the absolute right to enforce the position that rockets, bombs, missiles and ammunition must not enter Palestine or any area that can then attack the state of Israel.

We are challenged on the position of humanitarian aid, yet the state of Israel allows some 15,000 tonnes per week of humanitarian aid to enter Gaza. However, there is the role of Hamas: it holds up the aid. It uses it as an incentive to control the people of Palestine, and as a means of repression. Until it ceases its repression, the people of Palestine will not see the benefit of having a properly, democratically elected Government who truly represent them. ... There is, of course, a way forward on the situation. First, Hamas and Hezbollah must renounce violence, stop bombing Israel and recognise Israel's right to exist. Israel must then lift the blockade, allow humanitarian aid in and ensure that a two-state solution can prosper and grow in an atmosphere of negotiation, peace and tranquillity. ...

col 674 Emma Reynolds (Wolverhampton North East) (Lab): ... There must also be a wider understanding by the Israeli Government and the Israeli defence forces that they cannot use the justification of self-defence for any action that they choose to take. They must understand that there are severe doubts about the proportionality of their response in this case and others, and that the blockade of Gaza ... is self-defeating—a policy that has long been discredited and continues to push power into the hands of Hamas.

<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201011/cmhansrd/cm100614/debtext/100614-0015.htm>

col 676 Nick Boles (Grantham and Stamford) (Con): ... Let us look at the middle east and ask ourselves, where in the middle east is it best to be a woman, or where in the middle east is it best to be gay? In Egypt, personal status laws discriminate harshly against women on marriage, custody of children and inheritance. In Jordan, a country which I consider to be a positive force and one where the current ruler is trying to take it forward, more than 20 women per annum, according to Amnesty International, are killed for breaking social taboos. Israel had a female Prime Minister before any party in Britain had even thought of it, and it nearly had another one last year—I rather wish it had—in Tzipi Livni.

Think about a gay person in the middle east. In Syria, it is not so bad—three years in prison. In Iran, a gay person would get the death penalty. In Israel, a gay person can rise to be a general in the armed forces, and just last Friday 100,000 people marched in Tel Aviv to celebrate the equality of gay people in Israel.

So then I ask myself, where in the middle east is it best to criticise the Government in public? In Syria, it is simply not possible, because the state controls every single aspect of the media. Reporters Without Borders calls Iran, "the Middle East's biggest prison for journalists", but it ranks Israel higher than the United States as a place for press freedom—44th in the world and first in the middle east.

Finally, I ask myself, where is it best in the middle east to belong to a religious or ethnic minority? In Syria, Kurds and Jews are not allowed to take any part at all in political life. In Iran, one cannot even go to university without passing an exam on Islamic ideology, and one cannot get a senior post in any organisation unless one belongs to the majority Shi'a group. In Israel, Israeli Arabs have always had all rights—the same as Israeli Jews—except for one: they do not have to serve in the armed forces, because the state of Israel recognises that it would be unfair to set them against their Arab brothers. However, they can vote and be elected, and many have been. There is even an Arab-Israeli serving on the supreme court in Israel.

So let us be clear: for all its errors and excesses, which I and the whole House see,

Israel is an oasis in a desert-an oasis of freedom, democracy and human rights in the middle east. We therefore have to ask ourselves, why does Israel do those things that shock, pain and worry us all? Why does it feel driven to inflict on the people of Gaza what we all recognise, whether in law or not, as seemingly like collective punishment? The answer is very simple: it is not just faced but encircled by an enemy that wishes to destroy it. ...

col 677 Yasmin Qureshi (Bolton South East) (Lab): ... We have to go back in history. In the 19th century, only 5% of the population in Palestine were Jewish; 95% were Muslims and Christians. In 1931, 18% of the people in Palestine were Jewish, resulting from the persecution of the Jewish people in Europe. Between 1947 and 1948, 78% of Palestinians were expelled from their homeland, and now Jewish people hold 75% of the land, whereas the Palestinians, who are larger in number, have only 25%. ... People have been expelled from their homes and blockaded, but some Members say, "We can't see why people are being critical of the Israelis and why people feel that they should fight for the rights of the Palestinians." ...

<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201011/cmhansrd/cm100614/debtext/100614-0016.htm>

UK Parliamentary Questions

Passports: Fraud

Nicholas Soames: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what the outcome was of the investigation by the Serious and Organised Crime Agency into the use of counterfeit British passports in the killing of Mahmoud al-Mabhouh on 19 January 2010; what co-operation the Agency received from the government of Israel; what discussions (a) officials and Ministers of her Department, (b) officials of the Identity and Passport Service and (c) officials of the Serious and Organised Crime Agency have had on the issue with representatives of the government of Israel; what the outcome of such discussions was; and if she will make a statement. [1805]

Nick Herbert [holding answer 10 June 2010]: The outcome of the Serious Organised Crime Agency's investigation was reported by the then Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary in his statement to the House of 23 March.

An officer of the Serious Organised Crime Agency (SOCA) had discussions with the Israeli police but there were no discussions between representatives of the Government of Israel and Home Office Ministers, officials of the Department, officials of the Identity and Passport Service, or officers of SOCA.

<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201011/cmhansrd/cm100614/text/100614w0009.htm#10061411000014>

Palestinians: International Assistance

Mr Andrew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether he has received a response from the government of Israel to his statement of 5 June 2010 calling for an end to the closure of Gaza. [1991]

Alistair Burt: We continue to discuss these issues with the Government of Israel and our international partners-including members of the Quartet and the EU. There has been a slight easing in some of the items allowed into Gaza which we welcome. But we continue to call for more significant steps to lift Gaza's closure. As my right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary has made clear, it is important that there is unfettered access to meet the humanitarian needs of the people of Gaza and to enable the reconstruction of people's homes, livelihoods and trade.

<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201011/cmhansrd/cm100614/text/100614w0012.htm#10061417000016>

Palestinians: Politics and Government

Lindsay Roy: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what his latest assessment is of the political situation in Gaza; and if he will make a statement. [2077]

Alistair Burt: The UK is extremely concerned by the humanitarian, economic and political situation in Gaza. As my right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary has made clear, it is essential that there is unfettered access not only to meet the humanitarian needs of the people of Gaza but to enable the reconstruction of people's homes, livelihoods and trade.

At the same time it is important to remember that Hamas continues to pursue an ideology of violence which directly undermines prospects for peace in the region. We call on Hamas to take immediate and concrete steps towards the Quartet principles and to release Gilad Shalit unconditionally.

<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201011/cmhansrd/cm100614/text/100614w0012.htm#10061417000017>

Gaza

Lord Hylton: To ask Her Majesty's Government what assistance they are giving to restoring supplies entering Gaza to the level of the first half of 2007, including food and construction materials.[HL197]

Baroness Verma: The Prime Minister and the Foreign Secretary have made clear to their counterparts in the Israeli Government the need for full access for humanitarian aid into Gaza, and to ease import and export restrictions of materials and goods, to enable the reconstruction of homes and livelihoods.

We are also discussing with our international partners how best to achieve an easing of the access regime and what assistance we could provide.

We also continue to call on Hamas to end its interference with the operations of NGOs and United Nation agencies that are working to improve the lives of ordinary Gazans.

Lord Hylton: To ask Her Majesty's Government whether they have received legal advice on whether Israel is complying with Article 33 of the Fourth Geneva Convention in respect of its actions in Gaza and the West Bank; and, if so, what action they propose to take.[HL198]

The Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office (Lord Howell of Guildford): We do not comment on whether or not legal advice has been given.

<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/ld201011/ldhansrd/text/100614w0001.htm#1006144000765>

MV "Mavi Marmara"

Lord Hylton: To ask Her Majesty's Government whether they and the United Nations intend to organise an independent investigation into the incidents on the "Mavi Marmara" and the detaining of other ships.[HL196]

The Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office (Lord Howell of Guildford): As my right honourable friend the Foreign Secretary made clear in his Statement to the House on 2 June 2010, we want to see a full, credible, impartial and independent investigation, with international participation, into these events. What is important is that the full facts come out, that people are held accountable where necessary, and that there is international confidence in the process.

The Foreign Secretary has also discussed the importance of these issues with his Israeli counterpart, Avigdor Lieberman.

<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/ld201011/ldhansrd/text/100614w0005.htm#1006144000780>

UK Parliament Early Day Motion

Rodger Godsiff (213) MK Zoabi and the Gaza flotilla - That this House views with concern the treatment that MK Zoabi has received from her fellow parliamentarians in the Knesset as a result of her participation in the Gaza Freedom Flotilla; notes that she may shortly be deprived of parliamentary privileges which include her parliamentary immunity and Knesset membership, as well as facing criminal prosecution following her contradiction of the official Israeli version of events when the boats were intercepted in international waters; further notes that her vilification has led to death threats and the assignment of personal body guards by the Knesset; and calls on the Government vigorously to support the actions of MK Zoabi in its representations to the Israeli government and to affirm MK Zoabi's basic political, civil and human rights, including freedom of speech, and those of the Palestinian people for whom she took her stand.

<http://edmi.parliament.uk/EDMi/EDMDetails.aspx?EDMID=41136&SESSION=905>

UK Parliament Ministerial Statement

Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) Review Conference

The Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs (Mr William Hague):

... *The Middle East*

The outcome on the middle east represented a major step forward, with agreement to hold a regional conference in 2012 to discuss issues relevant to a middle east zone free of weapons of mass destruction and their delivery systems. Responsibility for the regional conference is shared between the UN Secretary-General and the NPT depositary states (Russia, the UK and the US).

The UK has long supported such a zone as an achievable goal-we co-sponsored the resolution on the middle east at the 1995 review conference-while recognising that its realisation lies in progress towards a comprehensive peace in the middle east and in ensuring that other states in the region, including Iran and Syria, are fully implementing and upholding the existing international agreements.

The agreement on the middle east involved difficult compromise from all parties involved. The singling out of Israel in the final document, and without any reference to Iran, will make progress more difficult: Israel was not a formal party to the discussion and has already made clear its difficulty with the decision. Building confidence among all the parties in the region and giving them full ownership of the conference will be essential for success. The UK will play a full and active role.

To read the full statement see

<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201011/cmhansrd/cm100614/wmstext/100614m0001.htm#100614800009>

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Relevant Legislation ** New or updated

UK Parliament

**** Academies Bill**

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

Amendment paper

<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/ld201011/ldbills/001/amend/am001-d.htm>

Identity Documents Bill

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

Scottish Parliament

End of Life Assistance Bill

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

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Other Relevant Information

European Commission against Racism and Intolerance

Reports (including about antisemitism) on the current situation in:

France

<http://www.coe.int/t/dghl/monitoring/ecri/Country-by-country/France/FRA-CbC-IV-2010-016-ENG.pdf>

Poland

<http://www.coe.int/t/dghl/monitoring/ecri/Country-by-country/Georgia/GEO-CbC-IV-2010-017-ENG.pdf>

Former Yugoslave Republic of Macedonia

http://www.coe.int/t/dghl/monitoring/ecri/Country-by-country/Former_Yugoslav_Republic_Macedonia/MKD-CbC-IV-2010-019-ENG.pdf

Georgia

<http://www.coe.int/t/dghl/monitoring/ecri/Country-by-country/Georgia/GEO-CbC-IV-2010-017-ENG.pdf>

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Consultations

** new or updated

** closes today

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>

** closes in 2 days

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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