

Political Affairs Brief

A daily summary of political events affecting the Jewish Community

Scottish Council of Jewish Communities

SCoJeC

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European Parliament: Shechitah

MEPs set out clearer and more consistent food labelling rules

... New country of origin requirements

Country of origin labelling is already compulsory for certain foods, such as beef, honey, olive oil and fresh fruit and vegetables. MEPs supported extending this to all meat, poultry, dairy products and other single-ingredient products. They also voted for the country of origin to be stated for meat, poultry and fish when used as an ingredient in processed food. However, this may be subject to an impact assessment.

Meat labels should indicate where the animal was born, reared and slaughtered, says Parliament. In addition, meat from slaughter without stunning (according to certain religious traditions) should be labelled as such. ...

... MEPs want food that is not prepacked, such as meat from a butcher, to be exempt from nutrition labelling rules. ...

... no quick agreement is expected with Council, so the draft legislation is likely to return to Parliament for a second reading. Once the legislation is adopted, food business will have three years to adapt to the rules. Smaller operators, with fewer than 100 employees and an annual turnover under €5 million, would have five years to comply.

To read the full press release see

http://www.europarl.europa.eu/news/expert/infopress_page/067-76128-165-06-25-911-20100615IPR76127-14-06-2010-2010-false/default_en.htm

Draft European Parliament Legislative Resolution on the proposal for a regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council on the provision of food information to consumers (COM(2008)0040 – C6-0052/2008 – 2008/0028(COD))

Amendment 205 relates to shechitah. Amendments: 25, 65, and 101 are also relevant.

<http://www.europarl.europa.eu/sides/getDoc.do?type=REPORT&reference=A7-2010-0109&language=EN&mode=XML#title1>

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Westminster Hall Debate

Gaza

includes:

col 92WH **Karen Buck (Westminster North) (Lab):** ... the latest crisis was triggered on 31 May, when Israeli forces boarded one of six vessels in the flotilla carrying aid to Gaza, killing nine Turkish nationals. ... From the footage that we have seen, there seems to be no doubt that Israeli soldiers were themselves subject to violent attack. However, Israel originally stated that its soldiers were fired on first—a claim for which no evidence has been provided—and that they were equipped with paintball guns, whereas the BBC's "Newsnight" on 1 June showed that Israeli soldiers had been carrying lethal weapons from the beginning. ...

Mark Lazarowicz (Edinburgh North and Leith) (Lab/Co-op): ... Theresa McDermott experienced what can only be described as brutality by Israeli forces, who fired sound grenades directly at people, tasered them and so on. ...

Karen Buck: ... Although it should not be necessary, I restate that rocket attacks on the civilian population, such as those that rained down on Sderot, constitute war crimes. I have no doubt that everyone taking part in this and other debates condemns such attacks without reservation. Israeli civilians have a right to peace and security. ...

... The 1.5 million citizens of Gaza should not be subjected to the impact of the siege because of the Government that they chose—or, in many cases, did not choose—to elect.

... The people of that grossly over-populated strip—measuring only 10 km from east to west—have been denied all freedom of movement, have extremely limited access to vital goods and services and, perhaps most crucial, have been denied access to construction materials needed to rebuild the many homes and facilities destroyed during Operation Cast Lead. ...

<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201011/cmhansrd/cm100615/halltext/100615h0004.htm#1006151700003>

col 98WH **Simon Hughes (Bermondsey and Old Southwark) (LD):** ... those of us of the Jewish, Muslim or Christian faith ... should have a particular responsibility in this matter. If followers of the three great world faiths, for whom the part of the world that we are discussing is so important, cannot understand that the logic of our faith is that we should seek to accommodate followers of other faiths who share the same belief in the same God, not much of an example is set to the rest of the world when we seek to preach to them. ...

Regarding the Government of Gaza, people must be allowed to choose their own Governments. They are not always comfortable choices, but the world must understand that it does not help by alienating those Governments entirely. ...

Israel is a democracy. ... it should be praised for being a democracy, although I share the view that certain forms of proportional representation are not helpful and that the Israeli system with a single chamber of Parliament might be one of them. The implication of a democracy is that the country respects international law. It cannot have it both ways. It cannot say, "We uphold democracy at home," as it does, "and an enlightened social and other policy," but then deny international law outside its own territorial waters or abroad. ...

<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201011/cmhansrd/cm100615/halltext/100615h0005.htm>

col 101WH **Emily Thornberry (Islington South and Finsbury) (Lab):** ... Israeli forces came on to the boat, firing plastic bullets. ... Two Australian journalists ... identified themselves. In response, they were tasered. ... There was no violence from Alex's boat towards the Israeli defence forces, yet those on board were treated with huge violence.

She says that she has hand marks on her arms and legs from when she was picked up and carried from the boat. ... She was in a pen with 15 other women, and she witnessed some women next to her being hit about the head. They were not treated as badly as the men. ... Some had been shot in the feet and were on crutches. There were no wheelchairs. She was not allowed to assist the men. If any attempt to try and assist them was made, people were hit again. ...

col 105WH Jeremy Corbyn (Islington North) (Lab): ... Why ... do we not impose some kind of sanction against Israel for its constant illegal behaviour? Why do we not suspend the EU-Israel association agreement by which Israel survives so well economically? Why does the US continue to pour aid into Israel, including military aid and a new missile defence system, other than because it sees Israel as an extension of its own foreign policy in the region? If we want a nuclear-free middle east and peace in the middle east, the siege must end. The blockade must be lifted, and the people of Palestine and their legitimate right to live peacefully and to survive must be recognised. ...

Louise Ellman (Liverpool, Riverside) (Lab/Co-op): ... the facts are that Israeli settlers left Gaza in 2005, but that was followed not by Palestinians and the people of Gaza trying to build a new society and attract international investment. It was followed by the violence of Hamas overthrowing Fatah and engaging in a civil war with it, and by Hamas continuing to state its absolute opposition to the very existence of Israel. Hamas's charter is readily available. It constantly puzzles me why people who are legitimately and genuinely concerned about social justice wilfully ignore the contents of that charter in a way that they would not if it belonged to any other organisation. The charter includes statements about killing the Jews. It says that the day of judgment will not come until the Muslims kill the Jews. It says that there is no way except jihad, and that peace conferences and negotiations are a waste of time. It talks about the protocols of the elders of Zion, and the false allegation that Jews run the world. It claims that Jews are responsible for all revolutions, including the French and Russian revolutions. Indeed, the charter goes beyond being anti-Israeli: it is clearly anti-Semitic, and when it is combined with Hamas's actions in targeting rockets at Israeli civilians, is it surprising that Israelis are genuinely concerned about their security? ...

<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201011/cmhansrd/cm100615/halltext/100615h0006.htm>

col 110WH David Ward (Bradford East) (LD): ... Hamas is proscribed, but why is the state of Israel not proscribed? Everyone says that a peaceful solution is necessary, but why on earth should the state of Israel agree to a peaceful solution when brutal force has achieved so much for it over such a long period? ...

<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201011/cmhansrd/cm100615/halltext/100615h0007.htm>

col 115WH Alistair Burt: ... there are competing versions of events out there, and we know that the world will not be satisfied unless there is a process that gives everyone the chance to say what they saw and what conclusions they came to. ... We should not get hung up on the structure of the inquiry, because, in testament to those who died or who were involved, we should let the inquiry get on and see what emerges ...

... Hamas does play a part in the whole tragedy of Gaza; it is wrong to ignore it or to ignore its part in that tragedy. There is no suggestion that the United Kingdom will change its position in relation to contact with Hamas; ...

<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201011/cmhansrd/cm100615/halltext/100615h0008.htm>

UK Parliamentary Questions

Passports: Fraud

Nicholas Soames: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what assurances he has received from the government of Israel that it will not sanction the misuse of British passports. [2515]

Alistair Burt: I have not yet received any formal assurance from Israel. An assurance that British passports will not be misused, would be a positive step from Israel both in its engagement with this new Government and in helping to re-establish the trust of the British passport holders.

<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201011/cmhansrd/cm100615/text/100615w0005.htm#10061561000022>

Israel

Lord Hylton: To ask Her Majesty's Government whether they are taking steps to ensure that the confiscated possessions of British citizens recently deported from Israel are returned to them, and that they receive legal assistance in any claims for compensation. [HL195]

The Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office (Lord Howell of Guildford): We have been in regular contact with the Israelis regarding the missing property. We understand that the property was transferred to Turkey, where any items that were not claimed are now held by IHH, the Foundation for Human Rights and Freedoms and Humanitarian Relief, the organisers of the flotilla. We are communicating any information we have to those British nationals who were on the flotilla.

The Government do not provide legal assistance for British nationals in regards to claims for compensation. We can provide them with a list of local lawyers who will be able to advise them on the legal process.

<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/ld201011/ldhansrd/text/100615w0002.htm#10061539000207>

Palestinians: International Assistance

Mr Andrew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what recent discussions he has had with the Middle East Quartet on securing free access to Gaza for the purposes of providing humanitarian aid, construction material and other non-military supplies. [1990]

Alistair Burt [holding answer 14 June 2010]: Both my right hon. Friends the Prime Minister and the Foreign Secretary have discussed these issues recently with their Israeli counterparts. We also continue to discuss these issues with our international partners, including during the Foreign Secretary's recent visits to EU capitals-and with Quartet Representative Tony Blair. We welcome Quartet consideration of these important issues.

Mr Andrew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what reports he has received on the establishment of an international investigation into the interception of the Free Gaza movement flotilla. [1992]

Alistair Burt [holding answer 14 June 2010]: We have underlined the need for a full, credible, impartial and independent investigation into the events of 31 May. We have made clear that we want to see a process that ensures full accountability and commands the confidence of the international community.

Israel has launched an internal military investigation and announced on 14 June a separate inquiry headed by former Supreme Court judge Yaakov Tirkel and including David Trimble and Ken Watkins as international observers. This is a positive step. We will await details of the inquiry's conduct and findings before drawing further conclusions.

UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon has also announced an inquiry panel, led by

former New Zealand Prime Minister Geoffrey Palmer, though no further details have been announced on the membership or composition of this panel.

<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201011/cmhansrd/cm100615/text/100615w0005.htm#10061561000022>

European Union Institute for Security Studies

The aftermath of Israel's raid on the Gaza aid flotilla: Is Turkey a new rogue state?

http://www.iss.europa.eu/uploads/media/Is_Turkey_a_new_rogue_state.pdf

United Nations

Flotilla incident highlights need for radical shift on Gaza,

... Robert Serry, the Special Coordination for the Middle East Peace Process, told the Security Council in an open briefing... that the UN is ready to accept responsibility, on an exceptional basis, to take possession of and responsibility for the cargo of the three Turkish-registered vessels and ensure its distribution in Gaza for humanitarian purposes.

... "The basic principle that should guide the policy on Gaza is clear. Everything should be allowed into Gaza, unless there is a specific and legitimate security reason," he stated. ... In addition, we strongly hope that exports would now be facilitated at a proper scale, and that the categories of people permitted to enter and leave Gaza would be significantly expanded," ...

"We are also making directly clear to interlocutors in Gaza that, just as we urge a significant change in Israel's policy at the crossings, we would be looking for a significant change from Hamas in its policies as well, particularly in declaring an extended ceasefire and acting to prevent all forms of violence against Israel," ...

To read the full press release see

<http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=35030&Cr=palestin&Cr1=>

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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-e.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

UK Parliament Early Day Motion

Greg Mulholland (228) Use of Jerusalem as the English National Anthem at the 2010 Commonwealth Games - That this House welcomes the decision to choose Jerusalem as the anthem for use by English athletes competing in the 2010 Commonwealth Games in Delhi following a month long public vote run by YouGov in which almost 2,000 people were given a choice between Jerusalem, God Save the Queen and Land of Hope and Glory; believes that of the choices given, this is the correct one as it is the only song specifically about England and the only one of the three therefore appropriate to be used as an English national anthem; recognises that, unlike Scotland and Wales, England does not have its own anthem and so looks forward to other sports and sporting events adopting an English anthem for occasions when English teams and athletes, as opposed to British teams and athletes, compete; applauds the Anthem4England campaign for its work on this issue; wishes all England's athletes well in the upcoming games; and looks forward to Jerusalem being sung proudly before and after each such event.

<http://edmi.parliament.uk/EDMi/EDMDetails.aspx?EDMID=41152&SESSION=905>

European Parliament: Family Law

International divorces and legal separations simplified

... the European Parliament gave its consent to establish enhanced cooperation in the field of international divorces and legal separation ... [Tadeusz Zwiefka MEP said] "... we find it necessary to establish common rules that would resolve their legal problems when confronted with cross-border divorce or separation proceedings. ... We are giving EU citizens a choice of what national law they wish to apply in the case of the end of a marriage or relationship, as long as the choice is confined to laws with which the marriage has a close connection." ... The European Parliament will now be consulted by the Council on the creation of the common rules that are to bind the states in the field of law applicable to divorces and legal separations of international couples. ...

To read the full press release see

<http://www.eppgroup.eu/Press/showpr.asp?PRControlDocTypeID=1&PRControlID=9466&PRContentID=16236&PRContentLG=en>

Text of European Resolution on the draft Council decision authorising enhanced cooperation in the area of the law applicable to divorce and legal separation (09898/2010 – C7-0145/2010– 2010/0066(NLE))

<http://www.europarl.europa.eu/sides/getDoc.do?type=REPORT&reference=A7-2010-0194&language=EN&mode=XML#title3>

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Consultations

** new or updated

**** closes tomorrow**

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>

**** Identity Documents Bill** (Committee consideration to be completed by 8 July)

<http://www.parliament.uk/business/news/2010/06/identity-documents-bill-committee-issues-call-for-evidence/>

**** Equality Act: obtaining information in potential discrimination and equality of term cases** (closes 13 July 2010)

http://www.equalities.gov.uk/news/new_streamlined_procedure_for.aspx

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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