

Political Affairs Brief

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

Contents

[Israel](#)

[Relevant Legislation](#)
[Consultations](#)

[Israel](#)

UK Parliamentary Questions

Gaza

Lord Hylton: To ask Her Majesty's Government what discussions they have had about the humanitarian elements of the cargo intended for Gaza carried by ships recently detained by Israel; whether they will act to ensure that it reaches the people of Gaza; and whether they will request the assistance of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East in the matter.[HL238]

The Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office (Lord Howell of Guildford): The UK has had regular updates from the UN and others on how the humanitarian cargo from the flotilla is being handled. We understand that Israel offered to transfer some of the aid to Gaza but that Hamas refused to accept it. However, the Office for the Co-ordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UNOCHA) reports that five truckloads of the flotilla aid have now been distributed within Gaza, facilitated by the Palestinian Authority co-ordination committee. More widely, we continue, with our international partners, to call for changes to lift Gaza's closure, ensuring unfettered access to meet the humanitarian needs of the people of Gaza and to enable the reconstruction of homes and livelihoods and trade.

<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/ld201011/ldhansrd/text/100617w0001.htm#100617117000152>

Iran: Sanctions

Mr Amess: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what steps at the United Nations he (a) has taken since his appointment and (b) plans to take in the next six months in response to allegations of (i) arming and (ii) funding by Iran of Hamas; and if he will make a statement. [2916]

Alistair Burt: Iranian support in the form of arming and funding of Hamas, and other Palestinian Rejectionist Groups, is unacceptable. It undermines international confidence in the Iranian regime's intentions, and is at odds with the regime's claim to the international community that it supports stability in the Middle East.

Hamas continue to pursue an ideology of violence and directly undermine prospects for peace in the region. We call on them to take immediate and concrete steps towards the Quartet principles. A number of issues related to the Middle East are discussed on a monthly basis at the UN. The UK will continue to push for the full implementation of UN Security Council Resolution 1860 which aims to prevent the illicit trafficking of arms into Gaza. We will continue giving our full support to the UN Sanctions Committee in pursuing and investigating sanctions violations.

<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201011/cmhansrd/cm100617/text/100617w0007.htm#100617129000080>

UK Parliament Early Day Motion

Gerald Kaufman (271) Lord Trimble and the Israeli Inquiry into the Raid on the Gaza Flotilla - That this House notes that Lord Trimble has been appointed as a foreign observer of the Israeli internal inquiry into that country's raid on the Gaza flotilla on 31 May 2010; and further notes that it has now been announced that he is one of the founding members of a newly-formed Friends of Israel composed of right-wing European politicians.

<http://edmi.parliament.uk/EDMi/EDMDetails.aspx?EDMID=41194&SESSION=905>

UK Parliament Petition

Blockade of Gaza

The Petition of the West Wiltshire Palestinian Support Group and residents of the Chippenham Constituency,

Declares that Israel's blockade of Gaza is illegal and inhumane.

The Petitioners therefore request that the House of Commons urges the Foreign Secretary to call on Israel to end its blockade of Gaza. [P000836]

<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201011/cmhansrd/cm100617/petntext/100617p0001.htm#100617122000025>

Foreign and Commonwealth Office

Alistair Burt meets with British participants of the Gaza flotilla

Following his meeting with some of the British nationals who were aboard the Gaza flotilla on 31 May, Minister for the Middle East Alistair Burt said:

"As I said in the House of Commons on 14 June, I invited all British nationals involved in the Gaza flotilla to a meeting to discuss their experiences, and I was able to meet with some of them today. I understood very clearly their anger and frustration about their detention, their treatment and about the loss of their goods and belongings, for which Israel is responsible. We had a productive discussion and I undertook to follow up on the concerns they raised. We continue to press Israel to return any British passports still in their possession, and to do everything they can to ensure the return of any belongings.

The British nationals and our consular staff were involved in a confusing and fast moving situation and I am disappointed that, because of the chaotic nature of the situation, consular staff did not manage to see all the British nationals involved, as quickly as we wanted to. We have expressed our concern and dissatisfaction with the Israeli organisation regarding those they detained, which hampered our ability to provide immediate consular assistance. British consular staff in Israel, London and Turkey worked tirelessly to do everything they could to assist the British nationals and their families, from start to finish of this situation. I recalled that we advise against all travel to Gaza, and reiterated that we would advise against any involvement in future flotillas."

<http://www.fco.gov.uk/en/news/latest-news/?view=News&id=22389066>

Foreign Secretary discusses British foreign policy and the Middle East

... **Presenter:** What a number of British MPs have said to me, and they have said in our channel actually, is that what Israel did with the freedom flotilla was, to put it bluntly, just a complete and utter breach of international law. It was piracy.

William Hague: There would be very few defenders of this in Britain. I've been very, very critical of it myself on behalf of the British Government, on behalf of the whole United Kingdom. And I have stressed to the Israeli Government several times over the last two weeks that they must change their policy on Gaza. That it is important that, that UN Security Council Resolution eighteen sixty is implemented, that the blockade of Gaza is lifted, that humanitarian aid should be able to go in, that normal commercial goods should

be able to come in and out of Gaza. And so Britain has been putting the pressure on Israel absolutely correctly to change their policy on Gaza.

Presenter: And the, the partial lifting, according to Israel, of the siege, or maybe the easing of the siege, is not enough. I mean, a lot of organisations, (indistinct) organisation, we just received a press release today from Save the Children, and from many organisations, that say it's not enough at all.

William Hague: ... It is good that there are signs of a change in Israeli policy, but yes, we need a bigger change. And at the same time, of course, there are certain things which would also help this situation. Corporal Shalit should be released. Rocket fire in to Israel should stop. And if those things happen, then of course there would be even more pressure on Israel to make sure that there was a complete change of policy towards Gaza.
...

Presenter: ... three British citizens ... still have their passports held by Israelis. ... they fear that maybe one day they will just wake up in the morning implicated in any plots by the Mossad or anything. I mean, what are you going to do about this?

William Hague: ... we have a strong view about that. ... British passports must not be misused. We look to Israel not to misuse British passports, and to assure us that they will not do so in the future. ...

Presenter: What's your policy towards the Hamas Government? Are you open to dialogue with the organisation? How do you see it?

William Hague: Well we hope Hamas too will support in the end the peace process and this is another of the very important changes that needs to take place. ... to turn away from violence and to recognise in the case of Hamas the existence and the right to exist of, of the state of Israel and to make as I put it concrete movement towards ... recognition. ... it's very important that the world is shown that Hamas is prepared to do those things ...

To read the full transcript see

<http://www.fco.gov.uk/en/news/latest-news/?view=Speech&id=22390552>

European Parliament Debate

Israeli military operation against the humanitarian flotilla and the Gaza blockade

includes:

Catherine Ashton, Vice-President of the Commission/High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy: ... Nine people died in international waters under circumstances that demand an inquiry. This must be an inquiry that Israelis, Palestinians and above all the people of Turkey can believe in. Israel has announced the creation of an independent commission with the participation of two senior international members as observers. This is a step forward. But the EU will follow closely the conduct and the findings of the Commission before drawing further conclusions. ...

Diane Dodds (NI): ... For those of us who have lived under terrorist threat, I have considerable empathy with the plight faced by innocent Israeli citizens who have suffered from indiscriminate rocket attacks. Israel has sought to defend itself from smuggled Iranian rockets by imposing the blockade of Gaza and to an extent this tactic has been successful in reducing the attacks on Israeli citizens. I believe that this House ought to defend the right of any state to defend its citizens from such attack. ...

Proinsias De Rossa (S&D) ... our resolution is clear in its condemnation of Israel's illegal action in killing nine civilians and injuring 38. We are clear in our demand for an international inquiry which is credible, transparent and independent. The inquiry announced by Israel is none of those things and is not acceptable. ...

Laima Liucija Andrikiienė (PPE): Mr President, just a few remarks. Firstly, violence, especially if it ends with loss of life, should always be condemned and fought against. However, it has yet to be determined who was actually the first to use violence in the case of Israel's interception of the Gaza flotilla. ...

Traian Ungureanu (PPE): *in writing* While the joint motion for a resolution on the 'flotilla case' and the Gaza blockade is most welcome ... the document is still unbalanced ... Gaza is governed by the elected Hamas administration and this should bring direct responsibility for Hamas as a governing party and as a military force. Hamas is labelled a 'terrorist organisation' by the EU, but the motion for a resolution abstains from naming Hamas when it asks for all the attacks on Israel to be stopped immediately. The perpetrator of these indiscriminate attacks on Israeli civilians is Hamas. ...

<http://www.europarl.europa.eu/sides/getDoc.do?pubRef=-//EP//TEXT+CRE+20100616+ITEM-012+DOC+XML+V0//EN&language=EN>

United Nations

UN team calls for end to systematic rights violations by Israel in occupied territories

A three-member United Nations body has called for an end to human rights violations by Israel in the occupied territories of the Gaza Strip, the West Bank and the Syrian Golan Heights, after hearing from dozens of witnesses during a recent visit to the region. ... "Victims of the systematic and often arbitrary restrictions on human rights and basic freedoms have the right to see justice prevail," he added. "Violations must cease." ... The Committee also heard about discriminatory policies relating to, among others, the continuing violations of the right to freedom of movement resulting from the Gaza blockade, the separation barrier, checkpoints, roadblocks and other physical obstacles; restricted access to education, health and water resources; and the treatment of prisoners, including over 300 children, held in Israeli jails. ...

The Committee will present its report to the General Assembly ... its observations and recommendations to improve the human rights situation for those living under the occupation.

To read the full press release see

<http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=35063&Cr=palestin&Cr1=>

[TOP](#)

Relevant Legislation ** New or updated

UK Parliament

Academies Bill

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

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>

Summary of written evidence

(pp16-22) <http://www.scottish.parliament.uk/s3/committees/endLifeAsstBill/papers-10/elap10-03.pdf>

[TOP](#)

Consultations

** new or updated

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

[TOP](#)

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