

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

Mr Amess: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many anti-Semitic incidents (a) were recorded in England and Wales in (i) 2008 and (ii) 2009 and (b) have been recorded in 2010 to date; and if she will make a statement. [5684]

Nick Herbert: The information requested is not collected centrally in the recorded crime statistics. The recorded crime statistics only hold data for racially or religiously aggravated offences as defined by law. Specific details relating to the victim or alleged offender are not collected.

<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201011/cmhansrd/cm100706/text/100706w0003.htm#10070657000072>

Higher Education: Anti-Semitism

Mr Amess: To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Innovation and Skills (1) pursuant to the answer of 24 June 2010, *Official Report*, columns 314-15, on higher education: anti-Semitism, when he plans to meet representatives of the Jewish community and the higher education sector; if he will place in the Library a copy of the agenda of that meeting; and if he will make a statement; [5379]

(2) what his policy is on the continuance of the higher education sub-group of the cross-Government working group on anti-Semitism; what discussions he has had with ministerial colleagues about this group since his appointment; and if he will make a statement; [5584]

(3) what guidance his Department has issued to higher education institutions on combating (a) anti-Semitism, (b) stereotyping of the Jewish community and (c) violent extremism; what discussions his Department has had with the Jewish community on the issue; and if he will make a statement. [5585]

Mr Willetts: The meeting with Jewish community and higher education stakeholders is in the process of being arranged and I anticipate that it will involve broad discussions on anti-Semitism and the implications for the higher education sector, including the future of the BIS Anti-Semitism and Higher Education Group. A formal agenda has not yet been agreed for this meeting but I would be happy to place a copy in the Library when it is available. I have held no discussions with ministerial colleagues about this group.

The former Department for Innovation, Universities and Skills provided updated and revised guidance to higher education institutions on 'Promoting Good Campus Relations, Fostering Shared Values and Preventing Violent Extremism in Universities and Higher Education Colleges', available here:

<http://www.dius.gov.uk/publications/extremismhe.pdf>

This provided detailed guidance to help institutions address issues concerning violent extremism, applicable to any form this might take on campus. The Department has not issued any guidance about the stereotyping of any community.

The sector itself has also produced guidance which offers institutions practical strategies to deal with instances of hate crimes and intolerance on campus, including anti-Semitism.

There is no place for racism of any form, including anti-Semitism, in higher education. Universities have the primary responsibility for ensuring that their students are not subject to threatening or abusive behaviour on campus and have access to a strong legislative framework and guidance to help them deal effectively with instances of intolerance, racism and harassment in their institutions. Government would expect them to vigorously tackle these issues when they arise and report criminal attacks to the police when they occur on campus, or support students to do so.

Mr Amess: To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Innovation and Skills which directorate of his Department has responsibility for the (a) formulation and (b) implementation of policy on (i) countering anti-Semitism in higher education, (ii) the higher education sub-group of the cross-government working group on anti-Semitism, (iii) the cross-government working group on anti-Semitism and (iv) Government policy on the work of the All Party Parliamentary Inquiry into Anti-Semitism; how many officials in his Department at each pay band are employed in this Directorate; what other posts in his Department each such official has held; and if he will make a statement. [5586]

Mr Willetts: The higher education directorate has the responsibility for policy on anti-Semitism in higher education. There are four officials within this directorate who cover policy on anti-Semitism as part of their remit-by grade these are two senior civil servants, one team leader and one higher executive officer. As experienced civil servants these officials have undertaken work in a number other posts across Government in the past.

Mr Amess: To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Innovation and Skills what files his Department holds on (a) the higher education sub-group of the cross-government working group on anti-Semitism, (b) the cross-government working group on anti-Semitism, (c) the All Party Parliamentary Inquiry into anti-Semitism and (d) countering anti-Semitism in higher education; and if he will make a statement. [5587]

Mr Willetts: The Department holds the necessary records on each of (a), (b), (c) and (d) to enable officials to provide the appropriate policy support to Ministers.

<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201011/cmhansrd/cm100706/text/100706w0005.htm#10070668000076>

UK Parliament Privileges Committee

Report : Mr Trevor Phillips: Allegation of Contempt

The original allegation was made by the Joint Committee on Human Rights in February 2010. The Committee for Privileges and Conduct concluded that Mr Phillips was not guilty of committing a contempt when he approached members of the Joint Committee on Human Rights shortly before they were to consider a draft report on the operation of the EHRC. However, the committee described his behaviour as “inappropriate and ill-advised”.

<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/ld201011/ldselect/ldprivi/15/1503.htm>

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UK Parliamentary Questions

Settlement Expansion

6. John Robertson (Glasgow North West) (Lab): What recent discussions [the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs] has had with his Israeli counterpart on settlement expansion in East Jerusalem and the west bank; and if he will make a statement. [5780]

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs (Alistair Burt): We are in regular contact and dialogue with the Israeli Government, particularly on matters pertaining to the peace process. We remain of the view that the moratorium on settlements that is currently in place is the right policy, and we continue to urge all parties not to change any facts on the ground which might undermine the peace process.

John Robertson: ... can he tell us exactly what the Government's policy will be towards the settlements? Will he come out and actually say that they have to be closed down, and that we have to return to the 1967 boundaries?

Alistair Burt: ... we regard the settlement policy as wrong and not in the interests of the peace process. That is a position that has been made clear to the Israeli Government ... We therefore urge that the moratorium on settlements should remain past September, when it is due to come to an end.

Sir Malcolm Rifkind (Kensington) (Con): Does the Minister agree that land swaps of Israeli territory for Palestinian territory, which has already been discussed in the past by Israelis and Palestinians, would form, at the very least, a significant part of a potential solution to the problem outside East Jerusalem? Does he also accept, however, that for the two-state solution to work, the proposed Palestinian state must have a high degree of both territorial integrity and economic viability?

Alistair Burt: ... land swaps play their part. We remain of the view that a two-state solution is the thing to be sought, with a universally recognised and secure Israel next to a viable and sovereign Palestine. ...

Mr Ivan Lewis (Bury South) (Lab): ... Will the Minister give a progress report on the implementation of the Israeli Government's commitment to minimise restrictions on goods and services needed for the reconstruction of Gaza? Will he confirm whether any progress has been made on the proposed deployment of EU troops to assist movement and access into Gaza? Will he also give an indication of what steps Britain and the EU are taking to secure the release of Gilad Shalit?

Alistair Burt: ... two days ago-I think-the Israelis announced that they were moving from a list of allowed goods to a list of banned goods, and that reconstruction materials would be allowed through. It remains essential that no weapons get through into Gaza and thereby further destabilise the situation. As he also said, it is crucial that Hamas should release Gilad Shalit as soon as possible and unconditionally ...

Sir Menzies Campbell (North East Fife) (LD): Does the Minister accept that the moratorium is no substitute for the cessation of a policy that is unequivocally contrary to international law ...

Alistair Burt: ... The current position, in which the moratorium has been observed, has been important in allowing space for the proximity talks to take place ...

Mrs Louise Ellman (Liverpool, Riverside) (Lab/Co-op): ... does the Minister welcome the decision by the International Trade Union Confederation to urge closer working between the Israeli trade unions-the Histadrut-and the Palestinian trade unions, instead of pursuing a policy of sanctions and divestment?

Alistair Burt: ... the recent investment conference on the west bank was very successful, and that the Palestinian Authority are now seeing real progress in their

own economy. They remain in difficulty, however, as do all the occupied territories, and of course none more so than Gaza. Anything that can be done to stimulate relationships, particularly those relating to trade, with the occupied territories and the west bank, must be good news.

To read the full transcript see

<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201011/cmhansrd/cm100706/debtext/100706-0001.htm#10070631000016>

Middle East

13. Simon Hughes (Bermondsey and Old Southwark) (LD): What [Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs] foreign policy priorities are for the middle east area. [5788]

The Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs (Mr William Hague): Strengthening the United Kingdom's relations with the countries of the middle east as part of a distinctive British foreign policy is one of the highest foreign-policy priorities of this Government. We will work to promote a two-state solution to the Arab-Israeli conflict, and will press for firm diplomacy to resolve international concerns about Iran. We will remain engaged in Iraq, and will help to build stability in Yemen.

Simon Hughes: ... Six years ago this week, the International Court of Justice ruled that the wall being built by Israel was illegal and ought to come down. Will my right hon. Friend make it absolutely clear, while consistent with supporting a continued safe state of Israel and a state for Palestine, that Israel must understand that international law is for all, not some, to obey?

Mr Hague: It is for all to obey—that is absolutely right—and, of course, we support a two-state solution created by negotiation and confidence-building on both sides, rather than the creation of facts on the ground that are intended to change the shape of such a solution ultimately. ...

Mrs Linda Riordan (Halifax) (Lab/Co-op): What action is the Foreign Office taking to ensure that there is a full, independent, international inquiry into the appalling Israeli attack on the freedom flotilla? Does the Foreign Secretary agree that an internal Israeli investigation alone is simply not acceptable?

Mr Hague: ... there should be a credible, independent, prompt and thorough inquiry. ... The United Nations Secretary-General proposed an international inquiry, which would have been a good thing to do. The Israeli Government have decided to set up an inquiry, but with an international presence. We may not consider such an inquiry ideal, but we should hold Israel to conducting it in an independent and thorough manner, and should judge it according to the way in which it proceeds. ...

Mr Andy Slaughter (Hammersmith) (Lab): What representations has the Foreign Secretary made to the Government of Israel about the thousands of Palestinians in East Jerusalem who have their citizenship withdrawn every year, about the hundreds who are expelled from the city and, in particular, about the four Palestinian MPs resident in Jerusalem who are due to be expelled this weekend?

Mr Hague: ... When these things happen, they are unacceptable and they show that we must put as much momentum as possible behind our efforts to broker peace in the middle east. That is why it is such a priority for the Government. I will certainly look to see whether we can do any more about the point that he makes.

To read the full transcript see

<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201011/cmhansrd/cm100706/debtext/100706-0001.htm#10070631000021>

Topical Questions

T3. [5802] Ann McKechin (Glasgow North) (Lab): Like the ministerial team, I welcome the recent easing of the blockade in Gaza, but what specific reassurances has the Foreign Secretary received from the Israeli Government that those within Gaza who need to travel outside for medical treatment, including children and elderly and disabled people, will receive unrestricted access out of Gaza?

Mr Hague: We have not yet received specific assurances on that, but the hon. Lady is right to raise the issue. It is one of the things that we want to see happen. It should be possible for goods and exports to leave Gaza, but it should also be possible for people such as she describes and others to move freely in and out of Gaza. So that is one of the things that we will continue to press on the Israeli Government. ...

Tim Farron (Westmorland and Lonsdale) (LD): How will the Foreign Secretary assist Mr Netanyahu to resist demands from within his own Government for the building of illegal settlements to recommence by September?

Mr Hague: We have to continue to try to convince the Israeli Government—my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister and I have been active in that already—that it is fundamentally in the interests of Israel to do everything that it can to secure a two-state solution, that time for that might be running out, and that such a solution is in the interests of Israel's long-term security. Winning that argument is very important, and we will continue to try to win it.

David Cairns (Inverclyde) (Lab): Given that a great deal of the credit for the steady if unheralded progress on economic and security issues on the west bank, in such matters as the dismantling of blockades, belongs to British military officers and former police officers, who have played a very important role there, will the Foreign Secretary reassure the House that the Government remain committed to supporting the work of our armed forces and former police officers on the west bank, as well as, of course, the excellent work of Tony Blair?

Mr Hague: Yes, very much, indeed. I never thought that I would say in this House that I support the excellent work of Tony Blair, but I do. I have had many phone conversations with him over the past few weeks, and a meeting with him last Friday, about Gaza and building up Palestinian institutions. He is doing a very good job on that—notwithstanding all our disagreements in the past.

We will of course continue to support the wider work to which the hon. Gentleman refers. A great deal of progress has been made on the west bank, and economic progress, which shows the signs that it is possible to have a functioning state, is a very important component of driving forward the middle east peace process.

<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201011/cmhansrd/cm100706/debtext/100706-0001.htm#10070631000025>

Middle East

21. Mike Freer: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what recent progress has been made in the middle east peace process; and if he will make a statement. [5796]

Alistair Burt: Recent events, including in Gaza, have highlighted the urgent need for progress towards a two state solution. My right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary spoke to Senator Mitchell last week about progress on proximity talks. We will continue to buttress the diplomatic initiative of President Obama's Administration and urge both sides to work for progress.

<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201011/cmhansrd/cm100706/text/100706w0004.htm#10070668000041>

Israel: Nuclear Weapons

Mark Lazarowicz: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if the Government will take steps to encourage the Government of Israel to declare the number, type and location of its nuclear weapons. [5470]

Alistair Burt: We are aware of the widespread assumption that Israel possesses nuclear weapons. We have always encouraged all states to be as transparent as possible about their civilian-and, where applicable, military-nuclear programmes and capabilities. We continue to call on Israel to sign up to the non-proliferation treaty as a non-nuclear weapon state.

<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201011/cmhansrd/cm100706/text/100706w0004.htm#10070668000054>

Middle East: Armed Conflict

Mr Andrew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what recent steps his Department has taken to seek to secure access for the International Committee of the Red Cross to visit Gilad Shalit. [4919]

Alistair Burt: The UK has long called for Gilad Shalit's immediate and unconditional release. His continued captivity without any access to the International Committee of the Red Cross and with only very occasional, minimal contact with his family is utterly unacceptable.

We continue to call on Hamas to renounce violence and take immediate and concrete steps towards the Quartet principles and to free Gilad Shalit without delay. My right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary made this clear in a public statement on 25 June on the fourth anniversary of Mr Shalit's detention.

<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201011/cmhansrd/cm100706/text/100706w0004.htm#10070668000055>

Palestinians: International Assistance

Richard Burden: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what estimate his Department has made of the number of (a) mobile telephones, (b) video cameras and (c) digital cameras confiscated by the Israeli authorities from British members of the Gaza Freedom Flotilla that have yet to be returned. [6315]

Alistair Burt: We have made no such estimate, though we have been provided with some information by some of the British nationals on the flotilla.

We have been informed by the Israeli authorities that the return of electronic and media equipment is under consideration by the Israeli Defence Forces. We will continue to press for its return and availability for use in the Inquiry, as required by those conducting it.

Richard Burden: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what assurances he has (a) sought from and (b) obtained from the Israeli government on it returning (i) contemporary notes, (ii) photographic evidence, (iii) video footage and (iv) other possessions confiscated from members of the Gaza Freedom Flotilla and accompanying journalists in their original condition. [6316]

Alistair Burt: We have raised these specific issues with Israel's ambassador to the UK. Our ambassador to Israel and other members of our Embassy in Tel Aviv have also raised the matter on a number of occasions with the Israeli authorities. It has also been raised by the EU presidency, on behalf of EU Heads of Mission, with the Israeli Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

Although we are not legally obliged to pursue either legal action, or to seek the return of a British national's property, nor is it part of our consular assistance policy to do so, exceptionally in this case, we have asked our consular staff in Istanbul to follow up with the flotilla organisers, Foundation for Human Rights and Freedoms and Humanitarian Relief (Insani Yardim Vakfi) (IHH) who still hold over 300 pieces of unclaimed luggage, including watches, phones and cameras. Our consular staff have taken photos of everything that was seen in IHH's storage, which we will

shortly be distributing to the British nationals involved so they can attempt to identify any property that is theirs.

We have been informed by the Israeli authorities that the return of electronic and media equipment is under consideration by the Israeli Defence Forces. We will continue to press for its return and availability for use in the Inquiry, as required by those conducting it.

Richard Burden: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what assessment he has made of the significance of photographic and video evidence confiscated from members of the Gaza Freedom Flotilla and accompanying journalists being made available to the Commission of Inquiry established by the government of Israel to enable that inquiry to meet international standards. [6317]

Alistair Burt: We believe the Inquiry should have access to all material which may assist it. We have not made an assessment on the significance of photographic and video evidence, which was reportedly confiscated from members of the Gaza Freedom Flotilla, being made available to the Commission of Inquiry.

We have been informed by the Israeli authorities that the return of electronic and media equipment is under consideration by the Israeli Defence Forces. I discussed this issue with the British Nationals during my meeting with them on 17 June and our officials have raised this with their Israeli counterparts. We will continue to press for its return and availability for use in the Inquiry, as required by those conducting it.

My right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary underlined the need for the Commission to provide a full, credible, impartial and independent investigation that the international community can respect.

<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201011/cmhansrd/cm100706/text/100706w004.htm#10070668000059>

UK Parliament Early Day Motion

William McCrea (414) Detention of Gilad Shalit -That this House notes the kidnapping by Hamas militants on 25 June 2006 of Gilad Shalit from within Israeli territory; further notes his subsequent removal to the Gaza Strip where he has been detained and deprived of basic human rights ever since; and calls on the Government to do all in its power to secure the freedom of Gilad Shalit.

<http://edmi.parliament.uk/EDMi/EDMDetails.aspx?EDMID=41355&SESSION=905>

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Relevant Legislation ** New or updated

UK Parliament

** Academies Bill

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

Report Stage, House of Lords

<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/ld201011/ldhansrd/text/100706-0001.htm#10070629000860>

Notice of amendments

<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/ld201011/ldbills/010/amend/ml010-ii.htm>

Daylight Saving Bill

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

Face Coverings (Regulation) Bill

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

** Identity Documents Bill

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

Committee Stage, House of Commons

<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201011/cmpublic/identity/100706/am/100706s01.htm>

Public Bill Committee Proceedings

<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201011/cmbills/001/pro0010706p.5-6.html>

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 tomorrow*

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/>

** *closes in 6 days*

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

Data protection legislative framework (closes 6 October 2010)

<http://www.justice.gov.uk/dpa-call-evidence-02-07-2010.pdf>

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