

Political Affairs Brief

A daily summary of political events affecting the Jewish Community

Scottish Council of Jewish Communities

SCoJeC

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UK Parliament Statement and Debate

Counter-terrorism and Security Powers

The Secretary of State for the Home Department (Mrs Theresa May): ... Today, as promised in the coalition agreement, I am announcing an urgent review of counter-terrorism and security powers. The review will consider six key powers: control orders; section 44 stop-and-search powers and the use of terrorism legislation in relation to photography; the use of the Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act 2000 by local authorities and access to communications data more generally; extending the use of deportations with assurances in a manner that is consistent with our legal and human rights obligations; measures to deal with organisations that promote hatred or violence; and the detention of terrorist suspects before charge. ...

To read the full transcript see

<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201011/cmhansrd/cm100713/debtext/100713-0001.htm#10071330000003>

UK Parliamentary Question

Anti-Semitism

Mr Amess: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many (a) males and (b) females in each age group have been (i) prosecuted and (ii) convicted of offences related to anti-Semitic violence in (A) Southend, (B) Essex, (C) the Metropolitan Police area of London and (D) England and Wales in the last 12 months. [7072]

James Brokenshire: This information is not collected centrally. The Court Proceedings Database holds information on defendants proceeded against, found guilty and sentenced for criminal offences in England and Wales. These data include information on the age of the defendant, their gender, the police force area and court where proceedings took place as well as the specific offence and statute for the offence. Other than where specified in the statute, information held centrally does not include the details of the victim.

<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201011/cmhansrd/cm100713/text/100713w001.htm#10071348000002>

UK Parliament Early Day Motion

Jim Dobbin (483) Ethnic group question in the 2011 census - That this House has regard to the historic and enduring value of information gathered by the decennial National Census; believes the ethnic group question, first introduced in 1991, represented a milestone in understanding and embracing the diversity of the United Kingdom; notes the primary purpose of the ethnic group question is to enable organisations to monitor equal opportunities and anti-discrimination policies and to allocate government resources more effectively; further notes that the development of the ethnic group question for the 2011 Census is interlinked with that of the newly introduced national identity question; further notes that in extensive consultation with key users of Census data 92 per cent. of respondents expressed support for requirement for information on population ethnicity; and consequently urges the Government to maintain a considered framework for Census questions that form an important part of a balanced policy of improving race relations and to resist calls to drop questions regarding ethnic and national identity.

<http://edmi.parliament.uk/EDMi/EDMDetails.aspx?EDMID=41436&SESSION=905>

Scottish Government

Death Certification, Burial and Cremation: Analysis of Consultation Findings: Phase 1 Report: Questions 1-20, 51 And 52

<http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Resource/Doc/318318/0101513.pdf>

Summary <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Resource/Doc/317758/0101182.pdf>

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Israel

UK Parliamentary Questions

Israel: Borders

Mrs McGuire: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what recent discussions he has had with his Israeli counterpart on relaxing the restrictions on border crossings with the Gaza Strip. [8343]

Alistair Burt: We are in regular contact and dialogue with the Israeli Government, on a number of matters related to the middle east peace process-this includes the current humanitarian situation in Gaza.

We have made clear that the situation in Gaza is a tragedy and unsustainable. Together with the EU and Quartet, we have called on Israel to ease restrictions on access and enable a return to economic normality. I therefore welcomed Israel's decision to move from a list of 120 permitted goods to a list of specific prohibited items.

It is now imperative that all parties work together urgently to deliver real change on the ground.

<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201011/cmhansrd/cm100713/text/100713w0001.htm#10071331000008>

Israel

Lord Hylton: To ask Her Majesty's Government what steps they are taking to prevent alleged breaches of international law by Israel, including the deportation from east Jerusalem of four elected members of the Palestinian Legislative Council.[HL918]

The Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office (Lord Howell of Guildford): We regard east Jerusalem as occupied territory. Its Palestinian population has rights under the Geneva conventions. Forcibly transferring people out of the city for political reasons-however much we may find their views abhorrent-as Israel appears to be trying to do in this case is illegal. This comes against a backdrop of other developments which appear designed to consolidate the purported annexation of east Jerusalem. Such actions erode trust between the parties at a crucial time. Sending these Hamas members into the West Bank as "heroes" carries a cost for those Palestinians who are working for peace. The EU has raised the matter with the Israeli Government.

<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/ld201011/ldhansrd/text/100713w0001.htm#10071340000186>

Palestinians: International Assistance

Mr Slaughter: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations he has made to the government of Israel on the three British citizens arrested on board the Gaza Freedom Flotilla who were returned to the UK without their passports. [6714]

Alistair Burt: I raised this issue with Israel's ambassador to the UK. Our ambassador to Israel and other members of our embassy in Tel Aviv 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. I can confirm we have received all three missing passports which are being returned to the holders.

Mr Slaughter: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what steps his Department has taken to secure the return of the property confiscated from British citizens on board the Gaza Freedom Flotilla by the Israeli authorities. [6787]

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. We, and the EU, have been informed by the Israelis that, with the exception of electronic and media equipment, the personal belongings have now been sent to Turkey, to the organisers of the Flotilla, İnsan Hak ve Hürriyetleri ve İnsani Yardım Vakfı-The Foundation for Human Rights and Freedoms and Humanitarian Relief (IHH). We understand that the Turkish authorities agree this to be correct. 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.

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 IHH who still hold over 300 pieces of unclaimed luggage, including watches, phones and cameras. Our consular staff have taken photographs 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.

<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201011/cmhansrd/cm100713/text/100713w0001.htm#10071331000011>

Gaza

Lord Hylton: To ask Her Majesty's Government what representations they are making to the Government of Israel about not granting visiting rights since June 2007 to the families of 800 Gazans detained in Israeli prisons.[HL1013]

The Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office (Lord Howell of Guildford): We continue to follow Israeli detention operations closely and monitor the situation of Palestinian prisoners. We have called on the Government of Israel to take immediate action to ensure all cases are reviewed by a court in accordance with fair procedures and that their rights, particularly the rights to a fair trial and family visit, should be upheld.

We hope the recent and welcome decision of Israel to relax restrictions on goods allowed into Gaza will also enable greater flows on people in and out of Gaza, while continuing to meet Israel's legitimate security concerns.

<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/ld201011/ldhansrd/text/100713w0001.htm#10071340000181>

European Parliament

Middle East peace process: "EU must be a full player, not just a payer", says Pittella

"The EU should play another role than just paying out" for the Middle East peace process, Parliament's first Vice-President Gianni Pittella told Palestinian Prime Minister Salam Fayyad at a bilateral meeting on Tuesday. "The EU should play its full role in the Quartet and is better placed now to actively contribute to the two-state solution which Parliament has always advocated", Mr Pitella told Mr Fayyad, who met Parliament's Budgets Committee earlier on Tuesday. On the EU's financial contribution to the region, Pittella said "our aid to the Palestinian Authority and the UNWRA should be strengthened". MEPs are "extremely worried" by the proposed reduction, in the EU's 2011 budget, of over 32% in financial assistance to Palestine, the peace process and UNWRA.

"The Flotilla attack is a harsh blow to the peace process", said Mr Pitella, pointing out that Parliament had recently passed a resolution condemning the attack and requesting an international inquiry into the events. ...

To read the full press release see

http://www.europarl.europa.eu/news/expert/infopress_page/030-78865-194-07-29-903-20100713IPR78864-13-07-2010-2010-false/default_en.htm

EU aid to Palestine - MEPs question Palestinian Prime Minister on results

The EU, as the biggest donor to the Palestinian Authority, has a more important role to play now than ever before, Palestinian Prime Minister Salam Fayyad told Budgets Committee MEPs on Tuesday. ... MEPs agreed with Mr Fayyad on the need to end Israel's blockade of Gaza, but asked detailed questions about the region's future and the role of EU aid. ...

EP Middle East Working Group chair Hans-Gert Pöttering (EPP, DE), was the first to underline Parliament's strong support for an end to the Gaza blockade, but he also raised some concerns: "When the border crossings open, we have to make sure that no weapons that could threaten Israel enter. Regarding the conflict between Hamas and Fatah, how are you, Prime Minister, going to ensure that there will be peace between the two fractions?" ...

"How should the EU deal with Hamas?", asked Helga Trüpel. "Personally I think it is really a mistake to say 'I do not talk to these persons'", replied Mr Fayyad. ...

To read the full press release see

http://www.europarl.europa.eu/news/expert/infopress_page/030-78648-193-07-29-903-20100712IPR78626-12-07-2010-2010-false/default_en.htm

European Commission

The EU continues to support the Palestinian people

The European Commission has agreed an additional financial package worth € 71 million for the Occupied Palestinian Territory, topping up the € 224 million already allocated by the EU in the 2010 European Neighbourhood and Partnership Instrument, as well as a reinforcement of humanitarian aid for Palestinian refugees.

Ahead of her trip to the region on Sunday, Catherine Ashton, High Representative of the European Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy/Commission Vice-President said: "Further to our direct financial support through payment of PA civil servants' salaries and social benefits, this package reinforces our support to the institution-building efforts made by the Palestinian Authority towards establishing a future State of Palestine." ...

The funds from today's decision will go towards helping the PA meet its objectives for social and economic development and institution-building under the Palestinian Reform and Development Plan. This includes a major initiative to support the Two Year Plan for Statehood announced by Prime Minister Fayyad in August 2009, with significant emphasis on security and the rule of law. Other priorities include infrastructure, with special attention being paid to water, support for private sector development and support for Palestinian institutions in East Jerusalem. ...

To read the full press release see

<http://europa.eu/rapid/pressReleasesAction.do?reference=IP/10/944&format=HTML&age=d=0&language=EN&guiLanguage=en>

United Nations

UN voices concern over demolitions, settlement approval in East Jerusalem

The United Nations today expressed concern over the demolition by Israeli authorities of buildings, including homes, and the approval of the construction of a new settlement in East Jerusalem, urging all parties to respect international law and avoid provocative actions.

"I continue to follow with concern developments in East Jerusalem and continuing tensions in the city. The approval of new units in the settlement of Pisgat Zeev, in violation of Israel's Roadmap commitments, is wrong," said Robert Serry, the UN Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process. ... who added that his office is closely monitoring the fate of four members of the Palestinian Legislative Council who face the threat of expulsion from the city. ...The Israeli High Court of Justice is scheduled to consider their case on 6 September. ...

To read the full press release see

<http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=35312&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>

Third Reading, House of Lords

<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/ld201011/ldhansrd/text/100713-0001.htm#10071325001246>

Bill as brought from the Lords

<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201011/cmbills/057/2011057.pdf>

Explanatory notes

<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201011/cmbills/057/en/2011057en.pdf>

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>

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**

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>

**** closes in 2 days**

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>

Guidance on Concessionary Schemes for Surface Water Drainage Charges

Applies in England only (closes 22 October 2010)

<http://www.defra.gov.uk/corporate/consult/surface-charges/index.htm>

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