

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 Question

Religious Groups: Funding

Lord Kilclooney

To ask Her Majesty's Government what was the estimated cost to the Exchequer in the past financial year of allocating funds to the (a) Anglican, (b) Islamic, and (c) Roman Catholic religions.[HL1475]

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Department for Communities and Local Government (Baroness Hanham): Like the present Government, the previous Government did not fund religion or religious activity, and no funds were allocated to any religion during the last financial year. A wide and diverse range of programmes was run by various departments which affected different faith communities, but a comprehensive list of these is not available and could only be compiled at disproportionate cost.

<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/ld201011/ldhansrd/text/100722w0001.htm#10072237000509>

UK Ministerial Statement

Arrest Warrants-Universal Jurisdiction

The Lord Chancellor and Secretary of State for Justice (Mr Kenneth Clarke): The United Kingdom has asserted universal jurisdiction over war crimes under the Geneva Conventions Act, and over a few other offences of exceptional gravity, because of our international obligations and our commitment to ensuring that there is no impunity for those accused of such crimes. That commitment is unwavering.

It is important, however, that universal jurisdiction cases should be proceeded with in this country only on the basis of solid evidence that is likely to lead to a successful prosecution-otherwise there is a risk of damaging our ability to help in conflict resolution or to pursue a coherent foreign policy. It is unsatisfactory that, as things stand, an arrest warrant for these grave offences can be issued on the application of a private prosecutor on the basis of evidence that would be insufficient to sustain a prosecution.

The Government have concluded, after careful consideration, that it would be appropriate to require the consent of the Director of Public Prosecutions before an arrest warrant can be issued to a private prosecutor in respect of an offence of universal jurisdiction. This would interfere as little as possible with the existing rights of private prosecutors, and would not prevent them from initiating prosecutions for these offences where the evidence justified that course. A suitable legislative amendment will be brought before Parliament at the first opportunity.

<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201011/cmhansrd/cm100722/wmstext/100722m0001.htm#10072238000038>

Downing Street

PM launches National Citizen Service pilots

... The pilots are expected to provide about 10,000 places for school-leavers to take part in activities which could include outdoor challenges and helping the local community. ... National Citizen Service is a key part of the Big Society agenda, ... and it aims to give teenagers the chance to learn new skills that will help them to make a positive contribution to their community.

The PM said: "... A kind of non-military national service, it's going to mix young people from different backgrounds in a way that doesn't happen right now. It's going to teach them what it means to be socially responsible. Above all it's going to inspire a generation of young people to appreciate what they can achieve and how they can be part of the Big Society." ...

To read the full press release see

<http://www.number10.gov.uk/news/topstorynews/2010/07/pm-launches-national-citizen-service-pilots-53775>

Home Office

Report on the operation in 2009 of the Terrorism Act 2000 and of part 1 of the Terrorism Act 2006 (Carlile Report)

<http://www.homeoffice.gov.uk/publications/counter-terrorism/independent-reviews/ind-rev-terrorism-annual-rep-09?view=Binary>

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Israel

UK Parliamentary Questions

Israel: Educational Exchanges

Mr Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what recent discussions he has had on expansion of the British-Israel Research and Academic Exchange Partnership for its next round. [10352]

Alistair Burt: We have committed £10,000 to the British-Israel Research and Academic Exchange Partnership (BIRAX) for this financial year which is an increase on previous spends. BIRAX is an important scheme and while we are unable to confirm funding for the next financial year we hope that we will be able to continue to support this initiative.

<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201011/cmhansrd/cm100722/text/100722w004.htm#10072281000011>

Foreign Investment in UK: Israel

Tom Blenkinsop: To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Innovation and Skills what assistance his Department provides to businesses based in Israel seeking to invest in (a) the UK, (b) the North East and (c) Middlesbrough South and East Cleveland constituency; how much financial assistance it has provided in each of the last 13 years; and what estimate he has made of the proportion of annual investment to the North East from such businesses attributable to the work of One NorthEast. [9592]

Mr Prisk: The information requested is as follows:

Assistance to businesses based in Israel seeking to invest in the UK

UK Trade and Investment (UKTI) is the Government Department with responsibility for attracting foreign direct investment into the UK. It is the joint

responsibility of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Business, Innovation and Skills (BIS) and my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs. UKTI provides bespoke information and location advice to potential and existing foreign direct investors. This work is delivered through UKTI's global network, in partnership with a range of organisations, including English regional development agencies and devolved administration economic development agencies. Overseas, the UKTI network is based in British embassies, high commissions and Consulates-General, including a UKTI inward investment team at the British embassy in Tel Aviv.

In the financial year 2009-10 UK Trade and Investment provided approximately £16 million, via BIS, specifically for foreign direct investment work by the English regional development agencies. Devolved administrations have separate funding arrangements.

This was part of a total of approximately £80 million spent globally by UKTI in the same period on foreign direct investment work.

UKTI assisted a total of 57 foreign direct investment projects from Israel which located or expanded in the UK in the financial years 1997-98 to 2009-10 inclusive (see Table A). Of these, 15 were assisted in collaboration with one or more RDAs or devolved administration economic development agencies. Additionally, English RDAs or devolved administration economic development agencies assisted a further 14 such projects in which UKTI was not directly involved.

Assistance to businesses based in Israel seeking to invest in the North East of England

ONE North East is the organisation which, in collaboration with UKTI and partner organisations, assists inward investors to locate and expand in the North East of England. The Middlesbrough South and Cleveland constituency is covered by the inward investment team at ONE North East.

UKTI assisted a total of three foreign direct investment projects from Israel which located or expanded in the North East of England in the financial years 1997-98 to 2009-10 inclusive (see Table B). All of these were assisted in collaboration with ONE North East. Additionally, ONE North East assisted a further two such projects in which UKTI was not directly involved.

Of this total of five projects, three located or expanded in the Middlesbrough South and East Cleveland constituency. All three were assisted by UKTI in collaboration with ONE North East.

Financial Assistance in each of the last 13 years

UK Trade and Investment does not provide financial assistance to inward investors. The Department for Business, Innovation and Skills and RDAs do, according to their respective roles and competences. In the period from financial year 2002-03 to 2009-10 inclusive, One North East provided a total of £1,362,600 to such projects in the North East of England, of which £870,000 went to such projects in the Middlesbrough South and East Cleveland constituency. In 1998-99 a Regional Selective Assistance payment of £50,000 was made via Government Office in connection with a project in the North East region. The annual breakdown of these figures is given in Table C.

Source: One North East, and Department for Business, Innovation and Skills

Proportion of annual investment to the North East from such businesses attributable to the work of ONE

During the period 1997-98 to 2009-10 inclusive, 99 foreign direct investment projects from Israel located or expanded in the UK. Of these, six located or expanded in the North East of England. As indicated above, three were assisted jointly by UKTI and ONE North East. Additionally, ONE North East assisted a further two such projects in which UKTI was not directly involved.

Source: UK Trade and Investment

[The lengthy tables have not been copied here. To read the data click on the weblink below.]

Tables: Breakdown of UKTI recorded foreign direct investment projects from Israel in each year from 1997-98 to 2009-10 showing amount of financial assistance, the number of projects assisted by UKTI and/or ONE North East locating or expanding in the North East of England, and the number of such projects locating or expanding in the constituency of Middlesbrough South and East Cleveland

<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201011/cmhansrd/cm100722/text/100722w0005.htm#1007232000013>

Palestinians: International Assistance

Ms Ritchie: To ask the Secretary of State for International Development what recent steps his Department has taken to alleviate the humanitarian situation in Gaza. [9688]

Mr Duncan: The humanitarian situation in Gaza is stable but fragile, with 75% of Gazans dependent on food aid. We have recently contributed £19 million to the 2010 general budget of the UN Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA), which provides basic services to Palestinian refugees across the region. UNRWA spends about 30% of its budget in Gaza, providing education, health care, social services and food aid to the 1 million Gazans who are registered refugees.

The UK also funds a UN team who co-ordinate and facilitate the movement of aid and other necessary items into Gaza.

We are looking at what further steps we can take in the light of the recent announcement by Israel that it will reduce access restrictions and allow a larger range and volume of aid and goods into Gaza.

<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201011/cmhansrd/cm100722/text/100722w0001.htm#10072254000007>

UK Ministerial Statement

General Affairs /Foreign Affairs Council (Agenda)

The Minister for Europe (Mr David Lidington): The General Affairs Council and Foreign Affairs Council will be held on 26 July in Brussels. My right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary will represent the UK. ...

Gaza/Middle East Peace Process

Ministers will discuss the response from Israel and the international community to the situation in Gaza following the flotilla incident. Baroness Ashton will give an update on her recent visit to Gaza and discussions about how the EU could assist with the opening of Gaza. Ministers will also discuss the wider peace process including the American-led proximity talks and their progress. Depending on the outcome of the discussion, the Council may issue a conclusion statement.

To read the full press release see

<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201011/cmhansrd/cm100722/wmstext/100722m0001.htm#10072238000026>

United Nations

Ban urges Israeli and Palestinian leaders to take 'bold steps' towards peace

... Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon today called on the leaders of both sides to surmount domestic political pressures and take "bold steps" to achieve peace in the region. ... "A two-State solution is vital for Israel "to maintain its democratic character and identity and gain security and legitimacy throughout the region," he stressed, adding that it is also essential for Palestinians "to achieve genuine freedom and national self-determination, and to end the occupation." ...

Mr. Ban today welcomed recent Israeli moves towards a new policy on Gaza, but stressed that "full and swift implementation is crucial, as are further measures beyond those announced," as well as an end to the blockade.

For its part, he emphasized, Hamas should enforce an extended ceasefire and move ahead with Egypt's reconciliation proposals with the "legitimate Palestinian Authority of President [Mahmoud] Abbas." ...

... the Secretary-General said that he continues to call for the conclusion of a prisoner exchange agreement. "It serves no Palestinian interest to keep Corporal Gilad Shalit in captivity; access should be granted to him and he should be released," Mr. Ban said about the Israeli soldier who has been detained for more than four years. ...

"The growing use of new media in the Middle East offers truly exciting opportunities to reach wider audiences, particularly young people ... I encourage young Israelis and Palestinians to use these new tools to spread positive messages that will encourage a culture of peace, coexistence and better understanding between their people" ...

To read the full press release see

<http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=35401&Cr=&Cr1=>

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Relevant Legislation ** New or updated

UK Parliament

**** Academies Bill**

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

Committee Stage, House of Commons

<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201011/cmhansrd/cm100722/debtext/100722-0002.htm#1007224500001>

Committee Proceedings

<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201011/cmbills/057/pro0572207p.33-38.html>

Notice of amendments

<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201011/cmbills/057/amend/pbc0572207a.109-112.html>

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>

**** Fixed Term Parliaments Bill**

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

Bill as introduced

<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201011/cmbills/064/2011064.pdf>

Explanatory notes

<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201011/cmbills/064/en/2011064en.pdf>

Identity Documents Bill

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

**** Parliamentary Voting System and Constituencies Bill**

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

Bill as introduced

<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201011/cmbills/064/en/2011064en.pdf>

Explanatory Notes

<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201011/cmbills/063/en/2011063-en.pdf>

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

Taking action on rights, support and protection of victims of crime and violence

(closing date 30 September 2010)

http://ec.europa.eu/justice_home/news/consulting_public/news_consulting_0053_en.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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