

Political Affairs Brief

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

Contents

[Home Affairs](#)

[Israel](#)

[Foreign Affairs](#)

[Relevant Legislation](#)

[Consultations](#)

Home Affairs

Northern Ireland Executive

Ford committed to tackling hate crime

Justice Minister David Ford has said that addressing hate crime will be integral to the new Community Safety Strategy. The Minister was responding to the publication of a follow-up inspection by the Criminal Justice Inspectorate on the management of hate crime by the criminal justice system. The report acknowledges the progress that has been made in recent years while highlighting that more can be done.

David Ford said: "Northern Ireland has become a more open, diverse and tolerant society in recent years. However, that diversity brings its challenges in how we treat each other. ... I am disappointed at the lack of progress on a number of recommendations and it is clear that more needs to be done. The criminal justice system cannot be complacent in its approach to addressing hate crime, and I have instructed my officials to take forward the outstanding recommendations as a matter of urgency."...

To read the full press release see

<http://www.northernireland.gov.uk/news/news-doj/news-doj-280710-ford-committee-to.htm>

Criminal Justice Inspectorate, Northern Ireland

Hate Crime: A follow-up inspection of the management of hate crime by the criminal justice system in Northern Ireland

<http://www.cjini.org/CJNI/files/16/16f98312-469d-464f-adcc-f7b2513adda7.pdf>

[TOP](#)

Israel

UK Parliamentary Questions

Israel: Educational Exchanges

Mr Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what funding his Department allocated for the British-Israel Research and Academic Exchange Partnership in (a) 2008-09 and (b) 2009-10; and how much it plans to allocate for (i) 2010-11 and (ii) 2011-12. [10354]

Alistair Burt: The Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) has committed £42,000 to the British-Israel Research and Academic Exchange Partnership (BIRAX) over the past three years as follows:

	<i>Committed funds (£)</i>
2008-09	5,000
2009-10	27,000
2010-11	10,000

No budgets have been set for 2011-12 and the FCO will decide allocations for this and future years in the light of the spending round that is expected to be conclude this autumn.

BIRAX helps to build and enhance university links between Britain and Israel. BIRAX currently supports 15 innovative scientific research projects involving 17 different universities from across the UK and Israel.

<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201011/cmhansrd/cm100727/text/100727w0004.htm#10072751000181>

Israel: Overseas Trade

Jeremy Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs (1) what his policy is on the sale of goods in the UK that were sourced, packaged or grown on Israeli settlements which the United Nations has declared illegal; [10923]

(2) if he will bring forward proposals for a ban on the sale of goods in the UK that were sourced, packaged or grown on Israeli settlements which the United Nations has declared illegal. [10924]

Alistair Burt: The Government's policy on settlement activity in the West Bank and East Jerusalem is clear. Settlements are not only illegal under international law and in direct contravention of Israel's Roadmap commitments, but they also represent an attempt to create 'facts on the ground' which makes a two-state solution harder to achieve. It is important that consumers in the UK are able to make fully informed decision concerning the products they buy. That is why, in December 2009, Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs introduced guidelines in consultation with the Foreign and Commonwealth Office to label more accurately produce from Israeli settlements that are sold in the UK. This does not represent a ban on the sale of products from Israeli settlements in the UK.

<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201011/cmhansrd/cm100727/text/100727w0004.htm#10072751000182>

Overseas Trade: Israel

Mr Amess: To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Innovation and Skills what recent estimate he has made of the number of jobs in the UK that are dependent on trade with Israel; and if he will make a statement. [R] [10605]

Mr Prisk: Estimates regarding the total number of jobs in the UK dependent on trade with any particular country are not available. There is no requirement for companies to notify UK Trade and Investment (UKTI) of their international activities. UKTI only has access to trade and investment figures relating to projects where UKTI or its regional partners were specifically involved. These figures will not realistically reflect the number of jobs that are dependent upon trade with Israel.

UK Trade and Investment (UKTI) is the Government Department with responsibility for helping British companies succeed overseas and attracting foreign direct investment into the UK.

<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201011/cmhansrd/cm100727/text/100727w0006.htm#1007284000025>

Israel

Lord Hylton: To ask Her Majesty's Government what is their assessment of the proportion of land remaining in the West Bank after deducting closed military zones and bases, settlements, their fenced adjoining areas and roads, and the wall and severed areas between it and the 1967 Green Line.[HL1548]

The Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office (Lord Howell of Guildford): The land described in the question is what is known under the Oslo Accords as Area C, over which Israel has full civil and military control. Area C makes up 60 per cent of the West Bank, leaving the Palestinians with 40 per cent. This is further divided up into Area B, over which the Oslo accords provided for Palestinian civil control and joint Israeli/Palestinian military control, and Area A, under full Palestinian control and making up around 17 per cent of the West Bank. Our views on Israeli settlements are well known—they are illegal under international law and harmful to the peace process. The same is true of the barrier where it crosses east of the Green Line.

<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/ld201011/ldhansrd/text/100727w0001.htm#10072736002046>

Palestine

Lord Hylton: To ask Her Majesty's Government what was the cost of their financial support, including the cost of training, to the security and intelligence services of the Palestinian Authority in each of the last two years; how much such expenditure is planned for the current financial year; and whether their funding takes account of alleged deaths of persons under interrogation or alleged use of torture on suspects. [HL1303]

The Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office (Lord Howell of Guildford): The Government's financial support to the Palestinian Authority Security Forces (PASF) falls into three main categories: direct budgetary support to the Palestinian Authority which is used in part to pay salaries of government employees including those in the PASF; technical assistance aimed at improving the efficiency and professionalism of the security sector as a whole including the civilian police and emergency services; and direct classroom based training for the PASF. In addition to this the UK has separate activity supporting policing, justice and the rule of law in the Palestinian Territories. As our contributions to the PA budget are provided through a pooled arrangement with other donors and the funds are mixed, we cannot determine exactly how much of our money goes to pay security services salaries. We have a programme of technical assistance to the Ministry of Interior and support two leadership courses for senior and middle-ranking personnel in the PASF including civilian police. These form the bulk of our contribution to the work of the United States Security Co-ordinator. Funding for categories two and three is provided through the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) Conflict Pool, a tri-departmental (FCO, Ministry of Defence and Department for International Development) conflict prevention programme. Financial support totalled £2.0 million in financial year 2008-9, £2.7 million for 2009-10 and £2.45 million allocated for 2010-11. In addition to that, under the third category, we invested £100,000 in financial year 2009-10 and a further £64,000 has been allocated for this financial year to provide human rights training to the PASF.

We took the credible reports of people being killed or tortured during PASF interrogation extremely seriously. We raised it directly with both President Abbas and Prime Minister Fayyad. We allocated money to fund an inspectorate general within the PASF that would deal with complaints and we continue to press the Palestinian Authority to appoint someone to that role. We provided specific human rights training. Human rights performance is a key element in the Department for International Development's structured dialogue with the Palestinian Authority on budgetary support. We were encouraged by the findings of the independent

commission on human rights that torture and mistreatment of people by the PASF, and the intelligence services in particular, had significantly declined by the end of last year. We remain concerned at the use of military courts, the detention of suspects without due process and reports of political interference in judicial decisions.

<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/ld201011/ldhansrd/text/100727w0001.htm#10072736002055>

Gaza

Lord Hylton: To ask Her Majesty's Government whether the relaxation of the blockade of Gaza announced by Israel has led to increased deliveries of essential commodities; if so, by how many tonnes per week; and if not, what representations they and the Quartet are making about the matter.[HL1545]

The Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office (Lord Howell of Guildford): There is a steady increase in the number of trucks entering Gaza since Israel announced a relaxation of the blockade on 14 June. Nine hundred and fourteen truckloads entered Gaza between 11 and 17 July, compared to 573 in early June, but this is still only one-third of the average amount before the blockade was imposed. Last week recorded the highest reached number of truckloads crossing through Kerem Shalom and this shows that the crossing can process 180 truckloads, without expanding capacity. Israel has announced that the capacity would reach 250 truckloads by the end of July. The volume and range of goods has increased to include a greater variety of food items, and goods such as water irrigation pipes, cloth fabric and chicken incubators. The British Government, together with the EU and the Quartet, will continue to press Israel to increase the capacity of the crossings for imports and also to allow exports which are vital to the recovery of the Gazan economy.

<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/ld201011/ldhansrd/text/100727w0001.htm#10072736002032>

UK Parliament Petition

Gilad Shalit's Continued Captivity

Mr Lee Scott (Ilford North) (Con): I wish to present a petition signed by 5,807 people. It states:

The Petition of the residents of Ilford North and others,

Declares that the petitioners deplore the continued captivity of Corporal Gilad Shalit and the violations of his basic human rights; notes that 25 June 2010 marked the 4th anniversary of Shalit's abduction by Hamas militants and that for over four years he has been denied visits from the Red Cross, adequate medical care and contact with the outside world; further declares that the petitioners believe these to be serious violations of his human rights under international law; and further notes that the petitioners believe that the inhumane prison conditions imposed on Shalit are criminal, immoral and unjust.

The Petitioners therefore request that the House of Commons urges the British Government, and in particular the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, to do all in their power and use all avenues possible to secure the basic human rights and freedom of Corporal Shalit, and call upon the United Nations and International Red Cross to redouble its efforts to secure the basic human rights and freedom of Corporal Shalit. And the Petitioners remain, etc.

[P000852]

<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201011/cmhansrd/cm100727/debtext/100727-0004.htm#10072747000232>

Downing Street

PM's speech in Turkey

... Just as Turkey is playing a pivotal role in Afghanistan, it can also do so in the Middle East. Turkey's relationships in the region, both with Israel and the Arab world, are of incalculable value. No other country has the same potential to build understanding between Israel and the Arab world. I know that Gaza has led to real strains in Turkey's relationship with Israel, but Turkey is a friend of Israel, and I urge Turkey, and Israel, not to give up on that friendship.

Let me be clear: the Israeli attack on the Gaza flotilla was completely unacceptable. And I have told Prime Minister Netanyahu we will expect the Israeli inquiry to be swift, transparent and rigorous. Let me also be clear that the situation in Gaza has to change. Humanitarian goods and people must flow in both directions. Gaza cannot and must not be allowed to remain a prison camp.

But as, hopefully, we move in the coming weeks to direct talks between Israel and the Palestinians so it is Turkey that can make the case for peace and Turkey that can help press the parties to come together and point the way to a just and viable solution. ...

To read the full transcript see

<http://www.number10.gov.uk/news/speeches-and-transcripts/2010/07/pms-speech-in-turkey-53869>

Press Conference in Turkey

... **David Cameron:** Well, let me take the second question first. My description of Gaza is something that I actually said in the House of Commons several weeks ago. Perhaps this is final proof that if you want to keep something completely secret you should announce it in the House of Commons. The fact is that we have long supported lifting the blockade of Gaza, we have long supported proper humanitarian access and, even though some progress has been made, we're still in the situation where it's very difficult to get in, it's very difficult to get out, it's very difficult for materials that are necessary to get in or get out and so I think the description is warranted. But we want to see progress and what we have been discussing – and Turkey has, I think, a huge role to play here – is the need to get to direct talks between Israel and the Palestinians, so all of these issues can be settled. ...

Prime Minister Erdogan: With regard to Gaza, as my friend has said, all the people there live in a sort of open-air prison. And Gaza is facing attacks, is facing a lot of pressure, and that's how life goes on there. This has been an area where phosphorous bombs have been used and 1,500 people from many different age groups were killed, 5,000 people were wounded and the infrastructure – the buildings – were all demolished, the UN buildings included. And no one can still enter, the construction materials are not allowed to go through and the fact that this blockade is not lifted is a tragedy, and it is very thought provoking that humanity remains only an observer to this situation.

For example, there was a donors' conference in Sharm el-Sheikh and \$4.5 billion was promised in aid, but since that time there has not been a single leaf moved – nothing has changed, in other words. And the aid groups or convoys coming to Gaza, bringing aid to Gaza, were attacked from the air, from the sea and the flotilla included Members of Parliament from the UK. There were people who were there from the UK, from Turkey, there were people from 33 different countries in that flotilla and the situation, what we saw happen, was taking place in international waters and this attack can only be termed as piracy. There is no other word to describe it. ...

David Cameron: ... Turkey has been a good friend of Israel in the past; I very much hope Turkey can go on being a friend of Israel because I think it's as a friend of Israel that Turkey will maximise her influence over what needs to happen in terms of those direct talks. And I speak as someone who is a friend of Israel, who desperately wants to see a secure and safe and stable Israel after a two-state solution has come about. It's very important that people remember that Israel will only agree to the final-status issues if it feels that at the end of that process it will have the security that it craves.

And that's why, on the issue of Gaza, while pushing for that humanitarian access and the end of the blockade, we always have to remember that, you know, there have been rocket attacks from Gaza on Israel. And friends of Israel have to remember that point, but nonetheless we both share the view that direct talks are the right answer. ...

To read the full transcript see

<http://www.number10.gov.uk/news/speeches-and-transcripts/2010/07/ress-conference-with-turkish-pm-53984>

[TOP](#)

Foreign Affairs

UK Parliamentary Question

France: Anti-Semitism

Mr Amess: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what recent reports he has received on anti-Semitism in France; and if he will make a statement. [10556]

Mr Lidington: In 2009 there were 832 acts of anti-Semitism recorded in France. In the past week, there have been reports of two separate incidents of anti-Semitism in France; the vandalism of graves in a Jewish cemetery and an attack on a synagogue outside of Paris. The French Interior Minister Brice Hortefeux, has condemned the attacks as "despicable, intolerable and shocking" and underlined the French authorities' commitment to punishing the perpetrators.

The Government condemn anti-Semitism and all forms of racism.

<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201011/cmhansrd/cm100727/text/100727w0004.htm#10072751000177>

[TOP](#)

Relevant Legislation ** New or updated

UK Parliament

Academies Bill

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

Ping Pong, House of Lords

<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/ld201011/ldhansrd/text/100727-0002.htm#10072739000585>

Royal Assent

<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/ld201011/ldhansrd/text/100727-0002.htm#10072739000586>

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>

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>

Scottish Parliament

End of Life Assistance Bill

<http://www.scottish.parliament.uk/s3/bills/38-EndLifeAssist/index.htm>

[TOP](#)

Consultations

** new or updated

Policing in the 21st century: reconnecting police and the people

(closing date 20 September 2010)

<http://www.homeoffice.gov.uk/publications/consultations/policing-21st-century/>

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>

[TOP](#)

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