

Political Affairs Brief

A daily summary of political events affecting the Jewish Community

Scottish Council of Jewish Communities

SCoJeC

Contents

[Home Affairs](#)

[Israel](#)

[Relevant Legislation](#)

[Consultations](#)

Home Affairs

UK Parliamentary Questions

Anti-Semitism

Mr Amess: To ask the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government which directorate of his Department has responsibility for the (a) formulation and (b) implementation of policy on reducing the incidence of anti-Semitism; how many officials at each pay band in his Department are employed in each such directorate; what other posts in his Department each such official has held; and if he will make a statement. [17384]

Andrew Stunell: The Communities and Neighbourhoods Directorate in the Department of Communities and Local Government is responsible for the formulation and in partnership with other Departments the implementation of policy on reducing the incidence of anti-Semitism. The department's work on anti-Semitism falls under the auspices of the team that works on hate crime and all other forms of hatred and intolerance. This team is made up of three officials, one at pay band 6.1, one at pay band 4.3 and one at pay band 3.2. All three have held a range of previous positions across Government including the Home Office, the Department of Environment, Food and Rural Affairs and Government Office for London.

<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201011/cmhansrd/cm101019/text/101019w0002.htm#1010195000043>

Topical Questions

T2. [17837] Mrs Louise Ellman (Liverpool, Riverside) (Lab/Co-op): What action will be taken to ensure that the arrest and prosecution of foreign nationals can be undertaken only by the Crown Prosecution Service and the Metropolitan police?

Mr Kenneth Clarke: I will make careful inquiries into what steps are being taken. Obviously foreign nationals should be treated on the same basis as any other residents of this country when it comes to being dealt with via the criminal law. However, if the procedures give rise to some concern, perhaps the hon. Lady would draw the specific problem that troubles her to my attention and that of my team, and we will look into it. ...

Ian Austin (Dudley North) (Lab): ... the Secretary of State completely failed to answer the question asked by my hon. Friend the Member for Liverpool, Riverside (Mrs Ellman). Before the election, Members now sitting on the Government Benches, from the current Prime Minister down, all promised on umpteen occasions to sort out the issue of universal jurisdiction. Why have they so far completely failed to do anything about it at all? Why are they shilly-shallying about? When are they going to get it dealt with?

Mr Clarke: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman; for some reason, I completely failed to get the full point of what was being said. I thought it was being suggested that there should be a different method for dealing with foreign arrests than for domestic arrests. I entirely agree with the point that has been made. We have already said we are going to readdress the law. The Leader of the House is sitting alongside me, and he tells me that legislation will be introduced in the House very soon.

<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201011/cmhansrd/cm101019/debtext/101019-0001.htm#10101928000028>

Kosher Meat: EU Law

Mr Amess: To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs if she will make an assessment of the effects on the market for kosher meat of EU regulations on labelling kosher meat; and if she will make a statement. [R] [17365]

Mr Paice: There are currently no specific EU regulations on labelling kosher meat. However, in the context of proposals for an EU Food Information Regulation, the European Parliament has suggested an amendment to require food labels to indicate whether an animal has been stunned before slaughter. I will be meeting with members of the Jewish community in early November to hear their concerns about the European Parliament proposal.

<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201011/cmhansrd/cm101019/text/101019w0001.htm#10101946000016>

Food: Labelling

Justin Tomlinson: To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs if she will bring forward proposals to ensure that food labelling includes information on the use of halal meat. [17665]

Mr Paice: The European Parliament has suggested an amendment to the proposed EU Food Information Regulations to require food labels to indicate whether an animal has been stunned before slaughter.

I appreciate that this is an issue which people feel strongly about and we will be working with interested groups to find a way to address their concerns. People should know what they are buying in shops or when they are eating out, and I will be discussing with the food industry whether labelling and point of sale information can play a greater role in giving consumers a choice.

<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201011/cmhansrd/cm101019/text/101019w0001.htm#10101946000014>

Slaughterhouses: Religious Practice

Mrs Moon: To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs what recent estimate she has made of the number of (a) slaughterhouses and (b) slaughterhouses practising halal slaughter. [18319]

Mr Paice: There are currently 346 approved slaughterhouses operating in Great Britain. There is no separate approval of Halal slaughterhouses and consequently we do not know the number of slaughterhouses practising Halal.

<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201011/cmhansrd/cm101019/text/101019w0001.htm#10101946000017>

Farm Animal Welfare Council

Tom Blenkinsop: To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs what estimate she has made of the net effect of abolishing the Farm Animal Welfare Council on her Department's expenditure in 2011-12. [17629]

Mr Paice: Further to the announcement on the Government's review of arms length bodies made by the Minister for the Cabinet Office and Paymaster General, my right hon. Friend the Member for Horsham (Mr Maude) on 14 October, the Farm Animal Welfare Council will be reconstituted as an Expert Committee to the

department. In this capacity, the new committee will provide independent, authoritative and cost effective advice to DEFRA and Departments in the devolved administrations in Scotland and Wales.

The 2011-12 budget for the new committee has not been agreed and will be fixed in the light of the Government's spending review.

<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201011/cmhansrd/cm101019/text/101019w0001.htm#10101946000012>

Communities and Local Government

Communities Minister urges faith groups to inspire community action

Communities Minister Andrew Stunell this week encouraged faith based organisations to share their passion and experience with others to maximise their work to help people and improve neighbourhoods. ... "faith based community action is a key plank of the Big Society vision. Faith based organisations are well-rooted in communities and have a long track record of successful work to address social needs. They are also able to stimulate volunteering and financial resources. ... Practical co-operation between churches, mosques, temples, gurdwaras, synagogues and the wider voluntary sector can become a huge force for good in building the stronger communities that are at the heart of the Big Society's purpose." ...

Making the keynote speech at the Faith Based Regeneration Network national conference ... the Minister issued a number of challenges ... He asked what Government can learn from faith based organisations and what barriers Government could dismantle that would make it easier for faith based organisations to achieve their goals. ...

To read the full press release see

<http://www.communities.gov.uk/news/corporate/1745462>

[TOP](#)

Israel

UK Parliamentary Questions

EU-Israel Association Agreement

Baroness Tonge: To Ask Her Majesty's Government what recent discussions they have had with their European partners regarding the European Union Israel Association Agreement.[HL2320]

The Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office (Lord Howell of Guildford): The UK has regular discussions with its EU partners on a number of issues related to the Middle East peace process including the European Union Israel Association Agreement.

The EU has made clear, as set out in Foreign Affairs council conclusions in December 2009, that any progress on this agreement must be seen in the context of progress in the wider peace process.

<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/ld201011/ldhansrd/text/101019w0001.htm#10101929000563>

Israel

Baroness Tonge: To Ask Her Majesty's Government what representations they have made to the Government of Israel regarding five cases between May and July 2010 of children shot in the legs whilst collecting building gravel in Gaza.[HL2318]

The Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office (Lord Howell of Guildford): The UK is extremely concerned by reports of such incidents. We have called on the Government of Israel to adhere to international and human

rights law and will continue to do so.

Baroness Tonge: To Ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of Israel's compliance with the International Atomic Energy Agency and its transparency regarding its nuclear activities. [HL2321]

Lord Howell of Guildford: Israel has a safeguards agreement with the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), which applies safeguards to Israel's nuclear research reactor. The IAEA's inspection and verification activities are limited to material, equipment and facilities specified in their safeguards undertaking. At the end of 2009, the IAEA Secretariat concluded that nuclear material, facilities or other items to which safeguards were applied in Israel remained in peaceful activities. The UK accepts the IAEA's conclusions.

We continue to call on Israel to join the non-proliferation treaty as a non-nuclear-weapon state, and to place all its nuclear materials and facilities under a comprehensive safeguards agreement with the IAEA.

<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/ld201011/ldhansrd/text/101019w0001.htm#10101929000579>

Israel and Palestine

Baroness Tonge: To Ask Her Majesty's Government what representations they have made to the Government of Israel regarding the alleged torture and abuse of Palestinian children held in detention by Israel. [HL2316]

The Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office (Lord Howell of Guildford): The UK is concerned by reports of alleged torture and abuse of Palestinian children held in detention by Israel. We have called on the Israeli Government to take immediate action to ensure all cases are reviewed by a court in accordance with fair procedures, and that human rights and international law is upheld.

Baroness Tonge: To Ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the alleged use of Palestinian children as human shields by the Israeli military; and what representations they have made to the government of Israel on this matter.[HL2317]

Lord Howell of Guildford: We condemn the use of civilians as human shields. This is strictly forbidden under Israeli law, in line with the Fourth Geneva Convention's proscription of the procedure.

We can confirm that two Israeli soldiers have been convicted of using a Palestinian boy as a human shield during Operation Cast Lead and are awaiting sentencing.

Such incidents highlight the need for Israel's investigations into allegations in the Goldstone report and those made by credible non-governmental organisations to be transparent, independent and credible. We continue to make this clear.

<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/ld201011/ldhansrd/text/101019w0001.htm#10101929000580>

[TOP](#)

Relevant Legislation ** New or updated

UK Parliament

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>

Committee Stage, House of Commons

<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201011/cmhansrd/cm101019/debtext/101019-0002.htm#10101928000008>

Proceedings

<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201011/cmbills/063/pro0631910p.83-84.html>

Notice of amendments

<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201011/cmbills/063/amend/pbc0632010m.581-587.html>

Scottish Parliament

Certification of Death Bill

<http://www.scottish.parliament.uk/s3/bills/58-CertDeath/index.htm>

End of Life Assistance Bill

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

[TOP](#)

Consultations

** new or updated

**** closes in 2 days**

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>

Consultation on the change to policy direction for the Big Lottery Fund

(closes 29 October 2010)

<http://www.culture.gov.uk/consultations/7313.aspx>

Equality Act 2010: The public sector Equality Duty: Promoting equality through transparency (closing date 10 November 2010)

http://www.equalities.gov.uk/pdf/402461_GEO_EqualityAct2010ThePublicSectorEqualityDuty_acc.pdf

Certification of Death (Scotland) Bill (closes 18 November 2010)

<http://www.scottish.parliament.uk/s3/committees/hs/inquiries/CertificationOfDeathBill/CallForEvidence.htm>

Equality Duty: Detailed Proposals - Consultation on Public Sector Equality Duty Draft Regulations and Order (Scotland) (closes 26 November 2010)

<http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Resource/Doc/324431/0104438.pdf>

Charity Commission: Proposed withdrawal of paper forms for Annual Returns, Registration applications, and forthcoming Charitable Incorporated Organisations (closes 2 December 2010)

[http://www.charitycommission.gov.uk/About us/About the Commission/ols consultation intro.aspx](http://www.charitycommission.gov.uk/About_us/About_the_Commission/ols_consultation_intro.aspx)

Equality Act 2010 - Performance of the Public Sector Equality Duties in Wales (closes 17 December 2010)

<http://wales.gov.uk/consultations/equality/equalityact2010/?lang=en>

Equality and Human Rights Commission: Draft Code of Practice on Further and Higher Education (closes 31 December 2010)

http://live.ehrc.precedenthost.co.uk/cgi-bin/generate.pl?page_id= sx0666i4b&save=screen

[TOP](#)

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