

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 Communities and Local Government what recent representations he has received from (a) hon. Members, (b) Members of the House of Lords, (c) representative organisations and (d) members of the public on the incidence of anti-Semitism; and if he will make a statement. [17383]

Andrew Stunell: The Department for Communities and Local Government regularly receives representations from hon. Members, representative organisations and members of the public of incidences of anti-Semitism and through the cross-Government working group regularly meets representatives of the CST, the Board of Deputies of British Jews and the Jewish Leadership Council. Recently I visited the Community Security Trust offices to discuss how the CST monitors incidents of anti-Semitism.

<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201011/cmhansrd/cm101026/text/101026w001.htm#10102638000006>

GMT: Clock Change

Lord Tanlaw: To ask Her Majesty's Government whether they have made an assessment of any loss of income from the tourist and leisure industries between 25 October 2009 and 28 March 2010 due to the clock change to GMT and the subsequent onset of darker evenings.[HL2800]

Baroness Garden of Frognal: The Department for Culture, Media and Sport has made no such assessment. The implications of a possible move to single double summer time remain under active consideration. The Prime Minister made clear in August this year that such a change can be considered only with the agreement of all parts of the United Kingdom including Scotland.

<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/ld201011/ldhansrd/text/101026w0001.htm#10102627000545>

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UK Parliamentary Questions

Israel

Lord Warner: To ask Her Majesty's Government what discussions they have had with United States and European Union partners about requiring the Government of Israel to remove barriers to the importation of construction materials for internationally approved construction projects overseen by the United Nations Relief and Works Agency, especially the eight UNRWA school projects currently unable to proceed. [HL2677]

Baroness Verma: I refer the noble Lord to my Written Answer of 18 October 2010 (*Official Report*, col. WA113). Since this date, the UN Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA) has reported that the Israeli authorities have withdrawn approval for another one of the eight new school projects, giving a total of four schools for which approval remains valid, and four from which approval has been withdrawn. UNRWA is working with the Israeli authorities to resolve this issue and expect that some of the materials required will begin to enter Gaza shortly.

The UK Government regularly discuss Gaza access issues with the United States and European Union partners. UK officials also pressed for early progress on UNRWA's school projects during the ad hoc liaison committee donor meeting on 21 September in New York. In response, Israeli officials reported that Israel had not delayed approval for the import of the necessary materials.

<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/ld201011/ldhansrd/text/101026w0001.htm#10102627000555>

Israel and Palestine

Lord Hylton: To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the size of Israeli closed military areas in the West Bank; and of their impact on access to water for the Palestinian population. [HL2732]

Baroness Verma: According to reports issued by the UN Office for the Co-ordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), 18 per cent of the total area of the West Bank is closed for Israeli military use. We agree with OCHA's assessment that these restrictions exacerbate water shortages faced by Palestinians living in area C of the West Bank. Other causes include lack of rainfall in recent years, inadequate infrastructure and inequitable distribution of water resources.

<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/ld201011/ldhansrd/text/101026w0001.htm#10102627000556>

Gaza

Baroness Tonge: To ask Her Majesty's Government what legal advice they have received concerning the interception of a British registered boat in International waters, when carrying Jewish people towards Gaza. [HL2585]

The Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office (Lord Howell of Guildford): We are unable to comment on whether or when legal advice has been sought/given. However, I can reassure the noble Baroness that we followed this incident closely, that our consular staff remained in regular contact with the families of those British Nationals on board and that we offered consular assistance to the British participants on arrival in Israel. Those detained by Israel were voluntarily deported on 29 September.

Following the tragedy of the Mavi Marmara incident, when nine Turkish nationals were killed by Israeli security forces, we have repeatedly made it clear to Israel that it is a matter of grave concern that Israeli actions should have ended in such heavy and tragic loss of life.

Lord Warner: To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the impact of Operation Cast Lead on the health and education of children in Gaza; and what action they have taken or will take with European Union partners as a result. [HL2678]

Baroness Verma: UN agencies and non-governmental organisations have published a number of reports on the health of children in Gaza since Operation Cast Lead. These show that many children still suffer traumatic stress and that their health is compromised by declining public health service provision, unclean water and a lack of necessary micro-nutrients in food. The UN Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA), which provides education for 222,000 children in Gaza, reports that schools are overcrowded and children must attend in shifts.

Following Operation Cast Lead the UK Government spent £24.8 million on humanitarian assistance. This included the clearance of unexploded ordnance to allow children to return to school, counselling for traumatised children, the building of safe play areas, and improvement to services for pregnant women, new mothers and babies. UK funding also provided food aid and clean water for families in most need. We also provided £5 million to UNRWA specifically to improve education services in Gaza. The UK and European Union (EU) are major donors to UNRWA. Our ongoing support to UNRWA's core budget helps provide food aid, social services, healthcare and education to refugees in Gaza and across the region. So far this year the UK Government have provided £19 million support. This has helped provide food aid to nearly 1 million Gazans; schooling for almost 480,000 children across the region, and primary healthcare to refugees across the region through 138 clinics with 9.5 million annual patient visits.

The UK and the EU continue to press Israel to allow reconstruction in Gaza and further to relax restrictions on movement and access into and out of Gaza. On 16 September the European Council called for full implementation of the measures to improve access announced by Israel in June and complementary measures, in order to achieve a fundamental change of policy that will allow for reconstruction and the economic recovery of Gaza.

Lord Warner: To ask Her Majesty's Government what action they are taking with the United States and other international partners to ensure faster progress on the implementation of approved and essential projects for improving sanitation and the state of polluted aquifers in Gaza, increasing the population's access to clean drinking water, especially among young children.[HL2680]

Baroness Verma: The UK is funding the UN Access Co-ordination Unit (ACU) which works with the Government of Israel, the Palestinian Authority and aid agencies to facilitate the transfer of goods into Gaza, including essential equipment and construction materials for sanitation networks. ACU works closely with the emergency water sanitation and hygiene group, which represents over 30 organisations working on water, sanitation and hygiene in the occupied Palestinian territories. In mid-September 250 tonnes of construction materials entered Gaza for the upgrade of the sewage treatment plant at Sheikh Aljin which will reduce the run-off of sewage into the Mediterranean Sea. The UK continues to press Israel and the Palestinian Authority to increase co-ordination and process applications the import of essential materials more quickly, in order to ensure further improvements to the Gazan sanitation system.

Lord Hylton: To ask Her Majesty's Government what steps they will take with the quartet to ensure that spare parts and chemicals are made available, so that the water desalination plant at Khan Younis, near Gaza, can work at full capacity.[HL2733]

Baroness Verma: There are a number of actual or potential desalination projects in or near Khan Younis, including small privately-owned plants. We are not aware of any specific obstacles to their development and the Office of the Quartet Representative (OQR) has not raised the issue of supplies for desalination plants with the Government of Israel. We continue to work closely with the OQR, UN agencies and other partners to support improvements in access to Gaza for items for approved reconstruction projects, and all items not on the Government of Israel's list of prohibited imports.

<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/ld201011/ldhansrd/text/101026w0001.htm#10102627000544>

Department for International Development

UKaid for Palestinian people

International Development Minister Alan Duncan today announced additional support for the delivery of essential services to the Palestinian people and the recovery of the private sector in Gaza.

The new UKaid from the Department for International Development will:

- Help pay for Palestinian Authority service delivery, demonstrating the UK's commitment to Palestinian state-building (£13 million). This funding will, for example, help pay for 5,400 children to go to primary school and over 1,000 children to secondary school.
- Support the United Nations Relief and Works Agency to deliver essential services (£8 million). For example, this will help pay for comprehensive maternal health care to 48,000 women and health services to over 43,000 children.
- Support the dormant and damaged private sector in Gaza to recover (£2 million). This will help 300 existing businesses and 4 start-ups to grow sales by \$5 million, and employ 2,200 people.
- Fund United Nations and Palestinian Authority teams working to facilitate access for Gaza imports (£310,000).

The announcement was made while Minister Duncan was visiting the Palestinian territories and Israel.

<http://www.dfid.gov.uk/Media-Room/News-Stories/2010/UKaid-for-Palestinian-people/>

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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>

Notice of amendments

<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/ld201011/ldbills/019/amend/am019-a.htm>

** Parliamentary Voting System and Constituencies Bill

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

Notice of amendments

<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201011/cmbills/098/amend/pbc0982610a.891.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>

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Other Relevant Information

European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA)

Experience of discrimination, social marginalisation and violence: A comparative study of Muslim and non-Muslim youth in three EU Member States

http://fra.europa.eu/fraWebsite/attachments/Pub-racism-marginalisation_en.pdf

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Consultations

** new or updated

**** closes in 2 days**

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%20us/About%20the%20Commission/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

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