

Political Affairs Brief

A daily summary of political events affecting the Jewish Community

Scottish Council of Jewish Communities

SCoJeC

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Arrest Warrants

Michael Ellis: To ask the Secretary of State for Justice what progress he has made on his proposals to amend the law on prosecutions for universal jurisdiction offences. [20925]

Mr Blunt: As my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Justice and Lord Chancellor (Mr Clarke) announced in a written ministerial statement on 22 July 2010, Official Report, column 47WS, the Government intend to bring before Parliament at the first opportunity a legislative amendment requiring 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.

<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201011/cmhansrd/cm101102/text/101102w0003.htm#1011031000043>

Higher Education: Anti-Semitism

Mr Amess: To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Innovation and Skills what recent reports he has received on incidents of Jewish students at universities in London being targeted by Islamic extremists; and if he will make a statement. [20243]

Mr Willetts: I have received no reports of incidents of Jewish students attending universities in London being targeted by Islamic extremists. The broader issue of the treatment of Jewish students was discussed at a recent meeting I held with John Mann, the Community Security Trust, the Union of Jewish Students, Universities UK and the Equality Challenge Unit.

There is no place for racism of any form, including anti-Semitism, in higher education. Universities have access to a strong legislative framework and guidance to help them deal effectively with instances of intolerance, racism and harassment in their institutions. Government would expect them to vigorously tackle these issues when they arise and has supported institutions with key guidance on promoting good campus relations in the sector.

<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201011/cmhansrd/cm101102/text/101102w0003.htm#1011035000011>

Scottish Government

Protection for vulnerable groups

The introduction of a new scheme to improve the protection of vulnerable groups has been postponed until February ... following advice from the Protection of Vulnerable Groups (PVG) Scheme programme board. The scheme had been due to go live on November 30.

Children's Minister, Adam Ingram said: "... given how important this protection is, in making a change the precautionary principle must apply. Therefore, before we move to a new system, we must ensure it is completely robust and able to deliver the improvements we want. ... The programme board have advised that there remains some work to do to ensure that the new IT system that supports the scheme is fully fit for purpose and that's why I've taken the decision to postpone implementation. ... We remain fully committed to the scheme and I will announce the new go live date once further testing of the new system has been completed."

To read the full press release see

<http://www.scotland.gov.uk/News/Releases/2010/11/03112745>

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Israel

UK Parliamentary Questions

Israel

Lord Hylton: To ask Her Majesty's Government what is their response to the approval by the Government of Israel of the construction of 240 houses in Jerusalem, east of the 1967 Green Line.[HL2853]

The Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office (Lord Howell of Guildford): As my right honourable friend the Foreign Secretary has made clear, we are very disappointed by the continuation of settlement activity, following the recent expiry of the settlement moratorium.

Our view is that all settlement activity in the Occupied Palestinian Territories is illegal and an obstacle to peace. We look to the Government of Israel to take all necessary steps to prevent settlement construction so that direct talks can continue. The Foreign Secretary discussed these issues with Israel's ambassador to the UK on 19 October.

Baroness Tonge: To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the prevalence and impact of Israeli incursions into Lebanese airspace since the 2006 conflict.[HL3095]

Lord Howell of Guildford: Violations of Lebanese airspace by the Israeli Defence Force occur on a daily basis. This contravenes UN Security Council Resolution 1701. UN Security Council Resolution 1937 adopted on 30 August 2010, has once again called for all concerned parties to strengthen their efforts to implement all provisions of UN Security Council Resolution 1701 (2006), which includes respecting Lebanese sovereign territory (including airspace).

The UK and other international partners have made representations calling on Israel to cease overflights of Lebanese territory. We continue to call on all parties, including Hizballah, to abide by UN Security Council Resolution 1701.

<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/ld201011/ldhansrd/text/101102w0001.htm#10110261000400>

Palestinians: International Assistance

Richard Graham: To ask the Secretary of State for International Development what assessment he has made of the humanitarian situation in Gaza; and if he will make a statement. [20676]

Mr Duncan: The humanitarian situation in Gaza has stabilised but remains fragile. The volume and range of goods entering Gaza has increased since Israel eased access restrictions in June 2010, although United Nations agencies are reporting difficulties obtaining approval for reconstruction projects and the necessary materials. Approximately 75% of Gazans are dependent on food aid and cannot obtain materials needed to rebuild their homes. The water and sewage system is dilapidated, with 90% of mains water unfit for drinking. Many people continue to suffer from post-traumatic stress and other psychological disorders.

<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201011/cmhansrd/cm101102/text/101102w0002.htm#10110298000071>

Hamas: Human Rights

Guto Bebb: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what recent discussions he has had with his UN counterparts on allegations of human rights abuses by members of Hamas in Gaza; and if he will make a statement. [21142]

Alistair Burt: Foreign and Commonwealth Office officials have regular dialogue with the UN regarding a number of human rights issues: this includes abuses carried out by members of Hamas.

We continue to call on Hamas to make immediate and concrete steps towards the quartet principles-unconditionally to release Gilad Shalit, who has been held in captivity for over four years.

<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201011/cmhansrd/cm101102/text/101102w0002.htm#101102107000009>

Foreign and Commonwealth Office

Foreign Secretary visits Israel, the Occupied Palestinian Territories and Egypt

Foreign Secretary William Hague is visiting Israel, the Occupied Palestinian Territories and Egypt. He will encourage parties to take the steps needed to resume direct talks on the Middle East Peace Process.

During his visit to Israel the Foreign Secretary will meet Israeli President Shimon Peres, Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, Defence Minister Ehud Barak and leader of the opposition, Tzipi Livni. He will also sign a Co-Production Film Treaty with Foreign Minister Avigdor Lieberman. ...

In the Occupied Palestinian Territories, the Foreign Secretary will meet Prime Minister Salam Fayyad where he will sign a ground-breaking UK-Palestinian Co-production Film Treaty. This reflects the progress the Palestinian Authority have made in state-building and will help stimulate productivity in both countries' film industries.

The Foreign Secretary will also meet Foreign Minister Riyad Al Malki and Palestinian community leaders from areas affected by the barrier, as well as prominent residents of East Jerusalem. ...

To read the full press release see

<http://www.fco.gov.uk/en/news/latest-news/?view=News&id=23131536>

BBC

Israel halts 'dialogue' with UK over war crimes law

Israel is postponing "strategic dialogue" with Britain over defence and security issues, an Israeli Foreign Ministry spokesman has said. The move is a protest over attempts to use

British law to prosecute visiting Israeli officials, the spokesman added. ... The Foreign Office said the British government was moving to curb the use of "mischievous" arrest warrants. ...

The Israeli Foreign Ministry spokesman denied that the latest development was a deliberate "ambush" to humiliate Mr Hague. ...

The BBC ... said the news that Israel was postponing an annual round of strategic talks with Britain was potentially embarrassing, even though the Conservatives have already promised to amend those laws which could expose visiting Israeli politicians to arrest. ...

A Foreign Office spokeswoman said: 'We share Israeli concerns about the current universal jurisdiction arrangements which inhibit Israelis visiting the UK without fear of mischievous arrest warrants. "That's exactly why the government is moving as quickly as possible to amend them. A Written Ministerial Statement was tabled to parliament in July and legislation will be tabled in the very near future. ...

To read the full news report see

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-11681989>

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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>

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

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

Report Stage, House of Commons

<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201011/cmhansrd/cm101102/debtext/101102-0002.htm#10110269000001>

Report Stage Proceedings

<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201011/cmbills/098/pro098021p.259-265.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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Consultations

** new or updated

**** closes in 7 days**

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>

The Future of the Citizenship Survey (closing date 30 November 2010)

<http://www.communities.gov.uk/documents/communities/pdf/1756366.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

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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