

Political Affairs Brief

A daily summary of political events affecting the Jewish Community

Scottish Council of Jewish Communities

SCoJeC

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Livestock: Slaughterhouses

Christopher Pincher: To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs whether she has made a recent assessment of the merits of making mandatory pre-stunning prior to slaughter for farm animals entering the food chain. [20687]

Mr Paice: The UK Government would prefer to see all farm animals stunned before slaughter but accepts the rights of religious communities to eat meat slaughtered in accordance with their religious beliefs. We have not made a recent assessment of the merits of making mandatory pre-stunning prior to slaughter for farm animals entering the food chain. Current and future EU regulations give member states rights to exercise discretion over pre-cut stunning when related to religious slaughter. The UK restricts the practice of slaughter without stunning to slaughterhouses.

<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201011/cmhansrd/cm101103/text/101103w0001.htm#10110362000031>

Food: Labelling

Jake Berry: To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs what timetable her Department has set for discussions with the food industry on labelling and point of sale information on methods of preparation of meat. [21281]

Mr Paice: No specific timetable has been set for discussions with the food industry on the use of labelling or point of sale information to provide information on methods of preparation, including method of slaughter, of meat. This is a complex and sensitive issue and addressing current concerns, while respecting the religious freedoms of the communities involved, will require very careful consideration. I will be using the regular contact I will have with retail and catering organisations over the coming months to explore these issues further.

<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201011/cmhansrd/cm101103/text/101103w0001.htm#10110362000029>

Home Office

Theresa May on counter-terrorism priorities ... the Home Secretary outlined her plans to deal with the threat of terrorism, which she called 'more diverse and more fragmented than ever'. ... her priorities are to:

- enhance protective security measures
- invest in conflict prevention and stopping overseas terrorist plots
- refocus the UK strategy for preventing radicalisation
- strike a better balance between liberty and security

To read the full press release see

<http://www.homeoffice.gov.uk/media-centre/news/counter-terror-speech>

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Israel

UK Parliamentary Questions

Middle East: Refugees

Lord Hylton: To ask Her Majesty's Government whether they will work for a comprehensive agreement covering all refugees arising from the Middle East since 1948.

Lord Wallace of Saltaire: My Lords, there is a range of refugee problems in the Middle East, including those of the Kurds and the Iranians, mostly in Iraq. The two major refugee issues are of course the Palestinian refugees from Israel in a number of countries, and the 4 million Iraqis displaced both within Iraq and as refugees in surrounding countries. A comprehensive settlement of the Palestinian issue will have to include a settlement for refugees as part of the final agreement. The Iraqi problem depends on restoring stability in Iraq.

Lord Hylton: ... Does he agree that the Palestinian refugees registered with the United Nations number some 4.8 million, and that Syria, Jordan and Lebanon contain about 1.7 million Iraqi refugees? This amounts to a population larger than that of many small states. Therefore, will the Government work not only for the comprehensive agreement that he mentioned, but more specifically for the resettlement of these people who have suffered so much for so long?

Lord Wallace of Saltaire: My Lords, the Government are working with the UN High Commissioner for Refugees and the UN relief and rehabilitation organisations to assist these refugees. Most of the Iraqis wish to go back to Iraq when they can. We will have a Question tomorrow about continuing violence in Baghdad and elsewhere, which is part of the problem. For the Palestinian refugees, this is of course a much longer-term and much more complex issue that has to be part of the negotiations for a comprehensive settlement of the Israeli-Palestinian dispute.

Lord Anderson of Swansea: Does the Minister agree that it would be unwise to encourage expectations of a mass Palestinian return to Israel, as both sides now accept that only a limited number will be allowed to resettle in the event of an agreement? Does he also agree that Arab states should be urged to do more financially to help Palestinian refugees settle and have a decent standard of living, either where they are or in the territories?

Lord Wallace of Saltaire: My Lords, I think that it is recognised on all sides that not all Palestinian refugees will return home. That is part of the necessary compromise that will have to be in a comprehensive settlement. We all understand also that reaching a compromise will be very difficult, and that we will need to address the issues of compensation and of a moral acknowledgement by Israel of the suffering endured by Palestinian refugees. ...

Lord Clinton-Davis: Will the noble Lord agree that Jewish refugees have also been threatened and menaced throughout the Middle East and have gone to Israel? Does he agree that it is imperative that there should be discussions between Israel and Abbas immediately to ensure that the Palestinians can create a viable second state? ...

Baroness Falkner of Margravine: My Lords, is my noble friend aware that organisations such as the World Zionist Organisation have had campaigns to encourage British Jews to move to Israel and the Occupied Territories of Palestine? What discussions are the British Government having with the Israeli Government, because many of these people risk contravening international law-the International Criminal Court Act 2001 and other protocols-by settling in the Occupied Territories?

Lord Wallace of Saltaire: My Lords, Her Majesty's Government have made it perfectly clear that we are in favour of a two-state solution and that this two-state solution rests on the establishment of a viable Palestinian state. That means that a number of the settlements currently taking place on occupied territory will have to be removed.

Baroness Symons of Vernham Dean: ... what level of aid we are giving to the UN to sustain the Palestinian camps in Jordan? ... Can he also tell us what direct discussions the Government are having with the countries of the Arab League, some of which are very rich indeed, about what aid they are prepared to make available both in budgetary and programme terms for resettlement in the future?

Lord Wallace of Saltaire: My Lords, I do not have the figures ... It is not only a question of the refugee camps in Jordan; as she will know, in many ways, the problems of the refugee camps in Lebanon and-worst of all-of those settled in Gaza are much more acute. I have seen Palestinian refugee camps in Damascus which I have to say were relatively well integrated into Syrian society. That seems to me very much the way forward. I agree with her that we should be asking members of the Arab League to provide more assistance.

Baroness Deech: Can the Minister give an assurance that he will in the mean time encourage that human rights prevail in the treatment of refugees in the Middle East? I am thinking in particular of the lack of rights of Palestinian refugees in Lebanon who are apparently unable to own property and who are excluded from healthcare. ...

Lord McAvoy: ... we all support a comprehensive peace settlement between Israel and the Palestinians. Will the UK Government, in supporting that comprehensive peace settlement, indicate quite clearly that they recognise the acknowledged security interests of Israel? Will they also take the opportunity to impress on the Israeli Government that there is no security in ruling all land between the River Jordan and the Mediterranean?

Lord Wallace of Saltaire: My Lords, the Foreign Secretary is in the Middle East at the moment and is talking to members of both the Israeli and the Palestinian Administrations.

<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/ld201011/ldhansrd/text/101103-0001.htm#10110363000373>

Middle East: Armed Conflict

Mr Ward: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what recent discussions he has had with his counterparts in Israel and the Palestinian National Council on the situation of members of the Palestinian legislature; and if he will make a statement. [18851]

Alistair Burt: The UK continues to follow Israeli detention operations closely and monitor the situation of Palestinian prisoners. We continue to urge the Government of Israel to take immediate action to ensure all cases are reviewed by a court in accordance with fair procedures and that their rights, particularly the rights to a fair trial and family visit, should be upheld.

Guto Bebb: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what recent reports he has received on the number of (a) rockets and (b) mortar bombs launched into Israeli territory from (i) Lebanon and (ii) Gaza since 1 January 2010; and if he will make a statement. [21141]

Alistair Burt [*holding answer 2 November 2010*]: According to the Israeli Defence Force there have been 122 rockets and 87 mortars fired from Gaza at the state of Israel and zero mortars and rockets from Lebanon.

<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201011/cmhansrd/cm101103/text/101103w0002.htm#10110372000045>

Middle East: Peace Negotiations

Mr Offord: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what aims and objectives his Department has set for its policy on the Middle East peace process. [21310]

Alistair Burt: As my right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary (Mr Hague) has made clear, we will do all that we can to support progress towards a two state solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. This conflict matters to British national security and we will take every opportunity to help promote peace.

We want to see a sovereign, viable and contiguous Palestinian state living in peace and security alongside a safe and secure Israel and their other neighbours in the region, based on the borders of 1967, with Jerusalem the future capital of both states and a fair settlement for refugees.

Direct talks are a vital opportunity to make progress. We look to Israel to renew the settlement moratorium so that talks can continue.

<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201011/cmhansrd/cm101103/text/101103w0002.htm#10110372000046>

Palestinians: International Assistance

Richard Graham: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what recent discussions he has had with the UN Relief and Works Agency on the (a) education of school children in and (b) importation of building materials into Gaza; and if he will make a statement. [20675]

Alistair Burt: Foreign and Commonwealth Office officials have regular contact, in London and in the region, with the UN Relief and Works Agency regarding a number of issues related to Gaza, including reconstruction of schools and import of key materials. We welcome the steps that Israel announced in June to improve access to Gaza. But we want to see further progress to speed up reconstruction and secure real change on the ground.

<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201011/cmhansrd/cm101103/text/101103w0002.htm#10110372000047>

Hamas

Mr Offord: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what aims and objectives his Department has set for its policy on Hamas. [21309]

Alistair Burt: The UK, along with its international allies, continue to call on all parties in the region including Hamas to refrain from any activity that could undermine the search for a just and lasting settlement.

We call on Hamas to take immediate and concrete steps towards the Quartet principles and to end its interference with the operations of non-governmental organisations and UN agencies in Gaza. We also call for the unconditional release of Gilad Shalit, who has been held in captivity for four years.

<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201011/cmhansrd/cm101103/text/101103w0002.htm#10110372000042>

Foreign and Commonwealth Office

Israeli Prime Minister meets UK Foreign Secretary

The two leaders discussed a broad range of common issues, including the efforts to advance the diplomatic process in the region. Israel and Great Britain maintain very close ties on strategic issues, especially Iran. It was agreed that another official meeting will be held soon in Israel. Israel welcomes the British government's explicit commitment to amend the universal jurisdiction law.

<http://www.fco.gov.uk/en/news/latest-news/?view=PressR&id=23147611>

Grants for joint UK-Israel scientific research announced

Ten joint British-Israeli research projects which tackle global challenges in Energy and the Environment have been selected to receive funding through the Britain Israel Research and Academic Exchange Partnership, BIRAX. ...

The Foreign Secretary emphasised the importance of science in the relationship between the two countries. He hailed science as “one of the cornerstones of the relationship between Britain and Israel” and added “both are countries that have built up our economies and our identity through being leaders in science and technology”

Israel's Minister of Science and Technology, Professor Daniel Hershkowitz said: “The scientific cooperation agreement with Britain, like similar agreements with other countries, is additional proof of Israel's status as a world scientific power. I place very great importance on international scientific cooperation in general and cooperation with Britain in particular. The language of science bridges differences and gaps between peoples and different world societies and cooperation between Israel and Britain will advance not only these two countries, but the entire world.”

The ten chosen projects address a wide range of topics within the field of the environment covering conservation of the coral reef in the Red Sea, the development of bio-renewable resources to replace non-degradable petroleum-based plastics and crop productivity to safeguard sustainable agriculture. The projects were selected for their innovation, the strength of the collaboration and the long term prospects for continuing the project and its potential impact. ...

The ten selected projects involve a total of nine British Universities in partnership with seven Israeli counterparts. The British Universities include the Universities of Bangor, Bath, Brunel, Cambridge, Glasgow, Leeds, Oxford, Southampton and Imperial College and the Israeli Universities include Ben Gurion, Haifa University, Hebrew University of Jerusalem, the Technion – Israel Institute of Technology, Tel Aviv University and the Weizmann Institute. ...

To read the full press release see

<http://www.fco.gov.uk/en/news/latest-news/?view=PressR&id=23150439>

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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>

Bill as brought from the Commons

<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/ld201011/ldbills/026/2011026.pdf>

Explanatory Notes

<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/ld201011/ldbills/026/en/2011026en.pdf>

First Reading, House of Lords

<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/ld201011/ldhansrd/text/101103-gc0001.htm#10110365000123>

Parliamentary Voting System and Constituencies Bill

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

Scottish Parliament

**** Certification of Death Bill**

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

Equality Impact Assessment

<http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Resource/Doc/329413/0106532.pdf>

Final Business and Regulatory Impact Assessment

<http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Resource/Doc/329408/0106531.pdf>

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 6 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](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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