

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 who serves on the cross-Government working group to tackle anti-Semitism; on what dates the working group has met since May 2010; on what dates the group plans to meet during the next six months; and if he will make a statement. [20254]

Andrew Stunell: The cross-Government working group to tackle anti-Semitism is made up of civil servants from across Whitehall as well as representatives of the Board of Deputies of British Jews, the Jewish Leadership Council, the Community Security Trust and a representative of the All Party Parliamentary Group Against Anti-Semitism. The working group met on Friday 23 July 2010. Further meetings are planned for Wednesday 17 November 2010, followed by meetings during the second week of February 2011 and June 2011.

<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201011/cmhansrd/cm101109/text/101109w0002.htm#10110964000004>

Arrest Warrants

Nick de Bois: To ask the Secretary of State for Justice (1) how many arrest warrant applications were made to district judges by private individuals in the period 1 January 1995 to 1 January 2010 in respect of an offence under (a) section 1 of the Aviation and Maritime Security Act 1990 ... [22281]

(2) how many arrest warrant applications were made to district judges by private individuals in the period 1 January 1995 to 1 January 2010 in respect of an offence under (a) section 1, 2 or 6 of the Aviation Security Act 1982 ... [22282]

(3) how many arrest warrant applications were made to District Judges by private individuals in the period 1 January 1995 to 1 January 2010 in respect of (a) offences relating to piracy or an offence under section 2 of the Piracy Act 1837 ... [22286]

Mr Kenneth Clarke: The information sought is not recorded. However, such applications are generally heard at the City of Westminster magistrates court, and staff there are aware of ten applications for arrest warrants in respect of universal jurisdiction offences in the last ten years. It is public knowledge that two applications were granted. Six of the applications related to allegations of grave breaches of the Geneva conventions under the 1957 Act, and four to allegations of torture under the 1988 Act.

Nick de Bois: To ask the Secretary of State for Justice (1) which (a) individuals, (b)

organisations and (c) foreign governments were invited to comment on his Department's note of 20 March 2010 on arrest warrants-universal jurisdiction; [22391]

(2) what (a) individuals, (b) organisations and (c) foreign governments responded to his Department's note of 20 March 2010, on arrest warrants-universal jurisdiction; and whether he plans to publish those responses. [22406]

Mr Kenneth Clarke: The following organisations and individuals were invited to comment on the note of March 2010:

the Lord Chief Justice

the Senior Presiding Judge

the Senior District Judge (Chief Magistrate)

the Justices' Clerks' Society

the Criminal Bar Association

the Law Society

Liberty

JUSTICE

Amnesty International

the District Bench (Magistrates Courts) Legal Committee

the Jewish Leadership Council.

Comments were received from:

the Justices' Clerks' Society

the Criminal Bar Association

Liberty

JUSTICE

the Jewish Leadership Council

Hickman and Rose, Solicitors

the Board of Deputies of British Jews

Labour Friends of Israel

Middle East Monitor

the Palestinian Forum of Britain.

The comments have not been published but have been made available on request.

No foreign governments were invited to comment and none did so.

Nick de Bois: To ask the Secretary of State for Justice what meetings he has had with representatives of foreign governments on universal jurisdiction and arrest warrants since 20 March 2010. [22407]

Mr Kenneth Clarke: I have had no such meetings.

<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201011/cmhansrd/cm101109/text/101109w0001.htm#10110949000065>

Meat: Labelling

Gordon Birtwistle: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what guidelines his Department issues on the preparation and packaging of halal meat. [22728]

Anne Milton: There are no guidelines issued from the Food Standards Agency (FSA) specifically on the 'preparation' and 'packaging' of Halal meat.

Meat intended to be described as Halal must be slaughtered in accordance with United Kingdom food law. This ensures the food is fit for human consumption.

The FSA recently reissued guidance (first published in 2003) for local authority food enforcement officers on Halal food issues to help local authorities make sure that food businesses comply with food labelling rules which are agreed at European Union level and prohibit false or misleading labelling. A copy has been placed in the Library.

<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201011/cmhansrd/cm101109/text/101109w0003.htm#10110964000045>

Home Office

Review of the Prevent strategy

The current threat level to the UK from international terrorism is severe. This means that the Security and Intelligence Agencies and the police assess that an attack is highly likely and could occur without warning at any time. The most significant international terrorism threat to the UK remains violent extremism associated with and influenced by Al-Qa'ida. The Prevent strategy, launched in 2007 seeks to stop people becoming terrorists or supporting terrorism both in the UK and overseas. It is the preventative strand of the government's counter-terrorism strategy, CONTEST. ...

What is changing? ...

- we want to more clearly separate work on preventing violent extremism from work to promote integration. The former will be led by the Home Office and the latter by the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG). As part of its work on integration, DCLG will also be coordinating work across Government to address the challenges we face from non-violent extremism
- we want to consider whether the Prevent strategy should address all forms of violent extremism, recognising that the risks to national security from groups associated with or influenced by Al-Qa'ida are greater than the risks from others
- we believe Prevent needs to be more focused in specific areas and sectors where propagandists for terrorism are known to be operating
- we want to strike the right balance between decision-making, prioritisation and accountability at local and national levels, recognising the need for local flexibility while mindful of the need to manage risks to national security
- we will be assessing whether promoting community resilience and addressing grievances should be part of our counter-terrorism strategy, or whether they should be led and delivered within other Government policies
- we will consider how activity on Prevent in the UK can be more seamlessly joined up with Prevent activity overseas
- finally, we will also be looking closely at how we monitor and evaluate Prevent to ensure that it offers value-for-money.

What is staying?

The revised Prevent strategy will continue to address the most significant security risk that we face: the risk from international terrorism. The heart of Prevent – targeted, local work to support people who are most vulnerable to radicalisation and to disrupt propagandists for terrorism – will also remain. There will continue to be an overseas element to the strategy. ...

To read the full press release see

<http://www.homeoffice.gov.uk/counter-terrorism/review-of-prevent-strategy/>

Edinburgh Sheriff Court

Prosecution for posting antisemitic comments on the Scotsman website

In March 2008 the Scottish Council of Jewish Communities reported a series of antisemitic postings on the comment pages of the Scotsman and Herald newspapers to both Police and Press Complaints Commission. These included: "jews are not fit to breathe our air. They must be attacked wherever you see them; throw rocks at their ugly, hooked-nosed women and mentally ill children, and light up the REAL ovens." (*sic*)

The perpetrator was identified as Mohammed Sandia, who lives in London. He first appeared in court in October 2009, charged under the Public Order Act 1986 of "publish[ing] written material which was threatening abusive or insulting ... whereby having regard for all the circumstances racial hatred was likely to be stirred up." The charge also alleged that this conduct was both aggravated by religious prejudice, and was racially aggravated. Having changed his plea to guilty last month, he appeared in

court again today, where the Sheriff described the material he had posted as “disgusting and repulsive”. He regretted that he didn’t have the power to impose an adequately lengthy custodial sentence, and told Sandia he did not choose to impose a penalty that would “have the effect of turning you in your own eyes, or in the eyes of your supporters, into a martyr”. He therefore deferred sentence for a year, cautioning that Sandia should expect either a custodial or community service sentence at the end of that time, depending on the findings of community reports to be commissioned by the court.

For more detailed information see

http://www.scojec.org/news/2010/10xi_sandia.html or contact Leah scojec@scojec.org

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Holocaust

European Union Agency for Human Rights (FRA)

Understanding the Holocaust through human rights education

To mark this year’s anniversary of “the night of the broken glass”, the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA) publishes a handbook for teachers: Excursion to the past – teaching for the future. The handbook emphasises the link between teaching about the Holocaust and other Nazi crimes, and teaching about human rights and democracy. Teachers and guides of memorial sites or museums are key to ensuring that the connection is recognised between Holocaust and human rights education. However, there is a lack of human rights training available for both groups. The FRA thus encourages national governments to better integrate education on the Holocaust and human rights into their school curricula to reflect the significance of human rights in both the history and the future of the EU. ...

“... It is not enough to listen to a witness who is over 80 years old if you do not connect his/her experience to the present time, if you do not recognise there is still a deficit in human rights today.” (Teacher, Italy) ...

To read the full press release see

http://fra.europa.eu/fraWebsite/attachments/PR-holocaust-education_EN.pdf

Excursion to the past – teaching for the future: Handbook for teachers

http://fra.europa.eu/fraWebsite/attachments/Handbook-teachers-holocaust-education_EN.pdf

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Israel

UK Parliamentary Questions

Topical Questions: Foreign and Commonwealth Office

T8. [22556] Mrs Linda Riordan (Halifax) (Lab/Co-op): Does the Minister share my concern, following Richard Falk's comments, that the Israeli occupation of Palestinian land is irreversible? Will he assure the House that the Government are doing everything they can to press for a Palestinian state and to support the Palestinian people?

Mr Hague: We certainly are doing that. I visited Ramallah last week and met Prime Minister Fayyad of the Palestinian Authority. I also met non-violent Palestinian human rights activists and other leading figures in east Jerusalem. During my visit, I restated the position of this country, and indeed of the whole European Union, which is that we want to see a settlement based on the 1967 borders with a just settlement for refugees and with Jerusalem as the capital of both states. That is the clear British Government position. ...

Richard Burden (Birmingham, Northfield) (Lab): Does the Foreign Secretary agree that one of the less well known but most insidious aspects of the blockade of Gaza is that Israel threatens to shoot any Palestinian considered to be near the Israeli border? Israel defines 17% of the entire territory of the Gaza strip as constituting nearness to that border, while 17 of the 22 Palestinians killed have been killed in the area. What can the Foreign Secretary do to get Israel to see sense on that issue?

Mr Hague: There have certainly been shooting incidents in the area. That underlines the importance of what we discussed earlier: a different approach to Gaza. We need to ensure that reconstruction takes place to prevent, for instance, arguments and incidents involving people who try to collect building materials from near the border and are shot at. That is one of the controversial incidents that have taken place. An improvement in reconstruction and a general improvement in economic conditions would be at least a first step towards dealing with the situation that the hon. Gentleman has described.

<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201011/cmhansrd/cm101109/debtext/101109-0001.htm#10110951000025>

Israel: Sanctions

Mr Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether he has received recent representations from trade union leaders on trade boycotts against Israel; and if he will make a statement. [20970]

Alistair Burt: We do receive representations from groups who advocate a trade boycott against Israel. However, we do not think boycotts are a constructive way forward. They are an obstruction to the close friendship and trade links shared between the UK and Israel.

<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201011/cmhansrd/cm101109/text/101109w002.htm#10110964000027>

Israel and Palestine

Baroness Tonge: To ask Her Majesty's Government what is their assessment of Israel's adherence to international law and respect for human rights for Palestinians following discussions on the European Union-Israel Association Agreement.[HL3092]

The Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office (Lord Howell of Guildford): We are very clear that Israel's actions must adhere to international law. The Government and the EU make frequent representations and statements where we see actions by either party that cause us concern. In particular, we have consistently made it clear that settlements in the West Bank are illegal under international law.

Baroness Tonge: To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the human rights implications for non-Jews living in Israel of the proposed policy of the government of Israel to implement an obligatory oath of loyalty to the Jewish state of Israel; and what representations they have made to the government of Israel on this matter.[HL3093]

Lord Howell of Guildford: The UK attaches the highest importance to the values set out in Israel's Declaration of Independence and basic laws.

We are concerned by anything that detracts from these and will be watching this debate carefully. Nothing should be done to prejudice Israel's non-Jewish citizens or to discriminate against people on the basis of their religion.

Lord Hylton: To ask Her Majesty's Government what representations they will make to the Government of Israel regarding the damage caused by fire to a Palestinian girls' school near Nablus on 21 October. [HL3319]

Lord Howell of Guildford: We are concerned by press reports of an attack on a girls' school near Nablus, reportedly by Israeli settlers. We condemn all acts of violence and call on all sides to refrain from provocative actions.

<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/ld201011/ldhansrd/text/101109w0001.htm#10110965000623>

Gaza Blockade

3. Mr David Ward (Bradford East) (LD): What recent discussions he has had on the blockade of Gaza. [22527]

The Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs (Mr William Hague): I discussed Gaza with the Israeli Prime Minister, Foreign Minister and Defence Minister during my visit there last week. I stressed that economic revitalisation will best safeguard Israel's security. Gaza's dependence on aid will continue until there is progress on exports and a better framework is developed for enabling imports of reconstruction materials for UN-led projects.

Mr Ward: Does the Foreign Secretary agree that the blockade not only represents an act of inhumanity, but is against the long-term security of Israel and is therefore against its national interest?

Mr Hague: Yes, I do agree with my hon. Friend. I have said before in the House that I think the blockade of Gaza is unsustainable and unacceptable. The tunnel economy that has arisen in Gaza often serves the interests of Hamas, rather than the interests of anyone else, so it is important for Israel to continue to allow an improvement in the flow of goods into Gaza and, as I said, to begin to allow reconstruction materials so that there can be a real improvement in conditions on the ground in Gaza. That will help the security of the whole region.

Sir Gerald Kaufman (Manchester, Gorton) (Lab): Is the right hon. Gentleman aware that in a briefing provided for me last week in Jerusalem by John Ging, the admirable head of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency in Gaza, Mr Ging said that the situation in Gaza now is worse than it was before the flotilla incident, that huge numbers of children are going hungry and undernourished, and that the schools are not being built? Will the right hon. Gentleman take every action available to him to impress on the Israelis that persecuting the people of Gaza will not bring peace?

Mr Hague: As I mentioned earlier, I raised the issue with all the leaders of the Israeli Government on my own visit to Jerusalem and Tel Aviv last week. The right hon. Gentleman is right that the school construction that we wanted to take place is not yet taking place. The British Government have announced additional help for the work of Mr Ging and UNRWA—£23 million of new support for the Palestinian Authority, £8 million of that for UNRWA and £2 million to help 300 businesses in Gaza. Britain is doing a lot to help the situation there and we must continue to do so.

Bob Blackman (Harrow East) (Con): I congratulate my right hon. Friend on an outstanding visit to the state of Israel last week, but Israel has clearly honoured obligations of humanitarian areas and aid for Gaza. Did the discussion that took place last week concentrate on the effect that Hamas has had in terms of its rocket capability and launching rockets and bombs into the state of Israel?

Mr Hague: It is important to bear in mind that dimension as well. The behaviour of Hamas obviously makes all those issues much more difficult to deal with. Indeed, I visited the family of Gilad Shalit, who is still imprisoned-held hostage-in Gaza, and I believe that he should be released immediately and unconditionally. So my hon. Friend is right that it is important to bear in mind that dimension to what is happening in Gaza, but I think that we are united in this House in making the case to Israel, as I did last week, that the best way to improve its security is to permit and encourage an improvement in the conditions in Gaza. That in itself will, over time, weaken Hamas and help to ensure that a new generation of Palestinians is not turned against Israel and against peace.

Yvette Cooper (Normanton, Pontefract and Castleford) (Lab): I welcome the Foreign Secretary's recognition of the importance of lifting the blockade of Gaza. He will know the importance for the people of Gaza not just of lifting the blockade, but of being part of a viable Palestinian state alongside a secure Israel in a two-state solution. Therefore, what discussions did he have during his recent visit on the role of Gaza in the future peace process?

Mr Hague: Gaza plays, ultimately, a very important role in the peace process, because there cannot be a successful peace in the long term without its involvement and inclusion. The immediate priority is to get the peace process going again and the direct talks going, and of course I put the argument very strongly to Israeli leaders and on Israeli media that that requires a new freeze on Israeli settlement building on the west bank. That is the immediate issue, and in that regard the announcements that we have heard in the past 24 hours are extremely disappointing. The immediate priority is to get the direct talks going. A real settlement would have to involve Gaza as well.

<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201011/cmhansrd/cm101109/debtext/101109-0001.htm#10110951000015>

Gaza

Baroness Tonge: To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the ability of Palestinians in Gaza to travel to Israel to receive medical treatment; and what representations they have made to the government of Israel on this matter.[HL3094]

The Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office (Lord Howell of Guildford): We, along with our international allies, believe it is not only imperative for goods and exports to leave Gaza, but it should also be possible for people, particularly those needing medical treatment, and others to move freely in and out of Gaza.

The UK raises a number of human rights issues, on a regular basis, with the Israeli authorities at ministerial and official level. We will continue to follow up on these issues.

<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/ld201011/ldhansrd/text/101109w0001.htm#10110965000608>

Lebanon: Anti-Israeli Missile

Mr Hollobone: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will undertake pre-emptive multilateral diplomatic action to prevent the escalation of anti-Israeli missile deployment in Lebanon. [22902]

Alistair Burt: We continue to press for the full implementation of United Nations (UN) Security Council Resolutions, most notably UN Security Council Resolution 1701, which calls upon Hizballah to disarm.

My right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary underlined the importance of UN Security Council Resolution 1701 with Prime Minister Hariri during his visit to the UK last week. I also raised these issues during my visit to Syria and Lebanon in July underlining the need to prevent the flow of arms to Hizballah.

<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201011/cmhansrd/cm101109/text/101109w0002.htm#10110964000028>

Foreign and Commonwealth Office

Israeli settlements: "extremely disappointing and unhelpful"

Foreign Secretary William Hague commented after the announcement yesterday that a further 1,352 housing units would be constructed in East Jerusalem settlements.

The Foreign Secretary said: "The latest announcement of plans for construction of further settlements in East Jerusalem is extremely disappointing and unhelpful. As I made clear during my recent visit to Israel and the Occupied Territories settlements are an obstacle to peace. Their construction should stop."

<http://www.fco.gov.uk/en/news/latest-news/?view=News&id=23980682>

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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>

Notice of amendments

<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201011/cmbills/064/amend/psc0640911a.1159-1160.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

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 today**

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%20us/About%20the%20Commission/ols%20consultation%20intro.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

**** Charity Commission for England and Wales: Views on Future Strategy**

(closes 14 January 2011)

http://www.charitycommission.gov.uk/RSS/News/pr_strategic_review.aspx

**** Prevent Review** (closing date not stated)

<http://preventreview.homeoffice.gov.uk/>

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The Scottish Council of Jewish Communities (SCoJeC) is Scottish Charity SCO29438