

Political Affairs Brief

A daily summary of political events affecting the Jewish Community

Scottish Council of Jewish Communities

SCoJeC

Contents

[Home Affairs](#)

[Holocaust](#)

[Israel](#)

[Relevant Legislation](#)

[Other Relevant Information](#)

[Consultations](#)

Home Affairs

UK Parliamentary Questions

Crime: Hate

Robert Halfon: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what objectives her Department has set for its policy on hate groups operating in the UK. [24582]

James Brokenshire: The Coalition programme for government outlines our objectives to deny public funds to any group that has recently espoused or incited violence or hatred; and to improve the recording of hate crime offences.

The Home Secretary also has the power to exclude (i.e. ban) an individual from coming to the United Kingdom where she considers that the individual's presence here would not be conducive to the public good. This may include those who display unacceptable behaviour by inciting hatred.

We are currently consulting the police on how hate crime information can best be collected. This commitment has been included in the Home Office's Business Plan. It is intended that the police will begin the collection of this data from April 2011. As with a whole raft of Government and police data, we will make information available in a transparent and accessible format.

The coalition agreement also includes the aim to restore rights to non-violent protest. We will review the law to ensure that the police continue to have the powers they need to protect local communities from intimidation and threatening behaviour and to deal with individuals and groups that espouse or incite violence.

The Department for Communities and Local Government is leading further work across Government to tackle non-violent extremism as part of our aim of promoting wider community integration.

We have announced a review of the Prevent strategy, aimed at tackling violent extremism and terrorism, with the objective of ensuring that it is more effective and properly focused. The review will consider whether the Prevent strategy should be expanded to include other forms of violent extremism. A revised strategy is due to be published in the new year.

<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201011/cmhansrd/cm101129/text/101129w0002.htm#10112930000007>

Equality and Human Rights Commission

Mike Weatherley: To ask the Minister for Women and Equalities what progress has been made on the reform of the Equality and Human Rights Commission; and if she will make a statement. [27242]

Lynne Featherstone: We intend to reform the Equality and Human Rights Commission to focus it on its core regulatory and human rights functions, and provide better value for taxpayers' money. Our plans for doing this include legislative proposals which we are preparing in the context of the Public Bodies Bill, currently in the other House. We intend to consult on our proposals early next year.

<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201011/cmhansrd/cm101129/text/101129w0001.htm#1011299000010>

ACPOS

Total of recorded hate crime from regional forces in England, Wales and Northern Ireland during the calendar year 2009

The data relates to 'recordable crimes' under Home Office recording rules and indicates those offences that have been perceived as hate crimes by the victim or any other person. Crimes were recorded from 1st January to 31st December 2009 in all police forces in England, Wales and Northern Ireland. ...

TOTALS

Race - 43,426

Religion/Faith - 2,083

Sexual Orientation - 4,805

Transgender - 312

Disability - 1,402

Total - 52,028

Antisemitic (included in previous total) - 703

CAVEATS TO DATA

Two forces were unable to submit data for Quarter 2 of this reporting period due to technical issues.

All hate crimes are included and not additional to general crime (i.e. all these crimes are also recorded in the figures for the relevant crime types, for example, robbery, assault etc.) ...

http://www.acpo.police.uk/asp/policies/Data/084a_Recorded_Hate_Crime_-_January_to_December_2009.pdf

[TOP](#)

Holocaust

UK Parliamentary Question

Auschwitz Restoration Project

Mike Freer: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what plans he has to provide funding to the Auschwitz restoration project. [25640]

Mr Bellingham: The Auschwitz-Birkenau Foundation has been speaking to a number of countries and a significant amount has already been pledged. The Government support the long term preservation of Auschwitz-Birkenau and other historic sites. Ministers are currently considering how support might be offered and intend to make a decision shortly.

<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201011/cmhansrd/cm101129/text/101129w0004.htm#10112939000005>

[TOP](#)

UK Parliamentary Questions

Israel: Foreign Relations

Mr Slaughter: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what bilateral (a) agreements and (b) programmes exist between the UK and Israeli governments. [25636]

Alistair Burt: The UK-Israel bilateral relationship is based on deep connections between our two countries. From the Balfour Declaration to the recent bilateral film treaty, our relationship has a rich heritage, embracing a wide range of activities over many years. The UK and Israel share a long history of agreement and cooperation across political, economic, scientific, commercial and cultural areas both bilaterally and multilaterally. You can find details of UK Israel-agreements at the website of our embassy in Israel

<http://ukinisrael.fco.gov.uk/en/about-us/working-with-israel/uk-israel-relations/>.

The underlying objective of any of our programmes in Israel is to enrich the friendship between our two nations and to support efforts to achieve a two-state solution, that will see a viable Palestinian state existing in peace and security alongside Israel.

<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201011/cmhansrd/cm101129/text/101129w0004.htm#10112939000017>

Israel: Borders

Mr Amess: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what recent reports he has received on the effectiveness of the Security Fence in Israel in reducing the number of (a) suicide bombings and (b) other terrorist incidences in the State of Israel; and if he will make a statement. [26611]

Alistair Burt: There are no reliable statistics on the effectiveness of Israel's security barrier, which was commissioned following the 2nd intifada of 2000. Although we believe Israel has every right to defend itself, we believe that barriers are not the best way to achieve this in the 21st century. Where it is constructed outside of Green Line Israel, the Israeli separation barrier is illegal both according to international and Israeli law. It is worth noting that the barrier on some 40% of the intended route remains unbuilt. We judge that Prime Minister Fayyad's reform of the Palestinian security sector has played the most significant part in reducing the violence committed by Palestinian groups against targets in Israel. The best way of ensuring Israel's security is to come to a comprehensive, just and lasting peace agreement with its neighbours.

<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201011/cmhansrd/cm101129/text/101129w0004.htm#10112939000016>

Middle East: Armed Conflict

Mr Amess: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what recent assessment he has made of the extent of arms smuggling into Gaza; what discussions he has had with the government of (a) Israel and (b) Egypt on this issue since September 2010; and if he will make a statement. [25053]

Alistair Burt: Despite the efforts of Israel, Egypt and the international community, weapons continue to be smuggled into Gaza, which is a cause of great concern. We continue to work with the international community to support all efforts to implement the steps set out in UN Security Council Resolution 1860 of January 2009, including the prevention and interdiction of illicitly trafficked arms into Gaza and the alleviation of the humanitarian and economic situation.

Mr Clappison: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what recent steps he has taken to bring about the release of Gilad Shalit; and if he will make a statement. [27339]

Alistair Burt: My right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary recently met with Gilad Shalit's family while on his visit to the region, making clear that we continue to call for Hamas to unconditionally release Gilad Shalit and that we consider it utterly unacceptable that he is denied International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) access.

My right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary made the following statement on 25 June, the fourth anniversary of Shalit's capture:

"Today marks the fourth anniversary of the abduction of Israeli soldier, Staff Sergeant Gilad Shalit. My thoughts are with Gilad's parents today. I sincerely hope that they will soon be able to welcome their son home. The UK has long called for Gilad Shalit's immediate and unconditional release and we reiterate that call today. It is also vital that Hamas allows the International Committee of the Red Cross to visit Gilad immediately and ensure that he is in good health. His continued captivity without any ICRC access and with only very occasional, minimal contact with his family is utterly unacceptable. We continue to call on Hamas to renounce violence and take immediate and concrete steps towards the Quartet principles and to free Gilad Shalit without delay."

<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201011/cmhansrd/cm101129/text/101129w004.htm#10112939000020>

Palestinians: EU Aid

Mr Amess: To ask the Secretary of State for International Development how much the EU donated in aid to the Palestinian territories in each of the last three years; what conditions were applied to such aid; what recent discussions he has had with (a) the President of the European Council and (b) Cabinet colleagues on aid to the Palestinian territories; and if he will make a statement. [26705]

Mr Duncan: European Union (EU) financial commitments to the Occupied Palestinian Territories (OPTs) totalled €518.41 million in 2009, €497.76 million in 2008, and €563.28 million in 2007. EU assistance to the OPTs is funded and disbursed via a variety of instruments and mechanisms. These, together with the policy considerations and any conditions which apply to such funding, are set out on the OPTs pages of the EC website.

Ministers regularly discuss the Middle East peace process and UK support to the OPTs. All UK aid is currently under review. There have been no discussions between Department for International Development Ministers and the President of the European Council, Herman Van Rompuy, on aid to the OPTs. UK officials are in regular contact with their EU counterparts regarding their respective aid programmes.

<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201011/cmhansrd/cm101129/text/101129w006.htm#10113011000061>

Palestinians: Overseas Aid

Mr Amess: To ask the Secretary of State for International Development what steps he (a) is taking and (b) plans to take in the next 12 months to ensure that (i) financial and (ii) aid donations to the Palestinian territories are used for their intended purposes; and if he will make a statement. [26503]

Mr Duncan: UK aid to the Occupied Palestinian Territories is subject to the highest levels of scrutiny. We conduct regular fiduciary risk assessments to assess the risk of funds being misspent and identify appropriate safeguards. Our funding to the Palestinian Authority (PA) is administered through a World Bank managed trust fund, which strictly controls how funds are used and has stringent audit requirements. For aid other than financial assistance to the PA, we work with all partners on project design to ensure that UK funding will be spent most effectively. Our partners are United Nations agencies and reputable non-governmental organisations with proven track records in effective delivery.

In line with the Department for International Development's (DFID's) commitment

to enhance aid transparency and value for money, from January 2011 details of all spending over £500 will be published on the DFID website. Aid projects will also be subject to additional scrutiny by the Independent Commission for Aid Impact which will be set up by June 2011.

Mr Amess: To ask the Secretary of State for International Development what steps he (a) is taking and (b) plans to take to ensure the effective use by the Palestinian Authority of financial assistance from his Department; and if he will make a statement. [26612]

Mr Duncan: Financial assistance from the UK to the Palestinian Authority (PA) is delivered through a Trust Fund administered by the World Bank. This makes disbursements to the PA conditional on progress in reforms to improve the efficiency of spending and reduce their need for aid in the future. The Department for International Development also provides technical assistance to the PA Ministry of Finance to help them strengthen public financial management. In addition, the UK-PA Memorandum of Understanding makes our financial assistance conditional upon the PA meeting benchmarks for reducing poverty, respecting human rights and strengthening public financial management.

Mr Amess: To ask the Secretary of State for International Development how much his Department allocated in aid to the Palestinian territories in each of the last three years; whether any conditions were placed on the disbursement of such aid; and if he will make a statement. [26613]

Mr Duncan: UK bilateral aid in the Occupied Palestinian Territories (OPTs) reported in Statistics on International Development 2010 totalled £57.6 million in 2009-10, £41.3 million in 2008-09 and £45 million in 2007-08. This does not include our funding to the United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA) which operates in the OPTs as well as in Syria, Jordan and Lebanon. Funding to UNRWA was £24.9 million in 2009-10; £19 million in 2008-09; and £15.6 million in 2007-08.

This aid was delivered in line with general UK policy on conditionality, which is that our aid should be based on three partnership principles with partner governments: poverty reduction and meeting the Millennium Development Goals; respecting human rights and other international obligations; and strengthening financial management and accountability, and reducing the risk of funds being misused through weak administration or corruption. We do not use conditions to impose specific policy choices on recipient countries.

<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201011/cmhansrd/cm101129/text/101129w0006.htm#10113011000062>

United Nations

Despite easing of Gaza blockade, situation still desperate, UN official warns

Despite encouraging developments in Gaza since Israel eased its blockade in June, with shops now full of consumer goods, the economic, humanitarian, and physical situation is still extremely bleak, the top United Nations official there said today ...

Access is key for all development, he stressed, calling the blockade “illegal, inhumane and counter-productive,” and underscoring the need to move beyond the humanitarian and consumer areas to bringing in commercial supplies and opening up exports. ...

To read the full press release see

<http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=36910&Cr=gaza&Cr1=>

[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>

Notice of amendments

<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/ld201011/ldbills/026/amend/ml026-ir.htm>

Scottish Parliament

**** Certification of Death Bill**

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

Stage 1 evidence to the scrutiny committee

<http://www.scottish.parliament.uk/s3/committees/hs/or-10/he10-3402.htm#Col3710>

End of Life Assistance Bill

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

[TOP](#)

Other Relevant Information

Council of Europe

Desecrations of cemeteries are hate crimes that exacerbate intolerance

... In recent months, desecrations of Muslim, Jewish, Christian Orthodox and Catholic cemeteries have occurred in a number of European countries ... Ithe tomb of Irena Sendlerowa in a cemetery in Warsaw was desecrated and anti-Semitic words sprayed on it. ... Such acts of disrespect occur in almost all Council of Europe member states. These hate crimes are urgent human rights issues. ... The European Convention on Human Rights protects the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion. This right encompasses the protection of religious buildings and sites from unlawful damage. However, some national authorities see these acts as "low social harms" that need not receive priority in terms of investigation and prosecution. This is a wrong choice. Although the offenders might be difficult to identify and apprehend, they should not be allowed to gain a feeling of impunity. Without proper investigation and judicial repercussions, the risk of tension, fear and reprisals among communities is high. ...

To read the full press release see

<https://wcd.coe.int/wcd/ViewDoc.jsp?id=1713937&Site=DC&BackColorInternet=F5CA75&BackColorIntranet=F5CA75&BackColorLogged=A9BACE>

[TOP](#)

Consultations

** new or updated

**** closes in 2 days**

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_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](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

Improvements to Criminal Justice Statistics (closing date 18 February 2011)

<http://www.justice.gov.uk/consultations/statistics-cp171110.htm>

National statistics, published by the Department of Health about the experience of black and minority ethnic patients

http://www.dh.gov.uk/en/Consultations/Liveconsultations/DH_121762

Prevent Review (closing date not stated)

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

[TOP](#)

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