

# 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](#)

[Consultations](#)

## Home Affairs

### UK Parliamentary Questions

#### Schools: Religion

**John Mann:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education what assessment he has made of the effectiveness of his Department's Interfaith School Linking Network Project; when he next plans to renew the Project's performance; and if he will make a statement. [27545]

**Mr Gibb:** In 2009 DfE commissioned NFER to conduct an evaluation of the Schools Linking Network (SLN) programme. The evaluation involves in-depth case study visits with participating schools to collect evidence on the take up and delivery of the programme, taking into account the views of school leaders, teachers, and local authorities. The evaluation also includes a robust assessment of the impact of the programme on pupils' attitudes and behaviour. The evaluation covers school linking on the basis of racial, socio-economic, or faith differences, and does not specifically focus on the interfaith aspect of the School Linking Network's work. The Department currently has no plans to conduct a separate evaluation of Interfaith School Linking. A full report on the current evaluation findings will be published in early 2011.

<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201011/cmhansrd/cm101214/text/101214w0004.htm#1012151000038> .

#### Anti-Semitism

**Mr Amess:** To ask the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government what steps his Department has taken to combat anti-Semitism since July 2010; what assessment he has made of the effectiveness of these steps; and if he will make a statement. [29814]

**Andrew Stunell:** The Coalition Government will publish the three-year on response to the All Party Parliamentary Inquiry into Anti-Semitism on Wednesday December 15 which will highlight the effectiveness and steps we have taken to combat Anti-Semitism.

<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201011/cmhansrd/cm101214/text/101214w0002.htm#10121453000003>

### **Armed Forces: Anti-Semitism**

**Mr Amess:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what recent assessment he has made of the level of anti-Semitism in the armed forces; and if he will make a statement. [29789]

**Mr Robathan:** While no such specific assessment has been made, any prejudicial behaviour would come to light through the services' normal disciplinary procedures and no problem with anti-Semitism has come to light. A Rabbi to the armed forces has now been appointed and he confirms that there have been no instances where personnel have approached him regarding anti-Semitism.

<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201011/cmhansrd/cm101214/text/101214w0003.htm#10121457000061>

### **Judaism: Festivals and Special Occasions**

**Mr Amess:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will seek to publish in the *Official Report* the text of his Chanukah message to the Jewish community; and if he will make a statement. [29842]

**Alistair Burt:** Messages of greeting to different religious faiths by my right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary are published on the Foreign and Commonwealth Office website and on the websites of relevant embassies.

<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201011/cmhansrd/cm101214/text/101214w0001.htm#10121448000018>

## **Communities and Local Government**

### **Communities Minister announces new measures to tackle Antisemitism**

Communities Minister Andrew Stunell today confirmed Government action to address antisemitism, four years on from the All-Party Parliamentary Inquiry's report into antisemitism. The Government will today publish a report on the steps they've taken and the significant progress that's been made, including measures to increase security for Jewish faith schools in the state sector and improving the collection of data on antisemitic incidents.

Education Secretary Michael Gove last week confirmed up to £2 million to fund tighter security measures in Jewish faith schools in the state sector. This funding will ensure children and staff will have a school environment safe from antisemitic incidents.

Ministers have also secured agreement that all police forces must now record antisemitic hate crimes, with the first official statistics published last month. This greater transparency provides the clearest picture yet of where and when hate crimes are likely to occur, thereby making it easier to target security measures.

Mr Stunell said: "It's unacceptable that such a high number of antisemitic incidents are still happening. The measures announced today will increase protection for Jewish communities and improve our evidence base, making it easier to determine what further measures are needed. This Government is committed to increasing the number of hate crimes brought to justice, tackling antisemitism on university campuses, and challenging hate crime and extremism on the internet. We are working towards a fully integrated society in which everyone feels able to take part without fear of discrimination or attack. "Although we've taken some big steps forward today, there's no room for complacency. We will continue to take practical, effective action to stamp out antisemitism whenever and wherever it occurs."

Jon Benjamin of the Board of Deputies of British Jews said: "The Parliamentary Inquiry marked a watershed in the understanding of antisemitism as a real issue in Britain today, but was the beginning of a process that continues to this day. The ongoing work of the cross-departmental task force is hugely important in ensuring that the Inquiry's findings are addressed."

Maintaining this momentum, Ministers will host a seminar in the spring to ensure

continued progress on tackling hate crime including antisemitism on the internet.

To ensure the Holocaust is remembered, the Government has committed £750,000 for the 2011 commemoration and related educational activities and has pledged to fund the Lessons from Auschwitz Project (LfA) next year. ...

**To read the full press release see**

<http://www.communities.gov.uk/news/corporate/1798442>

**All-Party Inquiry into Antisemitism: Government response - Three years on progress report**

<http://www.communities.gov.uk/documents/communities/pdf/1798120.pdf>

## Wales Office

**Privy Council approval for Referendum on 3 March**

... The Privy Council this afternoon gave approval to the orders which pave the way for the vote to be held on March 3, fulfilling a commitment by the coalition government and following a request from Assembly Members.

**To read the full press release see**

<http://www.walesoffice.gov.uk/2010/12/15/privy-council-approval-for-referendum-on-3-march/>

[TOP](#)

## Holocaust

### Prime Minister's Questions

**Q14. [30554] Mike Freer (Finchley and Golders Green) (Con):** As we approach Holocaust memorial day, will the Prime Minister confirm that the Government will generously donate to the Auschwitz-Birkenau restoration fund?

**The Prime Minister:** I can do that. Auschwitz-Birkenau is a very powerful reminder of the ultimate consequences of intolerance, and it is only right that it should be preserved to bear witness to the deaths of the millions of victims who perished there and to act as a stark reminder of man's inhumanity to man. The director of the Auschwitz-Birkenau Foundation has recently visited the UK to discuss funding with a number of Government Departments, and we are also involved in EU discussions. I think everyone in this House knows how important it is to maintain these memorials. We obviously remember the holocaust, but we must also remember that there have been other acts of gross inhumanity more recently. We have to go on remembering to stop that happening again.

<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm/cmtoday/cmdebate/02.htm#d2e764>

### Foreign and Commonwealth Office

**Envoy on Post-Holocaust Issues submits report on Holocaust education in the UK**

The UK Government's Envoy on Post-Holocaust Issues, Sir Andrew Burns, has submitted a report on Holocaust education in Britain to an intergovernmental body of 27 member states and representatives of international organisations. ... The report dispels common myths and misconceptions about the status of and challenges to teaching about the Holocaust in the UK; provides research-informed and accurate detail of the wide ranging work of organisations in the field; and presents key challenges and opportunities

for developing and improving the quality of teaching and learning about the Holocaust in our schools. ...

**To read the full press release see**

<http://www.fco.gov.uk/en/news/latest-news/?view=News&id=398726682>

## **United Kingdom Country Report 2010:Task Force for International Cooperation on Holocaust Education, Remembrance and Research**

<http://www.fco.gov.uk/resources/en/pdf/global-issues/human-rights/holocaust-education>

### **Appendices 1 and 2**

<http://www.fco.gov.uk/resources/en/pdf/global-issues/human-rights/holocaust-education-appendices1and2>

### **Appendices 3and 4**

<http://www.fco.gov.uk/resources/en/pdf/global-issues/human-rights/holocaust-education-appendices3and4>

## **Department for Culture, Media and Sport**

### **Report of the Spoliation Advisory Panel in respect of an oil sketch by Sir Peter Paul Rubens, The Coronation of the Virgin, now in the possession of the Samuel Courtauld Trust**

The claimants are the descendants of Herbert Gutmann, a prominent German banker and art collector who sold The Coronation of the Virgin in 1934 to pay off business debts. The painting is now in the possession of the Samuel Courtauld Trust. The claimants submitted that some of Gutmann's debts were fabricated by the Nazis and others were the result of Nazi persecution in his business affairs.

The Spoliation Advisory Panel concluded that, whereas there was some evidence that Gutmann had suffered from anti-semitic persecution under the Nazi regime, it was only a subsidiary and causally insignificant factor in his decision to sell his collection. The Panel also found that he achieved a fair price for the sale of the painting.

The Panel concluded that the claimants' moral case was therefore weak and that the painting should not be restituted to the family. ...

<http://www.culture.gov.uk/publications/7625.aspx>

### **Report**

[http://www.culture.gov.uk/images/publications/Spoliation\\_HC\\_655\\_031210.pdf](http://www.culture.gov.uk/images/publications/Spoliation_HC_655_031210.pdf)

[TOP](#)

## **Israel**

### **UK Parliamentary Questions**

#### **West Bank**

**6. Michael Dugher (Barnsley East) (Lab):** What recent discussions he has had with the Secretary of State for International Development on economic development in the west bank; and if he will make a statement. [30264]

**The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs (Alistair Burt):** The Foreign Office and the Department for International Development work very closely on this issue. I last had a conversation with the Minister of State, Department for International Development, my right hon. Friend the Member for Rutland and Melton (Mr Duncan) just before his visit to the west

bank in late October. We are encouraged by World Bank reports that the economy of the west bank grew by 7.2% in 2009, and we hope that it is benefiting from the stability under Prime Minister Fayyad and the easing of restrictions on movement and access by the Israeli Government.

**Michael Dugher:** I thank the Minister for that reply. Does he agree that Israel's decision to allow exports from Gaza is welcome and positive? Should not that serve to encourage all sides to look for further progress, and the people of Gaza to reject Hamas?

**Alistair Burt:** I welcome the hon. Gentleman's comments. The development of the economy of the west bank in recent years has been in sharp contrast to the development of the economy of Gaza—for a whole series of reasons. We would welcome the further expansion of the economy in Gaza, which has to come from an easing of the economic blockade. On that, we welcome the decision announced by Israel last week further to ease the opportunity for exports from Gaza. The hon. Gentleman is absolutely right in saying that it is economic prosperity in both the west bank and Gaza that will make decisions on the future of the whole area that much easier.

**Mr James Clappison (Hertsmere) (Con):** Would the growing economic prosperity in the west bank not spread to Gaza and be even more impressive if there were full acceptance of the Quartet principles by Hamas and all parties in the middle east?

**Alistair Burt:** It is certainly true that the rejection by Hamas of the Quartet principles and its failure to denounce violence and to accept the state of Israel is holding back any possible negotiations. Also, the illegal holding of Gilad Shalit for a further length of time is contrary to all our interests, and he should be released as soon as possible. It all goes to show that further negotiation and talk is the best way to produce an overall settlement in the middle east, which is what we are all looking for.

**Mr Speaker:** I know we are focusing on economic development in this question.

**Richard Burden (Birmingham, Northfield) (Lab):** Given what the Minister has said about economic development in the west bank, does he share my concern that it is not in the interests of the economic development of that region to see the tightening rather than easing of movement restrictions in the Jordan valley and Palestinians and Bedouins being dispossessed in the Jordan valley?

**Alistair Burt:** The hon. Gentleman's long interest in the economic development of the west bank and all other areas is well noted; we spoke in the Westminster Hall debate the other day. The easing of all restrictions is in the interests of all. That is why we welcome it when we find it and are concerned if there is any greater restriction on access. The economic development of the whole of west bank area and of Gaza is a crucial part of the development of the Palestinian state. The establishment of that valid state, side by side with a secure and recognised Israel, is of interest to us all.

**Bob Blackman (Harrow East) (Con):** The threat to the economic developments on the west bank and in the rest of the region is, of course, dependent on the military position. Is the Minister aware of the rockets, bombs and anti-aircraft capability that Hamas has built up and does that not further threaten the security of the region?

**Alistair Burt:** The Government have already expressed concern about the build-up of arms in the area by Hezbollah and Hamas, none of which is conducive to what we all want: a negotiated peaceful settlement of the middle east process that is a secure and sovereign Israel side by side a viable Palestine.

**Stephen Twigg (Liverpool, West Derby) (Lab/Co-op):** When the Minister visits the middle east in the new year, will he press Israel further to reduce its restrictions on freedom of movement both for Palestinian people and for Palestinian goods? Free movement is crucial; so, too, is providing global opportunities for the Palestinians to trade with the rest of the world. In the Foreign Office business plan, UK Trade & Investment is developing its strategy; will the Minister ensure that UK trade with the west bank is absolutely part of that UKTI strategy?

**Alistair Burt:** Yes, indeed; I welcome the hon. Gentleman's comments. There was

a successful investment conference in the west bank just a few months ago, and it is in the interests of all that economic prosperity is encouraged on all sides. It is in the interests of Israel to make sure that there is as much access as possible—providing, of course, that its essential security interests are safeguarded. Wherever they have been threatened, as in Gaza, it remains necessary for the Israelis to control any materials that might detract from that. When it comes to economic development and movement, however, the hon. Gentleman is absolutely correct.

<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201011/cmhansrd/cm101214/debtext/101214-0001.htm#1012144600023>

### Topical Questions

**Mrs Louise Ellman (Liverpool, Riverside) (Lab/Co-op):** Does the Secretary of State agree that the success of joint projects between Israel and the Palestinians, such as the tourism initiative between Jenin and Galilee, exposes the absurdity of calls for boycotts of Israel?

**Alistair Burt:** Yes, the hon. Lady makes a fair point. It is not through boycotts that influence is exercised but through continuing co-operation. That is the best way forward to the negotiated settlement that we all want to see in the interests of all those in the middle east.

<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201011/cmhansrd/cm101214/debtext/101214-0001.htm#1012144600028>

### Middle East

**Priti Patel:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what recent assessment he has made of the state of relations between the UK and the countries of the middle east. [30278]

**Alistair Burt:** Strong relationships with Middle East countries are a priority for the Government. In particular we will continue to work with the United States and the Quartet as well as with our Arab partners to secure progress towards a two state solution to the Arab-Israeli conflict. We are also working to elevate our links with the Gulf, and will engage strongly with the new Iraqi Government when formed. We are co-operating strongly with international partners to support the Government of Yemen in its efforts to tackle al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula and to ensure urgent reform and development in Yemen.

<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201011/cmhansrd/cm101214/text/101214w0001.htm#1012144800011>

### Gaza Aid Flotilla

**Rosie Cooper:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what recent discussions he has had with his Israeli counterpart on the progress of Israel's investigations into the deaths aboard the Gaza aid flotilla. [30279]

**Alistair Burt:** The establishment of an independent Israeli Commission of inquiry into the Gaza flotilla tragedy was an important step forward. My officials are in regular contact with the Israeli authorities on this issue. As we have made clear it is important that the Commission is able to proceed swiftly, transparently and rigorously, with access to the full evidence available. We have also been in touch with the Commission regarding British witnesses giving testimony.

<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201011/cmhansrd/cm101214/text/101214w0001.htm#1012144800012>

## UK Parliament Early Day Motion

**Ian Lavery (1195) Detention of Palestinian children in Israel** - That this House notes with grave concern that every year Israel prosecutes an average of 700 Palestinian children from the occupied West Bank in military courts; further notes that children as young as 12 are brought to these courts in shackles and cuffs and denied a fair trial, that most of these children are charged on the basis of confessions under interrogation, that 32 per cent. of all confessions are written in Hebrew, a language they do not understand; further notes that frequently they only meet their lawyers for the first time in court, that there are widespread and persistent allegations of torture and abuse against Palestinian children; further notes that Israel, whilst considering children to be anyone under the age of 18 in its own system, treats Palestinians as adults from the age of 16 in contravention of the International Convention of the Rights of the Child; further notes that whilst Israeli settler children in the same area have to see a judge within 24 hours, Palestinians may not see a judge for eight days; believes that this represents a dual legal system based on race and a grave and serious breach of international law; further notes that according to the Israeli human rights group, B'tselem, in Jerusalem, Palestinian children under 12 have been arrested including a five-year old; and calls on the Government to demand immediate action from the Israeli government to bring its behaviour in line with international law.

<http://edmi.parliament.uk/EDMi/EDMDetails.aspx?EDMID=42207&SESSION=905>

## Foreign and Commonwealth Office

### **EU supports Palestinian Statehood**

... Expressing their regret that Israel had not extended the moratorium on settlement construction, European Governments reiterated their view on the key parameters, principles and issues for the resolution of the Arab-Israeli conflict, stating “the EU will not recognize any changes to the pre-1967 borders, including with regard to Jerusalem, other than those agreed by the parties. ...

The Council underlined the EU’s “readiness, when appropriate, to recognize a Palestinian state” and its welcome of the World Bank’s assessment that “if the Palestinian Authority maintains its current performance in institution building and delivery of public services, it is well positioned for the establishment of a State at any point in the near future”.

Council members also focused on the situation in Gaza, stating in its formal conclusion that “the EU remains extremely concerned by the prevailing situation” and calling for the “immediate, sustained and unconditional opening of crossings for the flow of humanitarian aid, commercial goods and persons to and from Gaza.” ...

The Council also called on those holding the abducted Israeli soldier Gilad Shalit to release him without delay and for a complete stop of rocket attacks at Israel.

**To read the full press release see**

<http://www.fco.gov.uk/en/news/latest-news/?view=News&id=405382682>

## United Nations

### **Senior UN official calls for substantive mediation in Middle East peace efforts**

Substantive third-party mediation between Israel and the Palestinians is crucial now that direct talks have been suspended after Israel’s failure to freeze settlements in occupied territory, a senior United Nations official said today, citing United States-led indirect negotiations. ...

“Israel needs to roll back measures of occupation as the Palestinian Authority rolls out the basis for statehood,” he added, noting that the PA had made steady progress in implementing its reform programme, maintaining financial discipline and upholding security in areas it controls.

Highlighting the need to avoid provocations, Mr. Serry voiced concern at Israel's demolition of Palestinian-owned structures in East Jerusalem and the "regrettable" study under the auspices of the PA Information Ministry, since removed from its website, denying the significance of the Western Wall in the Old City of Jerusalem to Jews, for whom it is a remnant of the 2,000-year-old second temple.

"I stress the need for figures of political and religious authority on both sides to refrain from denial or denigration of the other's heritage, rights and dignity," he said.

On Gaza, while voicing concern at recent volatility and closure measures, he cited positive developments such as Israel's decision to allow exports out and approval for UN agencies to complete construction projects worth \$110 million in the Strip, which was devastated by the offensive that Israel said it launched two years ago to end rocket fire against it.

"... It is essential that calm be maintained," he added, noting that militant groups fired five rockets and 20 mortars into Israel over the past month while Israeli launched four air strikes and 12 incursions. ...

**To read the full press release see**

<http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=37065&Cr=palestin&Cr1=>

[TOP](#)

## Relevant Legislation \*\* New or updated

### UK Parliament

#### **Daylight Saving Bill**

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

Ping Pong, House of Commons

<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201011/cmhansrd/cm101214/debtext/101214-0003.htm#10121451000003>

#### **Localism Bill**

<http://services.parliament.uk/bills/2010-11/localism.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/su026-v.htm>

#### **Police Reform and Social Responsibility Bill**

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

### Scottish Parliament

#### **Certification of Death Bill**

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

[TOP](#)

## Consultations

\*\* new or updated

**\*\* closes in 2 days**

### **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>

**\*\* closes in 2 days**

### **Prevent Review** (closes 17 December 2010)

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

### **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](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** (closes 18 February 2011)

[http://www.dh.gov.uk/en/Consultations/Liveconsultations/DH\\_121762](http://www.dh.gov.uk/en/Consultations/Liveconsultations/DH_121762)

[TOP](#)

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