

Political Affairs Brief

A daily summary of political events affecting the Jewish Community

Scottish Council of Jewish Communities

SCoJeC

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Israel

UK Parliamentary Questions

Israel

Lord Hylton: To ask Her Majesty's Government what representations they are making to the government of Israel about their recent approval of 625 new houses in Pisgat Zeev, in East Jerusalem.[HL5024]

The Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office (Lord Howell of Guildford): It is the Government's long-standing view that settlements are illegal under international law and an obstacle to peace. We have made our views clear to the Government of Israel. We support the EU Foreign Affairs Council conclusions of 13 December 2010 which underline these points.

Baroness Tonge: To ask Her Majesty's Government what discussions they have had with the Government of the United States concerning their decision not to press the Government of Israel to suspend settlement building in the occupied territories.[HL5065]

Lord Howell of Guildford: My right honourable friend the Foreign Secretary made our position clear in his Statement of 9 December in which he said: "I am disappointed that Israel has not renewed the freeze on settlement construction and that peace talks are currently on hold. It is Britain's long-standing view that settlements are illegal under international law and an obstacle to peace.

"I spoke to US Envoy Senator Mitchell today to underline Britain's support for work to find a way forward. The leadership of the United States remains vital.

"There is an urgent need for progress to secure a two-state solution, based on 1967 borders, with Jerusalem as the future capital of two states and with a fair settlement for refugees. This is important for Israelis, for Palestinians and for the international community, including the UK.

We will continue to work with the United States, the parties to the conflict and with our EU and UN partners to achieve a two state solution. In addition, we will continue to press for an end to all settlement activity".

Lord Hylton: To ask Her Majesty's Government whether they will respond to the Israeli peace initiative as recently outlined by Mr Yuval Rabin.[HL5133]

Lord Howell of Guildford: We agree with the main elements of Mr Rabin's proposal: that there is an urgent need to secure a two-state solution, based on 1967 borders, with Jerusalem as the future capital of two states and with a fair settlement for refugees. My right honourable friend the Foreign Secretary made this clear in his public statement on 9 December 2010, underlining his disappointment at Israel's failure to renew the settlements moratorium.

The EU's Foreign Affairs Council (FAC) also underlined these points on 13 December, making clear that "the EU will not recognise any changes to 1967

borders, including with regard to Jerusalem, other than those agreed by the parties". The EU's FAC made clear that this could include agreed territorial swaps.

<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/ld201011/ldhansrd/text/101221w0001.htm#10122141000737>

Israel and Palestine

Lord Hylton: To ask Her Majesty's Government whether they are making representations to the Government of Israel about (a) the arrest on or about 2 December of Mr Nayif al-Rujut, an elected member of the Palestinian National Assembly, and (b) the treatment during interrogations of Palestinian youths suspected of stone throwing.[HL5025]

The Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office (Lord Howell of Guildford): Our embassy in Tel Aviv discusses concerns regarding the treatment of all Palestinian prisoners with the Government of Israel on a regular basis, underlining our view on the need for immediate action to ensure all cases are reviewed by a court in accordance with fair procedures, and that rights, particularly to a fair trial and family visits, are upheld. We have made clear our concerns regarding administrative detention.

In this context, we also raise concerns with the Israeli Government about the application of due process and the treatment of Palestinian detainees, where Palestinian children are involved. I would refer my noble Friend to the Hansard record of the Westminster Hall Adjournment Debate, Official Report 7 Dec 2010, column 23-44WH, for further detail.

We are aware of the recent reports documenting alleged abuse of Palestinian children by Israeli security forces and are currently looking into these allegations.

Lord Hylton: To ask Her Majesty's Government what is their assessment of allegations that Israel is denying water to Palestinian growers and farmers in the Jordan Valley, and attempting to sever the Jordan Valley from the West Bank by means including demolition of houses.[HL5134]

Lord Howell of Guildford: Israel's occupation of the West Bank has a considerable negative effect on the daily lives of Palestinians. One of the ways in which this most clearly manifests itself is through the construction of settlements. As the EU's Foreign Affairs Council made clear on 13 December 2010, settlements are illegal under international law and an obstacle to peace.

The Government of Israel's policy of connecting settlements to already scarce water supplies and restricting Palestinian movement and access in occupied territory, including establishing a secondary road system, makes matters worse. It will be important to ensure a just solution on shared water resources as part of a final status agreement.

The UK Government continue to lobby hard on house demolitions and evictions in the Occupied Palestinian Territories. We have made clear to the Israeli Government that, subject to limited exceptions, house demolitions are in breach of Article 53 of the Fourth Geneva Convention.

Lord Dykes: To ask Her Majesty's Government what representations they have received from members of the public concerning the Government of the United States' statement that they are unable to stop Israeli settlement building in Palestinian territory.[HL5159]

Lord Howell of Guildford: The Government receive a significant amount of correspondence from members of the public on the Middle East peace process, including on developments in recent weeks.

As my right honourable friend the Foreign Secretary made clear in his public statement on 9 December 2010, we are disappointed that Israel has not renewed the freeze on settlement construction and that peace talks are currently on hold. It is Britain's long-standing view that settlements are illegal under international law and an obstacle to peace. The Foreign Secretary spoke to US

Envoy Senator Mitchell on 8 December to underline Britain's support for work to find a way forward. The leadership of the United States remains vital.

We believe that there is an urgent need for progress to secure a two-state solution, based on 1967 borders, with Jerusalem as the future capital of two states and with a fair settlement for refugees. This is important for Israelis, for Palestinians and for the international community including the UK.

We will continue to work with the United States, the parties to the conflict and with our EU and UN partners to achieve a two state solution. In addition, we will continue to press for an end to all settlement activity.

<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/ld201011/ldhansrd/text/101221w0001.htm#10122141000738>

Palestinians: Economic Situation

Mr Amess: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what recent reports he has received on levels of (a) financial and (b) security support provided to the West Bank by the government of Israel; and if he will make a statement. [31709]

Mr Duncan: I have been asked to reply.

The Government of Israel do not provide financial assistance to the Palestinian Authority (PA) or to projects which benefit Palestinians in the west bank. They do, however, transfer to the PA custom clearance revenues which they collect on behalf of the PA. According to the Government of Israel's report to the Ad Hoc Liaison Committee meeting of 21 September 2010, it transferred 2,299 million New Israeli Shekels (NIS) in the first half of 2010. The Government of Israel also adopt a number of policies which result in financial benefit to Israeli settlements in the west bank.

The Israeli Defense Force (IDF) is deployed across the West Bank in Area C (where Israel retains full security control) and Area B (which is under joint Palestinian and Israeli control). Area A is controlled by the Palestinian Security Forces (PSE). We assess that security in the west bank has benefited from improved cooperation between the PSF and IDF, although Israeli movement and access restrictions continue to act as a constraint on Palestinian economic growth.

Mr Amess: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what recent reports he has received on financial contributions from Israel to the Palestinian Authority; and if he will make a statement. [31710]

Mr Duncan: I have been asked to reply.

The Government of Israel do not provide financial assistance to the Palestinian Authority (PA). They do, however, transfer to the PA customs clearance revenues which they collect on the PA's behalf. According to the Government of Israel's report to the Ad Hoc Liaison Committee meeting of 21 September, it transferred 2,299 million New Israeli Shekels (NIS) in the first half of 2010.

Mr Amess: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what recent reports he has received on the outcomes of international donor conferences on funding for the West Bank; and if he will make a statement. [31711]

Mr Duncan: I have been asked to reply.

The Government are not aware of any recent international donor conferences on providing funding for the west bank. An international donor conference for the Palestinian Territories was last held in Paris in December 2007. At this conference delegations from 87 countries and international organisations pledged \$7.4 billion over three years to support Palestinian institution building and economic recovery, and for humanitarian assistance.

<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201011/cmhansrd/cm101221/text/101221w0001.htm#10122148000020>

Palestinians: Overseas Aid

Mr Amess: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what economic assistance his Department (a) has provided in the last five years and (b) plans to provide to the Palestinian authorities in Gaza; and if he will make a statement. [31719]

Mr Duncan: I have been asked to reply.

The UK does not provide any support, either directly or indirectly, to the de facto authorities in Gaza, as under European Union and British legislation it is illegal to provide financial assistance to Hamas. We provide budget support to the Palestinian Authority, via a World Bank Trust Fund, in order to support basic services and pay the salaries of public sector workers in both Gaza and the west bank. From 2006-08, the UK provided funding to pay public sector worker salaries through two European Union programmes known as the Temporary International Mechanism (TIM) and PEGASE. As this funding is for the whole of the Occupied Palestinian Territories, it is not possible to disaggregate funding specific to Gaza. The following table lays out total UK funding for these programmes.

<i>Calendar year</i>	<i>Programme</i>	<i>Amount (£ million)</i>
2010	World Bank Trust Fund	30
2009	World Bank Trust Fund	30
2008	World Bank Trust Fund	35
	PEGASE	15.45
2007	TIM	3
2006	TIM	11.875

<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201011/cmhansrd/cm101221/text/101221w0001.htm#10122148000021>

Gaza

Lord Hylton: To ask Her Majesty's Government why the full United Nations Relief and Works Agency programme for building works in Gaza cannot be started, given that funds are available to pay for it.[HL4970]

Baroness Verma: According to the UN Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA) \$43 million worth of Gaza reconstruction projects have now been approved by Israel, out of \$190 million submitted. It is for UNRWA to set its priorities, and to liaise with Israel for project approval and entry of the necessary reconstruction materials.

Lord Hylton: To ask Her Majesty's Government, further to the Written Answer by Baroness Verma on 25 November (WA 383) and given that water supplies and sewage are essential to public health, whether they will seek assurances from the Government of Israel on those matters in so far as they affect Gaza and the West Bank.[HL5026]

Baroness Verma: The UK Government recognise the importance of water supplies and sewage to public health, but have no plans to seek such assurances, as the lead on these issues lies with the Emergency Water, Sanitation and Hygiene group (EWASH). EWASH co-ordinates project management among almost 30 donors, agencies and organisations working on water and sanitation projects in both the West Bank and Gaza, and also ensures that the donor community's messages to the appropriate Israeli authorities on these issues are coherent and consistent.

Lord Hylton: To ask Her Majesty's Government what is their assessment of the report by 21 non-governmental organisations Dashed Hopes: Continuation of the Gaza Blockade.[HL5135]

Baroness Verma: The Government are extremely concerned about the situation in Gaza, and agree with the report that, despite some progress following Israel's

June announcement on easing of movement and access restrictions, changes on the ground have so far been limited and insufficient. The UK reiterates the need for immediate, sustained and unconditional opening of the crossings for the flow of humanitarian aid, commercial goods and people to and from Gaza.

Lord Hylton: To ask Her Majesty's Government, further to the answers by Baroness Verma on 13 December (Official Report, cols. 395-7), what assessment they have made of (a) whether, and (b) when, the United Nations Relief and Works Agency will receive the building materials necessary for its minimum building programme.[HL5333]

Baroness Verma: The UK Government have not made such an assessment. The UN Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA) are in regular contact with the Israeli authorities on these matters and will be able to provide information on whether and when they expect to receive the construction materials needed for their projects. The UK and EU continue to call on the Government of Israel to allow fully implement measures they announced in June to ease movement and access restrictions on Gaza.

<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/ld201011/ldhansrd/text/101221w0001.htm#10122141000721>

UK Parliament Ministerial Statement

General Affairs Council and Foreign Affairs Council

The Minister for Europe (Mr David Lidington): ... A provisional report of the meeting and adopted conclusions can be found at:

<http://www.consilium.europa.eu/uedocs/cmsdata/docs/pressdata/EN/foraff/118456.pdf>

... *Middle East Peace Process*

The Foreign Secretary welcomed the adoption of the conclusions, particularly the readiness of the EU to assist in the reconstruction and economic recovery of Gaza.

Baroness Ashton acknowledged frustrations over the lack of progress with the peace process, but noted the EU's collective commitment to continue supporting US-led efforts.

To read the full statement see

<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201011/cmhansrd/cm101221/wmstext/101221m0001.htm#10122138000014>

European Commission

Commission approves first package of €100 million in support to the Palestinian people in 2011

The European Commission decided today to provide an initial financial package worth €100 million for the Occupied Palestinian Territory under the 2011 budget.

EU High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy/Vice-President of the European Commission Catherine Ashton stated: "This decision is a sign of the strong political and financial commitment of the European Union to the Palestinian Authority and to Prime Minister Fayyad's leadership in building a democratic and viable Palestinian state. Palestinian statehood is critical for any peaceful, workable and lasting solution to the conflict". ...

Today's decision, by which the EU fulfils by far the pledges made at the Paris Donors' Conference in December 2007, will help the Palestinian Authority to continue providing essential public services across all the occupied Palestinian territory. Of today's announced package, €60 million will be channelled through the EU's assistance mechanism for the Occupied Palestinian Territory, PEGASE¹, which was launched in February 2008. These funds will help the PA to cover wages and pensions for essential civilian workers (particularly medical and teaching staff). ... The remaining €40 million will be allocated to the core budget of UNRWA, the United Nations Relief and Works

Agency. UNWRA provides basic health, education and social safety net services for a refugee population of 4.7 million people since 1949. The EU and its Member States are the biggest donors to UNRWA. ...

To read the full press release see

<http://europa.eu/rapid/pressReleasesAction.do?reference=IP/10/1771&format=HTML&aged=0&language=EN&quiLanguage=en>

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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>

House of Lords consideration of Commons Reason

<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/ld201011/ldhansrd/text/101221-0001.htm#10122142000802>

and

<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/ld201011/ldhansrd/text/101221-0002.htm#10122146000169>

Royal Assent

<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201011/cmhansrd/cm101221/debtext/101221-0004.htm#10122162000004>

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-virb.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>

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Consultations

** new or updated

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

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

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