

Political Affairs Brief

A daily summary of political events affecting the Jewish Community

Scottish Council of Jewish Communities

SCoJeC

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Cabinet Office

Government launches one-stop shop for data

A major new website has been launched to the public which gives anyone who wants to use it unprecedented and free access to government data in one place. The site called data.gov.uk contains more than 2500 sets of data from across government. All of the data is non-personal and in a format that can be reused by any individual or business to create innovative new software tools, such as applications about house prices, local amenities and services, or access to local hospitals. ... So that people can continue to create new products in the future, data.gov.uk will be using a new, open licence, which allows government-owned data to be freely reused by anybody. ...

To read the full press release see

http://www.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/newsroom/news_releases/2010/100121-data.aspx

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Israel

UK Parliamentary Questions

Israel

Dr. Starkey: To ask the Solicitor-General who chose the subject of the lecture by the Attorney-General at the Hebrew University, Jerusalem, on 5 January 2010. [311937]

The Solicitor-General: The subject for the lecture was chosen by the Attorney-General.

<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm200910/cmhansrd/cm100120/text/100120w003.htm#10012076000048>

Palestinians: International Assistance

Dr. Starkey: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what recent reports he has received on the proportion of essential supplies which have been able to enter Gaza through Israeli-controlled checkpoints; and if he will make a statement. [311489]

Mr. Ivan Lewis: The UK continues to be concerned by the current humanitarian situation in Gaza. According to a recent UN report, the weekly total of truckloads of goods entering Gaza through Israeli checkpoints for the week of 10-16 January 2010 was 534. This constitutes less than 23 per cent. of the average number of

truckloads entering Gaza per week pre-2007. We are unable to establish the total number of truckloads actually attempting to enter Gaza, but it is clear that imported truckloads remain below needs. We continue to press the Israeli authorities to lessen restrictions on access into Gaza and allow the legitimate passage of humanitarian aid, reconstruction materials, trade goods, and people.

Mr. Soames: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether it is the policy of the Government that linking access for aid and reconstruction materials to Hamas's refusal to renounce violence constitutes collective punishment of the people of Gaza within the meaning of the Fourth Geneva Convention; and if he will make a statement. [311586]

Mr. Ivan Lewis: We have serious concerns about the Israeli restrictions on Gaza and the impact they have on the lives of Gazans. Although there is no permanent physical Israeli presence in Gaza, given the significant control that Israel has over Gaza's borders, airspace and territorial waters, Israel retains obligations under the Fourth Geneva Convention as an occupying power. The Fourth Geneva Convention is clear that an occupying power must co-operate in allowing the passage and distribution of relief consignments. The restrictions currently imposed on the passage of relief supplies are, as we see it, a disproportionate response to the security threat.

The extent of Israeli restrictions, and the threat to Israel from militants in Gaza, varies constantly. Rather than focus on whether the restrictions at any given time amount to collective punishment, we have consistently pressed the Israeli Government to comply with their obligations under international law and allow passage of relief supplies.

<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm200910/cmhansrd/cm100120/text/100120w0003.htm#10012076000044>

Palestinians: Journalism

Mr. Soames: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what assessment he has made of the effects of restrictions on access into Gaza via Israel for representatives of the international media; and if he will make a statement. [311404]

Mr. Ivan Lewis: The Foreign and Commonwealth Office's travel advice clearly states that we advise against all travel to Gaza. We are aware that a number of British journalists and aid workers visit Gaza, but we have not facilitated their entry via Israel.

<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm200910/cmhansrd/cm100120/text/100120w0003.htm#10012076000045>

War Crimes

Lord Dykes: To ask Her Majesty's Government under what circumstances they intervene or comment on cases in which a warrant has been issued by a court of the United Kingdom for the arrest of former ministers or officials of foreign states for alleged war crimes. [HL922]

The Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office (Baroness Kinnock of Holyhead): The Government fully respect the independence of the courts of the United Kingdom. In accordance with standard practice, the Government will provide to the courts information which they request for the purposes of the consideration of a case.

Arrest warrants can however, be sought and issued without any prior knowledge or advice by a prosecutor. This is an unusual feature of the legal system in England and Wales. The Government are concerned about the impact that the issue of a warrant in such circumstances may have on the international relations of the United Kingdom. It is important that the UK, as a permanent member of the Security Council, is able to talk to all leaders from around the world who are involved in conflicts and disputes, including current and former Ministers and officials. That is not in contradiction to our determination to uphold our

responsibilities for so-called universal jurisdiction. We share the cross-party consensus to abide fully by our obligations to uphold international law on war crimes, which we did in 2005 in respect of an Afghan warlord.

<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/ld200910/ldhansrd/text/100120w0004.htm#10012079000337>

United Nations

Ongoing Israeli blockade jeopardizing health of over 1 million Gazans, UN warns

United Nations agencies and their non-governmental partners today warned of the impact of the Israeli blockade on Gaza's population and on health services, and repeated their call for an immediate opening of the border crossings.

"The continuing closure of the Gaza Strip is undermining the functioning of the health care system and putting at risk the health of 1.4 million people in Gaza," Max Gaylard, the UN Humanitarian Coordinator for the occupied Palestinian territory, said in a joint statement with the Association of International Development Agencies.

Hospitals and primary care facilities, damaged during the fighting in Gaza one year ago, have not been rebuilt because construction materials are not allowed into the territory owing to the ongoing blockade, which is now in its third year. ...

To read the full press release see

<http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=33537&Cr=palestin&Cr1=>

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Relevant Legislation ** New or updated

UK Parliament

**** Children, Schools and Families Bill**

<http://services.parliament.uk/bills/2009-10/childrenschoolsandfamilies.html>

Public Bill Committee amendments

<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm200910/cmbills/008/amend/psc0082101m.71-77.html>

Constitutional Reform and Governance Bill

<http://services.parliament.uk/bills/2009-10/constitutionalreformandgovernance.html>

**** Crime and Security Bill**

<http://services.parliament.uk/bills/2009-10/crimeandsecurity.html>

Notice of amendments

<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm200910/cmbills/003/amend/psc003200110a.1.html>

**** Equality Bill**

<http://services.parliament.uk/bills/2009-10/equality.html>

amendments to be moved in Committee: supplement to the third marshalled list

<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/ld200910/ldbills/020/amend/su020-iiic.htm>

**** Flood and Water Management Bill**

<http://services.parliament.uk/bills/2009-10/floodandwatermanagement.html>

Public Bill Committee amendments

<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm200910/cmbills/009/amend/psc0092101m.183-189.html>

Scottish Parliament

**** End of Life Assistance Bill**

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

Bill as introduced

<http://www.scottish.parliament.uk/s3/bills/38-EndLifeAssist/b38s3-introd.pdf>

Explanatory Notes

<http://www.scottish.parliament.uk/s3/bills/38-EndLifeAssist/b38s3-introd-en.pdf>

Policy Memorandum

<http://www.scottish.parliament.uk/s3/bills/38-EndLifeAssist/b38s3-introd-pm.pdf>

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Consultations

** new or updated

Protection of Vulnerable Groups Implementation: Consultation on Significant Draft Secondary Legislation, Guidance and Regulatory Impact Assessment (Scotland only) (closes 2 February 2009)

<http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Topics/People/Young-People/children-families/pvglegislation/Consultation09>

Communities and Local Government: Creating a Single Equality Scheme for 2010 – 2013 (closes 28 February 2010)

<http://www.communities.gov.uk/documents/corporate/pdf/987402.pdf>

Proposal to amend the Licensing Act 2003 to simplify the procedures for Licensing Statements; Interim Authority Notices; and Temporary Event Notices (closes 9 February 2010)

http://www.culture.gov.uk/reference_library/consultations/6498.aspx

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