

Political Affairs Brief

A daily summary of political events affecting the Jewish Community

Scottish Council of Jewish Communities

SCoJeC

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Home Affairs

Communities and Local Government

John Denham announces £1million fund to help faith groups have their voices heard

Communities Secretary John Denham today unveiled a £1m fund to help faith groups get their voices heard by Government and public bodies and help play their part delivering public services. John Denham praised faith groups for their hard work and commitment to their local communities and called on local authorities to ignore the myths about faith communities and create a level playing field for faith groups providing publicly funded services. He also announced a £50,000 prize to reward faith groups for innovative projects in their local communities. ...

£1m Faith Leadership in Government Fund

National faith based organisations are invited to bid for a share of £1m funding that help them develop a bigger voice and strengthen their capacity to challenge and engage Government. The money is focused on making sure these organisations have the tools they need to do the job and could be used for activities including training in fundraising.

£50,000 Innovation in Faith-Based Social Action Prize

The prize is being developed to help publicise and reward faith based projects which have not yet received the recognition they deserve. Prizes will be awarded to faith projects who are finding new ways to meet local problems, bring people together and meet the needs of local communities

New 'myth busting' guidance for local government on working with faith groups

At times there has been a reluctance or confusion on the part of some local authorities to commission services from faith based groups and there are concerns amongst many groups and organisations including faith groups that they are disadvantaged when trying to access funding. It is clear that greater clarity is needed if local authorities and faith groups are going to have confidence they need to work together. Faith-based bodies are entitled, like any other suitably qualified bodies, to be awarded funding to deliver public services. ...

To read the full press release see

<http://www.communities.gov.uk/news/corporate/1507453>

John Denham speech to the Faith and Social Action Conference

<http://www.communities.gov.uk/speeches/corporate/faithsocialaction>

Faith Leadership in Government Fund

The fund will be able to make available packages of up to £30,000 to national organisations that can show a track record of representing and having real roots in their communities, of working with government, and of having a real contribution to make. Applications will be through open competition, and bidding will open in summer 2010. ... Expressions of interest should be sent to cohesion@communities.gsi.gov.uk

Faith prize

- The *Innovation in Faith-based Social Action Prize* - to be formally opened in the summer - aims to reward innovation in faith-based service delivery; it will make awards in five different categories
- independent projects (i.e. not already receiving public funding)
- projects delivered with funding support from a local authority
- advocacy and community development projects;
- multi faith projects
- youth projects

The total value of the prize fund is £50,000. This includes a top prize of £15,000 for the most innovative social action project, and three runners up prizes of £5000. There will also be four prizes of £1000 for the best examples in each of the five different categories totalling £20,000.

Projects can nominate themselves, or be nominated by others. Expressions of interest should be sent to InnovationPrize@communities.gsi.gov.uk.

Ensuring a level playing field: funding faith-based organisations to provide publicly funded services

<http://www.communities.gov.uk/documents/communities/pdf/15073411.pdf>

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Israel

UK Parliamentary Questions

Israel

Lord Dykes: To ask Her Majesty's Government whether they will instigate through the European Union and the Middle East quartet a review of the trade agreement with Israel, following recent developments there. [HL2796]

The Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office (Baroness Kinnock of Holyhead): The EU regularly takes stock of its association agreement with Israel during regular EU/Israel Association Councils. The EU Foreign Affairs Council last reaffirmed the importance of the EU's relationship with Israel on 8 December 2009. The Foreign Affairs Council also reiterated its position on upgrading this relationship, which is that any upgrade must be set against the context of our shared interests and objectives, including progress on the Middle East peace process. My right honourable friend the Foreign Secretary made this clear during his meeting with his counterpart Avigdor Lieberman on 22 February 2010.

<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/ld200910/ldhansrd/text/100317w0003.htm#10031748000905>

Israel and Palestine

Lord Hylton: To ask Her Majesty's Government what representations they have made to the Government of Israel about the effects on the health, education, work, and social and religious life of the Palestinian population of the present position of the West Bank barrier and those caused by 578 closure obstacles (as reported by the United Nations Office for

the Co-ordination of Humanitarian Affairs); and what responses they have received. [HL2644]

Lord Brett: There has been some progress on Palestinian social and economic development in the West Bank as a result of the Palestinian Authority's efforts to reform its institutions and build a stable economy. And we welcome moves by the Israeli Government to reduce the number of roadblocks and checkpoints, which has also been a contributing factor.

However, we still remain concerned that the number of obstacles and the route of the Israeli security barrier continues to have a detrimental impact on socio-economic conditions and bring unnecessary suffering to ordinary Palestinians. It also undermines the territorial contiguity of the West Bank, reducing the viability of a future Palestinian state.

We continue to press the Israeli Government to reduce the number of checkpoints and ensure the barrier does not stand on occupied land.

<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/ld200910/ldhansrd/text/100317w0003.htm#10031748000906>

Palestine

Lord Hylton: To ask Her Majesty's Government what were the conclusions of the assessment by the EU Police Mission in the Palestinian Territories (EUPOL COPPS) of the criminal justice system run by the Palestinian Authority; and how the EU is providing support or training for the Palestinian prison service. [HL2700]

Lord Brett: The assessment report concluded that improvement is needed in all areas; in prosecution for example more than 60 per cent of the prosecutors are inexperienced, have been employed in the past year and still need additional basic training and supervision. In the courts the non-appearance of accused and witnesses results in numerous adjournments that contribute to the build-up of pending cases. In the penitentiary there is a lack of resources committed to rehabilitating and resocialising prisoners, and a serious lack of rules and regulations governing the running of detention facilities.

The report led to an Action Plan for EU Police Mission for the Palestinian Territories (EUPOL COPPS) Rule of Law section in partnership with Palestinian stakeholders and in co-ordination with international actors. EUPOL COPPS has two penitentiary experts providing technical advice to the UN Office of Drugs and Crime Palestinian prison reform programme, which is funded by the Government of Canada. It also takes a co-ordinating role within the wider donor community bringing together the Dutch programme to refurbish seven West Bank detention centres and to build a new prison in Jericho, the European Community project to build a new prison in Nablus and the three-year programme to provide prison training and equipment, which is being funded by the US International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Agency.

<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/ld200910/ldhansrd/text/100317w0004.htm#10031748000915>

Entry Clearances: Palestinians

Harry Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what representations he has received on his Department's decision not to issue visas to Palestinian olive oil producers to visit the UK during Fairtrade Fortnight; and if he will make a statement. [320376]

Mr. Woolas: I have received eight representations from Members of Parliament.

The decision to refuse entry clearance to the three Palestinian olive oil producers has been overturned after consideration by the ECO of the information provided, and the Visa Section in Amman is in the process of contacting the applicants.

<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm200910/cmhansrd/cm100317/text/100317w0024.htm#10031769000015>

Egypt: Rafah Crossing

Lord Hylton: To ask Her Majesty's Government who will decide whether the European Union Border Assistance Mission in Rafah can resume work at the crossing into Gaza; and what criteria will be used to make that decision. [HL2701]

The Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office (Baroness Kinnock of Holyhead): The protocol establishing the EU Border Assistance Mission in Rafah forms part of the annex to the 2005 Access and Movement Agreement which was signed by Israel, the Palestinian Authority and the United States. In practice any decision to redeploy the mission at the crossing point would require the agreement of those three parties and would also require no objection to be raised by the Egyptian Government.

Given the current security situation in the Gaza strip and the ongoing control of the Palestinian side of the crossing by the Hamas authorities, we do not expect any such redeployment in the immediate future. Internally, the decision to reactivate the mission will be made at the EU Political and Security Committee (PSC) by 27 member states. The PSC's decision would depend on the Mission's evaluation of the security situation and the status of the Rafah Crossing Point facilities, including the Liaison Office in Kerem Shalom.

<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/ld200910/ldhansrd/text/100317w0002.htm#10031748000888>

Gaza

Lord Hylton: To ask Her Majesty's Government what representations they have made this year to the Government of Israel about their blockade of Gaza, in particular (a) the closing of the Keren Shalom crossing for two days per week, (b) the restriction of the Karni crossing to wheat movements only, (c) the closing of the Nahal Oz crossing since 1 January, (d) the reduction in heavy oil imports for Gaza Power Plant, (e) the decline in truckloads entering Gaza, and (f) the ending of all imports of glass since 17 February; and what responses they have received. [HL2646]

The Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office (Baroness Kinnock of Holyhead): Officials, including the ambassador, in Tel Aviv have continued to raise our concerns over access to Gaza with the Israeli authorities, including the new head of the Israeli army department overseeing the crossings. We remain deeply concerned by the restrictions on the crossings, not just for imports of humanitarian and reconstruction materials, but also for exports, on which the restoration of the Gazan economy depends.

Our understanding is that recent reductions in oil imports have mainly been due to problems surrounding the transfer of utility payments from the Gaza Electricity Distribution Company to the Palestinian Authority in Ramallah, which places the fuel orders. The Government of Israel recently agreed to allow a further shipment of glass into Gaza.

<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/ld200910/ldhansrd/text/100317w0002.htm#10031748000896>

UK Parliament Early Day Motion

Paul Rowen (1117) treatment of Palestinian children in Israeli prisons – That this House is concerned by recent reports of the treatment of Palestinian children in Israeli prisons; notes that 343 Palestinian children were being held in Israeli prisons at the end of February 2010; further notes that Israel routinely prosecutes children as young as 12; also notes the recent report by Defence for Children International which argues that ill-treatment and torture of Palestinian children is widespread, systemic and institutionalised; and calls on the Government to recognise the seriousness of this and to exert pressure on the Israeli authorities to uphold the human rights of Palestinian children.

<http://edmi.parliament.uk/EDMi/EDMDetails.aspx?EDMID=40759&SESSION=903>

Foreign and Commonwealth Office

UK condemns latest rocket attacks from Gaza

Foreign Office Minister Ivan Lewis has spoken out following today's rocket attack from Gaza which killed one person in Southern Israel. Mr. Lewis said: "The UK condemns the rocket attack carried out by militants in Gaza. All terrorist attacks directed against Israel are unacceptable and should be condemned by all those who are committed to peace and stability in the Middle East. It is now more urgent than ever before that we see the resumption of meaningful negotiations between the Israelis and Palestinians to create a two state solution. We are actively engaged in supporting the efforts of the US to create the conditions for negotiations to begin as soon as possible."

<http://www.fco.gov.uk/en/news/latest-news/?view=News&id=21911003>

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Foreign Affairs

Foreign and Commonwealth Office

2009 Human Rights Report Launch

... I see three main challenges for the years to come: ... We must continue to use our influence in the EU, the UN, the Commonwealth, the OSCE, and the Council of Europe in support of all of these strands of democracy building. And we must use our relationships with the African Union and others to encourage them to do the same.

But sadly, there are occasions when oppression is so intolerable that we need to resort to tougher measures. Which brings me to the second challenge I will raise today: ensuring that where the most oppressive governments refuse to be held to account by their own people, they are at least held to account by the international community. ...

The third and final challenge is to develop greater consensus on how we should approach international co-operation on terrorism, conflict and crime. Tackling such threats requires us to co-operate with countries where we have concerns about human rights. It would be an abdication of responsibility for a British government to refuse to co-operate in the investigation of terror networks in South Asia or kidnappings in Iraq; in the fight against piracy in the Gulf of Aden or drug trafficking in the Caribbean.

The question is not whether we should respect human rights in the process. Human rights and democracy are part of the solution to these very threats. Rather, the question is how human rights can best be factored in to our approach.

I believe that when we engage with countries with poor human rights records, we must seek to do so in a way which promotes, rather than undermines, human rights and democracy. But even with that starting premise, decisions are not always straightforward.

Engaging with foreign justice and security organisations may expose us to human rights risks. For example, if we train police or security forces to enable them to better protect their people, rogue elements could in some places seek to put their new capabilities to misuse. ...

In deciding whether and how to engage, all of this has to be taken into account. We need, where we can, to mitigate human rights risks and capitalise on opportunities to promote positive change. ...

<http://www.fco.gov.uk/en/news/latest-news/?view=Speech&id=21911017>

Annual Report on Human Rights 2009

<http://centralcontent.fco.gov.uk/resources/en/pdf/human-rights-reports/human-rights-report-2009>

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UK Parliament

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

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

Notice of amendments

<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/ld200910/ldbills/036/amend/am036-c.htm>

Delegated Powers and Regulatory Reform Committee: Report

<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/ld200910/ldselect/lddelreg/97/97.pdf>

**** Constitutional Reform and Governance Bill**

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

House of Lords Select Committee on the Constitution: Report

<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/ld200910/ldselect/ldconst/98/98.pdf>

Delegated Powers and Regulatory Reform Committee: Report

<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/ld200910/ldselect/lddelreg/97/97.pdf>

Crime and Security Bill

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

Equality Bill

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

notice of amendments

<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/ld200910/ldbills/039/amend/am039-c.htm>

**** Flood and Water Management Bill**

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

Committee Stage, House of Lords

<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/ld200910/ldhansrd/text/100317-gc0001.htm#10031744000124>

Delegated Powers and Regulatory Reform Committee: Report

<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/ld200910/ldselect/lddelreg/97/97.pdf>

Prosecution of Offences Act 1985 (Amendment) Bill

<http://services.parliament.uk/bills/2009-10/prosecutionoffencesact1985amendment.html>

Scottish Parliament

End of Life Assistance Bill

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

Draft Census Order

http://www.opsi.gov.uk/legislation/scotland/ssi2010/draft/pdf/sdsi_9780111008379_en.pdf

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Consultations

** new or updated

2011 Census Statistical Outputs (England and Wales) (closes 26 March 2010)
<http://www.ons.gov.uk/census/2011-census/consultations/open-consultations/2011-output-consultation---main-statistical-outputs/index.html>

Equality Bill: Draft Codes of Conduct (closes 2 April 2010)
<http://www.equalityhumanrights.com/legislative-framework/equality-bill/equality-bill-codes-of-practice-consultation/#1>

Arrest warrants – universal jurisdiction Note by the Ministry of Justice
(closes 6 April 2010)
<http://www.justice.gov.uk/about/docs/arrests-warrants.pdf>

Draft clause: Prosecution of certain extra-territorial offences: England and Wales
<http://www.justice.gov.uk/about/docs/private-prosecutions-draft-clause.pdf>

Equality Bill: Draft Guidance (closes 16 April 2010)
<http://ehrc-consult.limehouse.co.uk/portal>

Death Certification, Burial, and Cremation (Scotland) (closes 21 April 2010)
<http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Resource/Doc/300112/0093686.pdf>

Call for Evidence on the End of Life Assistance (Scotland) Bill (12 May 2010)
<http://www.scottish.parliament.uk/s3/committees/endLifeAsstBill/currentInquiries.htm>

Humanitarian Assistance Strategic Guidance (closes 14 May)
http://www.culture.gov.uk/images/consultations/HA_strategic_guide_draft.pdf

2011 Census Statistical Outputs (Scotland) (closes 14 May 2010)
<http://www.gro-scotland.gov.uk/census/censushm2011/preparations/consultation-and-research/formal-consultations/spring-10-consultation.html>

Reform of the coroner system (closes 1 July 2010)
Includes questions as to when it may be appropriate to carry out a non-invasive post-mortem examination, for example by means of MRI scan.
<http://www.justice.gov.uk/consultations/reform-coroner-system.htm>

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