

Political Affairs Brief

A daily summary of political events affecting the Jewish Community
Scottish Council of Jewish Communities
SCoJeC

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UK Parliamentary Questions

Arrest Warrants: War Crimes

Dr. Starkey: To ask the Secretary of State for Justice (1) pursuant to the answer of 18 March 2010, *Official Report*, column 1012W, on arrest warrants: war crimes, on what date the paper Arrest warrants - universal jurisdiction was placed on his Department's website; [324270]

(2) if he will list all the interested individuals and organisations to which a copy of the paper was sent. [324271]

Claire Ward: The paper 'Arrest Warrants - Universal Jurisdiction' was placed on the Ministry of Justice website on 17 March. It has been sent to the District Bench (Magistrates' Courts) Legal Committee and to the Jewish Leadership Council, as well as to the persons and bodies listed in my answer of 18 March 2010.

<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm200910/cmhansrd/cm100325/text/100325w0007.htm#10032547000003>

Equality Bill

Miss McIntosh: To ask the Minister for Women and Equality what representations she has received on the ways in which the provisions of the Equality Bill affect the rights of the individual in respect of freedom of religion. [323479]

Michael Jabez Foster: My officials, colleagues and I have received a number of representations on a range of issues from both individuals and religion and belief organisations since the introduction of the Equality Bill in April last year.

The main issues raised were:

- whether the Bill curbed religious freedom of expression;
- restriction of freedom of conscience;
- a perceived hierarchy of rights where some protected characteristics take precedence over the rights of the religious;
- catholic adoption agencies;
- the occupational requirement employment exception for organised religion; and
- faith-based care homes.

Such discussions and representations are ongoing as it is always important for Government to maintain a dialogue.

<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm200910/cmhansrd/cm100325/text/100325w0003.htm#10032541000010>

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Community Relations

Welsh Assembly Government

Individuals who promote tolerance honoured by First Minister

Individuals who have taken positive action to improve the lives of people in their local community, have been recognised with a prestigious award ... given to individuals who have taken a stand against social intolerance by promoting equality and inclusion among South Wales communities. ... Organisers chose "Promoting Tolerance" as this year's awards theme, to mark the 65th anniversary of the liberation of Auschwitz and the end of World War II.

To read the full press release see

<http://wales.gov.uk/news/latest/100326tolerance/?lang=en>

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Israel

UK Parliamentary Questions

Israel and East Jerusalem: Property

Lord Hylton: To ask Her Majesty's Government whether they will make representations to the government of Israel requesting that all property claims in Israel and east Jerusalem be treated on a basis of equality, in particular those dating from 1948; and whether they will raise the matter in the European Union in the context of the human rights clause of the European Union-Israel Association Agreement. [HL2817]

Lord Brett: The UK does not recognise the illegal Israeli annexation of east Jerusalem. We have consistently raised concerns about actions taken directly by the Israeli Government or by private organisations with the support of the Israeli legal system (such as the absentee property law and the enforcement of pre-1948 property claims by Jewish litigants to Palestinian land where no such parallel right exists for Palestinian litigants) that have the effect of altering the demographic balance of Jerusalem. This includes the building of settlements on occupied land, the eviction of Palestinian families from their homes and the demolition of Palestinian housing.

<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/ld200910/ldhansrd/text/100325w0003.htm#10032548000436>

Middle East: Peace Negotiations

Andrew Gwynne: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what steps his Department is taking to assist coexistence education projects in Israel. [323629]

Mr. Ivan Lewis: The UK has provided financial support to educational projects which promote co-existence between Jewish and Arab children in Israel.

Andrew Gwynne: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what assistance his Department is providing to projects to promote a shared society between Arab and Jewish citizens of Israel. [323630]

Mr. Ivan Lewis: The Government have spent over £100,000 in the current financial year to support projects and organisations that develop co-existence between Jewish and Arab citizens of Israel.

Andrew Gwynne: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what recent discussions he has had with his Israeli counterpart on equality between Jewish and Arab citizens of Israel. [323632]

Mr. Ivan Lewis: The UK regularly raises concerns regarding equality issues. I

discussed the issue of Israeli minorities in a meeting with the Israeli Deputy Foreign Minister on 9 February. We also highlighted the issue in the 2009 Foreign and Commonwealth Office Annual Report on Human Rights, which was published on 17 March.

<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm200910/cmhansrd/cm100325/text/100325w0004.htm#10032541000018>

Downing Street e-petition

We the undersigned petition the Prime Minister to take economic & trade sanctions against Israel and urge the EU to boycott the EU/Israel trade agreement and EU/Israel Association agreement.

“More than 500 Palestinians have died in 10 days - most ordinary civilians. Since the tanks went in, most people no longer have water supply and must queue for water whilst under the threat of bomb attacks. Ordinary civilians suffer huge unemployment in Gaza, and suffer malnutrition and reliance on “aid-handouts”. Electricity supply is poor to say the least. Hospitals are unable to function properly, let alone cope with the tragic loss of civilian lives. The blockading of Gaza effectively means that it is unable to trade with the rest of the world. Can you imagine Britain living in such conditions - it doesn't bare thinking about. EU Economic and trade sanctions appear to be the only viable option to get Israel to agree to a ceasefire. Pressure also needs to be applied to the Arab League to impose oil sanctions against Israel. There needs to be an end to the blockade of Gaza so that humanitarian aid can flow in to Gaza. Electricity and water supplies need to be renewed. Hospitals need to have supplies and equipment to assist Palestinians. More importantly, Gaza needs to be allowed to trade with the rest of the world so that it can improve its crippled economy.”

Government response

The Government remains extremely concerned by the prevailing humanitarian situation in Gaza. We have repeatedly made clear to the Israeli government that it is unacceptable that Israel should prevent aid and reconstruction materials from reaching those who so badly need them in Gaza. In December, EU Foreign Ministers reinforced our call for full humanitarian access. We also call on Israel to open its crossings to Gaza to the legitimate passage of trade goods and people, to ensure timely access for sufficient supplies of fuel for the Gaza power station and for spare parts to rebuild and maintain Gazan infrastructure, including water and sanitation networks.

The UK is - with our international partners - making very clear to Israel the actions that we expect to be taken. But we do not believe that the imposition of sanctions would increase our influence with Israel or lead to progress on the peace process. The UK has a strong relationship with Israel, which allows frank and honest discussion of the issues that concern us both. We do not shy away from taking a tough line with Israel where necessary.

The UK is also doing what it can by way of practical support to alleviate humanitarian suffering in Gaza. Following the January conflict we pledged £26.8million to the people of Gaza for humanitarian aid and early recovery activities, of which £21 million has already been given to charities and aid agencies in Gaza. Details of how this money has been spent are available of the Department for International Development website (www.dfid.gov.uk). On 28 December, the UK pledged an additional £5 million to pay the salaries of 500 UNRWA teachers in Gaza so that refugee children there can continue to receive a high quality education.

The UK is also deeply concerned about the decision by the Government of Israel to build new housing units in East Jerusalem. As the Foreign Secretary highlighted in his statement on 10 March; “This is a bad decision at the wrong time. It will give strength to those who argue that Israel is not serious about

peace. Along with our EU partners, I condemn it as certain to undermine the mutual confidence we need. The recently launched proximity talks are an important opportunity to move towards a peace deal between Israelis and Palestinians. Real peace will require the courage, commitment and compromise of both sides. This needs to be demonstrated not only by words, but by actions. The leadership of both sides must restrain those who try to provoke or disrupt the situation at this crucial moment of opportunity.” The UK also strongly supported the declaration by HR Ashton on behalf of the EU.

The best way to solve these issues is by bringing about a two-state solution in the Middle East, with a viable Palestinian state living alongside Israel in peace and security. We shall continue to work closely with international partners to drive the peace process forward.

<http://www.number10.gov.uk/Page22939>

United Nations

UN Human Rights Council calls for independent inquiry into Gaza conflict

The United Nations Human Rights Council today, echoing the General Assembly, called on the Israeli Government and the Palestinian side to carry out independent and credible investigations into the deadly conflict in the Gaza Strip that ended early last year. Those inquiries, the Council said in Geneva, must look into the serious violations of international humanitarian and human rights law reported by the fact-finding mission into the Operation Cast Lead, the three-week Israeli military offensive starting at the end of 2008 that had the stated aim of ending rocket attacks by militants operating in the area. ... The Human Rights Council today also called on the High Commissioner for Human Rights, Navi Pillay, to look into setting up an escrow fund to provide reparations to Palestinians who suffered losses as a result of unlawful Israeli actions during the conflict. ...

To read the full press release see

<http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=34203&Cr=gaza&Cr1=>

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Foreign Affairs

UK Parliamentary Question

Poland: Anti-Semitism

Mr. Amess: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what reports he has received on the defacing of monuments at the former Plaszow concentration camp near Krakow on Saturday 13 March 2010; what recent discussions he has had with the government of Poland on anti-Semitism in Poland; and if he will make a statement. [324377]

Mr. Ivan Lewis: We condemn the act of vandalism against the monuments at the former Plaszow concentration camp and all instances of persecution and discrimination against individuals and groups wherever they occur.

Polish politicians have spoken out strongly against this act. Polish Foreign Minister Sikorski said:

"The people who did this deserve the highest condemnation. This is something which ruins Poland and which I personally am ashamed of."

Polish Cardinal Dziwisch has apologised to Jewish people on behalf of all Christians for what happened.

Our embassy in Warsaw was in touch with non-governmental organisations and relevant Government representatives that deal with and monitor anti-Semitism on 16 April 2009. The Polish Government highlighted some of their initiatives in their

interim report, responding to a 2007 memorandum, to the Council of Europe Commissioner for human rights. This can be found on the Commissioner's website:

http://www.coe.int/t/commissioner/News/2009/090420PolandReport_en.asp

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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>

Notice of amendments

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

**** Constitutional Reform and Governance Bill**

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

Notice of amendments

<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/ld200910/ldbills/040/amend/am040-a.htm>

Crime and Security Bill

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

Equality Bill

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

Flood and Water Management Bill

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

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

**** closes today**

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>

**** closes in 7 days**

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>

Revised Guidance on Safeguarding Children and Safer Recruitment in Education (England and Wales only) (closes 15 June 2010)

<http://www.dcsf.gov.uk/consultations/index.cfm?action=consultationDetails&consultationId=1671&external=no&menu=1>

Continuing need for a controlled activity category in the Vetting and Barring Scheme (England and Wales only) (closes 17 June 2010)

<http://www.dcsf.gov.uk/consultations/index.cfm?action=consultationDetails&consultationId=1710&external=no&menu=1>

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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