

# 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

### UK Parliamentary Questions

#### Anti-Semitism: International Cooperation

**Mr Amess:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what progress his Department has made in implementing the provisions of the final declaration of the London Conference on Combating anti-Semitism, with particular reference to (a) establishing an international taskforce of internet specialists to measure anti-Semitism online and propose international responses and (b) exposing and isolating (i) governments and (ii) politicians engaging in anti-Semitism; and if he will make a statement. [5434]

**Mr Jeremy Browne:** The implementation of the provisions of the London Conference on Combating anti-Semitism falls within the remit of the cross-Government working group to tackle anti-Semitism which is made up of officials from across Whitehall and the chief executives of the Board of Deputies of British Jews, the Jewish Leadership Council and the Community Security Trust. The working group is currently ensuring that the provisions within the declaration are taken forward and they plan to report back on progress at the second Inter-parliamentary Coalition for Combating Anti-Semitism (ICCA) Conference in Ottawa in November 2010.

Mr Amess: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what his policy is on implementation of the provisions of the final declaration of the London Conference on Combating anti-Semitism; what recent representations he has received on this issue; and if he will make a statement. [5435]

Mr Jeremy Browne: We welcome the London Declaration on Combating anti-Semitism that was adopted in February 2009 and its important recommendations. We are committed to combating all forms of racism, including anti-Semitism. The implementation of the provisions of the London Conference on Combating anti-Semitism falls within the remit of the cross-Government working group to tackle anti-Semitism which is made up of officials from across Whitehall and the chief executives of the Board of Deputies of British Jews, the Jewish Leadership Council and the Community Security Trust. We look forward to the second Inter-parliamentary Coalition for Combating Anti-Semitism (ICCA) Conference in Ottawa in November 2010 as an opportunity for all participants to assess the progress that has been made.

<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201011/cmhansrd/cm100712/text/100712w0003.htm#10071240000004>

## Schools: Academies

**Lord Alton of Liverpool:** To ask Her Majesty's Government whether they will grant approval for proposals for new schools in the Academies programme from the boards of education of Church of England, Roman Catholic and other faith-based organisations, using their traditional admissions policies; whether such schools will be permitted to make it a criterion of staff appointments that applicants uphold the Christian faith by their belief and conduct; and whether church bodies will be able to bid to build and run new schools where there is an identified need on the traditional voluntary-aided model, rather than as an Academy.[HL782]

**The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Schools (Lord Hill of Oareford):** The Secretary of State will consider each free school proposal on its merits, and take into account all matters relevant to that proposal. This will include proposals from boards of education of the Church of England, Roman Catholic and other faith-based organisations. All free schools will be required to comply with the school admissions code and have inclusive admission arrangements.

Because of this we wish to ensure that free schools are open to the broadest possible range of local children. New faith academies have previously been set up on the presumption that they will admit 50 per cent of their intake without reference to faith and we will continue to require this for all new faith academies and free schools. This will also apply to independent schools converting to academy status.

Faith groups will continue to be able to propose to establish a new voluntary-aided faith school using the established statutory process for maintained schools. Similarly, an independent faith school will continue to be able to use the established statutory process to propose joining the maintained sector as a voluntary-aided school.

The Equality Act 2006 and the Employment Equality (Religion or Belief) Regulations 2003 sets out that voluntary-aided schools are permitted to take faith into account when appointing teachers. They may only take faith into account in appointing non-teaching staff if they are able to demonstrate that there is a genuine occupational requirement for the member of staff to be of the faith. Free schools, like academies, will also be permitted to take faith into account when appointing teachers. They may also take faith into account in appointing non-teaching staff if they are able to demonstrate that there is a genuine occupational requirement for the member of staff to be of the faith.

<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/ld201011/ldhansrd/text/100712w0001.htm#10071230000823>

## Voluntary Sector

**Lord Ouseley:** To ask Her Majesty's Government what role the community-led voluntary sector will play in the policies set out in Building the Big Society; and what effect public expenditure reductions will have on its role.[HL829]

**Lord Taylor of Holbeach:** The big society vision is that more power and opportunity are shifted to individuals and communities. The voluntary and community sector will have a fundamental part in making this a reality.

The Government recognise that there will be difficulties in the current economic climate but aim to promote and support the role of the sector in providing services. For example, we will create an independent big society bank to unlock hundreds of millions of pounds of new finance for social enterprises, charities and voluntary organisations. We will also set up the community organisers' programme which will identify, train and support 5,000 people who want to make a difference to their community over the lifetime of this Parliament. Complementing this, the community first programme is a new fund that will encourage more social action by new and existing neighbourhood groups.

<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/ld201011/ldhansrd/text/100712w0001.htm#10071230000828>

## Home Office

### **Rapid review of counter-terrorism powers**

The Home Secretary has announced ... a rapid review of key counter-terrorism and security powers ...

#### **The review will look at six areas:**

- the use of control orders
- stop and search powers in section 44 of the Terrorism Act 2000 and the use of terrorism legislation in relation to photography
- the detention of terrorist suspects before charge
- extending the use of deportations with assurances to remove foreign nationals from the UK who pose a threat to national security
- measures to deal with organisations that promote hatred or violence
- the use of the Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act 2000 (RIPA) by local authorities, and access to communications data more generally. ...

#### **To read the full press release see**

<http://www.homeoffice.gov.uk/media-centre/press-releases/counter-powers>

## Communities and Local Government

### **Keeping faith in the Big Society**

Communities Minister Andrew Stunell said that faith groups are making a vital contribution to national life, and are integral to creating the Big Society. Speaking to a large audience at the annual meeting of the Inter Faith Network for the UK, he told delegates that inter faith activity and faith groups were inspiring people to contribute to public service and providing support to those in need. ... Faith communities make a vital contribution to national life, guiding the moral outlook of many, inspiring great numbers of people to public service, providing succour to those in need. They are helping to bind together local communities and improve relations at a time when the siren call of extremism has never been louder. Inter faith activity is more important than ever in our work towards the Big Society, so I want to push for more inter faith dialogue and action rather than individual faith groups delivering social projects. ...It is not about compromising our individual beliefs ... But it is about respect for the other, the recognition of shared values and shared needs, and the will to action. ...”

#### **To read the full press release see**

<http://www.communities.gov.uk/newsstories/communities/1637515>

## Welsh Assembly Government

### **First Minister announces final Legislative Programme**

First Minister Carwyn Jones has set out his Government's final Legislative Programme of this Assembly session. ...

The new Legislative Programme includes three new Assembly Measures – Safety on Learner Travel, Housing and Education – and one new Legislative Competence Order (LCO) on the issue of organ donation.

#### **To read the full press release see**

<http://wales.gov.uk/newsroom/firstminister/2010/100713legislation/:jsessionid=TcpmM8PQm2pkLpzM6QNggR1rKFGpJchnKSQPZB6wNg4CCkCT8vG9!-2005468515?lang=en>

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## UK Parliamentary Questions

### **Israel: Passports**

**Nicholas Soames:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what recent representations he has made to the government of Israel about the misuse of British passports. [7406]

**Mr Jeremy Browne:** We cannot accept the fraudulent misuse of British passports. The Serious Organised Crime Agency report into the misuse of British passports pointed to Israeli involvement. In March my hon. Friend the Member for North East Bedfordshire (Alistair Burt) welcomed the previous Government's request for formal assurance that in the future the state of Israel would never be party to the misuse of British passports. We continue to seek these assurances from the Government of Israel.

<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201011/cmhansrd/cm100712/text/100712w0003.htm#10071240000015>

### **Middle East: Armed Conflict**

**Mr Amess:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what recent reports he has received of Qassam rockets being fired from Gaza into southern Israel; whether he has had discussions with the government of Israel on that matter since his appointment; and if he will make a statement. [7070]

**Alistair Burt:** The UK is aware of sporadic rocket fire from Gaza into southern Israel and we have urged all militants to refrain from such attacks. My right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary underlined this in his statement of 2 June 2010.

We are in regular dialogue with the Israeli Government particularly on matters pertaining to the peace process and we continue to urge all parties not to change any facts on the ground which might undermine the peace process. Both the Foreign Secretary and I reiterated this to the House on 6 July 2010.

**Mr Amess:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether he has received recent reports of the vandalism of a UN summer camp for children in the Gaza Strip; and if he will make a statement. [7071]

**Alistair Burt:** According to the UN on 28 June, a group of masked gunmen entered a UN summer games camp. This is the second such attack against a UN summer camp in a month.

UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-Moon condemned the incident and called on the local authorities in Gaza to combat any incitement against UN operations and ensure the safety of UN personnel and programmes, which serve the most vulnerable in Gaza.

**Mr Amess:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what recent reports he has received on the number of (a) rockets and (b) mortar bombs launched into Israeli territory from (i) Lebanon and (ii) Gaza since 1 January 2010; what reports he has received of the number of persons (A) killed, (B) seriously injured and (C) slightly injured; and if he will make a statement. [7288]

**Alistair Burt:** Since 4 January 2010 we have received reports of 263 rockets launched into Israeli territory, with one fatality in March. We condemn unequivocally the indiscriminate rocket attacks launched from Gaza.

**Mr Amess:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what steps he (a) has taken and (b) plans to take at the United Nations in respect of the reported Qassam rockets fired from Gaza into southern Israel during June 2010; and if he will make a statement. [7289]

**Alistair Burt:** We are extremely concerned by sporadic rocket attacks against southern Israel. As my right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary made clear in his statement to the House on 2 June 2010 it is important for Hamas to take

immediate and concrete steps towards the Quartet principles.

A number of issues related to the middle east are discussed on a monthly basis at the UN. The UK will continue to push for the full implementation of UN Security Council Resolution 1860 which aims to prevent the illicit trafficking of arms into Gaza. We will continue giving our full support to the UN Sanctions Committee in pursuing and investigating sanctions violations.

<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201011/cmhansrd/cm100712/text/100712w0003.htm#10071240000016>

### **Palestinians: International Assistance**

**Mr Slaughter:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what support the Government has provided to British citizens who were aboard the Gaza Freedom Flotilla since they returned to the UK. [6713]

**Alistair Burt:** I invited those British nationals involved to meet me on 17 June 2010. 16 of them attended and I was able to listen to their experiences and set out what we were able to do. Consular officials have also spoken to many of those involved.

I have set out in PQ numbers 6785, 6787 and 6716 what we have done to assist the individuals in clarifying the whereabouts of, and retrieving, their possessions and the missing passports. The UK has spent significant time and resources assisting British nationals in this case, including exceptional assistance beyond our normal policy, in view of the specific circumstances.

**Mr Slaughter:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what reports he has received on the Israeli government's willingness to grant consular access to British citizens detained on the Gaza Freedom Flotilla. [6715]

**Alistair Burt:** My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister told the House on 2 June 2010 that he was disappointed and dissatisfied with the Israeli response to the consular situation. He criticised their preparedness and the chaotic nature of the Israeli organisation. The Heads of EU missions in Israel have written jointly to the Israelis expressing their unhappiness at the consular provisions for a planned operation.

**Mr Slaughter:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make representations to the Israeli government that evidence be taken in public from British citizens who were aboard the Gaza Freedom Flotilla in any inquiry into the matter. [6716]

**Alistair Burt:** The Israeli authorities have yet to set out the exact details on how the inquiry will be conducted. Broadly, the Commission's mandate states that it may request any individual or entity, whether Israeli (other than military personnel) or foreign, to testify before it or to provide information to it by other means, on matters which the Commission believes to be relevant to its proceedings.

As my right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary underlined in his statement on 21 June 2010 it is important that the Commission provide a full, credible, impartial and independent investigation that the international community can respect.

When I met with the returnees on 17 June I made it clear that we believe the inquiry should have access to the testimony of the British nationals involved. I have raised this issue with the Israeli ambassador.

**Mr Slaughter:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what steps were taken by the UK Embassy in Israel to contact the next of kin of British nationals detained on board the Gaza Freedom Flotilla. [6785]

**Alistair Burt:** We had contact with a large number of family and friends before we were able to gain consular access to the British nationals who were detained, and provided them with as much information as we were able to on what was happening to reassure them. The Data Protection Act limits what we can discuss about an individual until we have received their consent.

UK consular staff visited the detained British nationals in Be'er Sheva Prison and saw most of them. From those they met they took contact details of the next of kin

they wanted us to contact. Consular staff in London and on the ground telephoned those for whom we were given details. Consular staff offered phone facilities for the British nationals to call their next of kin when they arrived in Istanbul after being deported from Israel.

**Mr Slaughter:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether his Department has estimated the value of possessions confiscated from British citizens on board the Gaza Freedom Flotilla by the Israeli authorities which have not yet been returned. [6786]

**Alistair Burt:** We have made no such estimate. We have set out clearly what we have and will be doing to assist those whose possessions are still missing, and made clear to the returnees what next steps they might consider.

**Mr Andrew Smith:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what progress has been made in his Department's work with its international counterparts to secure progress towards peace, security and a higher quality of life for both Palestinians and Israelis. [6952]

**Alistair Burt:** We support a two-state solution created by negotiation and confidence-building on both sides, rather than the creation of facts on the ground that are intended ultimately to change the shape of such a solution.

We welcome the commitment shown by both the Israelis and the Palestinians towards proximity talks. We seek to buttress the diplomatic initiative of President Obama's Administration and the proximity talks currently underway and will be strong supporters of those building the institutions of a future Palestinian state, while actively exploring with our European partners the scope for further EU action in this area, building on the foundation of December's Foreign Affairs Council conclusions.

**Mr Andrew Smith:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what steps his Department has taken to encourage Israel to allow Palestinians to travel to hospitals outside Palestinian-controlled territory. [6953]

**Alistair Burt:** The UK is in regular contact with the Israeli and Palestinian Governments and our international allies regarding the current humanitarian situation in Gaza and the wider issues relating to the peace process. Together with the EU and the Quartet we have called on Israel to ease restrictions on movement and access in the territories. It is essential that there be unfettered access to the Palestinian territories to meet the humanitarian needs of the Palestinian people. This includes facilitating access to medical care outside of the Palestinian territories.

**Mr Andrew Smith:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what progress has been made in efforts to lift the Gaza blockade to allow the import of construction materials. [6954]

**Alistair Burt:** We welcome Israel's decision to move from a list of 120 permitted goods to a list of specific prohibited items. This step shows that it is possible to lift the pressure on ordinary Gazans without compromising the security of ordinary Israelis. All parties must now work together urgently to deliver real change on the ground. This will mean building capacity at the crossings, getting vital reconstruction projects up and running and ensuring that Gazans can export as well as import goods.

My right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary underlined the importance in his statement of 5 July 2010 and I also reiterated this in the House on 6 July 2010, *Official Report*, column 159.

**Mr Sanders:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations he has made to the government of Israel on the blockade on Gaza since the agreement to substitute the list of allowed items for the list of banned items. [7058]

**Alistair Burt:** We are in regular contact and dialogue with the Israeli Government, on a number of matters related to the Middle East Peace Process-this includes the current humanitarian situation in Gaza.

We have made clear that the situation in Gaza is a tragedy and unsustainable.

Together with the EU and Quartet, we have called on Israel to ease restrictions on access and enable a return to economic normality. I therefore welcomed Israel's decision to move from a list of 120 permitted goods to a list of specific prohibited items. As I said to the House on 6 July 2010 the pressure that has been exerted on Israel in recent times by the EU, the UK, the US and the Quartet for a relaxation on the restrictions in Gaza has had an effect.

It is now imperative that all parties work together urgently to deliver real change on the ground.

**Mr Slaughter:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what assessment he has made of the implications for the security of British citizens detained following the raid on the Gaza Freedom Flotilla of the confiscation of their passports by the Israeli authorities. [7081]

**Alistair Burt:** All passports which were confiscated by the Israeli authorities were cancelled as soon as the British nationals in question were issued with temporary travel documents. I can further confirm that we have now received all three missing passports and they are being returned to their owners.

<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201011/cmhansrd/cm100712/text/100712w0003.htm#1007124000019>

### **Palestinians: International Assistance**

**Mr Andrew Smith:** To ask the Secretary of State for International Development what steps his Department is taking to help reduce Gaza's dependence on food aid; and if he will make a statement. [6955]

**Mr Andrew Mitchell:** The UK welcomes Israel's decision on 5 July to allow all goods into Gaza, except those on a prohibited list.

Enabling a greater range and volume of foodstuffs to enter Gaza, including raw materials for agriculture and food industries, should lessen Gaza's dependence on food aid by spurring local production and making food more affordable.

For this to happen, we are pushing all parties, including the Palestinian Authority, UN agencies, and international NGOs, to ensure that there is sufficient coordination and prioritisation of humanitarian and commercial goods entering Gaza, to best meet the needs of the population. We will also press the Government of Israel to ensure they deliver on their commitments.

<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201011/cmhansrd/cm100712/text/100712w0003.htm#1007123800019>

## **Downing St e-petition**

### **Petition for UK to support Goldstone report, bring Israeli war criminals to justice**

Submitted by Arafat Madi of The European Campaign to End the Siege on Gaza.

We the undersigned petition call on the British Premier, Gordon Brown, to support the Goldstone Report and to ensure its acceptance in the Human Rights Council in March 2010. The report which was issued by a special committee assigned by the UN proved in a report of 570 pages that Israel perpetrated war crimes against Humanity in Gaza within its offensive in January 2009. Endorsing the report is endorsing humanity and rights of the besieged people of Gaza who are defenseless victims of the Israeli army. Israeli soldiers themselves confessed to have received orders to shot children in Gaza. TV Footages, Photographs and Media materials entirely supports the Goldstone report. The full-scale offensive in Gaza left at least 1,450 Palestinians killed and over 5000 injured. The entire infrastructure in Gaza was destroyed as Israeli attacks targeted schools, hospitals, streets, water wills, sewage system, farms and police stations. Till this moment, Israel is still imposing a harsh and criminal siege on the civilian population Gaza.

### **Government response**

The Goldstone report raises very serious concerns about the conduct of Israel and

Hamas during the Gaza conflict. It is vital that Israel, Hamas and the Palestinian Authority address the allegations made against them.

Israel is in the process of carrying out its own internal investigations, which we hope will bring accountability for individual incidents reported. Concerns would best be addressed by an independent Israeli inquiry, separate from the Israeli Defence Force investigations. Democracies should rightly be held to high standards, and Israel is at its most impressive when it shows that it respects the rule of law.

The UK has called for full, credible and independent investigations by all parties to the conflict and voted for a UN General Assembly resolution to that effect on 26 February this year. We are committed to upholding accountability for breaches of international humanitarian law.

<http://www.hmq.gov.uk/epetition-responses/petition-view.aspx?epref=GoldstoneReport>

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## Foreign Affairs

### UK Parliamentary Question

#### Anti-Semitism

**Mr Amess:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what steps the Government plan to take to (a) monitor and (b) seek to reduce levels of anti-Semitism overseas; and if he will make a statement. [5517]

**Mr Jeremy Browne:** Combating all forms of racism, including anti-Semitism, remains an important part of the Government's human rights agenda. We condemn all instances of violence and discrimination against individuals and groups because of their race, faith or belief. The Foreign and Commonwealth Office's overseas missions have a responsibility to monitor and raise human rights in their host countries and routinely raise our concerns with host governments. Where possible our embassies take action on individual cases where persecution or discrimination has occurred and lobby for changes in discriminatory practices and laws. The Government also support the All Party Parliamentary Group against anti-Semitism and their work on tackling anti-Semitism across Europe and encourages MEPs to get involved in tackling anti-Semitism in their own countries. We will continue to promote these issues within the EU, the UN, the Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe and other multilateral fora.

<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201011/cmhansrd/cm100712/text/100712w0003.htm#10071240000003>

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## Relevant Legislation \*\* New or updated

### UK Parliament

#### \*\* Academies Bill

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

Notice of amendments

<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/ld201011/ldbills/013/amend/ml013-i.htm>

#### Daylight Saving Bill

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

## Face Coverings (Regulation) Bill

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

## Identity Documents Bill

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

## Scottish Parliament

### End of Life Assistance Bill

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

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## Other Relevant Information

### Supreme Court

#### Annual Report

*includes a brief summary of the JFS case pp25-26*

[http://www.supremecourt.gov.uk/docs/ar\\_2009\\_10.pdf](http://www.supremecourt.gov.uk/docs/ar_2009_10.pdf)

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## Consultations

\*\* new or updated

#### \*\* closes today

**Equality Act: obtaining information in potential discrimination and equality of term cases** (closes 13 July 2010)

[http://www.equalities.gov.uk/news/new\\_streamlined\\_procedure\\_for.aspx](http://www.equalities.gov.uk/news/new_streamlined_procedure_for.aspx)

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

**Amendments to the Anti-Terrorism Crime and Security Act 2001** (closes 15 July 2010)

<http://www.homeoffice.gov.uk/documents/cons-2010-pathogens-toxins/consultation-paper2835.pdf?view=Binary>

#### \*\* closes in 3 days

**Welsh Assembly Review of Standing Orders** (closes 16 July 2010)

[http://www.assemblywales.org/bus-home/bus-committees/bus-committees-other-committees/bus-committees-third-bc-home/bus-committees-third-bc-comm/bc3\\_inq\\_so.htm](http://www.assemblywales.org/bus-home/bus-committees/bus-committees-other-committees/bus-committees-third-bc-home/bus-committees-third-bc-comm/bc3_inq_so.htm)

**Data protection legislative framework** (closes 6 October 2010)

<http://www.justice.gov.uk/dpa-call-evidence-02-07-2010.pdf>

**Guidance on Concessionary Schemes for Surface Water Drainage Charges**

*Applies in England only* (closes 22 October 2010)

<http://www.defra.gov.uk/corporate/consult/surface-charges/index.htm>

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