

REPORT from Jeremy Corbyn MP

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The month has been dominated by the Anti-Terrorism legislation making its way through parliament and the Lords, and my energy was, not surprisingly, directed towards defending the right of independent justice in limiting the powers of the Home Secretary. We did manage to ring some significant concessions out of the government but at the 11th hour, the bill did go through. I have written more about this in the Articles section of this report: “Magna Carta Unbound” and “Justice and Parliament”.

Press Engagements since the last report:

(07/03): Islam TV – discussion on the buildup towards the UK General Election, the war and how people should vote.

(11/03): Al Jazeera - news bulletin – discussion on the Anti-Terror News Legislation which had been discussed in parliament for the previous 30 hours.

TOWARDS PEACE:

(18/02) I attended a Le Monde Diplomatique event centering on a discussion about **Iran**, with an academic from the LSE (Dr Shalabi) who gave a very interesting exposition of the pressures in Iran as a result of the external military threat from the USA. It appears that the conservative forces are spurred on by the external military threat.

I attended the Parliamentary **Caribbean** group (22/02) with representatives and High Commissioners from most of the English speaking Caribbean, where we talked about the issues of trade, and in particular the difficulty

of fruit (including bananas,) export from the Caribbean to Europe. We also talked about the after effects of Hurricane Ivan, and the welcome support given by Department for International Development (Dfid), particularly in Grenada and Jamaica. I raised with Dfid the need for a better warning system and shelter system to protect the people of the region from hurricanes. We also discussed the current problems in Guyana occasioned by massive flooding, bringing about heavy loss of homes and livelihood.

(22/02) Later that day the **Somali** Coordinating Committee met in the House of Commons under the expert chairing of Nuradine Dirie, a Mildmay ward resident. We discussed the promising development of local Somali community groups.

(23/02) As a member of the All Party Group (APPG) on **Mexico** I attended a meeting with Peace Brigades International (PBI) and Amnesty, concerning human rights in Mexico, especially the treatment of women in the poorest areas of the country, and in the urban slums, also the dangers that human rights and civil society monitors face when trying to stand up for individual victims.

(24/02): Catherine West, Tricia Clarke, Jean Roger and Regine Kaseki, myself and more handed in to Downing St a **Congolese** petition which originated from Islington North Labour Party, and called upon the government: to support the peace process in the Congo, and note our great concern about the illicit mineral exploitation and the continued presence of

foreign military forces in the east of the country. Afterwards we had a lengthy meeting with the Congolese there, and discussed the dangers of Congolese asylum seekers being forcibly removed to the Congo, where they face continuing dangers.

Palestine:

PSC held a fundraising concert at St James's church Piccadilly where the guitarist, John Williams was joined by the equally brilliant oud player, Khaled Jubran from Jerusalem for a truly inspired evening of quality music. I made an appeal at the end of the event for funds for the PSC and I understand that overall they raised a significant sum of money for this worthy cause.

(26/03) I chaired the morning part of Palestine Solidarity's (PSC) AGM and in my speech I drew attention to the work of PSC and the legal opposition to the wall, the settlements in both Gaza and the West Bank. I also indicated support for Mordechai Vanunu and the Peace movement in Israel as being sources of hope in the future.

What you can do:

March this Saturday 19/03, Assemble 12 noon Speakers Corner

21/03: The film: "Waiting for Mordechai" will be shown in Committee Room 4 of the House of Lords followed by a meeting to discuss Mordechai's current house arrest and what we can do to ensure it ceases.

Check out the events section of the PSC Website: www.palestinecampaign.org

- Join Palestine Solidarity Campaign
T: 020 7700 6192 F: 020 7609 7779
info@palestinecampaign.org

I was the guest speaker at CND council, and talked about the aftermath of the war in Iraq, and in particular the threat to Iran from continued US military posturing.

What you can do:

March this Saturday, 19/03, Assemble 12noon Speakers Corner

- **13/07** is the Joint CND/PSC lobby of national lobby of parliament: focusing in particular on Israel's nuclear weapons and WMDs.

Since this year is the 60th anniversary of the Hiroshima and Nagasaki bombings, and the year of the Non Proliferation Treaty (NPT) review it would be a symbolic year to join CND if you're not already a member: www.cnduk.org; Tel 020 7700 2393

(02/03), I was invited to join an Inter Parliamentary Union (IPU) group to receive a parliamentary delegation from Morocco, and during a very lengthy discussion I raised the question of self-determination for the people of the **Western Sahara**. I received a 29 minute uninterrupted reply to my question, which didn't indicate any hope of progress at all! I remain utterly convinced that the only way forward is for the United Nations to conduct the referendum which was due to be held some 20 years ago, after the ceasefire had been agreed between the Polisario and the Moroccan army.

(03/03): I was invited to a meeting of Belgian MPs and Senators concerning policies towards **Rwanda**, following my recent Peace Brigades International visit to Rwanda. We had a discussion about the aid programme to Rwanda and the need for support for civil society and human rights groups.

(05/03): I was a guest speaker at the "Europe for Peace international conference held at the Mechanics' Institute in Manchester, where I talked of the **aftermath of the Iraq war**, the danger of nuclear proliferation if agreement is not reached at the NPT Conference in New York this May, and what I believe to be a fundamentally flawed section of the proposed European Constitution which envisages the creation of a 60,000 strong European army. The meeting was attended by delegates from all over Europe, and included a terrific contribution from the Irish delegate (regarding concerns over Irish neutrality should the European Constitution be agreed.

What you can do:

- 16/03 to 19/03 sees the start of a Peace Camp in Trafalgar Square (organised by Military

Families Against the War (www.mfaw.org.uk) and from 7pm “an evening with Mark Steel”

17/03 from 7.30pm: Tony Benn, Shami Chakrabati (Director of Liberty), Jeremy Corbyn MP, Lindsey German (SWP/STWC), and a discussion on 'Bush wars and terror laws'.

18/03: Military Families Speak Out followed by Hip Hop against war.

- **Attend the 19/03 national demonstration, meet at Hyde Park Corner at 12 noon.** This day is close to the second anniversary of the vote to go to war.

- Donate or affiliate to Labour Against the War, Stop the War, or join Amnesty International or another relevant organisation.

- Keep abreast of things by checking out websites:

I took part in a discussion organized by the Parliamentary Human Rights group on **Nepal** which included members of the Dalit Solidarity Network and Amnesty International, and at which we discussed the plight of caste peoples in Nepal, and the prospects for a long term peace, through political action. Alice Mahon MP, Clare Short MP and myself intervened using a parliamentary process to block the British arms delivery to the new government of Nepal which was installed following the coup. Our intervention was welcomed by many Nepalese groups (representatives of some were in attendance) and was highly successful.

I had the privilege of meeting **Colombian** Congressman Alexander Lopez in the House, who also gave an excellent speech at the War on Want annual conference which I attended the following day.

(15/03) An anti nuclear activist (visiting from the Los Alamos Study Group in New Mexico, USA) Greg Mello spoke to me at the House, and gave a rundown of the ghastly, virtually non-existent **anti nuclear movement** in the States. He was very informative and this meeting followed soon after an Adjournment Debate I had held (08/03) on the **Non Proliferation Treaty** which is enclosed in the attached parliamentary interventions.

Local

(22/02) I attended the 60th Anniversary of **Remploy** factory (68 Queensland Rd): A sheltered workshop which undertakes a lot of electrical assembly work and (very proudly) has never had an accident in the past 2 decades. I raised the flag on the 20th anniversary and met all those who work in the factory, which unfortunately will probably be closing in the near future and relocating, due to the Arsenal stadium and nearby developments. I am assured that all its work will carry on.

(24/02) In the afternoon I attended Islington **Unison** AGM at the Red Rose Centre, which was well attended from a branch that is growing in membership and influence in our borough. I spoke about the issues surrounding public sector employment, and in particular what I (and many others) believe is a misguided attempt to alter the local government pension scheme. Together with a very large number of MPs, mainly Labour, I have opposed the order which the government is seeking parliamentary approval for.

(01/03) Following a previous intervention of mine in Parliament, the Home Office Prisons Minister Paul Goggins agreed to visit **Holloway prison**, along with myself and the Romsey's Lib Dem MP Sandra Gidley (who had referred to Holloway prison in the debate. We spent two hours in the prison with the governor and senior officers, talked to many of the women prisoners, visited the hairdressing salon, gymnasium and in particular, their very effective counseling and advice centre which helps the prisoners prepare for release by giving them housing benefit and job advice. We also talked at length to the very good medical team in the prison about the services they offer to the women. We also had a meeting with the chair and secretary of the Prison Officers Association Branch.

Holloway Prison has been through some very difficult times but I am impressed with the current senior management team there and their

determination to ensure that the prison offers education support and hope to all the inmates.

(01/03) I attended the relaunch of **Elthorne Community Regeneration** event at St John's Day Centre, and welcomed the latest community police initiative in which a local police team had been established in Hillrise ward. I discussed with them and local residents the problems and successes of the area.

I have also written to Islington Council concerning the appalling waste of spending here: apparently, £7,000 is spent per month on security for the **Crouch Hill Recreation Centre**, which was taken out of use. This community centre should be brought back into use by Islington for the benefit of locals. There can be no greater waste, than paying more public money to keep it closed, than was ever given to it in supportive grants by the Council over the past 10 years.

(08/03) I attended the All Party Group on **Council Housing which** held an Evidence session in the House, chaired by Austin Mitchell. Evidence was taken from councils and tenants groups all over the country concerning their wish for a level playing field on housing developments directly funded by local authorities, and to those tenants who vote not to transfer to either a Housing Association or an ALMO (Arms Length Management Organisation).

(09/03): I was Invited by Narendra Makanji (Chairman of the **Whittington Hospital**), and David Sloman (Chief Executive), to help launch national No Smoking day at the Hospital. Smoking is due to be banned on the entire premises including the driveway. Counseling support is offered for those who take the plunge and wish to give up smoking. Islington has the biggest proportion of smokers in the whole country, with 34% of our people regularly smoking. The consequences of this are reflected in the annual health statistics of lung cancer, heart disease etc.

(02/03) Tony Benn very kindly agreed to meet a lively group from Holloway and Highgate (Camden) Woodcraft groups. We had expected a smallish group of youngsters and parental support but over 40 adults and children turned up and had a terrific talk by Tony Benn followed by a tour of parts of the Palace of Westminster which they all seemed to enjoy.

Unfortunately, the government has announced that the Woodcraft folk has lost its annual £50,000 grant from the Department of Education which I think is scandalous, and so far over 50 MPs have signed their support, calling for the Government to reverse their decision. The Woodcraft are lobbying parliament next Tuesday.

What you can do:

Come along to the Lobby on **22/03, rendez-vous Committee Room 5 at the House**, 4 – 6pm, at which I will speak.

(09/03) I was a guest speaker at the **Islington Cycling Campaign** meeting on cycling and sustainable transport. We discussed cycle safety and in particular, I called for and welcomed the GLA's initiative in providing funding for cycle training for all youngsters in schools; I supported the cycle lane strategy but pointed out its many deficiencies particularly at major road junctions. We then discussed at some length issues of cycle safety and promotion and in the context of sustainable transport, railway development, and the potential funding of the East London Line and Crossrail in London.

Together with Barbara Roche I attended the **Friends of Finsbury Park** (10/03) open meeting at the Osborne Rd Luncheon club in Haringey, where both Barbara and I supported the proposed development of the park which in the long run sees it being managed by a consortium which includes the three neighbouring boroughs and, in particular, has a very large community input to develop the use and activities in what could be a really beautiful open space. As one who has been a regular user of the park for many years I welcome the increase in its use.

(13/03) **Highbury Walkabout:** spent the morning visiting constituents in the Blackstock Estate, listening to their concerns and problems, and welcoming some of the improvements that have taken place in entrance security on the estates. None of these facilities were working at the time I was there.

Jeremy's current Advice surgery schedule for the past four weeks included additional surgeries:

25/02: Algerian/Arab surgery, Algerian Advice Centre, 20 Blackstock Road, 3 pm.

27/02: Bengali surgery, Red Rose, 4.30 pm.

03/03: Turkish speaking women's group in the Community Rooms at Durham Road.

Regular a/surgeries are held as follows:

1st Fri, 4 - 6 pm (**by appointment**): Old Fire Station, Mayton Street, N7

2nd Thurs, 10 - 12 noon (walk in): Mildmay Library, 21-23 Mildmay Park, N1

2nd Fri, 10 - 12 noon (walk in): Mayville Community Centre, Woodville Rd, N16

3rd Fri, 4 - 6 pm (walk in): Old Fire Station, Mayton St, N7

4th Fri, 10 - 12 noon (**by appointment**): Caxton House, 129 St John's Way, N19

If you prefer: You could write to Jeremy with details of your problem: 213A Blackstock Rd, London, N5 2LL. Telephone: 020 7226 5775