

# REPORT from Jeremy Corbyn MP

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*December 2004 and January 2005*

**Dr Alan Clinton** was a Labour Councillor in Islington from 1982 until 2002. He made an enormous contribution to the life of our borough and was a key part of the amazing innovative and radical labour administration from 1982. That group developed so much in the way of parks, open spaces, community centres, social services, decentralisation and innovative housing schemes, including the splendid Highcroft Estate, all of which properties were named after famous Islington women. Alan not only was a great friend to all the people of Hillrise ward during his 20 years as a councillor but was an enormous figure intellectually, and politically his knowledge of the labour and working class movement in general was unparalleled in our community. We all miss Alan terribly and we give our warmest thanks and sympathy to those nearest and dearest to him.

My last meeting with Alan was in the morning of New Year's Day when I visited to wish him Happy New Year. We sat together for a long time and he, obviously in desperate pain, and tragically with only a few days to live, talked about French art, literature and politics, about Islington and about Palestine (as I was leaving the following day or a couple of days later to be an international observer at the elections).

His advice and knowledge is something I will always remember. It was therefore poignant that while attending a reception for the new Palestinian president, Abu Mazen, I received a phone call from Alison to give me the tragic news that Alan had finally lost his battle with cancer. Thank you Alan for all you did, for all your knowledge and all your friendship.

The above photo of myself and Mordechai Vanunu was taken on my recent trip to Palestine to observe the elections there.

This report covers, as usual, many local issues as well as parliamentary, and a very interesting experience I had in Palestine is fully covered in the attached articles.

## PRESS

- 26/11/04: GMTV - foreign policy
- 07/12/04: Kurdish TV
- 07/12/04: Will Raynor, ITV News – Jarvis collapse / Whittington
- 08/12/04: Al Jazeera
- 09/12/04: French Canadian TV - Chagos
- 12/12/04: Al Jazeera
- 13/12/04: Austrian Journalist
- 15/12/04: BBC Radio London - David Blunkett
- 15/12/04: BBC News - David Blunkett
- 16/12/04: Sky - David Blunkett
- 16/12/04: ITN - David Blunkett
- 16/12/04: American TV - David Blunkett
- 16/12/04: Press - David Blunkett
- 16/12/04: BBC 1 World Service - David Blunkett
- 16/12/04: CBC
- 16/12/04: BBC World Service Radio 4
- 17/12/04: IRAN TV
- 20/12/04: GMTV - Identity Cards
- 20/12/04: LBC
- 20/12/04: BBC The World Tonight
- 04/01/05: French TV

## INTERNATIONAL

### Iraq

14/01/05: I attended the **“Europe for peace”** conference in Brussels (organised by Coordination Nationale d’Action pour la Paix et la Democratie) and enclose my opening speech from the event.

15/12/04: **Stop the War** held their Xmas party in their Britannia St offices which was a nice coming together of all the different parts of the coalition which have been prominent in opposing the war.

04/12/04: I spoke at a **Labour CND** (fringe) meeting of the London Labour Party Conference at Hammersmith Town Hall. Michael Meacher MP, Felicity Arbuthnot (Freelance Journalist) and Pat Healy (Labour Party conference delegate who moved the resolution to set a timetable for withdrawal from Iraq) joined me on the subject of the complexities of the **current situation in Iraq**.

04/12/04: I was delighted to contribute to a **plenary discussion organised by the National Union of Journalists (NUJ) on the Iraq War**, at the University of Westminster, with Jeremy Dear, John Lloyd, and Lord McNally. This was particularly fascinating, with the focus being on the media reporting of wars, especially Iraq, and the way the coalition forces attempted to control access to the media.

30/11/04: Salam Ali is an old friend from the **Iraqi Communist Party** and he came to the House to discuss the situation in Iraq and his party’s strategy there.

30/11/04: A **briefing on civilian casualties in Iraq** was given by the Lancet group following their report suggesting as many as 100,000 civilians had been killed in the conflict.

29/11/04: Diane Abbott MP organised a briefing on the **Guantanamo Bay** prisoners. The lawyers of the Guantanamo victims have excelled themselves, and according to the

British Lawyer who’s been based in the USA (Clive Stafford Smith) the British government (has been more active than any other governments) has moved this along, and I hope that by the time this report is being read they’ll be preparing to leave Guantanamo Bay. It is disgraceful when anyone is imprisoned for this length of time without trial or representation, particularly given the unacceptable conditions and treatment of prisoners there.

24/11/04: I spoke in the **Foreign and Defence Debate** of the Queen’s speech (parliamentary interventions), notably on Iraq and weapons on a wider scale.

### Palestine

12/01/05: I reported back to **Socialist Campaign Group** following my Palestine trip to observe the elections.

16/01/05: **London Region CND** had a similar report from me regarding the elections, as well as a personal greeting and message from Mordechai.

05/01/05 – 11/01/05: I spent five days in **Palestine** observing the elections there and you can read more about this in my articles which are enclosed.

05/12/04: I was closing speaker at the **SOAS** (School of Oriental and African Studies) **conference on Palestine** on the issue of the boycott of Israeli goods and trade. I specifically asked for the suspension of the EU trade agreement and for an end to all arms supplies to Israel.

30/11/04: I was one of many speakers at a **“Palestine in Crisis”** meeting organised by West London PSC (Palestine Solidarity Campaign) at the House in which I discussed the difficulties of holding elections in the aftermath of the death of Arafat under occupation, and the need for far greater pressure to be put upon Israel.

24/11/04: PSC held a successful **lobby of Parliament** following which we had an informal meeting to discuss future activities.

20/11/04: A last minute request saw me comparing the **Mordechai Vanunu** Benefit at Conway Hall (acts including Tony Benn, Mark Steel, Bruce Kent, Reem Kelani, Susannah York and more), with a live link up to Mordechai. I really enjoyed the event which gave much publicity and funding to Mordechai's ongoing ridiculous situation of virtual house arrest by the Israeli government.

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14/12/04: I chaired what was a follow-up session at the House of Commons of **Somali** Co-ordinating Committee members, mainly focusing on the practicalities of raising the profile of Somalis on a Borough basis. Borough action teams were established, to pursue issues such as voter registration, and getting involved in Tenants' Associations, on school governing bodies or even as magistrates.

20/11/04: I chaired a **conference** in Bethnal Green organized by the **Somali** Co-ordinating Committee. Nuradine Dirie was particularly helpful in organising this event. The object was to explore ways of raising the profile of the Somali community in politics and the media. The invited speakers included: Oona King MP, David Lammy MP, Claude Moraes MEP, and a representative from Operation Black Vote. There were some very perceptive and frank discussions, and most people went away thinking the day had been extremely useful and inspiring.

08/12/04: I attended a meeting at the **Department for International Development (Dfid)**, with Lord Hughes and Hilary Benn to discuss the need for continuing the excellent aid program Britain has in **Angola**, and I am satisfied with Hilary's knowledge and concern about Angola.

24/11/04: Following my Inter Parliamentary Union (IPU) visit to **Angola**, I **reported back to the Angola Mozambique Committee** (in Camden) at the House, along with Bob

Hughes MP and Chris Mullin MP (Bob Hughes was also on the IPU trip).

17/01/05: **Liberation's** Central Council met with excellent results as we organised a very positive future program for Maggie Bowden (Coordinator) and the rest of us to work with.

12/01/05: I took part in a **Pakistan** Development lunch which centred around a briefing/launch of the Pakistan Development Group – a series of NGOs and representatives from Pakistan concerned with using the Pakistan Diaspora to raise money for Pakistan social developments.

30/11/04: Sheikh Hasina is the **Bangladeshi** Opposition leader and the daughter of Sheikh Abdul Rahmen. We first met with (then Cllr) Talal Karim on an earlier visit to London and I was delighted to meet with her again.

23/11/04: Regarding the **Dalit** cause, Rev David Haslem and I met with Douglas Alexander (relevant Cabinet minister) to discuss the Dalit peoples and the British government's approach to them. I insisted that we raise the issues of caste discrimination at the UN, as well as ensuring that aid from all British Aid programs to countries where caste discrimination is practiced should reach all people, from "scheduled" and "non scheduled" classes.

18/11/04: I was happy to join the **Cuban** Ambassador for a private breakfast at his home, where we discussed Britain/European relations with Cuba.

17/11/04: I met with the **Western Sahara** Group in the House to discuss the forthcoming European Solidarity Conference for the people of the Western Sahara. I wasn't able to attend but continue to raise the issue of the rights for the Saharwi people, in particular to have the

UN organised referendum to decide their own future.

## **Elderly**

29/11/04: **Greater London Forum** (GLF): As a member of the parliamentary group of GLF I attended a meeting to discuss pensioner issues in parliament relating to pensions, pension administration, transport in London and the Post Offices.

18/11/04: I spoke to the **Islington Pensioners** at their Forum at the Town Hall wherein I encouraged pensioners across the borough to join the forum as an excellent way of expressing opinions. I support the pensioners manifesto (and will do so in the run-up to a UK election), as well as the relinking of the state pension with earnings, and a recognition that the crisis in the private pension industry must be addressed by guaranteeing pensioner security to all those in, or facing retirement.

## **Health**

19/11/04: David Sloman is the new Chief Executive at the **Whittington Hospital**, having moved to Islington from Haringey. I was pleased to meet him to discuss the progress of the hospital, which is generally very good but has problems over the PFI (Private Finance Initiative) contract on the extension (refer articles and parliamentary interventions).

19/11/04: The Chief Executive of Islington and Camden Primary Care Trust, Rachel Tyndall, met me to discuss the provision of **children's facilities across Camden and Islington**, and the effect of the reorganisation of hospital facilities in the Whittington, Royal Free, North Middlesex, and Barnet General. I made the point that we value the childrens' services provided at the Whittington, and want it to be a successful local hospital, fully

able to deal with the health care needs of those in the borough.

## **Parliament**

20/12/04: I both spoke and voted against **ID cards** on the 2nd reading (see parliamentary interventions).

15/12/04: I attended the annual meeting of the newly formed **All Party Parliamentary Iran Group**, of which I am happy to be a member (since it is now very important to oppose any proposed military action by the USA).

16/12/04: I spoke at the **Bahrain** Press Conference at the House of Lords concerning the need to promote full democracy and restoration of the original independence constitution which gave guarantees of parliamentary elections and free speech. (See also parliamentary interventions).

13/12/04: I hosted the **Migrant Training Awards** at the House of Commons in which trainees from all over the world who have studied with the MTC (Migrant Training Company) on computer and technological skills receive their awards. Their determination to be successful, having survived the asylum experience here is always worth advertising, and I wish certain parts of the media took this angle with refugee reporting.

07/12/04: General Pervez Musharraf, President of **Pakistan** spoke to Members at the Foreign Affairs Committee, emphasising much of the good he had done for the country (particularly in the area of anti-corruption) and on developments in Pakistan.

02/12/04: I spoke in the **Caribbean** Adjournment Debate (parliamentary interventions).

02/12/04: I met with Menelik Shabazz and Afua Naa Laminley as well as a representative from Diane Abbott's office regarding future funding for the **Black Film Festival**. I have written to the relevant minister, Estelle Morris to ask for a meeting to further this (currently) under funded cause.

01/12/04: The RMT (Rail and Maritime Union) Parliamentary Group held a discussion on the **Railways bill** to which I contributed.

12/01/05: Adjournment **Debate** on suicides in **Women's Prisons** (see parliamentary interventions)

30/11/04: I attended the **PCS** (Public and Commercial Services Union / Civil Servants) Parliamentary Group to discuss their pay claim and job cuts issues, in particular in relation to the large number of black and ethnic minority staff who will be affected by the huge job cuts proposed by the civil service.

23/11/04: **The State Opening** went off with all the usual paraphernalia of horses and pomp, and officers with strange titles such as "Rouge Dragon Pursuivant". The Queen duly arrived in the House of Lords to deliver her speech and, as is my routine, I remained in the House of Commons believing that Members should not be ordered to attend the presence of an unelected upper chamber to hear a speech from the Queen.

16/11/04: I did say in last month's report that I would mention the outcome of the **Hunting Vote**, despite the fact that most of you will know by now. On a free vote MPs rejected by 321 to 204 a compromise that hunting would be licensed for control of pests, where it could be shown that no other reasonable method would cause less suffering. Curiously, Tony Blair was one of 25 Labour MPs who voted

for the compromise. Hunting will be banned, and I will continue to be active to this end.

## Local

04/01/05: I visited **Holloway Prison** to discuss the issues facing women prisoners, and self-harm prevention measures. I was able to draw on this visit for examples in a debate the following week (parliamentary interventions).

25/12/04: I went to **Upper Holloway Baptist Church** on Christmas day to drink coffee and eat mince pies and chat to the church people who do such a great job in providing a nice lunch for anyone who turns up.

25/12/04: I joined **Islington Pensioners** for their Christmas lunch at Holloway School: in their 38<sup>th</sup> year it is a real tribute to its volunteers who year after year manage this event, and I've offered to take part in fundraising activities to ensure the lunch goes on for many more years.

18/12/04: I was pleased to attend the **Hanley Crouch** Xmas dinner.

17/12/04: Fellow Members: Barbara Roche, David Lammy and Diane Abbot came together to discuss the future of Finsbury park and its management, for the people of all three boroughs. **Friends of Finsbury Park** have now become a registered charity following support from me and other people and we were pleased to continue that support.

15/12/04: **Mayville Xmas Buffet** was held as usual in the community centre and these lovely people just keep on keeping on, and always give me the warmest of welcomes.

14/12/04: **Centre 404** held their Carer's Festive Party.

13/12/04: I met with Tony Denton of **Thames Water** to inquire what plans they have for improvements of the area around the reservoir, and what support they can give to improving the park itself, making the top of the reservoir more attractive. I understand that public access is not possible because of public health/water supply issues which is disappointing.

13/12/04: I visited **Hargrave Park School** to wish them well for Christmas and New Year, greeting every class in this very small but thriving school that is a credit to the staff, children, and head teacher, Wendy Meredith.

12/12/04: Much of **Junction ward Walkabout** was spent around the Warrender Rd Estates listening to the concerns of local residents (repairs and security mostly).

11/12/04: A lovely event was organised at **Alsen Day Centre** to welcome Mr Siddique back from a very long stay in hospital. This was a religious event which I visited and which was organised by the users.

11/12/04: **Tollington ward Walkabout**: I spent the morning around Crouch Hall Court and neighbouring estates with Cllrs Derek Sawyer and Catherine West, and Richard Watts, listening to people's concerns and problems.

11/12/04: I attended the switching on of the **lights at Archway** which was originally organised by Junction Traders but taken over by a PR company on behalf of the council. I was pleased to see the rather barren concrete and open space next to the tube station being used, but am unhappy about the long term plans of St Modwin's property company regarding redevelopment of the area.

09/12/04: **Turkish Speaking Women's Group** organised by Gul.

09/12/04: Along with Emily Thornbury (prospective parliamentary candidate for Islington South) and Council representatives (at the Holy Redeemer Church) I spoke against proposed **cuts to the Islington Fire service**. We are meeting the Chief Executive of the London Fire Service to protest about the proposed reduction in the number of fire appliances in Islington.

08/12/04: I was invited by Pat Haynes (Fabian secretary) to a **Fabian farewell** and thank you **event for Meg Hillier and Jo Simpson** who are leaving the borough to move to Hackney. I was delighted to thank them both for all they've done over the years.

05/12/04: **Highbury West Walkabout** was mostly spent on the Jack Walker Court Estate in Highbury West, listening to residents' concerns about, more often than not, security and access and repairs.

05/12/04: I was invited to turn on the beautiful display of lights at Elthorne Park, in the **Philip Noel Baker Peace** garden, with fascinating contributions by local Buddhist and other faith groups: a real credit to the local community and excellent use of the park, welcoming people to go there. Carol Clinton did a brilliant job in organising this event.

04/12/04: At the **Whittington Community Association AGM** at their centre, I discussed the work they do and fundraising initiatives to ensure the continued survival of this very valuable centre.

03/12/04: I went to the **Finsbury Park Mosque** which I'm pleased to say is now reopened, meeting the worshippers following prayers and discussing their situation and participation with the local community.

03/12/04: I visited **Tollington Community Association's** Christmas party at the Andover Community centre.

02/12/04: The first **Community Reception** was held at the Red Rose and it was a nice start to the Christmas and New Year season, thanking lots of local organisations for their help during the year.

01/12/04: I met with the users and staff of **Alsen Day Centre**, who are very concerned about a proposed move away from the centre during the rebuilding program, and we talked about trying to identify a suitable temporary place with the Council.

01/12/04: Lord Filkin kindly launched the new website on personal relationships and problems within the **Muslim community** at the Muslim Welfare house – a commendable and great experiment which I was pleased to endorse.

29/11/04: **“Homes for Islington”** have appointed David Ronan to oversee the improvement works on the Tollington Estates. Following the allocation of money by the Council as well as the London Housing Board (a government agency channelling money into London’s areas of high need) David explained to me the plans which have been made out for the estate, including the program, and consultation. I was pleased to discuss these and made several suggestions, welcoming his willingness to work with the local community regarding the improvements due to take place.

21/11/04: **St George's walkabout** saw a group of us collecting casework on local issues most of which related to the proposed controlled parking scheme.

16/01/05: **Hillrise ward Walkabout:** I visited Byworth Walk, Nyton Close and Leyden Mansions area to look at problems of management, cleansing and repairs by Islington and Shoreditch HA and I’ll make sure these problems are taken up with the relevant authorities.

18/01/05: **Finsbury Park Steering Committee** met at City Hall today with Jeanette Arnold of the GLA, raising issues of the huge improvements made to Finsbury Park station by Transport For London (TFL), with some funding from Islington and Haringey Councils. **Many thanks to Ken Livingstone** and TFL for the work they’ve put in and I must pressurise the government to ensure network rail make equivalent improvements internally for the communications between the underground platforms and the mainline platforms to ensure full disability access.

## **Education**

03/12/04: The End of Term Show at the **Islington Arts and Media**, organised by Judy Gemmell was a huge success with its wide variety of acts including Shakespeare, brake dancing and rap performance. The evening was a real credit to the wonderful mixture that is ‘IAM’, which is doing so well at the moment.

03/12/04: The launch of the **20:20** campaign went ahead at the House of Commons. Organised by Richard Reiser and colleagues, it aims to have all disabled children in ordinary schools by 2020. This sounds like a terrific scheme and at the press conference Richard et al talked about their own experience of growing up in special schools for the disabled, and the drawbacks they suffered.

02/12/04: John Adam of the Hansard Society invited me to take part in the **Westminster Explained program** (at the Royal Society of Arts), where they contrasted the experiences of a labour backbencher and a labour whip.

29/11/04: I spoke at the London (Parkhurst Road) branch of **Long Island University** to a seminar of about 30 students from the USA who are studying British and European politics. The subject was “the role of MPs and Parliaments” and we had a very interesting

discussion on the perceptions of foreign policy in the USA, Europe and this country.

30/11/04: I gave a talk to a group of American students at **Birkbeck College** who were doing a course on politics and government, about the role of parliament and MPs in holding the Government to account.

23/11/04: I was please to attend **CEA's** (Cambridge Education Associate's) **Islington Islam Awareness Week** at the Barnsbury Centre. Most memorable was the contribution made by the Muslim Welfare Centre, which was excellent and informative.

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29/11/04: I hosted an event in parliament for Abdul Ahad Choudhury to give the annual journalist award – the **Russell Gold Medal** - for those in **Bangladesh** who have sought to report the truth of events. The prize is given in memory of the youngest son (Seik Russell) of the father of the nation, Bongo Bondhu Seikh Mujibur Rahman (also the founding President of Bangladesh). The event was well attended and I was honoured to be there and to make the presentation to Abdul Matin, which was extensively covered in the media.

**SADLY:** Alan Clinton's Funeral details are as follows: Caxton House, St John's Way N19. 12 noon Tuesday January 25th. This was Alan's local hall, where he held surgeries when a councillor. Burial at Islington and Camden cemetery, East Finchley at 1.30 pm. The funeral directors are Leverton and Sons (020 8455 4992)and Alan has asked for donations to be made in his name to Medical Aid for Palestinians.

## **JEREMY CORBYN's Advice surgeries for January 2005**

Friday 21<sup>st</sup> January, 4 – 6 p.m.  
Old Fire Station, Mayton Street, London, N.7.  
No appointment necessary, but please be prepared to wait.

Friday 28<sup>th</sup> January, 10 – 12 noon.  
Caxton House, 129 St. John's Way, London, N.19.  
Appointment only, please ring after 23<sup>rd</sup> January to book.

Friday 4<sup>th</sup> February, 4 – 6 p.m.  
Old Fire Station, Mayton Street, London, N.19.  
Appointment only, please ring after 30<sup>th</sup> January to book.

If you prefer: You could write to Jeremy with details of your problem. His address is: 213A Blackstock Road, London, N5 2LL. The office telephone number is 020 7226 5775.