

REPORT from Jeremy Corbyn MP

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Things go from bad to worse in Iraq and try as I might to start off this report with good news, the international scene makes that impossible. As this report goes to print, news is breaking that Margaret Hassan has been murdered, and Fallujah lies in ruins. Both are tragic events which could have been avoided if we (notably, Britain and the US) had behaved differently.

The Palestinian Conflict remains neglected by the international community, though meets with a new chapter at the death of President Arafat. I cannot be the only person to have found the premature and constant analyses of Arafat's failures distasteful and inaccurate. I look at it another way. Whatever else is said about Arafat, he founded the PLO and has been its figurehead; without it the Palestinians would have been forced into subjugated exile. They have not won their independent state and it is essentially the US unconditional support for Israel that has prevented this happening.

The month has been busy, and included my leading an Interparliamentary Union Delegation (IPU) to Angola. The trip was both rewarding and depressing: rewarding in that it is always so advantageous to visit an area for yourself, and make your own assessment of it; depressing in that the country is so much in need, and ravaged by nearly 30 years of war. Please refer to my articles at the end of this report.

As usual, I outline here what I have been up to over the past month, both in and out of parliament, beginning with press engagements.

PRESS

21/10: Al Arabia TV
21/10: Al Jazeera News
03/11: German TV
04/11: Radio Jamaica
12/11: Al Arabia

LOCAL

21/10: **Education Action Zone**: This was the celebration of the completion of the work of the Education Action Zone and was held at Grafton School. I wasn't able to attend because of the parliamentary debate, and Ruth Clarke went along to congratulate them on their successful intervention in improving local primary school standards. I was sceptical of the possibilities of work through EAZ at the beginning, but am now an admirer of their success.

22/10: There is a controversy surrounding **overdevelopment on Hillside Estate** and I had a meeting with Vera Hyde and other local residents to discuss this proposal, and Islington Council's strange way of "consulting" residents on this plan.

22/10: **"Healthy Living Centres"** launch at Caxton House: This was an excellent open day which brought together a large number of local groups encouraging healthy living through better diet, non-smoking, exercise and promotion of an inclusive lifestyle for communities who might otherwise feel isolated. It was a really good event and shows how successful much of the Health Action zone work has been in Islington. I was pleased to be

able to congratulate them on their achievements.

04/11: I had an excellent meeting with Chris Roche to discuss the future of the **Archway** area and the proposal by St Modwin's to rebuild much of the Archway. I think the project is overambitious and will cause too much disruption. A smaller and more incremental process would be more sensible.

31/10: I attended **CND** Council on return from Angola in order to contribute to the debate on preparations for the NPT conference next year, and the possibilities of a replacement for Trident embarked upon after the next general election. I have asked quite a few parliamentary questions on this which you can refer to later.

02/11: **Refugee Therapy Centre:** This excellent local organisation of which I am a patron provides brilliant work, and Radio 4's 'Week's Good Cause' raised several hundred pounds for it. It has been involved in a protracted argument over the opening of a therapy centre at St John's Way, N19 which as you can see (above) has now been sorted.

04/11: I met Inspector Joy Halder to discuss the location of the memorial bench from **Whittington Park**, which has temporarily been removed. We were looking at possible solutions to this local issue.

04/11: I attended the **Diwali** Festival at Caxton House which was organised by Anand Mandal, of the Asian Elderly. The Mayor and myself thoroughly enjoyed ourselves and are delighted with Anand's organisational skills.

05/11: **Timbuktu** Adventure Playground; the staff of Barclays bank as a part of their community programme gave a day's work to the centre and helped with repainting much of the hut. I thanked them and the staff on their work.

05/11: **Fireworks** at Junction Rd: Congratulations to Junction Road Traders on their annual fireworks display and especially thanks to Jed Beardsmore of Goodwoods.

09/11: North Area Planning Committee, **Archway Campus** – I was pleased to learn of an agreement at this meeting, on the planning application for the Refugee Therapy Centre house on St John's Way and well done to local residents, especially Jan Whelan and Gill Lawton, who went to speak up for the needs of asylum seekers in our community. I had also written a supportive letter on this.

10/11: **Age Concern AGM:** Along with Mr Tim Kirkwood of Age Concern, we spoke about campaigning and lobbying, and I spoke about my support for the pensioners manifesto and charter, and the need for the state pension to be set at least at £105 per week, equalling the pension credit level paid by the government.

14/11: **The Islington War Memorial** event at Manor Gardens was beautifully organised by Barbara Sidnell and held at the site of the borough's war memorial which is in the entrance to the old casualty unit of the Royal Northern (Hospital, now part of the centre) Health Centre. The Mayor and I were the only two speakers and Barbara read a poem.

I drew attention to the names of the families on the wall – Western Front deaths from the First World War. I went on to make the point that wars kill and that we don't seem to have learnt many lessons on this. The way forward has to be the legal resolution of conflicts around the globe through the UN and international law.

15/11: I met with a constituent regarding **MRSA**. Sue Reid has studied the issue of MRSA in some depth and took part in a recent lobby, and raised a number of questions with me which I can put to the Department of Health, about their new Hospital cleaning supremo!

11/11: **The Mosque:** As reported last month I am pleased to say that Finsbury Park Mosque on St Thomas's Road is now open and providing a good service throughout Ramadan. Friday prayers are being conducted with a large audience. I am attending the next Friday prayers on 2 December to show my support and pleasure at the reopening of this valuable local facility.

03/11: I attended the High Court for the **Roger Sylvester** Case: I remain very upset that the case was ever brought at all because an inquest jury declared a verdict of unlawful killing and the police officers have since been reinstated. We have had to campaign very hard to get money for public defence of the case, and the result is completely reprehensible.

PARLIAMENTARY

21/10: I met the **Angolan** Ambassador (with Lord Hughes) prior to my visit to Angola and we discussed the arrangements of our imminent visit, and mentioned a number of groups and organisations we would like to meet whilst there.

21/10: My contribution to the **Defence** in the World Debate is enclosed in the parliamentary attachments section.

01/11: I thought very deeply about the **Gambling** Bill, since it does contain some useful restrictions on small gambling, and access to gambling machines, but unfortunately it heralds the opening of super-casinos in this country, and I think this would be disastrous as do many other MPs. We (those against) voted accordingly, at Second reading. Our opposition has had some effect on the Department of Culture Media and Sport as they are now reducing the number of super-casinos proposed.

02/11: **Children's Bill:** I have always opposed any form of corporate punishment of children and accordingly voted for David Hinchcliffe's amendment to the bill which outlawed all punishment. I voted against the government's

revised clause on this matter because it allows physical punishment to continue. It should be noted that large numbers of children's organisations including the NSPCC supported David's amendment under the Campaign, 'Children Are Unbeatable'.

02/11: Stephen Hawkins, Juliet Stephenson, Ken Loach, Corin Redgrave, Susie Orbach, Kika Markham, Tony Woodley, Harold Pinter, David Hare and Peter Kennard are just some of the UK's leading opponents of the war and I joined them in a ceremony in Trafalgar Sq to name some of the **lives that have been lost** during the conflict. We took it in turns to read the names of some of the UK, American and Iraqi dead. The event coincided with the American Presidential elections being held on the same day.

03/11: **Chagos** Islands: On the day of one of the Chagos (Adjournment) debates (there were two), the Chagossians from Crawley protested outside Downing St about their predicament and their need for government assistance. I participated in the debate and my contribution is in the attachments.

16/11: I accompanied a Chagossian delegation to meet with Bill Rammell and we assured him (by some strange irony he is also Minister for Human Rights; see the FCO Website if you have a moment) that this case is not going to go away. The only offering he could give us was (at last) the news that he had arranged the go-ahead for a trip to Diego Garcia for 100 Chagossians to visit their family graves. This has been an outstanding request alongside many others, not the least of which is compensation, and the right to return.

Later that day, Minority Rights International organised a debate with myself, Olivier Bancoult (Representative of the Chagos Islanders), Richard Gifford (Sheridans Lawyer), Laura Jeffery (Cambridge University), Clive Baldwin (Chair Minority Rights Group International). This was an excellent event bringing together many people concerned about

the plight of the Chagossians, and also present was the producer of *Stealing a Nation*, the John Pilger film on the Chagos Islands.

03/11: I met with Randa Alami, campaigner for **Samar Alami and Jawad Botmeh** who are Palestinians imprisoned in the UK. I continue to support the case and am hoping to visit them both in prison.

03/11: The powers that be are trying to be rid of **Brian Haw** and I do what I can to contest this. My contribution to a recent debate is attached.

08/11: **Ivory Coast** meeting: I met a group of Ivorians who gave me an excellent briefing on the current situation there, and their concerns about the behaviour of the French troops in the Ivory Coast. I tabled parliamentary questions which are attached.

08/11: I attended a discussion on **Iran** with the PLP. Jack Straw spoke about policy towards Iran, and we discussed their attitude towards the Non Proliferation Treaty and the UN Atomic Energy Inspectorate.

08/11: I reported back to the Interparliamentary Union on my trip to **Angola**, and its most unusual aspects: I had to explain that we were officially an all-party delegation despite the fact that the team by the time we left for Angola consisted of Labour members only. I also had difficulty convincing the Angolan government that we were not part of the government and so could not make any significant offerings! See attached articles.

09/11: **The Civil Partnership Bill** was passed in the House, giving same-sex couples many of the same rights as married couples have. The bill creates a civil partner registry. Gay couples would have inheritance rights to their partners' estates, hospital visitation rights, and the right to receive the spouses share of their partner's pension. Wrecking amendments (allowing that it be extended to siblings who live together)

were rejected by Parliament. The legislation applies only to same-sex couples

10/11: **The Human Tissue Act** was passed and is intended to prevent future organ retention scandals such as that at Liverpool's Alder Hey hospital, by controlling the Medical Profession.

10/11: **Black Watch Families**: This was a very difficult but powerful event wherein the families of Black Watch soldiers came to lay a wreath at Tony Blair's door followed by a press conference. Both received much attention largely thanks to Tony Blair's initial refusal to allow them to lay the wreath and thus a media debate about who, Blair or the police, was refusing ensued.

11/11: Pat Edlin brought a visiting **US Democrat activist** to visit me, and she outlined even more of the 'shortcomings' in the electoral voting system than we already knew.

16/11: **Hunting**: The government's hunting bill cleared its final Lords hurdle and returned to the Commons where the vote was still to take place when this report went to print.

16/11: I attended an LSE Breakfast at the Savoy Hotel with Henrique Cardozo and Richard Falk on **Global Governance in the 21st Century**.

16/11: Father Giraldo is a Jesuit priest and an internationally renowned human rights activist who has spent over 25 years documenting human rights abuses in **Colombia** and spreading information about these abuses elsewhere in the world. I chaired a very well attended and informative meeting where he was our guest. Colombia Solidarity Campaign organised the event.

PCS (Public and Commercial Services Union): I spoke to support the strike which was taking place as did many of my colleagues, regarding job losses and propositions to cut civil service jobs by 100,000.

Advice surgeries from mid November until mid December

Friday 19th November, 4 – 6 p.m.
Old Fire Station, Mayton Street, London, N.7.
No appointment necessary, but please be prepared to wait.

Friday 26th November, 10 – 12 noon.
Caxton House, 129 St. John's Way, London, N.19.
Appointment only, please ring after 21st November to book.

Friday 3rd December, 4 – 6 p.m.
Old Fire Station, Mayton Street, London, N.7.
Appointment only, please ring after 28th November to book.

Thursday 9th December, 10 – 12 noon.
Mildmay Library, 21-23 Mildmay Park, London, N.1.
No appointment necessary, but please be prepared to wait.

Friday 10th December, 10 – 12 noon.
Mayville Community Centre, Woodville Road, London, N.16.
No appointment necessary, but please be prepared to wait.

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.**