

REPORT from Jeremy Corbyn MP

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As ever, the last month has been very busy, with a huge volume of constituency casework after the summer break. Surgeries are always bursting to overflowing, and I thank all my staff for their consistent support in dealing with constituents and other matters.

The most dramatic news has been the invitation by the US to deploy troops into further areas of Iraq, which is tantamount to the escalation of the war, and is being done in part to assist George Bush politically in the US, and to free up enough US forces so they can go into the battle of Falluja as soon as the elections are over. I have signed a parliamentary motion about this and will be doing my best to speak out against this. You'll see in the attached parliamentary interventions, my questions to the Prime Minister and Geoff Hoon about Iraq.

Locally, the constituents' casework problems vary between a whole range of issues, but essentially we are continually dealing with the shortage of housing for affordable rent, and whilst I welcome the Housing Association developments, including those surrounding the new Arsenal stadium, the reality is that we need a far more robust strategy of increased house building for rent. In the absence of this, those unable to afford to buy in London (now the vast majority of people) will be forced out of London, and our city will change dramatically and probably irreversibly. I detail below some of the activities I've been involved in over the last 4 weeks. Anyone who wants to receive an emailed version of this report is welcome to do so by emailing me (above) or via my website (above).

Labour Party Conference was held in Brighton this year and the headline publicity was largely about Iraq, and what I consider to be a very regrettable decision to drop Composite Six and give a more open ended commitment with an indication that sometime in the indeterminate future, British participation in Iraq would be ended! The other features of the conference were the passing of two resolutions, both of which I really welcomed, concerning the funding options of council's retaining control of their entire housing stock, and subsequently receiving the same financial assistance as housing associations, and a separate resolution calling for the return of the entire rail system into public ownership, including the train leasing and train operation companies.

I attended and spoke at numerous fringe meetings whilst at the party conference including:

- the Campaign for Labour Party Democracy on issues of Palestine and the Middle East.
- the Labour Against the War rally which I chaired, and which was the biggest fringe meeting at conference, with an overflow audience outside and a live link up speech from Paul Bigley. He graphically described what life was like in Iraq and what he wanted us all to do regarding both the peace process as well as his brother Ken
- a fringe meeting on Palestine, with MPs: Gerald Kaufman and Richard Burden
- a fringe meeting on Colombia, including a debate with Bill Rammell MP (Foreign Office minister) and members of our delegation who went to Colombia in January

- I addressed a Cuba Solidarity fringe meeting, and
- a very large Labour Representation Committee evening, as well as
- speaking at an outdoor Stop the War event
- On the Sunday afternoon the Trade Justice Movement held a magnificent march and rally where a vote took place on Brighton Beach calling for trade justice in the poorest countries of the world. It was large, cheerful, and committed. I renewed my acquaintance with John Sentamu, now the Anglican Bishop of Birmingham (formerly of Stepney). The good humour of this event was in stark contrast to the pro-hunt demonstration which came to the conference, managing to lose them whatever support they might have had before they arrived, by their behaviour and their routine abuse of people they met.
- I am a trustee of the Dalit Solidarity Network and spoke at a meeting about the Dalits, alongside Reverend David Haslam.

Press:

- 18/09: Egyptian TV
- 18/09: AL Jazeera by phone
- 19/09: GMTV Newspaper Review David
- 21/09: Iranian TV on the Green with Kate Hudson
- 22/09: Radio France
- 22/09: Radio Mauritius
- 24/09: Iranian TV
- 25/09: Sky News
- 27/09: Al Jazeera
- 28/09: GMTV
- 29/09: Sky Sunrise
- 30/09: BBC2 Politics Show
- 30/09: Radio Jamaica Breakfast Club
- 01/10: Sky News
- 05/10: Iran Television
- 07/10: Chinese TV
- 07/10: Egyptian TV
- 16/10: Sky News
- 17/10: BBC Radio
- 19/10: Lebanese TV

PALESTINE

16/09: I met Fadwa Barghouti's (wife of Marwan, the Palestinian political prisoner), with Betty Hunter (General Secretary of Palestine Solidarity Campaign - PSC) where we discussed raising the profile of his case. Fadwa is his lawyer and has not been given access to him since he was given 5 life sentences and put in a cell measuring 5 metres by 2 metres following his incarceration! Marwan was elected to the Fatwa Council in the West Bank in 1994 and elected to the Palestinian Legislative Council in 1996. Based exclusively on his membership to Fatwa, the Israeli state prosecutors deemed Marwan a terrorist by association. In such times as these, when Palestine so desperately needs its political leaders, this is an outrageous situation, and an important part of the Palestine cause.

18/09: I attended a PSC Comedy Fundraiser at the Bloomsbury Theatre which was a success.

13/10: I met with some Palestinian and Israeli women ("Women to Women for Peace") who were touring Britain with the help of the Britain-Palestine APPG (All Party Parliamentary Group) to raise issues of peace between communities.

14/10: I spoke at a PSC event at All Hallows Church, London Wall, alongside many interesting and hard working individuals who were in London for the European Social Forum (ESF). The event was well attended and prepared people for the very many issues that would be discussed further at the ESF.

CHAGOS

23/09: I met with Foreign and Commonwealth Office Minister Bill Rammell along with Richard Gifford, the Chagos Island solicitors. We restated our twin demands that the Islanders be allowed to return to their islands within a reasonable time, and that the government lift the two Orders in Council (removing their right to return) that were so disgracefully approved on June 10th. We also reiterated our demand for adequate compensation for the islanders for their removal in the late 70s and throughout the

80s. I will continue my activities to try to overcome this outrage in British history.

04/10: I attended a private view of “Stealing a Nation” a John Pilger film made about the Chagos Islands. I subsequently gave a number of interviews for Mauritian newspapers and broadcasting groups. I have tabled EDMs (‘motions’) in parliament calling for the lifting of the Orders in Council and the suspending of the Habitual Residence test for British citizens coming here.

PARLIAMENTARY

16/09: I met Viraj Mendis (from Bangladesh) in the House. Viraj took sanctuary in a church in Manchester in the mid 1980s for two years, to try to avoid deportation to Sri Lanka. I visited him in that church several times, and strongly supported his case. We were successful in getting him refugee status in Germany where he now lives, and he continues to take up the cause for peace in Sri Lanka. This was his first visit since his dramatic removal from the UK, which involved a 200 mile high-speed car journey from Manchester to Heathrow airport. Viraj came to see me to discuss ways of furthering the peace process in **Sri Lanka**. He was also one of many guest speakers at the ESF last weekend (15-17th October) in London.

16/09: I attended a meeting of a delegation of senior ministers from **Sudan**, including their Foreign Minister, and we had a robust discussion on the situation in Darfur, and the relationship between the Janja-weed militia and the Sudanese army, and pressed the case as hard as we could for peace in that country.

21/09: The **Western Sahara** issue remains high on my list of priorities and I was able to meet with Polisario visitors, including the Western Sahara Foreign Minister. We discussed the progress of the UN sponsored referendum on the future of the peace process, and later I spoke at the ESF at a very well attended seminar on the future of the Western Sahara. I am supporting the European

Solidarity conference in Saragossa at the end of November.

21/09: I chaired a public discussion at Conway Hall about **Argentina’s** debt and financial problems, which was addressed by my old friend Mario Cafferio, who is a member of the Argentine parliament, and an expert on its finances and the country’s debt.

22/09: Along with Baroness Hooper I had lunch at the **Chilean** Embassy with Maselo Briveli, the Chair of Santiago Regional Council in Chile and member of the socialist party. He was visiting London and wanted a briefing on how local and regional government works.

19/10: I lunched with Hilary Benn and several other MPs at the **Department for International Development** (Dfid). This was an excellent rendez vous to discuss our perceptions of development strategies in relation to his department and a welcome opportunity to raise important international issues.

12/10: Two **Cuban** women (Ivette Vega Hernandez and Alicia Gonzalez Gutierrez) visited the House of Commons to speak about the excellent achievements of the Cuban people against the potentially debilitating effects of *not being friends with America*.

18/10: I was invited to attend a fund raising viewing of “the Motorcycle Diaries” (Everyman Cinema) which was followed by a question and answer session with Dr Aleida Guevara, daughter of “Che”, and a reception by Cuba Solidarity.

14/10: Among other parliamentary duties I participated in a Westminster Hall Debate on **Slavery** which you’ll find in the “Parliamentary Intervention” section of this report.

19/10: Organised by the Greater London Pensioners, I spoke to the bi-monthly lobby (House of Commons) about the recently completed Turner report, and **pension** options in the future and today’s Morning Star article

illustrates my viewpoint further (see article section of this report).

LOCAL

North Central MOSQUE: The Finsbury Park Mosque, more properly known as North Central Mosque, was closed by police action nearly two years ago after Abu Hamza was arrested and subsequently charged for extradition to the United States. These charges have now been dropped and he is being charged under UK anti terrorism laws. A small number of people have been praying in the street outside the mosque every Friday for some time. I have been very anxious that this situation should not continue indefinitely, as indeed have a number of other people. I have attended numerous meetings of mosque users and more recently, private discussions of users, trustees, and Islington Police. As a result of all these discussions, agreement was obtained on how best to support the reopening of the Mosque in time for this year's Ramadan, after an unsuccessful attempt at reopening in July. This finally occurred on Friday 8th October when I attended Friday prayers to hear the speech from the new (temporary) Imam, and met many of the users of the mosque. It has now been open for two weeks and is available for daily prayers during Ramadan.

This is a very welcome move indeed. I have agreed to take part in further discussions about future management with the user group and the trustees as Ramadan proceeds. Enormous thanks are due to Barry Norman, Islington's Chief Superintendent, for his patience and good work which has brought about a successful outcome.

17/09 Cllrs West and Burgess, along with the Islington South parliamentary spokesperson - Emily Thornbury, together marked **European Car Free day** with me by cycling around the Upper St area to demonstrate Islington's Labour commitment to the environment.

21/09: I was reappointed as Trustee of the **Elizabeth House** Community Centre at their

AGM in Hurlock St. I've been involved in this project since its early days when we bought the building after establishing a local charity, now run for education and community services. Some facilities are used by City and Islington College on a regularly basis.

21/09: At Hargrave Park School I presented certificates to people who had been involved in a **time share scheme** where everyone offers to contribute some hours of work (depending upon their individual skills) on a reciprocal basis. The scheme works very well and has done much to improve local feeling and participation. The founder of the project is Beatris Echievez who gives of her time voluntarily, as part of her commitment to Local Agenda 21.

18/09: The **IMF** (Islington Music Fund) has done fantastic work in supporting the needs of those who have suffered mental illness, and they held a Music and Arts Festival celebrating the opening of the Highgate Mental Health Unit on the Whittington site, with a wonderful performance of their many musical abilities, and the different bands that make up the forum. They kindly invited me to give a short speech, and I was more than happy to do this as I'm a great admirer of their many achievements. The new unit is a brilliantly designed building showing real care and concern both for the users, the history of the site, and the local environment. It is a credit to the large amount from the government, to Camden and Islington Mental Health Trust, ensuring good facilities in our community.

18/09: Cllr Catherine West and myself attended the **Islington Chinese Association's** AGM. We were there to congratulate them on another successful year of support and care for the local Chinese community, and particularly for their services for the young and elderly. In my speech I also drew attention to the thirst for learning among the Chinese community, and indeed the enthusiasm for learning the English language held by the youngsters in China (not reciprocated in this country). I also offered

support for the introduction of Chinese teaching in our schools and colleges. Tragically, the Council seems to be pursuing its policy of selling off the freehold of all community centres including this very valuable centre. The Chinese Association must raise £500,000 in order to buy the building that they already use successfully, and have done since its opening. I am appalled by this completely insensitive approach by Islington Council to the needs of the community, and the methods which have been used in the sale of this building. I had attended a demonstration on their behalf during the summer outside the town hall.

18/09: **Greenspace** have developed an excellent new football facility on the **Mayville Estate** which I was invited to open, and start the first match off on the new pitch. One of the features is a series of sport and football murals painted by local youngsters, who clearly feel an enormous sense of pride about this facility. Well done Greenspace.

21/09: The **Maya Centre** marked its 20th anniversary at an event held in the Crypt of St Mary's in Upper St. The centre has given many years of service to those in need of counselling and support in Islington, and they have used the Eastgate building on St John's Way to do this. I went to their annual event to congratulate them on their work and I had a discussion with them there, as well as a week or so later, when the director, Celia Clarke visited me to talk about their financial problems: the Council wants to sell their building too, as vacant possession!

23/09: I was invited to be a guest at the **Whittington Hospital** for their annual public meeting, to hear reports from the Chair, acting Chief Executive, and Director of Finance. I was also invited to present the annual merit awards in the hospital for which all hospital staff can be nominated, but only by other hospital staff. This shows a real sense of community in the hospital. I then thanked all the hospital staff for the care they show in looking after our community.

23/09: Cllr Lisa Spall chaired a **public meeting on the Andover Estate** to discuss local policing, and Chief Superintendent Barry Norman and myself spoke, and a good discussion/debate followed on issues of personal security, drug dealing and prostitution. We agreed on policing measures and I'm delighted to say that Barry Norman has now brought forward to January, the date for the establishment of a Finsbury Park Ward based policing team, such as we already have in Mildmay ward.

24/09: Formerly the Lionel Jeffrey Nubian Centre, the **Islington Link Up** has reopened but is not adequately funded. I visited the centre to do a special advice bureau and talk to Des Riley about how we can support and develop the centre (the only centre for the black community) which is hardly supported at all by the local authority.

25/09: I attended a very pleasant local event at my friend Trevor Carter's house (Bickerton Rd) to discuss the way in which the **ethnic communities** have contributed to Islington life over many years. I also dealt with some individual problems, and thanks Trevor for arranging the event.

30/09: I left the conference early to speak at the parliament session at **Highbury Fields School** on the joys of representation. I had a good chat with the cabinet on their responsibilities, and the students who are elected representatives of their classes. I really enjoyed the event which was organised by Randy Buckley, and both are a credit to the school.

Arts and Media: One piece of very good news in the past week has been the reinstatement of Richard Ewen as head teacher of Arts and Media school. He took over from a previously disastrous resignation by the former head teacher, and I've worked with him throughout that period. He has completely transformed the school, which is now oversubscribed and the students love it, with its glowing Ofsted record.

The school does have some financial problems and was overspending, but this issue was being addressed by the head and the governors. I was therefore amazed when I heard that Bill Clark the director of CEA who runs Islington's education service had unilaterally suspended Richard for "mismanagement". I subsequently met some of the governors and received a copy of their detailed statement with its unanimous support for Richard and its condemnation of the CEA decision. I felt Richard's suspension was damaging to the school, to education in the borough, and called for his urgent reinstatement, conveying this very firmly to CEA, copied to the Secretary of State for Education Charles Clarke, so he would be aware of what was going on and the feelings of neighbouring MPs, local councillors, and dozens of parents. I was delighted to go to the school last week and welcome Richard back on his return. He was emotionally and warmly received by all staff and students alike.

01/10 **Crouch Hill Nursery:** I visited the nursery to see how it's getting on, and to support its demands for better maintenance of the building and to discuss their wishes to continue operating on this site. Crouch Hill community centre must be brought back into use by the local community since the Council boarded it up. The Council assured me that this will take place so I hope they stick to their word on this.

01/10: Whittington Community marked the retirement of **George Brade**. George has been caretaker of the centre for the last 18 years and in addition he has been the leader and inspiration behind the Whittington Steel Band. He has been a good friend to the local community and young people, and has given brilliant service to the locals there and we celebrated his work. He received lots of presents, notably, bottles of spirits, mainly rum, in recognition of his native Caribbean routes, and I added to his collection with a bottle of House of Commons whisky. Thanks to George for the past, and best wishes for his future.

05/10: **Islington Stop the War:** I spoke at the public meeting of Islington Stop the War to encourage support for the post ESF rally in Trafalgar Square which in the event had a good turnout of around 100,000 people.

07/10: I was a guest of **CND** at the incredibly noisy musical fundraising event at the Legion, an Old St bar. I hope they made a lot of money because they certainly made a lot of noise.

05/10: A rally organised by the **National Pensioners Convention** outside the Post Office Headquarters in Old St (see below) was covered by ITN and a number of international media outlets including Swiss TV. Billy Hayes (Communication Workers Union) spoke along with a number of other speakers including myself.

11/10: I joined a delegation of London Labour MPs to meet Gerry Sutcliffe, Deputy Minister at the Department of Trade and Industry (DTI) to protest at the inadequate postal service in London, the **closure of sub post offices, and the threat to main post offices** in London. Our delegation was completely united in this and demanded that the government take action to ensure that Royal Mail stop treating Londoners in this manner, and that they be persuaded to take on new, permanent staff, not casuals who often have less commitment to their work.

11/10: **The Finsbury Park Forum at Alexandra House** held their AGM. They have brought together local community organisations and users of Finsbury Park, but with the end of the single regeneration grant next year, the future of all these organisation is in some doubt. I will work with them to assist where I can.

12/10: **Finsbury Park Ward Walkabout** - I spent this morning walking around the Andover Estate with Cllrs O'Sullivan and Sidnell, and picked up a number of local issues and problems which I passed on to Homes for Islington and the local police. The users of the

Alsen Day centre are concerned about what will happen to them during the closure of their building whilst another new centre is being constructed.

12/10: Junction Road Traders and residents held a public meeting at Hargrave Hall to discuss local issues, and in particular the proposal by St Modwen's property company for the reconstruction of the buildings around the **Archway Tower**. This could potentially involve the closure of both the swimming pool and the library, as well as a massive construction project. I am very concerned that this huge proposal would be a further blight on the area for a long time, denying people the use of the facilities for the whole of the construction period. There should be a step by step approach to the sympathetic and sensitive regeneration of the area, and absolute financial transparency on what profits Modwens will make if the project is allowed to go ahead.

13/10: John White and John Lynch from HM Customs and Excise visited to discuss the illegal cigarette selling on Holloway Rd. They are preparing to have a blitz on this in the lead up to Christmas and I am in the business of trying to enlighten people about the dangerously high tar content of these **counterfeit cigarettes** which lately, have been coming into the UK from China.

19/10: I opened a meeting organised by **Asylum Aid** (at the House of Commons) which included first hand accounts of the experiences of some asylum seekers, and this is something that we need to hear much more of, in order to counter the very negative image surrounding asylum seekers, due largely to the tabloids.

MISC

30/09: Tony Benn kindly invited me to the launch of his latest book: "Dare to be a Daniel" which is different from the others in that it's more about him and his life than about his political views. The event was at Dauntons bookshop in Marylebone High St, and was a

gathering of the Benn clan, as well as lots of Tony's friends, all of who applaud this latest work. The tragedy was that Caroline could not be there.

04/10: That said, Clyde Chitty has written a book about her huge contribution to the principals of comprehensive education in Britain, and this book was launched a few days later, with many friends from the Social Education Association and the teaching profession who came to celebrate her life and works.

13/10: I took part in an LSE (London School of Economics) breakfast discussion on America and Iraq, with John Mearsheimer (University of Chicago) and Christopher Coker (LSE).

13/10: I attended a talk by Phyllis Bennis (Westminster Hall) on Iraq and Palestine. She also discussed her book: "Calling the Shots – How Washington Dominates Today's UN" which sounds like a very worthwhile read to me.

14/10: I attended the welcome event of the ESF at Southwark Cathedral where several people spoke, and of particular interest was Susan George (world renowned anti debt campaigner of the Trans National Institute in the Netherlands). The event kicked off a weekend of learning and discussion at Alexandra Palace and in Central London and I was delighted to speak at several events including a large meeting on Western Sahara, a Palestine Discussion in Bloomsbury, and the climactic Stop the War Demonstration / platform in Trafalgar Square. Somewhere in the region of 100,000 marched to protest at the war, privatisation and world debt.

SADLY

24/09: **Rose Sammuels**'s memorial service was held at St Marks: Rose was a lovely local resident on the Andover Estate who tragically died whilst at her son's in Nuneaton. In recognition of her wonderful support for the local community, a memorial service was held

for her, and the family asked me to say a few words in her memory, and on behalf of the local community. I was delighted to do this as she was a great character and brought much pleasure and support to people.

24/09: I attended an evening for (the late) **Jack Kennedy**, who was a member of the Labour Party and of the UCATT Union, and a wonderful activist within the Building Workers Charger Movement, in trying to bring about safer building sites and proper recognition of the skills and contributions that building workers make. I knew Jack for many years and particularly in his steadfast campaign for the Guildford Four and Birmingham Six. I attended his funeral last year but many of us felt it would be fitting if a memorial event could be held at the Camden Irish Centre, and this was duly done and attended by a huge crowd, with fond memories of him. I called for a new law of corporate manslaughter which would do something to make directors of building companies responsible for the appalling injuries and deaths that occur on building sites throughout the country.

02/10: I attended a thanksgiving Service for **Jeff Crawford** at St Martin-in-the-Field. He ended his life in retirement, whilst supporting the Haringey Pensioners Movement, previous to which he'd been chair of the Police Complaints Authority in London. I knew him from his time at London Transport, and his campaign against what was in effect a colour bar in promotion within the buses. As a Haringey councillor in the 70s and early 80s I was privileged to elect him to Haringey Community Relations, a job he filled with enormous distinction, giving huge support to black youth in Haringey. He died earlier this year and it was a testament to his contribution in the community that St Martin-in-the-Fields church was completely filled with old friends, well wishers, GLA representatives, and senior police officers from Scotland Yard who had come to recognise his contribution to London. The reception was held at the South African

High Commission in thanks for his work against Apartheid.

Jeremy Corbyn MP Advice Surgery Schedule: October and November 2004

Friday 22nd October, 10 – 12 noon.
Caxton House, 129 St. John's Way, London,
N.19.
Appointment only, please ring after 17th
October to book.

Friday 29th October – no surgery – fifth Friday
of the month.

Friday, 5 November, 4 - 6 p.m.
Old Fire Station, Mayton Street, London, N.7.
Appointment only, please ring after 31st
October to book.

Thursday, 11 November, 10 - 12 noon.
Mildmay Library, 21-23 Mildmay Park,
London, N.1.
No appointment necessary, but please be
prepared to wait.

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

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

Friday, 26 November, 10 – 12 noon.
Caxton House, 129 St. John's Way, London,
N.19.
Appointment only, please ring after 21st
November 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. Parliamentary address is House of Commons, London, SW1A 0AA

