

REPORT from Jeremy Corbyn MP

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This Report covers a two month period since March and it has been exceptionally busy in every way.

Housing is a huge issue and there are some signs of hope. I append my speech to the House on May 10th concerning Social Housing. I have since written to the Minister calling for a step change in Government policy to ensure new buildings for rent in the inner city areas.

In two weeks time I am meeting Transport for London with Jennette Arnold (GLA) to discuss the problem of Arsenal's match-day transport arrangements. These have already led to furious local debate about coach parking, but due to the inadequacy of the Holloway Road underground station, threaten us with local gridlock as 60,000 supporters try to leave the stadium at the same time. The Council should have ensured that this crucial aspect of planning was dealt with at the application stage, and not left until the new stadium is virtually complete.

Major pieces of legislation on ID cards and Education are before the House; I opposed the introduction of compulsory ID cards. I have supported amendments on the Education Bill to preserve the role of Local education Authorities and to support local community comprehensive schools.

I continue to oppose the war in Iraq and Afghanistan and have attended numerous meetings and rallies, as well as raising it in the House.

Diary

I append below a summary of some of my diary for the period.

March 16th

Islington Mental Health Resource Centre, Isledon Rd – this is an impressive local facility that is concerned about the level of funding it receives from the PCT and it is the best example I have come across of an organisation giving practical assistance to people who have gone through a crisis.

I spoke to a local public meeting in Hammersmith to call for support for the Stop the War demonstration.

March 17th

Adjournment debate on the EU – Morocco Fishing Agreement. The EU planned to allow Morocco to sell Fishing licences in the waters of the Occupied Territories of the Western Sahara. I opposed this and tabled an EDM calling on the Government to block the plan. Sadly, the Government has since voted for the EU plan to allow Morocco to sell fish from the Occupied Territories. I hope this will now be challenged in court.

St Patrick's Night at the Red Rose was excellent, and was supported by local people and our great friend John McDonnell MP for Hayes and Harlington (and Chair of the Irish Group in the House).

March 18th

The Stop the War Demonstration from Parliament Square to Trafalgar Square – I marched and addressed the rally at the end of it calling for the withdrawal of UK and US forces.

March 20th

Sue Lukes has produced an excellent report on Refugees in Islington which I was privileged to attend the launch of. It outlines the issues

facing refugee communities in our borough.

With Lord Avebury I met Bangladesh's High Commissioner to discuss the issues of Human Rights Abuse in Bangladesh.

I attended the Better Archway Forum at Hargrave Park School concerning the area and the Sustainable Communities Bill which I have agreed to sponsor.

March 22nd

I met a delegation of MPs from Burundi who gave a stark description of their problems, poverty and difficulties of dealing with HIV/Aids and the demands on Government.

I appeared with Roy Hattersley and Bridget Fox at City and Islington Question Time - a great event and a triumph for this excellent College.

March 23rd

I Opened the new (secure) Cycle Park at Finsbury Park Station. Funded by TfL (Transport for London), the local Councils and Finsbury Park Partnership, it will encourage cyclists to at least cycle to the station in the knowledge that their bike will not be stolen.

March 24th

I supported National Skipping Day to promote health and exercise, held at St Judes School in King Henry's Walk.

March 25th to 28th

I was a guest at the World Social Forum in Karachi. I spoke at a plenary session against the war in Iraq and Afghanistan and also at workshop sessions on Palestine and on Dalit Peoples. Whilst there I did numerous TV interviews and debates on the issues at the heart of this event.

This was the third of this year's Forums, with others being held in Mali and Venezuela, and it was a huge support to the progressive forces in Pakistan politics. The highlight of the event was the three hour debate on Kashmir, with representatives from all the main factions in Kashmir.

March 29th

I talked at an event organised by the Hansard

Society on "Westminster Explained", where I described the work of a backbench MP.

I was delighted to attend Cllr Derek Sawyer's leaving event at the Town Hall, to thank him for all his years of service to Islington Council.

The Angola group which I chair was addressed by Ralph Porticover, the new UK Ambassador to Angola, on issues of trade and aid. I've subsequently had a meeting with the new Angolan ambassador to Britain - Ana Maria Carreira to discuss relations and trade.

I have also asked questions of the department of International Development about maintaining the UK aid program to Angola, and in particular, the support of the Luanda Urban poverty program.

I met the High Commissioner for Bangladesh Sabihuddin Ahmed to raise concerns about Human rights abuses in that country, which have been drawn to my attention by members of the Angolan community.

30th March

I attended a meeting with FCO representatives regarding the Jericho Prison attack by Israel. This meeting was quite unsatisfactory since almost all meetings on this subject seem to be devoid of international law as a starting point and this was no exception.

I have been invited to become a trustee of Hanley Crouch Community Association which manages the Laundry Community Centre and I attended by first meeting as a trustee.

March 31st

I attended the opening of Ponders Bridge House with my colleague Emily Thornberry MP. This is a new development for people coming out of institutional care, where they are given high quality housing for up to a year.

I was invited to the 20th anniversary for the abolition of the Greater London Council hosted by Ken Livingstone. Margaret Thatcher was not invited, but her ghost was present throughout the evening as we relived the battle to save London in the 1980s.

I was interviewed on More 4 News regarding AEGIS (a British company in Iraq working on security). This included a film allegedly showing insurgents being shot at from cars operated by this company. I subsequently raised the issue of funding, and rules of engagement operated by security companies working in Iraq, with my colleague Harry Cohen.

April 1st

I chaired CND's National Council held at Caxton House.

In the afternoon I travelled to Brighton and Hove Palestine Solidarity AGM to speak on the illegality of the wall and the need for political negotiations with the Palestine National Authority.

In the evenings I attended Sally Billot's 60th birthday. Some of you may know her in her capacity as a former Haringey Councillor and activist in Finsbury Park forum.

April 2nd

I joined colleagues / MPs David Lammy and Emily Thornberry with Cllr Catherine West to launch the Islington Labour Local Campaign Launch.

April 3rd

I had a meeting with Eamon McGoldrick, chief executive of Homes, to raise my concerns about the continued lack of new build in Islington, and the increasing use of a policy of placing those in desperate housing need in privately leased accommodation at exorbitant rents (refer to my speech to the House which is attached)

I had a special advice session at the old Fire Station for the Somali Banadir Surgery organised by our friend Abdalla Sangaaf.

April 4th

I met John McNulty (TfL senior official responsible for interchange facilities) to discuss the progress of the Finsbury Park interchange and the lack of improvement of the Network Rail station and the access to the London Underground station; an impossible place for anyone with disabilities to access. John and

his colleagues have done a good job in improving the bus stands but because the government has so far refused to transfer the management of Finsbury Park station to Transport for London, we still need major improvements which have still not been set in hand in the station itself. I raised this in a question to Alistair Darling MP who has confirmed that there are no plans for such a transfer of management.

I attended a BBC Protest about the lack of reporting of the huge anti war demonstration on May 18th. This demonstration subsequently appeared on BBC feedback and we've had some useful conversations with the BBC about the wider issues here.

April 6th

Together with other London MPs I was invited to visit to the CTRL (Channel Tunnel) works at St Pancras Station, which are truly amazing in their size and detail and the skill of those who work there. I was impressed with the attention to restoring the historic detail of St Pancras station and look forward to the works being completed. I was also given an interesting book on the construction of the new line from the channel to London, and the enormous archaeological work that went on during the excavation phase.

April 7th

I met with representatives of the Nth London Central Mosque to discuss holding occasional advice sessions after Friday prayers for those who attend this mosque. I am pleased to say that this mosque is developing into a very valuable community resource.

I met Carol Louvet of the Holloway Neighbourhood Group Stress Project who is concerned about the funding problems of the Primary Care Trust, and the knock-on effect of the under funding of valuable local projects like this.

I later did an interview on Sky TV to talk about the continued issues of the Right of Return to Diego Garcia / the Chagos Islands.

Subsequently I have raised the matter in the House following the court victory of the

islanders in overturning the Orders in Council of 2004. I have asked our new Foreign Secretary Margaret Beckett not to launch an appeal but instead to facilitate the return of the islanders to their homeland.

April 8th

I spent part of this morning with Wally Burgess, Gary Heather and Bisi Williams at a stall on Brecknock Rd, meeting local people.

I later spoke at the Venezuela Information Centre conference at the Bolivar Hall on the need for understanding and appreciation of the social revolution which is taking place in Venezuela and some of its neighbours, and the need for it not to be isolated.

You'll have seen in the papers that President Chavez made a private visit to London for 2 days. I was invited to sit on the platform at the Camden Centre rally where he spoke briefly for (almost) four hours about history, culture, mathematics, health, social security, environment, and most other things.

He subsequently attended a lunch at City Hall the next day, as well as visiting the House of Commons to attend a meeting of Labour Friends of Venezuela in the Churchill Room. The irony of Chavez speaking while being scowled upon by Churchill is something I'll always remember. Chavez denounced the third way and barbaric capitalism and got cheered at every mention of the word socialism (by many of us anyway). I think even Churchill would have admired his spirit and the sense of occasion.

I was eventually to be interviewed by Sky television about his visit here, as well as CNN.

I later went to Leicester to speak at a two Day Palestine conference at the university, organised by Friends of Al Aqsa.

On my return to London I visited and spoke at the Liberation Fundraising event at Haringey Cypriot Centre.

April 9th

I spent the morning in Finsbury Park with Phil Kelly and Michael O'Sullivan visiting the streets

near the Andover Estate. In the afternoon I undertook an advice session for the Bengali community at the Red Rose.

April 10th

I spent the evening visiting people in Junction, campaigning.

April 19th

I spoke in an adjournment debate on the Democratic Republic of Congo, in which Members (including Mary Creagh) who had been on a delegation reported back. I raised local concerns from the Islington community and recalled the many visits to St Mellitus Church and the sterling work of Jean Roger and Regine Kaseki.

April 24th

I attended the Highbury Roundhouse AGM to celebrate a successful year for the Roundhouse, and hopefully a better and more secure future. The building was threatened with closure and sale by Islington Council some years ago, but hopefully now has a more secure future.

April 25th

I paid an early morning visit to residents on the City of London Estate with Bisi Williams, Wally Burgess and Gary Heather.

I later attended a meeting of Barbed Wire Britain which is a campaigning organisation concerned about asylum seekers and immigration detainees. The meeting requested Diane Abbott and myself to visit Yarlwood Detention centre to view conditions there for ourselves which we did on Monday 22nd May. I subsequently wrote a column about this in the Morning Star, published on 24th May.

The physical conditions in the centre are certainly a vast improvement on the centre which was burnt down some years ago. The real issue is the detention of some 2000 people in Britain including children who, whilst well treated and offered education and other facilities in the centre, simply should not be there. It must be a traumatic experience for a child to be detained. In all the furore of the debate about immigration and alleged over-stayers, we should not forget that there is a

human side to this. Many who I met in detention are victims of the most appalling social justice and prejudice in their own countries. We should adopt a much more humanitarian attitude towards them.

April 26th

I hosted a meeting for Military Families who have lost loved ones in Iraq. A significant number of MPs, both pro and anti war attended and spoke at the meeting. One could feel the dreadful pain of losing loved ones in the appalling circumstances in Iraq and the costs of war. We observed the families laying wreaths at the cenotaphs in memory of those who have died. The Police were very cooperative about this, as were the Downing St security staff.

I later went for a photo call with Frank Dobson at Tufnell Park Station, alongside Council candidates. We all welcome investment in Public Transport in London, and the current situation provides a very inadequate service.

I was invited to a private view of Sally Temple's excellent paintings and I hope they have sold well.

Today was also the 20th anniversary of the dreadful explosion at Chernobyl in 1986, and CND marked this event with myself, Michael Meacher and a Professor from the University present. "Chernobyl" was a salutary lesson for those who believe CND power is the solution to all our ills.

April 27th

I held a special advice session at the Durham Rd community rooms, with the Turkish and Kurdish Womens' Group

April 28th

I was invited to meet the President of the interim government of Somalia during his visit to London. We had an interesting conversation with him about the possibilities of restoring some form of government to the southern part of Somalia. Subsequently Hilary Benn MP paid an official visit to the area which is extremely welcome.

I was one of the parliamentary panel on the

Greater London forum for the Elderly and spoke at their AGM at Congress House, attended by about 300 delegates from different borough pensioners forums' across London.

I zipped across London on my bike to speak at International Workers Memorial Day outside City Hall to remember those who have died in building and other industrial accidents, and the need for having corporate manslaughter legislation in this country.

An Advice session at the Nth London Central Mosque turned out to be extremely long as many people came with serious problems.

April 29th

With Bici Williams and Catherine West I attended the Ethiopian Orthodox Church blessing at St George's Church in Crayford Rd. Reverend Melanie Toogood has done a great job in providing facilities for the Ethiopian church to operate within our community.

I spent the rest of the day visiting residents in Hornsey Rise Gardens with Claudia Webbe and David Poyser, and then in Courtney Court with Adrian Pulham, Richard Greening and Theresa De Bono.

May 1st

I celebrated Mayday by visiting Highbury Quadrant Estate residents with Mick Gilgunn.

May 2nd

I spoke in the Latin America Adjournment Debate about the political changes in the continent.

May 3rd

I was a guest on the Islam channel.

May 4th

During today I managed to visit every polling station and every one of the committee rooms of the election, assisting with reminding votes to come out and support labour candidates.

May 5th

I did an interview for the GMTV Sunday Program and also for Al Jazeera, News 24 and RTE, concerning the consequences of the election results of the day before.

May 6th

I joined a protest against an attack on Iran at Friends Meeting House, and whilst denouncing human rights abuses in Iran, we opposed any possible invasion of that country by a combination of Britain and the USA.

May 8th

I attended the citizenship ceremony of Mr Ghislain Mulumba Bakatuseka

May 9th

I chaired a meeting in the House of Commons on Protecting Rail workers Pensions Lobby at which among others, Francis O'Grady (Deputy General Secretary of the TUC) and 3 other General Secretaries of 3 rail unions presided over.

I was interviewed by a Ukraine Journalist Svetlana Selyutina on the profiteering tactics of some British companies in Iraq.

May 10th

Today was the Social Housing Adjournment Debate which I have attached. It was also the day of the International Arms Treaty lobby and I met with a very impressive delegation of local people concerning the need for an international arms treaty.

May 11th

I spoke at Islington Town Hall's Education of Black Children event which was organised by Islington NUT and Natfhe. The event was very well attended and partly designed to commemorate the work done by John Le Rose in the early 70s, and Bernard Coard, regarding the way in which the education system fails black children.

May 13th

Tonight was an informal gathering with the Chagossians at which we watched the film of them returning for a 4 day visit to the islands. The event was organised to celebrate the court win of the reversal of the Orders in Council. Understandably, the mood was tempered by the video of the journey which was of course full of sad memories, particularly for some of the older Chagossians who have memories of their cruel eviction from the islands.

May 15th

I visited the Open Day of the UK Church of God Training Centre UK in the Rainbow Theatre in Finsbury Park. The training is separate from the church's activities, providing opportunities for people to get back into education who might otherwise be left out.

May 16th

I voted against the Legislative and Regulatory Reform Bill because, despite its watered down version, it still gives far too much power to the executive at the expense of parliament. It's imperative that we control executive power and this bill was not nick named the Abolition of Parliament bill for no reason.

I hosted a meeting for Christian Aid on environmental and social consequences of mining in the Philippines, some of which is being done by British companies.

May 17th

Today a meeting was held for MPs at which Oliver Bancoult (Chagos Refugee Association) spoke about the situation facing them, and with the solicitor Richard Burden, participated in a discussion about how we could all move forward and persuade Margaret Beckett from appealing against the court decision (they have 28 days in which to do so).

May 18th

I met with the Commonwealth General Secretary at Pall Mall office accompanied by Olivier and Richard and we gave them a useful briefing on the subject including the Chagossians' lack of representation in UK government decision making regarding their homeland.

May 19th

I was a guest on the BBC Daily politics show to discuss the Education Bill and why I support community comprehensive schools.

I hosted a delegation of South African Trade Unionists at parliament and later gave a talk to 30 American students from the Mary Washington University in Virginia.

May 20th

The struggle goes on for Palestine, and today was the big demonstration, though with poor weather it wasn't quite big enough! There were many good speakers and I spoke as best I could about the unfolding humanitarian crisis there and how we must lobby the government to take substantive action to bring the occupation to a halt.

May 23rd

I was presented by John Ackers and supporters from Friends of the Earth with 250 postcards concerning climate change, and I will subsequently be writing to these people about that very important subject.

In the evening I chaired a meeting on Iran with speakers from different Iranian groups in the House of Commons.

Advice Sessions were as busy as always this month with the most common problem people have continuing to be housing, then immigration, and after that a mixture. Sessions continue each week and if you know someone who needs my help please ask them to telephone 020 7226 5775 and Ruth Clarke or Dave Horan can advise them on my behalf.
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