

2014.09.09

Deputy G.C.L. Baudains of St. Clement of the Minister for External Relations regarding the implementation of a trade boycott of Israel:

Does the Minister consider that Israel should be condemned for its continuing defiance of U.N. (United Nations) resolutions and disproportionate use of force against its neighbours, and, if so, in light of the recent escalation in violence, would he agree to take action to implement a trade boycott of Israel?

Senator P.M. Bailhache (The Minister for External Relations):

The policy of the Government of Jersey in this matter is of course aligned with the policy of the United Kingdom Government and we support the statements by the British Foreign Secretary, endorsing the continuation of the ceasefire. The current crisis underlines once again the need for a wider political solution to the Israeli Palestinian conflict which is the only way to secure the lasting peace that the people of Israel and Palestine deserve. The Island does not have any trade agreements with the Government of Israel.

3.4.1 Deputy G.C.L. Baudains:

I thank the Minister for his helpful response and presumably he is aware that there are dozens of U.N. resolutions still outstanding against that State due to its illegal occupation of Palestinian territory and its disproportional use of force. But does the Minister not believe that by continuing to trade with a State that behaves in this way that we risk sending a signal that we endorse that State's actions? What I am asking is, I know that we have been trying to create business with certain countries and Israel is one of them, so does the Minister not agree that we should either cease trade that we have or not continue with attempting to increase trade lest we be seen to be supporting this behaviour?

Senator P.M. Bailhache:

When the ambassadors from the Arab Consul came to Jersey some months ago, there were discussions, among others, with the Ambassador from the Palestinian State who was entirely understanding and approving of the wish of Jersey to nurture trade relations with Israel, and indeed to nurture trade relations with Arab States as well. The purpose of encouraging trade relations, or one of the purposes of encouraging trade relations, is to nurture and encourage political relations and to encourage exactly the kind of outcome which I think the Deputy and most of us would desire in relation to Palestine.

3.4.2 Deputy R.G. Le Hérissier:

I wonder if the Minister could tell us the circumstances under which the Jersey Government would refuse to engage in trade with a country in order that we can get the criteria clear? Thank you.

Senator P.M. Bailhache:

I think the first thing to say is that the Government of Jersey ...

The Deputy Bailiff:

I will have to break your proposition, Minister, in fact it is not in accordance with Standing Orders.

Deputy R.G. Le Hérissier:

Could I rephrase that, Sir?

The Deputy Bailiff:

You can certainly try.

Deputy R.G. Le Hérisier:

I wonder if in the light of the sentiments expressed in relation to Jersey-Israel trade, could the Minister outline the circumstances which would lead to a withdrawal or to a ceasing of the relationship, the trade relationship?

Senator P.M. Bailhache:

I think the bottom line is that the Government of Jersey must comply with the law, and so far as trade with Israel is concerned, the legal basis for trade relations lies in an E.U. (European Union) Israel Association Agreement which came into force in June 2000, and our relations with the European Union are, as the Deputy will know, founded upon protocol 3. The customs authorities in Jersey are required to apply E.U. rules relating to trade in goods and on that basis the Island would not be empowered legally to enforce any trade embargo on trading with Israel.

3.4.3 Deputy S.Y. Mézec:

This Assembly does not have to follow the same foreign policy as the United Kingdom. It did not do so at the beginning of the Iraq war when a motion was passed by this House deploring that action, so we do not have to follow what the U.K. says. So will the Minister agree that working with Israel, which is a country that is in breach of more United Nations resolutions than all of the countries in the world, sends out a message that we accept Israel being a pariah State, and would he not agree that a Government with integrity should not work with a country to help it become more wealthy so that it can spend more money on bullets and bombs to murder children on the Gaza Strip?

Senator P.M. Bailhache:

The Deputy uses very extreme language and the position of the Jersey Government is that it is constitutionally obliged to follow the same line as the British Government in the conduct of foreign affairs. Certainly we can if we wish express a point of view from time to time but as a matter of our constitutional relationship with the United Kingdom, it is not open to us to follow a different line from that of the United Kingdom because we are a Crown Dependency, we are not a sovereign state.

3.4.4 Deputy G.C.L. Baudains:

I am concerned from the answer arising out of the last question because it does seem to me that what we are being told is we have to do whatever the United Kingdom tells us to do. When I referred to a trade embargo ... if I could help the Minister, when I referred to a trade embargo I was not suggesting that we should enforce an embargo as we do on behalf of other countries, I was merely suggesting that we ourselves should make a decision not to trade with that particular State. Is it in our ability to do that or not?

Senator P.M. Bailhache:

Of course, the Deputy is right, it is open to the Government of Jersey to decline to encourage trade with any State if it wishes to adopt that action. But the position that the Government has adopted, as I have explained in answer to a previous question, is that trading with countries - not all of whose policies one might approve of - is a means of encouraging good relations, and by encouraging good relations one can express one's views as to those aspects

of the policy of the foreign country of which one disapproves. The notion that one should cut oneself off from trade with a particular country is a very extreme measure.