

4.6 Deputy G.C.L. Baudains of the Chief Minister regarding discussions with Israeli politicians:

Could the Minister advise whether the issue of Israel's stance in relation to a number of United Nations resolutions made against it has been raised when he or other Ministers have met with Israeli politicians and, if not, why not?

Senator I.J. Gorst (The Chief Minister):

I understand concerns regarding Israel's stance in relation to a number of United Nations resolutions and can confirm that Jersey's external relations policies align with overall British foreign policy in respect of Israel. This approach seeks constructive engagement in order to promote security, prosperity and peace in the region through partnership with Israel. My visit focusing on developing economic ties with Israel was supportive of the overall British foreign policy approach towards Israel.

4.6.1 Deputy G.C.L. Baudains:

The Chief Minister occasionally brings propositions to this Assembly to impose sanctions on countries who have upset the international community and, as we know that Israel has flouted I think it is over 70 U.N. (United Nations) resolutions; in fact, there have been more resolutions brought against Israel than all other countries combined. Does the Chief Minister not think that doing business with such a country could be seen as supporting their position?

Senator I.J. Gorst:

As I said, our external relations policy is aligned with British foreign policy. The Deputy is right, something like 77 U.N. resolutions have been issued since 1953, mainly with regard to deportations and confiscation of Palestinian land. The Deputy also raised the question of sanctions, and we do give effect to sanctions. I have got to say that, because of our economic makeup, they are mostly in relation to the financial services sector and individuals' relations with that sector.

4.6.2 Deputy M. Tadier:

Given that Israel's occupation of East Jerusalem is considered illegal under international law and is universally condemned by the United Nations, why did one of the Chief Minister's Ministers see fit to meet with the Deputy Mayor of Jerusalem last year, given that the Deputy Mayor of Jerusalem is an illegitimate role and one which helps facilitate the illegal occupation of East Jerusalem, which is an obstacle to peace?

Senator I.J. Gorst:

That is the Deputy's opinion. As I said in my opening answer, my visit was around focusing and developing economic ties with Israel as a whole and it is through developing those economic ties that we can be in support of the U.K.'s approach to Israel. I also met the President, and he is well-known for supporting a 2-state approach and for negotiating peace, but that negotiation is for those parties themselves to enter into.

4.6.3 Deputy M. Tadier:

We are pleased to have J.C.G. (Jersey College for Girls) in the gallery today because this is a prime example of how Ministers and the Chief Minister do not answer the question; sometimes quite adeptly, but as a Back-Bencher you realise very quickly when an answer has not been given. The Chief Minister stated that is my opinion; what exactly is he saying is my opinion? Incidentally, this is also a way that we have to use up our second supplementary questions ...

The Deputy Bailiff:

This is not a time for speeches, Deputy. The question is for the Chief Minister, please.

Deputy M. Tadier:

I thought it was an interesting didactic lesson for our pupils, Sir.

The Deputy Bailiff:

It is still a Parliamentary Assembly; it is a lesson for Members too.

Deputy M. Tadier:

Is the Minister saying that it is my opinion or the opinion of the United Nations that the occupation under international law is illegal? Because he is saying that this is my opinion, but it is not my opinion, it is simply a fact that the United Nations considers Palestine to be illegally occupied. If so, why are we dealing with positions which have no legitimate function, if we are to be seen as a legitimate state ourselves?

Senator I.J. Gorst:

As far as I am aware, the Deputy Mayor of Jerusalem is legitimately and democratically elected.

4.6.4 Senator S.C. Ferguson:

Given that Israel is arguably the main democratic country in the Middle East, is it not perhaps appropriate that we should, as a democracy, set up commercial links with them?

Senator I.J. Gorst:

As I said, I was in Israel and had a particular focus on developing economic ties with Israel in the digital sector. There are 2, I suppose, countries or areas that are at the forefront of this entrepreneurial digital development, that is, California - and well-known to be so - and also Israel. If we are serious about developing a digital sector, and that being part of Jersey's diversified economic future, then we must engage.