

PE2169/C: Facilitate a review and upgrade of the teaching resource ‘Palestine and Israel, understanding the conflict’

Petitioner written submission, 7 September 2025

SPICe’s brief overview of Scottish Friends of Palestine’s earlier petition, Petition 1879, raises issues which, I hope, will not be repeated when it comes to consideration of Scottish Friends of Palestine’s current petition, PE2169. This submission briefly addresses these issues. It is hoped that SPICe will benefit from a raised awareness of the Parliament’s petition process and its limitations when it comes to treating all concerned fairly.

The SPICe briefing states the two reasons for the immediate closure of petition PE1879 by Convener Jackson Carlaw MSP. My comments are as follows:

- The first does not make sense, confusing the development of curricula with the development of a resource, in this instance *Palestine & Israel: understanding the conflict*.
- The second points out that the Government wanted no further involvement with the resource *Palestine & Israel: understanding the conflict*.

In the case of the latter, it should be noted that Parliamentary protocol for petitions states that the position of the Government has no priority over that of the citizen – so protocol was breached on this occasion. No advice was given by the Convener to the contrary. And decisions of the Convener, once made, cannot be challenged - according to advice received by Scottish Friends of Palestine.

On the matter of Parliamentary protocol, it is also important to be aware of the following. Not only is Jackson Carlaw MSP Convener of the Petitions Committee, he is also Convener & founder of Parliament’s Cross Party Group on Building Bridges with Israel. Mr Carlaw’s associates on the Israel CPG were involved in the review of the resource in 2016. A reading of the *Collation of Responses* for this review confirms that these associates were virulently opposed to the resource. Any fair-minded person could reasonably assume that Mr Carlaw should have declared a conflict of interest and recused himself from the proceedings. However parliamentary protocol is quite clear on this – the necessity to declare a conflict of interest only applies if a financial interest applies to the proceedings, otherwise there is no obligation – as was the case for Mr Carlaw.

There is a thread throughout the Cabinet Secretary’s submission which implies the belief that teachers have the time, expertise and knowledge to produce their own resources even when the subject matter could be deemed controversial. Education Scotland, we are told, is supportive of practitioners dealing with controversial issues. What better way to support them than to support a resource, in this case the review and updating of the balanced resource, *Palestine & Israel: understanding the conflict*, developed by their peers?

The SPICe briefing states that the EIS is “not aware of any such working group”. On the first week of June the EIS met for its Annual AGM. On the agenda was motion **58. *That this AGM resolves to investigate and report on how the EIS learning resource on Israel-Palestine could be updated***, which was debated and carried by the members. Given the importance of keeping the resource under review and updated I would be very surprised if there was no mention of the working group. Having said that, the EIS is not a monolith, no one individual undertakes all the tasks. SPICe would not necessarily have spoken to an individual with knowledge of the working group.