

Cross-Party Group on Building Bridges with Israel

24/10/2022 – 6pm (via Zoom)

Minute

Present

MSPs

Jackson Carlaw MSP
Fergus Ewing MSP
Jamie Greene MSP
Alexander Stewart MSP
John Mason MSP
Jeremy Balfour MSP

Invited guests

Gal Sabo
Hodaya Avzada

Non-MSP Group Members

Bill Bowman
Walter Hecht
Stuart McIvor
Stanley Lovatt
Sammy Stein
Vicki Stein
Kirsty Robson
Jessie Maclennan
Jean Brannigan
Gina Brown
Fiona Brodie
Ephraim Borowski
Edward Green
Douglas Flett
Adrian Harris
Dorothe Kaufmann
Christina Jones
Jonathan Connelly
Nathan Wilson
Susan Verschueren

CPG Welcome

Jackson Carlaw MSP welcomed the guests to the meeting of the CPG and gave agenda of the AGM and presentations from Hodaya Avzada and Gal Sabo.

Minutes Approved

Minutes of the last CPG held on 15th June approved; proposed by John Mason MSP, seconded by Edward Green

AGM

The AGM elected the officers of the CPG for this session:

Convenor: Jackson Carlaw MSP

- Proposer: Alexander Stewart MSP, seconded Fergus Ewing MSP

Deputy Convenor: Fergus Ewing MSP

- Proposer: Jackson Carlaw MSP, seconded Edward Green

Honorary Secretary: Stanley Lovatt

- Proposer: Jackson Carlaw MSP, seconded Jean Brannigan and Bill Bowman
(role supported by Jonathan Connelly and Christina Jones)

Israeli Embassy Update

Update from Hodaya Avzada, who has replaced Jenny Sedov

Hodaya presented about the historic agreement between Israel and Lebanon which will be signed next Tuesday which is a historic moment between the two countries acknowledging the relationship between the countries which is a political, economic and security agreement

Israel is currently dealing with several challenges due to threats from Iran and Iranian's supplying Russia with drones that are being used to target civilians in Ukraine

There has been issues on the West Bank and concerns that the situation is not improving; this has been volatile over the Jewish holidays; there has been a terror wave in Jerusalem, Judea and Samaria in the past few weeks with attacks on Israeli civilians

The election that is to occur at the start of November has no clear winner and it is likely that this will come down to negotiations as to who can assemble a collation

Q&A Session

Question regarding Israel and the Ukraine conflict; Hodaya stated that there are many links between Israel and Ukraine and Israel and doing a lot on humanitarian aid to assist Ukraine; Jackson asked for a brief to be sent on this for further information regarding humanitarian aid and refugees

Question regarding the use of Israel's iron dome in Ukraine, however, this was not something that Hodaya was able to answer

Question regarding the gas deal between Israel and Lebanon and the compromise that has been made and whether this deal could assist Europe who could be facing gas shortages. Hodaya stated that there was some controversy with the deal however stated that this deal is incredibly important to both Israel and Lebanon and that it is unlikely that this deal would assist Europe

Question regarding Scotland and Israel working together regarding energy; Hodaya answered that Israel will explore any opportunities to work with Scotland on natural gas and renewable sources

Gal Sabo Presentation

Jackson introduced Gal and stated the importance of ties in the arts with Israel and Scotland

Gal brought her show to the Edinburgh Fringe after previously performing 'Tryptic Women' and worked with the Foreign Ministry to bring 'Maternity' by Frechet Ensemble which was the story of Yemenite children that were abducted from their families in the 1950s

Gal stated that people at the shows were very welcoming to Israeli performers and that she hopes to expand next year and bring 3 performances backed by the Israeli Foreign Ministry to perform at the Fringe Festival 2023.

Q&A Session

Question regarding the abuse that has been faced by previously Israeli performers; Gal stated that they were concerned of the risks and worked with Police Scotland on this to mitigate risks. Gal stated they hope to be able to promote their show more widely next year due to good experience

Question regarding the expense of accommodation in Edinburgh during the festival; Gal stated that the costs are huge but the MFA assisted and without their support the performances could not have happened

Question regarding the selection process for the Ministry choosing acts for the Fringe; Gal stated that there was an open call and a committee chose a shortlist; Maternity was then chosen as the committee liked little-known story the performance told

Question regarding the Israel not speaking up on the issue of the Yemenite abductions in the 1950s; Gal stated that there is no real answer to this and that people are still not discussing it, however, that artists have a privilege to be able to talk about these issues

Question regarding whether there is a similar festival in Israel in which Scottish performers could perform; Gal stated that there are few opportunities for international acts in Israel however there is the Israel Festival, but this only takes 3-5 international acts. Gal hopes for a Fringe Festival in Tel Aviv

Close of CPG

Jackson closed the CPG, thanking Gal for her presentation and stated that he was pleased that the performance was taken well and that there were not issues faced by the group

Jackson promoted the Two Truths in One Land Event which takes place on 16th November at 6pm in the Scottish Parliament

Next CPG: Monday 20th February 2023 at 6pm