

The Scottish Parliament Cross Party Group on Palestine

22nd April 2015

Minutes

MSPs Present: Sandra White, Claudia Beamish; Elaine Smith; John Finnie.

MSP apologies: Drew Smith, Cara Hilton, Neil Findley, Jim Hume

22 Members of public present

1. The minutes of the last meeting were agreed to.

2. Presentation of 'The Balfour Project'

The Balfour project about Britain's role in Palestine from 1917 to 1948 was presented through a short film and explanation. More information on the Balfour Project can be found via the following link: <http://www.balfourproject.org/>

The issue of who the video and material was intended for was raised and it was explained that it was pitched at a higher level of study, i.e. Secondary5-6 and that it would be a valuable aid to study in order to understand the present day situation. In order to achieve this it was noted that it would be best to work with Education Scotland to introduce this into the curriculum.

It was also suggested that given the high quality and excellent production of the video that it could also be introduced to a wider media.

Given the costs involved on the production of the video the convener asked whether the CPG wished to make a contribution of £250 to these costs. The group agreed to the proposal.

3. Educational links between Scotland and Palestine

Vicki McGraw of Glasgow and Clyde Rights Management explained that information regarding Palestine was underrepresented in education.

She explained that 8 local authorities had come together 3 to 4 years ago and had adopted Palestine as a Global Rights partner and that they had established links with schools in Palestine.

This partnership had been established between Scottish and Palestinian schools with British Council and Scottish Friends of Palestine support.

There had been successful teacher visits in 2013 were they visited schools along with the UNHCA. Unfortunately; however they were unable to visit as intended in 2014; although it was noted that another visit was planned for October 2015 and that there was a planned visit to Scotland of Palestinian teachers in June 2015.

It was noted that unfortunately there were also barriers to further development given the difficulties in communication and the fact that many schools have expressed interest but are wary of involvement in a controversial area.

Going forward Glasgow and Clyde Rights Management Group are working to produce a balanced and fair teaching resource on the issue of Palestine/Israel

Also a working Party has representatives from Education Scotland, primary and secondary Head Teachers, teachers, Social Subjects Faculty Heads and Quality Improvement Officers from Glasgow and Clyde local authorities and, hopefully, the EIS.

The Aim is to produce a resource that will allow teachers to tackle this controversial topic with confidence in the knowledge that it is supported by key decision makers.

It was also noted that the Balfour declaration would work well within these resources.

It was recommended that the CPG write to the Scottish Government seeking their views on the inclusion of these materials in the Curriculum.

The group made a number of comments centring upon the need to develop both links with Palestine and educational resources. Further comment was made with regard the possibility of including Jewish Groups such as Jews for Justice in order to counter any possible claims of bias in the production of material as both narratives need to be included.

It was also discussed that the Church of Scotland may be particularly with regards in regard to supporting the Balfour declaration production.

With regards funding for resources it was noted that the STEPS funding could be used as a template and that the Scottish Government had suggested that money may be available.

The group was encouraged to send any further suggestions to the Secretary of the CPG.

4. AOCB

Dr Issam Hajjawi introduced the Palestinian Alliance formed to bring together the Association of Palestinian Communities in Scotland with other organisations in Scotland working for Palestinian freedom and right of return.

www.apc-scotland.com/palestine-alliance/

5. Date of next meeting

The date of the next meeting was noted as being the 17th June 2015.