

## **Note of Scottish Parliament Cross Party Group on Palestine meeting**

**30<sup>th</sup> April 2014 at 5.30pm in CR5**

**MSPs Present:** Sandra White, Claudia Beamish, Jim Hume, John Finnie, Cara Hilton,

**MSP Apologies:** Jean Urquhart

20 members of public present

**JNF Charitable Status in Scotland** Presentation by Hugh Humphries, representing the Scottish Friends of Palestine, on what ways the Jewish National Fund (JNF) meets Scotland's public interest. He noted that public benefit is how charitable status is assessed and not public interest. He recommended a change in legislation to amend public benefit to public interest. The history and objectives of the JNF was noted; to obtain land for the sole purpose of Jews. It was suggested that a legal opinion be sought on Scottish regulatory control of a Scottish registered charity operating in Palestine. Claudia Beamish suggested robust questioning of the Office of the Scottish Charity Regulator (OSCR). It was proposed that the group would attempt to raise awareness of this issue to MSPs and the media. John Finnie suggested using Parliamentary scrutiny via a Minister and Parliamentary Questions as a means to question the charitable stance of JNF.

**Announcements** Claudia informed the group of a course in International Law in Dundee University where two representatives from the Palestinian Water Authority (PWA) would be attending in June as fees were waived for them. She welcomed the support of the University and the Council for European Palestinian Relations. It was put forward that the two representatives from the PWA would be invited to the Parliament in June.

**Items for future meetings:** As the next meeting is the AGM, the election of officers will take place first. This will be followed by Constitutional amendments including discussion on a mechanism to hold meetings sooner. The office of Sandra White will look into the regulations of Cross Party Groups regarding the ability to set up a 'Rapid Response Force'. Colin Cooper agreed to draft a template of the Constitutional amendments. The issue of the group's finances was raised and how the money that the group have can be spent in the most effective manner. A paper on divestment will be presented by members of the group at the next meeting. A proposal to host a film screening of 'Where Should the Birds Fly', a film about the reality of Israel's siege and the Gaza blockade was suggested with the potential date of the beginning of June, August or October.

Mrs Fatou Bensouda got a number of attendees to sign a letter of the Office of the Prosecutor of the ICC urging an investigation to determine whether war crimes have been committed in connection to the transfer of civilian population into Palestinian territory occupied by Israel.

**Next meeting** – AGM: 8<sup>th</sup> October 2014 in CR5 at amended time of 18.00