

The Scottish Parliament Cross Party Group on Palestine

8th October 2014

Minutes

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

MSP apologies: Elaine Smith, Christine Graeme, Hugh Henry, Humza Yousaf

46 members of public present

Previous minutes

Secretary Report

It was noted that on the 13th of October The House of Commons voted symbolically to recognise the State of Palestine. The Secretary also indicated that they would be stepping down but that they would remain active in the Palestinian cause.

The group thanked the Secretary for all the hard work and dedication they had put into the CPG over the years.

Treasurer Report

There was zero expenditure for the year with all income coming from membership fees alone. The balance of the group stands at £2557.19.

Election of Office Bearers

Office bearers stood down and were proposed and seconded as follows:

Co-Conveners- Claudia Beamish, Sandra White, Jim Hume

Treasurer- Phil Chetwynd

Secretary- Chris White

Rapid Response Force

Further to the previous meeting of the Cross Party Group it was noted that any sub-group (Rapid Response Force) would be required to meet the following criteria as provided by the Parliamentary clerks

- **Sub-groups**

Groups can form sub-groups under the Code's rules.

Groups may wish to form sub-groups to focus on particular elements of the Group's purpose. A meeting of a sub-group is required to meet the requirements set out above in relation to meetings of a full Group, other than the requirements

to hold an AGM and submit an annual return. Any decisions made by a sub-group must be ratified at a subsequent meeting of the full Group.

This rule means a sub-group could not be a 'rapid response unit' as groups must a) inform clerks ten days in advance of any sub-group meeting; b) ensure meetings are quorate – ie be attended by 2 MSP members of the group and c) have decisions in minutes ratified by the rest of the CPG before acting on them. Groups are not allowed to hold informal meetings that can be considered to be the work of the CPG – all mtgs must be detailed in the annual return to the clerks.

Colin Cooper acknowledged that the group had not been aware of the code's rules prior to the suggestion of a 'rapid response unit' and although frustrating, given a desire for the group to have the ability to respond quickly to developments regarding Palestine, accepted that such a unit would not be feasible within the Scottish Parliament's rules regarding CPGs.

The clerks of the Parliament also indicated that they would be happy to meet with member of the CPG to explain the code in further detail and the secretary agreed to facilitate any meeting should it be proposed.

Boycott, Disinvestment, Sanctions

THE CPG discussed the following motion which was put forward by the Association of Palestinian Communities in Scotland and the Scottish Palestine Solidarity Campaign.

The rules governing Cross Party Groups prevent them from specifically lodging parliamentary motions' however MSPs indicate that they would be willing to reword the motion discussed to fit with parliamentary style and lodge in their name for debate.

'The Cross Party Group on Palestine (CPGP) notes the depth and breadth of organisations representing Palestinian civil society that are calling for a campaign of boycott, divestment and sanctions (BDS) against the state of Israel.

The CPGP notes that Israel's attack on Gaza in July/August 2014 and the subsequent killing of over 2,000 Palestinians which include 506 children and 260 women - at least 90 families were all killed and 142 families lost three or more family members in the same incident; the wounding of thousands more; and the further destruction of the infrastructure of Gaza, demonstrates the need for urgent and effective action to end Israel's illegal occupation and violations of Palestinian rights.

In response, the CPGP endorses the Palestinian civil society call for BDS. The CPGP also supports the Scottish Government call for an immediate arms embargo on Israel.

The CPGP notes the role of corporations in sustaining Israel's illegal occupation. We therefore support the Scottish Government advice to public bodies, including local authorities, strongly discouraging trade with and investment in companies that are active, and therefore complicit, in Israel's illegal settlements and in the occupied territories.'

The CPGP will form a working group together with representatives of partner organisations:

- *to investigate the extent that Scottish public bodies, and local authorities, are trading with and investing in complicit companies*
- *to identify these companies and the level and nature of their complicity.*

The working group will report its findings, including recommendations for action, to the next CPGP meeting in December 2014.

Association of Palestinian Communities in Scotland

Scottish Palestine Solidarity Campaign

Whilst it was agreed that it would not be possible to set up a sub group it was agreed that this would not impede the setting up of an informal group to produce a report on the subject of BDS to be presented at a future meeting of the CPG.

The secretary agreed to facilitate meetings for such a group.

Date of Next Meeting

10th December 2014 @6pm in Committee Room 5