

CROSS-PARTY GROUP ANNUAL RETURN

NAME OF CROSS-PARTY GROUP
Cross-Party Group on Freedom of Religion or Belief
DATE GROUP ESTABLISHED (the date of establishment is the date in this parliamentary session that the Group held its initial meeting, where the office bearers were elected and not the date that the Group was accorded recognition. All Groups should hold their AGMs on, or before, the anniversary of this date.)
21 February 2017
DATE OF MOST RECENT AGM
22 June 2020
DATE ANNUAL RETURN SUBMITTED
1 July 2020
DATE OF PRECEDING AGM [this date is required to aid clerks in verifying that the most recent AGM has taken place within 11-13 months of the previous AGM]
27 February 2019
GROUP MEETINGS AND ACTIVITIES
Please provide details of each meeting of the Group including the date of the meeting, a brief description of the main subjects discussed and the MSP and non-MSP attendance figures.
Details of any other activities, such as visits undertaken by the Group or papers/report published by the Group should also be provided.
21st May 2019 – David Robertson gave a presentation dealing with the very heart of Freedom of Religion or Belief. The presentation dealt with the need for freedom of religion and freedom from religion and how these intertwine with freedom of speech.
MSP Attendance: 2 Non-MSP Attendance: 13

2nd October 2019 – Presentation from Anna Duncan and Fiona Bennet of Yazda. The presentation focussed on the persecution of and the experience of genocide suffered by the Yazidi. The presentation focussed on the Yazidi's current experience in Iraq and in particular their experience with ISIS. The presentation also highlighted the work of Yazda in Iraq.

The group decided to write a letter to Lord Jack McConnell around the issue of DNA testing for Yazidi living in camps.

MSP Attendance: 1 Non-MSP Attendance: 28

4th December 2019 – The group heard from two presenters, one from Family Federation for World Peace and Unification and the second from Daryl Watson of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints. The first presentation focussed on the history of the Federation for World Peace and Unification along with one of their member's introduction to the movement. The second presentation gave an introduction to the history of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints and also spoke of the persecution members have suffered.

MSP Attendance: 2 Non-MSP Attendance: 16

22 June 2020 – This meeting began with the AGM, where John Mason MSP was re-elected convener, Murdo Fraser MSP as deputy convener and Interfaith Scotland as secretary. The meeting then opened up discussion on the Hate Crime and Public Order (Scotland) Bill with presentations from Danny Boyle of BEMIS and Kishan Manocha, Senior Adviser on Freedom of Religion or Belief for ODIHR. Both presentations focussed on hate crime and discrimination from a societal viewpoint, whereby law formed only one part of any solution.

MSP Attendance: 3 Non-MSP Attendance: 26

*Due to COVID-19 the group could not meet during the spring of 2020. However, the group wrote two letters relating to instances of seemingly religious persecution. The first was a letter to the Malaysian Government relating to the disappearance of Pastor Raymond Koh, the second was to the Nigerian Government regarding the detention of Mubarak Bala.

MSP MEMBERS OF THE GROUP

Please provide names and party designation of all MSP members of the Group.

John Mason MSP (SNP),
Murdo Fraser MSP (Conservative),
Alex Cole-Hamilton MSP (Liberal Democrat),
Elaine Smith MSP (Labour),
Gordon Lindhurst MSP (Conservative),
Jeremy Balfour MSP (Conservative),

Maurice Golden MSP (Conservative),
Ross Greer MSP (Green)

NON-MSP MEMBERS OF THE GROUP

For organisational members please provide only the name of the organisation, it is not necessary to provide the name(s) of individuals who may represent the organisation at meetings of the Group.

Individuals	Steve Begarnie, Linda Oxburgh, Brian Oxburgh
Organisations	Christian Solidarity Worldwide, Church of Scotland, Scottish Council of Jewish Communities, Glasgow Focolare, ACN UK, Muslim Council of Scotland, Scottish Churches Parliamentary Office, Free Church of Scotland, Interfaith Scotland, Humanist Society Scotland, Release International, Iona Community, Baha'i Community, Shi'a Muslim Community, Steadfast Global, Tear Fund International, Open Doors Advocacy, Open Doors, Society for Protection of the Unborn Child, Quaker Society of Friends, Centre for Public Christianity, Global Minorities Alliance, Police Scotland, Fife Mosque, Evangelical Alliance

GROUP OFFICE BEARERS

Please provide names for all office bearers. The minimum requirement is that two of the office bearers are MSPs and one of these is Convener – beyond this it is a matter for the Group to decide upon the office bearers it wishes to have. It is permissible to have more than one individual elected to each office, for example, co-conveners or multiple deputy conveners.

Convener	John Mason MSP
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Deputy Convener	Murdo Fraser MSP
Secretary	Interfaith Scotland
Treasurer	N/A

FINANCIAL BENEFITS OR OTHER BENEFITS RECEIVED BY THE GROUP

Please provide details of any financial or material benefit(s) received from a single source in a calendar year which has a value, either singly or cumulatively, of more than £500. This includes donations, gifts, hospitality or visits and material assistance such as secretariat support.

Details of material support should include the name of the individual providing support, the value of this support over the year, an estimate of the time spent providing this support and the name of the organisation that this individual is employed by / affiliated to in providing this support.

Groups should provide details of the date on which the benefit was received, the value of the benefit and a brief description of the benefit.

If the Group is not disclosing any financial information please tick the box to confirm that the Group has considered the support received, but concluded it totalled under the threshold for disclosure (£500).

SUBSCRIPTION CHARGED BY THE GROUP

Please provide details of the amount charged and the purpose for which the subscription is intended to be used.

N/A

CONVENER CONTACT DETAILS

Name	John Mason MSP
Parliamentary address	1335 Gallowgate Glasgow G31 4DN John.mason.msp@parliament.scot
Telephone number	0141 550 4327

JOHN MASON MSP

01.07.2020

John Mason