conservative friends of israel cfi

MAGAZINE 2014/2015

INFORMED

"With me you have a British Prime Minister whose belief in Israel is unbreakable"

Prime Minister David Cameron, March 2014

8 Home Secretary Theresa May in Israel

14 In Conversation with Colonel Richard Kemp

18 Prime Minister David Cameron in Israel

CST wishes every success to all of our friends and colleagues at Conservative Friends of Israel.

What CST does

CST's mission is to ensure the physical protection and political defence of British Jews. CST strives to:

- **Facilitate Jewish life by protecting Jews from the dangers of antisemitism and antisemitic terrorism.**
- **Represent British Jews on issues of racism, antisemitism, extremism, policing and security.**
- **Work in closest partnership with all levels of the Police and Government.**
- **Promote good relations between British Jews and the rest of British society by working towards the elimination of racism and antisemitism.**
- **Promote research into racism, antisemitism and extremism; and to use this research to benefit both the Jewish community and wider society.**

CST offers its services free of charge; costs are met by donations from the Jewish community.

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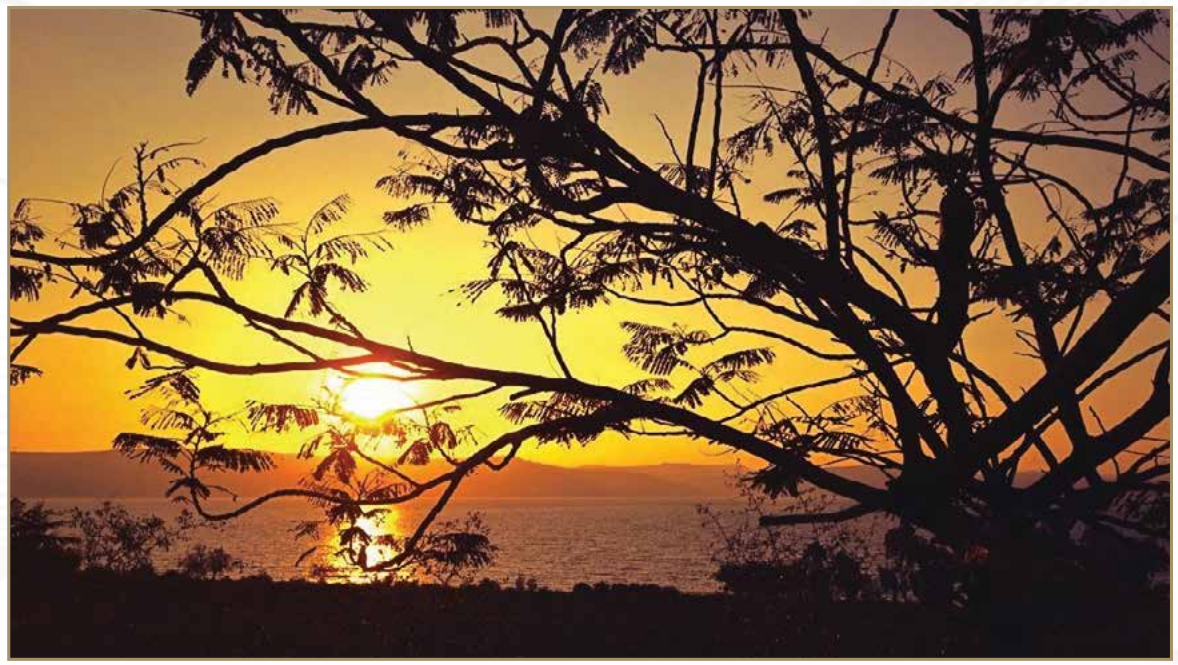

Introducing CFI

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Research & Events Officer: Sedef Akademir
Israel Liaison: Tanyah Murkes

Conservative Friends of Israel

45B Westbourne Terrace, London, W2 3UR

T: 020 7262 2493
F: 020 7224 8941
E: info@cfoi.co.uk
W: www.cfoi.co.uk

@CFoI

Conservative Friends of Israel

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Registered Office: C/O Shelley Stock Hutter, 7-10 Chandos Street, London, W1G 9DG

Editor of Informed Magazine - James Gurd, CFI

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March 2014 marked Prime Minister David Cameron's first official visit to Israel. The Prime Minister demonstrated his solidarity with Israel in a rousing speech to the Knesset where he underlined his "unbreakable" support for the Jewish State. Mr Cameron was joined on his visit by five Conservative MPs, including CFI's Parliamentary Chairman, James Clappison MP, David Burrowes MP, Mike Freer MP, Matthew Offord MP, and Lee Scott MP.

The strength of the Anglo-Israel relationship was seen throughout Israel's Operation Protective Edge, as the Prime Minister and his Conservative-led Government displayed robust support for Israel's right to self-defence against Hamas rocket attacks; asserting that Hamas was the aggressor in the conflict, and strongly condemning rocket fire from Gaza.

CFI has continued to expand its programme of parliamentary delegations to Israel and the Palestinian Authority, with as many as 30 Conservative parliamentarians and more than 10 Prospective Parliamentary Candidates (PPCs) visiting in the last 12 months. Delegations remain the best way for parliamentarians to gain a better insight and understanding of the issues facing Israel.

In April 2014, CFI were accompanied by seven MPs, including now Minister of State, Mark Harper MP, for a tailored delegation on Iran. The group received a series of in-depth briefings from senior Israeli officials on issues as wide-ranging as Iran's nuclear programme and support for terrorism. In the wake of the delegation, the MPs published a special CFI Report ('Iran's Nuclear Programme: Securing a Permanent and Comprehensive Nuclear Agreement'), urging the British Government to take a tough stance in nuclear negotiations with its P5+1 partners and Iran.

CFI also coordinated the participation of six Conservative parliamentarians at the annual Australia Israel UK Leadership Dialogue (AIULD) in Jerusalem in July 2014. The visit coincided with Operation Protective Edge, giving the parliamentarians an immediate insight into the security threats facing Israel and the complexities of daily life in the area. The delegates included former Solicitor General, Sir Edward Garnier QC MP, and former Minister of State for Security and Counter-Terrorism, Rt. Hon. Baroness Pauline Neville-Jones.

With the next General Election just around the corner, CFI has been actively engaging with Conservative PPCs. In both November 2013 and June 2014, we were joined in Israel by five PPCs from key election target seats.

CFI's events schedule has also continued to grow. We were pleased to welcome then Foreign Secretary, Rt. Hon. William Hague MP, as the keynote speaker at our Annual Business Lunch in November 2013. Addressing the 500-strong audience, Mr Hague proudly said that Britain and Israel's bilateral relationship is "stronger, warmer and more full of promise than ever".

At Conservative Party Conference 2013, 400 delegates packed into a CFI Reception with former Defence Secretary, Rt. Hon. Liam Fox MP. CFI also hosted a range of special parliamentary briefing events with senior Israeli politicians and officials, including Israel's Foreign Minister, Avigdor Lieberman, and Israel's Minister for Intelligence and Strategic Affairs, Dr. Yuval Steinitz.

We would like to take this opportunity to thank our Parliamentary Chairman, James Clappison MP, for playing such a pivotal role in leading CFI's efforts in Parliament. James will be leaving the House at the end of this term and we wish him every success for the future.

CFI Delegation: Iran's Nuclear Programme

Iran's nuclear programme has been one of the most vexing international security problems in recent decades.

The potential threat to Israel and the wider international community of a nuclear-armed Iran has been a major issue of concern for Conservative MPs. Long-standing fears that Iran's nuclear programme is intended for military purposes have been repeatedly raised by Conservative MPs in Parliament.

In April 2014, CFI led a delegation of seven Conservative MPs to Israel for a series of high-profile meetings and briefings about the Islamic Republic of Iran and its nuclear programme.

CFI was joined by now Minister of State for Disabled People, Mark Harper MP, Guto Bebb MP, Michael Ellis MP, Rob Halfon MP, Jack Lopresti MP, Andrew Percy MP, and James Wharton MP.

CFI delegation with Mark Regev, spokesperson for the Prime Minister of Israel

The MPs sought to gain a deeper understanding of Iran's nuclear programme and the status of diplomatic talks between Iran and the P5+1 (the United Nations Security Council's permanent members plus Germany) for a comprehensive, permanent nuclear agreement.

The trip featured a series of meetings with Israel's foremost Iran experts including Eran Lerman, Deputy National Security Advisor to the Prime Minister of Israel, and respected Iranian-born Israeli academic, David Menashri, the founding Director of the Alliance Centre for Iranian Studies at Tel Aviv University. The MPs also heard from Mark Regev, spokesperson for the Prime Minister of Israel, and Emily Landau, Head of the Arms Control and Regional Security programme at Israel's renowned Institute for National Security Studies (INSS).

Mark Harper MP reflected on a successful visit:

"As ever, a well organised and managed trip by CFI - well worth the time and effort for MPs. A really knowledgeable and thought-provoking 'cast of characters' had been put together to brief us on the potential threat to the region from Iran's nuclear programme and the need for the UK and our allies to work collectively to ensure that threat doesn't arise. Just as importantly, I came away much better informed about Iran - the country, its people, its Government and the regime. The last two are not the same thing at all".

In the wake of the delegation, the MPs published a special CFI Report ('Iran's Nuclear Programme: Securing a Permanent and Comprehensive Nuclear Agreement'), urging the British Government to take a tough stance in nuclear negotiations with its P5+1 partners and Iran.

Applauding the British Government for its firm position towards Iran, the Report contended that it had to ensure that any permanent and comprehensive nuclear agreement must be the right one.

The Report detailed that any final nuclear agreement must enforce severe limitations upon Iran's nuclear capacity; in order to hinder and deter a future Iranian decision to build nuclear weapons, and provide the longest possible 'breakout' time should it choose to do so.

Responding to the CFI Report, Tobias Ellwood MP, Minister for the Middle East, stated:

"I would like to thank CFI for their praise and recognition of the UK's tough position during negotiations with Iran. The UK is committed to achieving a deal, but not at any cost. A deal that does not address our proliferation concerns is not in our interests. We will not accept a bad deal".

CFI Report into Iran's nuclear programme

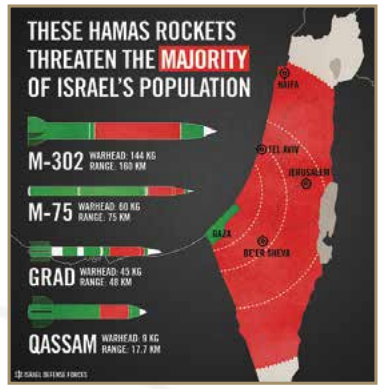
Israel's Strategic Vulnerability

Israel is the only country in the world that lives under the shadow of an ongoing and publicly declared threat against its very existence.

Gaza

- Hamas is designated as a terrorist organisation by the UK, the U.S., the EU, Australia, Canada, Jordan, Egypt and Saudi Arabia.

- Hamas's rocket fire endangers more than five million citizens in Israel – over 70% of the country's population.



- Hamas and other Gaza-based terror groups fired more than 4,500 rockets and mortars at Israel during the 50-day Operation Protective Edge (8 July – 26 August 2014), reaching as far as Tel Aviv, Jerusalem and Haifa.

- Since 2001, as many as 19,000 rockets and mortars have been fired at Israel; an average of four rocket attacks every single day.

- Hamas's vast underground tunnel network in Gaza has enabled the terror group to infiltrate Israel and conceal its rocket arsenal. The Israel Defence Forces identified and destroyed 32 of these tunnels during Operation Protective Edge, following a series of deadly Hamas cross-border tunnel attacks.

Hamas terrorists parade in Gaza

Iran

- Iran is a leading sponsor of state terrorism, providing financial and material support to Islamist terror groups across the Middle East and beyond, including Hamas and Hezbollah.

- Iran operates a complex network of weapons smuggling routes throughout the region to arm its terrorist proxies, in defiance of four Security Council resolutions (UNSCR 1737, 1747, 1803 and 1835).

- The international community has long-standing concerns that Iran's nuclear programme is intended for military purposes. The Islamic Republic's extensive nuclear infrastructure features the key components necessary for the domestic production of a nuclear weapon.

Lebanon

- Iranian-backed terror group Hezbollah operate from Lebanon where they have de facto control of the Government and boast the country's largest military infrastructure.

- Hezbollah is designated as a terrorist organisation by the U.S., Canada, France, the Netherlands and Bahrain. In 2013, the UK led an EU-wide effort to proscribe the group's 'military wing'.

- Hezbollah have reportedly amassed an arsenal of 60,000 Katyusha rockets and missiles; ten times what it had in the 2006 Second Lebanon War which killed 44 Israeli civilians.

- Hezbollah fighters have been actively fighting alongside President Bashar al-Assad's forces during the Syrian Civil War, who has in turn provided the terror group with an arsenal of advanced long-range missiles, allegedly including Scud missiles.

Egypt

- Egypt's restless Sinai Peninsula has been used as a launchpad for terror attacks on Israel by Islamist terrorists and arms smuggling into Gaza in recent years. The Egyptian military has launched a concerted effort to crack down on these activities.

Palestinian Incitement and the Peace Process

Nathalie Tamam
Deputy Director, CFI

It has become almost predictable for this magazine to be reporting on the issue of Palestinian incitement and hate education. But as long as the practice continues unabated and as long as the international community continue to sweep it under the carpet, we will continue to report on it as it remains a serious and continuing impediment to peace.

Towards the end of 2013, Israel and the Palestinians recommitted to direct peace talks. But regrettably, while negotiations were taking place, official Palestinian incitement against Israel was continuing. In December 2013, one Fatah Central Committee member stated on Palestinian Authority Television (PA TV): "Not a centimetre of Jerusalem will be liberated unless every grain of Palestinian soil is soaked in the blood of its brave people".

As peace talks began to break down in Spring 2014, Fatah's Facebook page welcomed the Fatah-Hamas reconciliation by posting a photo depicting two masked men carrying machine guns, each wearing a Fatah and Hamas headband.

Perhaps most disturbingly, following the kidnapping of three Israeli teenagers in the West Bank in June 2014, the Fatah Facebook page published a series of illustrations celebrating the kidnapping of the youths. One caricature depicted three rats with a Star of David, each caught on a fishing line, in an attempt to represent each of the kidnapped teenagers in a dehumanising way.

> **"The Palestinians will take British silence on this issue as a green light to continue."**

And throughout all of this, Palestinian officials continue to openly admit that salaries are being paid to Palestinian prisoners in reverence of, and as reward for, the terrorist atrocities they commit.

The levels of incitement we continue to witness highlights the extent to which Palestinian society has not publicly begun to absorb or internalise the changes that will be needed for practical and genuinely peaceful coexistence. We are faced with the inevitable question; what peace agreement will be able to guarantee peace in the long-term if a generation of Palestinians are growing up indoctrinated to hate Israel and Jews?

Prime Minister David Cameron has been clear in all of his speeches on the Middle East Peace Process that Palestinian incitement will not be tolerated. However, the British Government maintain a confused policy where the Foreign Office and the Department for International Development flip-flop between maintaining the problem is not widespread, and admitting it is an issue but stating there is very little they can do about it. When Israeli policies stand in the way of peace in the region, the British Government rightly holds Israel to account. By the same reasoning, it is imperative the same is done with regard to the Palestinians.

Aid and funding must be conditioned on the willingness of the PA to crack down on incitement, as it has pledged to do. This has worked before in stopping similar incidents, for example when a United Nations agency cut off funding for a Palestinian youth magazine that published tributes to Hitler; the magazine swiftly stopped printing such material.

The Palestinians will take British silence on this issue as a green light to continue this counterproductive and dangerous practice. Now is the time to act.

Fatah's Facebook page depicts Hamas and Fatah gunmen fighting in unity

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Cyber Security: Israel's Digital Iron Dome

James Gurd
Political Director, CFI

Israel is a country all too familiar with facing up to complex security challenges.

From suicide bombings and rocket attacks through to food and water security, the Jewish State and its people have been compelled to tackle a myriad of threats throughout their short history.

The dawn of the digital age ushered in a new, unpredictable menace: cyber-attacks.

Israel was forced to adapt rapidly. By some estimates, the country is faced with as many as 1,000 cyber-attacks every minute. From low-level distributed denial-of-service (DDoS) attacks such as the so-called #OpIsrael by hacktivist group Anonymous, to advanced, multilayered attacks by nation states and major crime organisations, Israel is no stranger to the threat of cyber-attacks.

The cyber threat is ever present. During the summer of 2014, as Hamas bombarded Israel with rockets, the country was fighting a very different kind of battle in cyberspace. Not content with simply supplying Hamas with its arsenal of rockets, the Islamic Republic of Iran was busy executing large-scale cyber-attacks against Israel's civilian communications infrastructure, including major financial networks and IDF websites. The attacks were unprecedented in the scope and the quality of its targets.

In one instance, hackers managed to spread a false message via the IDF's official Twitter account saying that Israel's Dimona nuclear reactor had been hit by Hamas rocket fire and that there was a risk of a radioactive leak.

> **"The next time you bank online, the chances are that you will be protected from online fraud courtesy of software designed in Tel Aviv."**

While Israel neutralised the attacks, the increasingly sophisticated nature of Iran's operation highlighted the importance of Israel and its Western allies retaining the edge in this new and rapidly changing battlefield.

Israel's achievements in combating them have been remarkable. Security technology giant McAfee ranks Israel as the world's third most prepared country for cyber-attacks. Israeli companies are counted among the world's leading providers of cyber security technology which protects critical infrastructure – energy, water, telecommunications, and financial services. It was an Israeli company (Checkpoint) that introduced the information technology world to the invaluable firewall concept.

Hundreds of multinationals now operate R&D centres in Israel, including Google, Apple, IBM, and Facebook - all tirelessly working to produce the next game-changing cyber security solution. The country boasts one of the world's most innovative and successful start-up scenes, with Israeli cyber security start-ups making headlines worldwide with record-breaking buyouts.

Trusteer, a leading provider of endpoint financial cybercrime prevention solutions, used by nine of the top ten banks in the UK, was acquired by IBM last year for a reported $1 billion. The next time you bank online, the chances are that you will be protected from online fraud courtesy of software designed in Tel Aviv.

Having grasped the importance of this 'digital Iron Dome', Israel's Government has now set its sights on establishing the next Silicon Valley. Cyber Labs - the world's first cyber security incubator - recently opened in Be'er Sheva, in southern Israel. The incubator is part of a wider strategic effort to put Israel's Negev on the world map, through the marriage of Israel's renowned Ben Gurion University and a new IDF campus for military telecommunications. In doing so, Israel is taking major steps towards ensuring its formidable cyber advantage for the foreseeable future.

For a land revered around the world for its great historical significance, it is this forward-thinking tech sector that is shaping the Israel of the future.

#OpIsrael advert by hacktivist group Anonymous

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Leaders Must Not Yield to Intolerant BDS

Sedef Akademir
Research and Events Officer, CFI

Amidst a summer of virulent anti-Israel rhetoric seen throughout the course of Operation Protective Edge it comes as no surprise that the Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions (BDS) movement have renewed their incendiary campaign against Israel.

The BDS campaign actively seeks to delegitimise the democratic State of Israel by demonising it in every aspect, and pressuring companies and bodies across the commercial, arts and political arenas to sever their ties with Israel.

The good news is that leaders across the Western world have firmly rejected BDS. Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas has himself expressed objections to boycotts of Israel.

In Britain, ties with Israel are flourishing in education, science and technology, and bilateral trade has reached a record £5.1 billion. The UK Government has recognised that boycotts are a major infringement on the right to free speech and directly impact upon academic, scientific, and business cooperation between Britain and Israel.

Prime Minister David Cameron has repeatedly expressed the UK Government's staunch opposition to the BDS movement: "When we see boycotts and calls for boycotts on Israel, we shouldn't just dismiss them; we should go in completely the opposite direction, showing the world that we are proud to do business with Israel".

However, it is deeply regrettable that the UK is currently the centre of an aggressive BDS campaign against Israel.

> **"BDS campaigners reject Israel, and they reject peace."**

This summer, in an attempt to intimidate student unions across the UK to boycott Israel, the National Union of Students (NUS) voted to adopt BDS against Israel; effectively sending the message to Israeli students that they are not welcome on campuses due to their nationality. Such is the poisonous ideology of BDS; it holds all Israelis complicit with the actions of their Government, whether they agree with its policies or not.

Upon a closer examination of the actions and statements by those who spearhead the BDS campaign, it becomes clear that the movement has very little interest in peace. BDS has formally rejected a two-state solution, and its leaders have even vocally opposed coexistence projects between Israelis and Palestinians promoting peace. BDS-affiliated protestors at pro-Palestinian rallies across the UK have brandished signs reading 'Hitler was right' and waved the flags of terror organisations such as Hezbollah.

As Conservative MP for Hendon Matthew Offord has observed, it is "becoming progressively clear that the demonisation of Israel, as opposed to criticism, is becoming the favoured method being used to promote anti-Semitism".

Moreover, supporters of BDS choose to overlook the fact that Israel is a fully functioning and thriving democracy, that enshrines equality between all citizens in its constitution; the only country of its kind in the region.

BDS proponents could instead choose to highlight the regime-sanctioned stoning to death of women in Iran, or turn their ire on the beheadings that routinely take place in Saudi Arabia under the auspices of the Kingdom's brutal Wahhabi doctrine, and the many other human rights abuses that are all too commonplace in the region's other autocratic regimes. They could, if they wished, protest loudly against the unspeakable abuses of ISIS. But instead, they choose Israel.

BDS campaigners reject Israel, and they reject peace. That is why it is crucial that its intolerant message must not be granted any legitimacy, and that political leaders, businesses and ordinary people continue to take a firm stand against its intolerance.

Protester with anti-Semitic placard in London

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In Conversation with James Clappison MP

James Clappison MP, CFI's respected Parliamentary Chairman, recently announced that he will be stepping down as Member of Parliament for Hertsmere at the next General Election. CFI's James Gurd sat down with Mr Clappison to hear about his support for Israel and memories of his time with CFI.

Why is Israel important to you and why have you been a friend of Israel for so long?

I have been an admirer of Israel for forty years. Personally, I have always enjoyed history and appreciate the access Israel gives to followers of some of our great religions. Each visit to Israel affords a valuable opportunity to visit great biblical locations. I have visited Israel many times and can always find a piece of new and inspiring history.

One cannot help but admire what the State of Israel has achieved since its birth, especially in the face of such adversity. It has faced invasion on repeated occasions and, still today, has a problem with political forces which are hostile to its existence – this is the bottom line.

Why did you decide to engage with CFI?

I engaged with CFI as soon as I became a Member of Parliament in 1992. I had actually visited Israel before becoming an MP and seen at first-hand some of the issues affecting the country.

I feel it is important for CFI to put the Israeli case but also be aware of the legitimate Palestinian cause. Those MPs who have visited Israel with CFI will agree that CFI have always been careful to provide access to the Palestinian case through engagement with high-level Palestinian Authority figures in Ramallah.

What is your fondest memory of visiting Israel with CFI?

While each visit to Israel is full of memorable moments, one sticks out to me in particular. I will never forget standing by the Sea of Galilee and appreciating its unique spirituality. It gave me an amazing feeling like nowhere else in the world.

What is the state of support for Israel amongst your parliamentary colleagues and why should they support Israel?

It has to be said that there is great support for CFI and Israel in the Conservative Parliamentary Party. This is reflected in the very large number of colleagues prepared to stand up on the floor of the House and express support for Israel in both good times and harder times. CFI's successful events always draw significant numbers of MPs as well.

James Clappison MP at CFI Annual Members Reception

There is a large measure of understanding of Israel's problems throughout the Party, although inevitably there will be a difference of views from time to time, just as there is in Israel itself. I would like to see people with different sympathies come together around support for a two-state solution and taking the steps which could bring it about.

> **"One cannot help but admire what the State of Israel has achieved since its birth, especially in the face of such adversity."**

How have UK-Israel relations improved during your time with CFI?

Britain has, and continues to have, a good relationship with Israel. I was privileged to attend the Knesset during Prime Minister David Cameron's visit earlier this year and this left me in no doubt as to the underlying warmth in relations between our two countries.

At the same time, it also left me in no doubt that both countries have a vigorous parliamentary democracy and, naturally, UK policies may not always coincide with those of Israel.

What changes have you noticed within Israel during your time in Parliament?

Israel has become an evermore vibrant and successful country. What saddens me is the relationship between Israel and the Palestinians. I visited Israel many times during the 1990s and was impressed by the progress which was then being made towards a peaceful solution and gave a glimpse of what could be achieved for both sides. Neither side is without fault since those times, but I do believe the biggest stumbling block is the unyielding hostility in some quarters towards the existence of Israel.

> **"There is great support for CFI and Israel in the Conservative Parliamentary Party. This is reflected in the very large number of colleagues prepared to stand up on the floor of the House and express support for Israel."**

What do you see in the future for Israel?

It may seem absurdly optimistic to say this against the present backdrop, but I do believe that at some point there will be a two-state solution because this is by far and away the best solution for both sides. As I say, this may seem optimistic, but forty years ago who would have seen the countries of Eastern Europe as free democracies, Vietnam as a thriving tourist destination and South Africa a rainbow nation?

What advice would you give to your successor as Parliamentary Chairman?

I would advise my successor to keep in mind the fact that, uniquely, Israel is a stable democracy constantly under attack from some quarters. At the same time, try to understand all shades of reasonable opinion. Needless to say, it is sometimes necessary to go in to bat and face some very stiff bowling!

James Clappison MP with IDF medics on Israel-Syria border

What Would We Do?

Andrew Percy MP

Brigg and Goole

In July 2014, Andrew Percy MP visited Israel. His visit coincided with Israel's Operation Protective Edge launched in response to sustained Hamas rocket fire into Israel. The Conservative MP for Brigg and Goole reflected on his experiences in an article published in the Daily Express on 16 August 2014.

So you're facing an enemy whose founding principle is the total destruction of not only your country, but your entire people too. Your enemy has fired thousands of rockets at your country from highly populated areas and shields its weapons behind children and civilians in homes and schools. This enemy also digs tunnels into your country so it can commit acts of mass murder on your people, and it describes large civilian deaths on its own side as an 'effective strategy'. Oh, and did I mention that it encourages its civil population to walk into your country and blow themselves up in the places most likely to cause the maximum number of deaths. It would seem fairly clear that when facing off against this kind of enemy, most reasonable people would probably hold your enemy accountable for what unfolds. But wait, you're Israel and it doesn't quite work like that does it?

I'm a friend of Israel. Saying that at the moment isn't easy, in part because of some of the actions of the Israeli Government, but largely because of the venom that is unleashed on you by some who claim to be in solidarity with the Palestinians. I'm a friend of Canada too, but oddly saying that doesn't mean you are in the pay of their Government or a vassal of their security services. I'm a questioning friend of Israel, and it certainly isn't my job to defend their Government. However, in the fight between terrorism and democracy, I tend to back the democrats.

> **"In my encounters with ordinary Israelis almost every conversation started with the question: "What would you do?"**

That's not to say we shouldn't ask questions of them and I've certainly been asking questions of the Israeli Government in recent weeks and months. Where is the political leadership for peace with the Palestinians? Is enough really being done to prevent civilian deaths in Gaza? When will the Israeli Government bow to international pressure and cease provocative settlement expansion?

But what would we do? That's the question I'm not sure many people commenting on the Israel-Gaza conflict have actually spent time considering. I've just returned from a visit to Israel where I've spent much of my time speaking with ordinary Israelis about the ongoing conflict in Gaza. I also spent a reasonable amount of time responding to rocket sirens, locating bomb shelters and watching Hamas rockets, deliberately aimed at civilians, being shot out of the sky by Israel's Iron Dome missile defence system.

Yes, I spoke with ministers in the Israeli Government, opposition MPs and journalists, but more interestingly I took it upon myself to actually take time to tour Israel (at my own expense) and speak with ordinary Israelis; taxi drivers, waiters, hotel receptionists and businesspeople. I was able to contrast these experiences with some of the commentary in the media. Watching certain news outlets, it became clear that rather than reporting independently, some had chosen a side. This hyperbole reached a peak when I saw one interviewer lambast an Israeli spokesman for being weak in not being prepared to sit down and talk with Hamas. There was no mention, of course, that Hamas in their Charter seek the total destruction of Israel and its people. Perhaps if the Jews had just sat down with Hitler…

Some of the media bias is understandable. How could anyone not have their hearts broken by the unacceptable deaths of children in Gaza and the intolerable suffering there? What seemed to be lost in all of this was the balance of who is to blame. Apparently, Hamas embedding themselves in civilians areas, hiding weapons in UN schools, firing rockets from next to UN buildings and digging terror tunnels into Israel to commit mass murder, not to mention the firing of thousands of rockets over years into Israel, requires Israel to be held accountable, rather than Hamas.

In my encounters with ordinary Israelis almost every conversation started with the question: "What would you do?". Take the taxi driver, Avi, who told me there would never be peace with the Palestinians because Hamas and groups like Islamic Jihad want to "wipe out the Jews". I was reminded regularly that Israel is just nine miles wide in places; a small country surrounded by a lot of people who wish for them not to exist at all.

The same question was posed to me by a young waiter. He was guarded but when he opened up he told me he didn't think the Brits and the rest of the West understood what it was like to live under the barrage of rocket fire and to have people literally tunnelling into your country just so they could come and murder you. He didn't know what else Israel could do - it was lose-lose either way.

Andrew Percy MP volunteering with Israeli charity Meir Panim

Andrew Percy MP visits Israel's Iron Dome missile defence system

I picked up a hitchhiker in the north of the country who was more circumspect. He again asked me, "what would you do?", but went on to say that he felt too much money was spent by both sides on fighting - a comparison he made to a divorcing couple.

Back in Tel Aviv, one of the most liberal and open cities in the world, I asked the young receptionist in my hotel what she thought of the fact that many in Europe and the U.S. don't think Israelis are concerned enough about Palestinian deaths. The change in this young lady was palpable. She raised her voice: "Do you think we don't care that children die? Do you think we don't cry for them?". Again, the conversation ended with, if this was the UK, "what would you do?".

My visit to Israel was fascinating and frustrating in equal measure. Britain and Conservative MPs have a choice. We can either defend the right of a democratic nation to defend itself as our Prime Minister has done so well, or we can align ourselves with people who pick this conflict, perhaps because of more sinister reasons, whilst conveniently ignoring other conflicts in Iraq or Syria where more people are dying.

What we must not do is yield to those who, for whatever reason, conveniently forget that it is the terror organisation Hamas who are strangling their own citizens, who seek the destruction of an entire people, and who use their own children as shields to an arsenal of mass murder. In recent times, balance in this debate seems to have been lost. A terrorist network has, in some cases, been made to look the victim, with some people incredibly asking why Hamas aren't allowed a missile defence shield! Whilst Jews get attacked in the streets of Western Europe for simply being Jewish, Hamas terrorists are relieved of the responsibility for the plight of their own people.

No Place Is Safe

Einat Shazar

Projects Manager, CFI

I arrived in Tel Aviv on day six of Operation Protective Edge. Once our plane entered Israeli airspace, I looked out the window onto the familiar sight of land and felt a slight unease; anything could happen now, I thought.

Inside the airport, every corner had signs for 'shelter' with directions - something which now made the emergency state of security seem very realistic. Entering customs and speaking to airport staff, I sensed restlessness. I just wanted to get on the connecting flight to Eilat; my city, my childhood, my home - the beautiful and exotic beach city built on a blooming desert, furthest away from other Israeli cities. Eilat is known to be the 'most safe' city in Israel due to its location right on the borders with Jordan and Egypt, and theoretically assumed to be 'too close' to be hit.

Upon arriving in Eilat I felt a sense of relief straight away. Meeting family provided warmth and a sense of security; a distraction in a city distanced from the rest.

> **"The experience has given me a brutal insight into the lives of Israelis living in constantly targeted areas."**

On the second night, I was ready for some well-deserved sleep when suddenly I heard the faded sound of a siren. Piercing through the strong sound of air conditioning and a closed window. Yes, I told myself - that was a siren. In Eilat. My protected city, now unprotected. A few seconds later I heard two booms, one very strongly.

Seeking immediate shelter within my childhood home, for the first time in my life I was confronted with an anxiety which left me feeling that I had no control over my life. We all felt a real sense of helplessness. I was in a surreal reality, feeling and understanding that no place is safe.

After that night I understood why when Hamas rockets hit Israeli cities, the news reported on victims of anxiety as well as physical injury. I felt I was one of them. I couldn't help but wonder how the residents of southern Israel go through this every day. It was no surprise to discover that 300,000 Israelis reportedly fled the south during the hostilities.

The experience has given me a brutal insight into the lives of Israelis living in constantly targeted areas, and it is a deep concern of mine that the world so easily points the finger at Israel when its army uses force against such constant threats. I ask; would our Government or the Americans not respond if rockets from neighbouring countries were to land in their sovereign territory and threaten their civilians' lives?

I believe that the UK, along with the West, must begin to act strongly against such acts of violence and terror. They should begin by showing staunch support for Israel, which is the West's frontline against the growing threat of extremist Islam. People must open their eyes and minds to the real threat that Israel faces to better understand the threat facing the West.

Eilat waterfront

Remembering the Shoah: The Next Generation

Matthew Offord MP

Hendon

In schools across the country children are taught that 'those who fail to learn from history are doomed to repeat it', but it is a sentiment that is all too often forgotten by politicians. Bosnia, Rwanda, Darfur, Cambodia, Burundi, and Iraq are all places where genocide has occurred since the end of the Second World War. In Europe, and more specifically the United Kingdom, lessons from the Holocaust uncovered in Europe in 1945 still resonate with many people.

> **"Today, the world sees Auschwitz as a continuing symbol of the Shoah and the atrocities of World War II."**

This period of history is being brought to the attention of the next generation through the excellent 'Lessons from Auschwitz' programme run by the Holocaust Educational Trust. This provides Sixth Form students with an invaluable opportunity to study the atrocities committed by the Nazis and visit the former extermination camp of Auschwitz-Birkenau, thereby enabling them to pass on their experience to others in their school.

The Prime Minister should also be commended for launching a Holocaust Commission into securing a permanent memorial to the Holocaust and educational resources for future generations.

In January 2014, I attended the 69th anniversary of the liberation of Auschwitz, alongside former leader of the Conservative Party, Rt. Hon. Lord Michael Howard. The International Holocaust Remembrance Day event was hosted by the President of the Republic of Poland, Bronisław Komorowski, and was attended by dignitaries from across Europe.

The powerful symbolism of the day was heightened by the first convening of the Israeli Knesset outside of Israel. The sight of so many of my parliamentary counterparts from Israel freely walking around the former extermination camp was incredibly powerful.

It was a moving experience on a bitterly cold day not so far removed from the actual event in 1945. It was hard to imagine how anyone could have survived the conditions of the camp, let alone other hardships of a lack of food and medical treatment, and the brutality of the camp's guards.

As a politician, the event served as a useful reminder why the Shoah is so important to the majority of my constituents. People want to remember the persecution and the loss of so many people because remembering is an ethical act which has ethical value in itself. Memory is the only relationship we can have with those who were murdered in places like Auschwitz.

Today, the world sees Auschwitz as a continuing symbol of the Shoah and the atrocities of World War II. But as the next generation is born, the passing of those who witnessed the liberation of Auschwitz in 1945 will come about. Their direct memories and experiences will be lost. Then it will be necessary for children, grandchildren, relatives - and even politicians - to ensure the knowledge of one of the darkest chapters in history is not forgotten, so that lessons may be learnt to prevent it happening again.

Matthew Offord MP and Rt. Hon. Lord Michael Howard at Auschwitz

CFI's Calendar: 2013/2014

September 2013

Matthew Levitt addresses cross-party MPs and Peers

- Cross-party Parliamentary Lunch with Hezbollah expert Matthew Levitt
- CFI hosts events for supporters with Universities, Science and Cities Minister, Rt. Hon. Greg Clark MP and Skills and Enterprise Minister, Nick Boles MP
- CFI Parliamentary Lunch with outgoing UNRWA Commissioner-General, Filippo Grandi and Israeli ex-MK Einat Wilf

October 2013

Rt. Hon. Dr. Liam Fox addresses CFI Party Conference Reception

- CFI sponsors BME reception with Conservative Campaign Headquarters at Conservative Party Conference with guest speaker Prime Minister David Cameron
- Conference Reception with former Defence Secretary, Rt. Hon. Dr. Liam Fox MP and H.E. Daniel Taub, Ambassador of Israel, attended by over 400 delegates
- CFI hosts breakfast in conjunction with the Conservative Party's 40/40 campaign for MPs and Parliamentary Candidates
- James Morris MP visits Israel for a series of cyber security related meetings

November 2013

Foreign Secretary William Hague addresses CFI Annual Business Lunch

- CFI Annual Business Lunch with then Foreign Secretary, Rt. Hon. William Hague MP, at the Westminster Park Plaza Hotel, attended by 150 Conservative parliamentarians and 400 businesspeople
- Israel Delegation for four Conservative MPs and five Parliamentary Candidates
- CFI Briefing for parliamentarians with Dr. Hagai Agmon-Snir on Israeli-Palestinian medical co-existence in Jerusalem

December 2013

Israel's former Deputy Prime Minister addresses Conservative MPs

- CFI Briefing event for parliamentarians with Israel's former Deputy Prime Minister, Dan Meridor
- CFI attends Jewish Care Breakfast with Conservative Parliamentary Candidates at Mansion House

January 2014

Matthew Offord MP and Rt. Hon. Lord Michael Howard at Auschwitz

- CFI hosts Matthew Offord MP and Rt. Hon. Lord Michael Howard at the Knesset convening at Auschwitz-Birkenau to mark International Holocaust Memorial Day
- Parliamentary Briefing with Israel's Foreign Minister Avigdor Lieberman
- CFI Briefing event for supporters with then Education Secretary, Rt. Hon. Michael Gove MP

February 2014

CFI Delegation in Jerusalem

- Israel Delegation for five Conservative MPs and two Parliamentary Candidates
- Parliamentary Briefing with Israel's Deputy National Security Advisor, Eran Lerman
- Parliamentary Lunch with Israeli academic Prof. Asher Susser

March 2014

Prime Minister David Cameron in Israel

- Prime Minister David Cameron makes official visit to Israel, attended by CFI delegation of five MPs
- Former Minister for the Middle East, Alistair Burt MP, visits Israel for a series of meetings on Iran
- Parliamentary Briefing with U.S. Congressman Robert Wexler

April 2014

Israeli Minister Yuval Steinitz with Conservative parliamentarians

- Tailored CFI Delegation to Israel for seven MPs on Iran's nuclear programme
- CFI Breakfast for Conservative parliamentarians and CFI supporters with Israel's Minister for Intelligence and Strategic Affairs, Dr. Yuval Steinitz

May 2014

CFI Delegation in northern Israel

- Israel Delegation for Conservative MPs
- CFI Parliamentary Breakfast with Israeli General Michael Herzog
- CFI publishes new look quarterly newsletter for supporters

June 2014

Home Secretary Theresa May at Yad Vashem

- Home Secretary Theresa May visits Israel
- Israel Delegation for five Conservative Parliamentary Candidates and parliamentary advisors
- CFI Parliamentary Briefing with H.E. Daniel Taub, Ambassador of Israel

July 2014

AIULD Delegation in the Israeli Knesset

- CFI and Conservative MPs participate in the third annual Australia Israel UK Leadership Dialogue in Jerusalem
- CFI publish 'Iran's Nuclear Programme: Securing a Permanent and Comprehensive Nuclear Agreement' written by six Conservative MPs

August 2014

Conservative MPs support Israel in newspapers

- The Times publishes letter signed by eight senior Conservative parliamentarians welcoming Government's support for Israel's right to self-defence
- Conservative MPs write to Sainsbury's CEO about the removal of UK-made Kosher food from Holborn branch
- The Daily Express publishes an article by Andrew Percy MP on his experiences in Israel during Operation Protective Edge

JNF Jerusalem Tree Planting Ceremony

Rt. Hon. James Arbuthnot MP

Hampshire North East

Israel in July looked very different from today. I arrived for a series of meetings organised (impeccably, as always) by CFI, and in order to see the trees which had been planted in my name when I stepped down as Parliamentary Chairman of CFI. But the background to the visit was that three Israeli teenagers had been kidnapped and had just been found killed. And then a Palestinian teenager had been killed, apparently in reprisal.

> **"I was thanked by JNF for being a loyal supporter of Israel – and I am just that."**

What struck me was how horrified were the Israelis I met about the killing of the Palestinian boy. Sadly, Israelis had grown used to the idea that Israeli children were always at some risk, but they told me that this retaliation was quite different, that it made them feel that they no longer had the moral high ground. I wish those who (sometimes rightly) criticise Israel could have seen the way so many Israelis reacted with shame to an act that could never be justified.

Rt. Hon. James Arbuthnot MP planting tree in Jerusalem

Still, the main purpose of my visit was the trees. JNF (originally Jewish National Fund) is an organisation which supports Israel in many different ways, not least in reclaiming otherwise barren land by the planting of trees. Since it was set up in 1901, JNF has planted more than 240 million trees across Israel, most of them in the Negev desert region, an area of considerable poverty and lack of community cohesion.

It was an honour to visit the grove just outside Jerusalem that had been planted in my name. I hadn't appreciated though, that I was meant to do some work myself and plant another (tree, not grove)! That single planting in the midday heat brought home to me the extent of the work that JNF is carrying out, and Israel's astonishing achievement of being one of only two countries in the world that entered the 21st century with more trees than it had had 100 years before.

I was thanked by JNF for being a loyal supporter of Israel – and I am just that. I am not uncritical of Israel (I consider the settlements to be a serious mistake and the recent taking of land appears calculated to turn the world against Israel), but I do wonder how other countries would react if they were surrounded by neighbours determined to destroy them and under frequent missile bombardment.

The fact that so many Palestinians have died in the recent conflict is awful. But I cannot reduce my impression that too many people in Hamas believe that these deaths benefit them. I wish I knew what the answer was, but I shall not be telling Israel that Israelis should simply accept that they will be a constant target of terrorism. They should not.

Rt. Hon. James Arbuthnot MP with commemorative certificate

"The short-term solution is money and the long-term solution more money."

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