

NEWSLETTER

CFI Annual Business Lunch 2016

CFI hosted its biggest ever Annual Business Lunch on 12th December 2016, which was addressed by Prime Minister Rt. Hon. Theresa May MP and attended by 800 people, including 200 Conservative parliamentarians.

The Prime Minister received a standing ovation from the audience for her first speech about Israel and issues affecting the UK Jewish community, where she vowed that Britain would mark the Balfour Declaration centenary “with pride” and praised the UK’s role in “creating a homeland for the Jewish people”.

Prime Minister May made the “ground-breaking” announcement that the UK was adopting the broad definition of antisemitism drawn up by the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA) – an intergovernmental organisation backed by 31 countries.

“We have, in Israel, a thriving democracy, a beacon of tolerance, an engine of enterprise”

In her wide-ranging speech, the Prime Minister underlined the UK’s staunch support of Israel, strongly condemned antisemitism within the Labour Party, restated the



Government’s commitment to building a National Holocaust Memorial and Learning Centre, and unequivocally stated that “no British taxpayers’ money will be used to make payments to terrorists or their families”.

Mrs May heralded CFI’s Annual Business Lunch as a “special” event and praised CFI’s parliamentary delegations as “powerful experiences”.

“We have, in Israel, a thriving democracy, a beacon of tolerance, an engine of enterprise and an example to the rest of the world for overcoming adversity and defying disadvantages... It is only when you walk through Jerusalem or Tel Aviv that you see a country where people of all religions and sexualities are free and equal in the eyes of the law. It is only when you travel across the country that you realise it is only the size of Wales – and appreciate even more the impact it has on the world... That is why I’m so pleased that CFI has already taken 34 of the 74 Conservative MPs elected in 2015 to Israel”. **Prime Minister Theresa May**

“I couldn’t be clearer: the Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions movement is wrong, it is unacceptable, and this Party and this Government will have no truck with those who subscribe to it. Our focus is the opposite – on taking our trading and investing relationship with Israel to the next level”.

Prime Minister Theresa May



CAMPAIGNS AND CFI IN THE PRESS



Under the guidance of Parliamentary Chairman Rt. Hon. Sir Eric Pickles MP, CFI's campaigns and parliamentary activities over the past year have received increased publicity and a surge in press coverage.

BALFOUR DECLARATION

On 2nd November 2016, CFI and Britain began to mark the beginning of the year-long celebration of the Balfour Declaration centenary, which was instrumental in the creation of the State of Israel and one of the most defining moments in the UK and Israel's shared history. At CFI's Annual Business Lunch in December, Prime Minister Theresa May vowed to mark the centenary with "pride". CFI's Vice-Chairman John Howell OBE MP wrote an article published on ConservativeHome to mark the start of the centenary commemorations. In November, Conservative MP Caroline Ansell led a landmark Westminster Hall debate on the 'Centenary of the Balfour Declaration', with over 13 Conservative MPs voicing their support for Israel.

MISUSE OF UK AID

Conservative MPs and peers have frequently voiced concern about the Palestinian Authority's (PA) misuse of UK aid. In June, numerous Conservative MPs participated in a Westminster Hall debate to call on the Department for International Development (DfID) to fund coexistence NGOs and review aid to the PA's general budget, following exposés in The Telegraph, Daily Mail, and Daily Express revealing that UK money has indirectly funded salaries for terrorist prisoners and organisations promoting violence. CFI welcomed the appointment of Rt. Hon. Priti Patel MP as International Development Secretary and DfID's announcement that it will implement key changes to its funding of the PA as part of its ongoing review into aid to the Palestinians.



SAVE A CHILD'S HEART

26 senior Conservatives in April wrote a joint letter to then-International Development Secretary, Rt. Hon. Justine Greening MP, calling on the Government to allocate funding to the Israeli NGO Save a Child's Heart. The NGO has brought thousands of children to Israel for heart surgery from countries where medical care is unavailable. Over 50% of the 4,000+ children who have received life-saving treatment live in Gaza and the West Bank.



ANTI-ISRAEL UN RESOLUTIONS

CFI has continued to take a robust stance against the United Nations's singling out of Israel. CFI's Parliamentary Chairman Rt. Hon. Sir Eric Pickles MP and Honorary President Lord Polak CBE condemned UNESCO's October vote to deny the historic connection of the Jewish people to the Temple Mount in Jerusalem as "an affront to both history and the Jewish community worldwide". In December, CFI expressed disappointment at the UK's support for the UN Security Council's passing of the controversial Resolution 2334. CFI welcomed No. 10's subsequent statement rebuking comments made by U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry which underlined that "settlements are far from the only problem in this conflict" and stated "we do not believe that it is appropriate to attack the composition of the democratically-elected government of an ally". In January 2017, the Government diverged from 73 other countries by refusing to sign a joint statement at the Paris Middle East peace conference, which the UK attended as an observer.

ANTISEMITISM

CFI and Conservative parliamentarians have voiced deep concern over antisemitism in the Labour Party, and strongly condemned antisemitism and anti-Israel intimidation on UK university campuses. CFI welcomed the publication of the Home Affairs Select Committee's report into antisemitism in the UK in October, which condemned the Labour Party for its "incompetence" over its handling of high-profile allegations of antisemitism within the party. In the same month, Rt. Hon. Sir Eric Pickles MP wrote letters to Universities Minister Jo Johnson MP and University College London President Professor Michael Arthur, to express concern and call for "an immediate and thorough investigation", after police were called when anti-Israel protesters violently disrupted an event hosted by the university's Israel society.



Parliamentary Delegation, February 2016

In February, CFI coordinated a parliamentary delegation for nine Conservative MPs to Israel and the West Bank, coinciding with then-Cabinet Office Minister Rt. Hon. Matt Hancock MP's visit and announcement of new Government guidance to curtail anti-Israel boycotts by publicly funded UK authorities, including councils. Simultaneously, the first-ever cross-party delegation of peers to visit Israel took place, with 11 members of the House of Lords, including five Conservatives. The peers met and held talks with Israel's President Reuven Rivlin, and together with the CFI delegation, met with Israel's Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu.



Parliamentary Delegation, August 2016

In the second delegation of the month, CFI led a visit to Israel and the West Bank for five Conservative MPs and three Conservative peers. As part of the diverse itinerary, the parliamentarians received security briefings on Israel's northern borders with Syria and Lebanon, and met with some of Israel's leading officials. In Jerusalem, delegates visited the Jerusalem College of Technology, which offers exclusive programmes in high-tech engineering developed specifically for Haredi (ultra-Orthodox) men and women. The group's visit to the West Bank included a tour of the first Palestinian-planned city of Rawabi, and meetings with PLO official Husam Zomlot and Palestinian polling expert Dr. Khalil Shikaki.



Conservative Women's Organisation, March 2016

CFI led a delegation of nine members of the Conservative Women's Organisation (CWO) to Israel and the West Bank, in the first visit of its kind. A number of the meetings with business people and NGOs were focused on issues concerning the position of women across Israeli society. Highlights from the visit included a lunch meeting with leading Israeli businesswomen from the Israel-Britain Chamber of Commerce, and a visit to the Women's Courtyard in Jaffa, which works to empower marginalised women in their local community. In the West Bank, delegates met with former chief negotiator Nabil Shaath and toured the first Palestinian-planned city of Rawabi.



Parliamentary Delegation, September 2016

During the Conference recess in September, CFI coordinated a delegation to Israel for seven Conservative MPs, led by former Culture Secretary Rt. Hon. John Whittingdale OBE MP. The trip was CFI's twelfth delegation since the General Election in May 2015. The visit coincided with former President of Israel Shimon Peres's funeral, which saw leaders from around the world make their way to the country. The itinerary included a visit to Sderot in southern Israel to see the remains of Hamas rockets, and a visit to Israeli NGO Save A Child's Heart where delegates met children from developing countries around the world receiving life-saving heart surgery.



Scottish Conservatives, August 2016

In August, CFI led its first-ever delegation of 10 Scottish Conservatives to Israel and the West Bank, including Chief Whip John Lamont MSP, and Director of the Scottish Conservatives Lord McInnes CBE. The delegation was conducted to promote bilateral trade and bolster the growing pro-Israel advocacy movement in Scotland. The packed itinerary included a mix of political meetings and briefings, as well as cultural and historical visits, providing an insight into the many different sides and voices within Israel. The visit received widespread coverage in the British and Israeli press, with talks now underway to encourage airlines to operate a direct flight between Scotland and Israel.



Australia Israel UK Leadership Dialogue, December 2016

In the final delegation to Israel of the year, five Conservative parliamentarians participated in the annual Australia Israel UK Leadership Dialogue, bringing together legislators, business leaders and opinion formers from across the political spectrum. Participants included CFI's Parliamentary Chairman Rt. Hon. Sir Eric Pickles MP, Minister for Digital and Culture, Rt. Hon. Matt Hancock MP, former Middle East Minister, Rt. Hon. Alistair Burt MP, and CFI Officers Rt. Hon. Lord Trimble and Will Quince MP. Former Australian Prime Minister Tony Abbott participated as a member of the Australian delegation, as well as over 13 Israeli Knesset Members.

MINISTERIAL VISITS TO ISRAEL

Foreign Secretary, Rt. Hon. Boris Johnson MP

Foreign Secretary Boris Johnson visited Israel in September to pay his respects at the funeral for Israel's last founding father, Shimon Peres, who he described as "extraordinary". During his visit, the Foreign Secretary met with Israel's Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu.



Then-Cabinet Office Minister, Rt. Hon. Matt Hancock MP

Then-Minister for the Cabinet Office, Rt. Hon. Matt Hancock MP, visited Israel in February to announce that the UK Government would be introducing new legislative guidance to curtail anti-Israel boycotts by publicly funded UK authorities, including councils.



International Trade Minister Mark Garnier MP

In September, International Trade Minister Mark Garnier MP visited Israel for the London Stock Exchange Group's conference in Tel Aviv, where he announced a Memorandum of Understanding with Bank Hapoalim, Israel's leading financial services group. Mr Garnier said: "It is inspiring to see 29 Israeli companies listed on the London Stock Exchange, testament to the UK's ability to support Israel's growth story".



Minister for Digital and Culture, Rt. Hon. Matt Hancock MP

In December, as Minister for Digital and Culture, Mr Hancock visited Israel again to promote UK-Israel relations in cyber security technology. Speaking at a reception to mark the fifth anniversary of the UK Israel Tech Hub, he celebrated the success of the UK-Israel partnerships forged by the hub. At the Knesset, he met with senior Israeli politicians including Minister for Social Equality Gila Gamliel MK.



EVENTS



JANUARY - MARCH 2016

CFI's 2016 began with CFI's Annual Parliamentary Reception in January, which was attended by over 300 guests and addressed by International Development Secretary Priti Patel, and then-Chief Whip Mark Harper. CFI hosted a number of events in Parliament, including a briefing by a panel of leading Israeli high-tech innovators, and a number of Conservative MPs attended a briefing with Israeli company OrCam, demonstrating their ground-breaking device to help the visually impaired.



APRIL - SEPTEMBER 2016

During the spring months, CFI welcomed the new Ambassador of Israel, H.E. Mark Regev, in a Parliamentary lunch which was attended by 50 Conservative MPs. CFI coordinated a cross-party briefing for MPs and peers by Israeli humanitarian NGO IsraAID. In September, CFI co-hosted a cross-party briefing in Parliament with Israeli Public Security Minister Gilad Erdan, which was attended by 11 Conservative MPs and peers.



OCTOBER - DECEMBER 2016

CFI had another strong showing at Conservative Party Conference in Birmingham, with Foreign Secretary Boris Johnson addressing a 500-strong crowd of Conservative parliamentarians, activists, and supporters. One of Israel's most senior Israeli defence officials, Amos Gilad, addressed over 15 Conservative MPs at a lunch hosted by CFI in Parliament. During this period, CFI hosted numerous parliamentary briefings with senior parliamentarians, diplomats, and supporters in attendance.