

APPG for International Freedom of Religion or Belief

AGM

Tuesday 24th October 2018

Call to order:

AGM of the All Party Parliamentary Group for International Freedom of Religion or Belief was called at 13:30 on 18/07/2017 and held in Room T, Portcullis House at 13:30 on 24/10/18.

1. Attendees:

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|----------------------|----------------------------------|
| 1. Baroness Berridge | 9. Brendan O'Hara MP |
| 2. Jim Shannon MP | 10. George Howarth MP |
| 3. Lord Singh | 11. Baroness Brinton |
| 4. Lord Suri | 12. Lord Gordon |
| 5. Jeremy Lefroy MP | 13. Katharine Thane – APPG staff |
| 6. Stephen Kerr MP | 14. Amro Hussain – APPG staff |
| 7. Derek Thomas MP | 15. Rev'd Lesley Perry |
| 8. Nic Dakin MP | |

Apologies:

- | | |
|-------------------------|--------------------------|
| • Baroness Cox | • The Bishop of Coventry |
| • Baroness Anelay | • Lisa Cameron MP |
| • Preet Gill MP | • Stephen Lloyd MP |
| • Christian Matheson MP | • Tom Brake MP |
| • Stephen Timms MP | • Tan Dhesi MP |
| • David Drew MP | • Tom Tugendhat MP |

Acceptance of apologies – proposed by Stephen Kerr MP, seconded by Brendan O'Hara MP

2. Election of Officers:

To elect as officers:

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|--------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| • Jim Shannon MP (Chair) | • Lisa Cameron MP (Secretary) |
| • Baroness Berridge (Co-Chair) | • George Howarth MP (Secretary) |
| • Preet Gill (Co-Chair) | • Brendan O'Hara MP (Secretary) |
| • Baroness Cox (Vice-Chair) | • Christian Matheson MP (Secretary) |
| • Lord Singh (Vice-Chair) | • Stephen Lloyd MP (Secretary) |
| • Baroness Anelay (Vice-Chair) | • Lord Suri (Secretary) |
| • Jeremy Lefroy MP (Treasurer) | |

(Proposed by Stephen Kerr MP, seconded by George Howarth MP)

Vote: Unanimous approval.

3. Review and re-adoption of motions passed in previous meetings

See AGM 2017 minutes on APPG website.

(Proposed by Baroness Brinton, seconded by George Howarth MP)

Vote: Unanimous approval.

4. Review and adoption of new motions

To pass en bloc the following annual motions:

1. To reappoint Lee Scott, Addo Accounting as our Accountant.
2. To reinstate Co-op Bank as the Banking Group of the APPG and pass all the associated resolutions as per the “Section 2: Declaration” document attached.
3. To allow signatories to the account to continue with all the powers outlined in the “Section 2: Declaration” document attached.

(Proposed by Jeremy Lefroy MP, seconded by Seconded Brendan O’Hara MP)

Vote: Unanimous approval.

5. Review and sign-off of annual income and expenditure statement

The APPG’s Treasurer, Jeremy Lefroy MP, noted that he is grateful to all those who contribute to the APPG to allow it to run and function and that he is up-to-date and aware of the current state of the finances.

See Income and Expenditure Statement July 2017 – July 2018 on the APPG website.

(Proposed by Derek Thomas MP, seconded by Baroness Brinton)

Vote: Unanimous approval.

6. Review of APPG register, declarations and London Living Wage declaration

Baroness Berridge updated attendees on the APPG register, confirming that all declarations of income and benefit in kind have been declared and are up-to-date. The APPG has also re-registered as a London Living Wage employer.

7. Review and outline of successes

- Mr Shannon noted that the exemplary successes over the past year are thanks to the hard work of the staff. These successes include:
 - Parliamentarian members: now 120; Stakeholder organisations: 25

- The Prime Minister appointed Lord Ahmad as the Government's Special Envoy on FoRB after the APPG's lobbying for additional resource on FoRB within HMG. The APPG submitted recommendations which are reflected within the Special Envoy's work plan. Two additional full-time staff have been appointed to the FCO FoRB Team, matching other thematic areas.
- The APPG's *Article 18: From Rhetoric to Reality* report was mentioned over 15 times in media reports, including on BBC Radio 4 and due to this report:
- FCO Ministers Mark Field and Lord Ahmad re-sent the FCO FoRB toolkit (edited by the APPG) to Embassies/ High Commissions and instructed them to report what they are doing on FoRB.
- The APPG and Asylum Advocacy Group have also helped the Home Office develop a 'Considering Religion or Belief in the Asylum Claim' compulsory one-day training module for all asylum caseworkers. This training is to ensure those fleeing religious persecution receive a fair hearing. The module will be used to update the Foundational Training Programme which all Home Office caseworkers also undergo.
- In addition to the Nepal FoRB strategy, the FCO has now produced a country-specific strategy for advancing FoRB in Egypt. Desk Officers and Ambassadors working on several other countries, including Pakistan, are now also determining how to strategically pursue FoRB.
- In response to a letter sent by APPG members, the Prime Minister highlighted the importance of protecting FoRB as one of 3 main points she made in her Christmas speech.
- DFID Minister Lord Bates sent letters to all 28 DFID country heads requesting their outline of the practical steps they are taking to advance FoRB in the countries in which they work.
- The UK Government made a strong statement in support of FoRB at the 37th Session of the UN Human Rights Council following the APPG organised debate on the subject.

Mr Shannon noted the importance of visiting Pakistan in early October 2018. He mentioned one case of a lady who said she was worried that everyone forgotten about them. Human rights issues were raised with the Government at every level including the Supreme Court and the Pakistani Ministry of Human Rights. Mr Shannon noted for example that there are 13,600 abductions in Punjab Province, and thousands of assaults annually.

8. Any Other Business

- It was noted by Mr O'Hara MP that the launch of the APPG for Yazidis is taking place in Room T in PCH on Tues 13th November, 5.30pm to 6.30pm. There will also be an event in December to publicise Nadia Murad's victory of the Noel Peace Prize.

9. Close of meeting

** These minutes are to be formally signed off by all Officers in the next Officers meeting.*