

ALL PARTY PARLIAMENTARY GROUP FOR INTERNATIONAL FREEDOM OF RELIGION OR BELIEF

INAUGURAL MEETING MINUTES

5pm, Wed Feb 5th, 2020 - Portcullis House

Call to order:

The Inaugural Meeting of All-Party Parliamentary Group for International Freedom of Religion or Belief (FoRB) was held in the Macmillan Room, Portcullis House at 5.05pm on 05/02/20.

Attendees:

- Jim Shannon MP
- Preet Gill MP
- Fiona Bruce MP
- Lisa Cameron MP
- Chris Matheson MP
- Marco Longhi MP
- Sir Jeffrey Donaldson MP
- Lord Suri
- Lord Singh
- Marie Rimmer MP
- Councillor Morris Johns
- Julie Jones
- Amro Hussain
- Ewelina O'Chab

Election of Officers

- Jim Shannon MP opened the meeting by welcoming attendees and then initiating the election of Officers.
- Jim Shannon MP noted that the Baroness Cox should be added to the list of Officers as a Co-Chair and Fiona Bruce MP as a Vice-Chair. Jim Shannon asked if Marie Rimmer MP would like to be an Officer. She chose to join as an ordinary member rather than an Officer
- The following officers were to be elected:
 - Jim Shannon MP (Chair)
 - Preet Gill (Co-Chair)
 - Baroness Cox (Co-Chair)
 - Lord Singh (Vice-Chair)
 - Lord Suri (Vice-Chair)
 - Fiona Bruce (Vice-Chair)
 - Baroness Anelay (Vice-Chair)
 - Sir Jeffrey Donaldson MP (Vice-Chair)

- Lisa Cameron MP (Treasurer)
 - George Howarth MP (Secretary)
 - Brendan O’Hara MP (Secretary)
 - Christian Matheson MP (Secretary)
- Sir Jeffrey Donaldson proposed the motion and Fiona Bruce seconded. Vote: Unanimous.

Overview of Previous APPG work

- Jim Shannon discussed some of the work that the APPG for International FoRB did in the previous Parliament.
- He then outlined Article 18 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and how countless people are having that right violated. He urged MPs to participate in the debate on Persecution of Christians on 06/02/20.
- Fiona Bruce commended Amro Hussain for his work as APPG Director and thanked Jim Shannon for his dedication to FoRB.
- Fiona Bruce asked Amro Hussain for an update on the APPG’s Nigeria Inquiry which he provided – A draft report is completed and would be circulated shortly.
- Lord Singh raised the point that raising awareness of FoRB issues is important but that we should do more where we can, we should think strategically and promote religious literacy at home as well as abroad. He agreed to write a brief paper to help guide the APPG’s work in this regard.

Review and adoption of Motions

Motions to be passed:

1. To delegate authority to APPG Chair and Co-Chair to sign off any necessary APPG press releases and public statements that will represent the APPG officers’ views.
2. To establish a charitable vehicle in conjunction with the APPG and subsequently to appoint Bates, Wells and Braithwaite as solicitors.
3. To TUPE of APPG staff to charity when established.
4. To reaffirm the name of the Charity’s website and creative work (once it had been agreed by the Charities Commission): “Freedom Declared Foundation” (FDF) to be name of charity.
5. A Service Level Agreement (SLA) between the APPG for International Freedom of Religion or Belief and Freedom Declared Foundation will be agreed. The charity would raise an invoice to the APPG for staff costs.
6. The current APPG website will be renamed to ‘APPGFreedomofReligionorbelief.’ with the shorthand APPG FORB for emails etc.
7. Phil Grundy (web-designer) is to be allowed to use the creative design for advertising purposes of his business. The APPG received gift of creative intellectual property from Phil Grundy, with thanks.
8. To reappoint Lee Scott, Addo Accounting as our Accountant.



9. 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.
 10. To allow signatories to the account to continue with all the powers outlined in the “Section 2: Declaration” document attached.
- The acceptance of the motions was proposed by Marie Rimmer. Preet Gill seconded. Vote: Unanimous.

Review of Income and Expenditure Statement and Statement of Assets and Liabilities

- Lisa Cameron (Treasurer) proposed the motion to accept the APPG’s income and expenditure statement and statement of assets and liabilities. Chris Matheson seconded. Vote: Unanimous.
- Fiona Bruce asked how are APPG finances obtained and secured for the future.
- Amro Hussain explained how APPG stakeholders donate contribute monthly or annually to cover APPG costs. Julie Jones explained how she is pursuing different avenues for finances.
- Lord Singh mentioned that here is an urgent need to consider religious texts in the context of our time and Jim Shannon strongly agreed.

APPG Strategy for 2020

- Amro Hussain discussed potential strategy for the upcoming year with Attendees.
- Preet Gill asked about how many members the APPG currently has. Julie Jones responded to that the APPG currently has just over 100 members with several new MPs joining in the past week.

AOB

- Fiona Bruce later proposed Lord Alton as a Vice-Chair. This was seconded by Chris Matheson MP. Vote: Unanimous. Lord Alton was duly elected as a Vice-Chair.
- Lisa Cameron repeated that there is a debate on the Persecution of Christians in Parliament on 06/02/2020 and urged people to attend.