



Delegation to Israel from 30 October to 1 November 2021

A delegation representing the European Parliament (EP) Delegation for relations with Israel held a visit to the State of Israel from the 30th of October to the 1st of November 2021, on the occasion of the 45th inter-parliamentary meeting (IPM) between the EP and the Knesset. This is part of the ongoing structured dialogue between the two Parliaments. The last IPM took place remotely on 30 November 2020.

Led by Antonio López-Istúriz White, Chair of the EP Delegation for relations with Israel and composed of three other Members, Elena Yoncheva, Vice-Chair of the Delegation (S&D, Bulgaria), Ljudmila Novak (EPP, Slovenia) and Mr Juan Ignacio Zoido Álvarez, (EPP, Spain), the delegation met with Member of Knesset (MK) Yossi Shain, the Chair of the Knesset Delegation for relations with the European Parliament, as well as with other MKs, members of the above-mentioned Delegation, during the IPM. The IPM adopted a joint statement (annexed). Other meetings were also held with representatives of the opposition in the Knesset, namely, MK Tzachi Hanegbi, Likud party, and MK Ayman Odeh, Head of the Joint List. The Chair also met with Knesset Speaker, Mickey Levy.

In Jerusalem, the delegation met with Nachman Shai, Minister for Diaspora Affairs, Idan Roll, Deputy Foreign Minister, Danny Dayan, the Chairman of Yad Vashem, as well as with high-ranking officials from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and representatives of civil society organizations.

The delegation visited the city of Ramla and held a fruitful exchange of views with Michael Vidal, Mayor of Ramla as well as with other high-ranking officials, on the diversity of the city and the good co-existence between the different communities, based on mutual understanding and knowledge.

The delegation highly appreciated the visit of the Peres Centre for Peace & Innovation and the meeting with its CEO, Nadav Tamir and their team of researchers. The visit reaffirmed the approach of using innovation for peace and confidence-building, including through European Union (EU) financed projects.

With all its interlocutors, the EP Delegation stressed the importance of a strong partnership between the European Union and Israel and the need to communicate more the intense cooperation held in many fields, in order to increase mutual knowledge. In this respect, it underlined that efforts for enhanced people-to-people relations should be made.

The EP delegation expressed support for reconvening the Association Council EU-Israel, as soon as a date can be mutually agreed, stressing the importance of a swift high-level structured dialogue for debating all issues of mutual interest.

The delegation highly welcomed the message expressed by the Israeli Foreign Minister Yair Lapid, during his visit to Brussels in July 2021, that the State of Israel and the European Union had started a new page in their relationship and recalled the EU's readiness for a fresh start in the relations with Israel and the understanding that a credible engagement and stronger relationship with Israel is needed to revive a path towards peace and justice for Israel and Palestinians both alike.

While recalling that vibrant democracy and respect for human rights are an integral part of the values which the EU and Israel hold dear, the delegation stressed the importance of a thriving and diverse NGO sector and civil society. In this respect, it asked for more information on the declaration of 22 October by Israeli Defense Minister Benny Gantz referring to six Palestinian NGOs as “terrorist organisations”, and for substantive evidences in this respect.

The EP delegation welcomed the process of normalization of relations between Israel and multiple countries. The Delegation noted the progress made in the implementation of the Abraham Accords and the increased positive outcome of this process. It also stressed the importance that efforts are pursued towards progress in the Middle East Peace Process (MEPP) and recalled the EU position on the support of the two-state solution and on the importance to avoid unilateral measures that could hinder the process.

The EP delegation noted the uniqueness of the Israeli government coalition, comprising parties from the entire political spectrum and, for the first time, including an Arab party; it commended this democratic achievement and sign of political unity.

The EP delegation informed about the recent adoption of the first-ever EU Strategy on Combatting Antisemitism and Fostering Jewish life. The strategy, acknowledging that antisemitism is worryingly on the rise in Europe and beyond, sets out a series of measures aiming to prevent all forms of antisemitism, protecting and fostering Jewish life, and promoting research, education and remembrance of the Holocaust. These measures will be reinforced by the EU's international efforts to lead the global fight against antisemitism.

The delegation underlined the central role of the European Parliament and of the Knesset in the relationship between the EU and Israel. It reiterated the commitment to remain engaged in the long-standing and multi-faceted dialogue between Israel and the European Union and to explore new avenues in order to stimulate further the EU-Israel parliamentary dialogue and cooperation.

Thanking its Israeli hosts for their hospitality and openness for dialogue, the EP Delegation stressed the importance of the constant cooperation with Israel, a key partner for the EU.
