

January 20, 2025

Report to the Government Relations Committee on Recent Activities

Chair: Mr. Daniel Liwerant

The following summarizes recent activities since the last committee meeting which was held on November 4th by Zoom:

JOINT KNESSET COMMITTEE MEETING ON SHINSHINIM BUDGETING

A joint committee meeting, initiated by the Jewish Agency, of the Education, Culture and Sports Committee (chaired by MK Yosef Taieb, Shas) and the Committee for Immigration, Absorption and Diaspora Affairs (chaired by MK Oded Forer, Israel Beitenu) was held last month on the issue of comparing Shinshinim budgeting disparities. Shinshinim in Israel are budgeted by the Government, but Shinshinim abroad are not. The Committees called on the Government to fund this important activity.

KOL HA'AM INITIATIVE LAUNCHED

The Voice of the People, an initiative of President Herzog, is a global network of proactive Jewish leaders committed to driving positive change through creative solutions, ensuring the continuity, and thriving future of the Jewish people. Supported by a network and experts, a council of 150 diverse members will work together over a two-year period to tackle immediate and long-term challenges facing Jewish people through collaboration, innovation, and collective action. The council members were selected from among 1,000 candidates and will be divided into ten discussion groups focusing on selected topics. Kol Ha'am is a joint subsidiary of the Jewish Agency and WZO.

NEW CHAIRS OF KNESSET COMMITTEES

Several committees will undergo rotation with new chairpersons taking office. Notably, MK Gilad Kariv, the Democratic Party, will replace MK Oded Forer, Israel Beitenu, as Chair of the Immigration, Absorption, and Diaspora Affairs Committee. In preparation for this transition next month, Jewish Agency Secretary General Josh Schwarcz met with MK Kariv to discuss various collaborative initiatives for committee consideration.

GOVERNMENT COMPANIES AUTHORITY COLLABORATION

A productive meeting was held by Josh Schwarcz with Minister David Amsalem, Likud, who oversees the Government Companies Authority, where an agreement was reached to promote employment opportunities for new Olim and Masa graduates in government companies. A follow-up meeting is scheduled with Secretary General Josh Schwarcz and Shay Felber, Deputy Director General, Aliyah & Absorption Unit of the Jewish Agency and with Meir Holtz, CEO of Masa.

MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Secretary General Josh Schwarcz met with the new Deputy Foreign Minister, Ms. Sharren Haskel, United Right party, who is responsible for public diplomacy at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. They agreed on increasing cooperation regarding the Jewish Agency's Shlichim network.

TEL-HAI COLLEGE SUPPORT

Tel-Hai College, which is owned by the UIA and managed by the Jewish Agency's Companies Authority, is one of two currently evacuated technological colleges in Israel. Secretary General Josh Schwarcz has facilitated three meetings during the war between the college administration and Minister of Labor Yoav Ben Tzur, Shas, who oversees technological colleges, to ensure maximum support.

AMIGOUR TOUR WITH MK SHARON NIR

A tour in the south with Amigour was conducted with IDF (RES.) Brigadier General MK Sharon Nir, Israel Beitenu, including to new public housing in Ashkelon, security rooms in Sderot, and to Kibbutz Be'eri, where Amigour conducted damage assessment surveys after October 7th and is currently carrying out building demolitions.

THE COMMITTEE FOR THE COMMEMORATION OF DIASPORA JEWS

The committee, which was appointed by the Government of Israel, is headed by the Chairman of the World Zionist Organization, Yaakov Hagoel, and the Director General of the Ministry of Diaspora Affairs, Avi Cohen-Scali. The director of the committee is the Jewish Agency Secretary General Josh Schwarcz. The committee has completed its initial research, and began the process of recognizing hundreds of victims of Antisemitic attacks in the Diaspora.

IBIM ABSORPTION CENTER YOUTH HUB

Progress continues on the planning of a Youth Hub for the Western Negev at the Ibim Absorption Center near Sderot. The Jewish Agency continues to advance this initiative with the Government of Israel, including several meetings with Minister Ze'ev Elkin, who oversees the Tkuma Administration and the Northern Rehabilitation Administration, as well as with Yossi Shelley, the Director General of the Prime Minister's Office.

IETA LEADERS SUMMIT

The Jewish Agency assisted in hosting The Israel Educational Travel Alliance (IETA) in the Knesset. IETA is an umbrella organization developed for and by organizations bringing Jews and non-Jews on educational trips to Israel. The Jewish Agency assisted JFNA in organizing a meeting of the Committee for Immigration, Absorption, and Diaspora Affairs, as well as a meeting with the Knesset Speaker Amir Ohana.