

On the European Greens to strengthen relations with the Joint List in the Israeli Knesset

We, European Greens, express our concern about the suspension of three Arab Palestinian Members of Knesset on February 8 2016 by the Knesset's ethics committee from all Knesset activities except voting (two for a period of four months and one for two months), Following a meeting they had in East-Jerusalem in order to negotiate between Palestinian families and the Israeli authorities on the issue of bringing to burial the bodies of the members of these families who were killed after carrying out attacks against Israelis. Greens strongly object the use of violence. We are also strong defenders of the right of democratically elected members of Parliament all over the world. As the Arab Palestinian minority in Israel could play an important role in achieving lasting peace between Israelis and Palestinians, respecting the rights of their Members of Knesset is of particular importance. Prohibiting and sanctioning legitimate parliamentary work causes frustration among those who seek peaceful solutions. This threat weakens trust in democratic means and opens space for radicals.

On September 2015 Greens/EFA in the European Parliament called on the European External Action Service (EEAS) to significantly step up their support to and engagement with minorities in Israel and to support their efforts to achieve better political, economic and social participation. On October 2015 Greens/EFA called the EU to reach out to the Arab minority in Israel, which is 'critical for a peaceful and democratic future for Israel and Palestine', and urged the EU representatives 'to stop ignoring the Arab community in Israel and to engage with them, notably the Joint List in the Israeli Knesset.'

In the spirit of these calls and in view of the current prosecution against the parliamentarians of the Joint List, we call upon all parties in Israel to respect the rights of elected Members of Knesset, to end discrimination of the Arab population in Israel and to jointly work for a peaceful and just solution. An important requirement on this way is to give free access to foreign and local actors like journalists, NGO representatives as well as civilians to visit and communicate with Palestinians in all areas inside Israel and the occupied territories. In addition, we call upon the EGP Committee to send a delegation to Israel to carry out political talks with Members of Knesset from different parties, including the Joint List, in order to evaluate the situation of parliamentarians and to discuss how to strengthen their rights, democracy and rule of law in Israel as well the efforts towards a peaceful solution of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict along the lines of a two-state solution.

In addition, we condemn antidemocratic legislation being promoted by the Israeli government including the Suspension Law, which will empower Members of Knesset to suspend fellow members. Opposition parties and civil rights organizations have warned that such legislation could lead to the exclusion of political rivals by illegitimate means, which may disproportionately affect the Joint List, as well as other Arab Palestinian Israeli representatives.