



Report of Meeting of Board of Deputies of British Jews - Held on 20th June 2021

Following the recent election of the President, Vice President, and other Officers the first meeting of the present Triennial took place on-line on the 20th of June.

- (i) President Marie Van Der Zyl ("MVZ") introduced the Israeli Ambassador HE Tzipi Hotovely who was questioned by Deputies about:-
 - a) The new Israeli Government policies (unchanged in terms of foreign affairs but to be clarified in relation to home issues). She would remain in post regardless of the change of Government.
 - b) Her previous right wing political views (she would not be drawn and was now a diplomat serving her country).
 - c) Anti-Semitism (this was a worldwide problem, and she would be vocal in speaking out to stop this insidious threat).
- (ii) After formally presenting her Presidential Report which had been circulated to Deputies previously questions were then thrown open to attendees covering:-
 - a) The Gazan Convoy and apparent police inaction. The President reported that there had been close contact with the Police who were now engaged in monitoring Muslim, right wing and left wing anti-Semitism and Trade Union and BBC bias. The Board was considering setting up a Media Division to counter all these threats.
 - b) University anti-Semitism in the light of the Bristol /Professor Miller dispute. The President was in touch with all Vice chancellors on these issues and pressing for a universal adoption of the IHRA definition of anti-Semitism. The University of Jewish Students ("UJS") was being supported as the primary lead body in dealing with this menace and the BOD were now sharing office space with the UJS.
 - c) A London Deputy expressed concern about lack of co-ordination or support from local Police on shul security issues which was "patchy". MVZ reported that CST receive d £14m pa from the Government for Jewish security support but could not say how this was shared out.
 - d) Yachad's representative wondered to what extent the views of Groups such as hers were taken into account before the Board issued public pronouncements on Israel. MVZ understood Yachad's views differed from many, but her position had always been clear in support of Israel.
 - e) A question was raised about the apparent immunity of MP's whose public statements might be considered inciting or anti-Semitic. Why wasn't the CPS prosecuting them? MVZ would meet with the CPS and raise such issues as no one should be immune from prosecution in such cases.
 - f) MVZ was a President and Vice President respectively of the European Jewish Congress and World Jewish Congress and was working to establish co-operation to stamp out and confront antisemitism everywhere.
 - g) The UJS President asked about the JFS situation and unsatisfactory Ofsted Report. MVZ was appalled at bullying allegations, and the situation of reported suicides was unacceptable. The Board would through its Communities Division look into it and support all schools as much as possible.
 - h) Another Deputy asked about support of the Board at local level. MVZ reported that the BOD website contained template letters for use by each shul or represented body. Equally the BOD wanted information from Deputies about the local situation where action was required.
 - i) We discussed refugees and MVZ said the BOD supported the amendment to recent legislation by Lord Alf Dubbs.
- (iii) Individual Divisional Group Reports were then given and questions taken:-
 - a) Group Relations and Defence Division
Chairman Amanda Bowman reported on a 500% increase in anti-Semitic reports to the CST. The Board was taking action nationally with the Government and with councils at a local level. A pilot scheme was being set up to monitor media bias and the Board would then decide what to do. Shechita had become an issue in one Manchester school where efforts were in place to require pre stunned animal meat. The Board was working with Shechita UK on this and other related issues. Interfaith issues were now increasingly important
 - b) Communities Division
Chairman Gary Mond reported on the scope of this Division; education in Jewish and non-Jewish schools, education about Israel, Community services, Holocaust Education and memorials and Jewish Heritage (including Hidden Treasures). He stressed the increasing importance to involve non-Jews in educating the public about antisemitism especially other faith leaders. He works with non-Jewish schools about Holocaust studies.
 - c) International Division
Chairman David Mendoza-Wolfson also covered the scope of this Division. He was dealing with current legislation in Poland, inviting the British Government to boycott the Durban IV Conference, working with groups to counter BDS, dealing with increasing anti-Semitism in Northern Ireland and the Irish Republic too
- (iv) Deputies wishing to join any division to engage more directly in the working of the Board were able to put themselves forward for election in July
- (v) Next meeting – 25th July 2021

If Any Magen Avot member wishes to bring an issue to the attention of the BOD he or she can do so at any time.