

News story: Statement from International Development Secretary Priti Patel

“This summer I travelled to Israel, on a family holiday paid for myself.

“While away I had the opportunity to meet a number of people and organisations. I am publishing a list of who I met. The Foreign and Commonwealth Office was aware of my visit while it was underway.

“In hindsight, I can see how my enthusiasm to engage in this way could be mis-read, and how meetings were set up and reported in a way which did not accord with the usual procedures. I am sorry for this and I apologise for it.

“My first and only aim as the Secretary of State for International Development is to put the interests of British taxpayers and the world’s poor at the front of our development work.”

Background

From 13 to 25 August 2017, the Secretary of State for International Development visited Israel on a family holiday paid for by herself.

While there on holiday, she took the opportunity to meet a number of people and organisations, including a range of politicians, businesses, tech start ups, and humanitarian NGOs. These meetings were an opportunity to learn about the Israeli approach to technology and development.

The meetings were arranged by the Conservative Peer, Lord Polak CBE. He also attended the meetings, with the exception of the meeting with Dr Aliza Inbal.

The FC0 were aware of the visit while it was underway, but were not informed about it in advance.

On her return from Israel, the Secretary of State commissioned Departmental work on humanitarian and development partnership between Israel and the UK, and on disability.

The FC0 are clear that UK interests were not damaged or affected by the meetings on this visit.

On Friday 3rd November, the Secretary of State was quoted in the Guardian newspaper as follows:

“Boris knew about the visit. The point is that the Foreign Office did know about this, Boris knew about [the trip].”

This quote may have given the impression that the Secretary of State had informed the Foreign Secretary about the visit in advance. The Secretary of

State would like to take this opportunity to clarify that this was not the case. The Foreign Secretary did become aware of the visit, but not in advance of it.

“The stuff that is out there is it, as far as I am concerned. I went on holiday and met with people and organisations. As far as I am concerned, the Foreign Office have known about this. It is not about who else I met, I have friends out there.”

This quote may be read as implying that the Secretary of State was saying that the meetings that had so far been publically reported were the only ones which took place on her visit. The Secretary of State would like to take the opportunity to correct this impression: she is clear that other meetings also took place on her visit, in addition to those which had been publically reported at the time of her making these statements. These meetings are outlined below.

The Secretary of State regrets the lack of precision in the wording she used in these statements, and is taking this opportunity to clarify the position.

List of those the Secretary of State met

Prime Minister Netanyahu

Introductory meeting. Discussion of:

- the Secretary of State’s family background – parents who fled Uganda in the 1970s, her experience growing up in an area of the UK with a thriving Jewish community, her political journey
- the Israeli domestic political scene
- India, given the Secretary of State’s family background
- the PM’s forthcoming visit to the UK
- prospects for closer collaboration between Israel and the UK on development and humanitarian issues.

Yuval Rotem – Israeli Foreign Ministry

General introduction on the Secretary of State’s background, discussion of British politics, Israel’s approach to development and humanitarian issues, and prospects for partnership work between Israel and the UK on development and humanitarian issues.

Gilad Erdan – Minister for Public Security, Information and Strategic Affairs

General introduction on the Secretary of State’s background. Discussion of British politics, growing anti-Semitism within the British political scene, and a cultural festival in London.

Yair Lapid – Leader of Yesh Atid

General introduction. Discussion of backgrounds, families and careers to date. General discussion of British politics, including the growing anti-Semitism within UK politics.

IsraAID – emergency humanitarian aid NGO

General introduction to their work, at the home of Hilda Worth.

Dr Aliza Inbal – Pears Programme for Global Innovation

General introduction to their work.

Dinner organised by the Pears Programme with Sivan Ya'ari – Innovation Africa, Glenn Yago – Milken Institute, Yosef Abramovitz – Energiya Global Capital, Mandie Winston – American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee

General introduction to and discussion of the work of these organisations.

Haim Taib – Mitrelli Group

Presentation on their work, on water, farming, solar and hospital projects in Africa.

Visit to Save a Child's Heart

Visit to a hospital to meet children and their families from Gaza and Africa who had been given life-saving heart surgery.

Dr Hirschfeld, Shimon Hefetz – Galilee International Management Institute

General introduction to their work.

Meeting with a group of startups with a focus on Africa: Vital Capital, MobileODT, Equatel Health, Cassit Orthopedics, Ltd, NUFiltration Ltd, Fair Planet.

Introduction and demonstration of new technologies for development – e.g. mobile cancer screening, water filtration, splints and supports for people with disabilities.

Jean Judes – Beit Issie Shapiro, and Pablo Kaplan – Wheelchairs of Hope

Visited a charity dedicated to disability and social inclusion internationally. Visited a sensory playground for children living with disability and discussed wheelchair technology for children.