

# Caabu's advocacy programme

*Introducing British politicians to the Arab world*



Palestinian children in Gaza teaching British MPs how to play football



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# Caabu's Advocacy Work

**Caabu is one of the most active NGOs working on the Middle East in the British Parliament.**

Britain's relationship with the Middle East must change fundamentally if the UK is to be on the right side of the historic realignment we currently witnessing in the Arab world.

We aim to create a more constructive and positive British foreign policy towards the region by supporting human rights, international law and democracy.

Our roots can be traced back to parliament itself, with the organization formed in 1967 by a distinguished group of MPs, academics and journalists. We currently include over 90 members in the House of Commons and House of Lords and we are chaired by three parliamentarians from each of the main parties. In addition we act as the secretariat of three All Party Parliamentary Groups (APPGs) - Palestine, Jordan and Qatar.

We are currently seeking funding to help ensure that parliamentarians are kept fully briefed on the latest developments in the Middle East and to continue our highly successful series of delegations providing MPs and Lords with the opportunity to visit the region and experience its key issues first hand.



## About Caabu

*Since its establishment in 1967, Caabu has taken on a strong political, educational and media role.*

*A cross-party organisation, with Chairs from the main political parties, Caabu works to advance Arab-British relations through its support for international law, human rights and democracy.*

# Why our work is essential

Caabu has an excellent record of working in the British parliament, meeting with Ministers, briefing MPs and Lords on regional developments and lobbying on key issues facing the region.

Our advocacy programme:

- **Helps to influence parliamentary debate**

Caabu's work is crucial in influencing debate in parliament on the Middle East. As a direct result of our recent work we have seen a parliamentary adjournment debate held on access to Gaza; a Westminster Hall debate on child detainees; a House of Lords debate on the Arab Awakening; and numerous parliamentary questions tabled in writing and asked orally, including to the Prime Minister and Foreign Secretary. This ensures that key issues in the region are discussed in a constructive manner, by British policy makers.

- **Informs key stakeholders**

Over 90 parliamentarians are members of Caabu; they and others receive our briefings ahead of key debates. Similarly we have facilitated visits to the Middle East for senior members of the current government, opposition, members of the House of Lords, and prominent back benchers. We are therefore seen as a trusted and credible source for information in parliament.

- **Raises particular issues to prominence**

Of particular note we have gained significant attention for the issue of Palestinian child detainees with debates on the subject held in the House of Commons and the House of Lords. This has attracted media attention both in the UK and in Israel, as a result of our repeated visits to the courts. In addition, the British Consulate in Jerusalem is now paying extra attention to the issue, whilst the Foreign Office Ministerial team have been extensively briefed on the subject.



- **Contributes to the debate with policy reports**

Caabu regularly produces detailed policy reports on the region. Most recently *The World's Largest Prison Camp* focused on the political and humanitarian situation in Gaza, whilst *Under Occupation* covered the situation in the West Bank. Both reports focused on the key issues facing the Palestinian Territories and were circulated around parliament, Whitehall and amongst related-NGOs. They were cited in parliamentary debates and praised by the Minister responsible for the Middle East, Alistair Burt MP. These reports provide a valuable lobbying tool for Caabu and are used to inform and influence stakeholders many months after a delegation has been completed.

# Our aims and objectives

At present Caabu is working on a number of critical issues effecting Arab-British relations. In parliament we aim:

**To support the Arab Spring** by briefing parliamentarians on developments in the region and pressing the UK government to support the aspirations of people across the region.

**To defend the rights of Palestinians** by ensuring that the situation is constantly on the parliamentary agenda.

**To create greater understanding about the Arab world in the UK** through our comprehensive delegation programme, through which we have taken 200 parliamentarians out to the Middle East since 1997.

**To provide expert briefings** to MPs and Lords ahead of key debates and throughout the parliamentary year by regional experts, representatives from NGOs and political figures from across the region.

## Our approach

The scope of our work is extensive but all of our work is underpinned by five core beliefs.

### Support for international law

Caabu's work is guided by a belief in the primacy and application of international law. We believe that all states are bound by international law, that all peoples are protected by it, and that it is vital that transgressions are addressed regardless of political circumstance.

### Commitment to democracy

Democracy is vital for the long term stability and prosperity in the Middle East. No region of the world or peoples should be viewed as unsuited to democracy and autocratic regimes should not be supported or defended in the name of strategic interests.



Nor do we believe that democracy can or should be imposed by external powers. Rather, it is essential that the aspirations of the people of the Arab world for genuine democratic reform and accountable governance in the region are fulfilled.

### A firm belief in universal human rights

The belief that everyone is entitled to the same rights and freedoms, regardless of race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth or other status is also central to our approach. Nor do we think any distinction should be made on the basis of the political, jurisdictional or international status of the country or territory to which a person belongs.

### The Arab world remains misunderstood

The Middle East and North Africa remain grossly misperceived in the UK and anti-Arab sentiment is also on the rise. Tackling prejudice and combating confusion is central to our work. Our role is not to present the views of a particular government or party, but to challenge misconceptions by raising critical questions and informing debate by making people aware of developments.

### That Britain's role in the region needs to change fundamentally

Britain's role - its arms sales, association with the US project for coercively reforming the region and its position on the Middle East 'peace process' - has had a deeply negative impact on the region and ignored the lessons of past experience. Britain's relations with the Middle East and North Africa require essential re-evaluation.

# Delegations

## Our delegation programme

A major aspect of Caabu's parliamentary work involves taking delegations of politicians out to the Middle East, in order for them to develop a better understanding of the region and the key issues. Visits enable them to speak with more authority in the Houses of Parliament on the subject, and hopefully their comments on the issue will be guided by such experiences.

Since 1997 we have taken over forty delegations to a variety of Arab countries, including the Lebanon, Syria, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Yemen, Egypt and Libya. We have also arranged and led a number of parliamentary visits to the Palestinian Territories and Israel.

Delegations provide both a short term impact – in terms of publicity for the visit and getting the issues raised in parliament – but a long term legacy. An MP who may have known nothing about the issues facing the region can become a long term advocate of a number of key causes, as the result of a delegation.



Simon Hughes MP being briefed on conditions in Area C in the West Bank during a Caabu delegation

# Our future work

**Caabu hopes to expand its parliamentary activities, but needs the funding to do so. We have a number of projects that require urgent funds:**

## **Democracy Assistance**

We are witnessing a huge opportunity for transformation in the Arab world. One of the main obstacles, however, is a lack of democratic experience. One of the roles Britain can play is by providing technical assistance. The dramatic changes unfolding in the region show just how much Caabu and its work is needed. So many in Britain still fail to understand the Arab world. The additional focus on the Middle East and North Africa over the past few months has however stretched Caabu's capacity, and if we are to continue with this work and ensure that regional events receive the necessary attention of the UK parliament, we will require additional financial support to continue this work. In particular, we aim to run two one-day workshops bringing together 20 experts to examine the different aspects of the challenge and which countries the UK can play a constructive role in and to determine the most effective forms of assistance. As a follow-up to these workshops we want to produce a comprehensive report on the ways in which the UK and other external actors could help to promote democracy movements in the Middle East and North Africa to help with our briefings and inform MPs and Lords on the historic events unfolding in the region.

**Cost: £3208**

## **Briefing programme**

Caabu's briefings allow parliamentarians to hear from key figures in the Middle East. Briefings take place in parliament and speakers include respected academics, foreign dignitaries, staff from international NGOs and members of the diplomatic community. These briefings ensure that MPs and Lords are provided with relevant and timely analysis of regional events. We generally hold around 15 briefings per year and topics are reflective of key issues. **Cost: £10,500 (£700 per briefing)**

## **Post-delegation advocacy**

Caabu's comprehensive delegation programme is crucial in helping MPs and Lords to gain first hand experience of the Middle East. We currently take around four delegations per year to the region. Post-delegation advocacy is crucial to the programme, but we require funding to ensure that delegation reports can be professionally produced and distributed and to raise critical issues in the media. This allows for the key findings of the delegation to spread around a wider audience of Ministers, MPs, Lords, foreign office officials and members of the government as well as to journalists and members of the public. **Cost: £28,500 (including 1 major report and 3 further follow-up reports, public meetings, staff-time and printing)**

## **Parliamentary reception**

At present over 90 parliamentarians are members of Caabu, but we hope to increase this number significantly over the course of the current parliament. With 233 newly elected MPs in the House of Commons, an event in parliament would be very useful in order to engage with a new audience. Parliamentary receptions are an excellent way to network, raise awareness and recruit new parliamentary members. **Cost £5,000**

## **Party conference 2011**

Caabu has been asked to co-host a reception at the Conservative Party Conference with the Conservative Middle East Council in October 2011. The key note speaker will be the Defence Secretary, Liam Fox and the leading journalist Peter Oborne. This is an excellent networking opportunity at the leading government party and an important venue for engaging politically active members of the Conservative party on the Middle East. This event would build on the success of previous events at these conferences which have had an increased attendance year-on-year.

**Cost: £3,420**

# Costs

Project	Item	Unit	Cost per Unit	Quantity	Total
Democracy Assistance	Workshop venue	day	45	2	90
Democracy Assistance	Staff time workshop (2 members of staff including preparation and follow-up)	day	480	2	960
Democracy Assistance	Participants travel budget	day		2	1000
Democracy Assistance	Workshop refreshments and lunch	1		2	280
Democracy Assistance	Production of report (including staff time)*	day		5	1,080
Briefing programme	Briefing	1	700	15	10,500
Post-delegation advocacy					28,500
Party conference 2011	Including share of venue, food, advertising, travel, conference pass, staff time and literature	day		1	3,420
Parliamentary reception	Reception in House of Commons	1			5000
	<b>Total</b>				<b>50,830</b>

A more in depth breakdown of the costs is available on request.

- This staff time includes 1 day of the Director's time and 4 days of the Parliamentary Officer's time