



For the first time since the entry of Hamas into government in January 2006, the first meeting of Palestinian and Israeli Members of Parliament came to fruition on the invitation of the Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung in Jerusalem at the end of April. From the Palestinian side, the PLC members of Fatah Jihad Abu Zneid, Fouad Kokali and Muhammad El-Laham participated. From the Israeli side,

Members of the Knesset Colette Avital (Avoda) and Avshalom Vilan (Meretz) participated.

The meeting was the high point of the visit to the region by German MPs Kerstin Griese and Christian Lange, who mediated the discussion. The goal of the discussion was to open further dialogue between the German SPD, Fatah, Avoda und Meretz on the basis of a connection as social democratic sister parties. Beside the current developments in the region, the primary obstacles for a peace agreement between Israel and the Palestinian Territories came to light as well as the expansion of settlements and the lack of a widely accepted interlocutor on both sides for a sustainable and durable resolution to the conflict.

At the end of the discussion both sides agreed to continue the dialogue. On the Israeli side, the participants suggested extending an invitation to their Palestinian counterparts to visit the Knesset. This sign would be a political landmark and the first time members of the PLC would visit the Knesset. The Palestinians showed a basic readiness to accept such an invitation based as well on the suggestion of Azzam Al-Ahmad to strengthen relationships between Palestinian and Israeli politicians.

At this point all parties are waiting on the practical implementation of these goals and ideas. The meeting, initiated by the FES offices in Jerusalem and Herzliya, definitely contributed to laying the foundation for future talks between Israeli and Palestinian legislators.

Photo- Christian Lange, Azzam Al-Ahmad, Kerstin Griese