

Following Middle East visit, OSCE PA leaders urge steps to improve human security



Pia Kauma and PA delegation meets with Knesset Speaker Amir Ohana in Tel Aviv, 10 March 2025. (Photo: Israeli Knesset)



The delegation visits the site of the Nova music festival that was attacked by Hamas on 7 October 2023.

A high-level OSCE PA delegation, headed by Assembly President Pia Kauma (Finland), has concluded a visit to Israel and the occupied West Bank in which securing a safe and stable life for people living in the region was in focus. In addition to President Kauma, the delegation included Vice-Presidents Kyriakos Hadjiyianni (Cyprus), Luis Graca (Portugal), Pere Joan Pons (Spain), Special Representative on the Mediterranean Pascal Allizard (France), and Secretary General Roberto Montella.

Following a series of discussions with various stakeholders, the parliamentarians noted that both Israelis and Palestinians continue to live under a cloud of great insecurity, and that confidence- and security-building measures are urgently needed for the sake of the populations. A full release of hostages and a sustained ceasefire are priorities, they said.

The delegation met with the Speaker of the Israeli Knesset, Amir Ohana, Deputy Foreign Minister Sharen Haskel and other Israeli officials and civil society. In Israel they also visited areas near Gaza that were attacked by Hamas on 7 October 2023 together with the Head of the Israeli Delegation to the OSCE PA, Ram Ben Barak, as well as communities in the north of Israel evacuated due to rocket attacks from Hezbollah.

Earlier in the week in Ramallah the delegation met with Deputy Speaker of the Palestinian National Council Musa Hadid, State Minister for Foreign Affairs Varsen Shaheen, as well as human-

itarian aid workers and civil society. In Jerusalem the Members also met with His Beatitude Patriarch Theophilos III at the Greek Orthodox Patriarchate, and discussed the impact of the conflict on faith-based communities in the region.

The delegation extended sincere condolences to Israeli officials for the 7 October attacks and condemned the terrorist attacks. Delegation members also expressed concern about the humanitarian consequences of Israel's actions in response to the attack. There is a yearning for peace, stability and regular life among people in the region, they noted, and urged renewed efforts to stop the cycle of violence. They stressed that extremists, most notably Hamas and Hezbollah, must not be allowed to continue manipulating the populations. Delegation members encouraged both Israelis and Palestinians to increase long-term efforts aimed at coexistence, with a particular focus on education.

The delegation also discussed the broader regional dynamic, including relations with neighbouring countries. In this context, Members also expressed serious concern about recent widespread killings of minorities in Syria.

Delegation members noted that the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly will continue to serve as an effective dialogue platform that can help to leverage diplomatic tools to support stability in the region, and welcomed Israel's active participation as an OSCE Partner State.

Joint PA-ODIHR webinar video published on YouTube

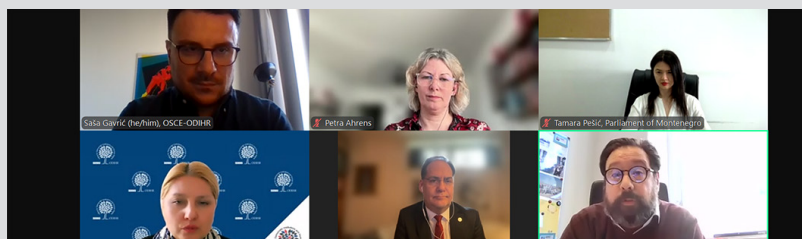
Video for the joint OSCE PA-ODIHR webinar entitled "Towards Gender Parity and Transformative Gender Equality Policy: The Role of Parliamentary Bodies", which took place 6 March 2025, is available on the OSCE PA's YouTube channel: https://youtu.be/bDOBdnMzyZQ?si=E9Hv7bdtM28Y_6Ak

MPs and human rights experts explore ways to foster gender-sensitive policies

The OSCE PA and the OSCE/ODIHR held a webinar on 6 March focused on the role of parliamentary bodies in achieving gender parity. Bringing together some 160 participants from OSCE national parliaments, field operations, governmental structures, permanent missions and international organizations, the online event provided participants the opportunity to discuss the crucial role of parliamentary institutions in fostering inclusive governance.

Participants explored diverse approaches to gender equality in parliaments, from formal standing committees to informal women's caucuses. In his opening remarks, OSCE PA Deputy Secretary General Gustavo Pallares underlined that gender equality is essential for building resilient democracies and fostering sustainable economic growth. Tea Jaliashvili, ODIHR First Deputy Director, noted that one of the event's key messages was to renew focus on gender equality in parliaments and across all sectors of society.

Kenneth Forslund, Deputy Speaker of the Swedish Riksdag, noted the importance of collaboration within parliament to



promote gender-sensitive policies, underlining the value of taking a practical approach to reforms that can have a real benefit in achieving gender parity. Croatian parliamentarian Marija Lugaric spoke about the experience of the Gender Equality Committee in her parliament, noting the importance of analyzing the impact of legislation on different genders.

Participants also heard presentations from Petra Ahrens from Tempere University and Tamara Pesic from the Parliament of Montenegro. Pesic spoke about the experience of Montenegro, noting that even small changes can make a big difference when striving for gender parity.

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