**CITY OF EDINBURGH COUNCIL**

**Item No 3**

**POLICY AND SUSTAINABILITY COMMITTEE**

**30 AUGUST 2022**

**DEPUTATION REQUESTS**

| **Subject** | **Deputation** |
|---|---|
| **3.1 In relation to Item 7.2 on the agenda –** Petition for Consideration: Twinning Edinburgh with Gaza City | a) Derby & Derbyshire Friends of Hebron (written submission attached)<br><br>b) Gaza Sky Geeks (written submission attached)<br><br>c) Mayor of Gaza City (written submission attached)<br><br>d) Dundee-Nablus Twinning Association (written submission attached)<br><br>e) Take My Hand |

**Proposed Deputation by the Very Reverend Geoffrey Marshall, Convenor of the Derby & Derbyshire Friends of Hebron (and a Council member of the Britain Palestine Friendship and Twinning Network).**

Setting up a twinning link with a place in Palestine may not be easy, but thoroughly worthwhile. Britain keeps talking of a Two State Solution to the Israeli-Palestinian impasse, but only recognises one of those states. Twinning is a way of beginning to put that right.

In 2014 the then Mayor of Derby went to Hebron - a city about the same size as Derby - to set up a twinning link. Hebron is one of the world's oldest continuously inhabited cities; it lies in the Palestinian Territories occupied by Israel since 1967. Derby & Derbyshire Friends of Hebron aims to raise awareness about the serious difficulties of daily life, including human rights violations, experienced by the people of Hebron. It also aims to break down widespread negative stereotypes of Palestine and its people and promote an understanding of its history and current circumstances. It tries to do this by establishing links between Derby and Hebron organisations, including schools and young people (22 of us from Derby raised funds for and visited two Hebron schools in 2019), trade unions (several trade unions have Palestinian solidarity policies), sports groups (at least one signed football has been taken by Derby County Football Club to a Hebron football team), religious groups, women's groups and environmental groups (we have made excellent links with the Palestinian Museum of Natural History); and just this week we have been invited by Hebron University (the oldest in Palestine) to set up formal links with the University of Derby (one of Britain's youngest).

We have held regular public meetings, sponsored walks and cycle rides, Palestinian meals and film and music evenings in and around Derby; and we have hosted Palestinian speakers, dancers and musicians. Of course the pandemic meant a break in visits in both directions, but we kept in touch by zoom meetings and fund-raising. We in Derby (and in Hebron) commend your initiative.

I am not a politician; I want to reiterate that any such twinning is never between politicians (of any particular party in either city); it is between two cities and their peoples. I want to remind you that it is not anti-Semitic to criticise some of the policies of the State of Israel. There are many Jews in Britain (and in Israel too) who are deeply troubled by some actions of the State of Israel; who see 55 years of Occupation of the West Bank as morally indefensible; who see the siege of Gaza and the wars against its people as crimes; who believe Jerusalem must be a shared city; who don't want to build their Jewish identity around racist Zionism; who oppose Israel's Nationality Law as bad for both the Jewish diaspora and for Palestinians; and who are very upset by the latest attacks against Palestinian civil society organisations.

When I take people to Israel/Palestine and when we twin with a Palestinian city I reckon we do so in solidarity with those whose freedom has been denied by war and despair; also in penance for Britain's broken promises and historic responsibility for injustice; and I do so with all who work for peace, reconciliation and justice, in the hope that all who call the land home will one day live as neighbours with equal rights.

Despite my peculiar title, which relates to me having been a Cathedral Dean in Wales, I am not backing your bid today as a religious leader but as a human being like yourselves. But a sizable minority of Palestinians, even in Gaza, are Christians; in fact Gaza's main hospital is an Anglican institution. I am certainly not anti-Jewish; Jesus was a Jew; he was also a Palestinian. I am not anti-Israel; in fact several years ago I was a proud winner of an Israeli Government award for services to tourism; but I am anti-Occupation and against anyone who commits war crimes or profits by them. I join you today daring to represent the quarter of a million people of Hebron and the quarter of a million people of Derby in supporting the idea of two bigger and even more important cities doing the same thing.

The city of Gaza has existed since at least the 15th century BC. The city of Edinburgh has been recognised as the capital of Scotland since at least the 15th century AD. Two proud cities with populations of rather over half a million. Gaza is known for too many negative things – I hope its future relationship with Edinburgh will help it be rightly famous for its hand-woven carpets, wicker furniture, pottery and fresh seafood. Gaza has a very young population, with roughly 75% under the age of 25. *Time Out* magazine has rated Edinburgh the best city in the world in 2022; it would surely rate Gaza as one of the worst. The Festival and Fringe capital of the world could be her wonderful friend.

# LETTER OF SUPPORT TO TWIN EDINBURGH WITH GAZA

25/08/2022
**FOR ATTENTION City of Edinburgh Council**
Edinburgh City leader, Edinburgh Council City Chambers
High St, Edinburgh EH1 1YJ.

**Dear Councillors**
I wish to speak in support of the Gaza Twinning petition, which is scheduled to be heard at the Policy & Sustainability Committee meeting on the 30th August at 10am.

Twinning the cities of Edinburgh and Gaza will open possibilities for the young women and men in Palestine to offer their tech skills to companies in Edinburgh who are seeking tech talent ... a win for Scottish companies, and a life changing opportunity for the young people in Gaza.




Gaza Sky Geeks was established in 2011 by Mercy Corps, with the support of Google. Our purpose is to empower young women & men of Palestine to earn respectable incomes from online digital work, and to help build a sustainable tech ecosystem in Palestine.

We are Palestine's leading tech hub that trains, nurtures, and supports emerging tech talent. 50% of our trainees are women. Our major donors include the governments of Sweden, Canada, Holland, plus multiple global tech companies, such as Google.

**Yours Sincerely,**
**Alan El-Kadhi**
**Director of Gaza Sky Geeks**
**E.** alan@gazaskygeeks.com
**T. +972548266480**
**www.gazaskygeeks.com**
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دولـة فلسطـين | بلديـة غـزة
State of Palestine | Municipality of Gaza

August 14, 2022

**To:**
**Policy and Sustainability Committee**
**Edinburgh City Council,**
**United Kingdom**

Dears,

**Subject: Request for Deputation in Support of the Gaza Twinning Petition**

On behalf of the people of Gaza and the City Council, I would like to present to you our best greetings.

The Municipality of Gaza (MoG) is the largest municipality in Palestine, where it is responsible for providing more than 1.2 million persons daily (including commuters from other governorates) with the basic services, which include, but not limited to, WASH, environmental, social, economic and cultural services. MoG seeks to develop an economic, civilizational and cultural center of the Gaza Strip.

With reference to the subject mentioned above and the Gaza Twinning Petition, which aims at developing good relations between Edinburgh and Gaza and their people, the Mayor of Gaza, Yahya R. Sarraj (PhD), would like, with great pleasure, to address the Policy and Sustainability Committee meeting in August, 2022.

Actually, it is our honor to develop friendly relationship between your esteemed city council and Gaza Council. It would be not only a symbolic action of respect and moral support, but also an affirmation of our mutual desire to live together in harmony and a step towards the creation of a better habitat for the human kind and to bring the cities together.

Therefore, this letter is to express our interest and passion to address the committee.

Should you have any information, please do not hesitate to contact us by email at **gm@mogaza.org**.

Sincerely,

**Yahya R. Sarraj**
**Mayor of Gaza**
**Palestine**

بلدية غزة
Municipality of Gaza
GAZA

**Cc:**

- **International Cooperation Unit**

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gm@mogaza.org | Fax: 970 8 2824400 :فاكس | P.O. Box 16 | Palestine Square

بلدية غزة هاشم 00970599815600
municgaza



**Dundee-Nablus**
**Twinning Association**
رابطة توأمة دندي نابلس

26th August 2022

Jamie Macrae
Committee Officer, Corporate Services
City of Edinburgh Council
Business Centre 2.1, Waverley Court,
4 East Market Street,
Edinburgh
EH8 8BG

email: jamie.macrae@edinburgh.gov.uk

Dear Mr Macrae,

**Proposal to twin Edinburgh with Gaza City**

Thank you for your invitation to submit a written statement for the Policy Committee to consider.

The Dundee-Nablus Twinning Association (DNTA) is happy to explain the benefits we see from our twinning with a Palestinian city and to encourage further twinnings with Palestine.

DNTA is proud of our city's long-standing link with our twin city of Nablus in Palestine. The relationship is positive in both directions. Dundee Councillors in 1980 made a very difficult decision to twin and they faced considerable opposition.

Our links are very much about friendship, understanding and commerce; they are not about (party) politics. We endeavour to understand each other and we value the human bonds which can be built by contact and hospitality. All Dundee City Council group leaders recognise this and have recently expressed their support for this twinning.

The origins of twinning after the wars in the 1940s were in bringing together those who had been in conflict. Twinning is by its nature often controversial or difficult but this is where it can be at its best. Building understanding is important to us all.

DNTA was established by Dundee City Council (with a Twinning Association created for each of the City's twins). The Lord Provost is an *ex officio* member of our committee and, subject to satisfactory examination of our accounts, the Council grants us £1,000 per annum. We raise a similar amount from our membership dues and fundraise for specific projects. We are independent and, of course, we do not speak for Dundee City Council or the Lord Provost.

Our activities include promoting friendship, understanding and commerce. We encourage and support visits between the two cities. Together with the other Twinning Associations, we support the Lord Provost when he holds twinning events.

A key role is to help the people of Dundee to learn more about Nablus and the people who live there.

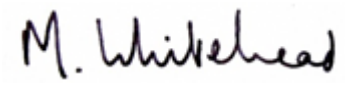
Zoom meetings have recently become more popular and have enabled people in Nablus to meet and talk to our members and friends in Dundee.

Nablus was a contentious twinning when it was proposed in 1980. There was a petition to Parliament and many objections. But twinning is a positive move and is not exclusive or discriminatory. We now find there is widespread support for our twinning and very few objections.

This is welcome because twinning with your "friends" is not as beneficial as twinning with those people you do not know well; many twinning relationships after the wars of the 1940s helped to establish new and constructive understandings between former enemies.

Dundee-Nablus Twinning Association would encourage further links with Palestine. Our experience, though sometimes facing difficulties, is very positive and beneficial.

Yours sincerely,



Mike Whitehead
Vice-Convener

Email: viceconvener@dundee-nablus.org.uk