

## UPF Parliament Week Event - Young Achievers Engaging with Parliamentarians

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### A Parliament Week Event Convened by UPF

There were over 60 connections joined on zoom and 700 views on Facebook for a Universal Peace Federation Parliament Week event with a focus on promoting political dialogue and understanding, with particular focus on young people and the issues surrounding the covid-19 pandemic. Sun Hak Peace Prize Laureate Afghan educationalist, Dr Sakena Yacoobi, commented on twitter, 'Engaging young people with parliamentarians lead us to look the world through their lenses and open our conscience to today's problem with a broader view of a solution.' Rt. Hon. Baroness Janet Royall tweeted, 'A pleasure to participate in the Q+A this evening, energised by amazing young people.'

The parliamentarians included Afzal Khan MP CBE, Rt Hon Baroness Janet Royall, Baroness Sandip Verma, Paul Scully MP and Shaun Bailey MP.



UPF Patron, Carole Stone CBE and UPF Chair of Trustees, Keith Best also spoke.

Panellists briefly introduced themselves first. The focus of the introductions was for the speakers to talk about their career/passions/interests in the context of young people. It was great to hear from a mixture of young and older panellists and why they all have a desire to get young people involved in politics and ensure they are part of conversations today.

Young people then asked questions to the panellists, ranging from 12 years old to approx. 30 years old. The questions were directed towards specific members of the panel who were best positioned to answer. Questions focused mainly on the issues that the covid-19 pandemic is causing for young people short term and long term, some examples of the questions asked were:

How are we supporting young people in starting up small businesses given that we are expecting

an economic crisis?

When will the covid crisis end?

How can we balance the restrictions with the mental health of the youth?

Are university students being consulted? Are universities resuming solely a financial decision?

If a COVID vaccine becomes available should vaccination be compulsory?

Should politics be taught to everyone in schools as part of the national curriculum?



The panellists gave thoughtful, honest answers and showed real compassion and interest in the issues young people in particular are facing today. Although many of the panellists shared that they could not give definitive answers to some of the questions (There isn't a right or wrong answer to many of the questions.), there was appreciation from the young people asking the questions for the answers provided.

There was also a strong theme emerging that the covid pandemic needs to be solved internationally. There is a huge focus on nationalism today (e.g. vaccines being purchased by countries alone), however we need global co-operation to resolve such issues. Another key theme was that we collectively all need to take individual responsibility to overcome this covid pandemic.

Concluding remarks were given by Dr. Michael Balcomb, Chair of UPF and FFWPU for Europe and Middle East who encouraged all young people to get involved and reach out directly to their local MP, let them know who you are and have belief that you can influence positive change in your area.

