

UPF Israel: Knesset Caucus for Israel-Lebanon Peace Offers Hope

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June 29, 2026
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Jerusalem, Israel – A historic and inspiring chapter in Middle Eastern diplomacy unfolded at the Israeli Knesset on June 29, 2026, with the inaugural meeting of the official Knesset Caucus for the Promotion of Peace and Normalization between the State of Israel and Lebanon. UPF-Israel was among the representatives of faith communities and civil society invited to participate.



Founded by Knesset member **Dr. Akram Hasson**, and established with the official blessing of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the caucus serves as a powerful platform bridging faith diplomacy, people-to-people connections, and grassroots social action.

The landmark event brought together an influential assembly of members of the Knesset, Ministry of Foreign Affairs officials, and senior international diplomats – including the ambassador of China, the consul of Belarus, and the consul of Vietnam. Joining them were members of the global media, prominent journalists, social media influencers and thought leaders.

A defining highlight of the inauguration was the vibrant presence of women and youth leaders. Pioneering female figures, social entrepreneurs and dynamic young activists infused the room with a driving spirit of action and a broad global outlook. Despite the diverse backgrounds of those present, the room resonated with a single, profound voice: a shared yearning for genuine human connection and lasting peace.



The atmosphere of the conference beautifully bridged historical memory with forward-looking hope. Participants reflected with deep longing on the heritage of Lebanon prior to the devastation of foreign interventions and civil conflict – recalling a time when the nation was celebrated as the “Switzerland of the Middle East” and Beirut shone as its jewel. In stark contrast to the hardships of the past, speakers highlighted Israel’s immense potential to contribute meaningfully to its northern neighbor’s prosperity once true peace is realized.

The inaugural meeting featured a rich tapestry of expert analyses and deeply moving personal insights, divided into three categories: international organizations and Track II diplomacy; the voices of youth and media; and heritage and shared history.

In the first category, representing UPF-Israel, **Mr. Hod Ben Zvi**, who serves as coordinator of the International Association of Parliamentarians for Peace for Europe and the Middle East, a UPF affiliate, presented a comprehensive, visionary position paper outlining the strategic path forward for regional stability. Advocate **Ms. Tamar Senesh**, representing the Jerusalem Institute of Justice, delivered a warm greeting on behalf of her organization and highlighted the legal and humanitarian dimensions of coexistence.

Representing youth, **Mr. Lourd Atia**, an 18-year-old Arab-Muslim social activist, powerfully embodied the courage and vision of the younger generation, while **Ms. Salana**, a journalist for a Lebanese social media platform, shared fascinating insights into existing digital and ground-level initiatives that already connect Lebanese and Israeli citizens daily.

Reminding participants of their shared history, the event was graced by the presence of South Lebanon Army (SLA) veteran families who have resided in Israel for decades. Moving testimonies were shared by **Mr. Jonathan El-Khoury**, representing the Christian community in Israel; **Mr. Lati Ibrahim**, former head of the SLA Military Affairs Bureau; and **Ms. Miriam Younes**, a Christian evacuee from the Lebanese town of Debel.

Other speakers offered institutional and spiritual insights. Valuable perspectives were shared by Knesset member **Mr. Osher Shkalim**, **Rabbi Pinto**, regional expert **Dr. Hanizadeh**, and **Mr. Ehab Joulner** from

the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. **Mr. Fayez Sarhan** from Hurfeish, a renowned lecturer on coexistence, deeply moved the audience by reminding everyone that mutual respect and human dignity must precede all doctrines.



The conference concluded with inspiring remarks from the caucus chair, Dr. Akram Hasson. He emphasized that forging peace requires immense courage and mutual investment from both sides. While true reconciliation demands effort and sacrifice, dedicated cross-border investment can build a warm, prosperous and durable shared reality.

The ultimate vision of the newly formed caucus is to foster a peace that does not merely exist on paper between governments and diplomats, but a living, breathing relationship of fraternity between the Lebanese and Israeli peoples.