Northern Ireland Assembly

Report by the Assembly Commissioner for Standards on Complaint made against Mr Paul Givan MLA

Assembly – Confidential

Summary

1. This report sets out the findings of my investigation as a result of 7 complaints received between 27th October 2025 and 4th November 2025 from members of the public. The complaints related to Minister Givan's visit to Israel from 23rd to 31st October 2025. Five of the complaints were found to be inadmissible as they failed to satisfy the conditions set out in paragraph 3.3 of the Direction by the Committee on Standards and Privileges on General Procedures. The 2 remaining complaints formed the basis of the investigation.

2. Both admissible complaints alleged breaches of the Ministerial Code of Conduct including an alleged failure to operate in a way conducive to promoting good community relations, misuse of official resources and alleged failure to uphold the principles of Integrity, Openness and Accountability.

3. After completing a preliminary investigation into the admissibility of the complaints, I formally commenced my investigation on 9th February 2026 which included an interview with Mr Givan.

4. I found that Mr Givan did not participate in the delegation to Israel officially as Minister for Education. During the trip, a visit by the delegation to a school in Jerusalem was facilitated which Mr Givan attended.

5. After the school visit Mr Givan instructed the Department of Education to issue a press release specifically regarding that element of the trip only. In doing so, Mr Givan was clearly acting in the capacity of Minister for that aspect of the trip and therefore required to uphold the Ministerial Code of Conduct.

6. I found that a visit to a school would be in keeping with the role and expectations of a Minister for Education. In addition, the press release issued was specific to the school visit, was factual and contained no political commentary or reference to the wider trip.

7. I have found therefore that Mr Givan did not breach the Ministerial code of Conduct in the circumstances.

Complaints

8. I received the first admissible complaint from Mr Oisin McKibbin on 30th October 2025[1]. Whilst the complaint asked that a number of related but inadmissible matters be examined, my investigation focused on an allegation of a failure to uphold the Principles of

[1] Document 1

Public Life as set out in the Ministerial Code of Conduct[2] namely Integrity, Openness and Accountability.

9. I received the second admissible complaint from Ms Aine McElhinney on 4th November 2025[3]. This complaint also referenced a number of related but inadmissible allegations. My investigation however focussed on the alleged failure to uphold 1.5 (vi) of the Ministerial Code of Conduct namely;

    - (vi) operate in a way conducive to promoting good community relations and equality of treatment.

10. I also considered the generalised allegations from both regarding the misuse of official resources under 1.5(v) of the Ministerial Code of Conduct namely;

    - (v) comply with this Code and with rules relating to the use of public funds.

11. The matters not considered included;

    1. Allegations related to the Pledge of Office.
    2. General complaints regarding a failure to serve the whole community and dereliction of an ethical duty.

12. In addition I considered that the Principles of Selflessness and Leadership had also potentially been engaged and were therefore included in my consideration.

Investigation

13. My investigation formally commenced on 9th February 2026.

14. In the course of my investigation I carried out the following:

    - Reviewed all complaints received.
    - Reviewed the official invitation to the delegation[4].
    - Reviewed the contents of the Department of Education press release published 27th October 2025 regarding the school visit[5].

[2] Ministerial Code of Conduct – Standards Commissioner for the Northern Ireland Assembly
[3] Document 2
[4] Document 3
[5] Document 4

- Reviewed footage of evidence given to the Education Committee on 12th November 2025[6] by Mr Ronnie Armour, T/Permanent Secretary regarding the use of Departmental resources.
- Reviewed the Department of Education report 'Information on Paul Givan's visit to Israel' published 20th November 2025[7].
- Reviewed a written response to the allegations received from Mr Givan dated 28th January 2026[8].
- Interviewed Minister Givan[9].
- Wrote to Mr David Malcolm[10], Permanent Secretary, Dept of Education.
- Reviewed response from Mr Malcolm including copy letters and emails[11].

15. A copy of the complaint and all other documents I have relied on in reaching my decision are included at Appendix A.

Evidence

Timeline

16. 15th September 2025 – Invitation received by Mr Givan from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Israel to attend a delegation to Israel.

17. 23rd October 2025 to 31st October 2025 – Mr Givan participated in Israel visit.

18. 27th October 2025 – Mr Givan attended 'OFEK' School as part of the visit, details of which were posted on the Department of Education website on that date.

Preliminary Investigation

19. On 13th January 2026 I commenced a preliminary investigation to consider the admissibility of the complaints. As part of that preliminary investigation I wrote to Mr Givan[12] inviting his written representations regarding the complaints with a request to address how the visit was initiated and to understand Mr Givan's rationale for attending.

[6] Committee for Education Meeting, Wednesday 12 November 2025 - Northern Ireland Assembly TV
[7] Document 5
[8] Document 6
[9] Document 7
[10] Document 8
[11] Documents 9 and 10
[12] Document 11

20. On 9th February 2026 Mr Givan provided a written response[13]. The response clarified that the visit had been initiated by the Israeli Embassy to the UK and that no public funds were used for the visit. The response further stated that the trip was not an official Department of Education trip nor was it represented as such.

21. The response described the allegations as criticisms of Mr Givan's political views and should not therefore be the subject of an investigation by the Commissioner for Standards.

22. Having considered Mr Givan's response I concluded that the complaints were admissible, that Mr Givan's participation in the delegation was sufficient grounds to suspect that a breach of the Ministerial Code of Conduct may have occurred and that an investigation was necessary.

Permanent Secretary Evidence to the Education Committee

23. On the 12th November 2025, Mr Ronnie Armour, T/Permanent Secretary, gave evidence to the Committee for Education[14] regarding the role of the Department relating to the Israel trip by Mr Givan.

24. Mr Armour was clear that the invitation to participate in the delegation was not framed as an Educational visit nor was it organised through Departmental channels hence was not subject to normal approvals. He further confirmed that the trip was not funded by the Department with all trip costs having been met by the Israeli Embassy.

25. Mr Armour stated that no Departmental advice was sought or provided regarding accepting or declining the invitation, nor were any briefing materials supplied to Mr Givan. Support by Departmental staff was limited to a small number of administrative tasks such as providing a letter of acceptance, confirming travel logistics, coordinating the Minister's diary and obtaining IT security clearance for the Minister to bring his mobile devices.

26. Mr Armour clarified that no Departmental Officials went on the trip nor were they involved in any engagements either in person or remotely.

27. Following the school visit, at the Minister's request, a press release was prepared and forwarded to Mr Armour for his approval. Mr Armour reviewed the release which he described as a factual account of the school visit, before approving it and sending it to the Special Advisor and the Minister for his approval.

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[13] Document 6

[14] Committee for Education Meeting, Wednesday 12 November 2025 - Northern Ireland Assembly TV

28. Mr Armour stated that he approved the press release having considered the Civil Service Code of Ethics and the guiding principles for communications issued by the Executive Information Service press office.

29. Mr Armour stated that he approved the press release having concluded it did not contain political content; it provided only factual information; it was relevant to the Minister's portfolio; it was not an unlawful request; it did not breach a statutory duty; there was no improper use of public funds; it did not appear to breach the civil service Code of Ethics.

30. Mr Armour was satisfied that, based on the information provided by the Minister, no engagements on the visit constituted 'relevant meetings' as defined in the *Functioning of Government Miscellaneous Provisions Act 2021*.

Department of Education Report on the Israel Trip

31. On 20th November 2025 the Department of Education published a report – 'Information on Paul Givan's Visit to Israel'[15].

32. The report provided an overview of the visit and confirmed that no departmental funds were used. It confirmed that the trip was declared on the NI Assembly Register of Members' Interests and that Departmental involvement was limited, consistent with the Permanent Secretary's evidence to the Committee for Education.

33. The report summarised the considerations relating to the press release regarding the school visit and those relating to the *Functioning of Government Act 2021*, again consistent with the Permanent Secretary's evidence.

34. The report's conclusions were as follows;

    - Departmental involvement was minimal, administrative and aligned with standard protocols.
    - No officials accompanied the Minister and no departmental resources were used for the trip itself.
    - The press release was cleared based on standards of factual accuracy, impartiality and transparency.
    - Based on available information, the Minister's engagements did not trigger legal requirements for official records or civil servant attendance.

[15] Document 5

Interview

35. Minister Givan was interviewed on 26th February 2026[16].

36. At interview Mr Givan confirmed that he had attended the delegation to Israel primarily as an MLA. He attended with a number of other DUP politicians and 2 members of the Welsh Assembly. No Ministers from other Assemblies were in attendance.

37. Mr Givan outlined the itinerary of the delegation and confirmed that there were no official governmental meetings.

38. When asked if he was introduced as Minister during the visit to the Israeli Parliament, Mr Givan replied;

    "So as part of that delegation they did have little name plates, and whenever we were there... I don't know what the other name plates were for the likes of Steve Aiken or Sammy Wilson, but they did have Minister of Education on mine, albeit I think that was more as a courtesy of the title. The two individuals that I met were not there as equivalents in terms of an education minister or so on. That meeting didn't take place. So I think that was more as a courtesy. What I would regard the education side of it was the school visit, which was an Ofek School visit, which was one that generated, I think, the issues around publication of a press release".

39. When asked about the arrangements for the school visit as part of the delegation, Mr Givan replied;

    "Whenever the invitation[17] came in and I had indicated to my private office that I intended to facilitate this visit, given my role as Education minister, whilst I hadn't been invited in that capacity, if there was an education component part that the embassy in London could incorporate into it, I'd be happy to do that. It transpired that there was never any official arrangement put in place to visit the school until whenever we were departing, where I think there was an indication that we would be visiting a school. At that point I still didn't know what school it was. It was only when we were there, and that morning when we headed off collectively. It was the full delegation that went along to that and visited the school."

40. When asked whether he accepted that the information posted on the Department's website[18] regarding the school visit gave the impression that he was there as the Minister, he replied;

[16] Document 7
[17] Document 3
[18] Document 4

“Yes, and there was no... So I think there were two aspects of this one. The visit was accepted in my role as a Member of the Assembly for Lagan Valley, but I can't divorce myself from the reality that I'm also the Education Minister, and therefore that part of the trip, which was exclusively the education component part of it, and that was the trigger for me to relay back to the department that I would like a press release to be issued, reflecting on the educational side of, of that school visit. So I can absolutely... The statement did not go out, 'Paul Givan, MLA.' It went out in my capacity as being the Education Minister in respect of that school visit.”

41. When asked about his motivation for going on the visit at that particular time, Mr Givan responded;

“Yes. Well, it absolutely was to be able to experience and to hear from people, and that was my motivation because there has been so much public commentary around it. When you have Gerry Carroll publishing tweets of the Palestinian resistance on the day of 7 October, when people were massacred, when I listened to other public representatives having a particular position, whilst I have historically been predisposed to a pro-Israel position as an elected representative over many years, it's always better to be able to say, 'I've been able to witness this.' Actually, I came back from it going, 'Jerusalem is a much more diverse place than what people would have you to believe, that a country with 10 million people, 2 million of which aren't Jews,' and actually I witnessed levels of integration and respect which is absent in some parts of Belfast. It was informative for me to be able to witness that first hand, and help inform some of the discourse that I engage in here.”

42. Mr Givan was asked if he considered Northern Ireland public opinion before making the trip. He replied;

“Well, listen, whenever you go and visit anywhere, when's the right time to go and visit China, for example? When's the right time for me, as I'm going in two weeks' time, to visit the White House and President Trump? There will be countless people here in Northern Ireland who feel we shouldn't go anywhere near the White House. Indeed, the First Minister believes that we shouldn't go near the White House. So lots of people are going to have different views on where politicians decide to go to. I've certainly views whenever elected representatives have taken themselves to strange places across the world, but that's their right to do so. So I recognise that, in Northern Ireland, people are going to have different views on where we go, who we meet. Indeed there are many of my electorate who probably don't think I should be in government with Sinn Fein in Northern Ireland. So that's the space we have to try and navigate.”

43. When put to Mr Givan that the views of a significant number of people, whether or not he agreed with them, were entirely predictable regarding this visit, he stated;

"I think there are some people in Northern Ireland, including some of these complainants, and the context of it is purely driven from a political opinion. Whatever I do in public life, decisions that I take, there are always going to be decisions that could have adverse public commentary. So whether it's going on this visit, or whether it's me taking a decision not to grant, for example, Bangor Academy integrated status, which created huge public controversy - a court case which I won, but nevertheless - am I not to take decisions on matters of public policy or visit countries on the basis of somebody, somewhere in Northern Ireland, having a disagreeable position to that? I would say, if that's the case, most politicians shouldn't step out the door of their house and give voice to any kind of wider public commentary on these things, because that's the nature of a free democracy. People will disagree with you, and some will agree."

44. It was put to Mr Givan that in a Ministerial capacity he was representing everyone in Northern Ireland. Did he consider this in terms of what some people view as an inherently political and divisive visit?

"Well, I think those who have taken a critical view of it speaks more to their own prejudice, because what's actually in the statement is entirely non-political. It's purely factual in terms of what the school is doing to help gifted children, and actually a school which has a diverse population within it of Jews, Christians and Arabs who attend the school. That was an example of a school in Jerusalem where there is an integrated setting. So me giving public voice and giving some credit to this school, I think, is an example of how they're trying to manage in a divided society. How others have chosen to interpret that through their own anti-Israel prism, I think, is a problem for them, as opposed to something that I, as a minister, should be held hostage to, that because people do have a particular view towards Israel, that somehow then I need to curtail my approach. This visit wasn't in my official capacity, but the school visit was in terms of me recognising the school.

When the statement went out, it went out as Education Minister, but it didn't opine on anything else around Israel, the Middle East, or give any kind of political viewpoint. There's nothing in that press release or in tweets that I may have put out, or social media commentary, that was of a political nature, in favour of the state of Israel in terms of that broader political debate that takes place. Certainly, there were aspects of the visit that other people may find disagreeable. That's again a matter for them to reconcile themselves with. But there was nothing in me going to the school, the Ofek School, and the statement that then published that I believe breaches the Ministerial Code. Does it breach some individuals' personal sensitivities and their own particular viewpoint towards Israel? Clearly it does, but I would contend that shouldn't curtail me as a minister from being able to have put out the statement that was issued."

45. When asked if the post on the Department's website could impact on the neutrality of the department, he replied;

"No. Under the legislation, all the departments in Northern Ireland operate under what's commonly referred to as the direction and control of the minister. So the department operates at my direction and control No, and there would be people that will say, 'Let's have a look at all of the Department of Education press releases,' and policy positions that I have taken on a whole series of issues. I'll give you one by way of public controversy. Whenever it came to the policy that the UK Supreme Court ruled on when it came to biological sex and transgender issues within schools, I have issued a written ministerial statement. I've issued press releases, all put through the Department of Education, all of which have invoked significant public commentary and controversy. So is the department who… How would it articulate my position, having reached decisions on those matters, in a way that would not invoke some kind of viewpoint being expressed by those who either agree or disagree with me?

So similarly, when it came to this visit, there's actually on this nothing of a political nature. The offence for some has been purely to do with the fact that it was a school in Israel, in Jerusalem, and in a part of Jerusalem that they regard as being East Jerusalem and therefore illegally occupied territory. That is the prism in which they're viewing it. The actual statement was not political at all."

Response from Mr David Malcolm, Permanent Secretary to Department of Education

46. On 24th February 2026 I wrote to Mr David Malcom[19], the current Permanent Secretary to the Department of Education requesting confirmation regarding costs and Departmental support to the visit and copies of official correspondence with the Israeli Government relating to the visit.

47. On 16th March 2026 Mr Malcolm responded[20] confirming again that Departmental support was minimal and that no wider public expenditure was incurred.

48. Mr Malcolm provided copies of correspondence with the Israeli Embassy[21] confirming that such correspondence was limited and concerned only the general arrangements for the trip. Having reviewed the correspondence I am content that it is as described by Mr Malcolm.

Findings of Fact

49. I have found the following facts established to the required standards of proof:

[19] Document 8
[20] Document 9
[21] Document 10

1. On 15th September 2025, an invitation[22] was received by Mr Givan to attend a delegation to Israel. The invitation was addressed to 'Mr Givan'. There was no indication that the invitation was intended for the visit to be in a Ministerial capacity.
2. No prior arrangements were made for the delegation to have a specific educational aspect.
3. Limited administrative support was provided to Mr Givan in respect of the trip.
4. All costs were covered by the Israeli Embassy.
5. The trip was properly declared on the NI Assembly's Register of Member's Interests.
6. On 27th October, as part of the delegation, Mr Givan attended the OFEK school in East Jerusalem.
7. That date a post[23] was placed on the Department of Education website informing of the visit by the 'Education Minister' to a school in Israel.

50. In accordance with paragraph 7.14 of the General Procedures Direction, Minister Givan was afforded an opportunity to challenge any of the above findings before I finalised my report. He did not do so.

Reasoned Decision

51. The conflict in Israel and Gaza is a subject of local and international political controversy. It would be clearly foreseeable that any visit by a Minister to Israel would provoke considerable attention and perhaps criticism and dissatisfaction from a significant proportion of the Northern Ireland population.

52. The purpose of the investigation however was not to make a moral or political judgment on the merits of the trip rather whether, on the balance of probabilities, the visit engaged and then breached the Ministerial Code of Conduct.

53. Everyone, including politicians, are entitled to their political opinions regarding the conflict. A decision to visit Israel as a private individual or indeed a Member of the Legislative Assembly is a matter for that person. To attend in the capacity of a Minister however requires careful consideration in light of the Ministerial Code of Conduct's requirement to *at all times*, comply with the Code.

54. At times the distinction between acting as an MLA and as a Minister can be blurred or indistinct. Mr Givan was clear that he had participated in the delegation to Israel as an MLA and had not been invited in his capacity as Minister. There is no evidence to indicate that the invitation was intended for Mr Givan in a Ministerial capacity.

[22] Document 3
[23] Document 4

55. On receipt of the invitation, Mr Givan enquired whether the delegation had any input regarding educational matters. No educational component of the trip was confirmed until he was departing and even at that stage no details were provided regarding where any visit might be. Such confirmation was only provided when he was in Israel with the delegation, all of whom then visited the school.

56. Mr Givan was clear that the delegation did not involve attending any official meetings in a Ministerial capacity. No departmental advice was sought or provided regarding the trip nor did any departmental officials attend any part of the trip[24].

57. Mr Givan further explained that his motivation for participating in the delegation was to be able to experience and hear from people and inform the discourse he is involved in. He did take the opportunity to visit the school and, as his role in the Northern Ireland Assembly is that of Education Minister, he decided to issue a press release on the Department website in that capacity.

58. The press release[25] on analysis consists of a brief factual account of the visit to the OFEK school followed by a quote from Mr Givan. The quote reflects on the learning environment and teaching approach. It does not contain any political opinions or commentary.

59. In giving evidence to the Committee for Education in relation to the visit[26], the Permanent Secretary indicated that the visit was not an official Department of Education trip and therefore did not require departmental approvals.

60. He stated that no Departmental funds were used with all costs being covered by the Israeli Embassy. Departmental involvement was limited to a small number of administrative tasks in the Minister's Private Office. These related to diary management, confirming logistics securing IT clearance and seeking clarification as to whether there were any educational components to the trip.

61. Consideration was firstly given as to whether the visit engaged the Ministerial Code of Conduct. I am satisfied on my examination of the facts that Mr Givan did not participate generally in the delegation as Minister for Education. The Ministerial Code of Conduct was therefore not initially engaged.

62. However, when he directed that a press release be issued and a post placed on the Departmental website, Mr Givan clearly acted in the capacity of Minister as he has

[24] Document 5
[25] Document 4
[26] Committee for Education Meeting, Wednesday 12 November 2025 - Northern Ireland Assembly TV

acknowledged. This aspect of his participation in the delegation did therefore engage the Ministerial Code of Conduct.

63. As previously clarified, the content of the post itself is non-political and contains nothing which could be construed as breaching the Code. Consideration was therefore given to whether the attendance at the school could constitute a breach of the Code.

64. Having concluded that the participation in the delegation in general did not engage the Code as Mr Givan was attending in his capacity as an MLA, it is difficult to conclude that a visit to a school by the Education Minister, other than for its location, could constitute a breach of the Code. Evidence would be required to substantiate that there has been a breach of some aspect of the Code specifically due to the school visit. No such evidence has been found to support such a position as outlined below.

65. The delegation was inherently political and divisive given the Israel / Gaza conflict. It was entirely foreseeable that there would be significant and conflicting views of Mr Givan's attendance in Israel. The Ministerial Code of Conduct cannot however be a vehicle for imposing restrictions on Ministers' support for particular issues or for where they choose to visit. It is solely for the purpose of clarifying the rules and procedures for the exercise of the duties and responsibilities of Ministers and for holding those Ministers to account under the rules and procedures.

Findings on allegations

66. My conclusions in respect of the specific allegations are as follows.

Code section 1.5(v) comply with this Code and with rules relating to the use of public funds

67. Neither the evidence provided by the Permanent Secretary to the Education Committee nor the Department's Report[27] would give rise to a suspicion that any public funds were used inappropriately with all costs being met by the Israeli Embassy. Costs in relation to the visit were properly declared by Mr Givan in the Assembly Register of Members' Interests in accordance with the rules of the Assembly Members' Code of Conduct. Departmental support for the visit was limited to a small number of administrative tasks such as would be the case on any occasion that a minister was absent or unavailable and no other departmental staff attended. There is therefore no evidence to support an allegation that public funds were misused.

[27] Document 5

Code section 1.5 (vi) Operate in a way conducive to promoting good community relations and equality of treatment

68. Logically this rule must relate to operating in a way conducive to promoting good community relations in Northern Ireland. Ultimately there is no evidence to support a conclusion that the Ministerial aspect of the visit by Mr Givan to Israel, specifically the OFEK school, would have any effect on equality of treatment in Northern Ireland or was not conducive to promoting good community relations. The community in Northern Ireland have differing views on the politics and conflict in Israel and Gaza. It is difficult to see how this school visit would have any impact on those pre-existing views.

Principle of Integrity

69. This requires that holders of public office should not place themselves under any financial obligation to outside individuals or organisations that might influence them in the performance of their official duties. Mr Givan has properly registered this visit in accordance with the rules. In addition, international relations are excepted matters and the potential for conflict of interest is therefore remote.

Principle of Openness

70. This requires that holders of public office are as open as possible about all the decisions and actions that they take. There is no evidence that Mr Givan has withheld any information regarding his trip either from the Assembly or this investigation.

Principle of Accountability

71. This requires that holders of public office are accountable for their decisions and actions. There is no evidence that Mr Givan has failed to submit himself to scrutiny from any quarter in respect of the visit.

Principle of Selflessness

72. This requires that holders of public office should take decisions in terms of the public interest. Public opinion and commentary would suggest that there is no agreed position which could represent the greater public interest in relation to the Israel / Gaza conflict. There is no evidence which suggests that Mr Givan stands to gain financially or in terms of other material benefits from his participation in this visit.

Principle of Leadership

73. This requires that holders of public office should promote and support these principles by leadership and example. Having not found a breach of the other principles, it is not possible to conclude that Mr Givan failed to show leadership in this context.

Conclusion

74. I am satisfied on the basis of the evidence, my analysis and reasoning that on the balance of probabilities, Mr Givan's conduct in participating in the delegation to Israel and visiting the OFEK school did not breach any aspect of the Ministerial Code of Conduct.

Appendix A

Document	Description
1	Complaint from Mr Oisin McKibbin
2	Complaint from Ms Aine McElhinney
3	Invitation to Delegation
4	Department of Education Press Release
5	Department of Education report 'Information on Paul Givan's Visit to Israel'
6	Written response from Mr Givan
7	Interview transcript – Mr Givan
8	Letter to Mr David Malcolm, Permanent Secretary
9	Response from Mr Malcolm
10	Communications from Private Office
11	Letter to Mr Givan

[redacted]

From: [redacted]
Sent: 30 October 2025 19:23
To: +StandardsCommissioner
Cc: chris.hazzard.mp@parliament.uk; southdownmp@gmail.com
Subject: Concerns Regarding Minister Paul Givan's Visit to Israel - Oct 2025

Dear Commissioner,

I am writing to lodge a formal complaint regarding the recent visit by Minister Paul Givan, Northern Ireland's Minister for Education, to Israel.

This visit raises significant ethical and public interest concerns, given Israel's current standing in international law and the scale of the humanitarian crisis in Gaza. Israel is plausibly accused of genocide by the International Court of Justice. According to United Nations and independent humanitarian organisations, more than 50,000 children have been killed or injured since October 2023, and approximately 97 percent of schools in Gaza have been destroyed or rendered inoperable by Israeli military actions.

Minister Givan's official visit to Israel, in these circumstances, risks conveying tacit approval of a state accused of systemic racism, apartheid, and gross violations of international humanitarian law. It also appears profoundly inconsistent with the ethical standards expected of public officeholders in Northern Ireland, particularly when public money or official endorsement may be involved.

I therefore request that your office investigate the following matters:

1. **The total cost of the visit to the Northern Ireland taxpayer** , including travel, accommodation, security, and any departmental support.

2. **Whether any part of the trip was funded, sponsored, or facilitated by the Israeli government, lobby groups, or affiliated organisations** , and whether appropriate declarations were made under the Assembly's Code of Conduct.

3. **Whether the Minister sought to meet with Palestinian educators, families, or representatives affected by the destruction of Gaza's education system.**

4. **Whether the Minister's conduct aligns with the principles of integrity, openness, and accountability set out in the Assembly's Code of Conduct.**

This matter is of pressing public concern. Overwhelming public sentiment across Northern Ireland and the wider UK is strongly opposed to Israel's ongoing assault on Gaza, and many view such official visits as incompatible with the values of justice, equality, and human rights that our institutions are meant to uphold.

I would be grateful if your office could acknowledge receipt of this complaint and confirm whether an investigation will be initiated. History will judge us, and you, by your actions in the face of the abhorrent abuse of power shown by Israel and its Western Accomplices.

Many thanks,

[redacted]
South Down Constituent

[redacted]

From: [redacted]
Sent: 04 November 2025 22:18
To: +StandardsCommissioner
Subject: FORMAL COMPLAINT AND DEMAND FOR SANCTION AGAINST MINISTER PAUL GIVAN – BREACH OF STATUTORY DUTY TO SERVE THE WHOLE COMMUNITY

Dear Commissioner,
This correspondence constitutes a formal complaint, demanding a full investigation into the conduct of the **Minister of Education, Paul Givan**, regarding his visit to Israel (on or around **October 24-30, 2025**). The Minister's actions represent a profound breach of his statutory obligations under the Northern Ireland Act 1998 and the Ministerial Code of Conduct.

I. The Nature of the Conduct and Institutional Damage

The Minister's conduct exhibits a calculated disregard for the foundational principles of power-sharing governance and is categorised by three primary institutional failures:

1. **Breach of the Duty to Serve the Whole Community and Sectorian Symbolism:** The deliberate and highly provocative display of partisan symbolism, including the **holding of the Israeli flag merged with Northern Ireland-related unionist/loyalist flags**, is an act of blatant political signalling that fundamentally rejects the duty to represent all Northern Ireland constituents. This visual conflation of his Ministerial role with a controversial international state directly alienates and antagonises a large segment of the community. This staunchly partisan behaviour damages cross-community relations and **actively contributes to the DUP's accelerating electoral decay and loss of institutional relevance among the post-Agreement generation.**
2. **Misuse of Official Resources and Undermining Civil Service Impartiality:** The Minister's request that the Department of Education (DE) use its official channels and resources to promote his visit (Evidence: **DE social media post and press release dated October 27, 2025, concerning the Ofek School visit**) is an abuse of public resources for a highly political purpose. This compromises the required political impartiality of the Civil Service, conflates the Minister's partisan views with the neutral functions of the Department, and breaches the clear rules against using official resources for party political ends.
3. **Dereliction of Ethical Duty by the Education Minister:** The decision to undertake and promote this visit occurred at a time when, according to UN-affiliated agencies, **over 20,000 children have been killed** and nearly **658,000 children** have been deprived of education due to the destruction of the Palestinian education system. The Minister of Education's failure to acknowledge this humanitarian catastrophe while promoting a "fact-finding" mission betrays the fundamental principles of his educational portfolio and demonstrates an ethical lapse inconsistent with the high standards of propriety required of public office.

II. Specific Breaches of the Ministerial Code and Statutory Law

The conduct detailed above is in direct breach of the following statutory provisions and principles:

- **Breach of Statutory Duty (Northern Ireland Act 1998, Schedule 4, Pledge (c) & (ca)):** The Minister has failed in his fundamental duty to "**serve all the people of**
- **Northern Ireland equally**" and to "**promote the interests of the whole community represented in the Northern Ireland Assembly towards the goal of a shared future**."
- **Breach of Propriety and Community Relations (Ministerial Code, Section 1(1)(e)):** The Minister has failed to "**operate in a way that is conducive to promoting good community relations**," instead engaging in highly divisive conduct that diminishes public confidence.
- **Breach of Resource Management (Ministerial Code, Section 1(1)(h) & (k)):** The Minister failed to "**ensure that official resources are not used for party political purposes**" and failed to "**uphold the political impartiality of the civil service**."

III. Request for Immediate and Definitive Action

I submit that the evidence establishes a *prima facie* case for a breach of the Ministerial Code of Conduct. I respectfully request that you launch a full and immediate investigation into this matter. Given the severity of the institutional and ethical failures, which erode the trust necessary for stable power-sharing, I urge you

to recommend the strongest available sanction, including the **Minister's immediate exclusion or dismissal from office.**

I await your formal acknowledgement and notification of the commencement of the investigation.

Yours sincerely,

[redacted]

EMBASSY OF ISRAEL

שגרירות ישראל
לונדון

15th September 202

Dear Mr. Givan,

As part of an exclusive group of devolved government leaders, we would like to invite you to a delegation to Israel from the **24th to the 31st of October, 2025**.

This visit offers a valuable opportunity to engage directly with policymakers, senior government officials, civil society leaders and community representatives in order to gain insight into the country's diverse cultural, social and political landscape.

The itinerary includes visits to both the northern and southern regions of Israel, as well as Jerusalem and Tel Aviv, in order to experience the country's distinctive cultural, innovative and historical heritage.

At a time when the region is at the centre of global attention, this delegation offers the chance to look beyond the headlines and to hear from a variety of voices from across the political spectrum.

The costs of this visit would be covered and it would be our pleasure if you could join us.

If you are intrested in taking part in this delegation or have any questions, please email [redacted] by the 22nd September.

Looking forward to hearing from you soon.

Kind regards,

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Israel

Department of Education

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Paul Givan visits Ofek School in Jerusalem

Date published: 27 October 2025

Education Minister Paul Givan today visited Ofek School in the Jerusalem District to learn more about Israel's innovative approaches to gifted education and inclusive learning.

The Education Minister was welcomed by Principal Racheli Yitzhak, along with representatives of the Israeli Ministry of Education, teachers and students. Ofek School provides opportunities for over 1,500 gifted and outstanding pupils from across Jerusalem who attend once a week to take part in small, ability-based classes designed to further their academic achievements.



Paul Givan visits Ofek School in Jerusalem.

Following his visit, Paul Givan said:

> "The Ofek School in Jerusalem adopts many innovative educational practices, supporting diverse learners within a high-achieving environment. During my visit, I had the opportunity to observe lessons, meet with pupils and hear how they are encouraged to think creatively and collaborate with others.
>
> "What stood out to me most was the passion and confidence of the young people that I met and their enthusiasm for learning was infectious. It's inspiring to see how Ofek School and the Israeli Ministry of Education are investing in the potential of gifted learners while maintaining an inclusive approach that ensures every student feels valued and supported. This visit has offered valuable insights into how innovative teaching, flexibility and high expectations can transform the classroom experience and empower students to reach their full potential."

INFORMATION ON PAUL GIVAN'S VISIT TO ISRAEL

Overview

- Paul Givan visited Israel as part of a delegation invited by the Israeli Embassy to the United Kingdom in London. A copy of the invitation is provide below.
- The purpose of the visit was to gain insight into Israel's cultural, social, and political landscape.
- The visit was not an official Department of Education trip, nor was it framed as one. It therefore did not require departmental approvals.

Funding and organisation

- No departmental funds were used.
- All costs (travel, accommodation, insurance) were covered by the Israeli Embassy.
- The costs are available on the NI Assembly's Register of Members' Interests: https://aims.niassembly.gov.uk/mlas/registerofinterests.aspx
- The Israeli Embassy handled all planning, including booking travel, arranging insurance and organising the itinerary. Paul Givan received a draft itinerary on the day of departure, 23 October 2025.
- Departmental involvement was limited to administrative tasks in the Minister's Private Office:
    - Confirming attendance and seeking clarification on whether the visit would include any educational components. Confirmation of educational components was not received in advance of departure.
    - Confirming travel logistics.
    - Managing the Minister's diary.
    - Securing IT security clearance for Minister's devices.
- No departmental advice or briefing materials were sought or provided.
- No discussions took place with the Executive Office or the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office in advance of the visit.
- No departmental officials attended any part of the trip, in person or remotely.
- The Paul Givan did not receive any gifts.

Visit to Ofek School

- Departmental involvement began only after a school visit on 27 October, when:
    - The Minister requested a press release about the school visit.
    - Press Office drafted the release and sent it to the Permanent Secretary for clearance. It was also cleared by the Special Adviser and the Minister.

- The content was checked for compliance with Civil Service standards (factual, impartial, relevant to portfolio).
- It was concluded that the release was a factual account and appropriate to issue.
- Social media posts were generated from the press release in line with standard practice.

The press release was judged to:

- Contain no political content.
- Be factual and relevant to Minister's portfolio.
- Not breach Civil Service Code or communications guidance.

Functioning of Government Act 2021

The Functioning of Government Act 2021 imposes two key obligations:

- Permanent Secretary must ensure arrangements and written records for relevant meetings.
- Ministers must take reasonable steps to have a Civil Servant attend meetings with third parties on official business.

A "relevant meeting" refers to a pre-arranged meeting for official business.

In the case of the visit to Israel:

- No educational visits or meetings were confirmed before Paul Givan's trip to Israel.
- The itinerary was received by Paul Givan on the day of departure. It mentioned an education engagement "to be confirmed" and Paul Givan was unaware of specifics before visiting the Ofek school.
- Consequently, no official attended the visit to Ofek school and attendance was not reasonably possible in this context.
- Paul Givan visited one school.

Key Conclusions

- Departmental involvement was minimal, administrative and aligned with standard protocols.
- No officials accompanied the Minister and no departmental resources were used for the trip itself.
- The press release was cleared based on standards of factual accuracy, impartiality and transparency.
- Based on available information, the Minister's engagements did not trigger legal requirements for official records or civil servant attendance.

Paul Givan addressed his trip to Israel on pages 16 and 42-48 of the Official Hansard Report dated Monday 3 November 2025. This is available here

EMBASSY OF ISRAEL

שגרירות ישראל
לונדון

15th September 2025

Dear Mr. Givan,

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If you are intrested in taking part in this delegation or have any questions, please email [redacted] by the 22nd September.

Looking forward to hearing from you soon.

Kind regards,

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Israel

Department of Education
www.education-ni.gov.uk

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Northern Ireland Commissioner
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28 January 2026

Dear Mr Wright,

Re: Case IDs 202500112 and 202500115 – Preliminary Investigation into Admissibility

Thank you for your letter of 13 January 2026 inviting representations relevant to your preliminary consideration of the admissibility of the complaints submitted by [redacted] and [redacted]

I appreciate the opportunity to provide clarification and context regarding my visit to Israel in October 2025, particularly in respect of how the visit was initiated and my rationale for attending.

The visit to Israel took place following an invitation from the Israeli Embassy to the United Kingdom. A copy of the invitation is attached at Annex A.

The invitation, travel arrangements, accommodation, insurance and itinerary were all coordinated by the Embassy.

No departmental or public funds were used for the visit. The costs were covered entirely by the Israeli Embassy and properly declared on the NI Assembly Register of Members' Interests, in accordance with the rules of the Assembly's Code of Conduct.

The purpose of attending was to gain insight into Israel's cultural, social and political context. As your letter notes, this was not an official Department of Education trip, and it was not represented as such.

At their heart, the allegations are criticisms of my political views, presented as supposed breaches of the Ministerial Code.

The political views of Ministers or MLAs should not be the subject of investigation of the Commissioner for Standards and to engage in such an enquiry, however dressed up, would be to set a dangerous precedent.

For example, Ms McElhinney advances three limbs under the heading "the nature and conduct of institutional damage":

1. Her first complaint relates to holding a flag. It is difficult to imagine an act which is more political in character and less susceptible to investigation. It would be wholly inappropriate for the Commissioner to determine the merits of sincerely held political views or expressions of political identity.

2. Her second complaint concerns departmental actions which were taken with the knowledge and agreement of the most senior official in the Department. The Permanent Secretary has already addressed these matters in detail before the Assembly's Education Committee.

3. The third complaint is openly political, offering no pretence that it is anything other than a criticism of my political views.

[redacted] letter is similarly comprised almost entirely of political criticism, including requests for the investigation of matters that fall clearly outside your statutory remit and bear no relation to the Standards Commissioner's functions.

Should you determine that the matter proceeds to the next stage of the process, I will be willing to provide any additional information required. However, I would respectfully suggest that even assessing the merits of the allegations straying into matters that are inherently political.

I trust this information assists in your consideration of whether the complaints meet the criteria for admissibility and I remain available should further clarification be required.

Yours sincerely,

[redacted]

Paul Givan MLA
Minister for Education

Okay. This interview is being tape-recorded. I'm Stephen Wright, the Commissioner for Standards. The date is 26 February 2026, and the time is 2:10. I'm interviewing… If you could please state your name.

Paul Givan, Education Minister, Member of the Assembly for Lagan Valley.

Accompanying Minister Givan is… Can you state your name?

R2: Richard Bullick, Special Adviser.

Okay. Can I just remind you that you're not permitted to answer any questions? You can certainly take advice, and if you need even to leave the room for that purpose, I'm happy for you to do so. Are you happy to take the oath, or do you want to do the affirmation?

I'm happy to take the oath.

Okay. If you just go ahead.

I swear by Almighty God that the evidence I shall give shall be the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth.

Thank you very much. I'll just remind you that this is a confidential interview, and nothing in the interview should be discussed with anyone, certainly until the end of the investigation. The transcript of the interview will be appended to my investigation report if I rely on it for any of recommendations, but I likely will so it'll almost certainly be on the report. Did you get a note from me okay about procedure here? It's really just… It would have been initially. I'm sure your office probably got it. It's just the bits around legal obligations.

Sure. I think so.

Yes. I'm sure, but it was sent with the original email. The interview's just about me asking you a number of questions about the two complaints. At the end of the interview, I'll certainly give you an opportunity to reflect on or clarify anything that you've said or add

anything else, and I'll also send you a transcript of the interview very shortly after. It usually takes about a week or so to come through, so you'll get that, and if there's any revisions that you think should be made I'll certainly take those into account. So before I start, are there any questions you have for me?

No. I'm content.

Okay. The purpose of this interview is really to explore complaints made in relation to your visit to Israel. I think it was 24 to 31 October. As the interview letter that was sent to you, it's really about exploring whether the Ministerial Code was engaged, and whether there's any evidence that there's been a breach of that code. Now, there were seven complaints, as I think you might know, five of which I will render inadmissible because they didn't meet the admissibility criteria in the direction. They were just political statements, essentially. These two complaints that I have accepted contain a significant amount of just political statement as well, but there are a couple of parts in them. I won't read out the whole statements, but essentially [redacted] 0:02:24.5] is really asking for an investigation as to whether your visit aligns with the principles of integrity, openness and accountability in the code, and [redacted] 0:02:32.4], among other things, specifically refers to code section 1.1(a), as she refers to, operating in a way that's conducive to promoting good community relations, among some other stuff.

I do accept that a lot of them are just political statements as well. I'll just get straight into it, then. Can I ask you, first of all then, really, in what capacity would your attendance on that visit to Israel?

So it was as a Member of the Assembly for Lagan Valley. Obviously, an element of it was to visit a school, but primarily it was accepted in my role as a Member of the Assembly. It was linked by way of me communicating it on to my private office. They were engaged in some of the logistics with the Israeli embassy in terms of coordinating the flights and so on, but it was primarily in my role as an MLA.

So thanks for the… You copied me the invitation, so thank you for that, and it's framed as part of an exclusive group of devolved government leaders.

Yes.

So again, you just accepted that, as you've said, primarily as an MLA though, not as a minister, in the way that invitation's phrased.

Yes, and people who were on that were, from Northern Ireland point of view, Steve Aiken MLA, Sammy Wilson, Member of Parliament, David Brooks MLA. There was a local councillor. Two local councillors were there, one from Newtownabbey Council, one from Belfast City Council, and then there was the leader of the Welsh opposition, a Conservative, and an Independent member of the Welsh Assembly were part of the political delegation who travelled.

No other ministers from the other assemblies.

There wasn't, no.

Okay. Right. I mean, have you a copy of the inventory that I could have? I don't really… I'm just trying to get a flavour of what sort of events you went to when you were there.

Yes. I'm not sure if you've been able to see the publication that's available on the Department of Education website in that respect that outlined aspects of the visit, but I'm happy to leave a hard copy with you. It's available online. Obviously, I might be able to pick up on this in due course, but there was an internal review of the visit and so on, and ascertaining use of departmental resources and all of that by the Permanent Secretary.

Is that all online now?

No, but he did… You know, the then Permanent Secretary, Ronnie Armour, gave evidence in front of the Education Committee, which is all available on the record in terms of his assessment. So there was an itinerary associated with it in terms of the places that we visited. Yad Vashem was one of the first places, the National Holocaust Memorial in Israel, in Jerusalem. We also went to the ministry of… Their equivalent of foreign affairs when we were there, for them to give a general update on the situation in Israel. We went then north in Israel, to in and around the Golan Heights area, and then we went down to southern Israel, where we were right at the border with Gaza. We visited one of the kibbutzim, I think that one in southern

Israel was called Nir Oz, where they had lost a number of their local community that were either killed or taken hostage.

We visited the site of the massacre that took place, where the concert was held, and then in northern Israel we were at another kibbutz which bordered with Lebanon, where they were able to show us some of the kind of issues that they've had to deal with. So a number of kibbutzim that we visited, there was some of that engagement politically at a general level with the foreign affairs. We went to the national parliament and there were a couple of politicians that met the delegation as well, and they were giving a general update to the wider delegation on the issues that they were facing in Israel.

You haven't referenced anything that I would consider to be official governmental meetings. Were there anything of that nature?

No, there was no…

Right, and you said you visited the Israeli Parliament. Were you introduced as anybody in particular? Did they introduce you as a minister or just a…

There were two…

You are the minister, and I get the difficulty here.

So as part of that delegation they did have little name plates, and whenever we were there… I don't know what the other nameplates were for the likes of Steve Aiken or Sammy Wilson, but they did have Minister of Education on mine, albeit I think that was more as a courtesy of the title. The two individuals that I met were not there as equivalents in terms of an education minister or so on. That meeting didn't take place. So I think that was more as a courtesy. What I would regard the education side of it was the school visit, which was an Ofek School visit, which was one that generated, I think, the issues around publication of a press release.

Well, you're absolutely right. That's the one that probably prompted all of the complaints of one nature or another. So if we just go to that, was that like an impromptu arrangement, or was that arranged in advance? How did that come about?

Whenever the invitation came in and I had indicated to my private office that I intended to facilitate this visit, given my role as Education minister, whilst I hadn't been invited in that capacity, if there was an education component part that the embassy in London could incorporate into it, I'd be happy to do that. It transpired that there was never any official arrangement put in place to visit the school until whenever we were departing, where I think there was an indication that we would be visiting a school. At that point I still didn't know what school it was. It was only when we were there, and that morning when we headed off collectively. It was the full delegation that went along to that and visited the school.

You said the full delegation. DO you mean more than just you and your two party colleagues? There was the others.

Yes, the Welsh. The two Welsh parliamentarians were there. The two local councillors were there. It was a visit that was organised for everyone who had went on the trip, but obviously, given my role as Education Minister, there was a focus when I was there on, people that we were meeting, 'This is the Northern Ireland Education Minister.'

Yes. Moving on to the post on the department's site, which really I think, as we said a minute ago, prompted most of these complaints. I mean, the post is on the department site, and it does start with, 'Education Minister Paul Givan today visited…' and refers to you as the Education Minister once or twice throughout it. Do you accept that that, certainly in part, gave the impression that you were there as the Minister to people reading that post?

Yes, and there was no… So I think there were two aspects of this one. The visit was accepted in my role as a Member of the Assembly for Lagan Valley, but I can't divorce myself from the reality that I'm also the Education Minister, and therefore that part of the trip, which was exclusively the education component part of it, and that was the trigger for me to relay back to the department that I would like a press release to be issued, reflecting on the educational side of, of that school visit. So I can absolutely… The statement did not go out, 'Paul Givan, MLA.' It went out in my capacity as being the Education Minister in respect of that school visit.

I mean, these things are difficult because you are the Minister for Education. There's no getting away from that, and I do appreciate the difficulty with these. A lot of this is about

interpretation in terms of the code, so that's what I'm trying to get at as much as anything. I think you've explained how you got there, and the aspect of the school okay, so I really just want to go on to the code then. Now, obviously the code requires you to adhere to the various bits and pieces and the principles at all times. The complaints referred to some of the principles. I think… Well, not all of them. More of the principles obviously are relevant here, particularly, in my view, leadership and selflessness. So in that context, what do you think - and you may not be able to answer this, or may not want to answer this - but what do you think was the Israeli Government's motivation for inviting you and others at this time? I'm sorry, at that time in October.

Well, they indicated it was very much a cultural fact-finding exchange, wanting me to be able to visit in order for me to see that, so that is their motivation. Why would I invite someone to come to Northern Ireland? It would be to show them Northern Ireland. If there are particular issues that are relevant that I think that needed to be explained, then I would take the opportunity to do that. So similarly, the basis of the invite indicates why I was invited to it. I would be second guessing if there was any other kind of ulterior motive, that they would have invited me to try and persuade me somewhat of their position. I wouldn't need to be persuaded to be supportive of Israel, and to be sympathetic of the position that they face in the Middle East. That is my general disposition. I went because we've had that many debates in this Assembly, in local councils - wrongly, in my view - about the Middle East, often misinformed.

I took it as an opportunity to inform me, as a member of the Assembly, that I would be able to indicate, 'Well, having been there, here was my experience, and here was what I was able to witness,' and that would help inform some of the contributions that I would make in the public discourse here in Northern Ireland when it comes to the wider Middle East issues.

Well, you probably in a way answered my next question, which was what was your motivation or rationale for going on the visit at that particular time? I guess a lot of those comments refer…

Yes. Well, it absolutely was to be able to experience and to hear from people, and that was my motivation because there has been so much public commentary around it. When you have Gerry Carroll publishing tweets of the Palestinian resistance on the day of 7 October, when people were massacred, when I listened to other public representatives having a particular position, whilst I have historically been predisposed to a pro-Israel position as an elected

representative over many years, it's always better to be able to say, 'I've been able to witness this.' Actually, I came back from it going, 'Jerusalem is a much more diverse place than what people would have you to believe, that a country with 10 million people, 2 million of which aren't Jews,' and actually I witnessed levels of integration and respect which is absent in some parts of Belfast. It was informative for me to be able to witness that firsthand, and help inform some of the discourse that I engage in here.

So did you consider Northern Ireland public opinion before you went in terms of, 'Do I go now or do this visit in two years?' then? Did you think about public opinion before you went to visit?

Well, listen, whenever you go and visit anywhere, when's the right time to go and visit China, for example? When's the right time for me, as I'm going in two weeks' time, to visit the White House and President Trump? There will be countless people here in Northern Ireland who feel we shouldn't go anywhere near the White House. Indeed, the First Minister believes that we shouldn't go near the White House. So lots of people are going to have different views on where politicians decide to go to. I've certainly views whenever elected representatives have taken themselves to strange places across the world, but that's their right to do so. So I recognise that, in Northern Ireland, people are going to have different views on where we go, who we meet. Indeed there are many of my electorate who probably don't think I should be in government with Sinn Fein in Northern Ireland. So that's the space we have to try and navigate.

Well, look, as I said, the Ministerial Code is principle-based. It's not rules-based like the Members' Code, which is much more black-and-white. It's much wider and open to interpretation. Did you consider the terms, the principles in the code, before your visit?

Not… I wasn't looking at the trip to Israel and saying, 'How does this align with the Ministerial Code, and let me have a look at those various different principles, and how does this visit interact with that?' That wouldn't have been something that I would have considered in terms of accepting the invitation to attend.

Yes. I mean, whether or not you or I agree with the views of a significant number of people in the local population, or some of the unions and all the voices we've heard around this, there are no… Their views were well known and entirely predictable around this. So

did you think about the impact of that when you were taking your… Did you consider the impact that would have?

I think there are some people in Northern Ireland, including some of these complainants, and the context of it is purely driven from a political opinion. Whatever I do in public life, decisions that I take, there are always going to be decisions that could have adverse public commentary. So whether it's going on this visit, or whether it's me taking a decision not to grant, for example, Bangor Academy integrated status, which created huge public controversy - a court case which I won, but nevertheless - am I not to take decisions on matters of public policy or visit countries on the basis of somebody, somewhere in Northern Ireland, having a disagreeable position to that? I would say, if that's the case, most politicians shouldn't step out the door of their house and give voice to any kind of wider public commentary on these things, because that's the nature of a free democracy. People will disagree with you, and some will agree.

I suppose essentially what you do privately, or even as an MLA, is entirely a matter for you around things like this. In a ministerial capacity it can be viewed slightly differently, in that you're representing, in a way, everyone in Northern Ireland. So when you were thinking about the school visit and posting on the departmental website, did you consider that in terms of what some people view as inherently political and divisive, a visit like that?

Well, I think those who have taken a critical view of it speaks more to their own prejudice, because what's actually in the statement is entirely non-political. It's purely factual in terms of what the school is doing to help gifted children, and actually a school which has a diverse population within it of Jews, Christians and Arabs who attend the school. That was an example of a school in Jerusalem where there is an integrated setting. So me giving public voice and giving some credit to this school, I think, is an example of how they're trying to manage in a divided society. How others have chosen to interpret that through their own anti-Israel prism, I think, is a problem for them, as opposed to something that I, as a minister, should be held hostage to, that because people do have a particular view towards Israel, that somehow then I need to curtail my approach. This visit wasn't in my official capacity, but the school visit was in terms of me recognising the school.

When the statement went out, it went out as Education Minister, but it didn't opine on anything else around Israel, the Middle East, or give any kind of political viewpoint. There's

nothing in that press release or in tweets that I may have put out, or social media commentary, that was of a political nature, in favour of the state of Israel in terms of that broader political debate that takes place. Certainly, there were aspects of the visit that other people may find disagreeable. That's again a matter for them to reconcile themselves with. But there was nothing in me going to the school, the Ofek School, and the statement that then published that I believe breaches the Ministerial Code. Does it breach some individuals' personal sensitivities and their own particular viewpoint towards Israel? Clearly it does, but I would contend that shouldn't curtail me as a minister from being able to have put out the statement that was issued.

Yes. So if I can summarise a wee bit, your overall visit, you didn't go as a minister. You went as an MLA, as you made clear at the start of the interview. You accept that that part of the visit, going to the school, you attended that as a minister, because you are the Minister for Education, but anything you said about that visit was entirely factual, non-political. Is that a fair assessment?

On the school visit? Yes.

Right, okay. I mean I don't really have a lot more I want to ask you about it, because we could go on about other people's views all day. Everyone has different views. Just the one thing that I do want to say is, how do you feel about… Would you accept that posting something on the department's website could impact on the neutrality of the department in that context of that visit?

No. Under the legislation, all the departments in Northern Ireland operate under what's commonly referred to as the direction and control of the minister. So the department operates at my direction and control, and there would be people that will say, 'Let's have a look at all of the Department of Education press releases,' and policy positions that I have taken on a whole series of issues. I'll give you one by way of public controversy. Whenever it came to the policy that the UK Supreme Court ruled on when it came to biological sex and transgender issues within schools, I have issued a written ministerial statement. I've issued press releases, all put through the Department of Education, all of which have invoked significant public commentary and controversy. So is the department who… How would it articulate my position, having reached decisions on those matters, in a way that would not invoke some kind of viewpoint being expressed by those who either agree or disagree with me?

So similarly, when it came to this visit, there's actually on this nothing of a political nature. The offence for some has been purely to do with the fact that it was a school in Israel, in Jerusalem, and in a part of Jerusalem that they regard as being East Jerusalem and therefore illegally occupied territory. That is the prism in which they're viewing it. The actual statement was not political at all.

No, that's absolutely fine. That's really all I'm going to ask you about. I think you've clarified quite a few issues there for me. I said in the letter that I wasn't getting into the cost and administrative pressure around that, and I'm not going to, other than I've watched the Education Committee evidence given by Ronnie Armour. I'm officially writing to the new Permanent Secretary just to get that on paper. I obviously want to just give you the opportunity if you want to say anything more about it that's not already been said, but I don't intend to ask you any more questions about it.

No, I'm content with the responses.

Anything else you want to say or clarify then, before I switch off the tape recorder?

No. I'm content.

Happy enough.

Yes.

Okay. Thanks very much.

[END OF TRANSCRIPT]

Document 8

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Assembly Confidential

Mr David Malcolm
Permanent Secretary
Department of Education
Rathgael House
43 Balloo Road
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BT19 7PR

Emailed to:

24th February 2026

Dear Mr Malcolm

Ref Case Nos 202500112, 202500115

I am conducting investigations into complaints regarding Minister Paul Givan's visit to Israel between 24th October to 31st October 2025.

I am aware of the responses provided by Mr Armour to the Education Committee on 12th November 2025 however I would seek your assistance in obtaining the following:

1. Confirmation as to what administrative support was provided to Minister Givan to facilitate his visit.
2. Confirmation as to whether there were any Departmental costs incurred in respect of the visit.
3. Copies of all correspondence between the Israeli government and the Department concerning the visit.

Please feel free to contact me if you wish to discuss this request.

Yours sincerely



STEPHEN WRIGHT
Northern Ireland Assembly Commissioner for Standards

Department of Education
www.education-ni.gov.uk

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[redacted]

16 March 2026

Dear Mr Wright,

Re: Case IDs 202500112 and 202500115

Thank you for your letter of 24 February 2026 requesting information regarding the administrative support provided in relation to Paul Givan's visit to Israel between 23 and 30 October 2025.

I am able to confirm the following.

Administrative Support

When requested, the Minister's Private Office provides guidance to ensure logistical and practical arrangements concerning the Minister's diary are effectively managed. In this case, fewer than ten emails were exchanged. These covered:

- Confirmation of attendance
- Enquiring as to whether an educational visit would take place
- Travel logistics

Civil service involvement was minimal and the level of resource employed was negligible. It is estimated that:

- The Private Office devoted less than one hour of staff time; and
- The Press Office contributed less than one hour.

Departmental Costs

No departmental or wider public expenditure was incurred in connection with this visit. All associated costs, including travel and insurance, were met by the Israeli Government.

Correspondence with the Israeli Embassy

Correspondence received from the Israeli Embassy was limited and concerned only the general arrangements for the trip. The specifics of any educational engagements

or school visits were not confirmed by the hosts prior to the Minister's departure. Copies of the relevant correspondence are enclosed.

Information Handling

The attached correspondence has been widely requested by individuals and various media outlets. To date, the Department has not released any of this material, including under the Freedom of Information Act, as it has been withheld under Section 35(1)(d) – Operation of a Ministerial Private Office. This exemption applies to information that concerns the internal workings, organisation and functioning of a Private Office, and material that reflects the advice, support or administrative arrangements provided to a Minister.

While we are content to share this material with you for the purposes of your investigation, we would appreciate it if the Department's position to date is taken into account when considering whether to publish any of this material. We fully recognise, however, that this is ultimately a matter for your determination and that you are not bound by our previous FOI decisions.

Should you decide that publication is necessary, we would be grateful for the opportunity to review the specific material you intend to release in advance. This would allow us to apply any redactions required solely to meet our obligations under UK GDPR legislation and to ensure the Department is appropriately forewarned.

I remain available should any further clarification be required.

Yours sincerely,

[redacted]

David Malcolm
Permanent Secretary
Department for Education

Department of
Education
www.education-ni.gov.uk

Gideon Sa'ar
Minister of Foreign Affairs
The Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Israel
[redacted]

Rathgael House
43 Balloo Road
Rathgill
BANGOR
BT19 7PR

private.office@education-ni.gov.uk

September 2025

INV 0477-2025

Dear Gideon

Thank you very much for your kind invitation to be part of a group of devolved government leaders to visit Israel from 24th to the 31st October 2025.

I am happy to be a part of the delegation visiting Israel to gain an insight into the country's diverse cultural, social and political landscape and am looking forward to meeting the other delegates.

I would be very grateful if consideration of educational issues could be considered as part of the delegation itinerary as this is my current portfolio in the Northern Ireland Executive.

My Diary Secretary will liaise with your office on the arrangements.

Yours sincerely

Paul Givan MLA

Minister of Education

[redacted]

From: [redacted]
Sent: 09 October 2025 15:29
To: [redacted]
Cc: [redacted]
Subject: FW: Israel Delegation

Good afternoon [redacted]

I am the Minister of Education (Paul Givan MLA) Private Secretary. I have been trying to contact you regarding travel details for the Minister's proposed trip to Israel. I would be most grateful if you could contact me, either by return e-mail or on either of the telephone numbers below. As I am sure you will appreciate we are keen to finalise details of travel for the Minister.

Kind regards

[redacted]

[redacted]
Private Secretary to the Minister of Education
Department of Education
Tel: [redacted]
Landline: [redacted]
Ext: [redacted]

Department of Education
www.education-ni.gov.uk

TransformED NI:
Transforming Teaching and Learning



From: Givan, Paul <paul.givan@mla.niassembly.gov.uk>
Sent: 30 September 2025 16:30
To: Csa-Assistant1 - Embassy of Israel - London <[redacted]
Cc: [redacted]
Subject: RE: Israel Delegation

CAUTION – This email has been received from outside the NICS network. If you have any concerns, please report for investigation.

Good afternoon [redacted] The dates of travel from the 24th to the 31st October are suitable for me. I have copied my private secretary, [redacted], into the email given my role as Northern Ireland Education Minister I have an interest in visiting some schools as part of the visit if that can be accommodated.

My Passport details:

British Passport
Name - [redacted]
Date of Birth – [redacted]

[redacted]

From: Csa - Embassy of Israel - London <[redacted]
Sent: 10 October 2025 13:11
To: Csa - Embassy of Israel - London
Cc: Csa-Assistant1 - Embassy of Israel - London
Subject: Checking availability on Delegation to Israel Travel Dates

CAUTION – This email has been received from outside the NICS network. If you have any concerns, please report for investigation.

Dear all,

My name is **Uri Zirinski**, and I am heading the department for for Domestic and Civil Society Affairs and responsible for the upcoming delegation to Israel on behalf of the Embassy of Israel in London. I oversee the programme and coordination of the visit [redacted] from my department, who is assisting with the logistical arrangements was already in touch with you.

I would like to check regarding your availability for an adjustment to the travel schedule.
Due to logistical operational challenges due to the current Jewish holidays and flight schedule changes, we are looking on an option for the delegation to begin **earlier** than originally anticipated.
The proposed flight itinerary is as follows:

Outbound

- **Belfast (BFS) → London Luton (LTN)** – *Thursday, 23 October,* ***09:00–10:10*** (EasyJet)
- **London Luton (LTN) → Tel Aviv (TLV)** – *Thursday, 23 October, 17:00–00:05 (+1)* (Israir 6H118)

Return

- **Tel Aviv (TLV) → London Luton (LTN)** – *Thursday, 30 October, 09:25–12:50* (Israir 6H115)
- **London Luton (LTN) → Belfast (BFS)** – *Thursday, 30 October, 17:05–18:20* (EasyJet)

Kindly confirm if the earlier departure presents any difficulty.
If the change is not possible for you we'll update regarding a later flight to Israel leaving on the 25.10 or 26.10.

For any direct queries, please feel free to contact me personally at [redacted] or reach out to [redacted] as well.

Warm regards,

Uri Zirinski

Counsellor for Domestic and Civil Society Affairs
Embassy of Israel to the UK
2 Palace Green
London W8 4QB
Tel: [redacted]
Website: www.embassyofisrael.co.uk

ISRAEL
Embassy of Israel London

[redacted]

From: [redacted]
Sent: 10 October 2025 13:33
To: 2024 DE Minister
Cc: 2024 DE SPAD; [redacted]
Subject: Fw: Checking availability on Delegation to Israel Travel Dates

Good afternoon Minister

Please see below from the Israeli Government. For your consideration please

Many thanks

[redacted]

Sent from Outlook for iOS

From: Csa - Embassy of Israel - London <[redacted]
Sent: Friday, October 10, 2025 1:12 pm
To: Csa - Embassy of Israel - London <[redacted]
Cc: Csa-Assistant1 - Embassy of Israel - London <[redacted]
Subject: Checking availability on Delegation to Israel Travel Dates

CAUTION – This email has been received from outside the NICS network. If you have any concerns, please report for investigation.

Dear all,

My name is **Uri Zirinski**, and I am heading the department for for Domestic and Civil Society Affairs and responsible for the upcoming delegation to Israel on behalf of the Embassy of Israel in London. I oversee the programme and coordination of the visit, [redacted] from my department, who is assisting with the logistical arrangements was already in touch with you.

I would like to check regarding your availability for an adjustment to the travel schedule.
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Kindly confirm if the earlier departure presents any difficulty.
If the change is not possible for you we'll update regarding a later flight to Israel leaving on the 25.10 or 26.10.

For any direct queries, please feel free to contact me personally at [redacted], or reach out to [redacted] as well.

[redacted]

From: Csa-Assistant1 - Embassy of Israel - London <[redacted]
Sent: 13 October 2025 12:54
To: [redacted]
Subject: RE: URGENT - Israel Delegation

CAUTION – This email has been received from outside the NICS network. If you have any concerns, please report for investigation.

Dear [redacted]

Apologies for the delayed response, I way away and the Embassy was closed for Jewish holidays.

Uri Zirinski from my department sent out an email with the flight details. I would like to check regarding your availability for an adjustment to the travel schedule.
Due to logistical operational challenges due to the current Jewish holidays and flight schedule changes, we are looking on an option for the delegation to begin **earlier** than originally anticipated.
The proposed flight itinerary is as follows:

Outbound

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Return

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- **London Luton (LTN) → Belfast (BFS)** – *Thursday, 30 October, 17:05–18:20* (EasyJet)

Kindly confirm if the earlier departure presents any difficulty.
If the change is not possible for you we'll update regarding a later flight to Israel leaving on the 25.10 or 26.10.

Kind regards,
[redacted]

From: [redacted]
Sent: 09 October 2025 08:42
To: Csa-Assistant1 - Embassy of Israel - London <[redacted]
Subject: URGENT - Israel Delegation
Importance: High

Good morning [redacted]

I would appreciate if you could send me the proposed travel options for this trip as soon as possible please to allow the Minister to plan ahead.

Many thanks and best wishes.

[redacted]

[redacted]

From: Csa-Assistant1 - Embassy of Israel - London <[redacted]>
Sent: 13 October 2025 13:01
To: [redacted]
Subject: RE: URGENT - Israel Delegation

CAUTION – This email has been received from outside the NICS network. If you have any concerns, please report for investigation.

Dear [redacted]

Please also do not hesitate to get in contact with me on my mobile number, which is [redacted]
The Embassy will be closed on Tuesday and Wednesday again so that would be the best point of contact!

Kind regards,
[redacted]

From: Csa-Assistant1 - Embassy of Israel - London
Sent: 13 October 2025 12:52
To: [redacted]
Subject: RE: URGENT - Israel Delegation

Dear [redacted]

Apologies for the delayed response, I was away and the Embassy was closed for Jewish holidays.

Uri Zirinski from my department sent out an email with the flight details. I would like to check regarding your availability for an adjustment to the travel schedule.
Due to logistical operational challenges due to the current Jewish holidays and flight schedule changes, we are looking on an option for the delegation to begin **earlier** than originally anticipated.
The proposed flight itinerary is as follows:

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Return

- **Tel Aviv (TLV) → London Luton (LTN)** – *Thursday, 30 October, 09:25–12:50* (Israir 6H115)
- **London Luton (LTN) → Belfast (BFS)** – *Thursday, 30 October, 17:05–18:20* (EasyJet)

Kindly confirm if the earlier departure presents any difficulty.
If the change is not possible for you we'll update regarding a later flight to Israel leaving on the 25.10 or 26.10.

Kind regards,
[redacted]

[redacted]

From: [redacted]
Sent: 13 October 2025 13:08
To: 2024 DE Minister
Cc: [redacted]
Subject: FW: Checking availability on Delegation to Israel Travel Dates

Good afternoon Minister

Please see below a draft response to Uri Zirinski in the Israeli government. For your consideration please.

[redacted]

Dear Uri

Thank you for your e-mail of 10 October 2025. We have considered the flight options you have suggested and would be most grateful if you could consider the flowing alternative flight options which wouldn't involve quite such long waits in airports.

Outbound - Thursday 23 October 2025 06:30 Belfast City to Amsterdam Schiphol KL946 (arriving 09:00) – Amsterdam Schiphol to Tel Aviv Ben Gurion International 11:55am KL 2472 (arriving 17:20)

Return – Thursday 30 October 2025 12:40 Tel Aviv Ben Gurion International to London Heathrow El Al LY209 (arriving 16:05) – London Heathrow to Belfast City Airport BA1410 18:45 (arriving 20:15)

In order that the Minister can continue to work whilst travelling the Department would normally book business class tickets, I would be most grateful if this could be considered for this trip. If there is any further assistance that I can provide please let me know.

Kind regards

[redacted]

[redacted]
Private Secretary to the Minister of Education
Department of Education
Tel: [redacted]
Landline: [redacted]
Ext: [redacted]

Department of Education
www.education-ni.gov.uk

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From: Csa - Embassy of Israel - London [redacted]
Sent: 10 October 2025 13:11
To: Csa - Embassy of Israel - London [redacted]

[redacted]

From: Csa-Assistant1 - Embassy of Israel - London <[redacted]
Sent: 22 October 2025 15:06
To: [redacted]
Cc: Csa - Embassy of Israel - London
Subject: RE: Picture of Minister Paul Givan's passport

CAUTION – This email has been received from outside the NICS network. If you have any concerns, please report for investigation.

Hi [redacted]

No worries, the Easyjet has a hold luggage of 23kg too, if you scroll down you can see 1x hold luggage booked in.

Hope that helps!

[redacted]

From: [redacted]
Sent: 22 October 2025 13:44
To: Csa-Assistant1 - Embassy of Israel - London <[redacted]
Subject: FW: Picture of Minister Paul Givan's passport

Good afternoon [redacted]

Can you confirm the luggage allowance on the flights please. There seems to be an allowance of 23kgs for the Luton to Tel Aviv flight but not on the Easyjet flight from Belfast to Luton. This would be an issue.

Many thanks

[redacted]

[redacted]
Private Secretary to the Minister of Education
Department of Education
Tel: [redacted]
Landline: [redacted]
Ext: [redacted]

Department of Education
www.education-ni.gov.uk

TransformED NI:
Transforming Teaching and Learning



From: Csa-Assistant1 - Embassy of Israel - London <[redacted]
Sent: 22 October 2025 10:28

[redacted]

From: Csa-Assistant1 - Embassy of Israel - London <[redacted]
Sent: 23 October 2025 09:40
To: [redacted]
Subject: RE: Picture of Minister Paul Givan's passport
Attachments: Paul Givan (1).pdf; itinerary.pdf

CAUTION – This email has been received from outside the NICS network. If you have any concerns, please report for investigation.

Hi [redacted]

Please see documents attached!

Kind regards,
[redacted]

From: [redacted]
Sent: 22 October 2025 15:07
To: Csa-Assistant1 - Embassy of Israel - London <[redacted]
Subject: RE: Picture of Minister Paul Givan's passport

Thanks [redacted]

[redacted]

[redacted]
Private Secretary to the Minister of Education
Department of Education
Tel: [redacted]
Landline [redacted]
Ext: [redacted]

Department of Education
www.education-ni.gov.uk

TransformED NI:
Transforming Teaching and Learning



From: Csa-Assistant1 - Embassy of Israel - London <[redacted]
Sent: 22 October 2025 15:06
To: [redacted]
Cc: Csa - Embassy of Israel - London <[redacted]
Subject: RE: Picture of Minister Paul Givan's passport

Hi [redacted]

The cover applies only to official travel abroad. Private travel days must be insured privately.
Coverage begins once leaving home en route abroad and ends upon direct return home, for up to 183 days.

2. Covered Sections

A. Baggage and Valuables

- Loss or accidental damage to luggage or valuables.
- Compensation limits:
    - Adult: up to US$2,500 for luggage; US$750 for valuables.
    - Minor: up to US$1,000 and US$350 respectively.
- Delay in luggage arrival (over 12 hours): reimbursement for essentials up to US$150.
- Theft from private car: up to US$500.

B. Passport and Flight Tickets

- Accidental loss or damage.
- Up to US$150 for a passport and US$150 for flight tickets.
- No cover for theft from private vehicles.

C. Medical Expenses

- Covers medical treatment abroad following an accident or sudden illness (not pre-existing).
- Includes hospitalization, surgery, X-rays, medications, emergency evacuation, and repatriation of remains.
- Coverage limits:
    - Medical expenses: up to US$1,000,000
    - Related travel/hotel expenses: up to US$50,000
    - Evacuation or body repatriation: up to US$100,000

Extensions :

- Early return due to a family member's death: up to US$750.
- Trip cancellation for medical/family emergencies: up to US$3,000.

D. Third Party Liability

- Covers legal liability for accidental injury or property damage to third parties abroad.
- Up to US$150,000 including reasonable legal defense costs (with Fund's prior consent).

E. Terror or Hostile Acts

- Covers injuries caused by acts of hostility against Israel, under same terms as domestic policy for terror victims.

F. Emergency Evacuation from Hostile Countries

- Reimbursement for escape expenses to a neighboring country: up to US$1,500.

G. Automatic Extension

- Automatic coverage extension of up to 48 hours if return is delayed due to uncontrollable transport issues.

H. Epidemic and Quarantine Coverage (COVID-type scenarios)

- Trip cancellation due to epidemic or required quarantine: up to US$4,000 (flights up to US$2,000).
- Quarantine abroad or isolation: hotel/transport expenses up to US$5,000.
- Extended stay due to epidemic:
    - Flight change: US$2,000
    - Hotel: US$5,000
    - Daily subsistence: US$50/day (max US$600 total).

3. Exclusions

- War against Israel, acts of enemy, confiscation, wear and tear.
- Pre-existing conditions, elective or cosmetic surgery, mental illness, routine exams.
- Participation in illegal acts or active terrorism.
- Loss of cash, documents, credit cards, tickets (except under defined terms).
- Competitive or extreme sports unless approved as official mission.

4. Claims Procedure

- Must notify the Internal Government Insurance Fund (Inbal Insurance) immediately.
- Provide receipts, police/airline reports, medical documentation, etc.

EMBASSY OF ISRAEL
2 PALACE GREEN שגרירות ישראל
LONDON, W8 4QB לונדון

22nd October 2025

To Whom It May Concern,

This is to confirm that Paul [redacted] Givan, holder of passport number [redacted], is a member of the official delegation organised by the Embassy of Israel in London.

The delegation member will be arriving to Ben Gurion Airport on the 24th October, 2025, and departing from Ben Gurion Airport on the 30th October, 2025.

The Embassy of Israel in London respectfully requests that border and immigration authorities provide reasonable assistance to ensure the timely transit of the above-named delegation member.

Should you require any further information please contact:

[redacted]
or
[redacted]

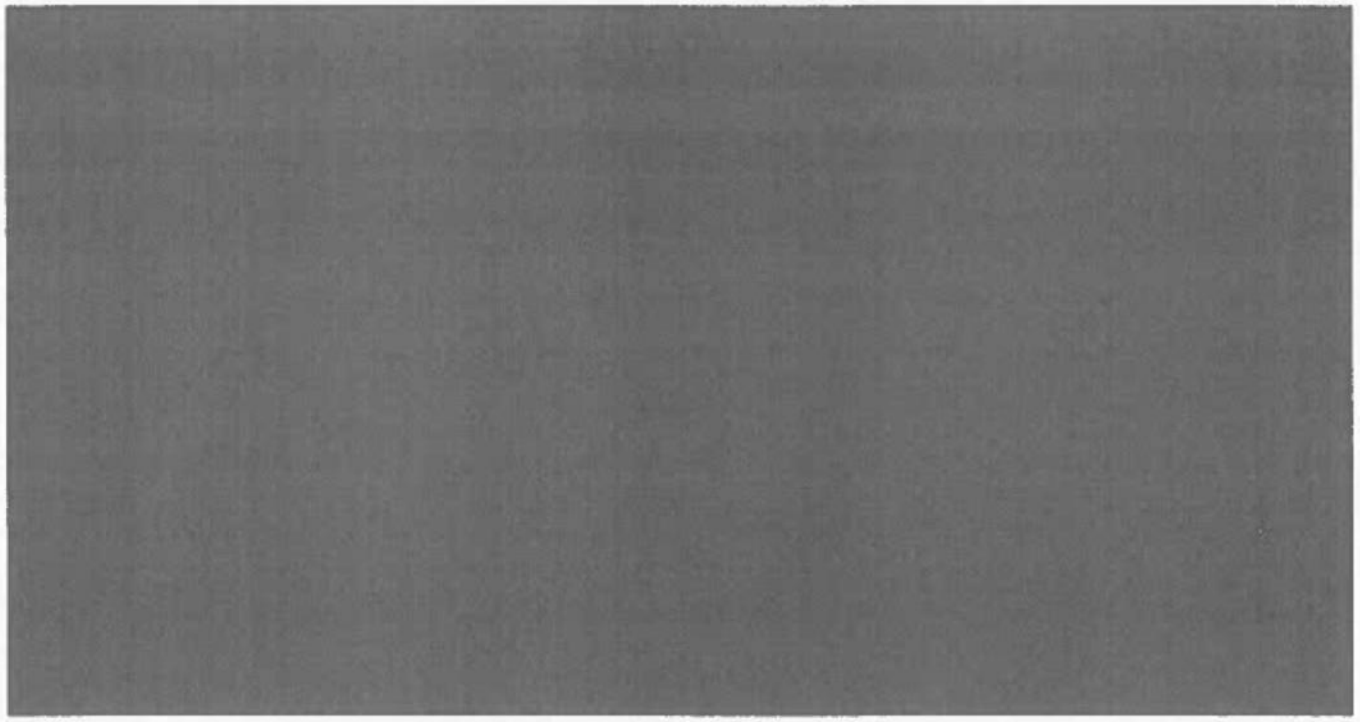
Yours faithfully,

[redacted]

Head of Civil Society and Domestic Affairs at the Embassy of Israel in London

2 Palace Green, Kensington, London W8 4QB
Telephone: 020 7957 9662 Fax: 020 7657 9601
E-mail: pr@london.mfa.gov.il Website: www.embassyofisrael.co.uk

NORTHERN IRELAND AND WALES DELEGATION OCTOBER 23-31, 2025



ISRAEL | Embassy of Israel UNITED KINGDOM

October 23

Thursday, October 23 – Travelling with delegates from Northern Ireland

09:00 – Departing from Belfast (BFS) to London Luton (LTN) (Easyjet)

10:10 – Landing in London Luton

13:00 – Briefing from Uri Zirinski, Head of Civil Society and Domestic Affairs at airport

17:00 – Departing London Luton (LTN) to Tel Aviv (TLV) (Israir 6H118)

October 24

Friday, October 24 - Jerusalem

A day dedicated to the spiritual and democratic heart of Israel. Delegates journey through ancient Jerusalem, remember the lessons of the Holocaust, and engage directly with Israel's national leadership.

Dress Code: Comfortable walking attire; modest clothing for holy sites.

00:05 – Landing in Tel Aviv (TLV) + VIP service at Ben Gurion Airport

Travel to hotel Beit Shmuel in Jerusalem and check in

10:00 – Breakfast at the hotel and opening briefing

11:30 – Tour of Yad Vashem, the World Holocaust Remembrance Center

Established in 1953, Yad Vashem is the world's foremost Holocaust memorial, museum, and research center. It documents the history of the Holocaust, commemorates the six million Jewish victims, and serves as a moral compass against antisemitism worldwide.

14:00 – Tasting tour in Mahane Yehuda market

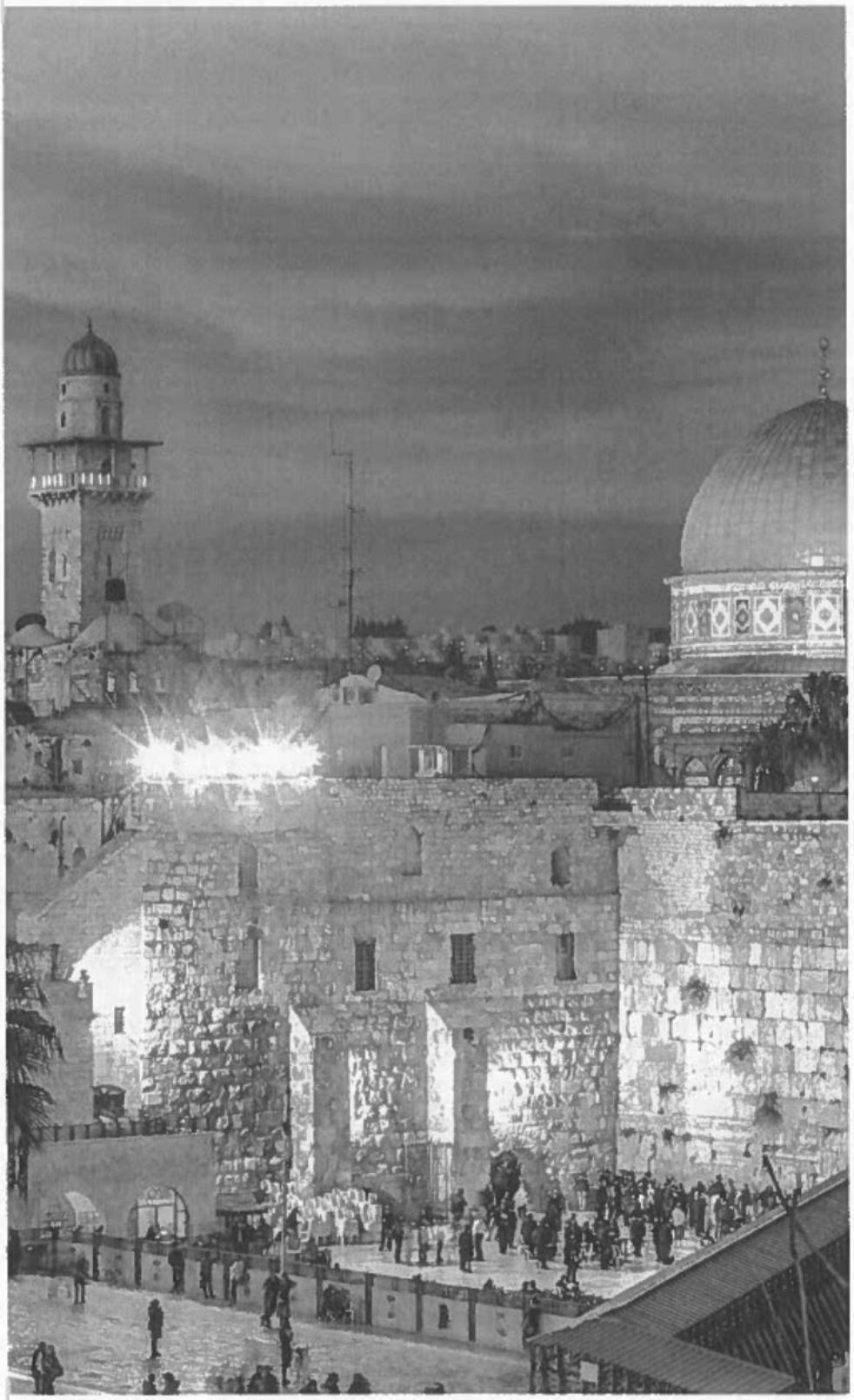
16:00 – Old City tour: Tour of Jewish sites including the Western Wall, Cardo and observation point on the Mount of Olives

The Old City of Jerusalem, enclosed by Ottoman walls, holds sites revered by Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. It is a living crossroads of civilizations.

The Western Wall allows delegates to walk alongside the massive Herodian stones of the Second Temple period, offering a unique perspective on Jewish continuity and resilience.
Western Wall Tunnels Tour - The tour offers a unique opportunity to explore the fascinating underground tunnels beneath the Western Wall Plaza. The walkways are enclosed, creating an intimate atmosphere that brings the history to life.

17:30 – Return to the hotel for rest and free time

Dinner at the hotel



October 25

Saturday, October 25 – Jerusalem and Galilee

08:00 – Breakfast at hotel and check out

09:00 – Tour of Christian sites in Jerusalem (Garden Tomb, Mount Zion Lookout)

The Garden Tomb, located in Jerusalem, is a rock-cut tomb discovered in the 19th century that some believe to be the site of Jesus' burial and resurrection. Surrounded by peaceful gardens, it serves as a place of reflection and worship for many Christian visitors.

The Mount Zion Lookout offers panoramic views of Jerusalem's Old City, including the walls, the Mount of Olives, and the surrounding valleys. Located on Mount Zion just outside the ancient city walls, it's a popular spot for visitors to appreciate the city's rich history and spiritual atmosphere.

11:30 – Bus ride to the north

13:00 – Lunch in Nazareth

14:00 – Explore Nazareth and Capernaum

17:00 – Arrive to Hotel Leonardo Plaza in Tiberias and free time

18:30 – Explore Sea of Galilee and Dinner

The Sea of Galilee, also called Lake Tiberias, Genezareth Lake or Kinneret, is a freshwater lake in Israel. It is the lowest freshwater lake on Earth and the second-lowest lake in the world, with its elevation fluctuating between 215 and 209 metres below sea level.

October 26

Sunday, October 26 – Northern Border

08:00 – Breakfast at hotel

09:00 – Alma Research Center specializing in Israel's security challenges on its northern border

10:00 – Drive to Malkia

10:45 – Meeting local residents

11:15 – Briefing

11:45 – Drive to Kiryat Shmona

Kiryat Shmona is a city in northern Israel, near the Lebanese border, nestled in the Hula Valley. Known for its beautiful mountain scenery and proximity to nature reserves and waterfalls, it serves as a gateway to the Galilee region and has a strong sense of community despite its challenging history.

12:15 – Tour and briefing in Kiryat Shmona

13:15 – Drive to Majdal Shams

14:00 – Meeting with families in Majdal Shams

15:00 – Briefing

Arrive to hotel Beit Shmuel and check in. Dinner at hotel and free time

21:50 – Arrival of Welsh delegates to Tel Aviv airport

October 27

Monday, October 27 – Knesset and Ministry of Foreign Affairs

Dress Code: Business Formal.

08:00 – Breakfast at the hotel

09:00 – Departure from the hotel to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs

09:30 – Visiting and meetings at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs

11:00 – Drive to the Knesset

11:30 – Tour and meetings in the Knesset

The Knesset, inaugurated in 1949, is Israel's parliament and the embodiment of its democratic system. It is a unicameral body with 120 Members of Knesset, representing the full spectrum of Israeli society through proportional representation. The building itself, inaugurated in 1966, symbolizes Israel's commitment to democratic governance in the ancient land of the Bible.

12:45 – Drive to lunch

13:15 – Lunch in Jerusalem with Former Ambassador Dror Idar

14:45 – Visit the Ministry of Education (tbc)

16:00 – Meeting with CAMERA's Partnership of Christians & Jews

17:30 – Drive to dinner

18:00 – Dinner in Jerusalem

20:30 – Return to hotel

October 28

Tuesday, October 28 – Western Negev and Gaza Envelope

The "Gaza Envelope" refers to the Israeli communities located within a few miles of the Gaza border. These towns and kibbutzim represent resilience under constant threat, embodying both Israel's pioneering spirit and the heavy toll of ongoing conflict.

Dress Code: Casual but respectful, comfortable shoes.

06:30 – Breakfast at the hotel and check out

Delegates will check out of their Jerusalem hotels and begin the journey south toward the Negev region, to witness resilience on Israel's frontlines, visiting kibbutzim and memorial sites scarred by the October 7 Hamas attacks, before transitioning to Tel Aviv, the vibrant center of modern Israel.

07:15 – Travel to the Western Negev

09:15 – Visit to Gaza border and briefing by IDF spokesperson unit

10:45 – Visit Kibbutz in the Gaza envelope

Kibbutzim are collective agricultural communities, rooted in the early Zionist ethos of building the land through shared labor, equality, and community.

Delegates will meet survivors and community members to hear firsthand accounts of resilience and rebuilding.

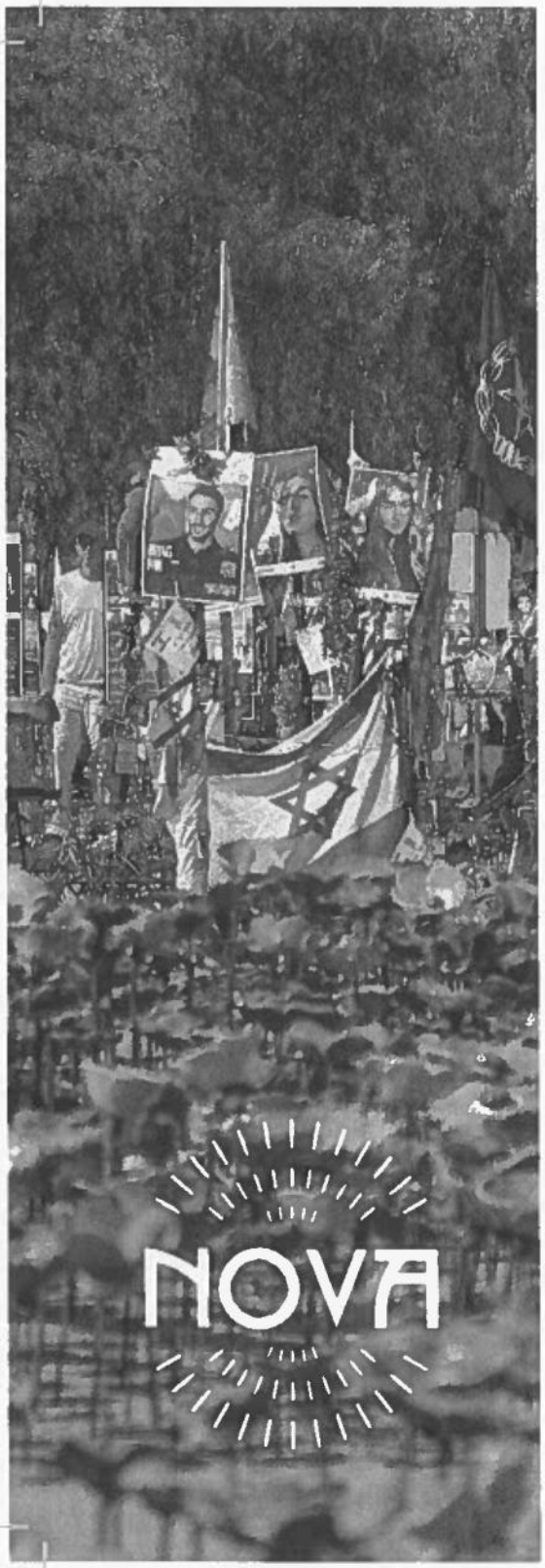
These visits underscore the human face of Israel's security challenges and the strength of civilian life in areas directly impacted by terror.

13:45 – Drive to the Nova site

14:00 – Briefing at the Nova site

The Nova music festival was meant to be a celebration of peace, love, and music, attended by thousands of young people. On October 7, it became the site of one of the deadliest massacres in Israel's history, where hundreds were killed and many taken hostage.

The memorial site now stands as both a place of mourning and a symbol of resilience, reflecting Israel's collective grief and its determination to honor the lives lost by preserving memory and celebrating life.



A guided reflection will allow participants to grasp the scale of the tragedy and its deep emotional impact on Israeli society.

15:30 – Drive to Tkuma junction

16:00 – Visit to Tkuma Junction the Burnt Vehicles Memorial

17:00 – Drive to Tel Aviv

19:00 – Arrival to Dan hotel in Tel Aviv and check in



October 29

Wednesday, October 29 – Leadership and Innovation

Dress Code: Business Casual.

08:00 – Breakfast at hotel

09:00 – Leave hotel

09:45 – Visit Start-Up Nation Central

The day is dedicated to exploring Israel's reputation as the "Start-Up Nation." With the highest number of start-ups per capita in the world, Israel has become synonymous with technological innovation, resilience, and entrepreneurship.

Start-Up Nation Central (SNC): Established in 2013, SNC connects Israeli entrepreneurs with global markets, investors, and partners. It highlights Israel's role as a global innovation hub and its ability to leverage technology to solve global challenges.

This day demonstrates how a small country in a complex region has become a global leader in technology, emphasising creativity, resilience, and global cooperation.

14:15 – Drive to lunch

15:30 – Meeting with families of the abducted and casualties

19:30 – Dinner at the hotel and briefing

October 30

Thursday, October 30 – Jerusalem

06:00 – Northern Ireland delegated check out and leave for airport

09:25 – Northern Ireland delegates depart from Tel Aviv (TLV)

09:00 – Departure from the hotel to Jerusalem for Welsh delegates

11:00 – Jerusalem tour of holy sites

14:00 – Tasting tour of the Mahane Yehuda market

16:00 – Return to Tel Aviv

18:30 – Free time and dinner at the hotel

October 31

Friday, October 31

06:00 – Check out of hotel and depart for airport

09:25 – Depart from Tel Aviv (TLV) to London Luton (LTN)

Have a Wonderful Trip!

Points of Contact:

Uri Zirinski

Head of Civil Society and Domestic Affairs at the Embassy of Israel in London

[redacted]

[redacted]

Civil Society and Domestic Affairs Officer at the Embassy of Israel in London

[redacted]

[redacted]

From: [redacted]
Sent: 23 October 2025 09:50
To: 2024 DE Minister
Cc: 2024 DE SPAD; [redacted]
Subject: FW: Picture of Minister Paul Givan's passport
Attachments: Paul Givan (1).pdf; itinerary.pdf

Good morning Minister

Documents attached

[redacted]

[redacted]
Private Secretary to the Minister of Education
Department of Education
Tel: [redacted]
Landline: [redacted]
Ext: [redacted]

Department of Education
www.education-ni.gov.uk

TransformED NI:
Transforming Teaching and Learning



From: Csa-Assistant1 - Embassy of Israel - London <[redacted]>
Sent: 23 October 2025 09:40
To: [redacted]
Subject: RE: Picture of Minister Paul Givan's passport

CAUTION – This email has been received from outside the NICS network. If you have any concerns, please report for investigation.

Hi [redacted]

Please see documents attached!

Kind regards,
[redacted]

From: [redacted]
Sent: 22 October 2025 15:07
To: Csa-Assistant1 - Embassy of Israel - London <[redacted]
Subject: RE: Picture of Minister Paul Givan's passport

Thanks [redacted]



From: Csa-Assistant1 - Embassy of Israel - London <[redacted]
Sent: 22 October 2025 10:28
To: [redacted]
Subject: RE: Picture of Minister Paul Givan's passport

Dear [redacted]

Please find Minister Givan's tickets attached. Can you confirm that his ETA-IL has been approved?

You will also find attached an itinerary, please note that it is still subject to a few changes.

On Thursday at the airport, our Head of Civil Society and Domestic Affairs, Mr. Uri Zirinski, will give a briefing before departure.

Each delegate receives an insurance policy automatically, please note that it does not cover pr-existing conditions. Here are the terms:

General Principles
The cover applies only to official travel abroad. Private travel days must be insured privately.
Coverage begins once leaving home en route abroad and ends upon direct return home, for up to 183 days.

2. Covered Sections

A. Baggage and Valuables

- Loss or accidental damage to luggage or valuables.
- Compensation limits:
    - Adult: up to US$2,500 for luggage; US$750 for valuables.
    - Minor: up to US$1,000 and US$350 respectively.
- Delay in luggage arrival (over 12 hours): reimbursement for essentials up to US$150.
- Theft from private car: up to US$500.

B. Passport and Flight Tickets

- Accidental loss or damage.
- Up to US$150 for a passport and US$150 for flight tickets.
- No cover for theft from private vehicles.

C. Medical Expenses

- Covers medical treatment abroad following an accident or sudden illness (not pre-existing).
- Includes hospitalization, surgery, X-rays, medications, emergency evacuation, and repatriation of remains.
- Coverage limits:
    - Medical expenses: up to US$1,000,000
    - Related travel/hotel expenses: up to US$50,000
    - Evacuation or body repatriation: up to US$100,000

Extensions :

- Early return due to a family member's death: up to US$750.
- Trip cancellation for medical/family emergencies: up to US$3,000.

D. Third Party Liability

Northern Ireland Assembly

Commissioner for Standards
222 Parliament Buildings
Ballymiscaw
Stormont
Belfast
BT4 3XX

Tel: 028 9052 1220
Email: standardscommissioner
@niassembly.gov.uk

Minister Paul Givan MLA
Stormont Castle
Stormont Estate
Belfast
BT4 3TT

13 January 2026

Case ID: 202500112 and 202500115

Dear Minister Givan

Complaints against Minister Paul Givan MLA by [redacted] and [redacted]

I have decided to conduct a preliminary investigation into the admissibility of the above complaints.

You will appreciate that at this stage I am concerned only with the admissibility of the complaint, not with whether or not it has any factual basis.

Before making my decision on admissibility, I am affording you the opportunity to make any representations you consider relevant. Any such representations should be made in writing and should reach me within 14 days of this letter. I am particularly interested in how the visit was initiated and your rationale for attending.

As you are aware, a number of other similar complaints were also received. These additional complaints have been found to be inadmissible due to the failure to provide specific information as required under paragraph 3.3 of the General Procedures Direction.

Please do not hesitate to contact me should you need any further guidance.

Yours sincerely,

[redacted]

Stephen Wright
Northern Ireland Assembly Commissioner for Standards

Encs