



**Edina–
sister up to
Gaza**



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TWIN EDINBURGH WITH GAZA? RALLY 23rd MARCH 2022

The rally to formally launch the 6-day campaign to see Edinburgh twinned with Gaza will take place outside the City Chambers on Edinburgh’s High Street on Wednesday 23rd March, from 10am to 11:30 am. It will feature short speeches from Council Petitioner Pete Gregson and Palestinian Mohammed Alshorafa, who hails from Gaza City. There will also be Dibkah dancing with Samer. Placards and banners, too.

Edinburgh is pondering whether to twin with Gaza. On the 29th March, the Council’s Policy Committee will debate the Council petition first due to be put before them in June 2020, but delayed due to COVID. Full details on the bid can be found on the petitioner’s twinning website www.twingaza.com

The Council, governed by an SNP/Labour coalition, is sympathetic, and the bid is fully backed by the Greens, but the petitioner knows he must secure many letters of support- and letters from citizens to their ward councillors- in order to secure “sister” city status for Gaza City. The twinning would be between Edinburgh City (population 450,000) and Gaza City (population 550,000).

To this end, a major publicity drive is planned across the city with 13,000 flyers distributed by volunteers to shops and eateries, backed up by adverts in the Edinburgh Evening News.

The petitioner, Pete Gregson, has, for four years now, been working with others to secure twinning. Work began with the lodging of a petition on the Council website in early 2019 which finally closed some seven months later with 362 signatures on the Council’s portal [Edinburgh’s unique petitions system, launched in 2011, encourages residents to have their say on matters which concern them. Once the threshold of 200 signatures has been passed, the Council commits to debating the proposal.]

The petitioner said “This is a great opportunity. If successful it will mark a significant step forward in ending the international isolation of Gaza.” At Committee on the 29th March, to help him in his pitch, he’ll be assisted by Wesam Wadi from Gaza, who will tell the Edinburgh Councillors what life is like in Gaza. The petitioner is also in discussions with Mohamed AlShaqra, International Cooperation coordinator at the Municipality of Gaza, to learn more about how this initiative can be promoted and the ways in which the two cities might work together.

The bid is supported by-

- academics Jewish-American political scientist Norman G Finkelstein; Israeli historian [Ilan Pappé](#),
- politicians Tommy Shepherd MP, Dr Philippa Whitford MP, Cllr Padraig Pearse McShane (Causeway Coast & Glens Council)

- Community groups [Scotland Against Criminalising Communities \(SACC\)](#), the [Muslim Women's Association of Edinburgh](#), Interfaith for Palestine UK, Derby & Derbyshire Friends of Hebron
- Government reps [Husam Zomlot](#) (Palestinian Ambassador to the UK),
- And in Gaza, IT incubators [Gaza Sky Geeks](#) , [GGateway](#),
- and of course Dr. Yahya Sarraj, the [Mayor of Gaza City](#).

The bid is also supported by 115 people in Gaza who have signed a sister petition addressed to Edinburgh City Council Leader Cllr Adam McVey and Lord Provost Cllr Frank Ross. The Change.org Gazan petition, which attracts more signatures on a daily basis, is at <https://chnng.it/Pgrwn7qM>

A key political supporter, Cllr Pdraig McShane, was with Moyle Council in Northern Ireland when he led its twinning with Gaza in 2012; he helped promote linkage in football, health care, women's issues, libraries, parks, sewage processing and education. Due to reorganisation, Moyle Council no longer exists. But, the petitioner says- "If Moyle can do this with a population of 17,000, what could Edinburgh offer, with a population of half a million? Cost is no issue; twinning did not cost Moyle Council a single penny."

The petition itself cannot be found on the Council website. It was previously on the site at www.edinburgh.gov.uk/directory-record/1110079/twinning-edinburgh-with-gaza-city but when clicking on the link to find it, the Council website declares "page not found". The petitioner has enquired of the Council as to why his petition had been deleted from the Council site, but answer came there none. Those seeking to read the petition in full must therefore go to the twingaza website at www.twingaza.com/what-you-can-do/#petition

Another body has helped refine the bid- the Dundee-Nablus Twinning Association (DNTA). The DNTA works around the oldest twinning in Scotland and has been running since the two cities were twinned in 1980. The petitioner hopes Edinburgh Council will base its agreement with Gaza City on the pioneering work that the Dundee group has done. If Edinburgh Council agrees to twinning, the petitioner will establish the Edina-Gaza Twinning Association which will take twinning activities forward on behalf of Edinburgh Council, in the same way that DNTA does for Dundee Council. In this manner he hopes to avoid Edinburgh Council incurring any new expenditure. See www.twingaza.com/why-twin/#scots-and-irish-working-to-twin

The agreement from Edinburgh Council to twin will be, therefore, largely symbolic. In any event, the petitioner observes that any Councillor seeking to fly to Gaza would be unable to because the airport there was destroyed by Israel in 2001 and access by land and sea is very complex. He notes, though, that COVID has shown us new ways to communicate, wherever, we are. Zoom and MS Teams allows people living in each city to work together and learn about one another.

The Petitioner notes that Arthur Balfour, who declared in 1917 that a national home for the Jewish people be established in Palestine (which was at that time part of the Ottoman empire), came from Edinburgh- so he believes his city is an appropriate choc for beginning to address historical wrongs to the Palestinians.

He says "Twinning Edinburgh with Gaza offers an opportunity for our citizens to acknowledge colonial history through understanding the role Balfour and British foreign policy played in creating the state of Israel and the consequent division of Gaza Strip from the rest of Palestine."

He notes that Dundee is twinned with Nablus and Glasgow with Bethlehem, now Edinburgh can play its part in supporting Palestine. Also, Amnesty have just declared Israel apartheid.

The petitioner observes that the ongoing siege of Gaza is illegal. Two million people live in the Gaza Strip, as ex-prime minister David Cameron has noted, in an open-air prison. They have been trapped in this prison for over 15 years now, crammed together behind barbed wire in one of the most densely populated regions on Earth. This particular prison constitutes a form of collective punishment on a civilian population; which is completely illegal under international law. The blockade began in 2007 and has been condemned by former UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon, the United Nations Human Rights Council (UNHRC) and other major human rights organizations.

Scotland's First Minister Nicola Sturgeon condemned the siege, in May 2017, when she told the Israeli envoy to the UK that the situation in the Palestinian enclave must end (see [Israeli envoy to UK given 'very strong' message by Scotland over Gaza | Jewish News](#))

The papers for the Policy committee meeting on the 29th March will be published on the 22nd March, at which point the agenda will note that the petition to twin the cities will be considered. The 23rd has been chosen, therefore, for the rally and to mark the run-up to the meeting on the 29th.

COVID dictates that all Council meetings are now held remotely, with Councillors working from home; the Policy Committee meeting will take place virtually. The petitioner and deputations will, likewise, be speaking from home. The Rally on the 23rd will therefore be the only public manifestation of the campaign where the media can get easy access to the bid's supporters and it is hoped that the press will attend for the unique opportunity to meet in person the twinning supporters and appreciate the level of public support for the bid.

-ENDS-

Editor's notes

All information on the rally and Council policy meeting is on the website post at www.twingaza.com/council-policy-committee-to-consider-twinning-petition-at-10am-on-29th-march-2020

CAMPAIGN SUFFERS CYBER-ATTACK

On Wednesday 16th March the bid's steering group noticed that the tinyurl links on the [old campaign flyer](#) were not linking to the intended destination webpages. On investigation it was found that one tinyurl in particular was, rather than taking users to the Amnesty International video declaring Israel to be practising apartheid, was instead taking users to a site declaring the exact opposite. The problem was not universal, as some users were taken to the correct destination. Screenshot of the bogus Amnesty website can be found at www.twingaza.com/beware-tiny-urls-on-flyer-are-now-infected-with-malware . The petitioner has had to pulp the 8,000 flyers he was about to distribute across the capital and replace them with new ones, to be distributed across the city from 18th March. Journalists can [download a copy of the new flyer here](#)

VIDEOS

For Edinburgh, twinning with Gaza in a "Sister-City" arrangement would not be to support Hamas, for the siege is fundamentally illegal. Note the twinning would be with Gaza City's people, not Hamas. See these videos:

- ◆ Jewish political scientist Norman Finkelstein "It's not about Hamas" in 4-mins youtu.be/UmeraZ3SGh0
- ◆ The petitioner says in 8 mins "Why we should twin" youtu.be/z6C6K0Twakw

◆ Amnesty's 15 min film sums it up: "The Israel Palestine Apartheid Explainer"
youtu.be/AUGICfaULXA

"For Edinburgh to twin with Gaza would be a blessed initiative" -Ilan Pappé, Israeli historian
"It surely would be a blessing for Gaza if this proposal were adopted."-Norman Finkelstein, Jewish American Political Scientist

OPPOSITION AND SMEARING

An attempt was made to twin Edinburgh with Ramallah some years ago but the Zionists, in the shape of the Confederation of Friends of Israel in Scotland (COFIS) (website www.cofis.org) scuppered it. COFIS know of the petitioner's twinning scheme and- as soon as they know it is going to Committee, will go nuts in trying to destroy it. They have contacts in the Scottish newspapers and will exploit them to the full, in painting the petitioner as a raving anti-Semite and Holocaust denier, out to gain civic recognition of crazed fundamentalist Hamas terrorists. Knowing that when promoting this scheme that Gregson will be tarred as an anti-Semite for his previous activities, he can only point attackers them to the facts about him as they appear in the Rogues Gallery on the website of newly-formed Campaign Against Bogus Antisemitism. (See [Rogues Gallery - Campaign Against BOGUS Antisemitism](#))

FURTHER PRESS RELEASE TO FOLLOW WITH RALLY PHOTOS ON WED 23rd AUGUST "USING THE NET TO BEAT THE BLOCKADE"

For more details contact the Petitioner Pete Gregson in Edinburgh on 0044 758 472 2191