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Step-by-step guide to creating a 'mass lobby' in Parliament and 'green carding' MPs, and/or meeting your MP in their constituency surgery

To arrange a 'mass lobby' day or chance for a group to 'green card' MPs

STEP ONE:

Planning steps before the day: set a date!

It is important to find a time when MPs will be available to meet with you, which is referred to as a time Parliament is 'sitting', and not on 'recess'. A list of recess dates is here.

- This date should also be convenient for your attendees to ensure nobody is left out.
- Setting the date in advance is important. This helps your group organise around this date (i.e. taking time off work, arranging childcare). It also allows your group members to clearly communicate this date to their MPs when they write to them requesting a meeting in Parliament.
- NOTE: **Tuesdays and Wednesdays** (when Parliament is 'sitting'), often work well for MPs particularly as Wednesdays are when Prime Minister's Questions (PMQs) take place in Parliament. This tends to be the day with the highest MP attendance.
- Decide how many people you can realistically support to attend your lobbying day. How large will your group be? Have you considered costs for transport to Parliament and associated costs such as refreshments and water, especially if you and/or members of your group live outside London? You will need to have a sense of accurate numbers of your group no later than two weeks from your scheduled Parliament date.
- Regularly communicate with your group. Invite questions and encourage individuals to contact you to discuss issues they're facing, barriers to participation. Be supportive to the needs of your group. If this is their first time contacting their MP they may feel nervous, or anxious. Reassure them their voices are powerful, and their MPs want to and need to hear from them. Make sure you provide your group a written invitation to the day, starting times, where to meet, outlining what to expect on the day, safety briefings, and provide your phone number for emergency contact. A helpful map detailing where the main entrance is to Parliament, Cromwell Green (number 9 in the map), is here. Parliament's full address with postcode is: Palace of Westminster, London SW1A 0AA.
- Make sure your group members email their MPs well in advance of the day. MPs are busy, and they need lead in time to organise their schedules. Usually, 3-4 weeks in

advance of your date is good practice. In their emails to MPs, individuals should provide their name, address and postcode (to confirm they are a constituent of the MP), the reason for writing to them indicating they will be in Parliament for a mass lobby day on XX date, and a request to meet their MP on the specified date.

- If needed, a template email is here (instruct your group to fill in the sections in highlight themselves):
  Dear XXXX
  *I am writing as a constituent, residing at [your full address **including postcode**]. I would like to request to see you on [date and times of your mass lobby] in Parliament, as I am taking part in a mass lobby on Sudan. I'd like to speak to you about my concerns for Sudan and its people. This issue is extremely important to me because [put your own reasons here]. I can be reached on [put your contact information here].*
  Yours sincerely, XXXX
- Waging Peace tools on how to contact your MP are available in Arabic and English. Share these documents widely with your group members as they offer a step-by-step guide for 'how to contact your MP'.

STEP TWO:

Creating communication channels, and record-keeping for your organisational purposes.

Create a spreadsheet or other similar method for collecting details about your group members. We suggest including the following, but there may be other information you'd like to collect, such as what city they are travelling from, or if they have access needs (i.e. unable to manage stairs, or a medical condition you should know about)

- Names of participants, and their MP names / what constituency they represent (for example: Harpreet Uppal MP is the Labour MP for Huddersfield).
- See 'Find My MP' to confirm MP details.
- Email addresses and mobile numbers of group members.
- Gender (do you have a gender balance represented in your group?).
- Transportation method and costs broken down, how will you raise funds for travel according to group needs?
- Emergency contact details.
- Photo ID – do they have photo ID?
- Seek permission from your group members to add them to a WhatsApp or other messaging group to allow smoother communication, and to boost confidence. Once permission is given, create a WhatsApp group, for example, and give this group clear parameters, such as confidentiality, sharing only about your lobbying event rather than loads of unrelated posts. You don't want to overload your group members. They should feel confident and safe in your group, and everyone should feel free to contribute equally.
- Ease of communication with your group will help facilitate conversations, answer questions that will be useful for other group members as well as the person asking, and will create a sense of community and solidarity.

- If not already done, encourage those attending to contact their MP proactively. You may also want to keep track on your spreadsheet of whether individuals have contacted their MP already, and if they have received replies. While encouraging individuals to be proactive in their outreach, you can quell fears that even those who do not hear back from their MPs should still attend your scheduled day, as they can then engage the 'green carding' process as detailed in STEP FIVE.
- It is possible some within your group have the same MP. While it is of course true that some such groups will want to speak to their MP jointly, remind your group that some individuals may want to speak to their MP privately and about confidential matters, and should not be judged for this, for instance see below about those raising immigration matters.
- You can also encourage your group to research their individual MPs and their voting and other records in Parliament. Useful resources for this are: https://www.theyworkforyou.com/ and Hansard (Parliament's own record-keeping mechanism). It can be helpful to know if your MP has before taken any action (or not) on the issue you want to raise with them.
- Schedule to delete the spreadsheet, and any sensitive data within your records, in the months AFTER your lobbying day, to protect people's private information.

STEP THREE:

Stepping into your leadership.

- Important questions to ask yourself: How have I made adjustments for those who might otherwise find it hard to attend, i.e. women and others with childcare responsibilities; those from asylum-seeking backgrounds who may not understand they too have a right to speak to their MP, anyone with access needs? **Note**: it may even be particularly advantageous for those with immigration matters to speak to their MP, as MPs can directly communicate with the Home Office on constituents' behalf. Such conversations between an individual and their MP would ideally be private, to allow the full sharing of information.
- Once your date is confirmed and the number of attendees finalised, it is best practice to contact the Serjeant at Arms Office in Parliament to inform them of your planned peaceful mass lobby and green-carding day in Parliament, and especially if your group is a large one (50 persons or more). Be sure to provide the number of participants attending no later than 2 weeks before your scheduled day, as this will help facilitate smooth and secure access to Parliament on the day. Telephone number for the Serjeant At Arms: 0207 219 3030, and email is saaenquiries@parliament.uk.
- Where needed, be available to help plan and book travel; to answer questions as they arise; and to boost the confidence of your attendees.
- It is very important to book transport as early as possible to secure the lowest fares and avoid last-minute price increases.
- This involves taking into consideration the costs of different transport options to accommodate each participant's circumstances. Consider buses, trains, and car-

sharing arrangements, including potential costs for fuel, tolls, congestion charges, and parking.
- Lean into your own experience as an expert, feel confident in answering questions, and we are available if needed.

STEP FOUR:

The day of your scheduled event in Parliament.

- If your mass lobby has some attendees who have never before attended Parliament, it might be a good idea to find an area to meet your group before going through security together. We can recommend just outside the Cromwell Green visitor entrance (as above).
- When passing through security you must show evidence of email contact with your MP, if applicable, or any written communication with the Serjeant At Arms about your mass lobby. Please know that if it is a day on which Parliament is sitting (which it will be if you have followed the steps above), any member of the public is welcome to attend Parliament to 'green card' their MP, whether or not they have any email or other written communication to that effect. If you face any issues, ask security to speak to the Serjeant At Arms office.
- You may be asked to show photo ID, so each member of your group will need to bring photo ID with them.
- There is a ban on bringing in flags, banners, sharp or dangerous items, or political or offensive slogans on items or clothing, which could even include pin badges. Breaking these rules could potentially have individuals removed from Parliament. Here is a list of banned items in Parliament. Advise your group not to bring big bags to Parliament as this may hold up security. It can take some time to pass through security even on the best of days. Please allow **AT LEAST** 30 minutes. This is especially relevant if you have a meeting time booked, make sure you arrive at security in plenty of time.
- Please be aware that chanting is not allowed inside Parliament, and you will be at risk of removal if this occurs.
- Filming and photographs are not permitted in most areas in Parliament, except for Westminster Hall when you first enter.
- Consider creating a 'buddy system' - as in every person must have another person with them in all times, to ensure no one is left behind.
- If any of your group members do not meet with their MP on the day, for whatever reason, reassure them there will be plenty of chances for follow-up.
- Note: there is a cafe in Parliament, named the Jubilee Cafe, just off Westminster Hall. This can be a helpful place to get a hot drink or bite to eat, but it does fill up during lunchtimes. More details here. It is either way a good idea to encourage your group to bring bottles of water (especially if it is scheduled to be warm the day you attend

Parliament), and/or any layers if it will be cold, as Parliament can be chilly on cooler days.

STEP FIVE:

Green carding your MP in Parliament – what is this and what does it mean?

- To 'green card' your MP is a way to request an impromptu meeting with your MP in Parliament's Central Lobby. If you do not have an appointment with your MP, you can proceed to the Central Lobby once you are inside Parliament, and ask the staff at the reception desk to 'green card' your MP. They will hand you a green card. You must fill out the card with your name, home address, contact information, and the reason you wish to meet your MP, then return it to the staff. The staff will then try to get your MP to come to the Central Lobby to speak with you. You may have to wait for a while as MPs or their staff team are located. If they are free and in the Parliamentary estate, your request to meet them will be delivered. Where possible, you will be offered a face-to-face meeting right there in Central Lobby. This is an alternative for those who did not hear back from their MPs after writing to them ahead of the mass lobby day.
- If you or members of your group already have a meeting scheduled with your MP, please just proceed to this meeting.
- Please note: there may be different locations specified for mass lobbies over a certain number, in which case ensure close adherence to the rules of the Serjeant At Arms who can offer guidance on this.

STEP SIX:

Speaking to your MP

Remind your group that MPs are just people, and their duty is to represent YOU. Their knowledge levels about Sudan, or any other area of concern that your group might want to raise, might also be particularly low. They do not necessarily need a list of facts and figures (but great if you DO know these!), but will most importantly be interested in hearing from YOUR GROUP, including about individuals' own personal experiences. It's encouraged to speak freely, from your heart, with MPs. You and your group can share personal experiences from yourself, your family, or friends, talk about stories you may have seen in the news, and provide information on the ongoing situation in Sudan. Remember **you** and **members of your group** are the experts, and you are helping to inform MPs about Sudan and/or your own situation(s). It can also be helpful to write down talking points in advance to ensure you and your group remember what you want to say.

STEP SEVEN:

After your day in Parliament, what happens next?

- Encourage follow-up! MP engagement is about building a relationship, so it can be important for you and your group to thanking MPs for their time and support, and to summarise the points you raised in your meeting.

- If you took your MP aside for a photograph (and away from Central Lobby where photographs are not permitted), make sure to share this photo with them. If you seek their permission first, you can also put it on social media, and ask them to do the same.
- Request constituency surgery appointments ('constituency surgery appointments' means you can request a chance to meet your MP in your local area, usually held weekly on Fridays). This is especially helpful when seeking personal help with, for instance, communication with the Home Office, or on housing, or on other confidential matters.
- Invite MPs to events in their area, from public gatherings to private *iftars*.
- Invite MPs to join groups like the All-Party Parliamentary Group (APPG) on Sudan & South Sudan. Your MP can reach out to Glen Promnitz, APPG Secretariat at grpromnitz@gmail.com.
- Send news articles or reports that are relevant on Sudan. Our latest Waging Peace report on the Situation in Sudan, September 2025 can be found here.
- Ask your MP to deliver your message to the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO).the Minister for Africa, Home Office, and any other relevant Ministers, and Department Secretaries of State.
- Useful resource: this guide explains many reasons you may wish to contact your MP, what to do if your MP does not respond, and other important answers to common questions.

If you want to arrange for individuals to meet MPs in your local constituency

- If you prefer to engage your MP through their constituency at their local surgery, or if you have a group of constituents with the same MP as you, you can contact your MP and let them know you'd like to organise an event so they can meet with their constituents **(remember: all who attend must live within the relevant constituency postcodes to meet with the same MP)**. It helps if the organiser already has a relationship with their MP, however this is not essential as this is a good time to start building a relationship with them.
- In your email to your MP, state your name, address and postcode (**always make sure to add your postcode and full address when emailing your MP)**, and let them know why you'd like to schedule a meeting for you or XX number of others (i.e. to discuss Sudan), and you are requesting an appointment. You will probably have a little back-and-forth with staff from the MPs office who will guide you through the process.
- If your MP is unable to host the meeting in their office, you will need to consider alternative venues. This could be a library, a community centre, a local cafe, or any suitable community space. Make sure to contact the venue in advance to confirm that they can accommodate the number of people you plan to bring.
- Once you have set the initial date with your MP, you can invite other MPs representing your community members to the same event. This will create a big impact and add more voices to the discussion.

- It's encouraged to speak freely, from your heart, with your MP. You can share personal experiences from yourself, your family, or friends, talk about stories you may have seen in the news, and provide information on the ongoing situation in Sudan. Remember **you** and **members of your group** are the experts, and you are helping to inform MPs about Sudan and/or your own situation(s). It can also be helpful to write down talking points in advance to ensure you remember what you want to say.
- After the constituency day, or your individual meeting at your local MP surgery, you're encouraged to send your MP an email thanking them for their time. Your actions will help build and maintain a positive relationship. Further contact with your MP could be to invite them to future community events, or even to *iftars* during Ramadan, or other meaningful community gatherings.
- Keeping a good line of communication with your MP will ensure your voice is represented, far beyond the day of your event but further in Parliament, during debates and within meetings amongst decision makers.

Important safety note: there can sadly be risks in bringing groups to Parliament, or moving around your local area, especially as members of a potentially minoritised group. As a leader, take what steps you can to protect your group, including liaising with appropriate authorities if needed. It might be a good idea, for instance, to advise that people leave in groups of two (with their 'buddy') rather than alone. If you, or a member of your group, are in immediate danger, call the police on 999. If you or anyone in your group is the victim of a hate crime, you can follow this guide on reporting.

WELL DONE for your hard work! We wish you much success!

This step-by-step guide was prepared by Waging Peace, September 2025.