46th Class – Leading Up to a Visit to the Foreign Ministry - 22.1.2019

The following is a background document, with the purpose of "getting to know" the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in a basic and primary way, for you, the participants of the 46th Class. Until the visit, I and of course Racheli and Luf are at your side for any questions or comments.

1. Purpose and top objectives: Every year in the autumn (October), the Ministry of Foreign Affairs publishes a short paper that includes the ministry's goals for the upcoming working year. The format fixed and the top objectives vary according to the changes in the different arenas of operation.

Following is the Ministry of Foreign Affairs' mission for the 2019 work year:

Purpose: The Ministry of Foreign Affairs will work to ensure the national strength, prosperity and well-being of the State of Israel and its citizens in a variety of political means, while promoting the entire range of the State's interests in the international arena.

Top Objectives for 2019:

* Regional: Iran-nuclear containment, terrorism, missiles, subversion, promotion of regional stability and arrangements.
* Ensuring and preserving the US as a long-term strategic partner.
* Exploitation of opportunities and regional partnerships.
* Strengthening the political standing, positioning and legitimacy of the State of Israel.
* Positioning the ministry and providing services to citizens.

From this framework, the various units of the Ministry derive their work objectives according to their areas of responsibility.

1. Structure of the Ministry: Together with this document, you will find attached a diagram of the organizational structure of the Foreign Ministry headquarters in Israel. In addition to the units mentioned, the Ministry currently has 103 representative offices around the world. The missions are professionally subordinate to the headquarters' units and their guidelines. It should be noted that this is a "flexible subordination" that not only allows but also demands from the head of the mission and his staff a great deal of discretion and initiative, in accordance with the conditions of the place of service. The chart includes units up to the division level. The lower levels, the desk (base level) do not appear.
2. Areas of activity: Without going into further detail, I will mention here some major areas:
   1. The political core that includes the activity vis-a-vis the governments and international organizations and focuses on issues that are at the top of the agenda of the National Security in the narrow sense of the term (external and security). In this context, one must also mention the political research that is the intelligence of the Foreign Ministry.
   2. Public diplomacy includes a wide range of activities, some of which directly support the political core (traditional speakers, digital diplomacy, etc.) and some in soft power such as economic activity, foreign aid (Mashav), promotion of Israeli culture abroad, contact with Diaspora Jewry and more.
   3. The consular sphere, which focuses on providing assistance to Israeli citizens in Israel and mainly in the world, whether for routine needs or in crisis situations.
   4. A variety of other administrative areas whose purpose is to support all of the activities mentioned above are legal counsel, the unit responsible for the security of the representative offices, the human capital and finance departments, and more.
3. Representations Abroad - Nomenclature and Explanation: There are several types of representations: For practical purposes, we will reduce categorization to three types - embassies (81 in number), consulates (20) and "others" (2.)
   1. As a rule, embassies represent the country vis-à-vis the official governmental institutions of the host country and are therefore always located in the capital. A small number of embassies represent Israel not in another country but in an organization in which Israel is a member or has an affiliation with (e.g. UN, EU, UNESCO, OECD, IAEA, etc.) and located in the city where the organization's headquarters is located. The embassy is headed by an ambassador. Note that most embassies are manned by Foreign Ministry officials (see details in the manpower structure), while in some, mostly in the largest and central ones, there are also representatives of other government ministries.
   2. Consulates are representatives that are not located in the capital, but in other major cities where there are (and in the areas around which the consulate is responsible) significant interests of the State of Israel. For example, in the United States (8 consulates), they focus on the political sphere in connection with members of Congress and governors, and another important part of their work is the connection with American Jewry (in addition to other areas of course), while in China (4 consulates) (2) The focus of work is almost entirely economic. The consulate is headed by a consul-general. From a formal hierarchical point of view the consulate has a dual subordination, both to the office headquarters in Jerusalem and to the Israeli Embassy in that country. In practice, there is often a flexible "gray area" in which the autonomy of the consulate and its members depends on the people involved.
   3. Clarifying a widespread misunderstanding - all consulates have a "consular section" that deals with providing services to Israeli and other citizens, emphasizing cases of passport loss / renewal, issuance of visas, various notarized certificates, etc. In addition, the Consul for Consular Affairs handles a range of bilateral issues, such as promoting agreements that allow Israelis to work concurrently with travelers, recognition of driving licenses, legal / consular agreements, extradition matters, recruitment of foreign workers / nursing care workers and more. He is of course a member of the Foreign Ministry and has a close working relationship with the Interior Ministry and other ministries. Although both are called consuls, there is no connection between the work of the consul-general (head of the consulate) and the consul of consular affairs (a position that exists in all representative institutions, not only consulates.)
4. Manpower: The Ministry of Foreign Affairs is a small organization. The number of diplomatic personnel to handle all the issues mentioned in section 3, as of 2019, is 924 women and men. These include both the headquarters and the 103 representative offices in approximately equal distribution. About 45 percent of them deal with the core political and public diplomacy fields, and the rest are in the consular and administrative spheres. Adding that in 2012 the number was 1,064, and since then it has been steadily decreasing, in part in accordance with government decisions on horizontal cuts in government ministries. Overall, the diplomatic staff of the Foreign Ministry decreased by 13 percent compared to 2012.

In order to ensure a true picture of reality, it should be emphasized that the names of units in the office (division, department, and desk) may be similar to those in other organizations, an average department at the Foreign Ministry headquarters consists of 3-4 people and most of the divisions will have 10-15 workers and even less.

One gender note - 20 out of 103 heads of missions and 5 of the 15 department heads in the office are women.

The firm employs additional workers for fixed periods of time and with a scope of 2000-2500 persons. These include local employees in the missions (divided into two groups - Israelis and citizens of the country of service, the latter being in effect the organizational memory and continuity), the security system, and researchers at the Center for Political Research, lawyers in the Legal Advisory Unit and more.

1. Budget: The Ministry's budget for 2018 stood at slightly less than NIS 1.6 billion. Ninety-nine percent of this amount, NIS 1.43 billion, is defined as fixed expense items, and only about 9 percent, less than NIS 135 million, is allocated to operations. This is, of course, a very difficult situation. If that's not enough, the budget for the year 2019 has been threatened again, and is currently set at NIS 1.3 billion, which will require the closure of at least seven additional missions and cuts. For those interested in the data and other numbers - I have a presentation on the subject and will be happy to pass it on to anyone who asks.

Rafi Shutz

January 2019