



EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT

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*Delegation for relations with the Palestinian Legislative Council*

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EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT DELEGATION COMPLETES FACT-FINDING MISSION ON PALESTINIAN PRISONERS DESPITE ISRAELI REFUSAL TO CO-OPERATE

*STATEMENT FROM EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT AD HOC DELEGATION*

*JERUSALEM, 20 MARCH 2014*

A European Parliament delegation has travelled to Israel to assess the conditions of Palestinian prisoners in Israeli prisons. The cross-party delegation included Emer Costello MEP (Chair, S&D, Ireland), Nicole Kiil-Nielsen MEP (Greens, France), Patrick Le Hyaric (GUE, France) and Jacek Protasiewicz (EPP, Poland) and held meetings in the region on 19 and 20 March 2014.

The visit took place on foot of a European Parliament resolution adopted on 14 March 2013, following the death of a Palestinian prisoner Arafat Jaradat. More than 200 Palestinians lost their lives in Israeli prisons and detention centres since 1967. The resolution highlighted the plight of prisoners being held in Israel and called for the fact-finding mission. This is the first such international mission to take up the issue of Palestinian prisoners and a clear sign of the EU's and its Member States' commitment to dealing with the question of prisoners in a constructive manner.

Almost 5,000 Palestinian detainees - including women and children, pre-Oslo prisoners, and eleven elected Members of the Palestinian Legislative Council, among them Marwan Barghouti, continue to be detained in Israeli prisons. Israel continues to use administrative detention, without formal charge or trial, against Palestinians as a substitute to fair judicial process. Palestinian prisoners are held in prisons and detention centres that are, all but one, located inside Israel which is in contravention of the Fourth Geneva convention. Basic human rights such as family visits, access to health care and education are restricted.

In spite of its clear mandate, the Delegation was denied access to the prisons and unable to secure meetings with the Israeli Ministries of Justice, the Interior and Foreign

Affairs. The chair Emer Costello expressed the Delegation's strong dissatisfaction at the decision by the Israeli authorities to refuse to co-operate with the European Parliament mission, effectively preventing it from fulfilling its mandate.

Nevertheless, the MEPs insisted that the fact-finding mission continue in the absence of co-operation from Israeli authorities. The MEPs met with Israeli and Palestinian public representatives, civil society and human rights organisations in an effort to draw a true picture of the state of Palestinian prisoners in Israel. The Chief Prosecutor of the Military Court in Ofer did meet the Delegation and outlined the military court system in some detail. Aspects of his presentation were in contradiction to what had been related by the other interlocutors. He did acknowledge the need to discuss with international organisations such as UNICEF in relation to concerns of due process in the military courts.

The MEPs concluded that issue of the Palestinian prisoners is inextricably linked to the political situation. Ultimately it will only be resolved in the context of a realistic and lasting conclusion to the Middle East Peace Process based on the two-state solution. The MEPs called for the continuation of the prisoner release programme so that all pre-Oslo prisoners will be released and furthermore called for the release of the Members of the Palestinian Legislative Council.