



Delegation for relations with the Palestinian Legislative Council

European Parliament Delegation denied access to the Gaza Strip

A cross-party delegation from the European Parliament was due to continue its programme with a visit to Gaza today, a visit which had been approved by the Israeli authorities.

Israel had yesterday afternoon granted final permission for all members of our delegation to travel. However, some three hours later entry for all members of the delegation was rescinded 'on security grounds', without further explanation.

We insist on a full explanation of the security risks claimed by Israel.

We received the news of the cancellation with bewilderment and dismay. It is extremely curious that the cancellation came within a few hours of the announcement of the EU Council statement re-affirming Europe's strong position in favour of an independent Palestinian state based on 1967 borders and an end to settlements in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem.

The inconvenience caused to our delegation is minor compared to the constant tension and harassment to which Palestinians live with in the occupied territories including house demolitions and evictions in East Jerusalem, and the appalling conditions under which the people are living in Gaza as reported to us by ECHO, the European Commission Humanitarian Aid office.

Our mission in the Gaza Strip was three-fold. Firstly, to check on the humanitarian conditions under which the people of Gaza are living in view of the continued restrictions being implemented by Israel. We were due to have a meeting there with Mr John Ging of UNWRA. Secondly, to urge the PLC members we were due to meet that reconciliation with their colleague elected members in the West Bank was essential to make progress on the establishment of a viable Palestinian state based on the 1967 borders. Thirdly, to check on the effectiveness of EU expenditure in the area. This mission was clearly as much in the interests of Israeli security as it was in the interests of the Palestinian people.

Being denied access to Gaza does not improve the relationship between this Israeli government and the European Parliament. By denying elected members of the European Parliament the opportunity to meet our democratically-elected counterparts of the PLC is an unacceptable interference in the democratic process, and is contrary to international law.

We have already been in touch with the President of the European Parliament on this matter, and will be raising these matters in the European Parliament, with the European Council, and the High Representative for Foreign Affairs. We do not intend to let this matter rest. Peace in the Middle East cannot be won by starving, or destroying the will, of 1.5m people in the Gaza strip, 50% of whom are young people. All it does is harden support for extremism.

A press conference will be organised in Ramallah today, 9 December, at 2.15pm, in the Government Media Center. The composition of the delegation is listed below. For further details, please contact: Christian Garrigues, European Parliament (GSM: +32 475 444 460)



EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT

2009 - 2014

Delegation for relations with the Palestinian Legislative Council

7-10 December 2009

Jerusalem / Ramallah / Gaza

PARTICIPANTS LIST

MEMBERS OF THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT

Mr	Proinsias	DE ROSSA	Ireland	S&D	Chair of the Delegation
Mr	Kyriacos	TRIANTAPHYLIDIS	Cyprus	GUE	Vice-Chair of the Delegation
Mr	Potito	SALATTO	Italy	EPP	
Mr	Rosario	CROCETTA	Italy	S&D	
Ms	Alexandra	THEIN	Germany	ALDE	
Ms	Nicole	KIIL-NIELSEN	France	Greens	
Sir	Robert	ATKINS	UK	ECR	
Mr	Georgios	TOUSSAS	Greece	GUE	

ABBREVIATIONS USED FOR POLITICAL GROUPS

<i>EPP</i>	<i>Group of the European People's Party (Christian Democrats)</i>
<i>S&D</i>	<i>Group of the Progressive Alliance of Socialists and Democrats</i>
<i>ALDE</i>	<i>Group of the Alliance of Democrats and Liberals for Europe</i>
<i>Greens/EFA</i>	<i>Group of the Greens/European Free Alliance</i>
<i>ECR</i>	<i>European Conservatives and Reformists Group</i>
<i>GUE/NGL</i>	<i>Confederal Group of the European United Left/Nordic Green Left</i>
<i>EFD</i>	<i>Europe of Freedom and Democracy Group</i>
<i>NI</i>	<i>Non-attached members</i>