



Plenary sitting

B8-0090/2018

5.2.2018

MOTION FOR A RESOLUTION

to wind up the debate on the statement by the Vice-President of the Commission/High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy

pursuant to Rule 123(2) of the Rules of Procedure

on the situation of UNRWA
(2018/2553(RSP))

Tamás Meszerics, Margrete Auken, Molly Scott Cato, Florent Marcellesi, Pascal Durand, Bart Staes, Jill Evans, Judith Sargentini, Klaus Buchner, Eva Joly, Bodil Valero, Heidi Hautala, Jakop Dalunde, Jordi Solé, Keith Taylor, Josep-Maria Terricabras
on behalf of the Verts/ALE Group
Fabio Massimo Castaldo, Ignazio Corrao, Rosa D'Amato

**European Parliament resolution on the situation of UNRWA
(2018/2553(RSP))**

The European Parliament,

- having regard to its previous resolutions on the Israel-Palestine conflict,
 - having regard to the Joint Declaration of the European Union and the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) of 7 June 2017 on EU support to UNRWA (2017-2020),
 - having regard to the Council conclusions on the Middle East Peace Process, in particular those of 18 January 2016 and 20 June 2016,
 - having regard to the EU Guidelines on international humanitarian law,
 - having regard to the UN Security Council resolutions on the Israel-Palestine conflict, notably Resolution 2334 adopted on 26 December 2016,
 - having regarding to the relevant UN General Assembly resolutions,
 - having regard to Rule 123(2) of its Rules of Procedure,
- A. whereas, since 1950, the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) has been mandated to provide education, healthcare, relief and social services, camp infrastructure and improvement, protection, microfinance and humanitarian aid to the Palestinian refugees, following their expulsion or flight from their homes in the 1948 war that followed the creation of the State of Israel;
- B. whereas there are an estimated 5.3 million Palestinian refugees under UNRWA's mandate, including 1.5 million living in UNRWA camps, dispersed between Palestine, Lebanon, Jordan and Syria;
- C. whereas the right of return of Palestinian refugees has been enshrined in several resolutions of the UN General Assembly (UNGA); whereas under international humanitarian law, the prime responsibility for the wellbeing of the local population lies with the occupying power; whereas the Palestinian refugee question has been one of the most central and contentious issues of the successive peace efforts, and remains unresolved to date;
- D. whereas the mandate of UNRWA was established by a resolution of UNGA and has repeatedly been renewed, with the support of an overwhelming majority of UN member states, most recently up to 30 June 2020 with 167 states voting in favour;
- E. whereas, pending the just resolution of the question of Palestinian refugees, UNGA has continued to emphasise the need for the continuation of the work of UNRWA, as well as the essential role it has been playing in providing vital services to Palestinian

refugees;

- F. whereas an increasing number of Palestinian refugees are reliant on UNRWA's services owing to the conflicts in the Middle East, including the war in Syria and its consequences in Lebanon and Jordan, the protracted occupation of Palestine and the ten years' blockade of and recurrent conflicts in the Gaza Strip, as well as by reason of the deterioration of socio-economic conditions and demographic growth; whereas the operations of UNRWA face serious and wide-ranging obstacles in Palestine, and particularly in Gaza owing to the Israeli blockade of the area; whereas UNRWA facilities were shelled seven times during the 2014 Israel-Gaza conflict, resulting in the killing of at least 44 civilians, including 10 UN staff;
- G. whereas UNRWA is funded mainly by voluntary contributions; whereas Israel does not contribute to the funding of UNRWA; whereas the US government announced on 16 January 2018 the withholding of USD 65 million of an expected early contribution of USD 125 million to UNRWA's programme budget for 2018, stating that any future payment would be conditional on major changes to the way UNRWA operates; whereas, as the US contributed USD 364 million to UNRWA's budget in 2017, this sudden decision by President Trump may result in a cut of almost USD 300 million;
- H. whereas the EU and its Member States, taken together, are the largest donor to UNRWA, contributing EUR 441 million in 2017; whereas the EU, on the basis of its multiannual joint declarations, has been providing predictable and reliable political and financial support to UNRWA; whereas the European Parliament has consistently expressed its support for continued and substantial EU contributions to UNRWA;
- I. whereas UNRWA has been facing major structural financial shortcomings for many years and would have faced continued difficulties in 2018, independently of the decision of the US government;
- J. whereas in the recent period, UNRWA has taken internal measures to streamline its cost structure and tighten controls on expenditure; whereas the UN Secretary-General made several recommendations in his report of 30 March 2017 aimed at ensuring adequate, predictable and sustainable funding for UNRWA;
1. Renews its expression of profound solidarity with the millions of Palestinian refugees who have endured, with immense dignity and resilience and across generations, open-ended displacement, extreme hardship and injustice and protracted statelessness;
 2. Denounces the collective failure of the international community, and notably of the European Union, to secure a fair and lasting solution to the Israel-Palestine conflict; stresses that this includes a just settlement of the Palestinian refugee question; reminds all parties of the centrality of the right of return of the Palestinian refugees in this context;
 3. Commends the admirable work of UNRWA and its staff, providing vital assistance, education and protection to millions of Palestinian refugees across the Middle East;
 4. Stresses the importance of ensuring the unimpeded operation of UNRWA and its provision of services for the wellbeing, protection and human development of the

Palestinian refugees, but also for the stability of the region as a whole; calls on Israel, as the occupying power, to lift the multiple restrictions which impede UNRWA's daily operations in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, and Gaza, and to respect the neutrality of UNRWA installations in line with international humanitarian law and UNRWA's UN diplomatic status;

5. Sharply criticises the recent decision by the US government to cut more than half of its planned funding to UNRWA, which will have most severe consequences for the Palestinian refugees, notably children, who depend on UNRWA for their education, access to emergency food supplies and other sources of vital assistance; urges the US authorities to reconsider their decision and to resume their support for UNRWA;
6. Rejects the politicisation of humanitarian aid and reminds all donors, including the US, that humanitarian assistance may not be used for securing political gains in international negotiations;
7. Calls on the Israeli Government to contribute to UNRWA, also given its direct interest in avoiding a total breakdown in meeting the basic needs of the Palestinian refugees;
8. Deplores the fact that the contributions of the Arab states to the UNRWA programme budget were below the commitment made by the League of Arab States to cover 8 % of this budget in 2017; calls on the Arab states, notably the Gulf countries, to demonstrate through enhanced financial contributions their continued commitment to the Palestinian refugees;
9. Stresses that resolving UNRWA's financial situation is a collective responsibility and has been a long-standing challenge that has only been aggravated by the recent US government decision; calls for the EU, including its Member States, to take a leading role at international level in order to find collective solutions for UNRWA's financial situation;
10. Welcomes the decision made by the EU and several Member States to fast-track payments to UNRWA in order to preserve the delivery of vital services in the first months of the year; urges others to follow this example in order to avoid any disruption in the delivery of services and give some space for UNRWA and the international community to consider longer-term solutions;
11. Calls for the EU and its Member States, but also on non-European countries, to mobilise additional funding for the UNRWA programme budget in 2018, so as to support UNRWA in addressing its immediate short-term financial needs, including if needed through emergency aid reserves;
12. Expresses outrage at the continued and unjustified obstruction by the Israeli authorities of any visit by official bodies or individual Members of the European Parliament to the Gaza Strip; underscores that this obstruction prevents Parliament from carrying out its basic responsibility of monitoring EU action, notably with respect to the funding of UNRWA;
13. Decides to send an ad hoc delegation to Gaza/Palestine to assess the situation on the ground, notably the heightened challenges faced by UNRWA in the delivery of basic

services to the Palestinian refugees; stresses the need for this delegation also to assess the destruction by the Israeli authorities of at least 400 EU-funded structures for Palestinians in the West Bank worth over EUR 1.5 million, including most recently a school for Bedouin children in Abu Nawar;

14. Regrets profoundly the killing of 30 UNRWA staff and the attacks on UNRWA facilities since 2012 in Syria and Gaza, which constitute grave violations of international humanitarian law; calls for such crimes to be effectively investigated and the perpetrators held to account;
15. Stresses that the support given to and the work carried out by UNRWA do not form a substitute for credible political efforts aimed at achieving a just and lasting peace between Israelis and Palestinians in the framework of a negotiated peace agreement, including a just and durable solution for the Palestinian refugees;
16. Calls for the EU, therefore, to fulfil its global responsibilities by taking a bold and comprehensive peace initiative for the region; stresses that this revamped EU policy should focus on preserving the long-term viability of a two-state solution;
17. Recalls in this context the need for the EU institutions and the Member States to enforce their legal requirement of non-recognition and, in line with UN Security Council resolution 2334, to apply an effective and comprehensive policy of differentiation by the EU between Israel and its settlements, grounded in strict respect for international law and the Union's principles;
18. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Council, the Commission, the Vice-President of the Commission / High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, the EU Special Representative for the Middle East Peace Process, the parliaments and governments of the Member States, the Secretary-General of the United Nations, and the Commissioner-General of UNRWA.