

WRITTEN QUESTION E-4394/06
by Pierre Schapira (PSE)
to the Council

Subject: Resumption of normal cooperation with Palestine

Following the entry into office of the Hamas government and its refusal to recognise Israel's right to exist, the Council decided to suspend aid to Palestine.

Since July 2006 the EU, in order to avert a humanitarian disaster, has operated a temporary international aid mechanism allowing the most basic needs of the Palestinian people to be met. Thus, European aid is not passing through government channels and is confined to the most sensitive areas such as health and social services. This mechanism does not, for example, permit payment of the public employees' salaries on which one-third of the Palestinian population lives.

By thus not passing through the Hamas government for supplying aid and denying its democratically acquired credentials, the Council is unnecessarily stirring up tension and hostility and doing nothing to resolve the conflict.

Now that a Palestinian government of national unity is about to be formed, on the basis of the document presented to the Palestinian people by the Hamas and Al-Fatah leaders now imprisoned in Israeli jails, we have a new and crucial factor which makes it essential, as a matter of urgency, to resume EU aid through the normal channels. Such a gesture would send out a positive signal to the new government.

Given the above, can the Council explain why it has decided to renew the temporary international aid mechanism for a further three months, instead of immediately starting a transition process with a view to resuming normal cooperation?