

ORAL QUESTION WITH DEBATE O-0010/05

pursuant to Rule 108 of the Rules of Procedure

by Luisa Morgantini and Francis Wurtz, on behalf of the GUE/NGL Group  
to the Council

Subject: Failure to re-appoint Peter Hansen as UNRWA Commissioner-General

Peter Hansen is to leave his post as UNRWA Commissioner-General on 31 March. According to the Israeli newspaper Haaretz, his removal from office is the result of a campaign orchestrated by the Israeli Foreign Affairs Minister - Shalom - and by conservative groups and Jewish conservative lobbies in the USA.

Peter Hansen has, indeed, been particularly critical of Israel's policy of demolishing Palestinian houses and infrastructure (which has a particular impact on refugees); he describes the policy as a serious contravention of international humanitarian law. The defamatory attack on UNRWA culminated in the broadcast of a video which showed UN ambulances being used to transport missiles in the Gaza Strip. The IDF [Israeli Army] spokeswoman Ruth Yaron has said that the object being transported was not actually a missile.

In view of the fact that, in 2004, the EU was the major contributor to the UNRWA budget (56% of which was provided by the Commission and the Member States), how does the Council react to the reports that the USA and the Israeli Government exerted pressure in order to prevent Peter Hansen from being re-appointed?

In view of the important work carried out by UNRWA under his leadership in the provision of humanitarian assistance to Palestinian refugees throughout the Middle East and the stance which he has adopted in defending the rights of those refugees, does the Council not think that it should take prompt action in support of Peter Hansen's re-appointment?

Tabled: 03.02.2005

Forwarded: 04.02.2005

Deadline for reply: 25.02.2005