

Humanitarian assistance to refugees from Western Sahara

European Parliament resolution on humanitarian aid to Sahrawi refugees

The European Parliament,

- having regard to its resolution of 16 March 2000 on Western Sahara¹, in which it ‘asks the Commission to step up humanitarian aid to the Sahrawi refugees and more especially calls on it to increase humanitarian aid to the Sahrawi people, particularly in the areas of food, health and education’,
 - having regard to its resolution of 23 October 2003 on the draft general budget of the European Union for the financial year 2004, Section III: Commission², which calls on the Commission to provide guarantees of substantial, uninterrupted humanitarian aid for Sahrawi refugees,
 - having regard to UN Secretary-General's Reports of 20 October 2004 on the possible reduction of MINURSO staff, including civilian and administrative personnel (S/2004/827) and of 27 January 2005 on the situation concerning Western Sahara (S/2005/49) calling on the international community to continue its humanitarian aid to the Sahrawi refugees until the conflict in Western Sahara has been resolved,
 - having regard to the UN World Food Programme (UNWFP) proposal of 5 May 2004 for aid to the refugees of Western Sahara (WFP/EB.2/2004/4-B/4) which notes a deterioration in the living conditions of the Sahrawi refugees (growth retardation in children, malnutrition, anaemia etc.) as a result of diminishing aid,
 - having regard to Rule 115(5) of its Rules of Procedure,
- A. whereas the Sahrawi population finds itself in refugee camps in Algeria as a result of unfinished decolonisation, and whereas the survival of this population is entirely dependent on international humanitarian aid,
- B. having regard to the deterioration in the humanitarian situation noted by a group of MEPs during their visit of 3 to 6 March 2005 to Sahrawi refugee camps (situated near Tindouf in south-western Algeria),
- C. having regard to the appeal to donor nations issued on 26 February 2005 by the UNWFP, which states that as of May 2005 the UNWFP will no longer be able to supply the 158 000 Sahrawi refugee beneficiaries with a complete daily ration of 2 100 kcals, owing to the lack of generous contributions and external assistance, which could have a serious nutritional and health impact on the refugees, particularly the women and children,

¹ OJ C 377, 29.12.2000, p. 354.

² OJ C 82 E, 1.4.2004, p. 457.

- D. concerned at the fact that stocks will run out in May 2005, exposing the already vulnerable refugee population to a major humanitarian crisis if steps are not taken between now and then to provide substantial, rapid aid to alleviate this grave situation,
 - E. having regard to the tragic consequences that would result from a continuing reduction in the aid provided by the Commission through the Humanitarian Aid department (ECHO) to the Sahrawi refugee population (dwindling of food stocks, deterioration in the areas of health and education, etc.),
 - F. having regard to the substantial specific and supplementary assistance (food, health, education, accommodation, hygiene, etc.) given to the Sahrawi refugees by the Commission up to 2002 over and above the aid in the form of basic products supplied by the United Nations institutions in the context of their mandate,
 - G. whereas the humanitarian crisis is due inter alia to the absence of any notable progress in the search for a fair and lasting political solution to the political situation in Western Sahara which is acceptable to all the parties involved,
1. Calls on the Commission to grant immediate emergency aid to enable the difficult situation of the Sahrawi population currently living as refugees to be addressed;
 2. Calls on the Commission to step up and diversify its aid so that it is brought up at least to the 2002 level, thus guaranteeing a decent minimum diet to the Sahrawi refugees, while continuing to place importance on the areas of health, education, accommodation and transport;
 3. Reiterates its call to the Commission, set out in paragraph 66 of its above mentioned resolution of 23 October 2003, to take appropriate steps to ensure that the aid provided to Sahrawi refugee camps is guaranteed and is under no circumstances interrupted, even momentarily, for merely administrative reasons;
 4. Calls on the Commission to involve the European NGOs which already have experience on the ground in implementing the ECHO programmes for the Sahrawi refugees, in order to guarantee that the aid granted by the European Union is efficiently and rapidly implemented;
 5. Calls on the Commission to contribute to strengthening the capacities for administering humanitarian aid in the refugee camps by cooperating with the Sahrawi institutions set up specifically for this purpose;
 6. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Council, the Commission, the UN Secretary-General, the Government of Morocco, the Polisario Front and the President of the African Union.