

Situation in the Gaza Strip

European Parliament resolution of 15 January 2009 on the situation in the Gaza Strip

The European Parliament,

- having regard to its previous resolutions on the Middle East, in particular those of 16 November 2006 on the situation in the Gaza Strip¹, of 12 July 2007 on the Middle East², of 11 October 2007 on the humanitarian situation in Gaza³ and of 21 February 2008 on the situation in the Gaza Strip⁴,
 - having regard to UN Security Council Resolutions 242 of 22 November 1967(S/RES/242(1967)), 338 of 22 October 1973 (S/RES/338(1973)), and 1860 of 8 January 2009 (S/RES/1860(2009)),
 - having regard the Fourth Geneva Convention of 12 August 1949 relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War,
 - having regard to the postponement of the vote on the assent to further participation of Israel in EC programmes,
 - having regard to the European Union statement of 30 December 2008 on the situation in the Middle East,
 - having regard to Rule 103(4) of its Rules of Procedure,
- A. whereas on 27 December 2008 Israel launched a military offensive in Gaza in response to Hamas rocket attacks in the south of Israel since Hamas took control of the Strip and following the breakdown of the ceasefire and the refusal to renew the ceasefire agreement,
- B. whereas according to the latest reports the Israeli operation has so far killed about one thousand people in Gaza, many of them children and women, and has caused thousands of casualties and the destruction of houses, schools and other key parts of civilian infrastructure, owing to the use of force by the Israeli army,
- C. whereas the border crossings in and out of Gaza have been closed for 18 months and the embargo on the movement of people and goods has affected the daily lives of the inhabitants and further paralysed the economy in the Strip and has limited any substantial improvements in the situation in the West Bank; whereas the embargo on the Gaza Strip represents collective punishment in contravention of international humanitarian law,
- D. whereas improving the living conditions of Palestinians living in the Gaza Strip and the West Bank, together with a revival of the peace process and the establishment of

¹ OJ C 314 E, 21.12.2006, p.324.

² OJ C 175 E, 10.7.2008, p. 579.

³ OJ C 227 E, 4.9.2008, p. 138.

⁴ Texts adopted, P6_TA(2008)0064.

functioning Palestinian institutions in Gaza, is a key aspect of the efforts to achieve a just and lasting peace between Israelis and Palestinians,

- E. whereas the considerable European Union financial support to the Palestinians has played an important role in the attempt to prevent a humanitarian disaster in the Gaza Strip and the West Bank; whereas the European Union continues to provide, including through the United Nations Reliefs and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA), humanitarian assistance in the Gaza Strip,
1. Welcomes the adoption of UN Security Council Resolution 1860 of 8 January 2009 and regrets that so far both Israel and Hamas have failed to meet the UN request for a halt to the hostilities; calls for an immediate and permanent ceasefire, which should include a halt to rocket attacks by Hamas on Israel and the end of Israel's military action in Gaza;
 2. Agrees that it is necessary to urgently provide arrangements and guarantees in Gaza, as demanded by the UNSC Resolution 1860, in order to sustain a durable ceasefire which includes at the same time the withdrawal of the Israeli troops, the sustained re-opening of the crossing points, the lifting of the blockade and the prevention of smuggling and of illicit trafficking in arms and ammunition;
 3. Calls for a negotiated truce, which should be guaranteed by a mechanism, to be set up by the international community coordinated by the Quartet and the League of Arab States, which could include the dispatching of a multinational presence, under a clear mandate, in order to restore security and secure respect for the ceasefire for the people in Israel and Gaza, with special reference to the monitoring of the Egypt-Gaza border, which implies an important role for Egypt; calls on the Council to increase its pressure in order to halt the ongoing violence; encourages the diplomatic efforts so far undertaken by the international community, especially Egypt and the European Union;
 4. Expresses its shock at the suffering of the civilian population in Gaza; strongly deplores, in particular, the fact that civilian and UN targets have been hit during the attacks; expresses its sympathy for the civilian population affected by the violence in Gaza and southern Israel;
 5. Calls in the strongest terms on the Israeli authorities to allow unimpeded access to humanitarian assistance and aid to the Gaza Strip and to guarantee a continuous and adequate flow of aid through the humanitarian corridors; urges the Israeli authorities to allow the international press to follow events on the ground;
 6. Calls on Israel to fulfil its obligations under international law and international humanitarian law; calls on Hamas to end rocket attacks and to assume its own responsibilities by committing itself to a political process aimed at restoring inter-Palestinian dialogue and contributing to the ongoing process of negotiation;
 7. Calls for a stronger and more united political stance on the part of the European Union and invites the Council to take the opportunity to cooperate with the new US Administration in order to put an end to the conflict with an agreement based on the two-state solution, with the aim of building a peaceful new regional security structure in the Middle East;
 8. Stresses the high importance of renewing the efforts for inter-Palestinian reconciliation between all the components of Palestinian society, based on the Mecca Agreement of 8

February 2007, which implied acceptance of the previous agreements, including the right of Israel to exist; and underlines, in this connection, the need for a permanent geographical connection between, and the peaceful and lasting political reunification of, the Gaza Strip and the West Bank;

9. Stresses that only real progress towards peace and a substantial improvement on the ground in the West Bank and Gaza can strengthen the legitimacy of the Palestinian Authority;
10. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Council, the Commission, the High Representative for the Common Foreign and Security Policy, the governments and parliaments of the Member States, the UN Secretary-General, the Quartet Envoy to the Middle East, the President of the Palestinian Authority, the Palestinian Legislative Council, the Israeli Government, the Knesset, the Egyptian Government and Parliament and the Secretary-General of the League of Arab States.