



TEXTS ADOPTED

P9_TA(2024)0051

Humanitarian situation in Gaza, the need to reach a ceasefire and the risks of regional escalation

European Parliament resolution of 18 January 2024 on the humanitarian situation in Gaza, the need to reach a ceasefire and the risks of regional escalation (2024/2508(RSP))

The European Parliament,

- having regard to its previous resolutions and recommendations on the Middle East conflict, in particular its resolution of 19 October 2023 on the despicable terrorist attacks by Hamas against Israel, Israel’s right to defend itself in line with humanitarian and international law and the humanitarian situation in Gaza¹,
 - having regard to the relevant resolutions of the UN Security Council and the UN General Assembly, in particular UN Security Council Resolution 2720 (2023) of 22 December 2023,
 - having regard to the Protocol on Economic Relations between the Government of the State of Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organization, representing the Palestinian people, of 29 April 1994 and to the Oslo II Accord of 28 September 1995,
 - having regard to international humanitarian law, in particular the Hague Conventions of 1899 and 1907 and the Geneva Conventions of 1949 and the Additional Protocols thereto,
 - having regard to the EU list of terrorist organisations, which includes Hamas,
 - having regard to the International Convention against the taking of hostages of 1979,
 - having regard to Rule 132(2) and (4) of its Rules of Procedure,
- A. whereas on 7 October 2023, Hamas terrorists committed a long-planned attack on Israel, deliberately murdering 1 139 Israeli and foreign citizens, including 36 children; whereas Hamas took over 240 people hostage, of which 136 are still being held in the Gaza Strip in terrible conditions; whereas over 5 400 Israelis have been wounded since 7 October 2023; whereas Hamas continues to indiscriminately shoot rockets at Israel on a daily basis;

¹ Texts adopted, P9_TA(2023)0373.

- B. whereas on 8 January 2024, UN experts called the growing body of evidence about reported sexual violence perpetrated by Hamas in Israeli villages ‘particularly harrowing’, referring to allegations of sexual torture, rapes and gang rapes, as well as sexual assaults; whereas the EU and its Member States have strongly condemned the crimes committed by Hamas and have repeatedly called for the immediate and unconditional release of all hostages held in the Gaza Strip;
- C. whereas during a humanitarian pause, 81 hostages were released as part of an Egyptian- and Qatari-mediated deal in exchange for the release of Palestinian detainees, and more humanitarian aid was allowed to enter the Gaza Strip; whereas the hostages that were freed during the humanitarian pause, mainly women and children, have recounted psychological, physical and sexual abuse by their captors;
- D. whereas Hamas is an internationally recognised terrorist organisation espousing extreme violence; whereas its principal stated goal is to annihilate Israel and reject a two-state solution; whereas since its establishment it has been responsible for many suicide bombings and other deadly attacks on civilians and Israeli soldiers; whereas in 1997 the US State Department designated Hamas a terrorist organisation, which was followed by a similar decision by the EU; whereas in 2005, Israel withdrew from the Gaza Strip entirely, leaving its administration to the Palestinian Authority;
- E. whereas since the attack of 7 October 2023, the response of the Israeli army in the Gaza Strip has resulted in over 23 000 people being killed, including 10 000 children, 60 000 being wounded and almost two million being displaced, according to figures reported to the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA); whereas approximately half of the population of the Gaza Strip is made up of children; whereas 30 % of all civilian infrastructure has been destroyed; whereas, in particular, water infrastructure, including treatment plants and pipelines, has been largely destroyed or cut off by the Israeli authorities, with only two pipelines reopened in December 2023;
- F. whereas over 140 UN staff have been killed, which is the highest death toll in UN history; whereas at least 81 journalists and media workers have been killed, including 18 in connection with or while carrying out their work, according to Reporters Without Borders; whereas over 600 medical workers and patients have been killed at hospitals, according to the World Health Organization (WHO); whereas over 370 schools have been damaged since 28 December 2023, according to UNICEF; whereas two thirds of hospitals in the Gaza Strip have been destroyed and one third remain barely operational, according to the WHO; whereas Hamas uses hospitals and other health facilities as shelters for its terrorist activities; whereas the IDF has exposed the tunnel system under the Al-Shifa Hospital compound, as well as in other parts of the Gaza Strip;
- G. whereas the Israeli authorities control entry to and exit from the Gaza Strip through all border crossing points, including the one with Egypt; whereas Israeli control over the Gaza Strip’s entry and exit points is severely restricting aid and there has been a significant decrease in aid trucks allowed to enter since 7 October 2023, according to OCHA; whereas 100 % of the population in the Gaza Strip is suffering from acute food insecurity, 50 % are experiencing an extreme lack of food and starvation and 26 % are suffering from catastrophic hunger and starvation, according to the Integrated Food Security Phase Classification (IPC) of 21 December 2023;

- H. whereas essential items, including medical equipment and solar panels, have been denied entry to the Gaza Strip; whereas the EU is leading efforts in providing humanitarian aid to the Gaza Strip with funding for UN agencies, medical equipment and other urgent supplies, and has quadrupled its aid since 7 October 2023; whereas on 21 November 2023, the Commission reported that ‘no money has been diverted for unintended purposes’ following a review of EU financial assistance for Palestine;
 - I. whereas attacks by Israeli forces and settlers have killed at least 330 Palestinians in the West Bank since 7 October 2023;
 - J. whereas Egypt has proposed a three-point plan for a permanent ceasefire, including a preliminary humanitarian truce for a renewable two-week period to exchange 40 Israeli hostages for 120 Palestinian prisoners, during which hostilities would cease, tanks withdraw, and essential supplies such as food, medical aid, cooking gas and fuel be allowed in;
 - K. whereas the International Criminal Court (ICC) opened an investigation regarding the occupied Palestinian territories in 2021; whereas on 29 December 2023, South Africa filed an application against Israel at the International Court of Justice (ICJ); whereas on 10 October 2023, the Office of the Prosecutor of the ICC confirmed that the court’s mandate applied to the current conflict;
 - L. whereas the risk of escalation in the region is the highest in decades given Iran’s aggressive actions and use of proxies as a means of deliberately destabilising the region; whereas Houthi attacks have targeted commercial shipping in the Bab el-Mandeb Strait since 19 November 2023, when Houthi rebels hijacked the Japanese-registered vessel Galaxy Leader; whereas several countries have retaliated militarily;
 - M. whereas Iran has armed and funded the Houthi rebels, Hezbollah and Hamas; whereas Qatar has long provided financial support to Hamas; whereas questions have been raised by western intelligence services about Qatar’s prior knowledge of Hamas’s 7 October 2023 attack on Israel;
1. Calls for a permanent ceasefire and to restart efforts towards a political solution provided that all hostages are immediately and unconditionally released and the terrorist organisation Hamas is dismantled; reiterates its unwavering support for a negotiated two-state solution on the basis of the 1967 lines with two sovereign, democratic states living side by side in peace and guaranteed security, with Jerusalem as the capital of both states, and in full respect of international law;
 2. Expresses its deepest sorrow for the innocent victims on both sides; reaffirms its condemnation, in the strongest possible terms, of the despicable terrorist attacks committed by the terrorist group Hamas against Israel; condemns the disproportionate Israeli military response, which has caused a civilian death toll of unprecedented scale;
 3. Calls for humanitarian access to be ensured in order to address the medical needs of all hostages and for the bodies of deceased hostages to be returned; recalls that the taking of hostages is a violation of international law and constitutes a war crime; calls for the perpetrators and organisers of those crimes to be prosecuted and punished;

4. Recalls that Israel has the right to defend itself within the limits of international law, which outlines that all parties to a conflict must distinguish between combatants and civilians at all times and that attacks must only be directed at military objectives and that civilians and civilian infrastructure must not be targeted in attacks; deplores Hamas's abuse of Palestinian civilian infrastructure, its combat operations in densely populated civilian areas, building of tunnels and use of human shields;
5. Expresses deep concern about the dire and rapidly deteriorating humanitarian situation in the Gaza Strip and its grave impact on the civilian population; underlines the urgent need for full, rapid, safe and unhindered humanitarian access to and throughout the entire Gaza Strip; emphasises the obligations of the parties to the conflict under international humanitarian law regarding the provision of humanitarian assistance; urges the Israeli authorities to ensure the continuous access of humanitarian aid to the Gaza Strip, with an emphasis on the uninterrupted delivery of essentials such as fuel, food, water, medical supplies and shelter, in line with international law, and demands the immediate restoration of vital infrastructure, in particular to prevent the risk of catastrophic hunger and starvation, as well as the possible spread of infectious diseases;
6. Calls for a European initiative to put the two-state solution back on track; emphasises the absolute necessity of immediately relaunching the peace process; welcomes, in that respect, the Peace Day Effort for Middle East Peace launched just before the attacks by the EU and the Arab League;
7. Reiterates its call for an end to the occupation of the Palestinian territories; recalls that Israeli settlements in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, are illegal under international law; calls for the de-escalation of tensions in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem; strongly condemns the rise in extremist settler violence committed against Palestinians and calls for restrictive measures to be imposed on extremist settlers who violate human rights and international law; calls for Hamas's senior political leadership to be added to the EU terrorist list, including Ismail Haniyeh, Khaled Mashal, Khalil al-Hayya and Mahmoud Zahar, in order for their funds and financial assets in EU Member States to be frozen;
8. Is appalled that Hamas's leaders have accumulated huge wealth at the expense of Palestinian civilians who have mostly been living in poverty;
9. Reiterates its full support for the Arab Peace Initiative of 2002, which proposes a full normalisation of relations between the State of Israel and all Arab states in return for Israel's full withdrawal from all Palestinian and Arab territories occupied since 1967 and mutually agreed equivalent land swaps between Israel and Palestine; recalls its support for the normalisation of relations between Israel and all Arab states; calls urgently for the full inclusion of the Palestinian Authority in this process, in line with EU and UN efforts to achieve a two-state solution for peace, security and stability in the region;
10. Stresses that the UN Security Council, in its resolution of 22 December 2023, 'reiterates its demand that all parties to the conflict comply with their obligations under international law, including international humanitarian law' and 'recalls that civilian and humanitarian facilities, and facilities of the UN, as well as humanitarian personnel, and medical personnel, and their means of transport, must be respected and protected,

according to international humanitarian law'; condemns the killing of journalists, media workers, UN staff and healthcare workers and reiterates the importance of their work;

11. Emphasises the role of the UN Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA), which is currently providing shelter for over one million internally displaced persons and has become the primary platform for humanitarian assistance to the population of the Gaza Strip;
12. Expresses deep concern about the Israeli Government's evacuation orders, forcibly displacing the civilian population from the northern Gaza Strip to the southern Gaza Strip, confining them to less than a third of Gazan territory, while targeting zones and civilian infrastructure;
13. Reiterates that the EU is the largest humanitarian and development donor to the occupied Palestinian territories; insists that EU development assistance to the Palestinian Authority should not be impeded or interrupted; welcomes the appointment of Sigrid Kaag as Senior Humanitarian and Reconstruction Coordinator for Gaza; welcomes efforts by the EU and its Member States to provide humanitarian assistance to the people of the Gaza Strip; welcomes the fact that EU humanitarian funding for the Gaza Strip has increased fourfold in the last three months;
14. Reiterates that respect for human rights and democratic principles constitutes an essential component of the EU-Israel Association Agreement as well as of the EU's relations with the Palestinian Authority;
15. Reiterates the EU's strong support for the work of the International Criminal Court (ICC) and the International Court of Justice (ICJ); calls for those responsible for terrorist acts and for violations of international law to be held to account and calls, to that end, for all possible war crimes to be investigated; reiterates that deliberate attacks on civilians are serious violations of international law, as is the forcible transfer of populations; demands justice for the victims of unlawful killings and sexual torture by Hamas during the 7 October 2023 attacks; takes note of the case brought by South Africa against Israel at the ICJ;
16. Supports an increased role for the two EU civilian common security and defence policy missions – the EU Coordinating Office for Palestinian Police Support and the European Union Border Assistance Mission for the Rafah Crossing Point – so that they both participate in facilitating the delivery of humanitarian assistance to the Gaza Strip and in improving the efficiency of the Palestinian Authority in the West Bank;
17. Strongly condemns the strikes by Lebanon's Hezbollah and the rockets launched by Iran from Syria against Israel following the 7 October 2023 attacks; is extremely concerned about the hundreds of strikes in southern Lebanon and northern Israel that have taken place since then;
18. Reiterates its call for the prompt initiation of de-escalation measures aimed at averting the potential escalation of current tensions along the Israeli-Lebanese border into a full-scale conflict; underlines the importance of applying UN Security Council Resolution 1701 (2006) of 11 August 2006; urges the Vice-President of the Commission / High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy (VP/HR) to support

all diplomatic efforts to bring all parties to the table following Lebanon's expressed readiness to reach an agreement on de-escalation; calls for restraint on both sides;

19. Recalls the importance of providing EU support to the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon and Lebanon's armed forces and internal security forces in order that they fulfil their essential role; recalls that all armed groups, including Hezbollah, must disarm in line with UN Security Council Resolution 1701 (2006);
20. Condemns, in the strongest terms, the Houthi attacks on commercial shipping off the coast of Yemen; calls for the immediate and unconditional release of the crew of the Japanese-registered vessel *Galaxy Leader*, including Romanian and Bulgarian nationals, who have been held since 19 November 2023; calls on the Member States to make immediate and concerted efforts to address these attacks, including by creating a naval operation under the common security and defence policy, in close cooperation with regional actors and international partners; welcomes the US-led 'Operation Prosperity Guardian' to safeguard Red Sea shipping and freedom of navigation, which must be ensured at all times;
21. Urges the VP/HR to coordinate these efforts to respond to the situation so as to deliver a strong EU response in order to protect the right of passage as enshrined in the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea of 1982; urges the VP/HR to maintain and support the UN-led peace process to end Yemen's conflict;
22. Denounces the role played by third states and non-state entities in providing financial, material and operational support to Hamas and Hezbollah; calls for thorough investigations to be launched to determine the origins of the funds and arms systems used by them; calls for the EU to impose sanctions on the states and entities that facilitated the attacks, notably Iran and Qatar;
23. Condemns the spike in antisemitism, anti-Muslim hatred and racism across Europe;
24. 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 governments and parliaments of the Member States, the EU Special Representative for the Middle East Peace Process, the Secretary-General of the United Nations, the Secretary-General of the League of Arab States, the Knesset and the Government of Israel, the Palestinian Authority and the Palestinian Legislative Council.