



EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT

Ad-hoc Delegation to Israel and the Palestinian Territories

30 May-2 June 2008

*Report by Mrs Veronique DE KEYSER
and Mrs Annemie NEYTS-UYTTEBROECK
co-chairwomen of the delegation
and vice-chairwomen of the Working Group on the Middle East*

Brussels, 9 June 2008

INTRODUCTION

By decision of 25 October, the Conference of Presidents decided to send an ad-hoc delegation to Israel and the Palestinian Territories to report on the situation on the ground. The delegation comprised 14 participants¹, including the Chairs of the delegations responsible for Israel, the PLC, and Mashreq, the Chair of the Sub-committee on Human Rights and a representative for each political group. The ad-hoc delegation was chaired by Mme Veronique De Keyser and Mme Annemie Neyts-Uyttebroeck as co-chairs of the Working Group on the Middle East.

The ad-hoc delegation, at its meeting of 23 April in Strasbourg, decided to split the ad-hoc delegation into smaller groups - each group dealing with specific subjects arising from the Annapolis agenda and the commitments, and expectations, of both Israelis and Palestinians. Wherever possible, it was hoped to meet Israelis and Palestinians together.

1. Building up Palestinian security capacities;
2. Jerusalem and settlements;
3. Building up the Palestinian economy - including free movement of persons;
4. Gaza - access, humanitarian and water issues.

Each thematic sub-group of the Delegation had a separate agenda during two days². The findings of each sub-group were conveyed to the Israeli and Palestinian counterparts in meetings with the Knesset, a representative of the Israeli Ministry on Foreign Affairs, the Palestinian Head of the Negotiation Department, Saeb EREKAT, and Palestinian Prime Minister Salam FAYYAD.

Starting its visit, the Delegation was thoroughly briefed by the EU troika in Tel Aviv (EU, Slovenian and French embassies). Similarly at the end of the visit, the delegation received a briefing from the EU troika accredited to Ramallah/Jerusalem.



Before the final press conference³, the EP ad-hoc delegation symbolically met with Palestinians in front of the Orient House to support its re-opening - as spelt out in the Road Map *"Government of Israel reopens Palestinian Chamber of Commerce and other closed Palestinian institutions in East Jerusalem based on a commitment that these institutions operate strictly in accordance with prior agreements between the parties."*

¹ Participants list - Annex 2

² Programmes - Annex 1

³ Press communique - Annex 3

FINDINGS/ASSESSMENT BY THE FOUR SUB-GROUPS

1. SECURITY

The Road Map quotes:

- "Rebuilt and refocused Palestinian Authority security apparatus begins sustained, targeted, and effective operations aimed at confronting all those engaged in terror and dismantlement of terrorist capabilities and infrastructure. This includes commencing confiscation of illegal weapons and consolidation of security authority, free of association with terror and corruption.
- **"All Palestinian security organizations are consolidated into three services reporting to an empowered Interior Minister"**.
- "Restructured/retrained **Palestinian security forces and IDF** counterparts progressively **resume security cooperation [...]**"
- **"GOI takes no actions undermining trust [...]"**

The sub-group aimed at assessing the progress made in relation to the Palestinian and Israeli commitments under the Road Map with regard to building up Palestinian security capacities. 75% of the reform of the Palestinian security spectrum is covered by the US (National Security Forces, Presidential Guard and Intelligence), and 25 % by the EU and its Member States (Civil Police, Judiciary, Prisons).

Under arrangements agreed before Annapolis the Palestinian Authority (PA) is allowed to operate Security Forces and Civil Police in selected areas from 6 a.m. until midnight. Yet, the Government of Israel (GoI) delays or refuses the delivery of essential equipment (e.g. armoured vests, helmets and pistols). GOI starts giving the PA permits to operate after midnight in Jenin, Tubas and Nablus and also in Area B (mixed Palestinian-Israeli control according to the Oslo agreements). However, Israeli Defence Forces (IDF) continue incursions during the curfew between midnight and 6 a.m. which undermine the authority of the Palestinian security forces.

Meetings took place with **US General DAYTON**, who leads the US funded training programme for the Palestinian National Security Forces, with Abdul-Razzaq Al-YAHYA, the PA Minister of the Interior and the EUPOL-COPPS mission in Ramallah, which assists the Palestinians with enhancing the capacities of the Civil Police. In a field visit to Nablus the group met with Governor Jamal Al-MUHAISEN, and the local Heads of both the National Security Forces and the Civil Police.

The US administration released \$ 86M in July 2007 to 1) rebuild the Palestinian Security Forces infrastructure in Jericho; 2) build up staff for the Ministry of the Interior and 3) train and equip the Presidential Guard and the National Security Forces (NSF) to be turned into a Gendarmerie. A 610-strong NSF battalion has just graduated after training provided in Jordan. The US intends to fund the training of two more battalions. General DAYTON, who considers that terrorism is not a military problem, said that the Civil Police is crucial and should be allowed to catch up with the progress made in training the NSF.

The incumbent Palestinian government inherited a general state of lawlessness and destroyed infrastructure in particular as regards prisons (current capacity is for 500 inmates, whereas capacity for 2000-2500 is needed). The previous security coordination with GOI (DCO liaison offices) has been closed down.

The PA security plan outlined by the **Minister of the Interior** comprises three phases: 1) disarming militants; 2) enhancing security and law and order; 3) restructuring the Ministry of the Interior, the Judiciary and the Security Forces. Phase 2 has been terminated. The cleaning-up of selected cities starting with Nablus has been successful.

The Minister of the Interior complained saying that the small scale EUPOL-COPPS projects (handcuffs, blankets for prisons, A4 paper for police stations etc.) do not allow the mission to make a real difference. The EU should step in with enhanced support to the Civil Police including thorough training to combat illegal immigration. While the Palestinians accept that GOI has a share in security, the impact of the daily IDF incursions on the ethos and moral of the Security Forces is considerable.

The **EUPOL-COPPS mission** started in 2000 but was interrupted by the second Intifada. The mission provides expertise and has made an exhaustive assessment of needs. Funding from the Member States goes to a Palestinian Trust Fund (currently about €25M) which decides upon the use of the money. For the Palestinians it is important that reforms do not appear as imposed from abroad.

EUPOL-COPPS has been training the Public Order Police since August 2007. However, as ESDP missions cannot deal with capacity building, EUPOL-COPPS is operating in a grey zone. The Palestinian Forces should prioritise as follows: Public Order Police (street police), Special Forces (arrest operations) and NSF (terrorism). Neglecting the Civil Police over the "Gendarmerie" would be a crucial mistake. The EU should pay increased attention to the Civil Police, especially as the US, looking for a success story, is trying to sneak into Police training.

In Nablus the policy of closures triggered an emigration of capital and enterprises. High levels of unemployment and poverty encouraged armed groups, and assaults on enterprises occurred frequently. However, **the Governor, Jamal al-MUHAISEN**, highlighted that the implementation of the Nablus security plan since August 2007 has led to an acceptable level of security. The authorities also try to tackle the problem of imams preaching hatred in mosques. Today, "nobody is arrested for belonging to Hamas, but for illegally carrying arms". If the PA is to do its job properly, coordination with GOI is necessary.

The **Heads of the local NSF and of the Civil Police in Nablus** recalled that the Palestinians took back control of the area during the last six months, seizing explosives and arms in town and the surrounding villages, thus winning back the confidence of citizens. Yet, this confidence is fragile and undermined by ongoing IDF operations at night. While in terms of human resources NSF and the Civil Police are well staffed, they crucially lack equipment (buildings, vehicles, arms, communication). Nablus counts only 6 police stations for 58 villages. Overall achievements are relative as the final say on security is still in the hands of GOI. Interrupted direct contacts for coordination with the IDF represent an additional obstacle.

2. *JERUSALEM AND SETTLEMENTS*

The “Jerusalem and Settlements” working Group observed considerable and continuous expansion of settlements - as well as separation barriers and the separation wall, a number of roadblocks and checkpoints serving to protect settlers and not necessarily to increase the security of GOI. These activities on the ground contradict the objectives laid down in Annapolis and are inconsistent with the Road Map with GOI committing itself “*to freeze all settlements activities, including natural growth of settlements*”. **Having seen those developments on the ground, the delegation came to the conclusion that GOI does not currently negotiate in good faith.**

Briefed by the Palestinian Negotiation Support Unit (which provides legal, policy and communication advice to the Palestinian negotiators) and Ir Amim, an Israeli NGO, it became clear that:

- Palestinian land (the West Bank) is restricted by Israeli settlements with about 50% in/around East Jerusalem) and by barriers/the separation wall:
- This leads to (Palestinian) property confiscation, demolition of their houses and – together with the “security barrier” and more than 600 check points – cuts off access of Palestinians to their land and leads to serious restrictions for the Palestinian population to move around, to reach their fields, to attend school, and to reach medical or other social services.
- Furthermore, West Bank-based Palestinians are not permitted to enter into Jerusalem – nor indeed, Israel.

Settlements, such as Gilo and Har-Homa, form a ring in and around East-Jerusalem and separate it from Bethlehem. The delegation witnessed current expansion with hundreds of new housing units currently being built in Har Homa. Members were particularly concerned over the planned construction activities in the so-called E-1 area, located east of Jerusalem, expanding the already vast settlement of Ma’ale Adumim (ca. 36,000 inhabitants). For the E-1 project – thousands of new homes are foreseen and, indeed, some infrastructure is already in place (e.g. a 4-lane-road leading to a huge, but isolated, police station on the top of a hill) and construction could start at any moment meaning the total separation of East Jerusalem from the West Bank.

With these “constructive” building activities on the ground – and a far less constructive approach to the ongoing negotiations, chances for a peace agreement are undermined and confidence building eroded.



The members were especially worried about the situation in the Old City of Hebron – with the illegal settlements of ultra-orthodox Jews in the Old City and their aggressive behaviour vis-à-vis the Hebron inhabitants. Whole areas and streets are inaccessible for Palestinians, access being determined on religious grounds; social and economic activities in the Old City are almost at a standstill – and 2,000 Israeli soldiers protect 400 fanatic settlers. Overshadowed by this absurd and kafkaesque situation, the Palestinian Reconstruction and Rehabilitation Committee in Hebron does a remarkable job – and has rehabilitated more than 500 houses in the past few years.

Whereas it is difficult, if not impossible for Palestinian landowners to get construction permits – and because of the lack of building permits - many Palestinian homes are demolished by Israeli authorities and many Israeli settlements are expanding beyond the (1967)-Green Line. The delegation visited – among others – the “Etzion block” between Jerusalem and Bethlehem, which includes the ultra-orthodox city of Beitar Illit and other settlements (with a total of 46,000 settlers) and the Modi’in Illit block (41,000 inhabitants), a large ultra-orthodox settlement west of Ramallah.

The answers received by the Israeli officials and politicians (including Housing Minister **Mr. Ze’ev Boim**) did not alter the delegation’s impression of a segregation policy, led by the Israeli authorities, aimed at creating new realities on the ground by extending settlements, continuing the erection of the separation wall, as well as other barriers and the bypass-road-system. On the contrary, on the very morning of this meeting, the Israeli Cabinet endorsed the Minister's proposal to issue a tender for over 800 new housing units in East Jerusalem. He argued that the "Road Map commitment" on settlements does not include Jerusalem

Israel has developed, and continues to develop a network of brand new roads which link the settlements from North-South and East-West, sometimes under tunnels weakening Palestinian infrastructure above, and which encircle Palestinian areas. Moreover they cut deeply into the West Bank. As these roads are strictly reserved for Israelis, one cannot but conclude that this results in segregation, which leads members to doubt the sincerity and good faith of the Israeli Government in negotiating with the Palestinian Authority.

3. ***BUILDING UP THE PALESTINIAN ECONOMY - INCLUDING FREE MOVEMENT OF PERSONS***

"No economy can develop without mobility" (World Bank)

The Road Map quotes:

- "Israel takes all necessary steps to help normalize Palestinian life".
- "Israel and Palestinians implement in full all recommendations of the Bertini report to improve humanitarian conditions, lifting curfews and easing restrictions on movement of persons and goods".
- "GOI and PA continue revenue clearance process and transfer of funds, including arrears, in accordance with agreed, transparent monitoring mechanism."

The group aimed at assessing the progress made in relation to the Palestinian and Israeli commitments under the Road Map regarding the **improvements made to free movement of goods and persons in order to allow the re-launch of the Palestinian economy**. Meetings were held with the following representatives/institutions: the office of Tony Blair, Special Envoy of the Middle East Quartet, the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA - who also provided a guided tour through some of the most important checkpoints/roadblocks), Mr Mohammed Shtayeh, Director General of the Palestinian Economic Council for Development and Reconstruction (PECDAR), Mr Bassam Khoury, Head of the Palestinian Federation of Industries and the European Commission delegation in Jerusalem.

The clear finding of the two-day mission is that the economic decline and the resulting humanitarian needs **in the West Bank are inextricably linked to the decline in trade as a result of imposed closures and restrictions of movement** as well as drops in remittance from Palestinians no longer able to travel to work in Israel. The economic situation is also inextricably linked to the security issue on the ground, because, according to the Israelis, **the closures and movement restrictions for goods and people in the West Bank are necessary measures** to protect Israeli citizens in Israel and in the settlements.

There are currently **more than 600 checkpoints/roadblocks and other closure obstacles in the West Bank**, hampering the free movement in the territory. **The separation barrier - of which 56.5 % has been constructed**, once completed will be around 740 km long, which is double the length of the 1967 border and will effectively split the West Bank area, and will also de facto cut the most fertile areas from the Palestinian territory (OCHA). Together a variety of administrative and legislative measures (annexation, permits), implemented in a most unpredictable way, have strangled the Palestinian economy. Today costs are higher to get a certain good from the PT to Israel than to get the same good from Israel to Shanghai (Dr Shtayeh).

No real improvement was made in the last months on removing circulation obstacles despite several announcements from the Israeli side (OCHA). The Blair Action Plan launched 13 May 2008 now foresees inter alia the removal of 12 strategic important obstacles. The example of the industrial park in Jenin addresses both economic and security concerns in the same zone (Blair office). The barrier has progressively sealed the West Bank from Israel, with the consequence of the petering out of economic activities of the West Bank - mainly SME's - due to the restrictions of movement. **Palestinian export trade has been particularly affected** by these developments.

Goods must first pass the internal closures around urban West Bank centres before exiting the West Bank via one of six Barrier Terminals.

The **Agreement on Movement and Access, which was signed in November 2005** and drafted to "facilitate the movement of people and goods and to minimise the disruption to Palestinian lives" has not, so far, led to consequent improvements on the ground. Import is still only possible via Israel or countries having an agreement with Israel, which excludes most of the Arab States. Palestine loses 264Mio €/y (Dr Shtayeh). With the total fragmentation of the territory, lack of access to the land and the omnipresent border controls, no economic activities can be built up.

In their day-to-day lives, Palestinians have to suffer harsh restrictions, hampering the humanitarian and economic development. **Israel is using 80% of the water resources in the West Bank**, which means that a Palestinian lives with 30 litres a day, a settler with 350 litres a day. (WHO: 100 litre/day minimum.) To cross the Qalandiya checkpoint, from Ramallah to Jerusalem, in the morning takes normally more than two hours for a Palestinian. This situation leads to a classical brain drain situation, with around 80 000 Palestinians having left the territories in the last three years.

The positive outcome of the **Investment Conference, 21-23 May 2008, Bethlehem** was stressed (Dr Shtayeh). The main objective of the conference was to improve the economic and social living standards in Palestine through increased investment in the Palestinian economy. The conference raised around \$1.4 billion. If this materialises, 35,000 jobs are expected to be created in the private sector. "We know how to fish; we want to have the chance to fish!" (Bassam Khoury)

Mr Mariano (EC, PEGASE) underlined that in order to address the expenditure deficit, more money needs to be invested in order to get the public expenditure under control. Most of the donors prefer to invest in more 'visible' development projects. The World Bank estimates that even with expected growth of 3% and with all the clearances delivered by the Israelis, the result would be a decrease of the GDP¹. Given that PEGASE will run out of money in August 2008, there is a crucial need for donors to deliver. This appeal is mainly addressed to the Arab states.

¹ 'Implementing the Palestinian Reform and Development Agenda', Economic Monitoring Report to the ad hoc Liaison Committee, World Bank, 2 May 2008

4. *GAZA- access, humanitarian and water issues*

On the field visit, Members visited the home and family of a deceased UNRWA teacher recently the victim of an Israeli incursion. During a visit to housing in Khan Younis refugee camp, they were informed that re-housing projects had come to a complete standstill due to the blockade as no building materials had come into Gaza for several years.

The blockade is affecting every sector of the community: health, economy, environment, education. 1.5 million people are suffering from what is perceived as a collective punishment. Gazans want the chance to work, not to be charity recipients.

Better economy ⇔ prosperity ⇔ peace

An environmental and ecological disaster is in the making. Due to the lack of fuel, converted vehicles run on cooking oil, with detrimental effects to the environment and for health. Hamas controls distribution of the scant stocks of fuel available and have had to prioritise between, inter alia, allocating fuel to sewage works, garbage collection, ambulances and hospitals. Tons of untreated garbage are tipped into the sea every day and 60,000m³ of sewage pours directly into the sea.



Empty streets of Gaza due to lack of fuel

Due to the pollution of the sea, the basic and cheapest source of animal protein - sardines - is becoming scarce, and unfit for human consumption. As fishing limits of three nautical miles are now imposed, young fish are being caught further depleting fish stocks.

A minimum of 400 trucks of goods are needed every day in Gaza to ensure the normalisation of Palestinian life. Only a total of 40-50 actually arrive through the different crossing points and more than 85% of the population are now living under the poverty line.¹

Although the Israelis have left Gaza, the Gazans still feel as though the Strip is occupied, the feeling of isolation and despair is evident and there is a strong worry that the isolation of Gaza will take on the veneer of normality.²

There is evident disappointment - from all interlocutors - that Tony Blair has not once been to Gaza and that there is only one project earmarked in Gaza (upgrading of sewage treatment plant).

At a meeting with members of the PLC, there was the evident desire for reconciliation between the two branches of the PLC and great concern over the imprisonment of the PLC members.

At all meetings, the EP members insisted that firing rockets on Israel would not improve matters for Gazans and, that this conveys an image to the outside world that Gaza remains a terrorist haven. The harsh sanctions and retaliations affect the moderate people hardest.

¹ Campaign Free Gaza

² UNRWA

The Palestinian Centre of Human Rights pointed out that Hamas is in control of Gaza and has to take responsibility. They have managed to bring peace to the streets and there are controls and barrages everywhere - ostensibly to stop cars driven on cooking oil, but human rights are not being respected, ie illegal arrests, detention and interrogations, lawyers refused access to clients.

Returning to Jerusalem, a meeting was held with the Israeli Coordination Liaison Unit based at Erez. The CLU explained that whenever there is a rocket attack, almost a daily occurrence, the borders close and no goods or people enter in or out of Gaza. Of course, this has nefast consequences for people requiring urgent medical treatment in Israel, such as chemotherapy which has to be administered on a regular basis. Answering a question as to why more than 1300 patients had not been granted travel permits for medical grounds, the Israelis replied that they coordinate directly with Ramallah regarding exit permits and, also, the amount of staple goods delivered, they also have regular contacts with the private sector in Gaza.

POLITICAL MEETINGS

According to the **Palestinian Head of the Negotiation Department, Saeb EREKAT**, the core reason for dysfunction is a lack of clarification of Western-Arab relations. These relations could be enhanced and extremists could be defeated by 1) a Two-States-Solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and 2) through the promotion of democracy in the Arab world. Democracy did not fail; Hamas failed by not complying with previous international agreements.

The agreement to be reached with Israel will be submitted to a referendum on the Palestinian side. Therefore it has to be fair and balanced. EREKAT stated that the PA is running out of options and has already put everything on the table. The EU should give incentives to both Israelis and Palestinians. In this regard, the Palestinians consider the current timing for an upgrading of EU-Israel relations as counterproductive.

Once an agreement is reached, the Palestinians will accept no other political and economic guarantees than those from the EU. EREKAT considers Tony Blair's work as positive. Blair has a new approach of concrete projects to break the system of closures which the EU should monitor closely. The current Israeli policy of roadblocks and checkpoints including arbitrary military interventions hampers Palestinian economic development and the taking over of security responsibilities. Both are prerequisites for a sustainable peace solution.

EREKAT further insisted that the PA is committed to ensuring zero tolerance towards violations of human rights and to fighting against corruption.

Prime Minister FAYYAD highlighted the need of restoring the Palestinian Authority in Gaza. He insisted that the Palestinians are ready to assume their responsibilities, and that they should be given the opportunity to do so. The Palestinians will not use the occupation and other obstacles like checkpoints as an excuse to slow down their necessary internal reforms: "We will build our state despite of the occupation". The conference on investment in Bethlehem was a positive action showing that Palestinians can take initiatives to foster economic development.

Concerning the Palestinian commitments under the Road Map, FAYYAD noted the positive improvements on security. But Israeli incursions still undermine ongoing efforts and the credibility of Palestinian security forces. The US and the EU should step up their efforts to help building up the Palestinian Security forces and Civil Police.

GOI does not respect its commitment to freeze all settlement activities. FAYYAD noted a change in the EU's terminology which phrases the settlements as an obstacle for peace instead of condemning them as illegal according to international law.

Overall, FAYYAD was doubtful whether, under these circumstances, an agreement could be reached by the end of the year. He also mentioned the letter he had sent to the EU Member States saying that he welcomes the principle of upgrading EU-Israel relations, but that the timing is not appropriate.

Meeting with **Nimrod BARKAN, Head of the Research Department of the Israeli Ministry of Foreign Affairs**, the Delegation voiced its complaints about the insulting and inhuman treatment experienced by the Delegation when crossing at the checkpoint from Bethlehem into Jerusalem.

BARKAN explained that the security measures respond to a terrorist threat. Before 2001 there were no road blocks or checkpoints necessary to protect Israel. The construction of the Separation Barrier decreased considerably the number of suicide attacks. The Delegation underlined that most of the West Bank checkpoints serve to protect the illegal settlements and not the security of Israel. Moreover, security concerns should not prevent Israel from instructing its security forces to ensure a humane treatment at checkpoints for everybody.

On the ongoing negotiations BARKAN stated that there is progress over the issue of borders with agreement over the percentages of the West Bank to be kept by Israel and the Palestinians. The question of Jerusalem has still not been addressed in detail. An agreement of principles, including the question of borders should be possible by the end of the year. However, quick implementation is unlikely. A step-by-step approach should prevail as the process of changing the mentality of extremists is time consuming.

At the **Knesset** the ad-hoc delegation met with **Ms Amira Dotan, Chairperson of the Knesset parliamentary delegation for relations with the EP**, and **Mr Alex Miller**, who asked to hear the opinion of the ad-hoc delegation on the visit. Over and above reporting on the impressions of the four groups, members raised the following issues; human rights violations, the possibility to meet with PLC parliamentary counterparts in Israeli prisons, and the proposal to upgrade EU relations with Israel. Replying, Ms Dotan emphasised that as regards settlements, before any discussion, there must first be consensus on the definition of terms and East Jerusalem is not part of the settlement issue. She suggested a future, possible constructive approach would be to meet with the Mayor of Jerusalem to assess the concerns raised.

She is aware that the environmental and ecological problems in Gaza - caused by the blockade - have a regional impact and deplores the general silence surrounding this topic.

The number of checkpoints has decreased; on security she underlined her positive surprise that law and order is on the rise in Nablus and Jenin as she had expected chaos.

Ms Dotan was also positive about the on-going discussions with Syria regarding the Golan Heights and considers that Egypt should take a more responsible role in the Middle East peace process. As regards the peace talks she questioned the legitimacy of Prime Minister Fayyad and President Abbas in this process. In her opinion, more time is needed for a positive outcome, and that the upgrading of Israeli/EU relations would be an encouraging incentive.

A possible concrete proposal for actions in the future would be a tri-partite delegation composed of Knesset, PLC and European Parliament members for a fact-finding mission on the ground (especially on the case of environmental issues linked to the situation in Gaza). She promised she would try to facilitate access to PLC members of parliament in prison for EP members who wished to meet their counterparts on the occasion of a future visit.

CONCLUSIONS

Points made on security

- Palestinians are making considerable progress in fulfilling their security related commitments under the Road Map. They have the necessary capabilities, but are still lacking capacities;
- Israel has to understand that it is in its own interest to see the security sector reform succeed and to help with it by allowing the PA security forces to operate 24h/24h and be adequately equipped;
- The funds made available for building up the NSF (US) and the Civil Police (Europe) are disproportionate. The EU must live up to its responsibilities and give EUPOL-COPPS increased funds. An overall coordination of Member States contributions is crucial to help building up the Civil Police in a coherent way;

Points made on Jerusalem/settlements

- Settlement construction has not frozen, but has continued apace;
- Future expansion of settlements will cut off East Jerusalem from the West Bank and will divide the West Bank into two sections. This seems not to be coincidence but a planned strategy;
- Palestinians houses and land seized with no explanation other than "security" and houses destroyed because Palestinians have not received planning permits;
- Illegal implantation of, and continued expansion by 400 ultra-orthodox settlers and the military presence (5 soldiers for every settler) to ensure their security in Hebron has led to the demise of the once-thriving inner city economic activity;
- Segregation system in operation with separate roads for Israelis and Palestinians. Palestinians being obliged to make long detours through roads with obstacles/check-points;

Points made on economy/roadblocks

- The Palestinian economy is strangled, mainly due to restrictions on movement and the separation barrier;
- There is general lack of belief from the Palestinian side that there will be an improvement of the situation in the near future;
- From the Israeli side, there is no clear engagement to alleviate the restriction of movement;
- More efforts are needed from the international Community, mainly the Arab countries, to support the objectives of the Palestinian Reform and Development Plan 2008-2010 (PRDP), especially the public expenditure balance;

Points made in Gaza

- ecological and environmental degradation is regional, not limited to Gaza; immediate concerted regional and international action is needed;
- Gaza is a time bomb waiting to explode ; the next generation of both Israelis and Palestinians are growing up in a climate of hatred and not knowing each other;
- UNWRA is carrying out incredible assistance work and demands are constantly increasing; this cannot, and should not, replace a long-term development strategy for the Gaza strip;
- extensive discussions with collective civil society organisations show that Gazans want the chance to work, not to be charity recipients;
- the business community in Gaza believes that EU upgrading of Israel should be linked to prior engagement on the ground, including by the Representative of the Quartet ;
- the overall message conveyed to the EP delegation was that there is the strong desire for "a capable and able" Europe to play a stronger role, not just "dumping money and paying" (with projects often being destroyed by the IDF).
- reconfirms the position of the European Parliament on the situation in the Gaza strip as expressed in the resolution adopted on 21 February 2008

We strongly feel that without serious signs of good faith translated into tangible improvements on the ground, the time is not yet right to upgrade EU-Israel relations.

PROGRAMME

Ad hoc delegation to the Palestinian Territories and to Israel
30 May - 2 June 2008

Friday 30 May

Afternoon / early evening Arrival of participants (Ben Gurion airport, Tel Aviv)

Dan Tel Aviv Hotel
99 Hayarkon Street
63432 TEL AVIV
Tel. +972 3 520 25 25

19.30

Briefing by Troika:
Slovenian Ambassador Mr Boris Sovič
French Ambassador Mr Jean-Michel Casa
Head of EC Delegation Mr Ramiro Cibrián Uzal
Caesarea Hall, Dan Hotel

Saturday 31 May

Members split into working groups covering separate issues, visiting different areas of the region (please see separate working group programmes for details)

Hotel accommodation in Bethlehem or Nablus, depending on working group (please see separate programmes)

Sunday 1 June

Morning/afternoon Continuation of working group activities

20.00

Debriefing of working groups (except Gaza group who will spend the night in Gaza)
Diwan Room, Intercontinental Hotel

Intercontinental Hotel Jacir Palace
Jerusalem-Hebron Road
BETHLEHEM
+972 2 276 67 77

Monday 2 June

- 10.00 Check out for participants departing Monday; luggage on coach
- 10.15 Depart for Jerusalem (meet in Intercontinental lobby)
- 11.30 Meeting with Mr Nimrod Barkan, Head of Research
Israeli Ministry of Foreign Affairs
9 Yitzhak Rabin Blvd., Kiryat, Ben Gurion, Jerusalem
- 13.00 Meeting with Troika:
Mr Igor Pogacar, Head of Slovenian representation in Ramallah
Mr Alain Remy, Head of French representation in Ramallah
Mr John Kjaer, Head of ECTAO
ECTAO, 5 George Adam Smith St, Jerusalem
- 15.15 (arrival 14.50) Meetings with Knesset members Ms Amira Dotan and Mr Alex Miller
Knesset, Kiryat, Ben Gurion, Jerusalem
- 17.30 Press conference
Pasha Room, American Colony Hotel
Organised by Ms Alix De Mauny, Press Officer of ECTAO
- Evening Departure of some participants by taxi to Ben Gurion airport, Tel Aviv

Tuesday 3 June

- Morning Departure of some participants by taxi to Ben Gurion airport, Tel Aviv

Ad hoc delegation to the Palestinian Territories and Israel
30 May - 2 June 2008

PROGRAMME WORKING GROUP

"BUILDING UP PALESTINIAN SECURITY CAPACITIES"

31 MAY - 1 JUNE 2008

Saturday 31 May

8:00 Transfer Tel Aviv - Jerusalem

9:00 Meeting with US General DAYTON on Palestinian Security Forces reform
Transfer to Ramallah

11:00 Meeting with Abdul-Razzaq Al-YAHYA, PA Minister of the Interior and with Khaled SALIM, Director general at the PA Interior Ministry in charge of security sector reform;

13:00 Working lunch with Colin SMITH, Head of mission; EUPOL-COPPS, Office Tokio Street, Ramallah;

14:30 Transfer to Nablus accompanied by EUPOL-COPPS Field Team

15:30 Meeting with the Governor of Nablus

16:00 Meeting with local Head of Palestinian Civil Police

17:00 Meeting with Kheiri HUSSEIN, local Commander of PA security forces

20:30 Dinner with the Governor of Nablus, local authorities, PLC members and civil society

Hotel: Al Yasmeen, Nablus (+972 9 2333 555)

Sunday 1 June

9:30 Transfer Nablus - Ramallah

11:30 Briefing in Ramallah with Stig ØDORF, EUPOL-COPPS Lead Police
Adviser on Upgrading the Jenin Civil Police

13:00 Meeting with Saeb Erekat, Head of PLO Negotiations Affairs Department

14: 30 Meeting with Prime Minister Salam FAYYAD (together with WG Economy) Ramallah,
Ministry of Finance

Return to Bethlehem

20:00 Debriefing of working groups
Diwan Room, Intercontinental Hotel

Hotel: Intercontinental Jacir Palace, Bethlehem

Ad hoc delegation to the Palestinian Territories and Israel
30 May - 2 June 2008

PROGRAMME WORKING GROUP:

"JERUSALEM AND SETTLEMENTS"

31 MAY - 1 JUNE 2008

Saturday 31 May

- 07.30 Check out from Dan Hotel
- 08.00 Transfer Tel Aviv - Jerusalem (meet in Dan Hotel lobby)
- 09.30 Briefing with Negotiations Support Unit (NSU) on settlement building
in the Palestinian territories
YWCA, Sheikh Jarrah, East Jerusalem
- 10.30 Transfer to Hebron
- 11.30 Briefing with Reconstruction and Rehabilitation Committee and
Palestinian citizens in Hebron; tour of town
- 13.00 Lunch and presentation of work of Committee
- 15.00 Transfer to Bethlehem visiting outpost settlements en route (and
Harhouma settlement)
- 19.00 Check into Intercontinental Hotel Bethlehem
- 19.30 Dinner with Deputy Mayor of Bethlehem - Georges Sa'aba, PLC members
and civil society; together with working group "Building up the
Palestinian economy"
Restaurant Abu Eli (opposite hotel)

Hotel: Intercontinental Jacir Palace
Jerusalem-Hebron Road, Bethlehem (+972 2 276 67 77)

Sunday 1 June

- 08.00 Transfer Bethlehem – Jerusalem (meet in Intercontinental Hotel lobby) via Palestinian reserved route and Beitar Illit settlement, accompanied by NSU
- 09.15 Briefing - tour on Israeli settlement policy in Greater Jerusalem with Ir-Amim
- 12.00 Transfer to Ramallah
- 13.00 Meeting with Saeb Erakat, Head of PLO Negotiations Affairs Department
- 15.30 Meeting with Minister of Housing Ze'ev Boim
Har Zion Hotel, 27 Hebron Road, Jerusalem
- 20.00 Debriefing of working groups
Diwan Room, Intercontinental Hotel

Hotel: Intercontinental Jacir Palace

Jerusalem-Hebron Road, Bethlehem (+972 2 276 67 77)

Ad hoc delegation to the Palestinian Territories and Israel
30 May - 2 June 2008

PROGRAMME WORKING GROUP:

"BUILDING UP THE PALESTINIAN ECONOMY
(INCLUDING FREE MOVEMENT OF PERSONS)"

31 MAY - 1 JUNE 2008

Saturday 31 May

- 08.00 Check out Dan Hotel
- 08.30 Transfer Tel Aviv - Jerusalem (meet in Dan Hotel lobby)
- 09.30 Meeting with Private Sector Adviser Mr Ronald Wormgoor, office of Tony Blair
American Colony Hotel (lobby, 3rd floor), Nablus Rd, Jerusalem
- 10.45 Briefing on OCHA by Mr Ray Dolphin
OCHA office, 7 St. George St, Jerusalem
- Transfer to Ramallah (accompanied by OCHA representative)
- Lunch with Mr Mohammed Shtayeh, Director General of Palestinian Economic Council for Development and Reconstruction (PECDAR), Mr Bassam Khoury, Head of the Palestinian Industry Federation
Darna restaurant, Al-Sahel St, Ramallah (+972 2 295 0590)
- 15.00 Visit of economically sensitive checkpoints with OCHA representative Mr James Weatherill
Please see separate detailed programme and map
- 19.00 Check into Intercontinental Hotel
- 19.30 Dinner with Mayor of Bethlehem, PLC members, civil society (together with working group: "Jerusalem and settlements")
Restaurant Abu Eli (opposite hotel)
- Hotel: Intercontinental Jacir Palace**
Jerusalem-Hebron Road, Bethlehem (+972 2 276 67 77)

Sunday 1 June

- 10.15 Transfer Bethlehem - Jerusalem (meet in Intercontinental lobby)
- 11.00 Briefing on **PEGASE** by Mario Mariani, Head of PEGASE;
Michel Laloge, Deputy Head of Section Infrastructure, Water,
Energy, Environment, Agriculture, Food Security and UNRWA
ECTAO office 4th floor, 5 George Adam Smith St, Jerusalem
- 13.00 Meeting with Saeb Erekat, Head of the Palestinian Negotiation
Department (together with WG Settlements, WG Security)
Ramallah, Ministry of Foreign Affairs
- 14.30 Meeting with Salam Fayyad, Prime Minister
(together with WG Security)
Ramallah, Ministry of Finance
- Return to Bethlehem
- 20.00 Debriefing of working groups
Intercontinental Hotel, room TBC
- Hotel: Intercontinental Jacir Palace**
Jerusalem-Hebron Road, Bethlehem (+972 2 276 67 77)

Ad hoc delegation to the Palestinian Territories and Israel
1-2 June 2008

PROGRAMME WORKING GROUP :

"GAZA: ACCESS, HUMANITARIAN AND WATER ISSUES"

31 MAY - 2 JUNE 2008

Hotel: Intercontinental Jacir Palace, BethlehemTel. +972 2 276 6777

Sunday 1 June

06h15 depart Bethlehem (meet Mr Triantaphyllides in Jerusalem)

08h00 Erez cross by foot and meet UNRWA vehicles

09h30 drive to Khan Younis,

10h15 meet UNRWA family recently bereaved after Israeli incursion

11h00 hardship housing case, Khan Younis refugee camp

11h30 depart for Gaza city

11h45 Campaign Free Gaza NGO - (Dr Refat Rustem)

13h00 Palestinian Businessmen Association

14h15 Campaign to End the Siege NGO (Mr Iyad Saraj)

15h30 Meeting with Karen AbuZayd, UNRWA Commissioner General
and John Ging; Director of UNRWA Operations, Gaza, UNRWA Headquarters

16h45 Palestinian Centre for Human Rights - Mr Jabr Wishah PCHR offices

18h00 Meeting with PLC members

20h30 Meeting with Mayor of Gaza, Majid Abu Ramadan

Hotel: Al Deira, Gaza, +972 8 283 8100

Monday 2 June

08h00 depart for Erez

10h30 meeting with Colonel Nir Press, Coordination Liaison Unit, Erez

11h45 Depart for Jerusalem

**AD HOC DELEGATION TO THE
PALESTINIAN TERRITORIES AND ISRAEL**

30 May - 2 June 2008

LIST OF PARTICIPANTS

Members of the European Parliament (14)

Member		Country	Political Group
Ms	Véronique DE KEYSER	Belgium	PES
Ms	Annemie NEYTS-UYTTEBROECK	Belgium	ALDE
Mr	Bastiaan BELDER	Netherlands	IND/DEM
Mr	Thijs BERMAN	Netherlands	PES
Ms	Frieda BREPOELS	Belgium	EPP-ED
Ms	Hélène FLAUTRE	France	Greens/EFA
Mr	David HAMMERSTEIN	Spain	Greens/EFA
Mr	Eugenijus MALDEIKIS	Lithuania	UEN
Ms	Luisa MORGANTINI	Italy	GUE/NGL
Mr	Philippe MORILLON	France	ALDE
Ms	Béatrice PATRIE	France	PES
Mr	Boguslaw SONIK	Poland	EPP-ED
Mr	Kyriacos TRIANTAPHYLIDIS	Cyprus	GUE/NGL
Mr	Francis WURTZ	France	GUE/NGL

EPP-ED	Group of the European People's Party (Christian Democrats) and European Democrats
PES	Group of the Party of European Socialists
ALDE	Group of the Alliance of Democrats and Liberals of Europe
Greens/EFA	Group of the Greens/European Free Alliance
GUE/NGL	Confederal Group of the European United Left/Nordic Green Left
IND/DEM	Independence and Democracy Group

President's private office staff (1)

Mr	Alexandre	STUTZMANN	Advisor for External Relations
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DG EXPO staff (5)

Mr	Michael	REINPRECHT	Head of Unit
Ms	Kristin	ARP	Administrator
Ms	Morag	DONALDSON	Administrator
Mr	Stefan	KRAUSS	Administrator
Ms	Erica	SCREEN	Assistant

Political group advisors (5)

Ms	Eva	MITSOPOULOU	PPE
Mr	Bruno	MARASA	PES
Mr	Zoltán	SIMON	PES
Mr	Niccolo	RINALDI	ALDE
Ms	Mychelle	RIEU	Greens/EFA

Interpreters (6)

Mr	Laurent	D'AUMALE
Ms	Manal	EL HELOU
Mr	Reuben	IMRAY
Ms	Jumana	KAYYALI
Ms	Vera	NOFAL
Mr	Saïd	SHAATH

EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT DELEGATION URGES ACTION TO COUNTERACT ERODING CONFIDENCE IN THE PALESTINIAN-ISRAELI PEACE PROCESS

Improvement on the ground is crucial

A European Parliament delegation visited Israel and the Palestinian Territories from 31 May to 2 June with the aim of assessing the situation on the ground as regards developments since Annapolis.

"We have observed encouraging improvements in the **security** situation in the West Bank municipalities with Palestinians being able to take on their responsibilities. Nevertheless, Israeli incursions and other restrictions undermine the authority and ability of Palestinian police and security forces to function.

We further witnessed the beginnings of Palestinian **economic recovery** with greater commerce, trade and tourism in some West Bank areas. However in order for these economic and security improvements to be consolidated, the movement of people and access of goods needs to be ensured. Palestinian compliance in this field is not enough; a change in Israel's policies is required. The existing policy of roadblocks and the impact of the route of the "separation barrier" seriously hamper on-going efforts, strongly backed by the European Union, to achieve economic recovery.

We have observed considerable and continuous expansion of **settlements** which is illegal, and incompatible with the objectives laid out in Annapolis and with the Road Map, making a two-state solution impossible. In particular, we are worried over the future of East Jerusalem, the "E1" settlement project and the situation in the old city of Hebron.

In the **Gaza** Strip the revolting consequences of the ongoing sanctions and blockade policy were all too evident. Dramatic overall shortages - in particular, medical supplies, food and fuel - result in unacceptable human misery, which, in turn, will generate future violence. We were positively struck by the mobilisation of the civil society, as well as the activities of UNRWA, who try to counterbalance the effect of the siege. Their efforts need immediate increased support from the international community.

On behalf of the European Parliament, we reiterate our pressing call to put an end to the geographical and political isolation of the Gaza Strip and to reconnect it to the rest of the world. We call on the Quartet, and its representative Mr Blair, and on the Palestinian Authority institutions to re-engage on the ground and to collaborate with the Gazans. The only identified project of a sewage plant in the context of the Quartet's quick impact projects must be urgently implemented. We condemn the launching of rockets on the neighbouring State of Israel and consider it as totally counterproductive with respect to the willingness for peace that is the desire of a great majority of Gazans.

All the above points were raised during discussions between the delegation and members of the Knesset. Finally, we strongly feel that without serious signs of good faith translated into tangible improvements on the ground, the time is not yet right to upgrade EU-Israel relations."

The delegation comprised fourteen MEPs and co-chaired by Mrs Veronique DE KEYSER and Mrs Annemie NEYTS-UYTTEBROECK

Jerusalem, 2 June 2008