

P6_TA(2008)0064

Situation in Gaza

European Parliament resolution of 21 February 2008 on the situation in the Gaza Strip

The European Parliament,

- having regard to its previous resolutions on the Middle East, in particular those of 1 June 2006 on the humanitarian crisis in the Palestinian territories and the role of the EU¹, 16 November 2006 on the situation in the Gaza Strip², 21 June 2007 on MEDA and financial support to Palestine – evaluation, implementation and control³, 12 July 2007 on the Middle East⁴ and 11 October 2007 on the humanitarian situation in Gaza⁵,
 - having regard to UN Security Council Resolutions 242 (S/RES/242) of 22 November 1967 and 338 (S/RES/338) of 22 October 1973,
 - having regard the Fourth Geneva Convention (1949),
 - having regard to the Annapolis Declaration of 27 November 2007,
 - having regard to the conclusions of the General Affairs and External Relations Council of 28 January 2008,
 - having regard to the declaration on the situation in Gaza made by the Euro-Mediterranean Parliamentary Assembly's Committee on Political Affairs, Security and Human Rights on 28 January 2008,
 - having regard to the UN Human Rights Council resolution of 24 January 2008 on human rights violations in the Gaza Strip (A/HRC/S-6/L.1),
 - having regard to Rule 103(4) of its Rules of Procedure,
- A. whereas, as a result of the embargo on the movement of people and goods, the partial denial of access to drinking water, food and electricity, and the lack of essential goods and services, the humanitarian situation in the Gaza Strip has further deteriorated,
- B. whereas the border crossings in and out of Gaza have been closed for months, and whereas the embargo on the movement of people and goods has further paralysed the economy in the Gaza Strip,
- C. whereas key public service sectors, including the health and education systems, are facing serious shortcomings owing to a lack of basic materials required for their functioning, and whereas the lack of medicines and of fuel to run the generators in hospitals in the Gaza Strip is endangering Palestinian lives,

¹ OJ C 298 E, 8.12.2006, p. 223.

² OJ C 314 E, 21.12.2006, p. 324.

³ Texts adopted, P6_TA(2007)0277.

⁴ Texts adopted, P6_TA(2007)0350.

⁵ Texts adopted, P6_TA(2007)0430.

- D. whereas hundreds of thousands of Palestinians recently crossed the border between the Gaza Strip and Egypt, after breaking down the border wall, in order to find essential goods for their basic needs, and whereas the Egyptian forces gradually resumed control of the situation and resealed the border on 3 February 2008, bringing to an end the free movement of Palestinians, as requested by the Israeli authorities,
- E. whereas the destruction of part of the border wall and fence is a direct consequence of the extremely serious humanitarian crisis in Gaza, which has led to the Palestinian population endeavouring to claim its vital need for freedom of movement,
- F. whereas a recent suicide terrorist attack in Dimona, after a long period without such acts, killed and wounded Israeli civilians; whereas the firing of rockets by Palestinian militias from the Gaza Strip into Israeli territory has continued; and whereas the military operations killing and endangering civilians and the extrajudicial targeted killings by the Israeli army have continued in the Gaza Strip,
- G. whereas the situation and the recent developments in the Gaza Strip threaten to undermine the ongoing negotiations between Israelis and Palestinians and the efforts to conclude an agreement by the end of 2008, as declared by the parties at the international Annapolis Conference of 27 November 2007,
- H. whereas the European Union has provided considerable financial support to the Palestinians in the past years; whereas the EU's Temporary International Mechanism and project funding have played an important role in avoiding a humanitarian catastrophe in the Gaza Strip and in the West Bank; whereas the Commission, the United Nations Development Programme, the United Nations Relief and Works Agency and the World Bank have suspended several infrastructure projects due to the inability to import raw materials; whereas these humanitarian offices, agencies and organisations have continued their activities on a limited scale despite all the obstacles; whereas the European Union continues to provide humanitarian assistance to the Palestinian people and direct subsidies to employees of the Palestinian Authority in the Gaza Strip; whereas the Palestinian-European Mechanism for Management of Socio-Economic Aid (PEGASE) will constitute a new financing mechanism for EU and other international assistance for the Palestinian Territories,
- I. whereas at the conference held in Annapolis all parties expressed their wish for a new start of negotiations with a view to the establishment of a sovereign and viable Palestinian State, alongside a safe Israeli State,
- J. whereas the participants in the International Donors' Conference for the Palestinian State, held in December 2007 in Paris, pledged a total of USD 7.4 billion to support Palestinian institution-building and economic recovery for the next three years,
- K. whereas the Special Envoy for the Quartet has identified four priority projects for economic development and institution-building for the Palestinian Territories, including the restoration of the Beit Lahia sewage treatment plant in northern Gaza,
- 1. Reiterates its deep concern at the humanitarian and political crisis in the Gaza Strip and its further possible grave consequences; considers the recent developments at Rafah, including peaceful events and violent acts, to be the result of that crisis in the Gaza Strip;

2. Expresses its deepest sympathy for the civilian population affected by the violence in Gaza and southern Israel;
3. Reiterates its call for an immediate end to all acts of violence;
4. Calls on Israel to cease military actions killing and endangering civilians, and extrajudicial targeted killings;
5. Calls on Hamas, following the illegal takeover of the Gaza Strip, to prevent the firing of rockets by Palestinian militias from the Gaza Strip into Israeli territory;
6. Believes that the policy of isolation of the Gaza Strip has failed at both the political and the humanitarian level; once again calls on all parties to fully respect international law, and notably international humanitarian law;
7. Regards as positive the reaction by Egypt to the disturbances at Rafah, which allowed many Palestinian families to have access to essential goods for their basic needs; urges the Government of Egypt to continue to play an active role in maintaining peace and stability in the area;
8. Calls once again for an end to the blockade and for a controlled re-opening of the crossings in and out of Gaza; calls on Israel to ensure the movement of people and goods at Rafah, Karni and other crossing-points, in compliance with the Agreement on Movement and Access; calls for the resumption of the EU Border Assistance Mission at Rafah; supports the statement by the EU High Representative for CFSP that a new Council mandate should be considered for the Mission; calls in this context for an increased international presence in the area;
9. Welcomes the proposal by the Palestinian Authority to take control of the crossing-points, on the basis of an agreement involving Egypt, Israel and the Palestinian Authority, and supports the recent resolution adopted by the Arab League in that respect; invites the Palestinian Authority, nevertheless, to help establish the necessary conditions to engage all parties concerned in the Gaza Strip in this regard;
10. Believes that the civilian population should be exempt from any military action and any collective punishment; calls on Israel to fulfil its international obligations, as an occupying power, in the Gaza Strip; calls on Israel to guarantee a continuous and sufficient flow of humanitarian aid, humanitarian assistance and essential goods and services, including fuel and power supplies, to the Gaza Strip; expresses grave concern at Israel's decision to introduce progressive five per cent per week cuts in power supplies to the Gaza Strip, which cannot be considered consistent with meeting minimum humanitarian needs; welcomes the petition from 10 Israeli human rights organisations against fuel and electricity cuts in the Gaza Strip;
11. Considers that the functioning of public institutions providing essential services and the operations of the international humanitarian offices, agencies and organisations seeking to improve the conditions of the Palestinians living in the Gaza Strip require, despite the political deadlock, a dialogue between the Palestinian Authority and Hamas;
12. Stresses the great importance of a permanent geographical and trade connection between, and the peaceful and lasting political reunification of, the Gaza Strip and the West Bank,

and calls on Hamas to revise its position in line with the Quartet principles and the previously agreed international obligations, and to support the peace process and the ongoing negotiations;

13. Reiterates its call for the immediate release of the Israeli corporal Gilad Shalit, which would be perceived as an act of goodwill on the part of Hamas, and of all imprisoned Palestinian former ministers, legislators and mayors; recognises the importance of the release of detainees in building confidence in the context of the current peace talks;
14. Reminds the parties of the commitments which they made in Annapolis to hold negotiations in good faith with a view to concluding by the end of 2008 a peace treaty resolving all outstanding issues, including all core issues, without exception, as specified in previous agreements; urges both sides to fulfil their obligations under the Road Map;
15. Calls on the Council and the Commission to continue, together with the international community, to guarantee essential humanitarian aid for the Palestinians living in the Gaza Strip, with special regard to the needs of particularly vulnerable groups; stresses the importance of the new financing mechanism PEGASE; expresses, nevertheless, its deep concern at the destruction of facilities financed within the framework of humanitarian aid or project financing provided by the European Union, which undermines the efficiency of EU assistance and affects the solidarity of the public in the Member States;
16. Welcomes the outcome of the December 2007 International Donor's Conference for the Palestinian State, namely the pledging of over USD 7.4 billion, and calls on all donors to deliver on their pledges in support of efforts to build the future Palestinian State in accordance with the Reform and Development Plan presented by Prime Minister Dr. Salam Fayyad;
17. Expresses grave concern over the ecological and human health consequences of the failure to undertake maintenance of sewage treatment facilities, and in particular calls on all parties to facilitate access to the goods needed for the repair and reconstruction of the Beit Lahia plant, as identified by the Special Envoy for the Quartet;
18. Calls for an urgent and exemplary energy project for Gaza, possibly in the Rafah area, in order to guarantee autonomy and self-sufficiency in electricity production and desalination for the population;
19. Invites its Working Group on the Middle East to examine, in cooperation with the Commission and the international organisations concerned, the consequences of the destruction of the infrastructure in the Gaza Strip, with special regard to the facilities financed within the framework of the humanitarian aid or project financing provided by the European Union;
20. 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 Special Envoy for the Middle East Quartet, the President of the Euro-Mediterranean Parliamentary Assembly, the President of the Palestinian Authority, the Palestinian Legislative Council, the Israeli Government, the Knesset, and the Egyptian Government and Parliament.