



European Parliament delegation shocked by conditions in Gaza

A seven member cross party delegation of the European Parliament, led by Proinsias de Rossa (S&D, Ir), visited the Palestinian territories (Gaza, West Bank, East Jerusalem), from 27 November to 1 December 2010.

The primary purpose of the visit was to meet with the elected representatives of all political parties in the Palestinian Legislative Council (PLC) in order to assess the living conditions in Gaza, the West Bank and East Jerusalem, as well to discuss the issue of reconciliation.

The delegation was shocked by the ongoing deprivations suffered by the people in Gaza: 750,000 people continue to need food aid from UNRWA; 300,000 of them are in abject poverty. Schools are still denied building material.

In order for the living conditions of people in Gaza to improve, the siege must be lifted. Normal economic and business activities must be allowed to start again, with no restrictions on exports and imports.

In Nablus, the major security problem is the violent activity of the settlers, over which the Palestinian Services have no authority. The Israel Defense Forces, however, do have authority, but do not take action against the perpetrators of crimes: hit-and-run killings or destruction of 3,700 olive trees.

The violent activity of the settlers in East Jerusalem with the support of the Israeli authorities continues, as well as illegal settlements, eviction of Palestinian families, demolition of houses and intimidation of children.

In the course of meetings with the PLC counterparts, the issue of the 8,000 political Palestinian prisoners has been raised, including some members of the PLC. Three Jerusalem PLC members, who have recently been released, have been ordered to leave East Jerusalem. They refused to do so and have taken refuge in the office of the International Red Cross.

Proinsias de Rossa (S&D, Ir), chair, Margrete Auken (The Greens/EFA, DK), vice chair, Gaston Franco (EPP, F); Niccolò Rinaldi (ALDE, I); Nicole Kiil-Nielsen (The Greens/EFA, F); Patrick Le Hyaric (GUE/NGL, F); Robert Atkins (UK, ECR).