Resolution on the situation in the Gaza Strip

2008/2518(RSP) - 21/02/2008 - Text adopted by Parliament, topical subjects

Following the debate held in plenary on 30 January 2008, the European Parliament adopted a joint resolution on the situation in the Gaza Strip, recalling that, as a result of the embargo by Israel 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.

Parliament recalled that 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. 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.

At the same time, Parliament noted that a recent suicide terrorist attack in Dimona, after a long period without such acts, killed and wounded Israeli civilians. 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.

Parliament reiterated its deep concern at the humanitarian and political crisis in the Gaza Strip and its further possible grave consequences. It considered the recent developments at Rafah, including peaceful events and violent acts, to be the result of that crisis in the Gaza Strip. It expressed its deepest sympathy for the civilian population affected by the violence in Gaza and southern Israel, and called for an immediate end to all acts of violence. It called upon Israel to cease military actions killing and endangering civilians, and extrajudicial targeted killings, and, at the same time, called 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.

Members recalled that the European Union had provided considerable financial support to the Palestinians in the past years and they welcomed the outcome of the December 2007 International Donor's Conference for the Palestinian State, namely the pledging of over USD 7.4 billion. They call 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, and stressed the importance of the new financing mechanism PEGASE. Parliament expressed, nevertheless, its deep concern at the destruction of facilities financed within the framework of humanitarian aid or project financing provided by the EU, which undermines the efficiency of EU assistance and affects the solidarity of the public in the Member States.

Parliament believed that the policy of isolation of the Gaza Strip had failed at both the political and the humanitarian level. It called, once again, for an end to the blockade and for a controlled re-opening of the crossings in and out of Gaza. Israel was asked to ensure the movement of people and goods at Rafah, Karni and other crossing-points. Parliament called for the resumption of the EU Border Assistance Mission at Rafah.

It believed that the civilian population should be exempt from any military action and any collective punishment, and called on Israel to fulfil its international obligations, as an occupying power, in the Gaza Strip and to guarantee a continuous and sufficient flow of humanitarian aid, humanitarian assistance and

essential goods and services, including fuel and power supplies. It expressed 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.

Stressing 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, Parliament called 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. It reiterated its call for the immediate release of the Israeli corporal Gilad Shalit, and reminded 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.

Parliament called 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 desalinisation for the population.

Lastly, Parliament 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 EU.