Resolution on the situation of Palestinian prisoners in Israeli jails

2008/2607(RSP) - 04/09/2008 - Text adopted by Parliament, single reading

Following the debate which took place during the sitting of 9 July 2008, the European Parliament adopted by 416 votes to 136 with 61 abstentions, a resolution on the situation of Palestinian prisoners in Israeli jails. The resolution had been tabled for consideration in plenary by the PES, ALDE, Greens/EFA and GUE/NGL groups. It pointed out that more than 11 000 Palestinians, including hundreds of women and children, are being held in Israeli prisons and detention centres. Parliament welcomes the release of 198 Palestinians freed by the Israeli Government on 25 August 2008 as a gesture of good will and to build mutual trust. This is a positive gesture to strengthen the authority of the Palestinian Authority and install a climate of mutual trust. Members stress that the issue of Palestinian prisoners has a major impact on both Palestinian society and the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. In this context, a substantial release of Palestinian prisoners, as well as the immediate release of the imprisoned members of the Palestinian Legislative Council including Marwan Barghouti, could be a positive step towards establishing the climate of mutual trust needed to make substantial progress in the peace negotiations.

Parliament states that it supports the legitimate security concerns of Israel, believing that the rule of law must be fully respected in the treatment of all prisoners, this being crucial for a democratic country. It pointed out, however, that around 1 000 prisoners are detained in Israel on the basis of 'administrative detention orders', with the right of appeal but without charge, trial and rights of defence. Such 'administrative detention orders' can be, and in some cases are, prolonged for many years. Human rights reports state that Palestinian prisoners are subject to abuses and use of torture. Parliament calls on Israel to guarantee that minimum standards on detention be respected, to bring to trial all detainees, to put an end to the use of 'administrative detention orders', and to implement adequate measures for minors and prisoners' visiting rights, in full compliance with international standards including the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the UN Convention Against Torture and other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment. Members express concern at the situation of Palestinian women and vulnerable prisoners, who are reportedly subjected to mistreatment and a lack of access to health care. Thet also call on the Palestinian Authority to make every effort to prevent any violent or terrorist acts, particularly by former prisoners and, especially, by children.

Lastly, Parliament expresses its belief that the upgrading of EU-Israel relations should be consistent with and linked to Israel's compliance with all obligations under international law. It welcomes the decision taken at the eighth meeting of the EU-Israel Association Council to establish a fully-fledged Subcommittee on Human Rights replacing the current Working Group on Human Rights. Human rights organisations and non-governmental organisations in Israel and in the Occupied Palestinian Territories must be extensively consulted and fully involved in monitoring Israel's progress towards compliance with its obligations under international law.