Resolution on the situation in the Gaza Strip

2009/2504(RSP) - 15/01/2009 - Text adopted by Parliament, single reading

Following a debate which took place during the sitting of 14 January 2009, the European Parliament adopted a resolution on the situation in the Gaza Strip. The resolution had been tabled for consideration in plenary by the EPP-ED, PES, ALDE, UEN, Greens/ALE and GUE/NGL groups. Parliament referred to the Israeli military offensive in Gaza launched on 27 December in response to Hamas rocket attacks in the south of Israel. It recalled that the Israeli operation has killed about one thousand people in Gaza, many of them children and women, and caused thousands of casualties and the destruction of houses, schools and other key parts of civilian infrastructure, owing to the use of force by the Israeli army.

Parliament welcomed the adoption of UN Security Council Resolution 1860 of 8 January 2009 and regretted that so far both Israel and Hamas had failed to meet the UN request for a halt to the hostilities. It called for an **immediate and permanent ceasefire**, which should include a halt to rocket attacks by Hamas on Israel and the end of Israel's military action in Gaza. It was necessary to provide arrangements and guarantees in Gaza, as demanded by the UNSC Resolution 1860, in order to sustain a durable ceasefire which included at the same time the withdrawal of the Israeli troops, the sustained re-opening of the crossing points, the lifting of the blockade and the prevention of smuggling and of illicit trafficking in arms and ammunition. Parliament had recalled that the border crossings in and out of Gaza had been closed for 18 months and the embargo on the movement of people and goods had affected the daily lives of the inhabitants and further paralysed the economy in the Strip. The embargo limited any substantial improvements in the situation in the West Bank. Parliament noted that the embargo on the Gaza Strip represented **collective punishment** in contravention of international humanitarian law.

It called for a negotiated truce, which should be guaranteed by a mechanism, to be set up by the international community coordinated by the Quartet and the League of Arab States, with special reference to the monitoring of the Egypt-Gaza border, which implied an important role for Egypt. Parliament encouraged the diplomatic efforts so far undertaken by the international community, especially Egypt and the EU.

It expressed its shock at the suffering of the civilian population in Gaza, strongly deploring, in particular, the fact that civilian and UN targets had been hit during the attacks. Parliament expressed its sympathy for the civilian population affected by the violence in Gaza and southern Israel.

Members called in the strongest terms on the Israeli authorities to **allow unimpeded access to humanitarian assistance and aid to the Gaza Strip** and to guarantee a continuous and adequate flow of aid through the humanitarian corridors. The Israeli authorities were asked to allow the international press to follow events on the ground.

Parliament called on Israel to fulfil its obligations under international law and international humanitarian law, and called on **Hamas to end rocket attacks** and to assume its own responsibilities by committing itself to a political process aimed at restoring inter-Palestinian dialogue and contributing to the ongoing process of negotiation.

With regard to the EU, Parliament called for a **stronger and more united political stance** on the part of the EU and invited the Council to take the opportunity to cooperate with the new US Administration in order to put an end to the conflict with an agreement based on the two-state solution.

Lastly, Parliament stressed the great importance of renewing efforts for inter-Palestinian reconciliation between all the components of Palestinian society, based on the Mecca Agreement of 8 February 2007.

This implied acceptance of the previous agreements, including the right of Israel to exist. Members underlined, in this connection, the need for a permanent geographical connection between, and the peaceful and lasting political reunification of, the Gaza Strip and the West Bank.