Peace and dignity in the Middle East

2002/2166(INI) - 23/10/2003 - Text adopted by Parliament, single reading

The European Parliament adopted a resolution based on the own-initiative report drafted by Emilio MENENDEZ del VALLE (PES, Spain) and called on both the Israeli government and the Palestinian Authority to commit themselves to the implementation of the "road map" set out for reaching a peace agreement. (Please see the summary dated 07/10/03.) The resolution was voted through by 343 votes in favour, 19 against and 57 abstentions. Parliament declared once again that there could be no military solution to the Middle East conflict. The only possible option is the negotiation of a firm and final peace agreement, without prior conditions and in line with the three phases of the roadmap, based on the existence of two democratic, sovereign and viable states - Israel and Palestine - coexisting peacefully within secure and recognised frontiers and within which the peaceful co-existence of Christians, Muslims and Jews is guaranteed. Parliament went on to condemn the anti-Semitic statements made by the Malaysian Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamed to a meeting of the Organisation of the Islamic Conference, as well as the appalling terrorist attack carried out near the Eretz border crossing in the Gaza Strip on 15 October 2003 in which three US citizens were killed. It felt that, if the Israeli Government wishes to contribute to this peace process, it must refrain from practices which also result in civilian victims among the Palestinians and which, by the same token, obstruct the peace process. In addition, Parliament regretted the Israeli air raid on Syrian territory on 5 October 2003, which is a violation of international law and has escalated and exacerbated the crisis in the region. Parliament asked Israel to help facilitate the enormous and highly difficult task facing the Palestinian Prime Minister in seeking to achieve the objectives set out in the roadmap: only if he enjoys broad popular support among the Palestinian people will the new Prime Minister be able to achieve these objectives and avert the clear danger that failure of the roadmap would result in an unstoppable rise of fundamentalist extremists. Moving to the question of Israeli settlements, Parliament called on the Israeli Government to press ahead with the measures required to end settlement activity, including natural growth of settlements. It is concerned at the continuation of illegal settlements and expropriation of land for the construction of the security fence, which represent a barrier to a peace settlement, since they threaten to make it physically impossible to devise a solution based on two states. The Israeli Government and all political forces in the country must refuse to authorise any funding for new settlements. According to the United Nations, the so-called 'security fence' represents a de facto annexation and is illegal under international law. The barrier initially planned by Israel would cut into 7 % of Palestinian territory in the West Bank. Israel is asked to give an undertaking that the security fence will not be prejudging the final border between Israel and the future Palestinian state. The parties should show the utmost flexibility in agreeing on the best way to carry out the total evacuation by Israel of existing settlements within Palestinian territory following the return by both parties to the frontier situation as it stood on the morning of 5 June 1967. On the matter of Palestinian refugees, Parliament commended theefforts by several countries in the region to offer support to Palestinian refugees. It called for the Arab League and all Arab states involved to offer support to enable a consensus-based solution to be reached on this delicate issue affecting the entire region. The States concerned should assess how they could enable those refugees who so desire to acquire nationality via residence in the countries in which they have taken refuge. Parliament recommended that the right of return for Palestinian refugees be confined to the Palestinian state, with exceptions that may be freely negotiated, and that the international fund for solidarity and economic aid referred to below should provide a generous and equitable system of compensation for those refugees not wishing to return or unable to do so because their place of origin is located outside of the Palestinian state.