Resolution on the kidnapping in Gaza of the journalist Alan Johnston

2007/2552(RSP) - 26/04/2007 - Text adopted by Parliament, topical subjects

The European Parliament adopted a joint resolution on the kidnapping in Gaza of the journalist Alan Johnston, who was abducted at gunpoint on 12 March 2007 whilst returning home in Gaza City and his whereabouts have remained unknown since that date. Although no group has claimed responsibility, President Abbas has confirmed publicly that there is credible evidence that Mr Johnston is alive, that he is being held in secure conditions and that there is information as to which group is holding him. MEPs called for Mr Johnston to be immediately and unconditionally released unharmed and returned to safety, and expressed theirs warm support for Mr Johnston's family in these difficult circumstances, and for his BBC colleagues and management, who have been campaigning tirelessly to build public and political support for his release.

Parliament paid tribute to Mr Johnston's record as a journalist of the highest integrity, with a record of sixteen years working for the BBC and, in particular, the past three years spent in Gaza, where he has been the only permanently-based foreign journalist from a major media organisation. It also expressed solidarity with the IFJ and its member unions, including the Palestinian Journalists" Syndicate, in their efforts to secure Mr Johnston's release and their campaign for a new global commitment to ending threats to independent journalism. Parliament recalled the appeal delivered by the IFJ to the leaders of the Palestinian National Authority on 19 April 2007, with the signatures of 197 Members of the European Parliament.

It went on to call on the Palestinian National Authority to redouble its efforts to secure Mr Johnston's speedy release, to ensure that journalists in Gaza are able to carry out their duties free from the threat of kidnap and harassment and to ensure that all attacks against journalists and other civilians are investigated thoroughly and those responsible brought to justice.

In addition, the European Commission's Technical Assistance Office to the West Bank and Gaza Strip, the diplomatic representatives of the EU Member States and the High Representative for the Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) must strengthen and coordinate their efforts to secure Mr Johnston's release and support the Palestinian National Authority's efforts in this regard.

Parliament condemned this and all other acts of violence and intimidation against the free exercise of journalism and freedom of expression. It stressed that the safety of journalists must be treated as a priority by all those attached to an open and democratic society and to progress towards peace everywhere, in line with the unanimously agreed United Nations Security Council Resolution S/RES/1738 (2006) adopted on 23 December 2006.