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Situation in the Gaza Strip

Greens/EFA motion for a resolution

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The European Parliament,

- having regard to its previous resolutions on the Middle East with regard, in particular, to the ones 16 November 2006 and 11 October 2007 on the situation in the Gaza strip,

- having regard to the conclusion of the External Relations Council meetings of 28 January 2008,
 having regard to the Annapolis declaration of 27 November 2007,

 having regard to the resolution on "Human rights violations emanating from Israeli military attacks and incursions in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, particularly in the Gaza Strip" adopted by the UN Human Rights Council on 24 January 2008,

 having regard to the Rule 103(4) of its Rules of Procedure,

A. whereas on January 23 Palestinians blew up and destroyed long stretches of the border fence that separates the Gaza Strip from Egypt allowing thousands Gazans to rush to the other side to buy food, fuel, medicines and any other supplies that had become scarce in the strip,

B. whereas on January 17 the Israeli security forces had closed down all the border- crossings with the Gaza strip following the rise in rocket attacks by Palestinian armed groups; whereas even the only electricity plant was shut down because of a shortage of fuel thus plunging the strip into darkness and affecting the functioning of local hospitals and water and sewage-treatment facilities; whereas these indiscriminate punitive measures were carried out in conjunction with stepped-up military operations aimed at stopping the firing of rockets,

C. whereas on February 4th a suicide bomber blew himself up at a shopping centre in Dimona killing a woman and wounding 11 people; whereas in spite of the recurrent Israeli air strikes and military incursions, which resulted in many victims also among the civilians, the firing of rockets from the Gaza Strip at the neighbouring Israeli villages, which has caused serious injuries to Israeli civilians, has not stopped,

D. whereas the Karni crossing point and the Rafah border-crossing had been closed for months in violation of the Agreement on Movement and Access, and whereas the blockade on the movement of people and goods had further paralysed the economy and had significantly contributed to an extremely high rate of

unemployment bringing the Gaza Strip on the brink of a humanitarian catastrophe with 75% of the population now dependent on food aid, 80% below the poverty line, and 90% of factories closed down in the last 6 months; whereas the EU Border Assistance Mission proved to be ineffective since it accepted over and over Israeli pressure for closure,

E. whereas the Egyptian authorities were left alone to cope with the emergency welcoming and assisting the sudden influx of people without forcing them back and providing aid and support to the Palestinians who were trying to escape from the persisting crisis; whereas the Egyptian forces gradually resumed control of the situation and resealed the border on February 3 bringing to an end the free movement of Palestinians as requested by the Israeli authorities,

F. whereas the Temporary International Mechanism (TIM), which was created to ensure the continued delivery of essential social public services to the Palestinian population after the decision of the Quartet to suspend the direct aid to the Palestinian National Authority, has partly failed in addressing the needs of the Palestinians since it could only contribute to alleviate the humanitarian crisis,

G. whereas the blockade on the movement of people and goods obstructed the operations of the European Communities Humanitarian Office (ECHO), the UN agencies, the Red Cross and the Red Crescent, and other humanitarian organisations providing aid and assistance to people living in the Gaza Strip; whereas the Commission, the UNDP, the UNRWA and the World Bank suspended several infrastructure projects due to the inability to import raw materials; whereas these humanitarian offices, agencies and organisations continued their activities on a limited scale despite all the obstacles,

H. whereas last November in Annapolis the Israeli and Palestinian sides expressed their determination to reach a comprehensive settlement in order to conclude a peace treaty by the end of this year and resolve all the outstanding and core issues of the conflict; whereas all efforts must be made in order to make the peace process as inclusive as possible involving all the components of the two sides open to a negotiated solution,

I. whereas on 30 January the Israeli Supreme Court upheld the government's decision to progressively reduce fuel and electricity to the Gaza Strip; whereas these restrictions will be implemented subject to a weekly evaluation of the situation,

1. Takes the view that the destruction of the border fence between the Gaza Strip and Egypt is the logical consequence of the persistent neglect and mistreatment of 1.5 million Palestinians trapped in a deep humanitarian crisis and regards this action as an affirmation of the basic right for freedom of movement of the Palestinian people; stresses that the policy of isolation of Gaza has failed both at the political and at the humanitarian level;

2. Urges, therefore, Israel to end the blockade and lift immediately the siege of the Gaza Strip and to restore the supply of fuel, food and medicines; points out that the breach of the fence at the Egyptian border implies no release of Israel from its responsibilities and obligations as an occupying power under the Geneva Convention ; calls upon Israel to cease immediately the practice of collective punishment and extra-judicial killings and to stop any military action endangering the life of the civilian populations inside the Gaza Strip;

3. Calls upon the Hamas, which controls the Palestinian institutions in the Gaza Strip, to put an end to the launching of rockets against Israeli civilian population and to put an end to its counterproductive strategy that deliberately jeopardises the lives and well being of the Gaza civilian population that is being held hostage to the conflict; reiterates its firm condemnation of all terrorist attacks;

4. Welcomes the role played by the Egyptian authorities as regards the management of this emergency

situation in assisting and providing urgent humanitarian aid to the population of Gaza and calls for a deep revision of the EUBAM mission in order to ensure the continued opening of the Rafah crossing point; supports the proposals by the Palestinian Authority to take control of the crossing-points; calls on the Council to support the doubling of Egyptian police forces in the Sinai-Rafah from 750 to 1500, within the context of the Sinai peace accords, in order to manage the border and maintain security in the Sinai;

5. Takes note of the end of the Temporary International Mechanism, calls for a deep and thorough evaluation of its shortcomings and hopes that PEGASE, the new European mechanism for support to the Palestinian Authority and the Palestinian people that will run for the next three years, will fulfil its objective to channel assistance to the four key areas of governance, social development, economic and private sector development and public infrastructure; urges the Israeli authorities to fully cooperate in order to make this new mechanism successful; stresses that even with exponential increase in international aid the humanitarian situation will not improve in the absence of concerted political action to end the blockade of Gaza and lift movement restrictions in the West Bank;

6. Takes the view, in this regard, that in order to ensure the success of humanitarian actions it is necessary to maintain contact and coordination on the ground with the civil administration of the Gaza strip;

7. Urges the Council to include in the agenda of the next meeting of the Quartet the deployment of a UN international civilian and military peace-keeping force in the Gaza Strip in order to defuse tension, facilitate the delivery of humanitarian aid, assist and protect the civilian population and monitor closely the situation; calls upon all parties, including Hamas, to accept the eventual deployment of this UN force;

8. Points out that the persisting division between the Palestinian National Authority on the one part running the West Bank and Hamas on the other part running the Gaza strip is overall undermining the negotiating effectiveness of the Palestinians; calls, in this regard, on the Council to make every effort in order to facilitate the dialogue between all the components of the Palestinian society with the aim of improving the essential services and provide full cooperation with the humanitarian relief agencies; takes the view, furthermore, that a united and shared stance would strengthen the Palestinian side at the negotiating table;

9. Calls for an urgent and exemplary energy project for Gaza, possibly in the Rafah area, in order to assure autonomy and self sufficiency in electricity production and desalinazation for the Gaza population; draws the attention to the fact that a large high-temperature solar plant could fulfil these objectives and be an emblematic renewable initiative for the whole region; takes the view, in this regard, that the Paris donors conference, the PEGASE mechanism and EU assistance programmes should allot significant resources to this initiative in collaboration with the ANP, Egypt and the Quartet;

10. Welcomes the start of bilateral meetings between Israeli and Palestinian officials in compliance with the commitments made by the two sides in Annapolis; calls on the parties, to make deeds follow words that means to implement the Road Map obligations in parallel with negotiations with a view to establishing a viable Palestinian state living side by side in security and peace with Israel; stresses that only clear progress in the negotiation of the core issues of borders, refugees and Jerusalem can strengthen the ANP and pave the way to a peaceful agreement that is necessary for the successful integration of Gaza in the new Palestinian state; draws the attention to the urgent need for concrete provisions within the peace negotiations that actively focus on ending the blockade of Gaza;

11. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Council, the Commission, the High Representative for CFSP, the President of the Palestinian Authority, the Palestinian Legislative Council, the Knesset and the Israeli Government, and the Secretary-General of the League of Arab States.

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