

Thursday 10 September 2015

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The EU's role in the Middle East peace process**European Parliament resolution of 10 September 2015 on the EU's role in the Middle East peace process (2015/2685(RSP))**

(2017/C 316/24)

The European Parliament,

- having regard to its previous resolutions on the Middle East peace process,
 - having regard to the Council conclusions of 20 July 2015 on the Middle East peace process,
 - having regard to recent statements by the Vice-President/High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, Federica Mogherini, and her spokesperson on Israel, the occupied Palestinian Territory, the Middle East peace process and the EU's support for the UN Relief and Works Agency,
 - having regard to the Euro-Mediterranean Agreement establishing an association between the European Communities and their Member States, of the one part, and the State of Israel, of the other part,
 - having regard to the Euro-Mediterranean Interim Association Agreement on trade and cooperation between the European Community, of the one part, and the Palestine Liberation Organisation for the benefit of the Palestinian Authority of the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, of the other part,
 - having regard to relevant UN General Assembly and UN Security Council resolutions,
 - having regard to the Fourth Geneva Convention relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War of 1949,
 - having regard to the EU Guidelines on Promoting Compliance with International Humanitarian Law,
 - having regard to Rule 123(2) and (4) of its Rules of Procedure,
- A. whereas achieving peace in the Middle East remains a key priority for the international community and an indispensable element for regional stability and security; whereas efforts are being made in the UN Security Council to resume the peace process;
- B. whereas the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is to be viewed in the larger context of the Arab-Israeli conflict; whereas the EU considers that peace in the Middle East requires a comprehensive regional solution; whereas the violent crisis in Syria, the rise of Da'esh, increasing radicalism and the spread of terrorism in the Middle East are creating significant security threats for Israel and the entire region and further aggravating the suffering of Palestinians, but are also creating shared interests between the Arab states and Israel, while the nuclear deal with Iran, in which the EU played a significant role, offers a unique momentum for the peace process, which should not be missed;
- C. whereas the EU has repeatedly confirmed its support for the two-state solution on the basis of the 1967 borders, with Jerusalem as the capital of both states and with the secure State of Israel and an independent, democratic, contiguous and viable State of Palestine living side by side in peace and security, and called for the resumption of direct peace talks between Israel and the Palestinian Authority;
- D. whereas the EU is Israel's largest trading partner and the biggest aid provider to the Palestinians; whereas the Vice-President/High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy (VP/HR), Federica Mogherini, has on several occasions expressed her commitment to renewing and intensifying the EU's role in the Middle East peace

Thursday 10 September 2015

process; whereas in April 2015 Fernando Gentilini was appointed the new EU Special Representative for the Middle East peace process; whereas the EU, despite its ambition and commitment to play an effective role in this field, has yet to develop a comprehensive and coherent vision of its engagement in the Middle East peace process, which should reflect the rapidly changing regional context;

1. Is deeply concerned at the persisting stalemate in the Middle East peace process, and calls for the resumption of credible peace efforts without delay; calls on both Israelis and Palestinians to avoid steps which could spark further escalation, including hate speech and incitement in the public arena as well as unilateral measures which could prejudice the outcome of negotiations and threaten the viability of the two-state solution; underlines the fact that any lasting solution to the conflict can only be achieved in a regional context with the involvement of all relevant regional stakeholders and the support of the international community;
2. Reiterates its strong support for the two-state solution on the basis of the 1967 borders, with mutually agreed land swaps and Jerusalem as the capital of both states, with the secure State of Israel and an independent, democratic, contiguous and viable Palestinian State living side by side in peace and security and mutual recognition, on the basis of the right of self-determination and full respect of international law; stresses that non-violent means and respect for human rights and humanitarian law are the only way to achieve a just and lasting peace between Israelis and Palestinians;
3. Stresses that preserving the viability of the two-state solution through concrete action and ensuring full respect for the rights of civilians on both sides must be an immediate priority for the EU and the international community; looks forward to the launching of the EU's structured dialogue with Israel on the situation in the West Bank and the preservation of the two-state solution, which should also cover the issue of settlements;
4. Welcomes the positive role and necessary support that the EU wishes to provide in facilitating the resolution of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and the larger Arab-Israeli conflict through peaceful and constructive means, which serve the EU's interests of security, stability and prosperity in the Middle East; calls, however, for a fresh EU approach that genuinely serves the interests of peace and security of both Israelis and Palestinians; welcomes the personal commitment of the VP/HR and the appointment of the new EU Special Representative for the Middle East peace process, and supports their efforts in this regard;
5. Welcomes the EU's commitment to work actively on a renewed multilateral approach to the peace process in consultation with all relevant stakeholders, and to actively support the parties to restore confidence and create an environment of trust necessary to engage in meaningful negotiations as soon as possible; notes that the EU considers that the establishment of an international support group is a possible way to contribute to this end; stresses that the EU is ready to engage in joint work with regional partners on the basis of the Arab Peace Initiative;
6. Urges the VP/HR and the EU Special Representative to make better use of the political relations and institutional expertise of the EU and its Member States, based as they are on Europe's geographical proximity, historical ties and intensive economic exchanges with the Middle East region, in order to play a genuine political role in the peace process between Israelis and Palestinians, and between Arab states and Israel in a broader context; reminds the Member States of their duty to actively contribute to the shaping of a united EU position in addressing the Middle East peace process, and to refrain from any unilateral initiative weakening EU action;
7. Supports the efforts in the UN Security Council to resume peace talks between Israelis and Palestinians; urges the EU, however, to fulfil its responsibilities as an influential player and to take a bold and comprehensive peace initiative for the region; considers that the EU should play a key role in redefining the Quartet's objectives — which should be refocused on finding a political solution to the conflict — and format;

Thursday 10 September 2015

8. Condemns the continued expansion of Israeli settlements, which violates international humanitarian law, fuels Palestinian resentment and undermines the viability and prospects of the two-state solution, and calls on the Israeli authorities to immediately halt and reverse their settlement policy;

9. Welcomes the EU's commitment — in the spirit of differentiation between Israel and its activities in the occupied Palestinian Territory — to ensuring that all agreements between the EU and Israel must unequivocally and explicitly indicate their inapplicability to the territories occupied by Israel in 1967, as reiterated in the Foreign Affairs Council conclusions of 20 July 2015; takes note of the Commission Guidelines of 19 July 2013 on the eligibility of Israeli entities and their activities in the territories occupied by Israel since June 1967 for grants, prizes and financial instruments funded by the EU from 2014 onwards, and of the letter sent to the VP/HR by 16 EU Foreign Ministers on 13 April 2015, encouraging her to take the lead within the Commission with a view to completing the work on EU-wide guidelines on the labelling of Israeli settlement produce;

10. Stresses the responsibility of the relevant EU authorities in continuing to ensure that no EU funding can be directly or indirectly diverted to terrorist organisations or activities;

11. Stresses that rocket fire by militant groups into Israeli territory is unacceptable, and underlines the danger of escalation; stresses the imperative need for the EU to work in partnership with Israel, the Palestinian Authority, Egypt and Jordan towards preventing the re-arming of terrorist groups in the Gaza Strip and the West Bank and their smuggling of weapons, manufacturing of rockets and building of tunnels; stresses once more the overwhelming need for all terrorist groups in Gaza to disarm, in line with the Foreign Affairs Council conclusions of July 2014;

12. Is deeply concerned at increasing settler violence in the West Bank; welcomes the widespread condemnation by the Israeli leadership of the recent arson attack against the Dawabshah family in the village of Duma, but reminds Israel of its full responsibility to protect the Palestinian population and to bring all perpetrators of settler violence to justice;

13. Welcomes the work done by the common security and defence policy (CSDP) police and rule of law mission (EUPOL COPPS) in the occupied Palestinian Territory in assisting the Palestinian Authority in building the institutions of a future State of Palestine in the areas of policing and criminal justice; calls for the reactivation of the CSDP border assistance mission (EUBAM Rafah), with a more ambitious mandate and adequate means and personnel, in order to play a concrete role in the control of the Gaza Strip's borders with Egypt and Israel;

14. Calls on the European External Action Service (EEAS) and the Commission to report back to Parliament on the destruction of, and damage caused to, EU-funded structures and projects in the occupied Palestinian Territory;

15. Calls on the Commission and the EEAS to provide funding and protection to NGOs in the region whose political goals are in line with the overall goals of the Middle East peace process, and urges EU authorities to engage with their relevant counterparts on this matter;

16. Reiterates its call for an end to the blockade of the Gaza Strip and for the urgent reconstruction and rehabilitation of the area after the summer 2014 war, which must be a humanitarian aid priority for the EU and the international community; commends the heroic work of the UN Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA) in this regard; urges donors to disburse as soon as possible their financial commitments made at the Cairo International Conference on Palestine ('Reconstructing Gaza') of 12 October 2014;

17. Welcomes the recent steps taken by Israel to ease restrictions on Gaza, but deplores the continued restrictions on the entry of building materials; underlines the importance of taking further positive measures — while addressing Israel's legitimate security concerns — to enable the full delivery of humanitarian aid, reconstruction and economic recovery; urges the Member States to fulfil their pledges to support the trilateral mechanism for the monitoring and checking of the reconstruction materials concerned;

Thursday 10 September 2015

18. Urges the VP/HR to work for the full implementation of the recommendations made in the report of the UN Independent Commission of Inquiry on the 2014 Gaza conflict, including the recommendation to support actively the work of the International Criminal Court; welcomes the unanimous vote by those EU Member States which are part of the UN Human Rights Council in favour of the latter's resolution of 3 July 2015 on 'Ensuring accountability and justice for all violations of international law in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem';
 19. Stresses that intra-Palestinian reconciliation is an important element for reaching the two-state solution, and deplores continued Palestinian disunity; supports the EU's call on the Palestinian factions to make reconciliation and the return of the Palestinian Authority to the Gaza Strip a top priority; urges Palestinian forces to resume efforts towards reconciliation without delay, notably through the holding of the long-overdue presidential and legislative elections; emphasises that the Palestinian Authority must take greater responsibility in this regard and assume its government function in Gaza, including in the fields of security and civil administration and through its presence at the crossing points;
 20. Calls on all parties involved in the conflict to respect fully the rights of detainees and prisoners, including of those on hunger strike;
 21. Expresses its deep concern at UNRWA's serious funding crisis; calls for increased EU financial support for UNRWA and urges all other donors to live up to their promises to the agency, and UNRWA to continue to improve its management, but calls also for the underlying core issue of Palestine refugees to be addressed; commends and congratulates UNRWA for its extraordinary efforts which made it possible to declare the 2015/2016 school year open for Palestine refugee pupils;
 22. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Council, the Commission, the Vice-President of the Commission/High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, the EU Special Representative for the Middle East peace process, the parliaments and governments of the Member States, the Secretary-General of the United Nations, the Knesset, the President and Government of Israel, the Palestinian Legislative Council and the Palestinian Authority, the Secretary-General of the League of Arab States, the respective parliaments and governments of Egypt, Jordan and Lebanon, and the Commissioner-General of the UN Relief and Works Agency.
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