

Brussels, 16 MAI 2019
A (2019) 2394281-2704745

To all MEP signatories of the letter regarding the situation in the Gaza Strip

Dear Colleagues,

I would like to thank you for your letter, sent on behalf of a group of MEPs.

I share your assessment regarding the situation in the Gaza Strip and the utmost importance of the action of the medical sector there. The European Union was alarmed by the sharp escalation of violence and loss of human lives since 30 March 2018. In repeated statements the European Union has called on all to act with utmost restraint to avoid further loss of life. We called Israel to respect the fundamental right to peaceful protest and the principles of necessity and proportionality in its use of force. Hamas and those leading the protests in Gaza also have a responsibility to avoid provocations and any acts that could put civilians in danger.

The EU and its Member States are alarmed by the frequent lack of respect for the medical mission in times of armed conflict and other emergencies. They underline the unacceptable character of attacks against medical personnel or patients, as well as any impediment to access to health care.

As said publicly in the EU statement to the Human Rights Council, the European Union is concerned by the grave findings in the report of the UN Commission of Inquiry; in particular that there are reasonable grounds to believe that there is possible unlawfulness of the use of live ammunition by Israeli security forces against demonstrators. We will study carefully the full report and urge the Israeli government to carry out meaningful investigations. The EU recalls that compliance with international law, international humanitarian law and international human rights law by States and non-State actors is a cornerstone for peace and security. The human rights of civilians on both sides must be respected.

The European Union is not considering the suspension of the Association Agreement with Israel nor sanctions. A regular and frank dialogue will remain the primary means by which the EU conveys its concerns to Israeli partners.

The humanitarian and human rights situation in Gaza remains of grave concern. We reiterate the need for all humanitarian actors to be granted access into Gaza. The EU calls upon all parties to take swift steps for a fundamental change to the political, security and economic situation in Gaza, including the end of the closure and an opening of the crossing points, while addressing Israel's legitimate security concerns. In 2018 and 2019, the European Commission through the Directorate General for European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations (ECHO), has allocated more than 6 million euros for the purchase and delivery of drugs, disposables and equipment for trauma and non-trauma patients in Gaza.

The EU has consistently reaffirmed its commitment to a just and comprehensive resolution of the Israeli Palestinian conflict through a two state solution negotiated between the parties, and will work towards this end in cooperation and coordination with international and regional partners.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'F. Mogherini', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Federica Mogherini