

5 May 2011

To: High Representative Catherine Ashton, EU foreign ministers

The EU's aid to Palestinian institutions and response to Palestinian reconciliation

Dear High Representative,

As humanitarian, development and peace-building organisations, we welcome the European Union's long support for Palestinian reconciliation and its significant donor contributions to the Palestinian people. We believe it is now vital to actively support the current reconciliation process and the prospective unity government including by resuming development aid to all Palestinian civilian institutions in Gaza.

Through our work in the occupied Palestinian territory (oPt), we have seen how the civilian population has paid a high price for the divide between Fatah and Hamas. The political division has exacerbated the impact of the Israeli blockade of Gaza, by further limiting access to essential services such as electricity, clean water, and essential drugs in Gaza. The political struggle also triggered an increase in arbitrary detentions, torture, and other violations of human rights in both the West Bank and Gaza.¹

The international diplomatic and financial boycott of Hamas has facilitated and aggravated this situation. For example, in July 2010, international restrictions on contact with Gaza municipal authorities prevented aid agencies from quickly assisting 25,000 people who were left without drinking water after fuel pumps ran dry. Gaza schools, hospitals and other essential service providers have also been denied aid by many donors. Donors have instead increased humanitarian aid at the expense of more sustainable and appropriate assistance.

In considering its response to the Palestinian unity agreement, the EU must avoid repeating past failed policies. In 2006 major donors halted aid to the oPt, causing poverty levels to soar. This time, the EU must seize the opportunity created by the reconciliation agreement to help reunite Gaza with the West Bank.

In conclusion, we urge you to:

- actively support the current reconciliation process and the prospective unity government and avoid actions that would set unity efforts back;
- ensure a unified and impartial approach in aid provision to the West Bank and Gaza by resuming development aid to all civilian institutions in Gaza;
- work with the prospective unity government to ensure the protection of all civilians, whether Palestinian or Israeli;
- begin inclusive dialogue with all major parties as a crucial step towards securing lasting peace;
- insist that Israel continues its transfers of tax and customs revenues collected on behalf of the Palestinian Authority, in line with past agreements.

Respectfully,

¹ The Independent Commission For Human Rights, *The Status of Human Rights in Palestine*. Annual Report 2009.

Representatives of the following organisations:



Jean Etienne DE LINARES
General Delegate
ACAT France



Loretta MINGHELLA
Director
Christian Aid



medico international

Tsafrir COHEN
Coordinator Israel & Palestine
medico international (Germany)



PoI DEGREVE
Director
Broederlijk Delen (Belgium)



Erik LYSEN
Director
Church of Sweden



Jeremy HOBBS
Executive Director
Oxfam International



Chris BAIN
Director
CAFOD (UK)



Bo FORSBERG
Secretary General
Diakonia (Sweden)



Quaker
Council for
European
Affairs

Liz SCURFIELD
Head of Office
Quaker Council for European Affairs



Bernard PINAUD
General Delegate
CCFD-Terre solidaire (France)



Steven JAMES
Chief Executive
Medical Aid for Palestinians



Jan GRUITERS
Director, IKV Pax Christi
Acting UCP Chair
United Civilians for Peace (The Netherlands)

For correspondence with the signatories above, please be in contact with Crisis Action at martin.konecny@crisisaction.org; +32 2 737 1498