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,

Representatives of the following organisations:

Jean Etienne DE LINARES  
General Deleguate  
ACAT France

Loretta MINGHELLA  
Director  
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Tsafir COHEN  
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Jeremy HOIBBS  
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