

European Parliament Calls for Recognition of Palestinian Statehood in Context with two States Living Side by Side (17 December 2014)

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After half a dozen European state parliaments called for Palestinian statehood recognition in the latter months of 2014, the European parliament, by a vote of 498 to 88 with 111 abstentions, passed the resolution supporting “in principle recognition of Palestinian statehood and the two state solution.” The resolution called for advancing peace-talks with the European Union to play an active, but undefined role. It strongly supports a 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 Palestinian State living side by side in peace and security on the basis of the right of self-determination and full respect of international law. MEPs also condemn in the strongest terms all acts of terrorism or violence and pushed for “consolidating the authority of the Palestinians and urged all Palestinian factions, including Hamas to end internal divisions.”

Noticeably absent from the contents was any mention of United Nations Resolution 242 of November 1967, which was the negotiating framework for the 1979 Egyptian-Israeli Treaty; the 1993 Oslo Accords between Israel and the Palestinian Authority; and the 1994 Jordanian-Israeli Treaty. Unlike UNSC 242 and the European Venice Declaration of 1980, which did not suggest a specific geographic or political outline for the conflict’s resolution, this EU Parliament Resolution defined the precise parameters of a two state solution. The resolution did not mention that Israel should be recognized as a Jewish state, but did reiterate the call for direct talks between the parties as stipulated in UNSC 338 of 1973. Such a call for direct talks undermines a desire by some Arab sides and some Palestinians to have a negotiated settlement imposed upon Israel.

Ken Stein, April 2015

The European Parliament ,

- having regard to its previous resolutions on the Middle East peace process,
- having regard to the conclusions of the Foreign Affairs Council on the Middle East Peace Process of 17 November 2014,
- having regard to the statements of the High Representative/Vice-President on the attack in the Har Nof synagogue of 18 November 2014, on the terrorist attack in Jerusalem of 5 November 2014, and to the statement by the Spokesperson of the EU High Representative on the latest developments in the Middle East of 10 November 2014,
- having regard to the announcement of the Swedish government on the recognition of the State of Palestine of 30 October 2014, as well as the earlier recognition by other Member States before joining the European Union,

– having regard to the motions on the recognition of the State of Palestine approved in the House of Commons of the United Kingdom on 13 October 2014, the Irish Senate on 22 October 2014, the Spanish Parliament on 18 November 2014, the French National Assembly on 2 December 2014, and the Portuguese Assembly on 12 December 2014,

– having regard to International Law,

– having regard to Rule 123(2) of its Rules of Procedure,

A. 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 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;

B. whereas finding a just and lasting peace between Israelis and Palestinians, has been a key concern for the international community, including the European Union, for more than half-a-century;

C. whereas direct peace talks between the parties are stalled; whereas the EU has called on the parties to pursue actions conducive to an environment of confidence necessary to ensure meaningful negotiations, to refrain from actions that undermine the credibility of the process and to prevent incitement;

D. whereas in its resolution of 22 November 2012, the European Parliament stressed that peaceful and non-violent means are the only way to achieve a just and lasting peace between Israelis and Palestinians, called for the creation of the conditions for the resumption of direct peace talks between the two parties, supported, in this connection, Palestine's bid to become a UN non-member observer, considered this an important step in making Palestinian claims more visible, stronger and more effective, and called on, in this connection, the EU Member States and the international community to find an agreement in this direction;

E. whereas the United Nations General Assembly decided on 29 November 2012 to grant Palestine non-member observer state status in the UN;

F. whereas the recognition of the State of Palestine falls in the competence of the Member States;

G. recalling the commitment of the PLO to recognise the state of Israel since 1993;

1. Supports in principle recognition of Palestinian statehood and the two state solution, and believes these should go hand in hand with the development of peace talks, which should be advanced;

2. Supports the efforts of President Abbas and the Palestinian national consensus government; stresses again the importance of consolidating the authority of the Palestinian consensus government and its administration in the Gaza Strip; urges all Palestinian factions, including Hamas, to accept the commitments of the PLO and end internal divisions; calls for continued EU support and assistance for Palestinian institutional capacity-building;

3. Expresses grave concern at the growing tensions and increasing violence in the region; condemns in the strongest terms all acts of terrorism or violence, and extends its condolences to the families of the victims; warns about the risks of further escalation of violence involving holy sites, which could transform the Israeli-Palestinian conflict into a religious conflict; calls on political leaders from all sides to work together through visible actions to de-escalate the situation and stresses that non-violent means and respect for human rights and humanitarian law are the only way to achieve a sustainable solution and a just and lasting peace between Israelis and Palestinians; underlines that any violent action can only fuel extremism on both sides; urges all parties to refrain from any action that would worsen the situation by way of incitement, provocation, excessive use of force or retaliation;
4. Stresses also that actions, which call into question stated commitments to a negotiated solution must be avoided; underlines that settlements are illegal under international law; calls on both parties to refrain from any action which may undermine the viability and the prospects of the two-state solution;
5. Reiterates its strong support for the two-state solution on the basis of the 1967 borders, with 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 on the basis of the right of self-determination and full respect of international law;
6. Welcomes the recent visit of the High Representative/Vice-President to Israel and to Palestine and her commitment to engage proactively in a positive process aimed at breaking the circle of the conflict and creating the conditions for genuine progress in the peace process; believes that the European Union should take its responsibility and become a genuine actor and facilitator in the Middle East peace process, also with a view to the need of the resumption of the peace talks, including through a common approach and a comprehensive strategy for a solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict; reiterates that a diplomatic approach under the auspices of the Middle East Quartet is necessary and recalls the importance of the Arab Peace Initiative;
7. Calls on the HR/VP to facilitate a common EU position in this regard;
8. Underlines the need for a comprehensive peace, ending all claims and fulfilling the legitimate aspirations of both parties, including those of Israelis for security and those of Palestinians for statehood; stresses that the only possible solution to the conflict is the coexistence of two States, Israel and Palestine;
9. Decides to launch a 'Parliamentarians for Peace' initiative aiming to bring together cross-party Members of European, Israeli and Palestinian Parliaments to help advance an agenda for peace and to complement EU diplomatic efforts;
10. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Council, the Commission, the High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy/Vice-President of the European Commission, the governments and parliaments of the Member States, the Secretary-General of the United Nations, the Middle East Quartet Envoy, the Knesset and the Government of Israel, the President of the Palestinian Authority and the Palestinian Legislative Council.