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HR/VP speeches

Speech by Federica Mogherini at the European Parliament plenary debate on the situation in Israel and Palestine, including the settlements

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Thank you.

Let me start by sharing with you a personal memory, maybe an anecdote. When I took office five years and a couple of weeks ago, I paid my first visit outside the European Union to Israel and Palestine, including visiting Gaza, and I said at that time that I believed that a two-state solution could be achieved during my mandate.

This was the goal that I kept in my mind and in my actions all of these years. And at some point I have to say this goal seemed to be getting closer. But we all know what the situation looks like today. This does not mean that the perspective is not there and is not valid anymore. I think it is a matter of political will and political conditions and I will get back to that. But clearly, if I would pay the same visit today, I would probably not say that I believe that this solution could be achieved in the coming months or years. Today, the very idea of two States has come under attack from many sides as never before.

Yet we should all know that the two-state solution remains – I am profoundly convinced of this – the best and the only realistic chance for peace and also for security in the Holy Places.

This is at the same time a principled and pragmatic position. Nobody has presented a credible alternative to two States so far. Many have argued against but nobody has expressed any clear view that can substitute that objective realistically. And any plan that is not firmly anchored in international law and, let me add, also in the profound aspirations and interests of the people – not only of Palestine and Israel but also of the region – would ultimately fail.

Our support to the two States is a matter of international law, a matter of justice and democracy and also a matter of realism.

In these years we have worked full-time to avoid the dissolution of the two-state perspective. And the work continues to date – even in such difficult circumstances, let me say especially in such difficult circumstances. Because sometimes we have the impression, us, some of our friends in the UN system, in the Arab world but also a little bit further away in Africa and Asia, that especially in this moment where it is so difficult to keep the perspective alive, the voices of wisdom and realism need to be heard and need to speak up.

This is why, as the objective was fading away, we kept this position and continued the work at full speed and with all our strength.

This explains our position on all recent developments.

First, on settlements. We have always believed that border changes can only be decided through direct negotiations between the parties, based on the pre-1967 borders. Israeli settlements in the occupied Palestinian territory are illegal under international law; they constitute an obstacle to peace and threaten to make a two-state solution impossible.

In addition, settlement activity in East Jerusalem seriously jeopardizes the possibility of Jerusalem serving as the future capital of both States.

We have never shied away from restating this position – including just a week ago – and with a united European position. I hear many times many inviting us to speak with one voice. In difficult times, in difficult years this has remained and remains a strong united European Union position.

Our position is clear and unchanged also regarding the security of the State of Israel. Firing rockets on Israel's civilian population is simply unacceptable. I am grateful to Egypt for their diplomatic efforts which helped to stop the recent escalation. I will repeat once again: Israel and Israelis have the right to security. But we are also convinced that security will only be sustainable and real if it is built on peace and on the two-state solution.

As you know, in these years we have worked constantly to alleviate the suffering of the people of Gaza. With the Gaza desalination plant we are providing concrete and long-lasting support, which will benefit hospitals, schools, companies and every citizen of Gaza.

Yet the crisis in Gaza is inherently political in nature, and requires a political solution. The closure must end and crossings must be fully opened. At the same time, it is also clear that Gaza is part of the future State of Palestine, and that Palestinians themselves must find unity beyond their divisions.

We know that the current political outlook is uncertain, both in Palestine and in Israel. Discussions among Palestinian factions have not yet led to a substantial reconciliation, and President Abbas has announced his intention to set a date for elections. On the Israeli side, the political stalemate continues and might lead to an unprecedented situation with the third election in just one year.

It is my firm conviction that with courageous leadership a return to negotiations is still possible. I am still convinced today, five years after my first visit as High Representative in Palestine and Israel, that this is the goal and this is realistically achievable. This is the only achievable, sustainable, realistic solution to this conflict. I am also deeply convinced that out of all the crises and conflicts of the region, of the Middle East, this is probably the easiest to settle in concrete terms, provided – and this is the most difficult thing to achieve – there is political will among the parties and among the international players to accompany this process.

There will not be peace without a strong political commitment by both sides and by the international community. On the European Union side, we have always been and we will continue to be ready to support, to encourage, to accompany all efforts to build peace and security and a negotiated two-state solution for Israel and Palestine.

Thank you.

See also

[Link to the video](#)

Press contacts

Press Contacts:

[Maja KOCIJANCIC](#)

Maja KOCIJANCIC

Spokesperson for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy/European Neighbourhood Policy and Enlargement Negotiations

+32 (0)2 29 86570

+32 (0)498 984 425

[Lauranne DEVILLE](#)

Lauranne DEVILLE

EEAS Press Officer

+32 (0)2 29 80833

+32 (0)460 758 775

www.eeas.europa.eu

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