



EUROPEAN UNION
DELEGATION TO THE UNITED NATIONS

The Ambassador

New York, 16 November 2021

Excellency,

On the occasion of the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People, the European Union wishes to convey the following message.

The Candidate Countries the Republic of North Macedonia*, Montenegro*, Serbia* and Albania*, the country of the Stabilisation and Association Process and potential candidate Bosnia and Herzegovina, align themselves with this message.

The EU reaffirms its commitment to a just and comprehensive resolution of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, based on the two state solution, with the State of Israel and an independent, democratic, contiguous, sovereign, and viable State of Palestine, living side by side in peace and security and mutual recognition. To this end, meaningful re-engagement between the parties, confidence-building measures and improving living conditions for ordinary people, are urgently needed. The EU welcomes recent high level contacts between the parties, including to agree on measures to improve the socio-economic conditions in the occupied Palestinian territory, and encourages them to continue. The EU stands ready to support such efforts, with the aim to improve the situation on the ground and restore confidence, and to open the path towards the relaunch of the peace process as soon as possible. Restoring a political horizon towards a two-state solution, for which the EU reaffirms there is no alternative, remains of utmost importance.

The EU continues to call for the consolidation of the ceasefire in Gaza, and recalls its unequivocal position that rocket fire, launching of incendiary balloons and other attacks by Hamas and other terrorist groups are unacceptable. The EU welcomes the steps that Israel has taken to ease some restrictions on Gaza and calls for the further lifting of restrictions to allow for early recovery and reconstruction efforts, basic service delivery as well as for unimpeded humanitarian access to

* *The Republic of North Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia and Albania continue to be part of the Stabilisation and Association Process.*

Gaza. The EU calls for all parties to take swift steps to produce a fundamental change to the political, security and economic situation in the Gaza Strip, including the end of the closure and a full opening of the crossing points, while addressing Israel's legitimate security concerns. The situation in the Gaza Strip has long been unsustainable: only a political solution will bring an end to the conflict.

The preservation of the viability of the two state solution, with Jerusalem serving as the future capital of both states, is at the core of EU policy and will remain a priority. The EU urges both parties to demonstrate their stated commitment to a two state solution through concrete actions and to avoid unilateral actions which threaten it. In this context, the EU is concerned about demolitions and evictions, including in East Jerusalem. Furthermore, the EU firmly condemns settler related incidents. The EU reiterates that settlements are illegal under international law. The EU's opposition to Israel's settlement policy and actions taken in this context, including in East Jerusalem, is well known. Such actions as building the separation barrier beyond the 1967 line, demolitions and confiscation - including of EU funded projects - evictions, forced transfers including of Bedouins, illegal outposts, settler violence and restrictions of movement and access severely threaten the two-state solution and will only escalate an already tense environment. It will be important not to proceed with any planned evictions. The EU recalls the special significance of the holy sites, and calls for upholding the status quo put in place in 1967 for the Temple Mount / al-Haram al-Sharif in line with previous understandings and with respect to Jordan's special role. The EU will continue to closely monitor developments on the ground and their broader implications and remains ready to take further action in order to protect the viability of the two state solution.

The EU reiterates its call on the Palestinian Authority to organize the postponed national elections without further delay. The EU has consistently expressed its support for credible, inclusive and transparent elections for all Palestinians. We firmly believe that strong, inclusive, accountable and functioning democratic Palestinian institutions based on respect for the rule of law and human rights are vital for the Palestinian people, for democratic legitimacy and, ultimately, for the two-state solution. We strongly encourage all Palestinian actors to resume efforts to build on the successful talks between the factions over recent months, to adhere to previous agreements, renounce violence and terrorism, and recognize Israel's right to exist and to commit to democratic principles, including rule of law. We reiterate our call on Israel to facilitate the holding of such elections across all of the Palestinian territory, including in East Jerusalem. The EU continues to stand ready to work with all those involved to facilitate EU observation of the electoral process.

Palestinian civil society organisations and actors must be allowed to carry out their important task free from obstruction, harassment and intimidation, where also the Palestinian Authority must take responsibility. The EU expects a full, independent investigation into the death of Nizar Banat to be duly carried out, and those responsible to be held accountable. The EU calls for the fundamental right to freedom of expression in areas under PA control to be upheld.

The European Union reiterates its deep and genuine appreciation for UNRWA's work and for its dedicated staff who are working in an extremely difficult and challenging context. UNRWA is playing a vital role in the humanitarian response and in the early recovery and reconstruction in Gaza, it is an essential provider of vital services to millions of Palestine refugees, and a stabilising force in the region. Until a just, fair, agreed and realistic solution to the refugee issue in accordance with international law is found, UNRWA remains crucial for providing the necessary protection and essential services for Palestine refugees, and we will continue to support UNRWA in all its fields of operations, including in East Jerusalem. The European Union recalls that together with its Member States it is the largest contributor to UNRWA. We welcome the additional financial support from other and new donors, including the renewed commitment from the United States, and calls upon all partners, including Arab Gulf states, to increase their contributions to UNRWA. The recent conference hosted by Sweden and Jordan represents an important opportunity to take steps towards a sufficient, predictable and sustainable funding of the Agency.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to be 'Olof Skoog', is written over the typed name and title.

Olof Skoog
Ambassador

H.E. Mr. Cheikh Niang
Chair
Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable
Rights of the Palestinian People