

Dear MEPs,

The decision to postpone the European Parliament's vote on the upgrade of EU-Israel relations permits a valuable interval for consultation. A constructive outcome is clearly desirable and it is for this reason we are writing to you. The European Community's Neighbourhood Policy (ENP) has the laudable aim of fostering closer political relationships and economic integration with states that are our immediate neighbours, based upon a set of common values.

In the political sphere, these are respect for human rights, a commitment to democracy and the rule of law and good governance. It is our contention that while Israel is a vibrant democracy in many ways, there are repeated instances where these values are blatantly disregarded and that this undermines not only Israeli democracy, but the ENP as well. We outline just a few examples here.

- A country with respect for freedom of expression should not be jailing teenagers. We are not talking about the many Palestinians held in endless "administrative detention" but about school leavers - the *Shministim* - who refuse to be conscripted into the Israeli Army and who are locked up in consequence of their conscientious objection.
- A country with respect for good governance and the rule of law would not ignore judicial decisions. We are not talking of the refusal to accept the advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice but of the many instances where the route of Israel's barrier has been ordered to be moved by Israel's Supreme Court. Only one of these instances has been observed, and that only after a large fine and scathing judicial opinion was issued, a year after the judgement to move the barrier was issued.
- A country with respect for good relations with its neighbours and the rest of the world would show greater regard for treaties and processes. We are not talking of abuses of the Israel-EU Trade Association agreement regarding the labelling of produce but of the unfathomable decision to extend and deepen the Occupation at a time when the world is

trying to move towards a solution that is just for both peoples. Just three days after the Annapolis Summit the Israeli Government announced a tender for around 300 new housing units to be built on Palestinian land. In the year since then, around 1000 new units have been built.

I hope you would agree that these are not the actions of a state abiding by a set of values we hold in common as citizens of the European Union.

We know that members of the European Parliament share many of the concerns we have briefly outlined here. You have considered a motion over the proposals of the new mayor of Jerusalem to expand still further the settlements around the city. These expansion plans (known as E1) are so inimical to a peace agreement that even US politicians known for their partisan support for Israel have been opposed to them.

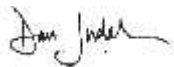
European Jews for a Just Peace, a network of Jewish Peace Groups from ten different European countries, makes regular trips to Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territories, including two this year and previous trips including as observers to the Palestinian elections of January 2006. Our letter here is based on information gleaned from those trips as well as from Israeli and Palestinian NGOs and other public sources. I am sure, given the attention this issue has received that you will have found many voices clamouring for your attention. Should you feel it useful, we would be happy to provide, by letter or in person, all sources used in the compiling of this letter.

The Palestinians have been unable to convince many of their sincerity towards Israel. Yet it cannot be denied that Israel creating 'facts on the ground' does significant damage to the equally important trust which Palestinians need to feel regarding Israel's unfulfilled promises to allow a viable, independent and contiguous Palestinian state. Establishing such trust is clearly essential to Israel's future security, something the Occupation itself can never provide. We would at least like to see even-handed pressure on the state of Israel to respect international and humanitarian law.

You are in a unique position to add to this long-term perspective by at least setting pre-conditions to the coming upgrading of EU-Israeli relations. These conditions have to be understood in the interest of the credibility of European principles and policies as well, (a secondary issue, but not unimportant). The ENP can be an effective way of bringing states closer to European values, but it will be a policy on paper only if diplomats, ministers and, in this instance, legislators decide to pass over instances where Israel ignores these values.

The issue here is not to punish Israel but to clearly demonstrate that rewards are contingent on observation of the very agreement under discussion here. Otherwise both the ENP itself and the principles upon which it was drawn up become devalued.

Yours sincerely,



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