



Press Release
PR/08/2015
Jerusalem

27 APRIL 2015

EU Representative presents 2014 European Neighbourhood Policy Progress Report to Minister Al Malki

The EU Representative, Mr. John Gatt-Rutter presented today the 2014 European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP) progress report for Palestine¹ to the Palestinian Authority Minister of Foreign Affairs, Dr. Riad Al Malki. The report on Palestine underlines key developments and reform efforts in 2014 and makes recommendations for the year to come. The European Commission and the High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy first published the annual "neighbourhood package" on 25 March 2015 which includes progress reports on 16 of EU's closest neighbours².

*"Palestinians faced exceptional challenges in 2014 namely the suffering and destruction caused by the summer conflict in Gaza, the breakdown in peace negotiations in early 2014, and increased tensions across the West Bank including in East Jerusalem. We have witnessed the formation of the Palestinian National consensus government that we welcomed. However, unfortunately to-date this government is still unable to assume its full responsibilities in Gaza," said **the EU Representative John Gatt-Rutter**. "Palestinian civil society in the West Bank still enjoys a relatively positive environment but there has been a shrinking of democratic space with complaints of violations of human rights and fundamental freedoms. Now after Palestine acceded to a number of international human rights conventions, it is important to focus now on the implementation of the commitments contained in these agreements."*

The report describes all reforms initiated, carried out successfully, or delayed during 2014 in the different areas of cooperation between the EU and Palestine. The **armed conflicts in Gaza** over the summer constituted a major setback. With over 2100 Palestinian and 71 Israeli casualties during 50 days of hostilities, the conflict was the third and most deadly conflict in Gaza in the last six years. The **formation of the National Consensus Government** was expected to foster the necessary harmonisation of legislation between Gaza and the West Bank, and the unification of their respective legal systems. However, there were no tangible developments in this regard. The **Palestinian economy**, which has been slowing down since 2013, entered recession in 2014, due in part to the

¹ This designation shall not be construed as recognition of a State of Palestine and is without prejudice to the individual positions of the Member States on this issue.

² Algeria, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Egypt, Georgia, Israel, Jordan, Lebanon, Libya, Moldova, Morocco, Palestine, Syria, Tunisia and Ukraine.

negative effects of the conflict in Gaza. The **restrictions imposed by the Israeli occupation**, particularly in Area C, remained the biggest obstacle to Palestinian socio-economic development. These included the periodic withholding of customs and tax revenues by the Israeli authorities.

Human rights issues continued to be a matter of concern, despite some limited progress, such as the amendment of the Penal Code on the issue of honour killing and the accession of Palestine to a number of international conventions. In the West Bank, despite a relatively positive environment, there has been a shrinking of democratic space with complaints of arbitrary detention, torture and ill-treatment, as well as reported violations of freedom of expression (undue pressure on journalists) and assembly (violent dispersion of demonstrators).

On the basis of the Country Progress Report, **several actions are recommended** to the Palestinian Authority for the year to come, amongst others: abolishing the death penalty while fully abiding by the *de facto* moratorium on the death penalty; pursuing positive steps in view of an early resumption of the Middle East Peace Process; and advancing intra-Palestinian reconciliation in line with the principles set out by President Abbas on 4 May 2011, resuming full governmental responsibility in Gaza and organizing free and fair presidential and legislative elections across Palestine.

Read full report here [ENP-Palestine](#)

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