



Press release
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European Union and Palestine hold policy dialogue on human rights, good governance and rule of law

Today the European Union (EU) and Palestine held their fifth annual policy dialogue on human rights, good governance and the rule of law in the framework of the European Neighbourhood Policy. Under the chairmanship of the Palestinian Deputy Minister of Justice Counsellor Khalil Kharajeh and Mr. Leonello Gabrici Head of the Middle East Division in the European External Action Service, senior representatives from the two sides reviewed progress in the sectors of human rights, good governance and rule of law measured against the jointly formulated priorities of the EU-Palestine Action Plan adopted in 2013.

The EU commended the Palestinian side for its work on a National Action Plan for human rights and efforts to combat torture and improve access in some detention centres. The EU praised the efforts made in the good governance sector; in particular Prime Minister Hamdallah's endorsement of an operational guide to the legislative process (public consultation guide and a comprehensive guide to legislative drafting) and the launching of e-government services.

At the same time, the EU addressed concerns about – inter alia – unlawful arrests and ill treatment, freedom of the assembly, freedom of press and equal opportunities for women. Palestinian progress in strengthening the rule of law through reform in the justice and security sector was equally discussed.

"The issues addressed in our policy dialogue today constitute the pillars of any democratic, well-governed state. For years, the EU has invested in Palestinian institution-building based on good governance, the rule of law and respect for human rights. There is still much to do in all these areas. However this important joint work is contributing to improved Palestinian credibility worldwide and increased Palestinian readiness to govern its own state", said the **EU Representative Mr. John Gatt-Rutter**. *"The participation of all relevant actors from the Palestinian government as well as the Independent Commission of Human Rights is testament to the seriousness of the discussion and the frank and open atmosphere"* added the **EU Representative**.

The **Palestinian Deputy Minister of Justice Counsellor Khalil Kharajeh** said that the meeting had achieved the expected outcomes in light of the new status of Palestine after the UN upgrade of Palestine to an observer state. *"This new status has motivated us for greater institutional and legal achievements across all sectors toward building the State of Palestine. Our aim is to reach international standards in all sectors covered by this Sub-Committee both at the individual and institutional levels. At the same time we continue to build our institutions while improving governmental performance. Both President Abbas and the Minister of Justice are closely following the committee's work and its outcomes. We have briefed our EU*

counterparts about our achievements and plans as well as the main obstacles that hinder the progress particularly the occupation and settlements".

Concrete follow-up has been agreed to address concerns ahead of next year's meeting. This round of the EU-Palestinian human rights dialogue concludes on Wednesday 27th November with a consultative forum in which civil society will be informed about the discussions and comment on progress made.

Background:

This is the fifth sub-committee between the EU and the PA covering human rights, governance and rule of law issues in the context of the ENP. It is the first such subcommittee under the new Joint Action Plan adopted earlier in 2013 for duration of five years. The EU – PA policy dialogue consists of a total of six forums on issues ranging from human rights to trade.

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