

# **Palestinian reconciliation must be supported to promote peace and ensure respect for human rights - Euro-Mediterranean Human Rights Network**

12 mai 2011



The EMHRN welcomes the reconciliation agreement between Palestinian factions signed in Cairo on 2 May 2011 and commends the efforts of Egypt to broker this agreement. The reconciliation agreement calls for elections within the next twelve months in an important step towards Palestinian unity and self-determination. This agreement has also the potential of putting an end to the spiral of intra-Palestinian human rights violations, to preserve Palestinian democracy and promote peace. The EMHRN urges the transitional government to respect international human rights and humanitarian law and to ensure the necessary conditions for the conduct of free and impartial elections. The EMHRN also calls on the EU and its member states to recognize the transitional government as well as the democratic outcomes of the elections.

The prolonged occupation of the Occupied Palestinian Territory (OPT) by Israel remains the main obstacle to the realization of the inalienable right of the Palestinian people to self-determination and to the establishment of a sovereign and independent Palestinian State and remains the main source of violations

of the basic rights of Palestinians in the OPT. Nevertheless, the inter-Palestinian conflict has had over the last three years serious implications for both the human rights situation on the ground and the establishment of a Palestinian State.

Following the political division between the West Bank and the Gaza Strip and the resultant power struggles, major human rights violations were and continue to be recorded on both sides. The interim government must ensure that these violations immediately come to an end. Among others, the interim government must immediately release all political prisoners, reopen all associations that have been closed on political grounds and allow civil society to freely function. The interim government should also initiate a process of reconciliation that ensures that the victims of division are granted justice and perpetrators of violations of human rights are held accountable. The EMHRN calls on the transitional government to ensure that the upcoming presidential and legislative elections be transparent, fair and impartial. In order to be so, it is crucial that human rights and political freedoms be respected.

The EMHRN urges all states, including Israel, not to interfere with the organization of free elections in the whole OPT including East-Jerusalem. Israel must also release detained members of the Palestinian Legislative Council and allow free movement between the Gaza Strip and the West Bank, including East-Jerusalem, which constitutes one territory under international law.

The EMHRN urges Israel not to withhold Palestinian customs funds, which could bring the Palestinian population in OPT in a dire human rights situation such as the one they saw in 2006 and the first half of 2007. This Israeli measure violates international law.

The EU has repeatedly called for reconciliation and the organization of free and fair elections. This inter-Palestinian agreement is a unique opportunity for the EU to put into practice what it called for. The EU policy of political conditionality and isolation has only consolidated the political split between the West Bank and the Gaza Strip. The EMHRN therefore calls on the EU and its member states to actively support Palestinian reconciliation efforts by providing political, technical and financial support and to accept the political will of Palestinian people as expressed in fair and impartial elections over the next year. EU development aid should also immediately resume to all civilian institutions in Gaza and should respect Palestinian democracy and induce respect for human rights. The EU should also urge all parties to implement the 2005 Agreement on Movement and Access, including allowing for movement between Gaza and the West Bank through a safe passage.

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