

Israel Denies EU Parliamentary Delegation Entry into Gaza

By [Middle East Monitor](#)

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A European parliament delegation that attempted to enter the besieged Gaza Strip to assess the residual damage of Israel's 2014 military offensive was denied entry by Israeli authorities today.

According to a statement released by the European Parliament's Delegation for relations with Palestine, Israeli authorities told the group that their entry was denied owing to the fact that only humanitarian workers and diplomats accredited by the Israeli government or the Palestinian Authority (PA) are allowed access to Gaza, which has been under an Israeli military blockade for a decade.

The statement noted that the delegation has been denied entry since 2011.

The delegation's statement decried the decision to refuse them access to Gaza, saying that the decision was based on "arbitrary grounds" and that the Israeli explanation was "unacceptable".

"We had hoped that that visit had ushered in a new more cooperative era, but this has not been the case... What is there to hide from us? Our positions are well-known," the statement read.

The delegation went on to demand the return of the PA to the Gaza Strip. "We urge all Palestinian forces to resume efforts towards reconciliation without delay, building on the latest unity deal reached in January," the chairman of the delegation Neoklis Sylikiotis said.

He also called on the international community "to put pressure on Israel" in order to end the crippling Israeli siege on the Palestinian territory.

"On the ground in Gaza our aim is to assess the reconstruction and rehabilitation efforts to which the EU is the major donor. EU aid targets the promotion of employment and the poverty in Gaza. We are working to ensure the people in Gaza have access to basic necessities including potable drinking water, food, housing and schools," Sylikiotis added.

Heading to Gaza:

- Four members of the European Parliament
- Margrete Auken (Denmark)
- Brando Benifei (Italy)
- Ivo Vajgl (Slovenia)
- Angela Vallina (Spain)

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