

The European Parliament Calls for Immediate End to Blockade on Gaza

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The European Parliament (EP) on Thursday called for an immediate and unconditional end to the blockade imposed on the Gaza Strip and condemned the Israeli killing of peaceful protesters near Gaza's eastern border over the past three weeks.

The Parliament during its Thursday session passed a resolution by a majority of 524 votes (nearly 70% of the EP members) to conduct transparent and independent investigations into the crimes committed against the protesters taking part in the Great March of Return.

The resolution stressed the Palestinians' right to peaceful protest, called for utmost restraint and underlined that priority must be to avoid any further escalation of violence and loss of life.

The EP expressed deep concern over the UN reports that the Gaza Strip will become uninhabitable by 2020.

It also praised the aid and services provided by UNRWA at many levels to about 1,3 million Palestinian refugees in the region.

The resolution reaffirmed that the main goal of the European Union is to achieve a two-state solution to the Palestinian-Israeli conflict on the 1967 borders with Jerusalem as a joint capital.

Thousands of Palestinians have taken part in the Great March of Return launched since 30th March along Gaza's border with the 1948 occupied territories in demand of the Palestinian refugees' right of return.

At least 35 Palestinians have been killed and about 3,100 injured by the Israeli gunfire deliberately targeting peaceful protesters.

A tightened blockade has been imposed by Israel on the Gaza Strip since 2007 causing unprecedented deterioration in the living conditions in the coastal enclave as well as high rates of unemployment and poverty.

The Palestinian Authority (PA) president **Mahmoud Abbas** in April 2017 decided to wage a set of punitive measure against Gaza to force Hamas to hand over the administration of the territory to the PA government.

The measures included cutting 30%-50% of the salaries of PA employees in Gaza, forcing

some of them into early retirement, reducing power supplies and halting medical referrals.

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