

Financial Times - Letter to the Editor on EU aid for Palestine

Sir, Whilst I appreciate the welcome coverage given to the vital work being done by the EU in Palestine, your article 'Brussels criticized for paying non-working Gaza civil servants' (11/12) is misleading.

Indeed, it would have been useful to remind your readers that the existence of the Palestinian Authority, and its ability to provide basic services to its citizens, is a pre-condition for a "Two-State Solution" to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. This has been the corner-stone of EU policy on the conflict, fully supported by all Member States. In this context, the Commission and the Member States have considered that it is vital that the Palestinian Authority (PA) is able to support its workers in the West Bank and in Gaza as a key element of a future Palestinian state.

Due to the current unstable political situation between the Palestinian authority and Hamas (which the EU considers as a terrorist organisation), the EU made a political decision to continue to support the Palestinian Authority in paying salaries to its staff in the Gaza strip. After all, why should the EU punish those of the PA civil servants who are being prevented from working?

I would like to underline the fact that the Court of Auditor's report found that the EU **has succeeded** in implementing our support to Palestine in spite of difficult circumstances, and that there is no evidence of corruption or mismanagement in any of our work in the region.

As usual, the Commission will take into account the recommendations of the Court; in fact, many of the recommendations of the report are already being implemented, and we have started a dialogue with the Palestinian authority on the issue of workers in the Gaza strip.

Let me conclude by stressing that the EU commitment to the two state solution and a stable Middle East requires that we support an effective Palestinian authority. It is not EU policy to allow Hamas to further increase its control over the Gaza Strip and make it a hotbed of instability and insecurity.

Štefan Füle, European Commissioner for Enlargement and Neighbourhood Policy