

**Talking Points:**  
*New EC head of Middle East division*  
*June 5<sup>th</sup>, 2007*

***[Background:***

*EC is disappointed with the process of renewing the mandate. They are concerned that it was sloppy (e.g. Israeli last minute attempts to sneak in renegotiation of the terms) and that it did not properly address the underlying problems. They believe that the EC should possibly have taken a stronger position vis a vis Israel before renewal.*

*The EUBAM has also highlighted a problematic relationship with the Palestinians at the crossing in recent days. This is heightening tensions at Rafah and creating a difficult work environment.*

*Also, it should be noted that the EC is now working on a comprehensive strategy paper on how to approach the issue of the Rafah crossing, including dealing with the issue of exports.*

*The EC is interested in hearing from you a general political update, and to have a discussion on the issue of Rafah specifically.]*

**General:**

- Today marks the 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Israeli occupation of the West Bank and the Gaza Strip. 40 years of occupation is enough. We need to move forward on a sincere effort to resolve this conflict once and for all.
- [Brief update on political situation.]

**Movement and Access issues:**

- Today, Israel continues to flout each and every one of its commitments under the AMA, contributing to the ever-worsening situation on the ground and chaos in the Gaza Strip.
- Israel continues to use the closure of the crossings as a coercive measure and collective punishment against the Palestinian people.
- **The best way to improve security for both Palestinians and Israelis is to create economic opportunities for Palestinians.**

***Rafah:***

- We thank the EU for ongoing efforts at Rafah.
- We are pleased that the EUBAM mandate has been extended. We are, however, disappointed with Israeli attempts to renegotiate the terms of the mandate at the last minute and outside the agreed forums. We greatly appreciate EU and EC

rejection of these attempts and renewal of the mandate in line with the understandings established in the CEC and the SWG.

- We continue to make every effort to address the very real concerns of the EUBAM with respect to the Rafah crossing. However, **the biggest problem with Rafah is the lack of normalization of the operation of the crossing due to non-implementation of the Agreement by Israel and Egypt.**
- We encourage EU and EC efforts to ensure normalization of the operation of the crossing. We also encourage EU and EC efforts to ensure that all work with respect to the Rafah crossing is coordinated and works towards transforming the crossing into a fully functional international border crossing.
- We hope that in this new period the EUBAM will focus more significantly on the capacity building and other outstanding aspects of its mandate.

*Kerem Shalom:*

- Israel must **sign the Customs Annex and open Kerem Shalom for commercial imports from or through Egypt** immediately. Their refusal to do this is a breach of the APRC.
- The opening of the Kerem Shalom crossing for imports from or through Egypt will greatly alleviate pressure on the Rafah crossing, and help to improve the security situation there.