

Press conference held by Javier Solana and Mahmoud Abbas at the Council of the European Union (Brussels, 2 March 2005)

Source: Conférence de presse: Javier Solana et Mahmoud Abbas / JAVIER SOLANA, Mahmoud Abbas.- Bruxelles: Communautés européennes [Prod.], 02.03.2005. Conseil de l'Union européenne, Bruxelles. - VIDEO (08:33, Couleur, Son original).

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Last updated: 04/07/2016

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[Javier Solana] Let me start by saying that, for all of us, and for me in particular, it is a great pleasure to receive the President of the Palestinian Authority here in the European Union. It's not the first time he comes, but he is not a usual visitor — he is going to be much more frequent in the future. But I would like to say that what we have been seeing in the last period of time is really, for us, fantastic. The manner in which the Palestinians have been able to handle a very complicated situation, to have elections, to have a President, to have a new Government and to do what they say they are going to do. And I would like to underline that all these statements that the President has said, he has complied with them. And this is something that we would like to underline: we are very pleased to see that happening.

I was in Gaza and in Ramallah the day of the elections, and I will never forget that day and that night. I saw the people happy: happy because they have participated in an electoral process. And I saw the people also with hope: pride and hope. Proud of what they have done and hope for the future are the two words that define the state of spirit of the majority of the people I met. We want that to continue. The hope not to be disappearing from the hearts of the people. And for that, the President can be assured that the European Union is going to be behind the Palestinian people for the realisation of their dream. The dream is clear: to have one State. And a State that can live together in peace with the neighbouring States, with Israel and with the other countries around the Palestinians. And they can have a prosperous State. It is a country and a people who have suffered a lot, and they have the right to begin to recuperate the hope that they have lost, and to recuperate the possibility of living, as I said before, hand-in-hand, along with the States of the region in peace and security.

We, in the European Union, are going to continue to help them. I can say that, personally, I have been engaged in this process from the Conference of Madrid some time ago, and I will continue doing it and do it collectively with the rest of the institutions of the European Union so that, as I said before, the dream is realised. We are going to continue helping now, in this period of time, from here to the summer, which is going to be a very important period of time with the elections, with the disengagement from Gaza, with the stabilisation of the structures of the Palestinian Authority. We are going to continue helping on three directions. They can be assured that they will be helped on the electoral processes if they need it. They can be assured that they will be helped economically in the moment in which the Gaza disengagement is going to need resources. We are going to help them to build up all the structures in order to have the State that they are going to have. And we are going to help them also on the security aspects. These, to my mind, are the most important vectors, directions in which they need help. They have asked for help, and they can be assured that they will have it from us, from the European Union. We are going to be with you and with your people until the realisation of the road map, when the end of the road map is a reality.

Mr President, thank you very much for being here, with your team, with part of your Government. You know that you have here friends. We hope to see you here and there frequently, because we will need to be in permanent and fluent contact between the European Union and the President and the Government and the people of Palestine.

[Mahmoud Abbas (interpretation)] I have just had an important discussion with Mr Solana, and we have exchanged views on everything relating to the Palestine question at the present time, and we have exchanged major and minor details, all in the cause of progress in the peace process.

It goes without saying how much the European Union has stood by our side and how much assistance it has provided and granted to the Palestinian Authority and the Palestinian people and that it will continue to do so, but it is also our wish that it — I mean the European Union — should play a political role in this, let us say this issue and that it could play a major political role within the Quartet.

And this European role is primarily played, or orchestrated, by Mr Solana, by the special European envoy in the region and by a number of European inspectors who come and go in all areas of activity to try to get things moving.

As regards the assistance provided by the European Union, as I said, we do, of course, expect Europe to play a major political role, but we also welcome all forms of assistance, whether in the realm of security or administration or in any of the many other areas where we need that European assistance.

In the course of this morning, during the talks with our friend, I and the Palestinian delegation accompanying me once more sensed the great empathy of our friend Mr Solana, his enthusiasm for progress and his desire that the Palestinian people should be able to build their Palestinian State as quickly as possible. Thank you.