



European Parliament welcomes release of Palestinian prisoners

In adopting a resolution on the situation of Palestinian prisoners in Israeli jails, MEPs welcome the recent decision by the Israeli Government to free 198 Palestinian prisoners on 25 August. This is "a positive gesture to strengthen the authority of the Palestinian Authority and to install a climate of mutual trust" says the resolution. The House also calls for the immediate release of the Israeli Corporal Gilad Shalit, abducted 25 June 2006 and held hostage since by Hamas.

The resolution was put forward by four political groups (Socialist, Liberal, Greens/EFA and GUE/NGL) and adopted with 416 votes in favour, 136 against and 61 abstentions.

A substantial release of Palestinian prisoners, as well as the immediate release of the 48 imprisoned members of the Palestinian Legislative Council including Marwan Barghouti, could serve as a positive step to establish the climate of mutual trust needed to make progress in the peace negotiations, says the resolution. According to MEPs, more than 11 000 Palestinians are being held in Israeli prisons and detention centres.

Corporal Gilad Shalit

MEPs call on Israel to guarantee that minimum standards of detention are respected, to bring to trial all the detainees, to put an end to the use of 'Administrative Detention', and to implement adequate measures for minors and for visits to prisoners.

The Palestinian Authority is asked to make every effort to prevent any violent or terrorist acts, particularly by former prisoners, especially children. Palestinian children from the age of 16 years (instead of 18) are considered adults under Israeli military regulations governing the Occupied Palestinian Territories, and are often held in inappropriate conditions.

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