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RÉSEAU EURO-MÉDITERRANÉEN DES DROITS DE L'HOMME
الشبكة الأوروبية - المتوسطية لحقوق الإنسان

Members of the European Parliament Approve Major EU-Israel Trade Agreement: Will Impunity Ever End?

Brussels, 19 September 2012 - The Euro-Mediterranean Human Rights Network (EMHRN) is disappointed MEPs passed a major trade agreement between the EU and Israel yesterday, in a move that clearly undermines the EU's declared position on the settlements and International Law.

On Tuesday, MEPs sitting on the Committee on International Trade (INTA) voted in favour of the "Protocol on Conformity Assessment and Acceptance of Industrial Products" between the European Union and Israel, commonly referred to as "ACAA".

MEPs may claim that it is not an upgrade of relations between the EU and Israel, but this enhanced cooperation and the prospective conclusion of this protocol does in fact reflect a significant stepping-up of trade relations. Specifically, ACAA effectively brings Israel into the European single market.

The EMHRN finds this decision by the MEPs particularly deplorable in that ACAA provides for the recognition of an Israeli authority responsible for the occupied Palestinian territory, in direct violations of the EU's obligations under International Law.

"By voting against ACAA, MEPs would not have been censuring a trade agreement, but simply sending a signal that there could not be "business as usual" while the Israeli authorities are pursuing their policy of occupation, effectively precluding any progress in negotiations in the Middle East peace process, and denying the right the Palestinian people to self-determination", said EMHRN President Michel Tubiana.

Furthermore, the Israeli pharmaceutical industry is heavily involved in the occupation of the Palestinian territory, effectively blocking the development of the Palestinian Pharmaceutical industry at a time when the Palestinian health system is unable to provide adequate access to health care.

The EMHRN is shocked that the EP should support the Israeli authorities in their policy by seemingly disregarding the deadlock in which this region finds itself by favouring a "business as usual" approach.

The EMHRN must point out that as the European Parliament is the only European institution to derive its legitimacy from its members being elected by direct universal suffrage, the European Union's credibility depends on it taking hold of the powers vested in it by the Treaty of Lisbon and fulfilling its foreign policy role.

"The European Parliament must distance itself from the short-sighted concerns of governments and reassert the fundamental principles that govern the European idea, in particular the respect for human rights and dignity for all. That is why suspending the ACAA adoption procedure signals the end of impunity to the Israeli authorities", continued Michel Tubiana.

The EMHRN therefore calls on the European Parliament in the November plenary vote to withhold their vote on the ACAA Agreement until Israel respects its obligations under international law.

The "Protocol on Conformity Assessment and Acceptance of Industrial Products", or ACAA, is an agreement that aims to facilitate the access of European and Israeli consumers to a wider range of cheaper pharmaceutical products.

Two months earlier, the EU already offered Israel 60 new activities of cooperation in 15 different fields, despite freezing the upgrade of its relations with Israel in June 2009.

Out of the 30 MEPS casting their votes on INTA, 15 voted in favour of the ACAA, 13 against and 2 abstained.

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See also the joint APRODEV, CIDSE, QCEA and EMHRN letter from April 2012:

[Human rights and development NGOs ask MEPs to suspend the vote of the EU-Israel ACAA protocol](#)