



**COUNCIL OF
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**Summary of remarks to the press
by
Javier SOLANA,
EU High Representative for the CFSP
on the Gaza crisis**

Javier SOLANA, EU High Representative for the Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP), told reporters today that it is essential to open up Gaza to allow humanitarian aid to enter. He said that the European Union is engaged at the humanitarian, political and economic levels and is sparing no effort to get relief to those in need and to help ensure that the ceasefire holds and that the peace process itself is taken forward.

The following is an edited summary of Mr Solana's remarks to the press made before the meeting of EU foreign ministers with the Israeli Foreign Minister, Tzipi LIVNI:

"We are going to have a meeting tonight with Mrs Tzipi LIVNI and on Sunday we will have a meeting with the foreign ministers of Egypt, Jordan and Turkey. In the days ahead of us we would like very much to wrap up our conversations with all the important players in the region. The Palestinians will also be having dinner with us on Sunday.

I would like to say that the ceasefire is still fragile and every effort must be made to ensure that it is solid, durable and lasting.

I would also like to say that it is very important that Gaza is opened. That means that the crossings are opened and the help that the international community wants to give can reach all those in need. First, the basic elements of humanitarian relief must be provided. Further on, reconstruction will also be important. This is an appeal that is made to everybody. The European Union is committed to helping. It is committed politically, to maintaining, with all our means, the ceasefire. It is committed to helping economically and it is committed, for the future, to two important dynamics, firstly, inter-Palestinian dynamics, and secondly a real peace process, which must not be forgotten. The situation will not be stable until a final settlement is achieved. All efforts have to be made in that direction. We, the EU, will spare no effort and I hope that the rest will do the same."

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Responding to questions from reporters, Mr SOLANA said the EU was ready, as always, to provide humanitarian aid, under any circumstances. We had done so already and we would never fail to do so. Secondly, Mr SOLANA said he very much hoped that there would be improvements in the inter-Palestinian situation that would facilitate the process of humanitarian help and reconstruction. This was very important. Mr SOLANA hoped very much that moves towards Palestinian unity would be possible because that would be very important for the peace process.

Asked about cooperation between the EU and Arab world on humanitarian aid for Gaza, Mr SOLANA said it was difficult to imagine that cooperation between the EU and the Arab countries could be deeper than it already was. Whilst it was true that there had been divisions amongst the members of the Arab League, common positions had emerged at the meeting in Kuwait two days previously and he was pleased to see that pledges for reconstruction aid had come out of the meeting. He hoped very much that those pledges would be translated into reality.

Asked about Israel's security concerns, the border crossing points and the kidnapped Israeli soldier, Gilad Shalit, Mr SOLANA said that the EU's position had been clear from the outset. The EU Troika, he and President Sarkozy had been to the region, from the very beginning, to call for a ceasefire, in order that we could begin deploying humanitarian aid. Now we had the ceasefire and we hoped it would be maintained and that humanitarian aid would be deployed. But for that Gaza had to be open. He would be asking that of Mrs Livni this evening. Mr SOLANA said he had had a long telephone conversation with Mrs Livni and he hoped that today's meeting would be constructive and positive. The question of Corporal Shalit had always been on the agenda for everybody.

Asked about deploying the Rafah border mission, Mr Solana said: *"Our decision on that has been taken already. We have said we are ready to return to Rafah and even to extend the mission if that is agreed by the parties and we are asked to do it. On that there is no reservation by the European Union. We are willing to do whatever is necessary in that direction, with monitors in Rafah and in other places. Rafah is probably the most important one and the sooner it is done the better. For that, the ceasefire has to be maintained, along with the withdrawal of Israel, which is taking place today. Now we have to really get to work, probably with Egypt, to see how fast this can be done. The opening of Gaza is a must.*

*"We are offering whatever is necessary if there is agreement between the parties. On Rafah, I hope there will be an agreement because we have done it already, following the agreement of 2005 on access and movement. Under that agreement, the only thing that was really done all the way to the end was the presence of EU monitors. Other parts of the agreement were never complied with, so what we say is credible, it has been done already and it will be done again if necessary. **The second thing is for the Palestinians to come to an agreement. That is not for us to do. It is an agreement between the Palestinians that is needed and we will cooperate with the Palestinian government.**"*
