

Response to open letter (dated March 2016) from Palestinian Media Watch (PMW) to the Danish Foreign Minister.

“The cooperation within the EU is a cornerstone of the Danish engagement in Palestine and in the Middle East Peace Process; both within the political and developmental spheres. In this context, Denmark operates within the general framework set out by international law and EU policies.

Denmark remains deeply concerned that the continuing cycle of violence has led to a serious loss of human life in Israel and the Palestinian territory in recent months. Denmark firmly condemns the terror attacks and violence from all sides and in any circumstances. We call on political leaders to work together through visible actions to contribute to calm and address the underlying causes of the tensions.

In particular, we urge all parties to refrain from any action that would worsen the situation by way of incitement or provocation and call on the parties to condemn attacks when they occur and adhere strictly to the principles of necessity and proportionality in the use of force. We call on both sides to jointly and resolutely fight incitement and hate speech.

Denmark is strongly encouraged by the fact that the Israeli government and the Palestinian government are upholding security coordination in the light of an extremely challenging situation. It is a key factor in addressing the risk of further and more violent developments.

We are convinced that only the reestablishment of a political horizon and the resumption of dialogue can stop the violence. Security measures alone cannot stop the cycle of violence. The underlying causes of the conflict need to be addressed.

Also, we urge all Palestinian factions to engage in good faith in the reconciliation process which is an important element for reaching the two state solution. The positive results of the past must not be lost and Palestinian institutions must continue to grow stronger, more transparent, more accountable and more democratic. In this regard we call upon the Palestinian government to work towards genuine and democratic elections for all Palestinians.

Specifically with regard to Denmark’s engagement with Palestine following the Oslo accords in 1993 and 1995, I would like point to the following aspects:

The Danish development engagement, together with that of other likeminded donors, has from the outset consistently focused on support for state-building, including at the local level, and on promoting human rights. In addition, the international community continues to provide long term humanitarian assistance to the Palestinian refugees - which constitute a bigger group than the Palestinian non-refugee population - especially through UNRWA.

The Danish engagement in Palestine, and with the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, aims to improve the livelihood and security of Palestinians as well as Israelis. But the increased threat from extremist, militant groups in parts of the Arab/Muslim world makes the need for progress on the Middle East peace process all the more urgent as the unresolved conflict is used as a recruitment tool in the propaganda of such groups.”