

(English version)

**Question for written answer E-002107/24
to the Commission
Marieke Ehlers (P/E), Sebastiaan Stöteler (P/E)
(16 October 2024)**

Subject: Return and readmission cooperation with the Palestinian Authority

The Commission notes in its assessment of third countries' level of cooperation on readmission in 2023 (COM(2024)0340) that the Palestinian Authority (PA) was excluded from the assessment as it was 'not possible to establish effective operational contacts due to the conditions on the ground'.

The EU is the biggest provider of external assistance to the Palestinians, amounting to almost EUR 1.2 billion for 2021-2024, of which over EUR 890 million has been paid out. Around EUR 85 million is paid annually to cover the salaries and pensions of PA employees. By August 2024, EUR 65 million had been paid out.

1. How is it possible that the Commission is unable to establish effective operational contacts with the PA, while the EU and Member States are its biggest funders?
2. With regard to Samidoun's Europe Coordinator, Mohammed Khatib, the Belgian Secretary of State for Asylum and Migration noted in April 2024 that even if someone enjoys refugee status, that status can be revoked if they turn out to be an extremist. Numerous migrants have been responsible for spreading antisemitism, extremism and violence, particularly during anti-Israel protests. Will the Commission cooperate with Member States to support the return of extremists staying illegally in Europe and the revocation of their refugee protection?

Submitted: 16.10.2024

**Answer given by Mr Brunner on behalf of the European Commission
(28 March 2025)**

The EU provides humanitarian and development assistance in line with the European Joint Strategy in support of Palestine ⁽¹⁾. However, contacts established in this framework are not *per se* relevant in view of operational cooperation on readmission. The possibility for identification, issuance of travel document and carrying out return operations depends on the situation on ground.

The Qualification Directive ⁽²⁾ allows Member States to revoke refugee status based on several grounds, including if the person has committed serious crimes or poses a threat to national security.

If after an individualised assessment, the Member State authorities decide that an individual satisfies the aforementioned conditions and revoke the refugee status, it will be possible to return the individual to the country of origin if this does not violate the principle of non-refoulement.

The Return Directive ⁽³⁾ requires an individual assessment deciding on the issuance of a return decision. This decision needs to respect certain safeguards, including the respect of the principle of non-refoulement.

The Return Directive provides for the possibility to apply firmer rules for third-country nationals representing a serious threat to public policy, public security or national security (such as no granting of a period for voluntary departure and issuance of an entry ban longer than five years).

The Commission has proposed a new Regulation on a European approach to return that would provide for stricter rules for such cases, including mandatory forced return, longer entry bans, and a separate detention ground.

⁽¹⁾ <https://www.eeas.europa.eu/sites/default/files/documents/European%20Joint%20Strategy%202021-2024.PDF>

⁽²⁾ Directive 2011/95/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council of 13 December 2011 on standards for the qualification of third-country nationals or stateless persons as beneficiaries of international protection, for a uniform status for refugees or for persons eligible for subsidiary protection, and for the content of the protection granted (recast).

⁽³⁾ Directive 2008/115/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 16 December 2008 on common standards and procedures in Member States for returning illegally staying third-country nationals.