

(English version)

Priority question for written answer P-002314/25
to the Vice-President of the Commission/High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy
Maria Zacharia (NI)
(10 June 2025)

Subject: Illegal arrest and detention of MEP, activists and EU citizens by Israeli authorities in international waters — Violation of international law — Blockade of Gaza

On 9 June 2025, the Israeli Government carried out a military operation against the Freedom Flotilla vessel *Madleen*, which was carrying humanitarian aid to the blockaded Gaza Strip and starving civilians, victims of the ongoing genocide against the Palestinian people. The operation took place in international waters with drones, chemical deployment and the violent arrest, kidnapping and taking hostage of 12 civilians, including MEP Rima Hassan and well-known peace activists.

Israel has unilaterally imposed a naval blockade on Gaza since 2007. The UN Human Rights Council Commission of Inquiry (2011) has ruled that the blockade constitutes collective punishment against the civilian population and violates the Geneva Conventions. The Israeli action in international waters constitutes an international crime, a violation of the Convention on the Law of the Sea, international law, the principle of freedom of navigation, international humanitarian law and international criminal law, while the Israeli Prime Minister is wanted for international crimes.

In view of the above:

1. What measures has or will the Vice-President of the Commission/High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy put in place for the immediate release of the arrested EU citizens and MEP Hassan?
2. What actions will the Vice-President of the Commission/High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy take regarding this act of hostility against EU citizens and a Member of the European Parliament, and what actions will the Vice-President of the Commission/High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy take to get the blockade lifted?
3. Will the EU activate the mechanism of the human rights clause (Article 2) of the EU-Israel Association Agreement?

Submitted: 10.6.2025

Answer given by High Representative/Vice-President Kallas on behalf of the European Commission
(6 August 2025)

The High Representative/Vice-President (HR/VP) took note of the media reports about an Israeli navy intercepting a British-flagged (Freedom Flotilla Coalition) ship attempting to enter Gaza by sea.

The EU called on all parties to take swift steps to release the passengers and produce a fundamental change to the humanitarian, political, security and economic situation in the Gaza Strip, for which a full opening of the crossing points is key, while addressing Israel's legitimate security concerns. The authorities responsible for ensuring consular protection are the states to which the citizens belong.

The EU reiterates its urgent call for the immediate, unimpeded and sustained resumption of aid at scale into Gaza, fully in line with humanitarian principles, and calls for the immediate ceasefire and release of hostages.

Following the exchange at the Foreign Affairs Council on 20 May 2025, the HR/VP announced a review of Israel's compliance with Article 2 of the EU-Israel Association Agreement ⁽¹⁾.

The review was presented at the Foreign Affairs Council on 23 June 2025 ⁽²⁾. The ministers of foreign affairs agreed that the EU's aim is to improve the humanitarian situation.

On this basis, the EU engaged in a frank and principled dialogue which led to Israel's agreement to take significant steps to improve the humanitarian situation in the Gaza Strip.

The outcomes were presented at the Foreign Affairs Council of 15 July 2025. The EU will continue to closely monitor the implementation of the agreed actions and consider next steps, if necessary, based on developments on the ground.

⁽¹⁾ https://eeas.europa.eu/archives/delegations/israel/documents/eu_israel/asso_agree_en.pdf.

⁽²⁾ <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/meetings/fac/2025/06/23/>.