



PARLIAMENTARY ASSEMBLY OF THE MEDITERRANEAN
ASSEMBLEE PARLEMENTAIRE DE LA MEDITERRANEE

الجمعية البرلمانية للبحر الأبيض المتوسط

**PAM Mission to the Middle East
Amman – Ramallah - Jerusalem**

9 - 15 November 2013

Executive Report

Background and Objectives

The PAM High-level Mission to the Middle East is to be considered as “Phase II” to the first Middle East Mission, which included Lebanon and Syria, from 28 June to 2 July 2013. Both were launched as follow up to High-level meetings with UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon, UN Under-Secretary for Humanitarian Affairs Valerie Amos, Special Envoy Lakhdar Brahimi, and UNSG Envoy for the Middle East, Amb. Robert Serry. This round of talks took place on the occasion of the 67th Session of the UN General Assembly and in follow up consultations in Geneva.

The first phase of the Middle East Mission to Lebanon and Syria was aimed at promoting confidence building measures, highlighting the extreme importance of the protection of civilians and at using PAM Parliamentary Diplomacy network to facilitate the delivery of humanitarian assistance to the Syrian people.

During the 1st mission, and in a meeting between the PAM delegation and all UN agencies working in Syria, PAM was called to assist them by convening a High-Level regional parliamentary hearing on the humanitarian crisis in Syria and the neighbouring countries. UN agencies also suggested to hold this PAM hearing in Amman, Jordan, which they considered as the ideal location to allow for a broader participation of UN representatives operating in Syria and in the neighbouring countries.

The PAM Parliamentary hearing was scheduled to be held in Amman, on 10 November 2013. The objective was to offer an opportunity to our members and UN agencies to exchange views on the humanitarian situation in Syria and that of refugees in neighbouring countries, and their related needs, as well as to look at prospects for the effective use of the instrument of parliamentary diplomacy in supporting confidence building measures, inter-parliamentary dialogue and diplomatic initiatives.

Unfortunately, and after receiving the confirmation of more than 120 participants from Parliaments, UN officials, diplomats, representatives of Baroness Ashton and others, the Jordanian Senate had to cancel the meeting only four days before, following the dissolution of the Jordanian Senate by H.M. the King of Jordan.

Notwithstanding the last minute cancellation of the Parliamentary Hearing in Amman, PAM decided that Phase II of the Mission to the Middle East, which was planned to start back to back with the Parliamentary hearing, had to go on as scheduled.

The main objective of the 2nd mission was to discuss, with all partners and key actors, regional developments impacting the security and stability of the Mediterranean region and to define strategies for parliamentary diplomacy support to the Peace Process in the Middle East.

PAM High-level Mission to Syria and Lebanon

10 - 15 November 2013

Schedule

Sunday 10 November

Arrival in Amman

Monday 11 November (Amman)

- 09:00 Meeting with H.E. the President of the Jordanian House of Representatives
- 10:00 Meeting with H.E. the President of the Jordanian House of Senate.
- 11:00 Meeting with Hon. Nasser Judeh, Minister of Foreign Affairs
- 16:00 Meeting with H.E. Amb. Joanna Wronecka, EU Ambassador to Jordan
- 17:00 Meeting with Msgr. Giorgio Lingua, Apostolic Nuncio to Jordan and Iraq

Tuesday 12 November (Ramallah)

- 10:00 Crossing over King Hussein Bridge/Allenby Bridge
- 12:00 Visit to Late President Arafat Mausoleum
- 13:00 Meeting with Dr. Hussein Al Aaraj, Chairman of President Mahmoud Abbas's Office
- 14:00 Meeting with the President of the Palestinian Legislative Council
- 15:00 Lunch hosted by H.E. the President of the PLC
- 17:00 Departure to Jerusalem

Wednesday 13 November (Jerusalem)

- 11:15 Meeting with Members of the Knesset, Hon. Dov Khenin, Head of the Knesset Delegation to PAM
- 12:15 Meeting with the Speaker of the Knesset, H.E. Yuli-Yoel Edelstein
- 13:00 Meeting with Hon. Tzipi Livni, Minister of Justice and Chief of Peace Process negotiations.
- 16:00 Meeting with Amb. Nadar Cohen, Director of Multi-cooperation Department, MFA
- 17:00 Meeting with Amb. Aviva Raz Shechter, Deputy Director General for Middle East and Peace Process Division, MFA
- 18:00 Meeting with Amb. Robert Serry, UN Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process

Thursday, 14 November 2013

End of mission and departure

Summary of discussions

The PAM mission, which visited Amman, Ramallah and Jerusalem, held a series of high level meetings with governmental and parliamentary authorities in the three cities, where discussions dealt with the Middle East Peace Process, the Syrian crisis, the Iranian negotiations, and the ongoing developments in those countries which experienced the Arab Spring.

In Amman, the discussions provided the opportunity to review the regional situation, the developments of the Peace talks and the cross border impact of the Syrian conflict, including that of religious minorities, as well as PAM relations with the UfM Secretariat, co-presided by Jordan. Special emphasis was paid on the enormous efforts provided by Jordan to accommodate large number of refugees.

H.E. Atef Tarawneh, President of the Jordanian House of Representatives, highlighted the seriousness of the Humanitarian Situation caused by the ongoing military conflict in Syria, the waves of Syrian refugees that Jordan is receiving on a daily basis, and the efforts by the Kingdom of Jordan to ease the suffering and to provide decent living conditions in the refugees' camps.

Hon. Tarawneh also emphasised the importance of the PAM mission and the role of the Parliaments of the region in assuming their responsibilities and in putting pressure on their governments to provide, on one hand, more humanitarian assistance, and on the other, to work on reaching a political solution to the Syrian crisis. He shared some figures with the PAM delegation showing that Syrian refugees in Jordan have reached 1.3 million, representing almost 20% of the Jordanian population.

The President of the Jordanian Senate, H.E. Abdur-Ra'uf Rawabdeh, stressed the need for different kinds of Humanitarian assistance to help the Syrian refugees in Jordan and in neighbouring countries. The aid now should not only consist of just food and tents. According to his point of view, there must be medium and long term programmes to deal with the refugees' problems. Education, healthcare, sanitation and ways of integrating the refugees in the labor market are drifting the problem towards a socio-economical issue, which goes beyond the humanitarian aspect.

The current political situation in Jordan and the region in general was thoroughly discussed with Hon. Nasser Judeh, the Jordanian Minister of Foreign Affairs. On Syria, he affirmed that a political solution is the only way out of the crisis, as it will never be solved through military action. He expressed his hope for the "Geneva II" conference to take place (meanwhile it has been scheduled for 22 January 2014) and the importance that the "*National Coalition for Syrian Revolutionary and Opposition Force*" proves to the international community that it represents all Syrians. He also stressed the inevitability of keeping Syria as one unified country.

On the Middle East, he indicated that there are three positive signs that are giving hope that this time a final peace agreement can be reached. These are: the unprecedented current US commitment; the time frame given to finalize the talks; and the commitment and agreement of both sides (Netanyahu and Abbas). On the other hand, he expressed his deep concern over

the ongoing announcements of the building of new settlements, and the escalating violence in Jerusalem, that might put pressure on one of the two sides or both.

On the Iranian Nuclear Program, Minister Judeh praised what has been reached during the first round of talks in Geneva, hailing it as a step forward towards a diplomatic solution to this problem. He added that the Iranian Nuclear Program is simply adding an added factor of threat and tension in a region which is already exploding. He also stressed the importance of having the Middle East region as a Nuclear-free zone.

The PAM delegation also discussed with H.E. Amb. Joanna Wronecka, EU Ambassador to Jordan and Msgr. Mauricio Puela Beltz, Chargé d'Affaires of the Apostolic Nunciature in Jordan, the efforts to assist the deteriorating humanitarian situation in Syria, as well as the refugees in the neighbouring countries. The importance of depoliticizing the humanitarian assistance was also raised. Amb. Wronecka noted that the EU is the biggest contributor to the Syrian humanitarian crisis with more than 2 Billion Euro. She confirmed that the EU started shifting assistance to Social rather than Humanitarian aid, so as to provide also decent living conditions over and above mere survival.

In Ramallah, the PAM delegation, after paying tribute to the Mausoleum in memory of the Late Palestinian President Yasser Arafat, met with Dr Hussein Al-Araj, Chief of Staff of the Presidential Bureau of H.E. Mahmoud Abbas, and with senior members of the Executive Body of the Palestinian Legislative Council.

Dr. Al-Araj outlined the current situation of the Peace talks with the Israelis. He praised the commitment of the US administration and stressed the commitment of the Palestinian Authorities to finalize the negotiations. He highlighted that, for the Palestinians, a peace agreement must be a comprehensive one aimed at solving all the historical pending issues. He clearly stated that any sort of partial or temporary agreement will not be accepted by the Palestinian people. The main obstacle, from his point of view, remains the Israeli Settlements in Jerusalem and the West Bank.

With regard to National Reconciliation between Fatah and Hamas, and the situation in Gaza, reference was made to the fact that during the Muslim Brotherhood ruling in Egypt, Hamas gained a lot of support from Egypt, as well as from Syria back then. This has negatively affected the reconciliation process. He added that with Egypt resuming its role, there are more hopes now that the process can develop faster, in a way that can facilitate the negotiations with the Israeli side as well.

The discussions also addressed the security of Palestinians in Syria, as requested to PAM by Ambassador Robert Serry. It is worth noting that at the beginning of the civil strife some 600 thousand Palestinians lived there. The Palestinian authorities had always pushed for their people to keep away from the Syrian internal conflict, but nevertheless, due to the intensification of the hostilities, from one camp alone, some 200 thousand Palestinians fled to Lebanon, seeking refuge and protection. A mission by the Palestinian Authority, at the time of PAM's visit, was in Syria to coordinate with the Syrian authorities and, at a later stage, with the Lebanese Government, to ensure the best possible assistance.

In Jerusalem, the PAM delegates held a series of High Level discussions with key Israeli personalities taking part in the negotiations with their Palestinian counterparts. Meetings were

held with H.E. Yuli-Yoel Edelstein, Speaker of the Knesset, the new Israeli delegation to PAM, headed by Hon. Dov Khenin, and senior officials at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, including Ms. Aviva Raz Shechter, Deputy Director General – Middle East and Peace Process Division, and Mr. Nadar Cohen, Director of Regional Cooperation.

A special meeting took place at the Knesset with Hon. Tzipi Livni, Minister of Justice, who is responsible for the negotiations with Palestine. Hon. Livni updated the delegation on the current status of the process and the challenges ahead. Minister Livni confirmed Israel's commitment to reach a peace agreement with the Palestinian Authority, and listed the confidence building measures taken by the Israeli government, such as the release of a number of prisoners. She added that this was met by a breach of the agreement with the Palestinian Authority, not to upgrade Palestine's International Status. Furthermore, she expressed the opinion that the Palestinian Authority needs to understand that the creation of a state shall only happen through negotiations and not by upgrading the Status at the United Nations.

The Israeli Minister also manifested her appreciation for the role played by PAM in facilitating the process through the instrument of Parliamentary Diplomacy in the region.

The PAM delegation concluded the mission with a bilateral meeting with H.E. Amb. Robert Serry, the UN Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process, with whom, the long standing cooperation between PAM and the UN in the area was highlighted.

Ambassador Serry also referred to his meetings with the Israeli and Palestinian negotiators, in connection with the Israeli settlements. According to a statement by his Office, the UN Special Coordinator said that "he understands from his discussions with Chief negotiator Livni and other Israeli officials that yesterday's (12.11.2013) decision to plan a large number of settlement units has been stopped".

Finally, both sides expressed their appreciation for the commitment being dedicated and for the results obtained thanks to this effective collaboration between PAM and the UN System.

Conclusions and follow up actions

The Phase II mission represents the PAM's continued commitment to the Middle East Peace Process and its endeavor to ease the humanitarian consequences of the Syrian crisis. The mission also helped PAM's delegation to acquire a wider perspective of the situation on the ground and of the recent developments in the region.

On the Middle East, PAM has noted with satisfaction, over the last few months, the determination of the US Administration to make real progress in the Peace Process between Israel and Palestine, aiming at reaching a lasting and comprehensive agreement.

PAM has however identified the lack of a regular direct dialogue between the two sides and their mutual concern about the real willingness of the other side to commit itself to a final agreement.

Throughout the meetings in the three cities, it emerged that new settlements and the status of Jerusalem, among other issues, remain the main obstacles hindering the path towards a final agreement. PAM is convinced that reaching a final and fair outcome for these two main issues is the only way forward to achieve the Two States solution.

The reconciliation between Hamas and Fatah remains a critical issue that needs to be addressed in a global way and not as an internal Palestinian affair. Its influence on the whole Peace Process is not to be underestimated. In this regard, PAM encourages the Egyptian Government to resume its mediation role between the Palestinian factions, in order to reach a preliminary agreement that would push peace talks forward.

PAM also praises efforts by US Secretary of State John Kerry and Amb. Robert Serry, aimed at paving the way for a final peace agreement. PAM, once more, is putting its high-level Parliamentary network and all its Parliamentary Diplomacy tools at the disposal of Secretary Kerry, Amb. Serry, and other UN and International initiatives.

On Syria, there was consensus on the importance of a political solution to the crisis. The unity of the Syrian land and nation was another point of unanimity. It was also made clear that the Geneva II meeting is still considered the only way forward to end this crisis. In this regard, PAM praises the United States of America and Russia, as well as H.E. Lakhdar Brahimi, the UN and Arab League Special Envoy to Syria, for their successful efforts to convene the Geneva II Conference on 22 January 2014.

This mission was an eye opener to the PAM delegation on the humanitarian challenges that Jordan is facing due to the influx of Syrian refugees. PAM notes with great admiration the efforts done by the Jordanian Government to accommodate the massive number of refugees which reaches 20 % of the actual Jordanian population. The humanitarian dimension of the Syrian crisis remains a top priority on PAM's agenda of its parliamentary diplomacy network, and since the outset of hostilities, it has been dealt with through a series of high level meetings in New York, Geneva, Damascus and Beirut.

PAM will continue to work together with the Parliaments of its member states, namely the Parliaments directly involved with the crisis (Syria, Jordan, and Turkey) and the UN

agencies, to distinguish the humanitarian and political aspects of the conflict, to facilitate dialogue and to secure channels of communication and humanitarian aid delivery to the Syrian civilians.

As a follow up to the Middle East mission, on 4 – 6 December 2013, a high level delegation will meet with the Secretary General of the UN, H.E. Ban Ki-moon, and other UN Senior officials, in New York, in order to prepare for the PAM 2014 action plan, which will be debated and adopted at the Plenary Session to be held in Marseille on 20-22 January 2014.

PAM Delegation

1. Sen. Francesco Maria Amoruso, President of PAM, **Italy**
2. Sen. Lhou Lmarbouh , President of PAM 2nd Standing Committee, **Morocco**
3. Hon. Tadic Ognjen, MEMBER OF THE HOUSE OF PEOPLES PA, **Bosnia and Herzegovina**
4. Hon. Pedro Roque António Oliveira, The Assembly of the Republic of Portugal, **Portugal**.
5. Hon. Nathalie Amoratti-Blanc, Member of the National Council of Monaco, **Monaco**
6. Hon. Zuhair Sanduka, Member of the Palestinian National Council – Vice President of PAM 2nd standing Committee, **Palestine**
7. Sen. Abdouh Abdellatif, Member of the Moroccan Parliament, **Morocco**
8. Sen. Mohamed El Ansari, Member of the Moroccan Parliament, **Morocco**
9. Hon. Majalli Wahaba, PAM Honorary Member and former vice President of the Knesset, **Israel**
10. Amb. Sergio Piazzi, Secretary General of PAM, **Italy**
11. Mr. Mourad Youssry, Deputy Secretary General of PAM, **Egypt**
12. Ms. Mariam Colombo-Pastorelli, Assistant of Hon. AMORATTI-BLANC, **France**
13. Mr. Mahnine Allal, Administrator – Moroccan Parliament, **Morocco**
14. Ms. Angela Scaramuzzi, Personal Interpreter of President Amoruso, **Italy**
15. Ms. Mandilovic Tea, Personal assistant of H.E. Mr. Tadic, **Bosnia and Herzegovina**
16. Ms. Istuk Pavlovic Dubravka, Personal Interpreter of H.E. Mr. Tadic, **Bosnia and Herzegovina**