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Subject: Statement from the Party of European Socialists on the
situation in the Middle East

[IMAGE]

Brussels, 18 April 2002

Statement from the Party of European Socialists on the situation in the Middle East

The Party of European Socialists condemns the loss of civilian life and the massive destruction of infrastructure and homes during the repeated Israeli incursions into the territories under Palestinian authority.

We condemn all acts of terrorism. In particular we condemn the outrages committed by suicide bombers. However, we do not believe that civilian lives in Israel will be protected by inflicting civilian casualties on the Palestinian community. On the contrary, the loss of life, the human suffering and the destruction of whole neighbourhoods are only too likely to recruit a new generation of terrorists. We recall that Sharon won the Israeli elections by promising to create security and are dismayed that instead there is escalating violence.

We call on both parties to the conflict to take the following essential steps to end the cycle of violence.

- The Israeli Defence Forces must withdraw immediately from the West Bank.
- Israel must immediately allow humanitarian organisations and aid into all Palestinian areas and co-operate with the forthcoming inquiry by the UN Human Rights Commission.
- The Palestinian National Authority must give a strong and reliable commitment to preventing terrorism.
- Both sides should return to negotiations based on the principle of 'land for peace', accompanied by the confidence-building measures set out in the Mitchell Plan, such as an end to settlements in the territories under Palestinian Authority.
- The most recent Resolutions (1043, 1402, 1397) of the United Nations Security Council must be fully observed and implemented in accordance with obligations of all UN members states under the UN Charter.

The PES urges the European Union to pursue every possible step to secure an end to the conflict.

- Member states should stand ready to contribute to a monitoring force in the region as part of any agreement reached between the two sides.
- Since the parties themselves do not seem able to end the deadlock, a strong international initiative is necessary. We urge the EU, US and Russia to find a

common approach to a final status settlement and to secure the support of key Arab countries.

- The Association Council with Israel should insist on the observance of human rights and international humanitarian law, which is a condition of all EU agreements with third parties.

- The Council of Ministers should urgently agree to support humanitarian and medical aid to the Palestinian communities and to the regeneration of their neighbourhoods. This must include the renewal of an accountable, efficient and transparent Palestinian Authority.

The Israeli and Palestinian peoples will only achieve lasting security and justice on the basis of the legal right of Israel to peace within internationally recognised borders and the establishment of a viable Palestinian state. We welcome the endorsement by the Arab League of the Saudi proposals, which constitute a basis for negotiation to deliver those objectives.

The PES supports those Israeli and Palestinian organisations working for peace and reconciliation, such as the Palestinian-Israeli Peace Coalition. It calls on the Israeli Labour Party, an observer party of the PES, to support those organisations and their objectives and to understand the deep concern of their partners in Europe over the current actions of the Sharon Government, of which the Party is a member. The PES will seek to bring together people from both communities who want to see a return to the peace process.

The PES firmly rejects all forms of racism. We strongly condemn recent anti-Semitic acts in Europe. We assert the special importance at this time of Europe continuing to demonstrate through tolerance and dialogue that it is possible for communities of different ethnic or religious identity to live and work together in harmony.

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