



THE MINISTER FOR
FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Minister van Buitenlandse Zaken

Minister of Foreign Affairs

Karel Schwarzenberg

Loretánske Nám. 5

118 00 Praha 1

7 January 2009

Dear Karel,

With much interest we have followed your efforts, leading the ministerial troika, to help bring about a cease fire in the Gaza strip. At our Paris meeting of December 30 we reached agreement on the urgent need for an immediate cessation of hostilities, enabling the much needed humanitarian assistance to reach the people of Gaza. The increased fighting, now with the involvement of Israeli ground forces and the resulting civilian casualties and increased humanitarian emergency situation have made these efforts all the more urgent.

We have discussed how we could support your efforts. In this light, we would like to suggest the following:

For adequate humanitarian assistance to go unhindered into Gaza, and for this to reach the people, a cease fire is a condition.

While Israel allows some humanitarian assistance to go into Gaza, this seems to be insufficient and it does not reach the people for whom it is intended. Furthermore, the worsening humanitarian situation is reason for Hamas not to stop its fighting and missile attacks on Israel. This continuation of Hamas hostilities in turn, is reason for Israel to continue its military operation.

For a cease fire to be successful and durable, it is therefore necessary that humanitarian assistance can flow into Gaza, as well as normal imports and exports going in and out. For Israel to agree to a cease fire, it seems crucial that it would not enable Hamas to re-arm.

In the past, Hamas has been able to arm itself through illegal traffic passing the Egyptian-Gazan border. The tunnels and the smuggling have enabled Hamas to acquire vast numbers of rockets and missiles, ammunition and other military equipment. Clearly, the prevention of that to happen again is a crucial element in the bringing about of a sustainable cease fire.

Hence, we suggest the EU offers to the Palestinian Authority and Egypt, and communicates to Israel, that it is prepared to contribute substantially to watertight control and monitoring of the Egyptian-Gazan border, with a view to creating the conditions in which a cease fire would be agreeable to Israel and Hamas and with a view to the opening of the Rafah border crossing for all needed assistance and normal commercial traffic. Such a contribution would build on the experience we have gained since the 2005 agreement and with the EU BAM Rafah. From recent contacts we have had, we have the impression that this would be a welcome commitment, possibly adding just that what is needed to achieve a cease fire. We hope that what you have learned during your contacts, coincides with this. For this to be successful, it seems of great importance to further concretize this idea with Egypt.

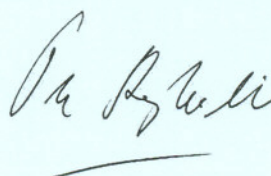
We would add that it is equally important to work with other Arab countries as well. To the parties in the military conflict, it must be clear that the envisaged monitoring force is the result of broad international agreement and commitment. Furthermore, we could offer to initiate a planning process through the Planning Staff in Brussels in order to ensure that an EU-mission - or any other international monitoring operation that would be asked to fulfill the task - would be able to deploy expeditiously after the agreement on a cease-fire.

We are ready to do our utmost to assure a solid contribution from the Netherlands and Denmark to the envisaged EU monitoring force.

We look forward to hearing your reaction. We are ready to assist you in this where and how you want us to. We are sending copies of this letter to our EU colleagues.



Maxime Verhagen
Minister of Foreign Affairs
of The Netherlands



Per Stig Møller
Minister of Foreign Affairs
of Denmark