

THE ROYAL FOREIGN MINISTRY
Committee Chairman Anders Anundsen
Scrutiny and Constitutional Affairs
Parliament, 0026 Oslo

Oslo, April 9, 2013

Re.:The Foreign Ministry's financial contributions to the Palestinian Authority

Referring to the letter from the Committee on Scrutiny and Constitutional Affairs dated April 2, 2013 and previous correspondence, and referring also to my answers to written questions about the same issue from MP Kjell Ingolf Ropstad - No. 1085, No. 1084 and No. 930 (2012-2013).

As far as we can see, the [PA's support] program for Palestinian prisoners in Israeli jails and the development of this program has not been a subject among donor countries before autumn 2012. On the Norwegian side, the support program was not a subject until 2011 either. As far as we can see from our archives in the Foreign Ministry, Norway has therefore not undertaken any investigations of the program for [money] transfers to Palestinian prisoners in Israeli jails before September 5, 2011, except when it obtained some information from the Palestinian Authority (PA) in connection with answering a press inquiry in May of that year.

I discussed this issue with President Abbas and Prime Minister Fayyad in Ramallah on April 4th of this year [2013], when I again made it clear that Norway views aspects of this program as problematic. They informed [me] that the program has existed for a long time and is funded by the Palestinians' own resources. More than half of the PA's budget is financed by [their] own tax and fee revenues, and according to the PA this support program for Palestinian prisoners and their families is independent of the budget support from donor countries. Abbas and Fayyad assured me that this will apply in the future as well. Although it may be difficult to distinguish the budget support from other income [sources], the PA is still required to meet several developmental objectives upon which the PA and the donors have agreed. So far, the donors feel that the PA meets these objectives. In addition, the PA stated that the portion of the funds paid [to the prisoners] as canteen money is channeled through the Israeli authorities.

The PA also confirmed that they are about to complete their response letter to the Norwegian-British inquiry [which contained] more detailed questions about the program. I will return to Parliament as soon as the PA has answered these questions, but in the meantime I do not have an exact date for this.

Kind regards,
Espen Barth Eide

[Norwegian Government's website, accessed April 21, 2013, http://www.regjeringen.no/upload/UD/Vedlegg/stortinget/brev_svar_kkk13409.pdf