

THE ROYAL FOREIGN MINISTRY

Committee Chairman Anders Anundsen
Scrutiny and Constitutional Affairs
Parliament, 0026 Oslo

Oslo, March 19, 2013

Foreign Ministry's financial contributions to the Palestinian Authority

Referring to the letter from the Committee on Scrutiny and Constitutional Affairs dated March 12, 2013.

Norway has been in contact with other donor countries about support programs for Palestinian prisoners (i.e., following PMW's reports). The Norwegian Representative Office to the PA has been in particularly close contact with the British aid agency DfID (Department for International Development), who arranged a meeting between key donors (the UK, Norway, Australia, Germany, France and the EU) about this question in November 2012. In late February this year [2013], (i.e., following PMW's report on Feb. 14 entitled *Is the PA lying to European governments to receive European funding?*), Norway and the UK agreed on drawing up a joint Norwegian-British letter to the Palestinian Authority (PA) with a series of detailed questions about the [support] program [for prisoners]. This letter has been delivered to the PA today [March 19, 2013], at the same time that the donor group (AHLC) is convening in Brussels.

Norway's Representative Office [in the PA] has on several occasions been in touch with the PA about the program for social support to Palestinian prisoners and their families, including in connection with written questions from [Norwegian] Parliament, No. 1905 from 2011 and No. 1876 from 2012, and questions from the Norwegian press in 2011, 2012 and 2013.

As stated in my letter of March 11 this year [2013], the Norwegian Representative Office also brought up the issue with [PA] Prime Minister Salam Fayyad on March 6 this year [2013]. In connection with the meeting in the donor group [AHLC] today in Brussels, I have brought up the matter directly with Prime Minister Fayyad.

Norway and other donors have not at any time backed PA's support program for Palestinian prisoners. The program is fully and completely the PA's responsibility. World Bank requirements and control procedures apply. Nevertheless, Norway has brought up the procedures of the support program with the PA.

In addition, we are following up with the PA through the Norwegian-British letter, in which we among other things are asking for information about the extent and under what circumstances the money has been paid to the families.

Since my response to the Committee on Scrutiny and Constitutional Affairs of March 11 this year [2013], we have been informed that the British authorities have established an understanding with the PA by which the PA promises that the UK's transfers via the World Bank will only go to salaries of public employees. According to the World Bank this applies as of transfers made in mid-March 2013.

The World Bank has reported that like Norway, neither Australia, Canada, Japan, Kuwait nor the World Bank have any kind of earmarking [of their donations] or any other special understandings (i.e., agreements) with PA.

Information that the Norwegian Representative Office [in the PA] obtained from the PA Finance Ministry on Sept. 5, 2011 showed that the support program was the same for Palestinian prisoners in both Palestinian and Israeli prisons. In February 2013, it became apparent that prisoners in Palestinian jails are not included in the same program, but that their families only receive ordinary social support. **In other words, the PA has a special [support] program for Palestinian prisoners in Israeli jails.** (Emphasis added by PMW.)

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs has, as I mentioned in my last letter, made it clear to the PA that we find aspects of the support program problematic. We will continue to follow up on this issue. I will be back with more comprehensive information as soon as we have received a detailed account from the PA.

Sincerely,
Espen Barth Eide
(Foreign Minister)