

To the President of the European Commission

Open letter: Demand for the resignation of Olivér Várhelyi, European Commissioner for Neighbourhood and Enlargement

Strasbourg, 17th October 2023

Dear President,

On October 9th, Olivér Várhelyi suddenly announced on X the immediate suspension of the disbursement of the European development funds dedicated to Palestine, in reaction to the horrific terrorist attacks of Hamas on Israeli civilians on October 7th.

Affirming “there can be no business as usual”, he unilaterally declared: “all payments immediately suspended. All projects put under review. All new budget proposals, incl. for 2023 postponed under further notice. Comprehensive assessment of the whole portfolio”.

Commissioner Várhelyi had no authority to unilaterally decide this, nor to officially communicate this on his social media accounts without this decision being taken with due process. The HR/VP’s ensuing communication set the record straight that such a decision had in fact not been taken with due process. The communication by several Member States opposing the announcement by Mr Várhelyi also indicated that the Council had not been consulted, in breach of inter institutional rules. As expressed by Eric Mamer, the Commission's chief spokesperson, “Commissioner Várhelyi's announcement was not preceded by any consultation with any member of the College”.

Mr Várhelyi’s communication targeted the 691 million euros of EU funds dedicated to development and humanitarian aid in Palestine.

Unilaterally, Mr Várhelyi implied through his communication that EU funds used for the promotion of the rule of law, healthcare, education and civil servants' salaries were likely to have been used to fund Hamas. Yet, according to sources within the Commission, these funds are among the most scrutinized by the Commission.

The European Commission had to rectify on Monday 9th in an official press release, this time, that there would not be any suspension but that an urgent revision of the aid was needed to ensure that “no EU funding indirectly enables a terrorist organisation to carry out attacks against Israel”.

This is not the first time Mr Várhelyi steps out of line and goes against inter-institutional rules. In the context of EU assistance to Palestinians alone, the Commissioner already had suspended the disbursement of 215 million euros of funds on unbased allegations concerning Palestinian schoolbooks.

In February 2023, many of us already called for Mr Várhelyi's resignation after he had referred to MEPs as "idiots" in the Parliament's plenary session.

We no longer condone the offenses of Mr Várhelyi to the EU's institutions and their democratic functioning. We therefore ask Commissioner Várhelyi to resign or for him to be relieved of his duties.

Dear President, the Commission needs to be exemplary in its democratic functioning. Commissioner Várhelyi's actions undermine not only the image of our institutions, but the trust that EU citizens put in the Commission.

Yours sincerely,

Mounir Satouri (Greens/EFA); **Marie Toussaint** (Greens/EFA); **Philippe Lamberts** (Greens/EFA); **Barry Andrews** (Renew Europe); **Giuliano Pisapia** (S&D); **Nathalie Loiseau** (Renew Europe); **Rosa d'Amato** (Greens/EFA); **Malte Gallée** (Greens/EFA); **Manon Aubry** (The Left); **Margrete Auken** (Greens/EFA); **Piernicola Pedicini** (Greens/EFA); **María Soraya Rodríguez Ramos** (Renew Europe); **Thijs Reuten** (S&D); **Matjaž Nemec** (S&D); **Ana Miranda** (Greens/EFA); **Idoia Villanueva Ruiz** (The Left); **Maria Arena** (S&D); **Nikolaj Villumsen** (The Left); **Pierre Larrouturou** (S&D); **Delara Burkhardt** (S&D); **Grace O'Sullivan** (Greens/EFA); **David Cormand** (Greens/EFA); **Caroline Roose** (Greens/EFA); **Damien Carême** (Greens/EFA); **Gwendoline Delbos-Corfield** (Greens/EFA); **Benoît Biteau** (Greens/EFA); **Michèle Rivasi** (Greens/EFA); **François Alfonsi** (Greens/EFA); **Lydie Massard** (Greens/EFA); **Claude Gruffat** (Greens/EFA); **Karima Delli** (Greens/EFA); **Klemen Grošelj** (Renew Europe); **Tineke Strik** (Greens/EFA); **Salima Yenbou** (Renew Europe); **Diana Riba i Giner** (Greens/EFA); **Billy Kelleher** (Renew Europe); **Javier Nart** (Renew Europe); **Maria Walsh** (European People's Party); **Ciarán Cuffe** (Greens/EFA); **Chris MacManus** (The Left); **José Gusmão** (The Left); **Marisa Matias** (The Left); **Bernard Guetta** (Renew Europe); **Samira Rafaela** (Renew Europe); **Domènec Ruiz Devesa** (S&D); **Anna Deparnay-Grunenberg** (Greens/EFA); **Heidi Hautala** (Greens/EFA); **Catherine Chabaud** (Renew Europe); **Evin Incir** (S&D); **Valérie Hayer** (Renew Europe); **Georgios Kyrstos** (Renew Europe); **Eugenia Rodríguez Palop** (The Left); **Giorgos Georgiou** (The Left); **Marc Botenga** (The Left); **Irena Joveva** (Renew Europe); **Raphaël Glucksmann** (S&D); **Aurore Lalucq** (S&D); **Charles Goerens** (Renew Europe); **Niyazi Kizilyurek** (The Left); **Saskia Bricmont** (Greens/EFA); **Sylvie Guillaume** (S&D); **Karen Melchior** (Renew Europe); **Younous Omarjee** (The Left); **Malin Björk** (The Left); **Alice Bah Kuhnke** (Greens/EFA); **Jakop G. Dalunde** (Greens/EFA); **Pär Holmgren** (Greens/EFA); **Pietro Bartolo** (S&D); **Leïla Chaïbi** (The Left); **Ville Niinistö** (Greens/EFA); **Nora Mebarek** (S&D); **Juan Fernando Lopez Aguilar** (S&D); **Brando Benifei** (S&D); **Pascal Durand** (S&D); **Manu Pineda** (The Left)