



EUBAM RAFAH

The European Union Border Assistance Mission for the Rafah Crossing

www.eubam-rafah.eu

Background

On 15 November 2005, the Government of Israel and the Palestinian Authority concluded an 'Agreement on Movement and Access', which included agreed principles for the operation of the Rafah Crossing Point (RCP) on the Gaza-Egypt border. Six days later, on 21 November 2005, The Council of the European Union agreed that the EU should undertake the role and fulfil the responsibilities of the Third Party at the RCP, as envisaged in the Agreement, and launched the European Union Border Assistance Mission for the Rafah Crossing Point (EUBAM Rafah).

The operational phase began on 24 November 2005. On 13 June 2007, following the Hamas takeover in the Gaza Strip, the Mission suspended its operations at the RCP. Since then it has maintained its readiness to redeploy at the RCP including launching a Preparedness Project, designed to enhance the Palestinian Authority's capacity and readiness to return to the RCP.

However, the political and security conditions in the Gaza Strip continue to impede redeployment of the Mission at the RCP, which remains unlikely in the short term.

Mission Facts and Figures

Theatre:	Occupied Palestinian Territories
Headquarters:	Tel Aviv
Starting date:	24 November 2005
Current Mandate:	Effective until 30 June 2024
Head of Mission:	Nataliya Apostolova
Mission strength:	18 (10 int. and 8 local)
Mission budget:	EUR 2 360 000 (1 July 2023 to 30 June 2024)
Contributing states:	All EU Member States can contribute to the Mission

Mandate and objectives

EUBAM Rafah is mandated to provide a Third Party Presence at the RCP in order to contribute to its operation in accordance with the 'Agreement on Movement and Access'. Under its Mandate, the Mission monitors, verifies and evaluates the performance of the Palestinian Authority's Border Police and Custom Services at the RCP and contributes to the confidence-building between the Government of Israel and the Palestinian Authority.

In its current stand-by mode, it enhances the capacity of the Palestinian Authority's border agencies by mentoring its personnel from the General Administration for Border and Crossings (GABC) on border related issues, to achieve a modern and sustainable border management system in line with international standards.

Implementation of the Mandate

In implementing its Mandate, the Mission undertakes a number of actions including training sessions, workshops, and study visits. They focus on topics such as border management, detecting and preventing smuggling, cross border crime, risk analysis and information sharing, cooperation between customs and judicial authorities, in addition to human rights, gender equality and women's empowerment.

Besides the capacity building activities, EUBAM Rafah continues through dedicated Action Plans to support GABC in implementing its 'Business and Integrated Border Management Strategies' drafted with support from the Mission. An additional number of projects have been identified to further enhance Palestinian border control capacities.

EUBAM Rafah is fully dedicated to the inclusion of human rights and gender perspective in all of its activities, both within the Mission and while working with its Palestinian counterparts.

Cooperation with stakeholders

The Mission retains its expertise in Border Management and Customs Operations and is regularly approached to share its expertise with other stakeholders involved in borders and crossings issues. EUBAM Rafah continues to liaise with all relevant parties on a regular basis including, but not limited to, GABC and the Coordinator of Government Activities in the Territories (COGAT).

The synergies of the EU Integrated Approach continues to play a vital role vis-à-vis the implementation of the Mandate. Close cooperation with the Office of the European Union Representative has enabled the Mission to support its counterpart in the implementation of Twinning and TAIEX (Technical Assistance and Information Exchange Instrument of the European Commission) projects.

Other programmes have been successfully established as part of the Integrated Approach, e.g. with the *Office Européen de Lutte Anti-Fraude* (OLAF) and the European Border and Coast Guard Agency (FRONTEX).

EUBAM Rafah also cooperates on the technical level with EUPOL COPPS (the EU Coordination Office for Palestinian Police Support) – the EU Police and Rule of Law Mission for the Palestinian Territories, based in the West Bank.





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EUBAM Rafah mission members training staff from the General Administration for Borders and Crossings as part of the Preparedness Project, designed to enhance the Palestinian Authority's capacity and readiness to return to the Rafah Crossing Point.

Achievements and Progress

As part of the Preparedness Project, the Mission has been engaged in a number of activities to enhance the Palestinian Authority's capacity on border issues.

Since its initiation, the main strategic documents, such as an Integrated Border Management Strategy, a Business Strategy and the Joint Redeployment Plan have been drafted, completed and adopted by GABC. These documents, aimed to ensure an effective management of the RCP, are continuously updated.

In terms of capacity building activities, numerous trainings, workshops and study visits have been conducted as part of the Preparedness Project. These have involved GABC senior and middle management as well as personnel employed at the border and local stakeholders, e.g. Representatives from the Public Prosecutor's Office and from the Customs Court.

Promoting local buy-in of these activities and projects has been a part of the process to ensure sustainability along with training of trainers, aimed at building up a pool of competent instructors for the border administration.

Mission State of Play

Despite the suspension of operations at the RCP in June 2007, EUBAM Rafah has maintained its capacity to rapidly redeploy.

The European Council has reaffirmed, on numerous occasions, the EU's readiness to reactivate EUBAM Rafah, once political and security conditions allow.

In 2014, the Mission started the implementation of the Preparedness Project, to enhance the PA's capacity and readiness to return to the RCP.

In 2015, a Joint Road Map was signed with the Mission's Palestinian counterparts in this regard, which enhanced cooperation with the Mission in working on strategies and policies, in addition to training activities.

2016 Integrated Border Management Strategy was developed and has been gradually implemented with Mission assistance. In this regard, EUBAM Rafah funded a "Training Center" (fully operational since 2017). The TC provides in-person and distant learning courses and other learning activities and services to GABC personnel and to the personnel of the seven agencies under its umbrella. The Mission played also a crucial role in establishing of the GABC Command and Control Centre (CCC), which enhances efficiency of coordination among all the GABC agencies.

In 2018, using the short-term PA control of the RCP, EUBAM Rafah's experts did a Comprehensive Technical Assessment of the RCP and their findings represent a solid base for training and other capacity building activities preparing GABC services personnel for future redeployment at the RCP.



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Currently, the Mission focuses on supporting GABC in enhancing border and anti-smuggling control, based on intelligence-oriented approach and on strengthening GABC operational staff's ability to operate the terminal in accordance with international standards, in regard to advanced border-control related activities and the use of new/state-of-art technologies or training on specialised skills. EUBAM Rafah has also intensified its cooperation with the other relevant EU missions and agencies, EU member states and other international stakeholders to support the PA on border-related matters with a view to a return to the RCP.

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