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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

on Prince El Hassan bin Talal's "How Europe could be a force for good in the Middle East"

by [Jamila Madeira](#)

Sir,

Over the past 50 years, dialogue has been the foundation of Europe's steady progress towards peace, democracy and respect for human rights. The ability of EU nations to listen to one another's views is still a vital guarantor of success for the never-ending European project. Prince El Hassan bin Talal says this "heritage of hope" could provide a model for the great challenge of the 21st century: the reconciliation of the western and Islamic worlds. I agree completely that our history can help Europe to act as a mediator in the Middle East. However, there is still a lot of work to do before such hopes become reality.



[> Original Article](#)

by [Prince El Hassan bin Talal](#)

The desire to increase multilateral dialogue was a major factor behind Portugal's determination to host an EU-Africa summit and to improve EU-Mediterranean relations during their presidency last year. By setting these priorities, Portugal aimed to raise awareness of the issues connecting Europe and her southern neighbours, and to bring forward EU concerns over the fundamental principles of peace, democracy and human rights. Portugal's objective was not to reach unanimity on all subjects; such over-ambition would hardly be constructive. Instead, the aim was to create a framework that would be favourable for further progress. In this sense, the Portuguese initiative can be considered a success.

I believe that future development of EU policies towards the Mediterranean and Africa requires us to look beyond mere investment. For more than a decade, much of the huge EU aid and development effort has been wasted due to inter-regional wars, which are often supported by outside elements. When ever a development partner breaks its commitments to peace, especially those in the Middle East, the Union must stick to its fundamental principles of promoting peace, democracy and human rights.

Therefore, I support Prince El Hassan's call for a Charter for Stability to respond to the concerns of people in the Middle East over such vital matters as land ownership, the economy, demography and supranational cooperation. I also agree that such a Charter must go beyond short-term national policies and cover all aspects of investment in the region. A Charter must also guarantee the primacy of democratic principles and respect for human rights. Together with full recognition by all parties of the Palestinian borders of 1967, this Charter could help assure a peaceful future for the region.

Given the need for such a holistic approach in the Middle East – one which clearly incorporates human rights – I believe the alternative proposals for renewed EU-Mediterranean relations from French President Nicholas Sarkozy are inadequate. Sarkozy wants us to revitalize discourse and action in the region. But he fails to address the critical issue of intra-regional relations, which has seen some EU member states tending to go-it-alone. Moreover, Sarkozy seems satisfied to consider investment in infrastructure in isolation, rather than taking on board investment in people and human rights too.

I believe that peace in the Middle East requires us to travel in hope in the company of people who believe in a peaceful and democratic future for the region, and for us to maintain a steadfast commitment to the values that helped Europe to meet its great challenge of reconciliation in the 20th century.

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