

Thursday 13 March 2025

Dear Kaja Kallas, High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, EC Vice-President,
Dear Dubravka Šuica, Commissioner for the Mediterranean,

Cc: Hadja Lahbib, Commissioner for Equality; Preparedness and Crisis Management

Re: occupied Palestinian territory and neighbourhood countries

The situation for Palestinians living in Gaza and the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, remains desperately challenging.

The ceasefire that our organisations have long called for in Gaza has provided some respite from the military offensive. But for a population that has been traumatised, had their homes and livelihoods destroyed, and had severely limited access to water, food, and other essentials, daily life remains extremely difficult. Israel's decision to block aid to over two million Palestinians in the Gaza Strip as Ramadan begins is a deliberate obstruction of aid, which would constitute a grave breach of the Fourth Geneva Convention and a war crime under international law. As the occupying power, Israel is legally bound under Article 59(1) of the Fourth Geneva Convention to allow and facilitate aid to reach civilians across Gaza and all occupied Palestinian territory.

Across the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, Israeli military activity continues to increase, placing more lives at risk every day. More than 40,000 Palestinians have been forcibly displaced in recent weeks, with no prospect of a return to their homes in the near future. Settler violence continues to threaten Palestinian lives, homes, livelihoods, and dignity. Increased number of roadblocks and military checkpoints are making any movement for Palestinians even more difficult and dangerous. Access to health and education across the West Bank is worsening.

The scale of Israel's military operation of the last 15 months is such that the European Union, World Bank, and United Nations estimate as part of their interim damage and needs assessment that US\$53.2billion is required for recovery and reconstruction over the next three years.

Furthermore, Israel has been repeatedly attacking Lebanon and Syria unilaterally in the past weeks, undermining the path for stability and recovery and putting these countries and their people at heightened risk. Many have been killed, and significant humanitarian assistance is needed.

During the EU-Israel Association Council in February, the European Union and Member States had the opportunity to press and use their diplomatic leverage for Israel to comply with its obligations under international law. In the aftermath of the Association Council, actions from the EU are still possible and more than ever needed.

Words alone are not enough. As international NGOs contributing to the humanitarian response, we urge you to work towards a peaceful and just future for Palestinians and neighbouring countries.

- The European Union must call on the government of Israel to abide by its legal obligation under international humanitarian law to provide unimpeded access to humanitarian aid for people living both in Gaza and across the occupied Palestinian territory. The European Union should make clear that its partner organisations and other aid providers should be able to reach all those in urgent need.
- We call on you to use engagements with the government of Israel to end deadly military operations and settler violence in the West Bank, allow all displaced Palestinians to return home, and for aid provisions to be increased. We urge you to continue to clearly oppose settler violence, which is increasing and harming communities now, and harming prospects of Palestinians peacefully living on their land.

- We urge you to work with Member States to ensure the implementation of the International Court of Justice (ICJ) Advisory Opinion of July 2024 and subsequent UNGA resolution, and seek clear actions ending the occupation of Palestinian territory by Israel. It should be clear that you, and the EU more widely, are prepared to take necessary measures in September if the occupation is continuing at that point. Therefore, we urge you to mandate your services to prioritise an independent and thorough analysis of the EU's implementation and actions in accordance with the ICJ Advisory Opinion as a first step.
- We call on you to ensure that aid actors can continue to operate in the occupied Palestinian territory: through continued financial and political support for UNRWA, whose role is irreplaceable and who provides not just lifesaving aid but also critical education, healthcare, and social protection services; through continuously using diplomatic engagement to oppose the arbitrary application of restrictions on the registrations of international organisations; and to oppose restrictions on Israeli organisations that do much good work to support those in need.
- We call on you to urgently ensure continued EU financial support for essential services provided by the Palestinian Authority to the populations it serves. It is critical that the EU does not delay financial support while Palestinians require continuous and urgent access to healthcare and essential services.
- We urge you to take the necessary diplomatic, economic and legal actions to stop further Israeli attacks on civilians and violation of international humanitarian law across the region.

The EU has an important role to play, with the necessary diplomatic tools at hand, working alongside others, to end the violence, ensure lifesaving aid assistance, promote recovery and reconstruction.

Your role is critical to delivering the actions needed to achieve these aims.

Yours,



Jan Egeland, Secretary General,
Norwegian Refugee Council



Charlotte Slente, Secretary General,
Danish Refugee Council



Amitabh Behar, Executive Director, Oxfam
International



Manuel Patrouillard, Global Managing Director,
Handicap International – Humanity & Inclusion



Craig Redmond, CEO, Relief International



Raymond Johansen, Secretary General,
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Anna Tiblin, Secretary General, WeEffect



Dalell D. Mohamed, Executive Director, Kinder USA



Tsafir Cohen, Executive Director, medico international



Maria Nyman, Secretary General, Caritas Europa

and



Waseem Ahmed, Chief Executive, Islamic Relief Worldwide

Barbara Archetti, President, Vento di Terra NGO; Niamh Nic Carthaigh, Head of EU Office, & Senior EU Representative, Plan International