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EUROPEAN CIVIL SOCIETY - URGENT CALL TO STOP THE GENOCIDE

Friday 22 March 2024, by [159 European civil society organisations and trade unions](#), [European Coordination of Committees and Associations for Palestine](#) (Date first published: 12 March 2024).

159 European civil society organisations and trade unions sent an urgent letter to the EU officials and European decision makers expressing an urgent need to act in line with the ICJ ruling to fulfil their obligations as third states and stop the genocide in Gaza.

President Ursula von der Leyen

Executive Vice-President Valdis Dombrovskis

European Commission

Mr Charles Michel

President of the European Council

Ms Roberta Metsola

President of the European Parliament

Prime Minister Alexander De Croo

Presidency of the Council of the European Union

Mr Josep Borrell

High Representative of the European Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy

Prime ministers of all EU member states

Mr. Rishi Sunak

Prime minister of the United Kingdom

Mr. Jonas Gahr Støre

Prime minister of Norway,

Dear Madam/Sir,

The undersigned organisations call upon the EU and all European countries to take an immediate step to **halt the looming ground invasion of Israel into Rafah and force Israel to stop all acts**

of genocide by all means. There will be no other chance.

The UN and human rights organisations warn of an irreversible catastrophe following a ground invasion into Rafah, where 1,4 million displaced Palestinians are crammed into improvised shelters without anywhere to escape. Egypt and the humanitarian community will be confronted with an unacceptable dilemma: to assist the ethnic cleansing of Gaza in order to save lives or let the mass murder be completed. **It is the last chance for the international community to act. Without a decisive act of the international community, the annihilation of Gaza will be completed.**

More than 155 days into the war against the entire population of Gaza, the moral failure of the international community to impose an immediate ceasefire has contributed to this unprecedented "[crisis of humanity](#)". What has been unfolding in Gaza defies all humanity. We have been calling on you to take action to prevent this catastrophe from unfolding. The UN Secretary General, UN experts, human rights organisations and millions of citizens around the globe have been calling in one voice: an immediate and unconditional ceasefire and unrestricted access of humanitarian aid to Gaza.

We have noted that [26 EU member states](#) have called for "an immediate humanitarian pause", which is a move ahead bypassing the consensus restriction, but falling far short of an urgently necessary lasting ceasefire. We reiterate [the recent call](#) by the European Parliament for an "immediate and permanent cease-fire."

Yet, **history tells us that such a call without any enforceable measures will not lead to compliance by the Israeli government. We call on you not to repeat the past mistake of meaningless reproaches while the Israeli government continues to pursue *fait accompli*.** They have only served to give time to Israel to continue expanding illegal settlements, expropriating Palestinian lands and resources, destroying lives, properties and communities, and entrenching its occupation with oppressive and discriminatory laws and practices. All of which amount to war crimes and crimes against humanity. Your inaction has failed the Palestinian people for the past 57 years and has been accomplice in the potential genocide in the last 155 days. In the meantime, Palestine has disintegrated into disconnected small Bantustans with little hope for a viable state. The collective punishment imposed on Gaza in the past 17 years has turned into a grinding genocidal machine that is almost reaching its final goal. There is no time for the same failed attempt. Each single passing day costs lives.

The declaration of the Israeli government to extend their military operation into Rafah comes after the ruling of the international Court of Justice (ICJ) in response to the application by [South Africa accusing Israel of committing Genocide](#). The court confirmed that at least some of South Africa's claims are plausible and ordered Israel to allow unhindered humanitarian access and stop all acts of genocide. 45 days after this provisional ruling, it has been clear that Israel blatantly ignored the orders of the world's highest court. The indiscriminate killing and maiming of civilians, extensive destruction of civilian infrastructure, including hospitals and facilities of sanitation, and the targeting of medics and journalists have never stopped following the ICJ ruling. Humanitarian access has been even more severely restricted than prior to this ruling. As almost all hospitals are either destroyed or have been made dysfunctional, people are facing preventable death due to the lack of medical treatment. Already famine and contagious diseases began to claim lives. An even higher death toll is expected in the absence of an urgent intervention.

As the defiance of the Israeli government against the ICJ ruling becomes clearer, **the responsibility of third states to force Israel to comply becomes more compelling.** In case of grave breaches of international law such as genocide, third states have both passive and active responsibilities: "not to assist" and to actively "prevent" the commission of such international crimes. The international

community must fulfil such obligations by all means available. First of all, all activities that directly assist the commission of ongoing genocide must come to an end. **All military assistance and weapon sales to Israel must be banned.**

[UN experts have welcomed the announcement to suspend arms transfers to Israel by Spain, Italy and the regional Walloon government of Belgium.](#) The Hague court of appeal ordered the Dutch government to halt [the export of F-35 fighter jet parts](#) to Israel citing a clear risk of them being used in grave human rights violations, clearly echoing the ICJ. While we await the implementation of these decisions without a delay, **we demand all European governments to impose a comprehensive arms embargo with immediate effect.** [As stated by the HRVP Josep Borrell himself](#), it is illogical to keep on supplying weapons while expressing concern for the excessive civilian death in Gaza. Countries such as the US, UK, Germany, Canada and France that continue to supply weapons to Israel are enabling Israel to continue its human rights violations **and run a grave risk of being complicit in genocide.**

In order to fulfil the ICJ provisional measures **to ensure humanitarian access**, all states must support and protect the humanitarian community. Almost instantly after the ICJ provisional ruling, Israel came up with allegations that 12 employees of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA) were involved in the Hamas attack on 7 October last year. Several states including the US, UK, Australia, Austria, Finland, the Netherlands and Sweden rushed to suspend their funding to UNRWA, in spite of the fact that the agency promptly fired the accused individuals and started an internal investigation **although Israel has failed to provide any evidence until present.**

The unusually quick action of these states against UNRWA based on an unproven allegation, that concerns only less than 0.1% of all the UNRWA employees is truly astonishing. The humanitarian community, including the new [UN coordinator for humanitarian aid and reconstruction in Gaza, Sigrid Kaag](#), responded by arguing that UNRWA's role in providing humanitarian assistance is absolutely essential and irreplaceable. This huge drawback will severely compromise the ability of UNRWA to provide essential humanitarian assistance to Palestinian refugees in this most critical time in recent history. UNRWA is the only life-line for millions of Palestinians, even more so under the current circumstances in Gaza. **Defunding UNRWA is a blatant negation of the ICJ provisional measures and an unacceptable insult to the heroic humanitarian organisation** that operates under extremely difficult circumstances. Civil society organisations in these countries have been calling to reverse the irresponsible decision. We thank a few European countries, namely Belgium, Ireland, Spain and Norway for expressing continued support to UNRWA. We also welcome the decision of the EU to continue the funding to UNRWA, reflecting the following statement by the HRVP Josep Borrell: "Defunding UNRWA would be both disproportionate and dangerous. ". We repeat our call on these reckless countries who withdrew their support to UNRWA to reverse their decision and act in accordance with the obligations arising from the ICJ ruling. **These countries may all face an allegation of assisting genocide, as already exemplified by [the case filed against Germany before the ICJ](#).***

It is finally time for Europe to exercise the strongest leverage possible as the largest trading partner of Israel, accounting for almost 30 % of Israeli trade in goods. We welcome [the recent request of Spain and Ireland](#) to review the human rights conduct of Israel as stipulated in Article 2 of **the EU-Israel Association Agreement**. Many of the signatories to this letter have demanded its immediate suspension time and again. Colossal volumes of human rights violations by Israel have been documented by the UN, UN experts and human rights organisations over decades and they now have been exposed in the courtroom, as the ICJ is holding another hearing [on the legal consequences of Israel's occupation of the Palestinian territory](#) upon a request by the UN General Assembly. Together with the earlier hearing in which Israel was accused of the crime of genocide,

these bodies of evidence presented necessitate no further research. We demand that all European countries urgently proceed with similar economic, political and diplomatic measures on the basis of their own bilateral agreements with Israel

Suspension of the EU-Israel association agreement and similar trade measures by major European countries, complemented by **a coordinated total arms embargo** are the only way to stop the ongoing genocide in Gaza.

It is time to put Europe's moral principles into action and show that its commitment to human rights is genuine.

Failing to act now means the total abandonment of the Palestinian people as well as of the entire system of international law with the UN at its centre with very dangerous global consequences. It may even entail complicity to genocide. The UN charter and various conventions are built on the sacred pledge of "never again", to salvage humanity from the scourges of war and wanton destruction. You have a moral duty to preserve that spirit.

[PDF](#)

Signatories:

EUROPE

1. European Coordination of Committees and Associations for Palestine (ECCP),
2. European Trade Union Network for Justice in Palestine,

AUSTRIA

1. Society for Austro-Arab Relations, Vienna
2. Women in Black Vienna
3. Not in Our Name Vienna
4. Palestine Solidarity Austria
5. One State Embassy Art Collective, Vienna
6. Peace Platform Styria
7. Palestine Initiative Tyrol
8. Palestine Solidarity Styria

BELGIUM

1. Pax Christi International,
2. Pax Christi Flanders,
3. Union des Progressistes Juifs de Belgique UPJB (Union of Progressive Jews of Belgium),
4. Entraide&Fraternité (Mutual Aid & Fraternity),
5. Association Belgo-Palestinienne (ABP),
6. Viva Salud,
7. Soutien Belge Overseas, (Belgian Support Overseas),
8. Palestina Solidariteit (Palestine Solidarity),
9. Vrede vzw (Peace),
10. Belgian Academics and Artists for Palestine (BA4P)

FINLAND

1. Vasemmisto-opiskelijat / Left-Students of Finland,

2. Friends of the Earth,
3. Finnish Peace Committee – Suomen Rauhanpuolustajat,
4. Sumud – The Finnish Palestine Network,
5. Israeli Committee Against House Demolitions – Finland,
6. Nahlieli – Jews for Justice in Palestine,
7. Finnish-Arab Friendship Society,
8. Psykologien Sosiaalinen Vastuu ry,
9. Peace Union of Finland,
10. PAND,
11. Tekniikka elämää palvelemaan – Tekniken i livets tjänst r.y. (Technology for Life),
12. Naiset Rauhan Puolesta/Women for Peace,
13. Naiset Atomivoimaa Vastaan/Women Against Nuclear Power,
14. Global Social Work ngo,
15. Fem-R,
16. Aseistakieltäytyjäliitto,

FRANCE

1. Pax Christi,
2. Association France Palestine Solidarité (AFPS),
3. Plateforme des ong Françaises pour la Palestine,
4. Chrétiens de la Méditerranée,
5. CEDETIM,
6. Délégué Général,
7. Alfonso Zardi,
8. Campagne BDS France

GERMANY

1. Kairos Europa,
2. Kommunistische-Organisation.de,
3. Pax christi Erding Dorfen,
4. Pax christi Dioezesanverband Rottenburg-Stuttgart
5. Council of Peace,
6. Kairos Palästina Solidaritätsnetz (KPS),
7. Israeli Committee Against House Demolitions – Germany,
8. Jewish-Palestinian Dialogue Group Munich,
9. Friends of Sabeel,
10. Students for Palestine Bonn,
11. Solidarische Kirche im Rheinland,
12. The european alliance in defence of the Palestinian detainees,
13. Ulmer Weltladen,
14. Bonn-Ramallah Partnership Association e.V.,
15. Deutsch-Palästinensischer Frauenverein e.V. ,
16. Palästina Initiative Region Hannover,
17. Bremer Friedensforum,
18. BDS Berlin,
19. Deutscher Friedensrat,
20. Friend of Bethlehem in Cologne,
21. Frauen in Schwarz München,
22. Friedenstreff Rüsselsheim und Umgebung,
23. BIP – Bündnis für Gerechtigkeit zwischen Israelis und Palästinensern,

24. Palästinensische Gemeinde in Koblenz und Umgebung e.V.,
25. International Munich Peace Conference,
26. RDS,
27. Gruppe Frauen wagen Frieden,
28. Palästina-Friedenstiftung-Rachel Corrie,
29. Flüchtlingskinder im Libanon e.V.,
30. Antikriegs-AG Aufstehen Bonn,
31. Palästina Spricht,
32. Arbeitskreis Marburger WissenschaftlerInnen für Friedens- und Abrüstungsforschung,
33. AK Palästina, Tübingen,
34. Durlacher Forum,
35. Bündnis für Gerechtigkeit zwischen Israelis und Palästinensern e. V.,
36. Free Palestine Saarbrücken,
37. Palästina Forum Nahost,
38. Salam Shalom Arbeitskreis Palästina-Israel e.V.,
39. Al Salam eV.,
40. Hannefriedel Meyer-Faude,
41. Aufstehen-Steinlach-Wiesaz,
42. Friedensforum Kreis Unna,
43. Attac Hagen,
44. Bielefelder Nahost-Initiative,
45. Nahostgruppe Mannheim,
46. Solidarität International e.V.,
47. Bönener für Bönener,
48. IHV Bonn,
49. Palestinian Community Germany e.V,
50. Union for palestinian communities,institutions and events in Europe,
51. Attack - Dresden,
52. Arbeiterwohlfahrt Kamen,
53. PalästinaForum Nahost Frankfurt,
54. Sammlungsbewegung aufstehen,
55. Internationaler Versöhnungsbund deutscher Zweig
56. Palästina Friedensstiftung
57. Bonn-Ramallah Partnerschaft

ITALY

1. Defence for Children International Italia,
2. CULTURA È LIBERTÀ una campagna per la Palestina,
3. Permanent Peoples' Tribunal - General Secretariat,
4. BDS Torino,
5. ODV SALAAM RAGAZZI DELL' OLIVO DI TRIESTE,
6. Assopacepalestina Firenze,
7. Evang. Pfarrer,
8. Assopacepalestina national association,
9. Associazione Gazzella,
10. Lilliput,
11. Rete Romana di Solidarietà con il Popolo Palestinese,
12. Comitato "Fermiamo la guerra" - Firenze,
13. donne in nero bari,
14. AWMR Italia Donne della Regione Mediterranea,

15. New weapons research group,
16. Comitato Fiorentino Fermiamo La Guerra,
17. Salaam Ragazzi dell'Olio-Milano-ONLUS,
18. Sinistra Progetto Comune,
19. Comitato Piazza Carlo Giuliani ODV,
20. Comunità Isolotto,
21. Italian Network of Women in Black,
22. Transform!Italia,
23. Firenze Citta Aperta,
24. Comitato Fiorentino Fermiamo la Guerra

THE NETHERLANDS

1. The Rights Forum,
2. A Different Jewish Voice,
3. SFFilm,
4. Groningen for Palestine,
5. Urban Green Deals,
6. docP - BDS Netherlands,
7. Stichting Groningen-Jabalya,
8. Planteenolijfboom,
9. Overijssel voor Palestina,

PALESTINE

1. Defence for Children International - Palestine,

SLOVENIA

1. Slovene Philanthropy,
2. Humanitas - Center for Global Education and Cooperation,
3. Umanotera, Slovenska fundacija za trajnostni razvoj (Umanotera - the Slovenian Foundation for a Sustainable Development),
4. Zavod Volontariat (Institute for and about volunteer work),
5. Youth for Climate Justice,
6. Studentska Organizacija Iskra (Student organisation ISKRA),
7. Sindikat Glosa - **trade union**,
8. Cedra - Center for social research - **trade union**,
9. Trade union of professional firefighters of Slovenia - **trade union**,
10. Participativna Ljubljanska Avtonomna Cona (The Ljubljana Participative Autonomous Zone),
11. Borec Journal,
12. Zavod za podporo civilnodružbenih iniciativ in multikulturno sodelovanje Pekarna Magdalenske mreže Maribor ((Institute for the Support of Civil Society Initiatives and Multicultural Cooperation The Bakery The Magdalene Network, Maribor),
13. ZaŽivali!, društvo za uveljavitev njihovih pravic ((For the Animals! Association for the Acknowledgement of Their Rights),
14. Iniciativa Mestni Zbor Maribor ((Initiative of Self-organized Communities Maribor),
15. Organizacija za participatorno družbo ((The Organization for a Participatory Society),
16. Društvo OV-CA (Association for Awareness and Protection - Centre for anti Discrimination),
17. Zavod Bob ((Institute for Educational and Cultural Activities),
18. DRUŠTVO POGLEJ ("Look", Society for All-life Assistance),
19. PROJA Institut ((Institute Justice through Action),

SPAIN

1. CIG trade union – Galicia

SWEDEN

1. Swedish Peace and Arbitration Society (SPAS),
2. The Palestine Solidarity Association in Sweden (Palestinagrupperna i Sverige-PGS),
3. Kairos Palestine Sweden,

UK

1. Israeli Committee Against House Demolitions – UK,
-

P.S.

- European Coordination of Committees and Associations for Palestine. 12 March 2024 :
<https://www.eccpalestine.org/european-civil-society-urgent-call-to-stop-the-genocide/>