

CEASEFIRE IN GAZA MUST MARK THE START OF LONG-TERM POLITICAL CHANGE IN THE OCCUPIED PALESTINIAN TERRITORY AND ISRAEL

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CIDSE welcomes the long-overdue ceasefire achieved between Israel and Hamas. The ceasefire comes as a relief, and it is heartening to see Israeli hostages and Palestinian detainees¹ reunited with their loved ones. However, in Gaza in particular, and across the region we mourn so many destroyed lives, including the staff of our local civil society partner organisations. Our thoughts are with their grieving families.

Over the past 15 months, Gaza has been reduced to an apocalyptic landscape, and civilians have suffered intolerably. More than [46,600 Palestinians](#), most of them civilians, have been killed, and an additional 11,000 Palestinians have been reported missing or remain trapped under the rubble. The man-made humanitarian crisis inflicted upon Gaza by Israel is enormous and acute. After being forcibly displaced repeatedly and living in makeshift tents without the most basic supplies, people are now returning to their homes only to find them reduced to rubble. The healthcare system in Gaza has been largely destroyed, the education system erased, and places of worship bombed. Gaza, as we knew it, is gone.

It is now of utmost importance that international aid organisations and humanitarian workers have unimpeded access to provide essential assistance such as food, fuel, and medical supplies. Humanitarian workers must have freedom of movement in all parts of Gaza. This is crucial to rebuilding the healthcare system, tending to the more than 110,000 wounded, and addressing the collective trauma inflicted upon Gaza's population.

CIDSE also stresses the importance of allowing independent international investigators and journalists into Gaza immediately. Their work will be vital in collecting evidence and testimonies from victims to finally hold all perpetrators of war crimes and violations of international humanitarian law accountable.

The cease-fire brought no relief in the West Bank. The situation there worsened rapidly alongside the war in Gaza, and particularly in the immediate days after the ceasefire. Over the past week, the Israeli army blocked most access points to and from Palestinian villages,

¹ Many of the Palestinian detainees are being unlawfully held in particular the detainees from Gaza who are held incommunicado, without access to lawyers, family or even visits by the ICRC, and without receiving adequate food, hygiene or medical care. See also CIDSE's publication: <https://www.cidse.org/2024/05/23/the-appalling-situation-of-palestinian-detainees-in-israeli-prisons/>

and all the cities in the West Bank. The Israeli military assault in the Northern West Bank has [killed](#) at least 12 Palestinians, cause large-scale destruction in the City of Jenin and forces hundreds of civilians to [flee](#). Our partners also documented coinciding spikes in violent [attacks by settlers](#) who set Palestinian homes and vehicles on fire. The annexation of Palestinian land continues unchecked, and the forced displacement of entire communities has [surged](#) since October 7th. The current escalation in the West Bank is a painful reminder that violence will not end unless the root causes are addressed.

The truce must now serve as a steppingstone toward long-term efforts for a just political solution. The EU and its member states, together with international and regional partners, must ensure this by committing to upholding international law and ensuring accountability. A just solution requires legitimate Palestinian self-rule throughout the Palestinian territory and an end to illegal Israeli occupation, as also [mandated](#) by the International Court of Justice and the [UN General Assembly](#). Only through a firm commitment to a long-term resolution can a new escalation of violence be prevented and a just, lasting peace be achieved.

Read more on the ceasefire by our members:

[Maryknoll OGC Joins Letter to Congress Cautioning Against Sanctions for the ICC](#), from Maryknoll (USA).

[Gaza ceasefire welcome but it is 15 months and over 46,645 lives too late](#), from Trócaire (Ireland).

[Staakt-het-vuren, een eerste stap](#), from Broederlijk Delen (Belgium), in Dutch.

[CAFOD statement on Gaza ceasefire](#), from CAFOD (UK).

[Declaration of the Catholic Ordinaries on the Ceasefire in Gaza](#), from SCIAF (Scotland).

Contact: Dorien Vanden Boer, Israel & occupied Palestinian Territory Policy Officer,
vandenboer(at)cidse.org

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