

CIDSE Statement

Call for an immediate response to halt the violence in the OPT and Israel and tackle its root causes.

19 May 2021

CIDSE is calling upon the EU and member states to take urgent action to bring to an immediate end all violence in the occupied Palestinian territory (OPT) and Israel.

Over the last week, violence in the OPT and Israel severely escalated. It came amidst Palestinian mobilization against Israel's discriminatory policies of forced displacement, in particular home evictions, that are set to transfer and dispossess Palestinians from the Neighborhoods of Sheikh Jarrah and Silwan in East Jerusalem. The Israeli forces' assaults on Palestinian worshippers in Al-Aqsa Mosque and in and around the Old City of Jerusalem during Ramadan, resulted in hundreds of Palestinians being injured between May 7th and 10th.¹ There has also been violence documented about Israeli Jewish extremists and police brutalities towards Palestinian citizens of Israel,² as well as violence between Palestinian and Jewish Israelis. Hamas responded by firing rockets towards Israel, leading to 10 people in Israel being killed, among them two children.³ The indiscriminate firing of rockets towards civilian centers is a violation of international humanitarian law (IHL).

Starting on 10 May 2021, Israeli forces intensified attacks and missile strikes on the Gaza Strip. At the same time the Israeli government continues to impose a 13 yearlong illegal blockade upon the densely populated coastal area. This collective punishment, illegal under international law,⁴ has brought Gaza to the brink, rendering it unlivable.⁵ The people of Gaza have no way to escape the violence and destruction, and have difficulty accessing essential services and goods.

According to the Palestinian Center for Human Rights, from May 10th till 17th, in Gaza 213 Palestinians have been killed, amongst them 61 children.⁶ UNOCHA reports more than 1400 injured in Gaza, among them 444 children, and 22 Palestinians killed and 4824 injured in the West Bank and East Jerusalem since May 10th.⁷ In Gaza essential infrastructure, such as electricity feeder lines, water and sanitation networks, hospitals and roads leading to hospitals have been destroyed, resulting in a lack of access to basic services for the people in Gaza.

¹ <http://webtv.un.org/watch/ohchr-press-briefing-escalation-of-violence-in-the-occupied-palestinian-territory-geneva-11-may-2021/6253647997001/>.

² <https://www.adalah.org/en/content/view/10317>.

³ <https://www.ochaopt.org/content/escalation-gaza-strip-west-bank-and-israel-flash-update-6-12-00-16-may-2021>.

⁴ Collective punishment violates the Hague Conventions as well as article 33 of the Fourth Geneva Convention. See Diakonia International Humanitarian Law Resource Center, "Guilty by association. Israel's collective punishment policies in the oPt", October 2016. p.4. <https://www.diakonia.se/globalassets/blocks-ihl-site/ihl-file-list/ihl-briefs/guilty-by-association-israels-collective-punishment-policies-in-the-opt.pdf>.

⁵ In 2012 the UN already issued a report warning that Gaza would become unlivable by 2020 unless fundamental change was made and Gaza was given open access to the outside world. Gaza in 2020: A liveable place? A report by the United Nations Country Team in the occupied Palestinian territory, August 2012. https://unsco.unmissions.org/sites/default/files/gaza_in_2020_a_liveable_place_english.pdf.

⁶ <https://www.pchrgaza.org/en/day-9-of-israeli-offensive-on-gaza-houses-bombarded-and-more-civilians-displaced/>.

⁷ <https://www.ochaopt.org/content/escalation-gaza-strip-west-bank-and-israel-flash-update-8-1200-18-may-2021>.

In addition, schools, family homes, shops and international press offices have been damaged or destroyed.⁸ The destruction has led to tens of thousands of Palestinians now being displaced within Gaza, seeking refuge in UNWRA facilities.⁹ All this while a global pandemic is still raging as well.

The indiscriminate and disproportionate use of force against civilians, and attacks on residential homes and civilian infrastructure is prohibited under international humanitarian law (Article 85(3)(b) 1977 Additional Protocol I Geneva Convention). It raises grave suspicions of severe violations of international humanitarian law that amount to war crimes as listed under the Rome statute of the International Criminal Court.

The EU and member states must recognize that this spiral of violence will not end until the root causes are tackled, and the system of discrimination and domination by Israel over Palestinians stops and is completely dismantled. It will not end until the Israeli blockade of Gaza is completely lifted. It will not end until the Israeli military occupation of the West Bank and the expansion of illegal settlements halt. It will not end until the illegal Israeli annexation of East Jerusalem is reversed, and Palestinians on both sides of the Green Line are no longer discriminated against. It will not end until the Palestinian right to self-determination is respected and fulfilled under the protection of international law. And, it will not end until all those responsible for grave violations of IHL are held accountable and put to justice.

Only the fulfillment of these essential preconditions will bring peace and life in dignity to all people living in the OPT and Israel, and a halt to the inhuman situation that we are witnessing today. Therefore, CIDSE urges the EU/MS to:

1. Call upon all parties to come to an **immediate cessation of all violence**, in particular the indiscriminate, disproportionate, military offensive in the Gaza Strip.
2. Call upon Israel and Egypt to **immediately allow the entry of humanitarian aid and personnel into the Gaza strip**.
3. Call upon Israel to **immediately lift the land, air and sea blockade illegally imposed on the Gaza Strip** for almost 14 years and to take concrete and urgent measures to this end.
4. Call upon Israel to **end the military occupation** of the West Bank and the settlement practice, and reaffirm the inalienable right of the Palestinian people to self-determination.
5. Call upon Israel to **immediately halt all forced displacement and all systematic and discriminatory laws, policies, and practices that create a coercive environment** driving the forcible transfer of Palestinians from occupied East Jerusalem and “Area C” of the West Bank facilitating the illegal transfer of Israeli settlers and additional settlement expansion.¹⁰
6. **Hold those actors accountable** that are responsible for violations of human rights and international humanitarian law. Protect and support the International Criminal Court (ICC) investigation into the situation in the OPT; and proactively provide documentation of violations under the Rome statute to the court.
7. Implement a **stronger and stricter differentiation policy** in all economic, diplomatic, political, and all other dealings and agreements with Israel – in line with UN Security Council resolution 2334.

⁸ <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2021/5/15/building-housing-al-jazeera-office-in-gaza-hit-by-israeli-strike>.

⁹ <https://www.unrwa.org/photos/ongoing-nakba-gaza-under-attack>.

¹⁰ OCHA, Humanitarian Impact of settlements in Palestinian neighborhoods of East Jerusalem: the coercive environment (10 July 2018) (www.ochaopt.org/content/humanitarian-impact-settlements-palestinian-neighborhoods-east-jerusalem-coercive).