



## CIDSE and ACT Alliance EU joint statement

### **Call for an immediate cessation of all hostilities and protection of civilians in the occupied Palestinian territory and Israel.**

On Saturday October 7th, Hamas militants undertook an unprecedented large-scale attack on Israel. Israel responded with an attack on the Gaza Strip, heavily bombing the densely populated area. The escalation of violence has caused unspeakable human suffering for both Palestinians and Israelis. So far, thousands of people are wounded, and the death toll is rising.<sup>i</sup> To date, according to UN OCHA more than 900 Israelis were killed by Hamas militants and numerous captured as hostages, while more than 700 Palestinians have been killed by the Israeli military in Gaza and the West Bank.<sup>ii</sup>

There is no justification for the crimes committed by Hamas forces during their military incursion. Killing civilians, the taking of hostages and subjecting them to mistreatment, and the execution of captured soldiers amount to war crimes under the Rome statute and the Additional Protocol I to the Geneva Convention. Similarly, the indiscriminate bombing and the intentional attacks against the Palestinian civilian population and infrastructure such as hospitals and schools by the Israeli army also amount to War Crimes<sup>iii</sup> while persecution, or collective punishment, amounts to a Crime Against Humanity under the Rome Statute<sup>iv</sup>. All civilians must be protected in full compliance with international humanitarian law. CIDSE and ACT Alliance EU urge the EU, EU member states and US government to call the parties to declare an immediate cease-fire, lift the siege on Gaza and to strongly condemn all indiscriminate targeting of civilians regardless of the nationality they have.

As we mourn the devastating impact of escalating violence, we must not forget the root causes that are sustaining this endless cycle of violence and human tragedy. Sixteen years of blockade in Gaza has created a man-made humanitarian, social, and economic disaster, condemning generations of Gazans to a life that has been described as an open-air prison, devoid of hope and human dignity. Fifty-six years of military occupation, the annexation of Palestinian land, and systemic discrimination have led to severe daily violations of the fundamental rights of Palestinians. The illegal settlements continue to expand, and settler violence has been surging, adding to the coercive environment that is instrumental to the dispossession and forced displacement of Palestinian communities in the occupied West Bank and East Jerusalem. The changes to the status quo around the Temple Mount/Haram Al-Sharif in East Jerusalem and violations of the right to worship have long fueled the flames in an extremely volatile situation. The only path to a sustainable peace with freedom, security and dignity for all people in Israel and the occupied Palestinian territory is to address these root causes urgently and immediately.

The international community and the EU and US government in particular bear a heavy responsibility for the deteriorating situation. For years, they have failed to adequately hold Israel accountable for gross violations of human rights and international humanitarian law, in

accordance with their own third state obligations under International Law<sup>v</sup>. A biased approach toward the applicability of international law and accountability for violations undermines the rules-based international order and the universality of value of human life. More generally such an approach is harmful, undermines any peace efforts and will only lead to more escalation and incitement. Governments must work for justice to ensure respect for the fundamental rights of all peoples, and for their equality in dignity and rights. This is the only way to achieve peace between Israelis and Palestinians

CIDSE and ACT Alliance EU urge the EU and US governments to

1. Call upon the parties to immediately reach a cessation of all hostilities and an end to the siege on the Gaza Strip.
2. Call upon the parties to live up to their obligations under international humanitarian law and protect civilians.
3. Ensure accountability for violations of international humanitarian law and human rights law.
4. Urge the EU to maintain and increase humanitarian support to the affected population in Gaza including the establishment of immediate humanitarian access to the most affected populations.

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<sup>i</sup> More than 900 Israelis, including foreign nationals, were killed, making it the deadliest attack in Israel in decades. At least 2,616 people were injured, according to the Ministry of Health in Israel. According to Israeli sources, more than 50 members of Israeli forces and Israeli civilians, including women and children, were captured and forcibly taken into Gaza. Palestinian armed groups in Gaza claim to have captured and forcibly taken into Gaza over 150 people. According to the Ministry of Health in Gaza, at least 687 Palestinians have been killed and 3,800 others injured. An additional 17 Palestinians, including four children were killed and 295 were injured by Israeli forces in the West Bank. Source: [www.ochaopt.org/content/escalation-gaza-strip-and-israel-flash-update-3](http://www.ochaopt.org/content/escalation-gaza-strip-and-israel-flash-update-3)

<sup>ii</sup> <https://www.ochaopt.org/content/escalation-gaza-strip-and-israel-flash-update-3>

<sup>iii</sup> <https://www.un.org/en/genocideprevention/war-crimes.shtml#:~:text=Some%20examples%20of%20prohibited%20acts,charitable%20purposes%2C%20historical%20monuments%20or> and [https://www.un.org/en/genocideprevention/documents/atrocity-crimes/Doc.34\\_AP-I-EN.pdf](https://www.un.org/en/genocideprevention/documents/atrocity-crimes/Doc.34_AP-I-EN.pdf)

<sup>iv</sup> Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court, 1998, Article 7(h).

<sup>v</sup> Common Art 1 to all Four Geneva Conventions, <https://ihl-databases.icrc.org/en/ihl-treaties/gciv-1949/article-1?activeTab=undefined>