

To: All members of Dáil Éireann and Seanad Éireann, and Irish Members of the European Parliament.

From: Sadaka - The Ireland Palestine Alliance.

Date: October 9th 2023.

We believe that the following points are important, and we hope that politicians will take them into account in any debates which take place, whether in Dublin or Brussels, as well as in any statements which you may be making in the coming period.

First of all, it is important to recognise that civilians must not be targets and must be protected in armed conflicts. This is a fundamental principle of international humanitarian law and applies to all civilians. All deliberate or reckless attacks which result in civilian deaths and injuries are war crimes and those who perpetrate them must be held to account.

It is clear to us that the tragic events which are now unfolding are the direct result of decades of failure by the international community to take action in response to the repeated requests by Palestinians to stand up to Israel and demand respect for international law and the basic rights of the Palestinian people. Since 1948, Palestinians have been denied their rights; dispossessed of their land on which hundreds of Israeli settlements have been established; they have been and continue to be ethnically cleansed and killed in their thousands by a long line of Israeli governments – all of which have ignored international agreements and UN resolutions that have called on them to fulfil their responsibilities as an occupying power.

We are now facing a dangerous moment as Israel bombards and prepares a ground offensive against the 2.3 million people living in Gaza, half of whom are children. Today, 9th October 2023, the Israeli Defence Minister, Yoav Gallant, stated: “I have ordered a complete siege on the Gaza Strip. There will be no electricity, no food, no fuel, everything is closed. We are fighting human animals and we act accordingly”. Such a statement is indicative of the complete disregard for the lives of the civilian population in Gaza, it would amount to collective punishment, and as such is yet another in a long list of violations of international law by the State of Israel, and may constitute a war crime, if not genocide. Furthermore, there is clearly the potential for the current situation to escalate beyond the borders of Israel and Palestine and to take on a regional dimension.

We believe that the Irish Government should:

1. Recognise in its statements that these events are a direct result of the failure of the international community to respond to the repeated appeals by Palestinians to take action against the decades-long oppression imposed on them by the State of Israel, its armed forces, and settlers. In Gaza, specifically, people have lived for 16 years in an open-air prison with limited access to water and electricity and no

access to basic rights such as the right to healthcare and basic freedom of movement. By failing to call out apartheid, the international community has allowed Israel to act with impunity and continue to deny Palestinians' basic rights in their own land, including their right to self-determination. Violence will continue until Israel can no longer pursue with impunity its project of dispossession, annexation, and apartheid.

2. Call on the international community, and particularly political leaders, to refrain from fuelling the ongoing attacks and oppose escalation of Israeli military measures, particularly those that target or fail to protect an exposed civilian population. This is a time for maximum restraint and, while Israel has pledged that Hamas will be held accountable for its attacks, Europe must hold Israel accountable for its actions in the coming days and weeks. The Irish government should publicly state that it does not agree with or accept that Israel has the right to engage in a military assault that is likely to result in the death and injury of thousands of innocent civilians.
3. At the EU Council of Foreign Ministers' meeting on Tuesday, 10th October, Ireland should demand that the EU provides a political horizon through which a solution can be found to the decades of occupation and disregard for international law which have led to the current attacks.
4. Condemn in the strongest terms the decision to cut off all supplies – electricity, fuel, water, food, and medicines from the people of Gaza. There are already more than 200,000 internally displaced, over 2,000 wounded and hundreds of fatalities. The need for food, medicines, and basic services such as electricity are urgent. Measures such as these amount to collective punishment of the civilian population and as such are illegal. International law states clearly that at all times the lives of all civilians should be protected, and they must not be targeted by such actions. Such actions also constitute war crimes.
5. Call on the international community in all possible fora to act immediately to ensure that this does not become a regional conflagration. The Palestinian people and the entire Middle East region must see that the international community will uphold international law and ensure that the fundamental rights of the Palestinian people are moved to the top of Europe's agenda.
6. This is a moment of truth for the EU, in particular. There must be a solemn commitment that this is the time when the decades of inertia and enabling of Israel will come to an end and the Palestinian people will have a future free from occupation, dispossession and apartheid. As Primo Levi wrote: "If not now, when? If not us, who?"