

Joseph R. Biden,
President of the United States,
The White House,
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, N.W,
Washington, DC 20500.

November 14th 2023.

Dear President Biden,

We write this open letter as representatives of Irish civil society organisations with a collective membership of more than one million people across the island.

We write to you as a President of the United States of America who has embraced your Irish heritage and who celebrates your connection with Ireland as a fundamental part of your personal and political identity.

We mourn, without reservation, the taking of all civilian life, in Israel, in Gaza, and across the occupied Palestinian territory; and we condemn all actions which deliberately target or recklessly and indiscriminately endanger civilians, including hostage-taking, and all acts of collective punishment against a population under siege.

We are shocked and distressed by the terrible violence now being inflicted on the people of Gaza. As we write, the number of Palestinians killed has climbed beyond 11,000 people; more than 4,600 of those are children. More than half of all homes in Gaza are now either completely destroyed or damaged. Meanwhile, essential humanitarian aid trickles into Gaza at a fraction of the level before this war started. Hospitals, UN facilities providing safe shelter, schools, ambulances, and refugee camps have all been targeted by Israel with devastating consequences.

Ireland has a long history of supporting the cause of sovereign statehood and justice for the Palestinian people, arising, we believe, from our own experience of colonialism and occupation. In the context of the current onslaught on the innocent people of Gaza, increasingly described as genocide, the outpouring of support in Ireland for the cause of the Palestinian people has never been greater. Roads you travelled during your visit here, streets you walked, your ancestral home of Ballina, are decked in Palestinian flags and echo to the sound of rallies calling for a ceasefire and justice for Palestinians.

The strength of feeling in the population is unambiguously reflected in statements issued by leaders across the entire political spectrum and institutions of the Irish state.

An Taoiseach, Leo Varadkar, has stated that this violence resembles “something more approaching revenge”. He has described Israel’s actions in Gaza as collective punishment. Our President, Michael D Higgins, has also spoken out, saying “To announce in advance that you will break international law and to do so on an innocent population.....reduces all the code that was there from the 2nd World War on protection of civilians and it reduces it to tatters.”

International law is clear: the right of self-defence allowed to an occupying power does not include the collective punishment of civilians; massive bombardment and the cutting off of water, food, medicines and fuel; and it does not include the destruction of life and property on an unprecedented scale. The occupying power, Israel, has complete responsibility for the

welfare of the population under occupation; its safety and welfare comes before all other considerations. The Chief Prosecutor of the International Criminal Court, Karim Khan, has warned all parties of their responsibilities under law and the consequences for those who breach them. There must, equally, be no political interference with the work of the Court.

We agree with the United Nations Secretary General, António Guterres, when he says these events did not happen in a vacuum, and when he acknowledges the decades-long “suffocating occupation” and dispossession imposed on the Palestinian people.

The United States is Israel’s most powerful ally. We ask that at this moment, you reflect on, and honour your Irish identity. Honour the lived historical experience of your Irish ancestors and those of many Irish Americans, who, like Palestinians, lived life under a settler-colonial occupation before they left this island. We ask that you demand an immediate and unconditional ceasefire to bring an end to the death and destruction; secure full access to all humanitarian aid for the people of Gaza; and commence a political process leading to a just outcome which meets the legitimate demands of the Palestinian people for self-determination, and thus ensuring peace and security for Palestinians and Israelis alike.

President Biden, you are in a position to make this a pivotal moment, to bend the arc of history towards justice, and thereby leave a legacy for the ages. This cycle of death and destruction must be brought to an immediate end; you have the power to do that.

Yours sincerely,



Joe Murray
Coordinator
Action from Ireland (Afri)



Dr. John Reynolds
Academics for Palestine



Tony Doherty
Chairperson
Bloody Sunday Trust



Dr. Caroline Murphy
Chief Executive Officer
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Séan O Briain

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Sue Pentel

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CC: Claire D. Cronin, United States Ambassador to Ireland, Deerfield Residence, Chesterfield Avenue, Phoenix Park, Dublin, Ireland.