

15 October 2023

Mr. Tor Wennesland
Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process
United Nations Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process (UNSCO)

Subject: Urgent Appeal for Immediate Action to Halt Aggression on Gaza.

Dear Mr. Wennesland,

We, the undersigned Palestine Independent Commission for Human Rights, Palestinian Human Rights Organizations, and Civil Society Organizations, write to express our deep disappointment and growing alarm at your apparent inaction in the face of the ongoing crisis in Gaza. Your silence on this matter is deafening and deeply concerning, especially considering your crucial role as the Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process.

It is disheartening to witness the lack of a clear stance or proactive measures from your office in response to the relentless aggression against the people of Gaza. The shocking loss of innocent lives, including women and children, demands immediate attention and decisive action.

Since October 7, 2023, Israeli airstrikes have caused significant civilian casualties, leading to the loss of over 2228 lives, including children and women, and leaving more than 8744 individuals injured. This unrelenting violence has also targeted civilian infrastructure, hospitals, and schools. The situation is exacerbated by a blockade that has further deepened the humanitarian crisis.

Of even greater concern, Gaza has been experiencing a complete electricity blackout since October 11, which has pushed essential health, water, and sanitation services to the brink of collapse and intensified the issue of food insecurity.

Mass displacement continues to escalate, with the latest OCHA figures as of October 14, 2023, revealing that the total number of internally displaced persons (IDPs) in the Gaza Strip has now exceeded 423,378. Alarming, over two-thirds of them are seeking refuge in UNRWA schools, with UNRWA hosting about 64 percent in 102 premises operated as designated emergency shelters. Some 33,054 IDPs had taken refuge at 36 public schools. It is estimated that over 153,000 IDPs, whose homes have been destroyed or damaged or have left their homes due to fear, are residing with relatives and neighbors, as well as in other public facilities.

We urgently call upon you to break your silence and take a resolute position on the current aggression in Gaza. We urge you to work tirelessly with all relevant parties to put an immediate end to this aggression and to address its severe humanitarian consequences. Upholding international law and safeguarding the lives of civilians must be your paramount priorities.

Furthermore, we adamantly oppose any attempts to forcibly displace Palestinian residents from their rightful lands. Such actions not only violate international law but also exacerbate the suffering of the people in Gaza.

We earnestly request your immediate and unwavering response to this urgent appeal.

Sincerely,

1. Palestine Independent Commission for Human Rights
2. Addameer Prisoner Support and Human Rights Association
3. Al Mezan Center for Human Rights
4. Al-Haq, Law in the Service of Man
5. Center for Defense of Liberties and Civil Rights "Hurriyat"
6. Defense for Children International – Palestine
7. Jerusalem Legal Aid and Human Rights Center
8. Muwatin Institute for Democracy and Human Rights (Observer Member)
9. Palestinian Centre for Human Rights; and
10. the Palestinian Youth Association for Leadership and Rights Activation (PYALARA)
11. The Palestinian Association for Empowerment and Local Development (REFORM)
12. The Palestinian Initiative for the Promotion of Global Dialogue and Democracy - MIFTAH
13. A.M. Qattan Foundation
14. AMAN: Coalition for Accountability and Integrity
15. The Civil Commission for the independence of Judiciary and Rule of Law (ISTIQLAL)
16. Filastiniyat
17. Union of Palestinian women committees UPWC
18. Arab World Democracy and Electoral Monitor (AlMarsad)
19. Non-Governmental Organizations Network PNGO
20. Faisal Hussein Foundation
21. Women's Centre for Legal Aid and Counseling WCLAC
22. MUSAWA- The Palestinian Center for the Independence of the Judiciary and the Legal Profession
23. Bisan Center for Research and Development
24. The Palestinian Center for Development and Media Freedoms (MADA)
25. Women's Studies Centre
26. Sharek youth Forum