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EMERGENCY | LAWS | INTERNATIONAL | PALESTINE | PUBLISHED ON OCTOBER 14TH 2023



OUR WORK IN INTERNATIONAL

OUR WORK IN PALESTINE

Archive: View of one the many buildings destroyed by air strikes in Gaza City, February 2011 | © Xavier

Urgent plea to avert unprecedented humanitarian crisis amid looming Israeli land incursion into Gaza.

We are alarmed by Israel’s call for over a million Palestinians to leave northern Gaza in less than 24 hours. Israel must rescind this order immediately. Demands for the population in its entirety to relocate in such an immediate manner put at risk the lives of those forced to flee. The Government of Israel has not provided any assurances for their safety while in transit or for the safety of civilians remaining in the Gaza Strip as fighting continues.

Humanitarian agencies operating in Gaza are reporting an unfolding humanitarian crisis on an unprecedented scale. There are not adequate facilities to safely accommodate residents from northern Gaza, and their safety remains jeopardized as Israeli airstrikes persistently target central and southern Gaza.

A forced relocation without any guarantees of safety or return and without providing for the needs of the protected population, risks amounting to forcible transfer, which is a grave breach of international humanitarian law and codified as a war crime. Israel is bound by international law to ensure the protection of all persons there from harm, and ensure that they are adequately supplied, including by agreeing and facilitating, relief schemes.

The horrendous violence that has engulfed Gaza and Israel over the last week has already created unprecedented humanitarian need. As of 13 October 2023, 11:00 AM EST, more than 1,799 Palestinians have been killed in Gaza, more than 1,300 people in

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thousands of children and families in Gaza have already been displaced. Entire neighborhoods have been destroyed and turned to rubble.

Yet recent developments indicate that the worst may still be to come. We, the undersigned leaders of some of the world's largest humanitarian organizations call for the international community to unequivocally uphold international law and prioritize the protection of civilians to avert further suffering and loss of human life.

World leaders must:

- Demand that the Government of Israel immediately rescind its order;
- Demand that all parties agree to an immediate cessation of hostilities;
- Demand to stop the use of explosive weapons in populated areas in addition to the targeting of civilians, of inviolable UN premises, schools and hospitals where civilians shelter;
- Facilitate the provision of essential and life-saving relief assistance, including food, water, and medical supplies and care and access of humanitarian personnel into Gaza;
- Immediately facilitate medical evacuations for children and families who require it in either Egypt, the West Bank or Israel;
- Ensure the immediate, unconditional release of all persons deprived of liberty, most urgently children, pregnant women and mothers with infants and young children, the wounded and sick held captive by armed groups in Gaza; and
- **Guarantee safe passage for families who need and want to seek safety to any place they feel safe.** Families need adequate access to information on options and to be given adequate time to do so safely. The Israeli government has an obligation under international humanitarian law to provide safe shelter and humanitarian assistance for civilians displaced by their offensive and this should be carefully prepared in advance of any offensive. Anyone who seeks safety outside of the Gaza Strip must be immediately allowed to return as soon as hostilities end, in line with their right to repatriate or return to their habitual places or residence. This must be internationally guaranteed.

Families who are unable or unwilling to leave their homes remain protected under international humanitarian law. There are many reasons why people cannot heed these warnings to leave areas, including ongoing hostilities, impassable roads, health needs, disabilities, and fear of permanent displacement. Many will have nowhere else to go.

We urge UN Secretary-General António Guterres and senior UN leadership to make an emergency visit to the oPt and Israel in an attempt to ensure respect for international law and demonstrate solidarity with affected persons and humanitarians.

We plead with world leaders and actors on the ground to prioritize the preservation of human life above all else. Anything less will forever be a stain on our collective conscience.

Olivier Longue - Chief Executive Officer, Action Against Hunger – Spain

Mattias Brunander - Secretary General, Diakonia

Manuel Patrouillard - Global Managing Director, Handicap International / Humanity & Inclusion

Joël Weiler - Chief Executive Officer, Médecins du Monde - France

Nicolás Dotta - Chief Executive Officer, Médecins du Monde - Spain

Morgane Rousseau - Chief Executive Officer, Médecins du Monde - Swiss

Tjada D'Oyen McKenna - Chief Executive Officer, Mercy Corps

Jan Egeland - Secretary General, Norwegian Refugee Council

Amitabh Behar - Executive Director, Oxfam International

Stephen Omollo - Chief Executive Officer, Plan International

Inger Ashing - Chief Executive Officer, Save the Children International

Rob Williams - Chief Executive Officer, War Child UK

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