

Occupied Palestine - September 18, 2014

Dear Baroness Ashton,

The Treaty on the European Union (TEU) sets out that the EU's external actions must be guided by the principles of democracy, the rule of law, the universality of human rights, the principles of equality and solidarity, and respect for the UN Charter and international law.

As such, we, the undersigned Palestinian civil society organisations, are writing to request that the EU adheres to the letter and the spirit of the TEU by implementing steps capable of holding Israel to account for its recent war crimes in Gaza and its other violations of international law and Palestinian human rights.

In particular, we urge you to take steps to end the tacit support that the EU affords to Israeli violations of human rights and international law by suspending the EU-Israel Association Agreement and implementing a European military embargo on Israel until such time as Israel complies with international law.

At the time of writing, more than 2,100 Palestinians in Gaza have been killed and more than 10,000 have been wounded, predominantly civilians, in what is one of Israel's bloodiest ever massacres. UN officials, Palestinian organisations and international NGOs including Amnesty International and others accuse Israel of deliberately targeting civilians and civilian infrastructure, including schools and hospitals, and of committing other war crimes and violations of international law. More than 300,000 people have been displaced. The Dahiya Doctrine adopted by the Israeli army explicitly calls for targeting civilian infrastructure and making civilians suffer as an "effective" military strategy.

The EU Foreign Affairs Council has warned of a "disastrous humanitarian situation" in Gaza. Let it be clear that this disaster is the direct result of Israeli aggression and violations of international law.

The world has united in its opposition to Israel's massacre in Gaza. Hundreds of thousands of people have taken to the streets in protests described by Archbishop Desmond Tutu as the biggest mobilisations over a single issue since the fall of apartheid in South Africa. Political parties and civil society groups throughout Europe have called for action to hold Israel accountable. The failure of the EU to apply significant pressure capable of holding Israel to account is out of step with the democratic will of the people of Europe.

Israel has also stepped up its violations of international law in the occupied West Bank, including East Jerusalem, detaining hundreds of Palestinians, conducting night raids and violently crushing demonstrations, leading to the death of dozens of Palestinians.

It is the view of Palestinian civil society that the EU contributes to Israel's impunity in violating international law in two key ways.

Firstly, the continued application of the EU-Israel Association Agreement despite Israel's clear violation of the Article 2 clause, which states that both parties should respect human rights and democratic principles, sends a clear message to Israel that its massacres of Palestinians will be tolerated and will not result in any meaningful impact on its intimate relations with the EU.

That Israel is still afforded preferential treatment to European markets and access to EU programs despite acting in such flagrant violation of international law is a stain on the reputation of the EU.

The failure to suspend the Association Agreement is a form of political support for Israel's continued violations of international law that seems completely out of step with the EU's determination to act to hold other states to account, including, for example, Russia and Sri Lanka.

Furthermore, the Association Agreement provides direct support for Israeli violations of international law including, for example, by providing funding for Israeli military companies and universities and other institutions that play a key role in developing the technology and methodologies of Israel's system of occupation and oppression over the Palestinian people.

The persistent refusal of Israel to address its gross violations of international law over many decades, including its war crimes in Gaza, its acquisition of territory by force, its policies of forced population transfer and the denial of the Palestinian right of self-determination, makes the suspension of the Association Agreement a necessary and proportionate response.

Secondly, the vast military trade and cooperation that take place between Israel and EU member states directly provide Israel with the material and political support that it requires to carry out its regular massacres of Palestinians and its systematic violations of international law. In the period 2005-09, EU countries granted arms exports licenses to Israel [worth €7.47bn](#). Weapons exports from the EU to Israel during 2012 were [worth €613 million](#), up 290% on the previous year. This booming military trade amounts to the aiding and abetting of Israel's grave violations of international law.

The European Union has repeatedly criticised Israel's construction of settlements, its disproportionate use of military force and some of its other violations of international law. Recent steps to scale back European recognition of Israeli sovereignty in the occupied Palestinian territory are welcome. However, such steps are disproportionately weak when compared to the extent of Israeli violations of international law and the resulting loss of human life. As Israel's most recent massacre in Gaza shows, the failure of the EU and other western powers to treat Israel on equal footing with other states that systematically violate international law and commit war crimes allows Israel to act with impunity.

Israel's war crimes and its sabotage of every effort to reach a just peace based on UN resolutions must lead to effective and substantial, not just cosmetic, consequences. We urge you to take urgent steps leading towards the suspension of the EU-Israel Association Agreement and the imposition of a comprehensive military embargo on Israel.

Palestinian civil society demands freedom, justice and equality. The EU will not be able to play a positive role in supporting our rights until it ends its support for Israeli massacres and war crimes.

Kind regards,

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