

Statement on the Escalation of Violence in Palestine and Israel

WILPF is deeply saddened at the ongoing and escalating loss of life in Palestine and Israel, which take place in the context of ongoing Israeli occupation, war crimes and impunity. We denounce all attacks against civilians by all parties. Indiscriminate attacks on civilians are a crime under international law and cannot be justified.

States are a collective of peoples in all our diversity with a right to self-determination and to a free, dignified and safe life. Permanent peace is built on the foundations of freedom, justice, nonviolence, human rights and equality. Colonialism, occupation, apartheid policies, and militarised security have denied the possibilities for peace. Despite multiple UN resolutions and repeated calls, Israel has not ended its illegal occupation.

Current attacks must be seen in the context of an escalation of militarised activities in recent years by Israel's hardline new government and in conjunction with decades of continued and repeated violations of international law. A failure to uphold international law and the absence of any effective action by the international community has emboldened impunity and the continuation of an apartheid regime. It has to end.

The Israeli government has enforced a complete siege on Gaza. No water, food, electricity or fuel is allowed into the territory. Collective punishment further exacerbates ethnic cleansing and must stop. The siege and ongoing attacks will increase social and economic inequalities that perpetuate vulnerabilities and disadvantage women.¹ This will compound the gendered impacts of the existing 16-year illegal blockade on Gaza. The constant aggression has left youth in unimaginable despair.

Israel's right to security is prioritised over Palestinians' legal rights and safety. The Palestinian people have been left alone and are denied the right to defend themselves and their land. Their right to peaceful protest has been penalised. Their efforts to isolate Israel culturally and

¹ For examples of gendered impacts of Israel's occupation, see "Palestinian Women Under Prolonged Israeli Occupation: The Gendered Impact of Occupation Violence," Joint Submission to the UPR Working Group 29th Session (August 2017) by Community Action Center (CAC), The Palestinian Center for Development and Media Freedoms (MADA), Women's Centre for Legal Aid and Counselling (WCLAC) and Women's International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF). Available at: <https://www.wilpf.org/report-release-palestinian-women-under-prolonged-israeli-occupation-the-gendered-impact-of-occupation-violence/> and Palestinian Women: The Disproportionate Impact of The Israeli Occupation (November 2018), by The Palestinian Initiative for the Promotion of Global Dialogue and Democracy (MIFTAH), Palestinian Working Woman Society for Development (PWWSD), Women's Centre for Legal Aid and Counselling (WCLAC), Women Media and Development (TAM), and Karama. Available at: <http://www.miftah.org/Display.cfm?DocId=26522&CategoryId=8>

economically have been criminalised.² Even human rights defenders have been labelled as terrorists.³

The absolute necessity is to prevent further atrocities and loss of life. For this, we need an immediate ceasefire and a release of hostages by Hamas and of those illegally detained by Israel. A durable and fair peace will only be achieved by eliminating the root causes of violence and oppression. The international community should not wait for yet another escalation of hostilities to create a realistic path for justice and peace. We must act now.

Members states and the responsible bodies of the UN must uphold the UN Charter and:

- Demand that Israel, as an occupying power, abide by its obligations under international law and make all necessary efforts to protect civilian populations in the Occupied Palestinian territories
- Call for an immediate ceasefire and an end to the use of explosive weapons by all parties in all populated areas.
- Demand that Israel lift the siege on Gaza and ensure access to goods essential to the survival of the people in the enclave.
- Re-instate aid so as to avoid collective punishment of Palestinians by donors and member states.
- Initiate a UN-brokered process for peace and justice that centres Palestinian voices and perspectives, particularly women, to enable a move towards peace.
- End military and other support for Israel's occupation of Palestine and its apartheid regime.

² <https://bdsmovement.net/news/statement-european-legal-scholars-defending-right-support-bds-palestinian-rights>

³ <https://www.ohchr.org/en/press-releases/2022/04/israelpalestine-un-experts-call-governments-resume-funding-six-palestinian>