

To: Permanent Missions to the United Nations in New York and Geneva

Ministries of Foreign Affairs

25 October 2023

Excellencies,

**Re: UN General Assembly's Emergency Special Session on Israel and occupied Palestinian territory:
WILPF calls on all States to fulfill their international law obligations**

Ahead of the 10th Emergency Special Session of the United Nations (UN) General Assembly under the resolution 377A(V), "Uniting for peace", scheduled on Thursday 26 October 2023 at 10am EST, where States will meet to discuss the human rights and humanitarian crisis in Israel and the occupied Palestinian territory particularly the Gaza Strip, the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF)¹ makes the following calls critical for the protection of civilians and address root causes of the violence and conflict.

WILPF demands that the Member States of the UN uphold the Charter and their obligations under international law. We specifically warn as to States' obligations to prevent genocide. [Civil society](#), including [WILPF](#), and [UN experts](#) have already given you notice of that risk.

All situations must be dealt with through the consistent and principled application of objective criteria that treat respect for human rights and international humanitarian law and principles as paramount. Applying these criteria to the situation in Israel and the occupied Palestinian territory, particularly the Gaza Strip, and as the UN General Assembly meets to discuss the situation, **WILPF calls on all States to:**

1. Implement their obligation to [prevent and protect against the crime of genocide](#);
2. Urgently call and take measures for the implementation of an [immediate ceasefire](#), including but not limited to a cessation of all attacks that target or indiscriminately affect [civilians and civilian infrastructure](#). All attacks on health infrastructure and humanitarian actors must urgently end;

¹ WILPF was founded in 1915, and since then it has united women around the globe to work for peace by non-violent means and by promoting political, economic, and social justice for all. WILPF addresses the root causes of war and violence through a feminist lens and constantly challenges systems of oppression, militarism, patriarchy, and neoliberalism.

3. Demand that Israel allow urgent and unimpeded access to fuel and humanitarian aid to all areas in Gaza, including medical supplies, and the immediate restoration of access to food, water, electricity and other essential needs, to alleviate the [dire humanitarian crisis](#);
4. Demand an immediate end to Israel's ongoing siege of the Gaza Strip, which constitutes collective punishment;
5. Urge an immediate halt to the provision of any materiel, equipment or other commodity that may foreseeably be used in the commission of war crimes or otherwise contrary to international humanitarian law;
6. Work through the UN General Assembly, the Arms Trade Treaty (ATT), and their regional and national systems, to end arms transfers to all parties to the conflict and to impose a comprehensive two-way arms embargo on Israel. ATT states parties and signatories have a particular obligation to end their arms transfers to Israel for its violations of Articles 6 and 7 of the Treaty;
7. Denounce Israel's unlawful bombing and shelling of Gaza, as well as Hamas' launch of rockets into populated areas in Israel. States, particularly those that have endorsed the [Political Declaration on Strengthening the Protection of Civilians from the Humanitarian Consequences arising from the use of Explosive Weapons in Populated Areas](#), must also call for an end to the use of explosive weapons in populated areas and for action to address the devastating impacts on civilians from this practice, in line with the Political Declaration;
8. Condemn Israel's use of white phosphorus in Gaza and Lebanon. WILPF especially addresses this call to the high contracting parties to the [Convention on Conventional Weapons Protocol III on Prohibitions or Restrictions on the Use of Incendiary Weapons](#);
9. Call for the immediate and unconditional release of all hostages held by Hamas and all persons, including [children](#), deprived of liberty without due process in Israel, enabling them to return to their families – including through the assistance of neutral intermediaries such as the ICRC;
10. Ensure the protection of human rights defenders, peace activists in Israel and the oPt, journalists and humanitarian workers;
11. Urge the International Criminal Court to prioritize the investigation into the Situation in the State of Palestine and in all incidents that fall within the Court's jurisdiction;
12. Urge Israel to allow independent, impartial and thorough investigations into all violations and abuses in Gaza, denounce Israel's persistent obstruction of the work of the Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, and Israel, and establish clear mechanisms protecting access to investigative powers from obstruction by State and non-State actors;
13. Take decisive and concrete steps to address the [root causes of violations and abuses](#) and the ongoing Israeli military aggression, including through reaffirming the rights of the Palestinian people to self-determination and return, and calling for an end to, and accountability for, Israeli policies and practices of apartheid and settler colonialism;

14. Uphold UN Security Council resolutions and relevant General Assembly resolutions, including on Women, Peace and Security as the humanitarian crisis unfolding in Gaza fueled by Israel's violations is affecting women and girls in specific and devastating ways;
15. Urge immediate action by the UN Security Council to implement sanctions and other countermeasures, including a [two-way arms embargo](#). Israel's illegal belligerent occupation of the Palestinian territory, its system of apartheid against Palestinians, and its disregard for international law must not continue nor be sustained;
16. Respect their obligations under international human rights law and international humanitarian law, denounce all violations of international law including war crimes and crimes against humanity without discrimination, and cease making any statements that may be interpreted as supporting the use of force contrary to international law.

The calls from humanitarian and human rights actors to bring an end to the horrors of this conflict can be found in this document [here](#).

When an elderly Israeli Jewish woman can hold the hand of a Palestinian member of Hamas, her captor, and say 'Shalom' those who are charged with upholding the Charter of the UN to 'save future generations from the scourge of war' must listen. We the People of these United Nations demand no less. There must be Peace.

Madeleine Rees
Secretary General