



Urgent Statement: UK Charities Call for Immediate Ceasefire, Humanitarian Aid and Lifting Siege on Gaza

27th October 2023

As a group of UK-based humanitarian, development, human rights and faith charities working for the rights and wellbeing of the Palestinian people, we are united in issuing an urgent call to the government to support an immediate ceasefire, unimpeded access to humanitarian aid and to lifting the siege of Gaza.

We write with alarm at the current catastrophic humanitarian crisis in Gaza, an emergency of unparalleled proportions in Palestine. Israel's relentless bombardment of Gaza from land, sea, and air has left no place safe while the 'complete siege' continues to strangle civilian life, exacerbating the consequences of 16 years of punishing blockade. This indiscriminate assault has targeted hospitals, schools, universities, places of worship, the few remaining bakeries and entire neighbourhoods, decimating Gaza's fragile civilian infrastructure.

Emergency services are in the midst of collapse, overwhelmed by the magnitude of devastation, and deprived of the fuel and essential supplies required to function. The [admission](#) of 74 trucks of aid does not come close to meeting the mounting need. The tragic toll stands at more than 7,000 [killed](#) at the time of writing, among them at least 2,900 children, and 18,482 injured. Over 1.4 million people have been forced to flee their homes, with no safe haven and uncertain prospects of return. Israel has also escalated attacks in the West Bank, with 103 Palestinians [killed](#), either by settlers or soldiers, among them 32 children, and at least 1,266 [arrested](#) since 7th October.

Depriving civilians access to items essential for their survival such as food, water, fuel and electricity, forcible displacement with no guarantee of return; indiscriminate attacks; targeting civilians and civilian infrastructure; and collective punishment are all *prima facie* war crimes for which there must be accountability. All parties are bound by the requirements of international law, and civilians must be protected from attack. Israel as the occupying power in Gaza has a duty to ensure the protection of the civilian population

under its control. The UK has a legal obligation to respect and ensure respect for the rules governing armed conflict. The UK must do everything reasonably in its power to prevent the commission of acts that violate international law. It is also required to actively pursue accountability for those responsible for such violations.

This unprecedented situation has led to Palestinians recalling their mass expulsion in 1948 and the ongoing denial of Palestinian refugees' right to return, and to chilling warnings by UN experts and legal scholars about the consequences for the Palestinian people if Israel's military campaign and siege continues. In anticipation of a ground invasion, which threatens catastrophe for civilians in Gaza, we remind the government that it must act to avert further atrocities. We therefore demand with urgency that the government calls for an immediate ceasefire, unimpeded access to humanitarian aid and lifting of the siege on Gaza. While these actions alone are well beneath the minimum obligations the UK owes to the Palestinian people and the requirements for genuine peace and justice, they are nevertheless a crucial and urgent first step.

Statement endorsed by the following agencies:

- Medical Aid for Palestinians (MAP)
- Friends of Birzeit University (Fobzu)
- War on Want
- Caabu (Council for Arab-British Understanding)
- FONSA (Friends of Nablus and Surrounding Areas)
- Welfare Association
- Sabeel-Kairos UK
- Islamic Relief UK
- Interpal
- Amos Trust