

FORUM-ASIA's statement on the situation in Occupied Palestinian Territory and Israel: Protect civilian lives, end bloodshed

(Bangkok, 19 October 2023) - The Asian Forum for Human Rights and Development (FORUM-ASIA) is deeply disturbed by the [escalating violence and spiralling death toll](#) in Gaza and Israel. The recent events have had devastating impacts on all civilian life, worsening an already volatile human rights situation and humanitarian catastrophe in the Occupied Palestinian Territory.

We acknowledge that throughout the 56 years of occupation, the Israeli Government has maintained a policy of apartheid. It has condoned and actively participated in land confiscation and illegal settlement in the Occupied Palestinian Territory. It has also subjected Palestinians to starvation and dispossession. These acts of violent settler colonialism and violation of international laws cannot be overlooked.

We unequivocally condemn the indiscriminate attacks made by Israel's military forces against the Palestinian people in Gaza. We denounce Israel's imposition of '[a complete siege](#)' on Gaza, which entails the withholding of water, food, electricity, medicine, and fuel to over 2.3 million people as well as the [forced displacement](#) of over a million Palestinians living in Northern Gaza. These acts may amount to war crimes and crimes against humanity under international law.

We condemn the decades-long and deliberate dehumanisation of Palestinians. The Israeli Government and its senior officials have made clear-through words and actions-their intent to carry out mass atrocity crimes, including genocide, against Palestinians.

We share the views of [UN human rights experts](#) and the [UN Independent International Commission of Inquiry in the Occupied Palestinian Territory](#) that Israel's 'complete siege on Gaza' constitutes a collective punishment. It must also be noted that the Palestinian people in Gaza have lived under Israel's unlawful blockade for 16 years.

Likewise, FORUM-ASIA unreservedly condemns the heinous crimes committed by Palestinian armed groups, including the use of civilians as human shields and the targeted killings and hostage-taking of unarmed civilians. All these acts are prohibited under [International Humanitarian Law](#). Women and children, in particular, are bearing the biggest brunt.

Targeted and indiscriminate attacks against civilians can never be justified. They are prohibited under international law and amount to war crimes. We call for the immediate, unconditional, and safe release of all civilians taken by Palestinian armed groups.

Call to Action

FORUM-ASIA calls on the Government of Israel to end its siege of Gaza.

We reiterate the [UN Secretary General's appeal](#) for 'rapid and unimpeded access for humanitarian aid.' The international community has a responsibility to help guarantee immediate humanitarian access and aid to Gaza.

We are deeply concerned over the Israeli airstrikes' reported targeting and killing of journalists, media workers, humanitarian aid workers, medical facilities and vehicles, healthcare workers, and UN staff.

We call for an immediate ceasefire and the protection of all civilians. All parties involved must stop endangering civilian lives and further violating international humanitarian law.

FORUM-ASIA urges all parties to fully cooperate with the Commission of Inquiry on the Occupied Palestinian Territory's investigation into the human rights violations that have occurred since 7 October 2023. In addition, we appeal to the Office of the Prosecutor of the International Criminal Court to accelerate its investigations regarding the grave international crimes committed in both Palestine and Israel.

As long as the international community continues to turn a blind eye to the ongoing impunity for human rights violations, these vicious cycles of violence in Palestine and Israel will never end.

About FORUM-ASIA:

The Asian Forum for Human Rights and Development (FORUM-ASIA) is a network of 85 member organisations across 23 countries, mainly in Asia. Founded in 1991, FORUM-ASIA works to strengthen movements for human rights and sustainable development through research, advocacy, capacity development and solidarity actions in Asia and beyond. It has consultative status with the United Nations Economic and Social Council, and consultative relationship with the ASEAN Intergovernmental Commission on Human Rights. The FORUM-ASIA Secretariat is based in Bangkok, with offices in Jakarta, Geneva and Kathmandu. www.forum-asia.org

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