

Brussels, January 19th 2025

To the attention of:

Kaja Kallas, High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, EC Vice-President,

Ursula von der Leyen, President of the European Commission,

Maroš Šefčovič, Commissioner for Trade and Economic Security

Re: European Trade Unions` Call: Suspend the EU-Israel Association Agreement!

We, the undersigned European trade union organisations, call on the European Commission to review the Israeli Government's compliance with article two of the EU-Israel Association Agreement. We urge the Commission to fulfil its responsibility as the 'Guardian of the Treaty', by complying with the advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice, the February 2024 requests from the governments of Ireland and Spain and recommend adequate measures to the Council to address the grave violations of international humanitarian law by the Israeli government during the last 13 months.

Since October 2023 over 46,000 Palestinians in Gaza have been killed, with at least 10,000 more reported missing, or under the rubble, according to UN figures. Almost the entire population has been displaced, many multiple times and many have died from infectious diseases caused by the deteriorating conditions. Public services including healthcare, water and sanitation have been decimated, with over 80 percent of schools and universities destroyed or damaged. Hundreds more have died as a result of the latest escalation in northern Gaza, including the forced displacement of Palestinians and the denial of humanitarian assistance, and hundreds of thousands more are in peril. In addition Israel is banning the UN relief and works agency (UNRWA) - the largest provider of humanitarian assistance to the country's Palestinian population.

The UN Commission of Inquiry concluded that Israel has committed war crimes and the crime against humanity of extermination with relentless and deliberate attacks on medical personnel and facilities in Gaza. The International Court of Justice in its advisory opinion highlighted the legal consequences incumbent upon states and international organisations, including the duty of non-recognition, non-assistance, and cooperation by lawful means to bring the associated violations to an end.

During this period, the Israeli Government has embarked on the largest escalation in the West Bank since 2002, resulting in over 700 Palestinians killed and 10,900 detained. Approximately 1,800 Palestinian homes and other structures have been demolished and there has been a significant increase in settler attacks as noted in the ILO report. Israel has likewise expanded its assault into Lebanon, killing well over 1,000 people and displacing more than one million.

Trade union members have been particularly affected by the increasingly brutal actions of the state of Israel, including the deliberate targeting of medical, aid workers and journalists. More than 1,000 health workers and 318 aid workers have been killed in Gaza, including 235 UN staff. 200 aid workers have been killed in seven months --- exceeding the total number killed in the entire world in any year in the past two decades. Among the more than 130 media workers and journalists who have been killed, are 31 credible cases where there is enough information to confirm the journalists were directly targeted because of their profession.

Over the last 12 months, the UN Security Council has passed four resolutions on Gaza, including one calling for a ceasefire, and the International Court of Justice (ICJ) has issued three binding rulings listing urgent measures that Israeli authorities should take to prevent the risk of genocide in their military operations in Gaza. The ICJ also issued an Advisory Opinion that found that Israel's occupation and annexation of Palestinian territory is illegal and Israel is responsible for racial segregation and apartheid against the Palestinians, and laid out a long list of abuses and violations of international law by Israeli authorities. The ICJ rulings are consistent with evidence of very serious crimes by Israeli authorities provided by the UN secretary general, a UN Commission of Inquiry, UN experts, and numerous nongovernmental groups. Israeli authorities have largely flouted those rulings, and continue to use starvation as a weapon of war, and to impose arbitrary and onerous restrictions on entry and distribution of desperately needed humanitarian aid throughout Gaza.

The EU's own envoys called for international pressure to stop the mass deportations, and emphasised the need for accountability. A number of European diplomats, including the EU High Representative for Foreign Affairs expressed recently their concerns regarding the current developments in Palestine. We call on the Commission to act on it.

Beyond statements calling for de-escalation, the EU and international community have done almost nothing to challenge the Israeli government's violations of international law and Palestinian rights. The EU, as Israel's biggest trading partner, must move from words to action and ensure accountability for these crimes.

Respect for human rights constitutes an "essential element" of EU Association Agreements with partner countries, including Israel. The European Commission as a Guardian of the Treaty has responsibility to ensure that the EU-Israel Association Agreement is conducted in compliance with human rights and democratic principles. The European Commission inaction in this regard is contrary to the legally binding obligations as reaffirmed in the international law obligations as defined in the ICJ AO.

Therefore, we demand that the European Commission performs its duty by reviewing the EU-Israel Association Agreement and recommending to the Council suspension of the treaty, considering Israel's breaches of article 2 as also reaffirmed by the ICJ and other relevant bodies of the United Nations. In addition, we urge European countries to abide by their obligation to refrain from assisting in maintaining the illegal situation, arising from Israel's violations of peremptory norms, including by stopping trade with Israeli settlements and suspending the provision of military equipment as well as weapons transfer via its territories.

Signatories:

European Trade Union Network for Justice in Palestine,

Belgium

ABVV-FGTB,

La Centrale Générale-FGTB,

ACV-CSC,

FGTB Wallonne,

MWB-FGTB,

FGTB-Jeunes

France

CGT,

CFDT,

FILPAC-CGT,

La Fédération Nationale des Mines et de l'énergie - FNME-CGT,

The Fédération CGT des Services publics,

Fédération Nationale des Salariés de la Construction du Bois et de l'Ameublement CGT,

Union syndicale Solidaires,

Ireland

Irish Congress of Trade Unions,

Fórsa,

Services Industrial Professional Technical Union - SIPTU,

Irish National Teachers Organisation - INTO,

The Irish Nurses and Midwives Organisation - INMO,

Craigavon Trades Council,

Dundee Trades Union Council,

Italy:

FIOM-CGIL,

Netherlands

MENA Working Group FNV,

Palestinian Workers' Association Netherlands,

Norway

The Norwegian Union of Municipal and General Employees - Fagforbundet,

Norwegian Trade Union of Commerce and Office employees,

Spain

Sindicato de Trabajadoras y Trabajadores de la Administración de Castilla y León - STACYL ,

Colectivo Unitario de Trabajadores,

Confederación Intersindical,

Sindicato Andaluz de Trabajadores - SAT,

Unión de Sindicatos de Trabajadoras y Trabajadores En Andalucía - USTEA,

LAB (Basque Country),

ELA (Basque Country),

CIG (Galicia),