



EMAlumni Statement
October 2024

We are writing to you as the alumni of the [European Masters in Human Rights and Democratisation](#) (EMA), part of the [Global Campus for Human Rights](#) (mainly funded by the European Union's European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights (EIDHR)). We issued previous statements on [10 November 2023](#) and [26 January 2024](#).

We urge the EU, and the European Commission in particular, to take a definite step towards peace on what is happening before our very eyes in Gaza, occupied Palestine and Lebanon. The inaction of the European Union and most of its Member States during a full year, and the double-standards that we have shown vis-à-vis other international conflicts (namely Ukraine) have seriously damaged the EU credibility outside and inside.

Our disappointment with the international community was relieved with the International Court of Justice emergency hearing of South Africa's case against Israel under the 1948 Genocide Convention and the strong stance of the Governments of Belgium, Ireland and Spain. Based on that case, the ICJ ordered Israel several provisional measures in January, March and May 2024, among which to immediately [suspend its military operation at Rafah](#), an order Israel completely ignored. In addition to that, a distinct [advisory opinion delivered on 19 July 2024](#) the ICJ stated that "the sustained abuse by Israel of its position as an occupying Power, through annexation and an assertion of permanent control over the Occupied Palestinian Territory and continued frustration of the right of the Palestinian people to self-determination, violates fundamental principles of international law and **renders Israel's presence in the Occupied Palestinian Territory unlawful**". The latter ICJ advisory opinion was endorsed by a majority of States through the adoption of an UNGA resolution in September with 124 votes in favour, 43 abstentions and 14 votes against.

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Despite these developments, the EU responds completely inadequately to the genocide in Gaza and the continuous illegal occupation of Palestine, including East Jerusalem. As we wrote these lines, we learned that Israel targeted UNIFIL peace troops in Lebanon. While this would have attracted all international attention from the media and governments, we have not yet seen the reactions that such an atrocious attack on international UN peacekeeping troops require.

Once again, we urge the EU to call for an immediate, unconditional and permanent ceasefire to the war in Gaza, the rest of Palestine and Lebanon. Additionally, we call for the [lifting of the illegal blockade preventing Palestinians from accessing food and other goods](#), the imposition of relevant sanctions on Israel, the prompt release of all arbitrarily detained and forcibly disappeared Palestinian captives, and the return of Israeli hostages. It is crucial for the EU to take decisive measures to address the ongoing situation.

Palestine is now a “[hell on Earth](#)”. NGO Access Now [reported](#) that “[10 children a day lose one or both legs](#)”. More than [902 entire families](#) have been obliterated; at least [17,000 children have been orphaned](#); and [90 percent of the population](#) has been displaced, [some as many as 10 times](#). With [80 percent of its buildings](#) destroyed, there are no safe places left to go inside Gaza, and [no escape](#) possible beyond its borders.”

We emphasise that Israel’s response to the events of 7 October 2023, which we equally condemn, has been utterly disproportionate, amounting to collective punishment and unmeasurable suffering.

The calls for “humanitarian pauses” from the EU and the European Commission President, and the calls for a ceasefire from High Representative and Vice President Borrell, received no response from the EU as a whole. The new High Representative must ensure that Europe stands as united against the war crimes and slaughter in Palestine as it does for those in Ukraine.

As human rights professionals, working in a variety of institutions around Europe and further afield, we call on the EU as a collective to build confidence in international law and institutions within its membership. Given the commitment and role of the EU to protect international law and justice mechanisms, the EU must publicly support the critical adjudication role of the independent ICJ.

The magnitude of devastation, destruction and human denigration seen in Gaza, coupled with a humanitarian catastrophe were we continue seeing starvation used as a weapon of war, the aggression to the territorial sovereignty of Lebanon, together with the attacks to Lebanese civilians and civilian infrastructures, represents an erosion of the rule of law and has to be a matter of concern for all European Union member states and the global community - not to mention the recent attacks to the UNIFIL peace mission which may incur in serious war crimes. **As an Institution, the EU must insist on respect for international human rights and humanitarian law and on the legal mechanisms created to uphold**

these laws and to hold those who breach them to account. This is essential to ensure accountability under law, non-discrimination and full respect for all human rights legal obligations. It is time for the EU to show with concrete actions and certainty that it has the commitment to its vision for the realisation of human rights values.

In view of the above, we call on the EU and individual EU States to adopt the following steps:

- Call for an immediate, unconditional, and permanent ceasefire, along with the release and safe return of all captives.
- Support and respect the ICJ ruling by demonstrating decisive leadership in ensuring all States fulfill their role in preventing breaches of the Genocide Convention.
- Call for the immediate withdrawal of Israeli troops from Lebanese territory.
- Demand an instant cease of hostilities from the Israeli troops against the UNIFIL peace forces in Lebanon
- Impose sanctions on Israel, such as the suspension of the EU-Israel association agreement
- Halt the sale of weapons and armament to Israel through an EU weapon embargo, and take all necessary measures to prevent further escalation of the conflict.
- Ban the import of products originating from the illegal settlements in the West Bank
- Openly condemn the advances in occupied territory in the West Bank and demand the instant departure of settlers.
- Publicly and unequivocally support the work of the International Criminal Court (ICC), ensuring it has all the resources needed to carry out its mandate.
- Recognize the apartheid situation to address the root causes of the conflict.
- Focus all efforts on establishing a path to peace, and fulfill a key role in this, including the recognition of a sovereign State of Palestine.

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[ERMA Alumni Network \(EAN\)](#)- Alumni Association of the European Regional Master's Programme in Democracy and Human Rights in South East Europe

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