



FAGFORBUNDET



Norsk Folkehjelp



End the siege of Gaza now!

Collective punishment is a crime against humanity.

Dear Minister of Foreign Affairs, Ine Eriksen Søreide.

In response to the global pandemic, governments across the world are implementing emergency measures to protect the health of their citizens and stabilise their economies. For people in the West Bank, East Jerusalem and Gaza the Covid-19 outbreak has critical economic and humanitarian implications.

As a population under occupation and siege, the Palestinians are a high risk group, both at the mercy of the pandemic and disproportionate measures from the occupying power.

Israel confirmed their first case of Covid-19 on February 21st. Following this, the UN and humanitarian organisations reported that Israeli authorities demolished 69 buildings in the West Bank and East Jerusalem. Amongst the demolished infrastructure were seven water, hygiene and sanitation structures. A third of the damaged or confiscated buildings were funded by international aid to the Palestinians. The UN body OCHA also reports an increase in attacks by Israeli settlers and incidents of disproportionate use of violence by Israeli soldiers. This is happening at the same time as Israel's government plans to annex large areas of the West Bank. These are serious, political measures, violating international humanitarian law and increasing the vulnerability of Palestinians.

Overcrowded areas and refugee camps in the West Bank and Gaza are especially vulnerable to the pandemic. For the two million people living in Gaza the situation is catastrophic. 13 years of siege and military operations in 2009, 2012 and 2014 have made Gaza uninhabitable. In an area the size of Hamar municipality, Palestinians are living with a weak public health sector, extreme poverty, high levels of unemployment, dysfunctional infrastructure, aid-dependency and terrible conditions to grow up in for children and youth.

Under these critical circumstances it is impossible for the Palestinian health sector to handle the pandemic. Health care in Gaza has been on the brink of collapse even before they received the first Covid-19 patients and has for many years struggled to meet the needs of the population due to the critical lack of medicine, equipment, and training. Restrictions set by the Israeli siege seriously impede the import of goods, trade and economic activity as well as stable access to electricity and fuel.

The siege, which limits freedom of movement by land, sea and air, is a clear violation of human rights, and, as the UN has declared several times, a clear breach of Israel's commitments to international law. We want to emphasize the importance of ensuring that the

international community has access to the necessary information about what is happening in Palestine and the consequences of the siege.

Our own government has spoken about the centrality of human rights, democracy, and the rule of law in Norwegian foreign policy. From this follows a duty to act. Norway has a clear responsibility as chair of the Ad Hoc Liaison Committee (AHLC) for Palestine since 1993. We, the signatories below, believe that ending the siege is long overdue.

We urge the Minister of Foreign Affairs to take an initiative at the UN and in other international bodies in order to stop the collective punishment of the Palestinians, an action that, according to the Geneva Conventions of 1949, is considered a war crime.

Oslo, 5th May 2020

Signatories:

Norwegian Union of Municipal and General Employees - Mette Nord, President
Norwegian People's Aid - Henriette Westrin, General Secretary
Ship to Gaza Norway - Torstein Dahle, President
Defend International Law - Kjell M. Brygfjeld, lawyer

Co-signatories:

Aftenpostens Grafiske Klubb
Arbeidernes Ungdomsfylking
Attac Norge
BDS Norge
Bestemødre for fred
Changemaker
EL & IT Forbundet
Fagforbundet teoLOgene
Fagforbundet Ung
Fellesforbundet
Fellesorganisasjonen
Fellesutvalget for Palestina
FIVAS
Handel og Kontor i Norge
ICJ-Norge Studentnettverk
Industri Energi
Internasjonal Kvinneliga for Fred og Frihet
KFUK-KFUM Global
Kvekerhjelp
Kvekersamfunnet i Norge
Latin-Amerikagruppene i Norge
LO i Bergen og omland
LO i Oslo
LO i Trondheim
Norsk Nærings- og Nytelsesmiddelarbeiderforbund
NNN Oslo og Akershus
Norges Fredslag

Norges Fredsråd
Norges Kommunistiske Parti
Norges kristelige studentforbund
Norges Sosiale Forum
Norsk Dramatikerforbund
Norsk Folkehjelp Solidaritetsungdom
Norsk Jernbaneforbund
Norsk PEN
Oslo Arbeiderparti
Oslo Bygningsarbeiderforening
Oslo Grafiske Fagforening
Oslo og Akershus HK
Oslo Senterungdom
Palestinakomiteen i Norge
Palestine Network Norway
Palestinske barn i israelske fengsler PIM
Rød Ungdom
Rødt
Sabeels Venner i Norge
Studentenes og Akademikernes Internasjonale Hjelpfond SAIH
Samordningskomiteen for akademisk og kulturell boikott av staten Israel AKULBI
Senterungdommen
Skolenes Landsforbund
Sosialistisk Ungdom
Sosialistisk Venstreparti
Stiftelsen Karibu
Ungkommunistene i Norge