

INDEPENDENT
COMMISSION
FOR HUMAN RIGHTS
I C H R

25 October 2023

Dear Colleagues from our Fellow National Human Rights Institutions Worldwide,

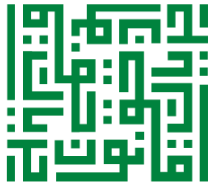
Warm Greetings from Palestine Independent Commission for Human Rights (ICHR).

We wish to extend our profound gratitude and appreciation to all colleagues from the Global Alliance for National Human Rights Institutions (GANHRI) for your compassionate messages of support and condolences, especially after the tragic loss suffered by our colleague, Hassan Halasa, who lost 12 beloved members of his family including his mother, wife, two daughters, and seven-year-old son. We also acknowledge the NHRIs that have publicly condemned the continuous bombardment of civilians, and the ongoing suffocating siege imposed on 2.3 million Palestinians in the Gaza Strip, including the prevention of entry of food, medicine, water, and fuel.

In light of these difficult circumstances we are going through, it is comforting to see that we do not stand alone and that we have principled friends and supporters who back us out of their firm belief that human rights are indivisible and that humans are equal in dignity. Killing civilians is condemnable regardless of who commits it, and international humanitarian law and human rights should apply to all parties.

Since October 7, 2023, the unprecedented rate of bombardments in the Gaza Strip has led to the tragic killing of over 5,791 Palestinians, of whom 68 per cent are children and women. The UN has estimated that there are 1.4 million Gazans internally displaced with nearly 600,000 sheltering in the UN Relief and Works Agency (UNWRA) facilities. There are 50,000 pregnant women unable to obtain basic services in Gaza with 34 health facilities damaged, including 19 hospitals. Further exacerbating this humanitarian disaster is the blockade of vital supplies, reminiscent of acts defined as Genocide.

NHRI staff place themselves at enormous risk in their defense of human rights. Sadly, across the region, some have paid the ultimate price for their work and have been killed. These incidents serve as a heartbreaking reminder of the courage of NHRI staff and the risks that they face every day in the fulfilment of their duties.



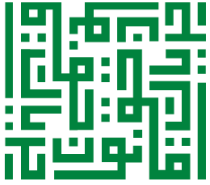
It saddens us to share that the ICHR team has endured devastating suffering from this crisis. Five commissioners and 17 staff members stationed in the Gaza Strip

have undergone immense personal losses. Many have lost loved ones, all have been internally displaced, and their homes have suffered damage or total destruction.

At this critical hour, the core principles of international law and human rights are undergoing a stern test. Their credibility hangs in the balance. People in our country are losing faith in international law, which repeatedly has failed them. Let us here quote Mr. Michael Lynk, former Special Rapporteur for Human Rights Situation in the Occupied Palestinian Territories, who indicated in a report to the UN General Assembly that “the duration and entrenchment of this half-century long occupation was profoundly corrosive of human rights and a dark stain on the efficacy of international law”.

In our view, it is our collective responsibility as NHRIs in the Globe, to work to restore confidence in international human rights and humanitarian law and give hope to helpless and vulnerable civilians. Under the current extremely difficult circumstances, we would therefore like to request for the support and assistance of all of our fellow NHRIs. In particular, we urge fellow NHRIs to urgently initiate contact with your respective ministers of foreign or external affairs and relevant authorities within your jurisdiction, including the possibility of contacting influential foreign embassies, and share the following messages:

1. **Ceasefire & Civilian Protection:** A clear stance by NHRIs for a ceasefire is paramount. Without it, proclamations of civilian protection are empty, for currently, there exists no safe haven in Gaza.
2. **Unconditional Humanitarian Aid:** It is imperative to pressurize for the unobstructed entry of humanitarian aid, abiding by the principles of humanity, neutrality, impartiality, and independence. Current aid barely scratches the surface, meeting less than 3% of daily needs and it is limited to the southern area neglecting the northern and middle Gaza. It is worth noting that essential fuel supplies, vital for hospitals and water pumps, has yet to be permitted entry.
3. **Accountability:** A call by NHRIs for an unbiased investigation into war crimes committed by anyone in the course of this war, allowing bodies like



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the International Criminal Court (which Palestine is a party to) and the Independent Commission of Inquiry on the Occupied Palestinian Territory established by the Human Rights Council in 2021, to undertake their responsibilities without any obstruction.

4. **Root Causes of the conflict:** The atrocities we have witnessed since October 7, 2023 should be a wake-up call for the international community to double efforts towards achieving peace. This requires, as Justice Navi Pillay, former UN High Commissioner for Human Rights and the current Chair of the UN Human Rights Council Commission of Inquiry, emphasized that “...the only path towards ending violence and achieving sustainable peace is through strict observance of international law throughout the Occupied Palestinian Territory and Israel. This requires addressing the root causes of the conflict, including the occupation of Palestinian territory, and allowing the Palestinians to exercise their right to self-determination.”.

Esteemed NHRI Colleagues,

Immediate action is crucial. Each passing minute is vital to protecting the lives of innocent civilians. We would therefore urge you to immediately reach out to your government and foreign embassies with these four key messages. Let us collectively assert that human rights and justice are more than mere ideals — they are principles we must uphold, defend, and champion.

We look forward to your support.

Issam Aruri
Commissioner General

Ammar Dwaik
Director General