



Norwegian People's Aid



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. Brygfeld, lawyer

Co-signatories:

Trade Union for Graphic Workers at the newspaper «Aftenposten» (Aftenpostens Grafiske Klubb)
The Workers' Youth League (Arbeidernes Ungdomsfylking – AUF)
Attac Norway (Attac Norge)
BDS Norway
Grandmothers for Peace (Bestemødre for fred)
Changemaker
The trade union for Energy, Electricals engineering, Telecommunications and IT workers (El & IT Forbundet)
Trade Union for Theologians of Norwegian Union of Municipal and General Employees (Fagforbundet teoLOGene)
The Youth of The Norwegian Union of Municipal and General Employees (Fagforbundet Ung)
The United Federation of Trade Unions (Fellesforbundet)
The Norwegian Union of Social Educators and Social Workers (Fellesorganisasjonen)
The Association of Norwegian NGOs for Palestine (Fellesutvalget for Palestina)
The Association for International Water Studies (Fivas)
The Norwegian Union of Employees in Commerce and Offices (Handel og Kontor i Norge)
The Student-Network of ICJ-Norway (ICJ-Norge Studentnettverk)
The trade union for workers in Industry and Energy sector (Industri Energi)
Women's International League for Peace and Freedom (Internasjonal Kvinneliga for Fred og Frihet)
YWCA-YMCA Global (KFUK-KFUM Global)
Quaker Service Norway (Kvekerhjelp)
The Religious Society of Friends (Quakers) in Norway (Kvekersamfunnet i Norge)
The Norwegian Solidarity Coommittee for Latin America (Latin-Amerikagruppene i Norge)
The body for trade unions in Bergen and surrounding (LO i Bergen og omland)

The body for trade unions in Oslo (LO i Oslo)
The body for the trade unions in Trondheim (LO i Trondheim)
The Norwegian Food and Allied Workers' Union (Norsk Nærings- og
Nytelsesmiddelarbeiderforbund)
Oslo and Akershus Department of The Norwegian Food and Allied Workers Union (Oslo og
Akershus NNN)
The Norwegian Peace Association (Norges Fredslag)
The Norwegian Peace Council (Norges Fredsråd)
Communist Party of Norway (Norges Kommunistiske Parti)
Student Christian Movement in Norway (Norges kristelige studentforbund)
The Norwegian Social Forum/Globalization Conference (Norges Sosiale Forum)
The Writer's Guild of Norway (Norsk Dramatikerforbund)
The Youths of The Norwegian People's Aid (Norsk Folkehjelp Solidaritetsungdom)
The Norwegian Trade Union for Railway's Workers (Norsk Jernbaneforbund)
Norwegian PEN (Norsk PEN)
The Norwegian Labour Party of Oslo (Oslo Arbeiderparti)
The Trade Union for Construction Workers' in Oslo (Oslo Bygningsarbeiderforening)
The Trade Union for Grafic Workers' in Oslo (Oslo Grafiske Fagforening)
Oslo and Akershus Department of The Norwegian Union of Employees in Commerce and
Offices (Oslo og Akershus HK)
The Centre Party Youth of Oslo (Oslo Senterungdom)
The Palestine Committee of Norway (Palestinakomiteen i Norge)
Palestine Network Norway
Palestinian Children in Israeli Prisons (Palestinske barn i israelske fengsler - PIM)
Red Youth (Rød Ungdom)
The Red Party (Rødt)
Friends of Sabeel Scandinavia in Norway (Sabeels Venner i Norge)
Nowegian Students' and Academics' International Assistance Fund (Studentenes og
Akademikernes Internasjonale Hjelpfond SAIH)
The Norwegian Committee for Academic and Cultural Boycott of the State of Israel
(Samordningskomiteen for akademisk og kulturell boikott av staten Israel AKULBI)
The Centre Party Youth (Senterungdommen)
The Norwegian Union of School Employees (Skolenes Landsforbund)
Socialist Youth (Sosialistisk Ungdom)
Socialist Left Party (Sosialistisk Venstreparti)
Karibu Foundation (Stiftelsen Karibu)
The Youth Communists in Norway (Ungkommunistene i Norge)