

# A statement on Gaza and Israel from the president of the ICRC

Israel and the occupied territories    Protected persons: Civilians

**Geneva (ICRC) – Five months into the escalation of hostilities, which began with the horrific events in Israel on 7 October, the situation in the Gaza Strip degenerates by the hour. There is nowhere safe for people to go. The civilian death toll and the ongoing captivity of hostages are shocking and unacceptable.**

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This brutal war has ruptured any sense of a shared humanity. In the face of such deep suffering, we are making three urgent calls:

- A cessation of hostilities to allow for meaningful assistance to reach the people in need.
- That hostages held by Hamas are released unconditionally and their dignity, safety and medical needs cared for. The ICRC reiterates its call to be allowed to visit the hostages.
- That Palestinian detainees are treated humanely and permitted to communicate with family. The ICRC must be notified of and allowed to visit Palestinians in Israeli detention.

A steady, robust flow of humanitarian aid to match the needs is only part of the solution. Alleviating the humanitarian catastrophe in Gaza starts with a clear will and measures that safeguard civilian life and human dignity, meaning both sides must conduct their military operations in a way that spares the civilians who are caught in the middle.

The only way to achieve this is that the parties strictly adhere to international humanitarian law, which means preserving the life, dignity and humanity of all people affected by armed conflict, regardless of which side they are on. It is the line between humanity and barbarity. The principles of distinction, proportionality and precaution must be applied in practice to achieve their very purpose: that preserving civilian life and health is the rule, not the exception.

As an occupying power, Israel must provide for the basic needs of the population or facilitate the safe and unimpeded delivery of humanitarian relief.

International humanitarian law provides a way out of the downward spiral we currently see. All states - indeed all of humanity - have a stake in this. Respect for international humanitarian law not only preserves the humanity of the enemy, it preserves our own humanity, both today and in the future. In this conflict, as in all others, the international community must make respect for IHL and its implementation a political priority.

The ICRC is standing by to serve as a neutral intermediary – a trusted and experienced third party – facilitating the humanitarian aspects of any political agreement reached by the parties, contingent upon the provision of necessary access and security guarantees.

If there is a cessation of hostilities that will allow for meaningful assistance to reach people in need, then the ICRC can significantly expand food, shelter, and

hygiene assistance. The ICRC's longstanding work in Gaza's health, electricity and water sectors would enable us to swiftly support these vital services.

**For further information, please contact [press@icrc.org](mailto:press@icrc.org)**