

Joint statement against the mass forced displacement of Palestinians in Gaza

20 February 2024



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We, the undersigned organisations, are appalled over the mass forced displacement of Palestinians in Gaza resulting from Israel's devastating military assault.

Almost 2 million Palestinians have been forcibly displaced within Gaza, with reports indicating Israeli plans for mass displacement outside of Gaza itself.

This humanitarian catastrophe must be addressed urgently within the framework of international law and human rights principles.

Forced displacement, as observed in Gaza, violates international humanitarian law, notably Article 49 of the Fourth Geneva Convention, which prohibits the forcible transfer of protected persons by an occupying power. Israel's actions, including the issuance of "evacuation" orders covering vast areas of Gaza, have resulted in the displacement of an estimated 85% of Gaza's population.

Families have been displaced multiple times, exacerbating the already dire situation. The lack of safe routes and clear destinations for displaced persons raises concerns about their right to return and constitutes forcible transfer.

We remain horrified about the prospect of a full ground invasion in Rafah, which would be utterly catastrophic for the more than 1.5 million people currently staying in Rafah, including more than one million displaced people seeking shelter there. People in Rafah have nowhere to go, as the north and middle areas of Gaza are under daily bombardments.

Reports of Israeli plans to permanently relocate Palestinians from Gaza to other territories, such as the Sinai Peninsula or third countries, are alarming.

In response to these grave concerns, we call upon governments around the world to do everything in their power to:

- Actively pursue an immediate, permanent, and unconditional ceasefire.
- Ensure Israel's compliance with its obligations under international law and protective measures ordered by the International Court of Justice.
- Reject and prevent any initiatives that contribute to permanent or protracted forced displacement of Palestinians and ensure the safe return for all displaced Palestinians within Gaza once hostilities cease.
- Facilitate immediate humanitarian access to Gaza, including essential aid and supplies, to meet the needs of the civilian population, especially vulnerable groups.
- Fully adhere to their fundamental legal obligation under the Geneva Conventions and customary international law to ensure respect for international humanitarian law.

We urge the international community to take decisive action to address the plight of Palestinians in Gaza and uphold their rights under international law.

Signatories

Medical Aid for Palestinians - MAP
ActionAid
Action Against Hunger
Action for Humanity
Amnesty International UK
Caabu (Council for Arab-British Understanding)
CAFOD
Child Rights International Network (CRIN)
Christian Aid
Eurochild
Gender Action for Peace and Security (GAPS)
Handicap International - Humanity & Inclusion
Interpal
INTERSOS
Islamic Relief UK
Lawyers for Palestinian Human Rights
Médecins du Monde - International Network
Plan International
SAFERWORLD
Sadaka, The Ireland Palestine Alliance
The Global Legal Action Network (GLAN)
Trócaire
War Child
War on Want
Welfare Association

Photo: Displaced Palestinians walk while carrying water (Credit: Mohammed Zaanoun, 19 February 2024)

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Medical Aid for Palestinians 33a Islington Park Street, London, N1 1QB, United Kingdom +44 (0)20 7226 4114 info@map.org.uk

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