

strangling those besieged in Gaza with more walls is not permissible.

In the name of Allah, Compassionate, Most Merciful.

The Federation of Islamic Organisations in Europe

One year since the Israeli aggression: strangling those besieged in Gaza with more walls is not permissible

In days like these, last winter, human consciences around the world were in a state of shock, witnessing a military aggression, committed by the Israeli war machine, which perpetrated the most horrific atrocities against 1.5 million Palestinians in the Gaza Strip; already under a stifling blockade, and unrelenting isolation from the rest of the world.

Now, one year has passed since that barbaric aggression and all its crimes, confirmed by the Goldstone Report, against the Palestinian inhabitants, civilian facilities, and educational and medical establishments, as well as places of worship. As then, the siege continues, rather it is becoming ever harsher, and ever more restrictive, with new measures that can only mean a turn for the worst. All of these fly in the face of human values, moral obligations, and binding international conventions, and flagrantly disregard the repeated calls by UN agencies, and aid organisations on the urgent need to lift the blockade, and open the crossings into Gaza.

It is painful to find that corroborated reports from Gaza all speak of a further tightening of the blockade, through the planting of a massive underground, metal barrier sealing besieged Gaza from the Egyptian side, and the commencement of excavation work, and the digging of buffer channels, which completely prevent Gaza in its entirety from communicating with its surroundings. These measures will have the most bleakly tragic

consequences, as they block and sever the vital arteries that were the remaining hope for a minimum supply of basic foodstuffs, and necessities. All this is in flagrant violation of international conventions, and a grave denial of moral obligations.

It is common knowledge that, for the people of Gaza, the border area with Egypt has come to represent the only remaining lifeline in a suffocating blockade, especially since the Israeli occupation continues to keep all the crossings into Gaza sealed.

No doubt that the negligent inaction of the international community has only aggravated the already dire humanitarian situation. Not only did the international community turn a blind eye to the Israeli military aggression on Gaza, but also broke its promises regarding aid for reconstruction, and mending what the Israeli war machine had destroyed. The people of Gaza have seen nothing of the billions that were promised by donor States. And so for the past year, and to this day, thousands of Palestinian families continue to live in the cold and rain, in the shadow of crippled facilities, destroyed infrastructure, hermetically sealed crossings, and promises that have gone with the wind.

The least that the inhabitants of the Gaza Strip can expect, today, and after one year since that barbaric war, is that the suffocating blockade is not made harsher, and that those remaining lifelines, sustaining their children, and their sick, are not severed.

People of conscience, the world over, cannot afford to ignore the pleas of the besieged inhabitants, whose voices have risen out of Gaza these past few days, calling for help, for Egypt—neighbour and elder, to stand by its obligations, by lifting the blockade, opening the Rafah crossing—Gaza's sole gateway to the external world, and to restrain itself from forcing Palestinian civilians into a state of famine, or tightening the stranglehold to deprive them of the few remaining resources they need for their livelihood, and their very existence.

It is an urgent request that we make to the Egyptian President, who previously emphasised in his famous statement at the outset of 2008, that the Egyptian leadership would never allow the Palestinians to go hungry. From this position, we appeal to President Hosni Mubarak to intervene and bring a halt to those measures and actions that continue to isolate the inhabitants of Gaza, to instruct that the Rafah crossing be opened, and end a catastrophic blockade that cannot be allowed to continue or be ignored in today's world.

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