

Open letter to the EU

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The letter was sent by email to the addressed institutions in mid September 2025. At that moment, the letter had about 150 signatures. The email linked to this live document. It will remain open for signatures.

Open letter to the European Union from members of the European Association of Social Psychology and other social and community psychologists

To the Presidents of the European Council, the European Commission, and of the European Parliament,

We write to you with an urgent call to use all the power that the European citizens have delegated to you to stop the humanitarian catastrophe unfolding in Gaza due to the actions and policies of the government of Israel led by Benjamin Netanyahu. In particular, we demand a stop to the disregard for human life, the policy of starvation, the destruction of the cities and infrastructure of Gaza, and the violence perpetrated by settlers and Israeli armed forces in the occupied West Bank.

In a letter published by the journal *The Lancet* on July 30 of this year, De Vogli and colleagues (2025) summarized the dire situation in Gaza and pointed out that “most public health, medical, and social science associations have either remained silent or issued vague statements”. Our organisation has been silent as well, until today. We now see it as imperative to act.

Our organisation’s purpose is the promotion and development of social psychology in Europe and beyond. Our field is deeply committed to upholding human rights and democratic values, to promote mental and physical health, and to support the peaceful resolution of conflicts. Social psychology is a field that for decades has researched the causes of intergroup conflict, how it spirals in acts of violence and retribution, and also how to overcome it. Social psychologists have studied the causes of genocides such as those in Rwanda and Srebrenica, as well as how to reconstruct societies after such catastrophes. Much of our work has been financed by funding from the EU. Our field has studied these phenomena precisely because we want them to never happen again.

We are thus horrified by how the Israeli government has escalated its use of violence in an unprecedented way throughout Palestine for now 23 months, following decades of occupation and blockade. This escalation has already led to the forced displacement of almost two million people and claimed tens of thousands of Palestinian lives, the majority of them women and children. The fact that the exact number is hard to determine cannot detract from the unbearable suffering, and neither can the fact that the current escalation began in the wake of Hamas’ violent attacks and abductions in Israel on Oct 7, 2023, with some of the hostages being held to this day. .

As scientists; we strive to use data to understand the world wherever possible. Data reported by numerous international organisations and non-governmental agencies, in conjunction with reports by eye witnesses and victims (Smith et al., 2025), leave no doubt that a humanitarian catastrophe is unfolding in Gaza. The situation is dire:

Famine. The Integrated Food Security Phase Classification (IPC), a multi-stakeholder initiative whose supporters include the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), the World Bank, and the World Health Organization (WHO), warned on 29 July 2025 that the “worst-case scenario of Famine is currently playing out in the Gaza Strip. Famine thresholds have been reached for food consumption in most of the Gaza Strip and for acute malnutrition in Gaza City”. According to the IPC, one in three individuals is going without food for days at a time, and one in ten children is severely malnourished.¹ The famine is caused by a blockade of aid organisations by the Netanyahu government and the complete inadequacy of the support delivered by the Gaza Humanitarian Foundation (GHF). Ongoing bombardments and ground operations by the IDF and the widespread demolition of infrastructure including a systematic destruction of Gaza health care facilities by the IDF worsen its effects.

Killing. Both Palestinian adults and children in Gaza are killed in horrifying numbers. We are well aware that estimates differ widely and are often disputed due to their provenance. Nevertheless, credible data have been compiled by demographers. Jamaluddine and colleagues (2025) estimate more than 64000 deaths between October 7, 2023 and June 30, 2024, of which about 60% were women, children, and older people. Guillot and colleagues (2025) published an analysis of the first year of the war, until September 2024. They estimate that during that time, life expectancy in the Gaza strip almost *halved*, from 75.5 to 46.3 years. The life expectancy of men decreased more strongly, but even women's life expectancy decreased by 38.6%. Once indirect deaths and unidentified victims are taken into account, the actual number may be even higher, possibly 4 times as many (Khatib, 2025). We can only extrapolate what has happened in the year following the periods studied in these two publications.

Destruction of infrastructure. It has been widely reported that there is a near total destruction of buildings and infrastructure in most of the Gaza Strip. As academics, we are also horrified by the fact that soldiers of the IDF destroyed the campuses of all three non-profit universities in Gaza in a deliberate and targeted manner. The universities live on without infrastructure.²

Children. War and starvation have been particularly dire on children who have a special status of protection under international law and who, by definition, can not be held responsible for an armed conflict or for the causes that led up to it. According to *Save the Children*, Gaza has become “the deadliest place on earth to be a child”.³ Children comprise close to 50% of the total victims, including 40% under the age of ten.⁴ According to a public statement by the United Nations, Gaza has the highest number of child amputees per capita in the world.⁵ Moreover, approximately 17.000 children are estimated to be orphaned. There is also a devastating mental health situation, reflected in the unprecedented level of psychological trauma. A study of children living through the conflict in Gaza found that 49% wanted to die, 96% believed their death was imminent, 79% had nightmares, and 73% showed signs of aggression (War Child, 2024, ⁶). As psychologists we are particularly concerned about the situation of Palestinian children, given that they not only experience acute medical (death, injuries, disfigurement, amputations, brain injury, infectious diseases, malnutrition), psychological (such as becoming orphans, grief and loneliness), and socio-educational consequences (displacement, lacking education and safe housing, etc.), but also face foreseeable long-term effects. It is well documented that such devastating experiences in childhood tend to produce long-term

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<https://www.unrwa.org/resources/reports/unrwa-situation-report-181-situation-gaza-strip-and-west-bank-including-east-jerusalem>

² <https://www.aljazeera.com/amp/opinions/2025/7/14/an-open-letter-from-the-presidents-of-gaza-universities>

³ <https://www.savethechildren.net/what-we-do/emergencies/war-gaza>

⁴ <https://msf.org.uk/article/gaza-msf-survey-shows-almost-half-people-killed-are-children>

⁵ <https://www.unocha.org/publications/report/occupied-palestinian-territory/humanitarian-situation-update-245-gaza-strip>

⁶ https://www.warchild.org.uk/sites/default/files/2024-12/CTCCM_Gaza_Needs_Assessment_Report_2024_WCUK.pdf

damage to mental (e.g., post-traumatic stress, anxiety, depression) and physical health in adulthood, in part determined by life-changing experiences such as orphanhood or amputations (Papakonstantinou et al., 2024). As human beings, we can only concur with the conclusion of *Save the Children* that “When children are slaughtered en masse, humanity’s moral and legal foundations crumble”.⁷

Genocide. As scientists, we also take the judgments of our colleagues seriously, in particular when a consensus emerges. There is now a long list of prestigious genocide scholars who have affirmed that the Israeli state is perpetrating a genocide in Gaza. Influential human rights organisations and UN special rapporteurs concur (for a list of sources, see ⁸). In this situation, it is urgent to increase pressure from the outside and to intervene with all non-military options.

The most urgent goals the EU needs to pursue are these:

1. An immediate, sufficient, unimpeded, and unconditional humanitarian access to Gaza must be achieved because it is the only path to avert further famine-related deaths and suffering (e.g., Osendarp, 2025). This includes granting access to UN-based organizations such as UNWRA that have a long and successful history of supporting Palestinian refugees and that has been denied access by Israel since the beginning of March. To delay humanitarian assistance is to deepen the crisis.
2. An immediate ceasefire is urgently needed to stop the loss of life of Palestinian civilians and the further destruction of Gaza’s infrastructure.
3. Release of all hostages and arbitrarily detained prisoners on both sides.
4. Renewed negotiations for peace with the goal to assure the human rights and sovereignty of all Palestinian and Israeli people. This includes an end to the siege on Gaza and an end to the occupation, and Israel giving up its illegal settlements.

The European Union has the power to actually intervene. We therefore ask you to implement the following policies (see also ⁹):

1. Resume international aid deliveries immediately at scale and flood the Gaza strip with humanitarian supplies, in full respect of the core principles of international humanitarian law.
2. Suspend with immediate effect all arms and dual use exports to Israel.
3. Ban trade with Israel’s illegal settlements in occupied Palestinian territory and prohibit EU and member states’ commercial and investment relations with any entity or company doing business in or benefiting from Israel’s illegal settlements.
4. Suspend all preferential commercial arrangements for Israel under the Association Agreement.
5. Cancel all dual use research and technology programmes of the EU.
6. Impose targeted sanctions on Israeli Ministers, government officials, military commanders, and violent settlers responsible for war crimes, crimes against humanity, facilitating genocide and carrying out State-sanctioned terrorism.
7. Support international and national judicial mechanisms - including the International Criminal Court and domestic courts under universal jurisdiction - to bring perpetrators to justice.
8. Provide political, legal, and financial support to Palestinian civilian victims, human rights defenders, and humanitarian organizations operating under impossible conditions.
9. Recognize Palestinian statehood on the occasion of the UN conference in September 2025, to create the necessary prerequisite for a two-state solution.

⁷ <https://www.savethechildren.net/news/news-quote-gaza-children-among-highest-casualties-israeli-airstrikes-return-widespread-death>

⁸ [https://www.thelancet.com/cms/10.1016/S0140-6736\(25\)01541-7/attachment/952693d2-32e5-4674-9c77-1ed951d1e098/mmc1.pdf](https://www.thelancet.com/cms/10.1016/S0140-6736(25)01541-7/attachment/952693d2-32e5-4674-9c77-1ed951d1e098/mmc1.pdf)

⁹ https://www.politico.eu/wp-content/uploads/2025/07/27/EU-Amba_EN-fin_58signed_July2025.clean_.pdf

We know from our research that social movements emerge from situations in which people feel strong emotions, such as outrage, but also compassion. Opinions that were in a minority yesterday can become majority.¹⁰ The movement to stop the Israeli government from committing war crimes in Gaza has grown since October 7, led by Palestinian activists, artists, and scientists, and it has increased in numbers and reach since the start of the total blockade in March 2025. Within Israel, we are aware of two open letters demanding a stop to the destruction of Gaza that were published by the rectors of five Israeli universities¹¹ and by Israeli Academics, including members of our association.¹²

References to Scientific Articles

- ¹⁰ <https://yougov.co.uk/international/articles/52279-net-favourability-towards-israel-reaches-new-lows-in-key-western-european-countries>

¹¹ <https://news.walla.co.il/item/3768594>

¹² This was published as an ad in Haaretz. Copy: [adinhaaretz.jpg](#)

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