Parliamentary Assembly
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COUNCIL OF EUROPE
CONSEIL DE L'EUROPE

Resolution 2582 (2025)[1]

The absolute and urgent need to end the humanitarian crisis for women, children and the hostages in Gaza

Parliamentary Assembly

1. The Parliamentary Assembly has condemned in the strongest possible terms, from the outset, the appalling terrorist attack by Hamas and other militias against Israel on 7 October 2023. It continues to do so. The murders, hostage taking and all other crimes, not least sexual assaults, committed during this attack constitute a complete violation of human rights and human dignity, for which the perpetrators must be held accountable. The Assembly reiterates its call for the immediate release to their families and homes of all hostages still held in captivity and calls on Hamas to grant the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) access to those hostages without delay. The Assembly welcomes the conclusion of a three-phase ceasefire agreement to suspend military operations in the Gaza Strip and facilitate the exchange of hostages and prisoners. It welcomes the implementation of its first phase, from 19 January 2025, as a crucial and positive step forward and calls on all parties to respect this commitment so that the three phases are fully implemented and lead to a long-lasting peace.

2. The military campaign launched by Israel in Gaza in response to the attack on 7 October continued for fifteen months, causing an unimaginable humanitarian crisis. The whole Gaza Strip is under control by the State of Israel, and especially besieged northern Gaza. During Israel's military campaign, more than 46 000 people have lost their lives and more than 109 000 civilians have been injured, including a large number of women and children, who make up 70% of the victims. The hostages are exposed to the same humanitarian crisis as the civilians in Gaza, further compounded by their captivity. Many medical and humanitarian workers, including 265 people working for the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA), have died. A conservative estimate is that 120 000 people have died from ailments and diseases which could not be properly treated or managed, due to the severe damage to the healthcare system in Gaza. Entire sections of the infrastructure of society in Gaza – homes, schools, hospitals and medical facilities – are now completely destroyed or unable to function. In recent months, the conflict has escalated to other areas, such as Lebanon, Syria and the West Bank, where the same pattern and effects of attacks on civilian areas and humanitarian aid structures can be observed.

3. The Assembly cannot remain silent concerning the fact that women and children are without any shadow of doubt the main innocent victims of the conflict, as was also apparent in the horrific 7 October attack on Israel. In May 2024, the Gaza Ministry of Health put the number of children killed in this period at 14 100 and on 16 September published a list containing the names of 11 000 dead children who were able to be identified. These figures do not include the many more children who are missing, detained, buried under rubble, separated from their families or without any family, or those who have lost their lives indirectly as a result of the conflict. At the same time, the entire population of Israel, including children, has been subject to continuous, indiscriminate rocket attacks targeting the civilian population. According to United Nations special rapporteurs, more than 183 women a day are giving birth without pain relief, while hundreds of babies have died because of the lack of electricity to power incubators.

1. *Assembly debate* on 28 January 2025 (4th sitting) (see Doc. 16093 and add., report of the Committee on Social Affairs, Health and Sustainable Development, rapporteur: Ms Saskia Kluit). *Text adopted by the Assembly* on 28 January 2025 (4th sitting).

4. The Assembly points to the responsibilities of Hamas, not only for the massacre of 7 October but also for its protracted refusal to free the hostages unconditionally, as called for by the United Nations, and to give the ICRC essential access to them.

5. The Assembly refers to its Resolution 2524 (2024) "Recent developments in the Middle East: Hamas' terrorist attack on Israel and Israel's response" adopted on 23 January 2024, in which it pointed to the loss of thousands of lives, massive displacement and widespread destruction of civilian objects and infrastructure in Gaza and voiced its sorrow and dismay at the staggering number of innocent casualties in the Gaza Strip. It also notes that many parliamentarians spoke in favour of an immediate ceasefire in the current affairs debates entitled "War in Gaza: ensuring the release of the hostages, the implementation of an immediate ceasefire and the provision of humanitarian aid" and "Situation in the Middle East: escalation of violence and mounting humanitarian crisis, particularly in Gaza", held respectively on 27 June and 1 October 2024.

6. Today, the Assembly expresses its deep concern that the humanitarian situation in Gaza, which was already under stress before October 2023 and clearly dire at the time of Resolution 2524 (2024), has deteriorated further as a result of the fifteen months of military operations in Gaza. The Assembly cannot accept that this humanitarian crisis could be portrayed or seen as inevitable or be allowed to become the "new normal". The incessant bombing and ground operations of Israel are only adding to the death toll of innocent civilians. The winter weather only exacerbates the already inhuman and degrading living conditions of the people of Gaza and the hostages held by Hamas, who are subjected to an infernal cycle of suffering. The Assembly cannot remain silent while thousands of children continue to die and suffer life-altering injuries on a daily basis, especially in a situation where they have no means of escape and no access to even the most basic humanitarian services or assistance. This represents a blatant violation of children's rights under the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, the 1949 Geneva Conventions and their 1977 additional protocols.

7. The Assembly underlines that humanitarian organisations working in Gaza – whose ability to work on the ground is severely hampered, if not almost totally disrupted – sounded the alarm at two hearings held by the Committee on Social Affairs, Health and Sustainable Development on 13 and 30 September 2024. These organisations reported that the majority of people in the Gaza Strip have little or no access to basic foodstuffs and hygiene products, drinking water, electricity or heating. Approximately 90% of the population has been displaced at least once and some even up to 15 times. Every displacement results in the loss of necessary goods and contact with family and relations, and worse living conditions. People are living in makeshift shelters, made from plastic tarpaulin, which are unusable in winter as they have already been partly destroyed by the recent rains. They are concentrated in small, overcrowded areas, where rubbish is piling up because it cannot be disposed of or treated. As a result, preventable diseases and infections have spread among the already vulnerable population. At the same time, the Assembly must point out that over 120 000 Israelis have been evacuated from their homes near the borders with Gaza and Lebanon during the war, and that over half of these people have still not been able to return home safely.

8. The healthcare system of Gaza is on the brink of collapse due to the widespread destruction of medical infrastructure and the lack of supplies of essential goods resulting from administrative and physical restrictions imposed by the parties to the conflict, particularly the State of Israel. As a result, the population and hostages in Gaza have often no access to essential medicine, such as insulin or blood pressure medication. In a situation where potentially fatal injuries are common, surgical dressings and essential medicines are hard to come by and there are no longer enough blood supplies to meet even half of the needs. Surgery, when it can be performed, is mainly carried out in field hospitals set up in tents.

9. The Assembly refers to the United Nations General Assembly Resolution of 10 December 2023 demanding a ceasefire and humanitarian access to Gaza (A/ES-10/L.27). In Resolution 2024/2508(RSP) adopted on 18 January 2024 and entitled "The humanitarian situation in Gaza, the need to reach a ceasefire and the risks of regional escalation", the European Parliament also called for a permanent ceasefire and for full, rapid, safe and unhindered humanitarian access to the Gaza Strip. On 26 January 2024, the International Court of Justice issued an order stating that "Israel must, in accordance with its obligations under the Genocide Convention, in relation to Palestinians in Gaza, take all measures within its power to prevent the commission of all acts within the scope of Article II of this Convention" and "take immediate and effective measures to enable the provision of urgently needed basic services and humanitarian assistance to address the adverse conditions of life faced by Palestinians in the Gaza Strip". To this day, this order has not been acted upon or implemented. On 21 November 2024, the International Criminal Court issued two warrants of arrest for Mr Benjamin Netanyahu and for Mr Yoav Gallant, for crimes against humanity and war crimes committed from at least 8 October 2023 until at least 20 May 2024.

10. Echoing and reinforcing these calls, and in the light of the further dramatic deterioration in the humanitarian situation in Gaza, the Assembly urges all parties to the hostilities, in particular Israel to:

10.1. reach a permanent and unconditional ceasefire;

10.2. pending such a ceasefire, ensure that attacks do not destroy more civilian lives and civilian infrastructure, in particular hospitals, refugee zones and schools. The Assembly stresses that these are important protections under international humanitarian law;

10.3. refrain from using civilian infrastructure and humans as a shield;

10.4. ensure that attacks do not harm humanitarian personnel and structures and guarantee that humanitarian missions and their staff can carry out their work in safety and under appropriate conditions;

10.5. immediately and unconditionally repeal the ban on the UNRWA imposed by Israel;

10.6. ensure strict and immediate compliance with international humanitarian law and standards, including with the principles of humanity, distinction and proportionality, at all times, in particular to:

10.6.1. immediately grant full, rapid, safe and unhindered access by humanitarian aid organisations to the Gaza Strip and to ensure that the adequate supply of essential goods in the Gaza Strip, such as food, water, medical equipment and medicines, fuel and shelter, is guaranteed for all Palestinians, in particular women and children, and for the hostages in Gaza;

10.6.2. respect the “deconfliction” zones and ensure safe working conditions for humanitarian aid workers;

10.6.3. protect civilians, in particular women, children and other vulnerable groups, especially wounded children with no surviving family;

10.6.4. ensure that neonatal care facilities are established and protected at all times;

10.6.5. enable the stabilisation of the condition of the most seriously wounded;

10.6.6. immediately and unconditionally facilitate medical evacuations, in particular of children and their families and of pregnant women and their families;

10.6.7. provide adequate, permanent areas where families can stay and children can play in safety.

11. The Assembly reiterates the importance of free press in a democratic society and the responsibilities of the parties to the conflict in guaranteeing safety for journalists, especially when working in zones of military conflict. Journalists are entitled to protection as civilians under international humanitarian law. The Assembly calls on Israel to immediately allow access to the Gaza Strip for local and foreign journalists and for international organisations responsible for providing information or carrying out investigations, and to facilitate their work in safe conditions.

12. The Assembly calls on Council of Europe member States to comply with their obligations under the United Nations Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide and to use their influence in every way possible to remind the parties to the conflict of obligations under this convention and of the need to respect minimum humanitarian standards, including those set out in the Geneva Conventions. In particular, the following basic principles should be respected: civilians must be spared from military strikes; the wounded and sick must be collected and cared for; impartial humanitarian organisations must be able at all times to offer their services to alleviate suffering without this being considered as interference; and certain acts against protected persons, including women and children, are prohibited at all times and in all places.

13. In this context, the Assembly calls on Council of Europe member and observer States, as well as States whose parliament enjoys observer or partner for democracy status with the Assembly, to play an active role in addressing the current humanitarian emergency in Gaza and its future consequences, in particular as regards:

13.1. the support to and provision of emergency humanitarian aid without delay, including the allocation of sufficient funding for non-governmental organisations and international structures delivering humanitarian aid, enabling them to strengthen their workforce;

13.2. the restoration of vital infrastructure, in particular hospitals and that needed to deliver humanitarian aid, to immediate working order;

13.3. the provision of emergency food aid;

13.4. the provision of appropriate physical and mental healthcare for the children, women, healthcare providers and medical and humanitarian staff who are suffering and will continue to suffer from the trauma caused by the armed conflict;

13.5. the construction of safe emergency shelters and decent housing for families and children;

13.6. the provision of education without incitement of hatred, and activities in safe physical settings for children and the reconstruction of schools as soon as possible;

13.7. the removal of rubbish and the restoration of sewage and sanitation systems;

13.8. the reception of persons requiring medical evacuation and the provision of specialised medical care within their countries to those persons.

14. The Assembly considers that the observer status and the partner for democracy status with the Assembly bring with them the duty and responsibility to uphold the values of the Council of Europe. The humanitarian crisis existing today in Gaza is in complete contradiction to these duties and responsibilities. The Assembly therefore urges Israel and Palestine, whose parliaments enjoy respectively observer status and partner for democracy status with the Assembly, to do everything in their power to end without any further delay this conflict and put a stop to the suffering of the people in Gaza, including that of the hostages, thereby demonstrating with this resolute action their full commitment to the values of the Council of Europe in the field of human rights, democracy and the rule of law.

15. The Assembly will closely monitor the follow-up given to its above-mentioned requests to all parties to the hostilities, including for an immediate, permanent and unconditional ceasefire, the immediate release of all hostages and concrete and immediate measures to end the humanitarian crisis in Gaza. It refers to the possibility of returning to this question at a forthcoming part-session, with a view to assessing whether further steps are necessary in the light of the commitment shown to the values of the Council of Europe by States whose parliament enjoys observer status with the Assembly.