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Global peace under threat: halting the humanitarian catastrophe in Gaza and addressing the wider conflict in the Middle East

Report¹

Committee on Political Affairs and Democracy

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1. Reference to committee: Bureau decision, Reference 4889 of 23 June 2025. In accordance with Rule 50.4 of the Assembly's Rules of Procedure, the report of a committee shall not contain an explanatory memorandum if the report is prepared under the urgent procedure.



Draft resolution²

1. The Parliamentary Assembly expresses deep concern about the escalation of the war in the Middle East, where multiple fronts of fighting have been active since the appalling terrorist attack by Hamas against Israel in October 2023, which the Assembly has unequivocally condemned. This unfolding multifaceted war involves Israeli forces, as well as terrorist and proxy groups such as Hamas, Hezbollah and the Houthis, and has caused immense suffering to the civilian population, particularly in Gaza. The eruption of open military hostilities between Israel and Iran in June 2025 and the direct military intervention of the United States in this conflict targeting nuclear facilities, represent a further alarming development, which could lead to an even wider conflagration with devastating consequences for human suffering and the maintenance of international peace and security, at a time when power politics seem to have overridden the system of global governance based on international law.
2. The Assembly reaffirms, in line with the values of the Council of Europe as a defender of human rights, democracy and the rule of law, its longstanding commitment to peace and regional stability in the Middle East and calls on all the parties to this broader war to de-escalate. The Assembly also reiterates the urgent need to uphold international law, respect human dignity, protect civilians, and reinvigorate multilateral diplomacy to avert further suffering, violence, destabilisation and radicalisation. The solution to the multiple, deep-seated, long-standing conflicts and challenges affecting the Middle East cannot be achieved through military confrontation but through diplomacy and an inclusive political process aimed at laying the foundations for durable peace, stability, respect and reconciliation between peoples.
3. In this context, the Assembly acknowledges the announcement of a ceasefire between Israel and Iran, and urges all parties to refrain from any actions that could jeopardise this fragile progress.
4. The Assembly remains gravely concerned by the destabilising activities of the Iranian regime which, in addition to systematically denying basic human rights to its population, plays a central role in fuelling regional and global violence and instability. Through its sustained support for armed proxy groups across the Middle East, including Hamas in Gaza, Hezbollah in Lebanon, armed factions in Syria and Iraq, and the Houthi movement in Yemen, Iran has aimed to undermine regional security and has contributed to the prolongation and intensification of multiple armed conflicts.
5. In addition, Iran's acceleration of its uranium enrichment programme in defiance of international commitments and its growing co-operation with the Russian Federation in this domain raise serious concerns about its capacity to develop nuclear weapons. By supplying military equipment to the Russian Federation for use in its war of aggression against Ukraine, and by deepening its political and strategic alignment with Moscow at both bilateral and multilateral levels, Iran has also emerged as a direct threat to European security.
6. In the face of the unprecedented escalation in Iran centred on the unacceptable nuclear threat that it poses, and the increased threat to global security, the international community must not lose sight of the dramatic fate of ordinary people in Gaza, and that of the hostages held captive by Hamas and other terrorist militia groups. The Assembly is convinced that the widening scope of hostilities in the region should not divert attention from the urgent need to halt the humanitarian catastrophe in Gaza, nor from the deteriorating situation in the occupied West Bank and East Jerusalem, and the urgent need to uphold international law and ensure accountability.
7. The Assembly recalls its resolutions that have sought a permanent and unconditional ceasefire and a renewed effort to achieve a political solution in Gaza. While welcoming the mediation that led to a temporary ceasefire on 19 January 2025, the Assembly deplores the fact that, despite these efforts and other expressions of the will of the international community, Israeli forces continue their disproportionate attacks on Gaza, with appalling consequences for the civilian population. The Assembly abhors and condemns in the strongest terms the devastating toll inflicted – with over 55 000 deaths according to figures reported to the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs. It equally abhors and condemns reported Israeli attacks on civilians seeking aid, the obstruction of humanitarian aid, the mass displacement of communities and the widespread destruction of civilian infrastructure, including housing, hospitals, schools and religious and cultural sites.

2. Draft resolution unanimously adopted by the committee on 24 June 2025.

8. Aid delivery models approved by Israel's Security Cabinet, purportedly designed to bypass Hamas-controlled channels, have risked violating core humanitarian principles and have exposed civilians and aid workers to significant harm. Humanitarian access remains grossly insufficient amid ongoing hostilities and operational restrictions. Strikes on distribution sites and the absence of adequate protective measures have led to mass casualties and the deaths of over 460 aid workers since October 2023.
9. The expansion of Israel's military operations in Gaza in May 2025 was met with opposition from large parts of the international community, and the Israeli Government has been repeatedly called upon to meet its obligations under international law, including international humanitarian law. In this context, the Assembly further recalls the provisional measures indicated by the International Court of Justice, and the issuance of arrest warrants by the International Criminal Court against senior Israeli officials, as well as against a Hamas senior leader. Systemic breaches of fundamental obligations require accountability.
10. In deploring the catastrophic situation in Gaza, the Assembly recalls the grave responsibility of Hamas for the war, its rejection of numerous ceasefire mediation efforts that would provide a pathway for ending the conflict, and its refusal to release the remaining hostages. In sustaining the conflict, Hamas not only threatens Israel's security, but prolongs the appalling suffering and ordeal of the Palestinian people and undermines the Palestinian project for peace and statehood.
11. The Assembly emphasises that the prolongation of hostilities, the intensification of violations of international humanitarian law, the obstruction of ceasefire negotiations and the continued captivity of hostages are inflicting intolerable suffering on civilians and endangering any realistic prospect of restoring stability and securing a viable political settlement. The protracted nature of the conflict, combined with disregard for established legal and humanitarian norms undermines the effectiveness of the international rules-based order and represents a threat to global peace and security.
12. The Assembly expresses particular alarm at statements by senior Israeli officials advocating, or openly contemplating, the permanent displacement of Gaza's civilian population. It stresses that any such acts would constitute a grave breach of international humanitarian and human rights law, including the Fourth Geneva Convention, and would amount to a crime under international law. The Assembly underscores that the protection of civilian populations must remain a paramount concern and that any policies aimed at demographic engineering or forcible population transfer are wholly unacceptable.
13. Furthermore, the Assembly remains deeply concerned about the situation in the West Bank and East Jerusalem where settler violence, the closure of all checkpoints and mass arrests and detentions have accelerated since direct hostilities between Israel and Iran began on 13 June 2025. The Assembly reaffirms its unwavering support for a negotiated two-State solution as the only viable path to lasting peace and security. It further stresses that the continued expansion of Israeli settlements in the occupied West Bank, which remain illegal under international law, systematically undermines this goal, inflames tensions and contributes to the broader destabilisation of the region.
14. In light of the escalation of war in the Middle East, the Assembly:
 - 14.1. expresses its deep concern about the direct hostilities between Israel and Iran and about the involvement of the United States, and calls for immediate de-escalation and restraint by all parties;
 - 14.2. acknowledges the announcement of a ceasefire between Israel and Iran, and urges parties to take steps to ensure its implementation;
 - 14.3. urges all States to refrain from actions that risk regional conflagration and to pursue diplomatic channels to establish regional stability;
 - 14.4. stresses that under international humanitarian law, all parties must take all feasible precautions to spare civilians and minimise their suffering and casualties;
 - 14.5. expresses serious concern about the continued Israeli military operations in Syria that risk further destabilising a fragile political transition, and calls on all parties to respect the territorial integrity of Syria and refrain from actions that may escalate regional tensions;
 - 14.6. calls for a return to multilateral engagement, particularly through the United Nations and relevant regional actors, to address the interconnected crises across the Middle East.
 - 14.7. calls on its member States to send a stronger message of political support to and solidarity with Iranians standing up for democracy and human rights, by, among other things, listing the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps as a terrorist organisation.

15. As concerns efforts to reach a political solution in Gaza, the Assembly:
 - 15.1. repeats its urgent appeal for the immediate and unconditional release of all hostages still held in Gaza;
 - 15.2. calls for an immediate and permanent ceasefire in Gaza to stop the relentless loss of civilian life, end the widespread destruction of homes and infrastructure and enable urgent humanitarian relief to reach all those in need without delay or obstruction;
 - 15.3. urges all parties to engage constructively with mediation efforts aimed at reaching a comprehensive ceasefire and the release of all hostages;
 - 15.4. affirms that sustainable peace and stability in Gaza cannot be achieved while Hamas and other groups designated as terrorist organisations maintain any governing or operational role.
16. As regards the catastrophic humanitarian situation in Gaza, the Assembly
 - 16.1. recalls that international humanitarian law comprises a set of universal and binding rules to protect persons and civilian objects, and restricts the permissible means and methods of warfare;
 - 16.2. calls for Israel's strict compliance with its obligations under international humanitarian law and human rights law and underscores the importance of holding accountable all those responsible for violations;
 - 16.3. strongly condemns any use of starvation of a civilian population as a method of warfare and the unlawful denial of humanitarian access, which constitute crimes under international law;
 - 16.4. resolutely affirms that there must be no unlawful transfer or forcible displacement of Palestinians from Gaza, nor any attempt to alter the territory of the Gaza Strip, including through reduction or annexation;
 - 16.5. stresses the obligation not to deprive civilians in Gaza of goods indispensable to their survival, including by wilfully impeding relief supplies and humanitarian access;
 - 16.6. calls on Israel to take all necessary and effective measures to ensure, without delay, in full co-operation with the United Nations, the unhindered and widespread provision by all stakeholders concerned of urgently needed basic services and humanitarian assistance, including food, water, electricity, fuel, shelter, clothing and hygiene and sanitation requirements, as well as medical supplies and medical care, to Palestinians throughout Gaza, including by increasing the capacity and number of land crossing points and keeping them open for as long as necessary;
 - 16.7. calls for a full, independent and transparent investigation into fatal attacks near food distribution sites.
17. As regards the role of Council of Europe member and observer States, the Assembly calls on them to:
 - 17.1. respect and uphold their obligations under international law, including by supporting the work of United Nations organs and agencies and the work of the International Court of Justice, and by ensuring respect for the rules laid down in the Geneva Conventions in all circumstances;
 - 17.2. refrain from obstructing the work of the International Criminal Court, and for those States Parties to the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court, co-operate fully with it;
 - 17.3. continue to support humanitarian funding and the provision of humanitarian assistance to the people of Gaza;
 - 17.4. facilitate medical evacuations, including the provision of treatment and transportation, with particular attention to children and their families, as well as to pregnant women and their families;
 - 17.5. lend their full diplomatic support for a two-State solution and for creating the preconditions for a durable and sustainable peace in the Middle East built on trust, justice and reconciliation.
18. In reaffirming its commitment to a just and comprehensive peace based on the two-State solution, the Assembly:
 - 18.1. renews with urgency its call to parties to refrain from any unilateral measures that undermine the prospects for the peace process;
 - 18.2. calls for the urgent and resolute engagement of the Israeli authorities to prevent settler violence and refrain from the building of new settlements and the expansion of old ones, home demolitions, forced evictions and confiscation of land in the occupied territories;

18.3. underlines that the Palestinian Authority is an essential interlocutor in peace negotiations;

18.4. supports international efforts to prepare the political horizon for a two-State solution, including the Global Alliance for the Implementation of the Two-State Solution established by Norway, the European Union and Saudi Arabia at the United Nations General Assembly in 2024.