



In Defense of Life: Cease-fire and End of Blockade in Gaza

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People around the world, including social movements, trade unions, civil society organizations, anti-Zionist Jewish groups and the Palestinian diaspora, are calling for a ceasefire in the Gaza Strip and urgent humanitarian support for the more than two million Palestinians in the region. Under the blockade imposed by the State of Israel since 2007, which has condemned them to a life of misery with limited access to basic survival essentials such as water, electricity, medicine and adequate food, the Palestinian people in Gaza are also denied their right to mobility by Israel. Therefore the international community considers Gaza to be an open-air prison, which on top of this, is periodically bombed by the Israeli army. The heaviest bombardments are justified by Israel in the name of its national security or in response to the actions of Hamas, which emerged in the 1980s and whose growth was encouraged by the State of Israel itself as a tactic to weaken the PLO.

Recently, the armed wing of Hamas acted violently against Israeli civilians, causing hundreds of fatalities and taking dozens of persons hostage for prisoner exchange with Israel. We recognize, in principle, the right of resistance of the Palestinian people as it is contemplated in international law in cases of colonial occupation. However, we condemn these actions of indiscriminate violence against Israeli civilians and we stand in solidarity with the families affected, just as we stand in solidarity with the thousands of Palestinian families who are victims of this recent stage of the conflict. We affirm the defense of life as a principle of emancipation.

In addition, we acknowledge the right to and the need for a sovereign territory for life and sustainability for the Palestinian and for the Jewish people. This can only be achieved through the paths of reparation and conciliation, not through the path of militarization that grows with the support of foreign capital and its thirst for

resources. An end to the history of displacement and pain in the region is needed to ensure more solidary ways of life.

This attack by Hamas, unprecedented in history, was quickly instrumentalized by the most right wing Israeli government in history. It put an abrupt end to a massive protest movement opposing, in Israel, the judicial reforms initiated by this government. It marginalized once again those opposition and left-wing forces in Israel that are fighting for peace and peaceful coexistence among all peoples in the region. The most reactionary line of the Israeli government and army was further encouraged by the unconditional international support, for example, by the US and German governments, leading to a period of intense bombardment and a total closure to the entry of food, water, electricity or medicines into Gaza.

The UN does not support the Israeli state's claim to its full right to self-defense against a non-state actor. But this argument has been widely used to dehumanize Palestinians and claim that all the people of Gaza must be affected because of the actions of Hamas, although its top leaders actually reside in Qatar. The State of Israel has long been employing "collective punishment" tactics against the people of Gaza, which is prohibited by the Fourth Geneva Convention. It is also important to remember that the oppressive actions against Palestinians by the State of Israel extend beyond Gaza, through an apartheid regime, affecting Palestinians also in the West Bank, East Jerusalem and even within the green line of the territory recognized as Israel, generating further displacement, imprisonment - even of children - and daily violence. This colonial expansion project also affects the Golan Heights, a Syrian territory occupied by Israel since 1967.

Currently, the escalation of violence and death perpetrated by the Israeli army in Gaza is reaching new levels of cruelty, while several of its leaders openly confess their intention to promote a new Palestinian Nakba (catastrophe) through forced displacement, militarization, occupation and the construction of new Zionist colonies. The recent order for more than one million Palestinians, as well as members of the humanitarian sector, to move into southern Gaza within 24 hours indicates a new stage in Israel's plans for territorial expansion and ethnic cleansing. The many days of blocking the entry of humanitarian aid and the direct or indirect shelling of civilian shelters, such as schools, places of worship and hospitals, as well as displacement routes and the border with Egypt, indicate that, in addition to ethnic cleansing, the Israeli right wing in government is now aiming at a direct genocide of the people of Gaza while the world watches through television and live broadcasts. The State of Israel is acting in this way because it knows it has the

backing of political leaders in the United States, Canada, France, Germany and other countries.

The Ecosocial and Intercultural Pact of the South understands that, from Latin America, we must confront and present alternatives to the civilizational crisis that is developing on our planet due to the capitalist and colonial system. Therefore, we understand that our mission of decolonization should not be limited to our territories, but also extends to the reality of the Palestinian people, including the refugees whose right of return has been systematically denied for more than 75 years. We are well aware of the reality of the areas of peoples and ecosystems sacrificed in the name of capitalist and imperial interests in our region, so we cannot remain silent in the face of the aggravation and prolongation of the catastrophic colonial paradigm imposed by the State of Israel on the Palestinian territory and people.

We join the call for an immediate ceasefire and the release of the Israeli hostages held by Hamas, so that not one more drop of blood is spilled, and for an end to the restrictions on humanitarian aid in Gaza. We recognize that these are not reprisals by Israel, but the continuation of a violent process of encirclement of Gaza, and therefore we call for an end to the blockade that limits the lives of more than two million Palestinians, 800,000 of whom are children and adolescents who have never known any other life than that of this prison.

We repudiate arguments that equate any criticism of the State of Israel as anti-Semitism. We condemn, at the same time, the equating of the Jewish population in the world with the State of Israel and its policies, we recognize their right to live in peace after a history of centuries of persecution and extermination, and we repudiate the recent attacks against individuals, synagogues and Jewish institutions in several countries encouraged by this war, as well as the intensification of Islamophobic positions in the Western press and representatives of the right wing in our countries.

Finally, we wish to emphasize that the war machine takes lives, destroys territories, devastates ecosystems and feeds a vicious cycle of appropriation and waste of resources in the name of profit and the colonial, patriarchal and exclusionary interests of the most powerful countries and corporations. The military power of the State of Israel does not exist in isolation from this machinery, and the hyper-militarization of Israel radiates over Latin America. The connection between the Israeli military and the promotion of violence in Colombia is well known, while Israeli arms companies sign contracts with the Brazilian and other Latin American

governments. The promotion of war and military oppression of the Palestinian people is part of a global extractivist system and contributes to the perpetuation of colonial regimes and logics in Latin America as well.

Any possibility of a just ecosocial transition requires a firm commitment to the defense of life, the decolonization of territories and the right to freedom of oppressed peoples. The call for a free Palestine is also a call for life and for the construction of an ethic of care between peoples and Nature that will contribute to open a true path towards peace.

Ecosocial and Intercultural Pact of the South



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