

STATEMENT

Gaza one year on, the loss of life must end: VOICE is urging the European Union and its Member States to ensure respect for International Humanitarian Law

For the past year, [VOICE and its members in the Middle East have been witnessing](#) the horrific humanitarian crisis in Gaza and the region. Following the dreadful events of 7 October when Palestinian armed groups attacked and killed Israeli forces and civilians and took hostages, the Israeli government launched an attack on the Gaza Strip that has further deteriorated the humanitarian crisis in the area. [Over 41,000 Palestinians have been killed](#), including more than 11,000 children, with tens of thousands severely injured. The attacks on Palestinian civilians, the destruction of infrastructures such as hospitals and schools, forced displacements, as well as the civilian Israeli hostages are gross violations of International Humanitarian Law (IHL). As the leading European network of 90 humanitarian international non-governmental organisations, we are gravely concerned by the unprecedented levels of suffering in Gaza and now in the region, and by the shocking lack of action by states to protect civilian lives.

[The systematic obstruction of humanitarian access](#) has left over two million people in Gaza without essential supplies such as food, water, healthcare, and fuel, putting almost half a million people at risk of starvation. Despite the tireless efforts of humanitarian organisations, including international, national, and local responders, to provide much-needed assistance, the delivery of humanitarian items is restricted and humanitarian workers are under attack. Since October 2023, more than 280 humanitarian workers have been killed in Gaza. Civilians and humanitarian workers, local and international, are not a target!

We urge the European Union (EU) and its Member States to take decisive diplomatic actions to protect civilians and humanitarian workers from indiscriminate attacks against them, guarantee unimpeded humanitarian access, and ensure adherence to IHL as well as accountability for IHL violations.

By failing to respond to these violations, EU Member States are falling short of their fundamental obligation to ensure respect for IHL. The EU and its Member States should demand full compliance with, and themselves adhere to, resolutions by the United Nations Security Council and General Assembly as well as the recent [Advisory Opinion](#) by the International Court of Justice. Failure to do everything in their power to prevent and bring violations to an end not only contravenes Member States' own legal obligations but prolongs human suffering and contributes to a climate of impunity for serious violations of international law.

Considering the escalating conflict in Gaza and the West Bank and the escalation of the [conflict in Lebanon](#) with more than 1,000 deaths and 8,000 injured in the past two weeks and an estimated one million people who have been directly affected or displaced since October 2023, the EU and its Member States must use their power to pressure the warring parties to agree to an immediate ceasefire. Now more than ever, decisive action is needed to stop the violence and loss of life.