

An open letter from ITUC General Secretary Luc Triangle: Political inaction on Gaza and Palestine is criminal negligence

Dear Heads of State, Governments and International Institutions,

The world is witnessing a horror that defies comprehension. Boundaries of humanity have long been crossed, red lines have been trampled. The war in Gaza and the ongoing repression across Palestine must end now.

The Israel–Palestine conflict has endured for generations, but since the heinous terrorist attacks by Hamas on 7 October 2023, we have entered a new and devastating chapter. That attack was an atrocity. However, the collective punishment inflicted on millions of Palestinians in response is a crime of historic scale.

Nearly 22 months into this war, more than 60,000 people are dead, including more than 15,000 children. The 2.1 million Palestinians in Gaza face starvation and indiscriminate bombardment. Three million more in the West Bank suffer daily humiliation, violence and a systematic campaign of land confiscation and settlement expansion.

And yet, apart from strong statements and global protests, the political world remains paralysed, watching this humanitarian catastrophe unfold as if its hands were tied.

This is not diplomacy. This is not neutrality. This is complicity.

Political inaction in the face of these atrocities is nothing less than criminal negligence. The options are many and available within the framework of international law. The international community must act now.

Trade unions from around the world demand immediate and sustained action.

1. Stop all arms deliveries to all parties now

Governments that have armed this conflict in the past or today are co-responsible for the horror. All governments must stop fuelling this war with ever more and heavier weapons. Each bomb, each bullet adds fuel to the fire and empowers extremists to commit war crimes. All indiscriminate bombing and attacks on civilians has to stop.

2. Ceasefire and unrestricted humanitarian access now

Every day, innocent civilians in Gaza are killed or buried under rubble from bombardments as they search for food to survive. In July 2024, I visited the Kerem Shalom crossing from Israel to Gaza. I saw that the infrastructure is right there. It is perfectly equipped to organise the delivery of food and aid to Gaza, and yet it does not happen.

The starvation continues because of political decisions, not logistical limits. Starvation is being used as a weapon of war. Those responsible for such a crime need to face accountability under international law. The international community must demand and

enforce an immediate ceasefire and the unhindered delivery of food, water and medical supplies into Gaza. Anything less is complicity.

3. Release all hostages and political prisoners now

Taking civilians hostage is a war crime. I met an Israeli woman who was held captive by Hamas for nearly two months. Her story was harrowing. Many of the hostages were progressive voices, kibbutz residents, peace activists. They are now used as pawns in a brutal game.

At the same time, thousands of Palestinians are detained in Israeli prisons without due process. Most have never seen a judge. Detention without trial, especially on such a mass scale, violates fundamental rights and fuels further radicalisation. Justice must apply equally and to all.

4. Recognise Palestine, end occupation and stop trading with illegal settlements now

A two-state solution has been the agreed path since 1967. But recognition of the State of Palestine must not be a reward at the end of negotiations. It is a precondition at the start of a real peace process. It is increasingly clear that the current Israeli government does not want to live aside an autonomous and independent Palestine.

After destroying Gaza, uprooting its entire population and expanding settlements, what will remain of Palestine once the horror ends? How are we going to resolve and reverse the illegal settlements, the daily aggression of settlers, the intimidation and humiliation of Palestinians in the West Bank and East Jerusalem? Businesses and governments benefiting from trade with the settlements perpetuate their existence.

5. Strengthen democracy to deliver peace now

In the West Bank I witnessed the grim reality of occupation: endless checkpoints, settler violence, and a regime of segregation that evokes the darkest days of South African apartheid. Israel makes it impossible for the Palestinian Authority to govern, and pursue political and economic autonomy. This vacuum is being filled by extremists.

Hamas is a terrorist organisation. The mass murder of 1,200 civilians and the taking of 250 hostages was a crime against humanity. But the Israeli government under Prime Minister Netanyahu has also chosen a path of extremism. The killing of more than 60,000 Gazans, including thousands of children, and the starvation of an entire population is indefensible.

Hamas will not be defeated by Netanyahu. Hamas will be defeated by the Palestinian people, if they are given hope for a free and peaceful future, with decent jobs and social and economic security. In May 2024 in the West Bank I saw firsthand how support for Hamas grows in the shadow of occupation, insecurity, humiliation and poverty.

Palestinians need autonomy. They need rights. They need recognition. Israel rightly demands security guarantees, and that demand must be met. But peace cannot be built on subjugation.

In Israel too, many know this war cannot lead to peace and stability. Brave citizens continue to protest against their government, demanding another path, one based on peace, not

endless war. The current leadership in Israel and Hamas need each other to stay in power. Their war is their strategy for survival.

6. As the ITUC and as trade unions worldwide, we must also act now

We stand in solidarity with our affiliates and other democratic forces in both Palestine and Israel, who continue to advocate for peace and reconciliation amid enormous adversity. We must build bridges between the Israeli Histadrut and the Palestinian PGFTU. We must speak the truth to power and to the people. We must build pressure on business and governments to act. We must push for a reopening of the Israeli labour market to Palestinian workers and respect for their labour rights. We must work for a genuine two-state solution, with a democratic, sovereign and economically viable Palestine living in peace and equality alongside a democratic Israel that respects the rights of all its neighbours.

The war must end now and justice must begin. We all carry responsibility. Inaction is complicity.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Luc Triangle', enclosed within a thin black rectangular border.

Luc Triangle
General Secretary