



AUSTRALIAN
COUNCIL
FOR
INTERNATIONAL
DEVELOPMENT

Prime Minister
The Hon. Anthony Albanese
House of Representatives
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Cc:
Minister for Foreign Affairs
Senator Penny Wong
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Minister for International Development and the Pacific
The Hon. Pat Conroy MP
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Minister for Defence
The Hon. Richard Marles MP
richard.marles.mp@aph.gov.au

19 October 2023

Dear Prime Minister and Ministers,

Re: Urgent relief for civilians in Gaza and Israel

We are writing to you as humanitarian organisations concerned about the dire situation in Gaza and Israel, and the implications for the wider Middle East region.

We call upon the Albanese Government to exert all possible influence with partners towards five life-saving outcomes:

1. Protection of civilians
2. Negotiation for the safe release of hostages
3. Humanitarian access, including a humanitarian pause
4. A ceasefire to end rapidly escalating conflict, and
5. Renewed efforts towards a long-term diplomatic solution.

We are deeply concerned at the ongoing violation of the human rights of citizens in Gaza and Israel, and breaches of International Humanitarian Law (IHL). The Israel Defense Force's shelling and blockade of the Gaza Strip, including shutting down critical infrastructure such as water and electricity; preventing food and medical supplies from entering, threatens the survival of 2.3 million civilians, half of whom are children. Ongoing conflict is causing a massive escalation in civilian deaths. At the time of writing 4,200 people have died; the catastrophe at Al-Ahli hospital has killed at least 500 people alone. The serious water shortage is leaving people vulnerable to waterborne diseases, infections and dehydration. Women, children, the elderly, and the disabled are being disproportionately impacted.

ACFID has [unequivocally condemned](#) the killing and kidnapping of civilians by armed Palestinian groups. The assaults that led to the deaths of thousands of Israelis and the taking of numerous hostages are abhorrent acts.

We ask your government to be unceasing in your efforts to achieve unimpeded access for humanitarian assistance, a humanitarian corridor and protection of civilians. We call for a pause in the hostilities to allow for critical humanitarian work to save lives.

Ultimately, protection of civilians and alleviation of the humanitarian crisis can only be guaranteed through peace. **The Australian Government must use its voice and exert its influence to seek a ceasefire – an end to the rapidly escalating conflict – as a matter of urgency.**

We note that Australia's official policy is in support of a two-state solution, which would see Israel and Palestine co-exist peacefully. The current crisis poses a grave risk to the political and practical viability of a two-state solution. If Australia wishes to see a future in which Israel and Palestine exist peacefully, side-by-side, within secure and recognised boundaries, we must act now to halt the current conflict. We must also renew our efforts towards a long-term diplomatic solution.

We await your action.

Yours faithfully,



Marc Purcell
Chief Executive Officer
Australian Council for International Development (ACFID)

Cosigned by members of the ACFID:

1. ACCI Relief
2. Action Aid
3. Anglicans in Development
4. Anglican Relief and Development Fund Australia (ARDFA)
5. Australian Lutheran World Services (ALWS)
6. Caritas Australia
7. CBM Australia
8. Educating the Future Australia Limited
9. Global Mission Partners
10. Good Return
11. Hagar Australia
12. HOST International
13. Indigo Foundation
14. International Needs Australia
15. Islamic Relief Australia
16. Live and Learn
17. Love Mercy Foundation
18. Mary Ward International Australia
19. Mercy Works Ltd
20. Opportunity International Australia
21. Oxfam Australia
22. Palmera
23. Plan International Australia
24. Save the Children Australia
25. School for Life Foundation
26. See Beyond Borders Australia
27. St John of God Outreach Services
28. Transformational Aid International (TAI)
29. Tearfund Australia
30. Union Aid Abroad (APHEDA)