

To: The Hon Anthony Albanese MP.

Prime Minister of Australia

Canberra, 2600

By email

CC: Senator the Hon. Penny Wong

Minister for Foreign Affairs

Canberra, 2600

By email

Dear Prime Minister Albanese & Minister Wong,

The undersigned Australian Council for International Development (ACFID) members write to you today to urge your public support for the decision made last week by the International Court of Justice (ICJ) to implement urgent provisional measures to limit harm to Palestinian civilians. We also urge the Australian Government to actively ensure its adherence to international law and uphold its own obligations under the Genocide Convention and the Arms Trade Treaty.

The ICJ decision adds further weight to the ongoing global calls for an immediate and permanent ceasefire. It is imperative that Australia adds its voice to ensure that the state of Israel and Hamas immediately end the war in Gaza so that critical recovery and reconstruction efforts can begin.

Minister Wong has previously stated:

"The International Court of Justice plays a critical role in upholding international law and the rules-based order."

It is important that the Australian Government meets this moment with this same tone, as well as respect for the experience, neutrality and expertise of the Justices, including an Australian, who have made this decision. The people of Gaza in particular are desperate to access immediate and unconditional humanitarian assistance which this cessation of hostilities can provide for. It is essential that a cessation of hostilities guarantees the unconditional release of all hostages.

In over 100 days of war, the world has witnessed the death of over an estimated 26,000 Palestinians in Gaza, over 65,000 injured, 1.7 million internally displaced and the collapse of healthcare, education and welfare systems. Many more thousands of people are missing under rubble. Our members and their partners working on the ground tell us that they are already significantly impeded in their efforts to reach those who are vulnerable, hungry and without shelter due to the ongoing bombardments of the civilian population of the Occupied Palestinian Territories.

We welcome the \$21.5 million of funding provided to Gaza, the West Bank and the region to date by the Australian Government. However, in addition, we ask the Australian Government to support the following measures:

- New and additional funding of \$100 million of humanitarian assistance to Gaza and the West Bank, including a portion to Australian NGOs who are operational in these settings.
- Immediately end the transfer of any military goods to the state of Israel and provide transparency of the due diligence process for arms sales.
- Use its voice to amplify global calls for an immediate ceasefire in Gaza.
- Double the Humanitarian Emergency Fund to \$300 million to accurately reflect the growing number and scale of disasters each year, in our immediate region and beyond.

The dire situation in Gaza will rapidly escalate without UNRWA's critical support, with 2 million Palestinians facing starvation, imminent famine, and disease outbreak. UNRWA, one of the biggest employers in the Gaza strip with 13,000 staff, has terminated the contracts of several employees who were allegedly engaged in misconduct. One of the accused employees was confirmed dead and the other two are still under investigation. We urge you to be judicious and discriminate between allegations against a small number of individuals and the foreseeable impact of defunding UNRWA on millions of Palestinians reliant on their services, including children. Our concerns have been echoed by UN Human Rights Rapporteur, Ms Francesca Albanese, who stated that 'defunding UNRWA based on those allegations is actually in contradiction to the ICJ ruling...'. As acknowledged by Minister Wong, UNRWA provides vital, lifesaving services in Gaza and if suspension of funding is not reversed immediately, we risk a complete cessation of already limited humanitarian assistance in Gaza.

We look forward to hearing back from you as to what actions the Australian Government intends to take to ensure that this ICJ decision is respected and upheld by all involved parties, and what steps Australia will take to ensure its own compliance with the Genocide Convention.

Your sincerely,

Susan Pascoe

Susan Pascoe AM, President of ACFID



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