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A joint Statement Condemning the Aggression against Gaza by LGBTIQ+ Organizations, Activists, and Community Members in the West Asia and North Africa region

Tuesday, October 24, 2023

The organizations, movements, and individuals from the LGBTIQ+ community in the West Asia and North Africa region that have signed this statement condemn and denounce the genocide of the people of Gaza by the Israeli occupation forces against the Palestinians. They also affirm their support for the Palestinians' right to self-determination and liberation from the colonial violence and occupation.

The groups, individuals, and signatories demand an immediate ceasefire in Gaza, the provision of humanitarian aid to those affected, and an end to the aggression and genocide perpetrated by the Israeli army.

On the morning of October 7, we awoke to a military operation targeting settlements near the besieged Gaza. These settlements were constructed after seizing Palestinian lands, resulting in the displacement or extermination of their inhabitants. The occupation forces retaliated against this operation with constant air strikes and bombardments, as well as the cutting off of electricity, water, food, and medical supplies, receiving military and moral backing from the United States of America and several other countries, including France, Germany, and the UK. This onslaught and bombardment on the besieged Gaza has resulted in killing more than 4,650⁷, including

⁷ "Israel-Palestine: Gaza death toll passes 5000 with no ceasefire in sight." 23 oct.. 2023, <https://news.un.org/en/story/2023/10/1142687>. Date de consultation : 23 oct.. 2023.

2000 children⁸, and injuring over 15,273 civilians⁹ – (until the moment of writing this statement), wiping out entire families, buildings and leveling neighborhoods from North to South Gaza. Running parallel to this brutal aggression is an uptick in racist rhetoric and systematic repressive actions. These have manifested globally, notably on social media platforms, where there is a concerted effort to suppress voices advocating for the Palestinian cause and their fundamental right to liberation from colonialism. Such suppression utilizes various means, from promoting a culture of cancellation to posing military threats, exemplifying the deep-seated collusion between governments and technology.

The intensifying turmoil and unfolding humanitarian catastrophe in Gaza cannot be overlooked by those steadfast in their dedication to human rights and the championing of social justice. As LGBTIQ+ activists for West Asia and North Africa, we staunchly condemn all forms of military aggression, the tragic loss of innocent lives, and heinous crimes against humanity which are considered genocide, as the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide¹⁰, Article 2 (C), stipulates that “Deliberately inflicting on the group conditions of life calculated to bring about its physical destruction in whole or in part.” We stand with the global community in their unified demands for an immediate and comprehensive ceasefire in Palestine. It may be added that humanitarian law stipulates that “Whenever circumstances permit, an armistice or a suspension of fire shall be arranged, or local arrangements made, to permit the removal, exchange, and transport of the wounded left on the battlefield.” (Geneva Convention 1, Article 15), ensuring that the wounded and displaced receive the urgent, life-saving aid they so desperately require.

The Israeli government claims it stands irrevocably bound by international human rights and humanitarian laws, which demand the prevention of civilian casualties and hostage situations. In addition to protecting persons in areas in time of war¹¹, Article III, Paragraph 2 “The wounded and sick shall be collected and cared for.” Article 15 stipulates “to establish, in the regions where fighting is taking place, neutralized zones intended to shelter from the effects of war without distinction: (a) Wounded and sick combatants or non-combatants; (b) Civilian persons who take no part in hostilities, and who, while they reside in the zones, perform no work of a military character.” Article (16) of the same agreement also stipulates that: “The wounded and sick, as well as the infirm and expectant mothers, shall be the object of particular protection and respect.”

⁸ "2055 Palestinian children killed in Gaza, more than 800 missing." 23 oct.. 2023, https://www.dci-palestine.org/2055_palestinian_children_killed_in_gaza_more_than_800_missing. Date de consultation : 23 oct.. 2023.

⁹ "Israel-Palestine: Gaza death toll passes 5000 with no ceasefire in sight." 23 oct.. 2023, <https://news.un.org/en/story/2023/10/1142687>. Date de consultation : 23 oct.. 2023.

¹⁰ "Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime ... - ohchr." <https://www.ohchr.org/en/instruments-mechanisms/instruments/convention-prevention-and-punishment-crime-genocide>. Date de consultation : 23 oct.. 2023.

¹¹ "Geneva Convention relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in" <https://www.ohchr.org/en/instruments-mechanisms/instruments/geneva-convention-relative-protection-civilian-persons-time-war>. Date de consultation : 23 oct.. 2023.

The systematic collective punishment meted out to the Palestinian civilians in Gaza and the West Bank by both the state of Israel and the Israeli Defense Force "IDF" following the Hamas attacks on 7 October 2023 is not only unjustifiable but also deeply reprehensible. The IDF's retaliatory actions, designated as crimes against humanity by numerous UN Special Procedures mandate holders, have been alarmingly egregious; the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the occupied Palestinian territories stated: "Israel has already carried out mass ethnic cleansing of Palestinians under the fog of war,"¹² Their onslaught includes targeted assaults on hospitals, mosques, churches, sanctuaries where the uprooted civilians find solace, and educational establishments of civilians after enforced evacuation orders. The IDF's strategic military operations, such as calculated attacks on border checkpoints and the deliberate severance of vital supplies into Gaza, are undeniable breaches of humanity. Such actions warrant global condemnation.

As LGBTIQ+ activists from the West Asia and North Africa region, we envision a world where every individual, irrespective of their identity, can live, love, and exist in a realm of true equality, justice, and respect for diversity. When unchecked violence runs rampant, it becomes our duty to delve deep into its origins and evaluate its repercussions on LGBTIQ+ communities globally. We also firmly reject using our queer issues to serve the agenda of the occupying Israeli entity and its pink-washing politics.

As we write this statement:

- **we affirm our unconditional support for the right of the Palestinians to liberate their lands from the river to the sea.** No free person can adopt methodologies or theories of individual and gender freedoms and ignore the right of people to get rid of occupation completely.
- We assert unequivocally that genuine liberation and inclusion of all, especially LGBTIQ+ individuals, remains a distant dream if **the shadows of economic devastation, rampant religious extremism, unchecked militaristic endeavors, and the ongoing endorsement and impunity of illegal occupations and settlements continue to loom large over the region, as Queer liberation is fundamentally tied to the dreams of Palestinian liberation.**
- We also affirm that we, **both as individuals and institutions, will not succumb to convert threats or stances that do not acknowledge the occupation.** Furthermore, we will not permit financial or technical support, in the form of funding and networking, to serve as a colonial tool for countries with histories of colonialism and modern forms of

¹² UN expert warns of new instance of mass ethnic cleansing of ... - ohchr." 14 oct.. 2023, <https://www.ohchr.org/en/press-releases/2023/10/un-expert-warns-new-instance-mass-ethnic-cleansing-palestinians-calls>. Date de consultation : 23 oct.. 2023.

colonization. During this genocide, we saw disgraceful statements supporting the Israeli government from foreign platforms working in the human rights and cultural fields.

- We demand the global community take immediate and resolute action, holding every entity, be it individual or institutional, accountable for any involvement in, or facilitation of, acts that are tantamount to war crimes or crimes against humanity. Justice must not only be impartial but also expedited, ensuring immediate access to humanitarian aid and preventing what may escalate to a genocide against the Palestinian people.
- We demand the international community to unwaveringly enforce international human rights and humanitarian laws universally. The selective application merely erodes the very foundation and trust in these vital legal systems.

In the face of escalating war on Gaza, we demand an urgent and comprehensive response:

- Borders must be unconditionally opened, ensuring the safe and free movement of civilians escaping war zones While ensuring that there is no forced displacement of the sector.
- An immediate ceasefire must be put into effect, halting all hostilities, which encompasses the swift release of hostages and holds all involved parties accountable for any breaches of international human rights and humanitarian standards.
- The genocide and ethnic cleansing against the Palestinian people must be condemned and stopped immediately.
- The Gaza blockade must be lifted without delay, guaranteeing the re-establishment of essential services and resources, from electricity and fuel to food, clean water, and unrestricted humanitarian aid access, not only coffins!
- The international community, with emphasis on the Security Council, must take rapid action against war crimes committed by Israeli forces and against further aggressions that continue unchecked.

The organizations, groups, and activists who signed this statement confirm that they have a strong determination to defend the rights of LGBTIQ+ individuals and relentlessly pursuing justice and equality for all. Yet, true realization of these principles is inconceivable unless we actively tear down the mechanisms and practices perpetuating state-endorsed violence and suppression. In unity, we stand resolute in forging a future where justice, equity, progress, and liberty are not mere ideals but lived realities for everyone—be it in Palestine or any corner of the globe.

Lastly, to acknowledge the right of the Palestinian people for liberation self-determination, where the occupation of Palestinian territories must be definitively ended, and support for any unlawful Israeli settlements must be resolutely terminated.