



Press Statement

6 November 2023

Corruption Watch calls for ceasefire in Gaza, end to arms industry complicity in the conflict

Corruption Watch joins the growing calls from around the world for an immediate ceasefire to Israel's war on the Palestinian people in Gaza. Israel's blanket violence against the people of Palestine, under the cloak of legitimate defence after the attack by Hamas on Israelis on 7 October, has been described by many as a genocide.

The claims of Israeli forces to be targeting key Hamas leaders ring hollow, as horrific images emerge each day of women and children killed in the wake of the savage bombing attacks.

Now almost a month since the Hamas attack which claimed the lives of 1 400 Israelis, and took 200 people hostage, the death toll in Gaza as a result of the Israeli army's armed response, has risen to nearly 9 500, including 3 900 children and over 2 400 women, according to media reports. The number of people injured is even higher, estimated at more than 23 000, with limited access to critical medical care.

The airstrikes on Gaza's largest refugee camp, Jabalia, are testament to just how indiscriminate these attacks are, and the devastation they have left in their wake.

Armed conflict fuelled by corruption

The escalation of violence that the world has witnessed is fuelled by corruption in the arms industry, perpetuated by defence sector players and the governments that support them, who are profiting from war crimes and the suffering of innocent civilians.

The situation in the region calls for scrutiny of the global arms industry, which is frequently characterised as complicit in corruption, due to the veil of secrecy that surrounds defence contracts, under the guise of state security, and the vast amounts of money exchanged in arms contracts. According to [Transparency International](#), close to three quarters of the world's largest defence companies demonstrate little to no commitment to tackling corruption.

Another anti-corruption body, the [Campaign Against Arm Trade](#), in a statement released in October, accuses the UK government of complicity in the genocide against the Palestinian people, through providing arms exports to Israel. The United States, as the country providing the biggest [military support](#) to Israel, is equally guilty for the ongoing onslaught in Gaza, with commitments to continue the support, amidst global criticism of its actions.

"The direct impact of these powerful nations' support of Israel's military campaign can be measured in the cost of individual human lives," says Corruption Watch executive director, Karam Singh. "The sheer scale of destruction wrought by the opaque nature of the trade in arms around the world, and the impunity of those involved in these transactions, is something that we should continue to campaign against."

Gross human rights violations

On a level of basic human rights, the bombing of basic infrastructure such as hospitals, schools and houses reveals a callous disregard for the lives of Palestinians from all walks of life who, despite being told to vacate their homes, have nowhere else to go.

The [World Health Organisation](#) indicates that about a third of the hospitals in Gaza are “non-functional due to lack of fuel as well as damage, attacks and insecurity.” Furthermore, the cutting off of food, water, fuel and electricity supplies to 2.2-million civilians while also blocking communication, is a gross contravention of international law and treaties, specifically the Fourth Geneva Convention, and is wholly unjustifiable. The Convention refers to the Protection of Unarmed Civilians during Occupation and or War.

As an occupying force for the past 16 years, the state of Israel is legally obliged to protect the civilians who have been forced to live in the highly populated 365 square meter territory, which has been compared to an open-air prison. The resulting conflict, which spans over decades, has been marked by continued human rights abuses against a people at the receiving end of an apartheid agenda. Dispelling the claims by Israel of a Hamas-targeted campaign, there have been [reports](#) of additional killings in the Occupied West Bank by settlers, where Hamas is not present.

South Africa’s debt to Palestine

Corruption Watch acknowledges the efforts of the South African government thus far, which include a call for an immediate ceasefire in Gaza, as well as decisive action to recall diplomats from Tel Aviv, as reported in the media. However, the organisation believes that our country and our government have a greater responsibility to the people of Palestine in actively lobbying for global support, having ourselves benefitted from the immense global pressure that helped put an end to apartheid, including from Palestinians themselves.

Singh notes: “Anybody committed to upholding human rights should be appalled and outraged at the carnage that is unfolding before our eyes. Given South Africa’s direct experience of the cruel and damaging effects of apartheid, we must call for a cession of hostilities and commitment to a process that can end apartheid in Palestine.”

“We are obliged as a free people, to be vocal advocates for justice and freedom, and to call for an end to these massacres. We, and all countries in the world, should not stand by or condone the ongoing subjugation of a people and watch as these crimes against humanity are being perpetrated daily with such intensity and violence.”

“Corruption Watch calls for solidarity with our Transparency International (TI) colleagues – The Coalition for Accountability and Integrity (AMAN) –Palestine-TI and their call to make a clear and decisive humanitarian stance to stop the massacres in Gaza,” he concludes.

The world should not rest until the Palestinian people’s right to self-determination and liberation from the Israeli occupation has been realised.

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