



IEASA STATEMENT ON OCCUPIED PALESTINE AND ISRAEL

10 November 2023

The [International Education Association of South Africa](#) (IEASA) has watched with horror the events unfolding in Gaza over the past few weeks. We strongly condemn all human rights violations and mourn the loss of lives and countless injuries that have taken place since 7 October 2023 in Gaza and Israel, as well as the ongoing violence by illegal settler communities in occupied Palestinian territories.

We recognize that the current crisis is rooted in events that date back many decades, including colonialism, forceful displacement of Palestinians, Israeli occupation, settler colonialism, a relentless blockade of Gaza, and the fact that Israel is an apartheid state, as highlighted by [Human Rights Watch](#) and [Amnesty International](#).

We have watched in disbelief the brutal, disproportionate and indiscriminate collective punishment and murder of more than 10,000 Palestinian civilians – many of whom are children. We have watched the attacks on hospitals, ambulances, bakeries, journalists and humanitarian workers. We have also observed displacement of more than 1.5 million people and the denial of access to basic necessities to Palestinians in Gaza.

We have watched the [destruction of more than 250 schools](#) and several universities in Gaza by the Israeli army. These attacks on Palestinian educational institutions are nothing but an [epistemicide](#) – a brutal attempt to annihilate the Palestinian knowledge system.

All this, according to a [joint statement](#) by United Nations agencies, leading international NGOs and relief organizations is ‘contrary to all the obligations under international humanitarian and human rights law’. The United States-based [Center for Constitutional Rights](#) calls the brutal and indiscriminate attacks on Gaza an ‘unfolding crime of genocide of the Palestinian people’.

As highlighted by the South African Minister of International Relations and Cooperation, [Dr Naledi Pandor](#), Palestinian people are ‘denied the right to exist as human beings.’ We agree with Dr Pandor that we have an obligation to speak for the oppressed. As [Nelson Mandela said](#) in 1997, if we fail to do this, ‘we would be less than human’. In the same speech, Mandela said that ‘our freedom is incomplete without the freedom of the Palestinians’.

We stand in agreement with thousands of colleagues from South African higher education and other sectors who have expressed solidarity with Palestine ([here](#), [here](#) and [here](#)), as well as colleagues from [Nordic countries](#), [Ireland](#) and [Italy](#), to name a few.

We have observed and strongly condemn numerous attacks on freedom of expression and academic freedom in many parts of Europe and the United States, where university students, staff and academics face [intimidation](#), [attacks](#), [suspensions](#) and job losses for expressing solidarity with the long-suffering Palestinian people.

Criticism of Israel's genocidal actions are a legitimate human response to oppressive actions. We have observed with gratitude the opposition to the bombing of civilians in Gaza by a wide range of people of different faiths and people of conscience. The expressions of solidarity with Palestinians include many Jewish people in South Africa and elsewhere (see [here](#), [here](#) and [here](#)). The descendants of a people who had experienced intolerable discrimination and collective punishment in the past are stating with moral authority that when survivors of the Holocaust said 'never again,' it meant 'never again for everyone,' and that the destruction of Gaza and the murder of Palestinian civilians is 'not in our name'. The courage and leadership shown by Jewish people of conscience inspires us all, and the voices of many Jewish youth give us hope that a better tomorrow for Palestinians and Israelis is possible, and that a better world is, indeed, possible.

We urge the higher education community in South Africa and beyond to raise their voices and join people of conscience all over the world to end the suffering by:

- Calling for an immediate ceasefire and an end to the killings in Gaza and attacks on Palestinians in the West Bank;
- Calling for essential humanitarian and life-saving medical aid to immediately enter Gaza;
- Calling for the protection of civilians;
- Calling on all parties in the conflict to adhere to international humanitarian law;
- Calling for the release of all hostages in Gaza, and the release of [Palestinian prisoners](#), including children, imprisoned without trial in Israeli jails;
- Engaging with the call by the [Boycott, Divestment, Sanctions \(BDS\)](#) movement to act against the genocide in Gaza;
- Engaging with the [Palestinian Campaign for the Academic and Cultural Boycott of Israel](#) (PACBI).

Ultimately, we are calling for the end of apartheid and the restoration of equal human rights and dignity to the Palestinian people, while a long-term peaceful solution for co-existence is actively prioritised and facilitated by the United Nations.

For further engagement, please contact the IEASA Secretariat via email:
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