



AIDA STATEMENT
International NGOs Call for Immediate, Formal Cease Fire in Gaza

The undersigned members of the Association of International Development Agencies (AIDA) are alarmed at the escalation of violence and destruction involving the civilian population in the Gaza Strip and we welcome efforts being made by the members of Quartet (the United States, the European Union, Russia and United Nations) and the Arab League to broker an immediate, formal cease fire from all parties. This call is even more urgently needed after the recent attack on students at the Jewish religious school in Jerusalem that claimed the lives of 8 students including 3 children.

Lasting from 27 February to 2 March, the Israeli military operation in Gaza resulted in the deaths of over 107 Palestinians, at least half of whom were civilians - including more than 27 children. Many more Palestinian civilians have been critically wounded, and the death toll is steadily rising. Palestinian armed groups have fired rockets into Israel, leading to the death of one civilian and the injury of 25.

We condemn all attacks that target civilians, including both attacks by Palestinian militants and Israeli military actions. We remind all parties that under international humanitarian law they are responsible and accountable for protecting civilian populations and infrastructure.

The latest military operation has exacerbated the impact of the Israeli blockade of Gaza, pushing an already vulnerable population to the brink. Key infrastructures, including public health facilities and the water and sanitation network, are now at a breaking point.

The latest violence and destruction coupled with the on-going impoverishment and isolation of Gaza's people, 56 percent of whom are children, and increased restrictions placed on humanitarian actors, does nothing to establish conditions necessary for peace. It also places our work and the work of our partners in jeopardy.

The undersigned members of AIDA therefore urge the Quartet and the Arab League to:

- Abide by their responsibility under international humanitarian law to protect civilians and to broker an immediate, formal cease fire.
- Assure humanitarian movement and access in and out of Gaza.

- Push Israel to widen its definition of what constitutes essential humanitarian assistance to include: items essential for the maintenance and rehabilitation of public service infrastructure; access for treatment abroad for patients requiring urgent medical care and allowing parents to accompany children under the age of 18; and the immediate resumption of normal fuel imports and electricity.
- Urge all parties to work toward the reopening of the Gaza crossings in accordance with the Agreement on Movement and Access (AMA) brokered by the US and EU in November 2005.

Campaign for the Children of Palestine (CCP)
 CISS – Cooperazione Internazionale Sud Sud
 Gruppo di Volontariato Civile (GVC)
 Italian Consortium of Solidarity (ICS)
 Japan International Volunteer Center (JVC)
 Lutheran World Federation
 Medical Aid for Palestinians (MAP-UK)
 medico international
 Mennonite Central Committee
 Norwegian Church Aid
 Norwegian Refugee Council
 Oxfam International
 Oxfam Great Britain
 Oxfam Novib
 Oxfam Quebec
 Palestine Solidarity Association of Sweden
 Save the Children-UK
 Solidarite Socialiste Belgium
 Swedish Organization for Individual Relief (SOIR)
 Swedish Cooperative Center
 Terre des hommes Italia
 War Child Holland
 World Vision Jerusalem