

The First Palestinian-European Civil Society Forum Draft Declaration

The 1st Palestinian - European Civil Society Forum convened in Ramallah from the 7th to the 9th of November 2022.

More than 130 delegates from civil society organizations from Palestine and more than 14 European countries gathered in Ramallah for three days to discuss the main challenges facing Palestine and the Palestinian civil society, both at the local and European level.

The delegates emphasize that the root cause for the institutionalized and systematic oppression, fragmentation and dispossession of the Palestinian people as a whole is embedded in Israel's settler-colonialism and apartheid regime, designed and imposed since 1948, and entrenched with the occupation of Palestinian territory in 1967.

We affirm our unwavering position in regard to the Palestinian people's inalienable right of self-determination, including their rights to return and to live in peace, justice and human dignity. We also recognise that the main challenge threatening this right is Israel's settler-colonial project and hegemony over the Palestinian people.

We also warn of Israel's unprecedented practices of apartheid and forcible transfer, which constitute blatant violations of international law and crimes against humanity, and thus warn against the international community's potential to normalize such regime and its associated positions and policies.

Prior to the conference, three days of field visits were held on both sides of the Green Line, during which European delegates were able to witness first-hand the severity of Israel's daily, continuing violations of the basic human rights of the Palestinian people.

Accordingly, we call on the European governments and the European Union to take a clear stand and ACTION, and specifically to:

1. Recognize that Israel is committing the crime of Apartheid, as an unavoidable consequence of Israel's pursuit of settler-colonialism in mandatory Palestine;
2. Support the implementation of the right to self-determination of the Palestinian people, also by concretely pushing for the dismantling of Israel's settler-colonial and apartheid regime, including the occupation;
3. Push for the Lifting of the blockade and closure of the Gaza Strip;
4. Prevent the Judaization of illegally occupied and purportedly annexed Jerusalem and the forced displacement of Palestinians, including from Area C of the West Bank;



5. Clear support to:

- a. The independent investigation carried out by the International Criminal Court into the Situation in Palestine;
 - b. The United Nations Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, and in Israel,
 - c. The UN General Assembly resolution requesting an advisory opinion on the illegality of the occupation from the International Court of Justice;
6. Counter shrinking space and vilification of Palestinian civil society, including by recognizing and addressing the problematic nature of Israeli lawfare groups;
7. Prevent the adoption of the infamous IHRA Working Definition of Antisemitism (IHRA WD) by the Member States, and push for its withdrawal whereas it has been already adopted;
8. Ban all dealings with Israel's colonial settlements, including trading of settlement goods, selling of goods to settlements, financial transactions, military and academic cooperation, sports and culture;
9. Suspend the EU-Israel Association Council until the full compliance of Israel with all its obligations under international law and international humanitarian law; and
10. Strengthen the democratic environment in Palestine, including by undertaking effective measures to ensure that Israel respects the democratic process of the Palestinian elections in the occupied West Bank, including Jerusalem, and the Gaza Strip.

We call on the Palestinian government to:

1. Enforce legislations and measures that reinforce the democratic culture and environment in all areas of Palestinian livelihood, including by expeditiously scheduling, organizing and holding free and transparent presidential and legislative elections;
2. Maintain an open dialogue with the Palestinian civil society, refrain from imposing any measures that serve to further shrinking the Palestinian civic space, and enhance and support Palestinian civil society organizations especially those operating in Jerusalem, Area C, and the Gaza Strip; and
3. Support the Palestinian civil society organizations in combatting Israeli silencing of opposition measures.



We affirm our strong belief in the need of ramping up advocacy without prejudice towards the other important topics and issues, we also recommend focusing the civil society advocacy efforts in Europe towards:

1. Collective action focusing on select areas to achieve incremental victories and build on success and learn from mistakes;
2. Focus on reclaiming back civic space, promoting accountability while enhancing communication and coordination; and
3. Take a rights-based approach and focus on collective action that both Europeans and Palestinians can relate to.

We also agree on the need for strategic coordination and knowledge sharing amongst civil society actors active for Palestine both locally and in Europe and support the set-up of a permanent follow-up and coordination mechanism. We therefore announce that The Palestinian - European Civil Society Forum, through its main organizers, will be turned into a permanent platform to coordinate, support, and amplify the Palestine advocacy efforts in Europe, with a fixed presence in Palestine, the EU and European countries, while also convening the full Forum every two years.

Adopted in Ramallah, Palestine on the 9th of November 2022.

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