

57th Executive Board meeting, April-May 2021

DRAFT EXECUTIVE BOARD STATEMENT: BEYOND THE CEASEFIRE

While a ceasefire is critical to end this month's violence between Israel and Hamas, it cannot lead to a lasting and permanent peace if the underlying causes of the violence remain unresolved. This is the moment for ending both the occupation and the blockade. It is critically important for rebuilding to begin immediately, but that rebuilding must occur on a solid, democratic and rights-respecting ground.

EI deplores the fact that since the 10th of May, Israeli airstrikes have killed 248 civilians, among them 58 children. Conversely, Hamas rockets have killed 10 Israeli civilians and two children. EI mourns all these civilian losses. We deplore the destruction of schools on both sides, and the conversion of scores more from centers of learning into emergency shelters housing displaced people.

We also deplore the fact that Hamas' strategy is to directly send rockets into civilian centers, which goes against all ethical and moral norms and international laws. However, the high numbers of death and destruction to innocent bystanders from Israel's military strikes into civilian targets is also unacceptable and unethical, even if it is targeting Hamas within the civilian population.

These attacks came after days of violence, in Jerusalem, where hundreds of Palestinians were injured in demonstrations against forced evictions of Palestinian families by the Israeli authorities. The planned evictions, if implemented, would constitute a gross violation of Israel's obligations under international law.

For too many families, the trauma does not end with this ceasefire. Hundreds of families are left mourning the loss of loved ones, far too many of them children. Teachers are mourning their students and vice versa. Thousands of people are homeless and critical infrastructure has been destroyed. A massive humanitarian effort to rebuild after so much destruction must commence immediately and without delay.

Equally important is to recognize that the root causes that have led to the current situation and escalation must be addressed with the same urgency.

Focusing attention on symptoms and not causes resigns all involved to a permanent cycle of escalation and violence instead of coexistence and peace.

EI reiterates its 2019 World Congress statement urging both Israelis and Hamas to: "Renounce violence and commit to engage in direct negotiations. EI recognizes that agreement on the status of Jerusalem is central to resolving the conflict and underlines the urgent and imperative need for the international community to support, in every way possible, the realization of a peaceful and just solution".