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## **An open letter for the people in Gaza**

**Paola Manduca, Iain Chalmers, Derek Summerfield, Mads Gilbert, Swee Ang, on behalf of 24 signatories**

"We are doctors and scientists, who spend our lives developing means to care and protect health and lives. We are also informed people; we teach the ethics of our professions, together with the knowledge and practice of it. We all have worked in and known the situation of Gaza for years.



On the basis of our ethics and practice, we are denouncing what we witness in the aggression of Gaza by Israel.

We ask our colleagues, old and young professionals, to denounce this Israeli aggression. We challenge the perversity of a propaganda that justifies the creation of an emergency to masquerade a massacre, a so-called "defensive aggression". In reality it is a ruthless assault of unlimited duration, extent, and intensity. We wish to report the facts as we see them and their implications on the lives of the people.

We are appalled by the military onslaught on civilians in Gaza under the guise of punishing terrorists. This is the third large scale military assault on Gaza since 2008. Each time the death toll is borne mainly by innocent people in Gaza, especially women and children under the unacceptable pretext of Israel eradicating political parties and resistance to the occupation and siege they impose.

This action also terrifies those who are not directly hit, and wounds the soul, mind, and resilience of the young generation. Our condemnation and disgust are further compounded by the denial and prohibition for Gaza to receive external help and supplies to alleviate the dire circumstances.

The blockade on Gaza has tightened further since last year and this has worsened the toll on Gaza's population. In Gaza, people suffer from hunger, thirst, pollution, shortage of medicines, electricity, and any means to get an income, not only by being bombed and shelled. Power crisis, gasoline shortage, water and food scarcity, sewage outflow and ever decreasing resources are disasters caused directly and indirectly by the siege..."

- [Read the Letter in full](#)
- [Read list of 24 original signatories](#)

- [Read the published responses to this letter](#)



### Support the letter

Following the response to "An open letter for the people in Gaza", The Lancet has decided not to publish the names of signatories. We are concerned about several threatening statements to those signatories, which have recently been posted on social media.

**Please note that all the email addresses we have collected will be kept confidential and will not be used for marketing purposes.**

Thank you for your interest. We have reached 20,000 signatures, and are no longer collecting names.

**Signatures to date: 20,063**

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on behalf of 24 signatories

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People in Gaza are resisting this aggression because they want a better and normal life and, even while crying in sorrow, pain, and terror, they reject a temporary truce that does not provide a real chance for a better future. A voice under the attacks in Gaza is that of Um Al Ramlawi who speaks for all in Gaza: “They are killing us all anyway—either a slow death by the siege, or a fast one by military attacks. We have nothing left to lose—we must fight for our rights, or die trying.”<sup>2</sup>

Gaza has been blockaded by sea and land since 2006. Any individual of Gaza, including fishermen venturing beyond 3 nautical miles of the coast of Gaza, face being shot by the Israeli Navy. No one from Gaza can leave from the only two checkpoints, Erez or Rafah, without special permission from the Israelis and the Egyptians, which is hard to come by for many, if not impossible. People in Gaza are unable to go abroad to study, work, visit families, or do business. Wounded and sick people cannot leave easily to get specialised treatment outside Gaza. Entries of food and medicines into Gaza have been restricted and many essential items for survival are prohibited.<sup>3</sup> Before the present assault, medical stock items in Gaza were already at an all time low because of the blockade.<sup>3</sup> They have run out now. Likewise, Gaza is unable to export its produce. Agriculture has been severely

impaired by the imposition of a buffer zone, and agricultural products cannot be exported due to the blockade. 80% of Gaza's population is dependent on food rations from the UN. Much of Gaza's buildings and infrastructure had been destroyed during Operation Cast Lead, 2008—09, and building materials have been blockaded so that schools, homes, and institutions cannot be properly rebuilt. Factories destroyed by bombardment have rarely been rebuilt adding unemployment to destitution.

Despite the difficult conditions, the people of Gaza and their political leaders have recently moved to resolve their conflicts “without arms and harm” through the process of reconciliation between factions, their leadership renouncing titles and positions, so that a unity government can be formed abolishing the divisive factional politics operating since 2007. This reconciliation, although accepted by many in the international community, was rejected by Israel. The present Israeli attacks stop this chance of political unity between Gaza and the West Bank and single out a part of the Palestinian society by destroying the lives of people of Gaza. Under the pretext of eliminating terrorism, Israel is trying to destroy the growing Palestinian unity. Among other lies, it is stated that civilians in Gaza are hostages of Hamas whereas the truth is that the Gaza Strip is sealed by the Israelis and Egyptians.

Gaza has been bombed continuously for the past 14 days followed now by invasion on land by tanks and thousands of Israeli troops. More than 60 000 civilians from Northern Gaza were ordered to leave their homes. These internally displaced people have nowhere to go since Central and Southern Gaza are also subjected to heavy artillery bombardment. The whole of Gaza is under attack. The only shelters in Gaza are the schools of the UN Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA), uncertain shelters already targeted during Cast Lead, killing many.

According to Gaza Ministry of Health and UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA),<sup>1</sup> as of July 21, 149 of the 558 killed in Gaza and 1100 of the 3504 wounded are children. Those buried under the rubble are not counted yet. As we write, the BBC reports of the bombing of another hospital, hitting the intensive care unit and operating theatres, with deaths of patients and staff. There are now fears for the main hospital Al Shifa. Moreover, most people are psychologically traumatised in Gaza. Anyone older than 6 years has already lived through their third military assault by Israel.

The massacre in Gaza spares no one, and includes the disabled and sick in hospitals, children playing on the beach or on the roof top, with a large majority of non-combatants. Hospitals, clinics, ambulances, mosques, schools, and press buildings have all been attacked, with thousands of private homes bombed, clearly directing fire to target whole families killing them within their homes, depriving families of their homes by chasing them out a few minutes before destruction. An entire area was destroyed on July 20, leaving thousands of displaced people homeless, beside wounding hundreds and killing at least 70—this is way beyond the purpose of finding tunnels. None of these are military objectives. These attacks aim to terrorise, wound the soul and the body of the people, and make their life impossible in the future, as well as also demolishing their homes and prohibiting the means to rebuild.

Weaponry known to cause long-term damages on health of the whole population are used; particularly non fragmentation weaponry and hard-head bombs.<sup>4, 5</sup> We witnessed targeted weaponry used indiscriminately and on children and we constantly see that so-called intelligent weapons fail to be precise, unless they are deliberately used to destroy innocent lives.

We denounce the myth propagated by Israel that the aggression is done caring about saving civilian lives and children's wellbeing.

Israel's behaviour has insulted our humanity, intelligence, and dignity as well as our professional ethics and efforts. Even those of us who want to go and help are unable to reach Gaza due to the blockade.

This “defensive aggression” of unlimited duration, extent, and intensity must be stopped. Additionally, should the use of gas be further confirmed, this is unequivocally a war crime for which, before anything else, high sanctions will have to be taken immediately on Israel with cessation of any trade and collaborative agreements with Europe.

As we write, other massacres and threats to the medical personnel in emergency services and denial of entry for international humanitarian convoys are reported.<sup>6</sup> We as scientists and doctors cannot keep silent while this crime against humanity continues. We urge readers not to be silent too. Gaza trapped under siege, is being killed by one of the world's largest and most sophisticated modern military machines. The land is poisoned by weapon debris, with consequences for future generations. If those of us capable of speaking up fail to do so and take a stand against this war crime, we are also complicit in the destruction of the lives and homes of 1.8 million people in Gaza.

We register with dismay that only 5% of our Israeli academic colleagues signed an appeal to their government to stop the military operation against Gaza. We are tempted to conclude that with the exception of this 5%, the rest of the Israeli academics are complicit in the massacre and destruction of Gaza. We also see the complicity of our countries in Europe and North America in this massacre and the impotence once again of the international institutions and organisations to stop this massacre.

### **Estimados amigos y amigas:**

Estos son tiempos desesperadamente malos. El gobierno de Israel, habiendo provocado el lanzamiento de cohetes por su furia con Cisjordania, ahora está usando esa respuesta como pretexto para un ataque aéreo contra Gaza que ya ha costado gran cantidad de vidas. Una atmósfera de histeria está siendo provocada deliberadamente en Israel, y comunidades enteras son sometidas a un castigo colectivo, un crimen de guerra. Las personas están muriendo y... ¿para qué? ¿Para evitar un gobierno de unidad de Fatah y Hamás?

Nuestros colegas académicos en la Franja de Gaza -cuyas universidades han sido destruidas varias veces en los últimos seis años, que son incapaces de enseñar o estudiar, y que también tienen una imperante necesidad de alimentos y medicinas, como el resto de los casi dos millones de palestinos que viven en Gaza- nos han solicitado instarles a que actúen con urgencia, para que su voz se escuche en Israel y en el extranjero en contra de lo que el gobierno israelí inflige a la población de Gaza. Más de 1325 personas han muerto ya en Gaza por el ejército israelí desde el inicio de la operación el 08 de julio, y el número será mayor al momento de leer este mensaje. La mayoría de estas personas son mujeres, niños y ancianos. No existe argumento creíble que indique que estas personas estaban involucradas en actividades militares. La infraestructura de Gaza, ya de por sí en ruinas, ha sido socavada aún más, y la población se encuentra en la peor situación en la que alguna vez haya estado, agravándose por momentos. Estas atrocidades cometidas por Israel no traerán

paz ni seguridad a la región y sólo pueden conducir a un mayor deterioro de la situación ya tensa entre Palestina e Israel.

Los invitamos, como colegas académicos e intelectuales, a que unan sus voces en una protesta abierta y contundente sobre estos crímenes de guerra cometidos por el gobierno israelí, nuestro gobierno. Les instamos a levantarse y hacerse tomar en cuenta, para responder al llamado de nuestros colegas en Gaza y hacer que su voz sea escuchada. Esperamos que sean capaces y estén dispuestos a unirse y expresar su total oposición a los crímenes de guerra cometidos en su nombre. Sabemos que pueden sentirse preocupados y solos, sabiendo el alto precio que tiene la disidencia en Israel. Estaremos con ustedes cuando tomen esta decisión reflexiva.

Los firmantes de esta declaración, todos académicos de universidades israelíes, desean que se sepa que deploran la estrategia militar agresiva desplegada por el gobierno israelí. La masacre de un gran número de personas totalmente inocentes coloca más barreras de sangre en el camino de un acuerdo negociado, que es la única alternativa a la ocupación y la interminable opresión del pueblo palestino. Israel debe aceptar un alto al fuego inmediato y comenzar a negociar de buena fe por el fin de la ocupación y los asentamientos, a través de un acuerdo de paz justo.

Académicos israelíes que han firmado la petición:

Prof. Rachel Giora, Tel Aviv University  
Prof. Emmanuel Farjoun, Hebrew University  
Prof. Nadera Shalhoub-Kevorkian, Hebrew University  
Dr. Kobi Snitz, Weizmann Institute of Science, Israel  
Dr. Anat Matar, Tel Aviv University  
Dr. Efrat Ben-Zeev, Ruppin Academic Center  
Prof. As'ad Ghanem, Haifa University  
Prof. Anat Biletzki, Tel Aviv University  
Prof. Adi Ophir, Tel Aviv University  
Dr. Ovadia Ezra, Tel Aviv University  
Prof. Zvi Tauber, Tel Aviv University  
Prof. Vered Kraus, Haifa University  
Dr. Yuval Yonay, Haifa University  
Prof. Oded Goldreich, Weizman Institute  
Prof. Dana Ron, Tel Aviv University  
Prof. Gadi Algazi, Tel Aviv University  
Prof. Mira Ariel, Tel Aviv University  
Prof. Idan Landau, Ben Gurion University  
Prof. As'ad Ghanem, Haifa University  
Dr. Ayelet Ben-Yishai, Haifa University  
Prof. Micah Leshem, Haifa University  
Dr. Ilan Saban, University of Haifa  
Prof. Avishai Ehrlich, Academic College Tel Aviv Jaffa  
Dr. Ivy Sichel, Hebrew University, Jerusalem  
Prof. Yehuda Shenhav, TAU

Dr. Hannah Safran, The Academic College for Society and the Arts  
 Dr. Yael Ben-zvi, Ben-Gurion University  
 Prof. Dudy Tzfati, Hebrew University  
 Dr. Tikva Honig-Parnass, Jerusalem  
 Prof. David Blanc, University  
 Dr. Haim Yacobi Bezalel, Ben Gurion University  
 Elizabeth Ritter, Ben-Gurion University  
 Prof. Paul Wexler, Emeritus, Tel-Aviv University  
 Prof. Tal Siloni, Tel Aviv University  
 Prof. Amatzia Weisel, Tel Aviv University (retired)  
 Prof. Tamar Katriel, Haifa University  
 Dr. Haim Deuelle Luski, Tel Aviv University & Bezalel Academy of Art  
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 Prof. Shai Lavi, Tel Aviv University  
 Prof. Issi Rosen-Zvi, Tel Aviv University  
 Prof. Nomi Erteschik-Shir, Ben-Gurion University  
 Tamar Pelleg Sryck, Tel Aviv, Human rights lawyer  
 Prof. Tova Rosen, Tel Aviv University  
 Prof. Eva Jablonka, Tel Aviv University  
 Dr. Halleli Pinson, Ben-Gurion University  
 Prof. Ramzi Suleiman, University of Haifa  
 Dr. Grit Schorch, Tel Aviv University  
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Dr. Ophira Gamliel, the Hebrew University, Jerusalem, and Bar Ilan University  
Prof. Outi Bat-El, Linguistics, Tel-Aviv University  
Dr. Karin Nisenbaum, The Hebrew University, Jerusalem  
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Esta carta también ha sido suscrita por 1590 académicos y académicas extranjeros.

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