

Dear Richard Falk,
Euro-Mediterranean Human Rights Monitor

I am writing this letter to inform you about the work we are carrying out as the Human Rights and Equality Institution of Türkiye regarding the humanitarian crisis in Palestine.

As is known, the heavy attacks on Gaza and the deployment of disproportionate force have led to a severe humanitarian crisis in the region, disproportionately affecting the most vulnerable, including children, women, and the elderly. The civilian population, who should be shielded from the devastating impacts of conflicts under international humanitarian law, now find themselves at the epicenter of these attacks. By clearly committing a war crime according to the provisions of the Geneva Conventions, the Palestinian people have been subjected to unacceptable “collective punishment.”

Our Institution remains committed to closely monitoring the ongoing situation and taking various initiatives within our authority as a national human rights institution to raise responsiveness at the national and international levels about Israel's actions, which constitute war crimes.

As an active member of the European Network of National Human Rights Institutions (ENNHRI), our Institution sent a letter to the other national human rights institutions within ENNHRI on October 13, 2023. This letter highlighted the severe impact of the cutoff of vital food, energy, and humanitarian aid to Gaza, along with the indiscriminate targeting of civilian settlements.¹

On October 27, 2023, our Institution extended its efforts by sending a letter to 120 peer national human rights institutions, members of the Global Network of National Human Rights Institutions (GANHRI), calling for an end to the systematic attacks against the civilian population in Gaza, which constitute war crimes. In this letter, we emphasized our solidarity with the Independent Commission for Human Rights in Palestine (ICHRP) and urged all GANHRI members to be more responsive to this atrocity and play an effective role in ending human rights violations in Gaza.²

¹ <https://www.tihek.gov.tr/en/official-letter-on-ending-inhumane-treatments-in-gaza>

² <https://www.tihek.gov.tr/letter-on-the-cessation-of-systematic-attacks-against-civilians-in-gaza-that-constitute-war-crimes/>

On November 3, 2023, our Institution sent a letter to Maryam Abdullah Al Attiyah, GANHRI Chairperson and Chairperson of the Qatar National Human Rights Committee and Dr. Ammar Al Dwaik, Director of the Independent Commission for Human Rights in Palestine (ICHRP) to strengthen international solidarity regarding the systematic attacks against civilians in Gaza that constitute war crimes.³

Lastly, on December 1, 2023 our Institution sent a letter to the President of the International Court of Justice, Judge Joan E Donoghue, Judge Piotr Hofmanski, President of the International Criminal Court and the Prosecutor of the International Criminal Court, Karim Khan. In these letters information was given about the work carried out by our Institution regarding the humanitarian crisis in Gaza and the importance of international cooperation was emphasized.⁴

On October 13, 2023, our Institution published the “Press Release on Cessation of Conflicts between Palestine and Israel” on its website, emphasizing that the main priority in terms of humanitarian law is to ensure the safety of life and property of civilians in these conflicts as soon as possible⁵.

Subsequently, on October 18, 2023, our Institution published the “Press Release on the Targeting of a Hospital in Gaza by Israel” on its website, highlighting the humanitarian crisis and urging the international community to act against Israel's heinous actions.⁶

On October 22, 2023, our Institution issued another press release on the “Targeting of Civilians in Gaza by Israel” on its website, underscoring that Israel's systematic, encompassing, and disproportionate acts of disproportionate violence against Palestinian civilians constituted a war crime. All international institutions and organizations, especially the member states of the United Nations (UN) are called upon to take a more constructive attitude towards upholding human dignity and human rights in the face of this historical tragedy.⁷

³ <https://www.tihek.gov.tr/chairman-prof-dr-muharrem-kilic-sent-a-letter-to-strengthen-international-solidarity-regarding-the-systematic-attacks-in-gaza/>

⁴ <https://www.tihek.gov.tr/letter-sent-to-judge-joan-e-donoghue-president-of-the-international-court-of-justice/>
<https://www.tihek.gov.tr/letter-sent-to-judge-piotr-hofmanski-president-of-the-international-criminal-court/>
<https://www.tihek.gov.tr/letter-sent-to-international-criminal-court-prosecutor-karim-khan/>

⁵ <https://www.tihek.gov.tr/en/press-release-on-cessation-of-conflicts-between-palestine-and-israel>

⁶ <https://www.tihek.gov.tr/en/press-release-on-the-targeting-of-a-hospital-in-gaza-by-israel>

⁷ <https://www.tihek.gov.tr/en/press-release-on-the-targeting-of-civilians-in-gaza-by-israel>

On October 27, 2023, our Institution published the “Press Release on The Cessation of Israel's War Crimes Attacks in Gaza” on its website, highlighting that Palestinians were facing the danger of mass ethnic cleansing in front of the eyes of the world and calling on all actors in the international community to be more resolute in responding to this atrocity and to play an effective role in ending human rights violations in Gaza.⁸

On October 31, 2023, our Institution published the “Press Release on the Targeting of the Turkish-Palestinian Friendship Hospital by Israeli Forces,” on its website, stating that Israeli forces targeted the Turkish-Palestinian Friendship Hospital, the only cancer hospital in Gaza, on 30 October 2023, and highlighted this action was a manifestation of a crime against humanity aimed at the annihilation of the Palestinian people. The statement emphasized that Israel's attacks on hospitals, medical facilities, healthcare personnel, and wounded civilians are contrary to the Geneva Conventions that determine the law of war.⁹

Lastly, our Institution published the “Press Release Regarding the Interventions Against the Fundamental Rights of People Calling for an End to the Genocide in Palestine”¹⁰, on December 13, 2023, and “Press Release on Israel's Actions of Mass Arrests of Palestinian Civilians”¹¹ on December 14, 2023.

We have also engaged in a series of interviews as part of our “HREIT Academy: Human Rights Talks” initiative, shared on our Institution's YouTube account. These interviews aimed to shed light on various aspects of the Palestinian issue in the context of international law and humanitarian law. On November 29, 2023 we had an interview with Assistant Professor Filiz Değer regarding “The Role of the United Nations in Global Humanitarian Governance: The Case of Israel-Palestine.”¹² On November 8, 2023 we interviewed Associate Professor Hakkı Hakan Erkiner, who discussed “War Crimes in Gaza under the International Law on the Use of Force.”¹³ On November 2, 2023, we had an interview with Associate Professor Muhammed Demirel regarding “The Right of the Strong vs. Humanitarian Law in the Context of Israel.”¹⁴ On October 26, 2023, we interviewed with Professor

⁸ <https://www.tihek.gov.tr/en/-press-release-on-the-cessation-of-israels-war-crimes-attacks-in-gaza>

⁹ <https://tihek.gov.tr/press-release--on-the-targeting-of-the-turkish-palestinian-friendship-hospital-by-israeli-forces>

¹⁰ <https://www.tihek.gov.tr/en/press-release-regarding-the-interventions-against-the-fundamental-rights-of-people-calling-for-an-end-to-the-genocide-in-palestine>

¹¹ <https://www.tihek.gov.tr/en/press-release-on-israels-actions-of-mass-arrests-of-palestinian-civilians>

¹² <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LMSxQwu1Ng&t=2s>

¹³ https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QUOmyCDM_gY

¹⁴ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-BufcOKrnew>

Dr. Yücel Acer, who discussed “The Right to Self-Defense, International Humanitarian Law, and Israel's Actions.”¹⁵ On October 23, 2023, Professor Dr. Berdal Aral shared insights on “The Future of the Palestinian Issue in the Context of International Law.”¹⁶

In addition to that, during the meeting of the Human Rights and Equality Board of Türkiye held on November 2, 2023, a Commission for the Investigation and Reporting of Human Rights Violations and War Crimes Committed by Israel in Palestine in the Context of International Law and Humanitarian Law was established. A decision was made to write a report titled “Investigation of Human Rights Violations and War Crimes Committed by Israel in Palestine in the Context of International Law and Humanitarian Law.”

In the first session of the fifth meeting of the Consultative Commission on Non-Discrimination, whose members are comprised of public institutions and agencies, non-governmental organizations, unions, social and professional organizations, higher education institutions, printed and audio-visual media, researchers and relevant persons, agencies and organizations, held on November 22, 2023, “Rights Violations against Vulnerable Groups in War and Conflict Environments in the Context of Israeli Attacks on Palestine” was discussed and the “Final Declaration of the Consultative Commission” regarding the issues discussed in the meeting was published on the website of our Institution.¹⁷

The 29th issue of the Periodic International Human Rights Monitoring Bulletin was published as the “Special Issue on Gaza.” This issue includes the work of international and peer organizations that have included the humanitarian tragedy in Gaza on their agenda.¹⁸

On December 5, 2023, “The Role of National Human Rights Institutions in Conflict and Post-Conflict Situations”, the ninth in a series of factsheets, which are regularly published in order to raise awareness about international standards on specific thematic issues, was published on the website of our Institution.¹⁹

¹⁵ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mBAdQqdBCCg&t=2s>

¹⁶ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZL98uXIQa4c&t=2s>

¹⁷ <https://www.tihek.gov.tr/israilin-filistine-yonelik-saldirilari-baglaminda-savas-ve-catisma-ortamlarinda-savunmasiz-gruplara-yonelik-hak-ihlallerine-iliskin-istisare-komisyonu-sonuc-bildirisi>

¹⁸ <https://www.tihek.gov.tr/public/editor/uploads/mlhFfdui.pdf>

¹⁹ <https://www.tihek.gov.tr/public/editor/uploads/vkqzPnkf.pdf>

Our Institution organized several events in regards to the situation in Palestine, on December 7, 2023, a symposium on “The Global Politics of Human Rights - Humanitarian Tragedies, Loss of Values and Systemic Collapse”, on December 21, 2023, a panel on “The Systemic Collapse of Human Rights in the Context of Humanitarian Tragedies in Gaza” and on December 27, 2023, a panel on “The International Court of Justice, the International Criminal Court, the Status Quo and the Criminal Responsibility of the Israeli Government” was held.

Our Institution is planning to carry out other activities in relation to the humanitarian crisis in Palestine. On January 10, 2024, an international webinar on the Humanitarian Crisis in Gaza in the Context of International Human Rights Law will be conducted with the participation of Ammar al-Dwaik, Director of the Independent Commission for Human Rights of Palestine, former UN Special Rapporteurs on the Situation of Human Rights in the Palestinian Territories Richard A. Falk and S. Michael Lynk, former UN Special Rapporteur on the Right to Food Hilal Elver and Prof. Dr. Antonietta Elia.²⁰ Additionally, with the aim to discuss different aspects of the humanitarian crisis in Gaza by experts and to raise international responsiveness on the issue, a bulletin titled “Perspectives on Addressing the Situation in Gaza” will be prepared, several workshops will be organized to discuss situation in Gaza in the context of international human rights law, and a painting contest on the theme of “Human Rights Violations and War Crimes in Palestine” among students of private and public schools at high school level in Ankara province under the Ministry of National Education will be organized. Institutional contacts with the Turkish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Palestinian National Human Rights Commission and GANHRI are also still ongoing.

As Human Rights and Equality Institution of Türkiye, we attach great importance to the work of all relevant actors regarding the situation of human rights in Palestine. We also closely follow your valuable work and are deeply committed to actively seeking innovative approaches to further strengthen the solidarity between all relevant actors working in this field. In this context, it would be highly valuable to consider collaborative endeavors that we can carry out in cooperation with your organization.

Respectfully yours,

Prof. Dr. Muharrem KILIÇ
Chairman

²⁰ <https://www.tihek.gov.tr/en/international-webinar-on-the-humanitarian-crisis-in-gaza-in-the-context-of-international-human-rights-law-will-be-conducted-by-our-institution>