

25 October 2023

An Tánaiste Micheál Martin,
Minister of Foreign Affairs,
Department of Foreign Affairs,
Iveagh House,
Dublin 2.

A Thánaiste, a chara,

We write to commend you and your cabinet colleagues for the strong stance the Irish government has taken regarding the human rights abuses being perpetrated against those who live in Gaza including hundreds of thousands of schoolchildren. In particular we note your own comments this week: ***“The suffering of innocent civilians, particularly children, is on a scale that requires an immediate cessation and the provision of an accelerated and comprehensive scale of water, food and medical supplies.”***

The INTO thanks you for emphasising the need for a ceasefire in the region, the reopening of borders and the lifting of the siege of Gaza, which is having such a devastating effect on the lives of children and young people and their families when you met Foreign Minister counterparts in Luxembourg on Monday.

We note that the Government has also made clear that it supports an immediate humanitarian pause, or humanitarian ceasefire, to give space to establish humanitarian corridors to meet the immediate needs of all civilians in Gaza and that An Taoiseach raised this as a priority for Ireland in his discussions with EU leaders at the emergency European Council meeting last week.

The INTO joins with the Irish government in calling for restraint.

Thousands have tragically lost their lives, including educators and students. We mourn the tragic loss of life and urge intensified diplomatic intervention to end the cycle of violence and secure a just, lasting peace.

The international community must continue to collectively condemn breaches of international humanitarian law, including the targeting and killing of civilians. We urge you to continue to amplify that call.

The United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) reports that at least 88 educational institutions have been directly targeted. This includes the destruction of 18 UNRWA schools and 70 Palestinian Authority schools. Such actions deprive more than 600,000 children and their teachers access to safe learning and teaching.

This union supports the UN and international human rights organisations in their vital work to bring urgent supplies to the people of Gaza and secure the release of hostages.

Therefore, we warmly welcome your announcement of €13 million in additional funding for humanitarian assistance to the Palestinian people bringing Ireland's support to the people of Palestine to €29 million this year.

For many years our organisation has been providing financial support and offering solidarity to teachers and students in Gaza.

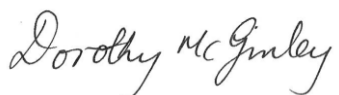
We are currently providing €10,000 in grant assistance to the Centre for Global Education, (CGE) a non-governmental development organisation established in 1986 to provide education and enhance awareness of global issues and support action towards global change. CGE is seeking support for the provision of education and psychosocial support services to 400 children aged 6 to 12 in the Gaza Strip. We are concerned about the safety of the 400 children participating in the project. We can only hope that they survive this escalation.

We supported the Lajee Cultural Tour, a group of Palestinian teenage dancers and musicians from Aida Refugee Camp near Bethlehem who visited Ireland last Summer. INTO members also support the Hands Up Project. Last September three Palestinian teenagers, along with two young people from Czech Republic (Czechia), who collectively won the Hands Up Project online competition, came to Belfast to perform their play “Welcome to Earth”. *Our thoughts are with the teachers and students of the Hands up Project, who are currently in North Gaza. Any assistance your Department can give those involved with these projects will be greatly appreciated.*

We also assist the “Stop the Wall Campaign” to twin Irish schools with a number of schools in Palestine.

We adopted a resolution condemning the ongoing practice of apartheid in Gaza, the Occupied Palestinian Territories and in Israel at our annual congress in 2022. We have declared our offices in Dublin and Belfast to be apartheid free zones and have encouraged all of our branches to do likewise. We ask that your Department actively support agencies that are working with children in Gaza and that the Irish government concentrate its efforts to protect children’s rights to a future free from war, violence, and oppression.

Yours sincerely,



Dorothy McGinley
President



John Boyle
General Secretary