



## **An open letter to the Minister of Foreign Affairs**

10 August 2022

Minister of Foreign Affairs, Hon. Nanaia Mahuta

Tēnā koe Hon Mahuta

### **NZ Government must hold Israel to account for killing children in Gaza**

Justice for Palestine, writes to call on the Government of Aotearoa New Zealand to hold Israel to account for the killing of innocent children living in the besieged Gaza strip as a result of recent Israeli airstrikes.

At the time of writing the death toll stands at 44 Palestinian dead including 16 children and 4 women, with 311 wounded. This is the fifth Israeli military operation in the Gaza Strip since the blockade of Gaza began 15 years ago. Each time around a quarter of the dead have been children and most of the others, ordinary, innocent Palestinian civilians.

This is not an aberration. This is not collateral damage from a targeted Israeli strike. The deaths of innocent Palestinians, including many children, is the necessary consequence of Israel's illegal occupation and its blockade of Gaza.

The lives of Palestinian families in Gaza are unimaginable to most of the international community. The devastating impact of the blockade, and the constant threat of sudden, unpredictable violence raining down from above, has been documented in countless reports by NGOs and human rights organisations. UN Secretary-General, Antonio Guterres, described Gaza as a "hell on earth". The strip was blockaded by Israel fifteen years ago, after Israel withdrew its settlements and occupation forces. Under international law Gaza remains part of the Occupied Palestinian Territories, and Israel – as the occupying power – is responsible under the Geneva Convention for ensuring the welfare of the Palestinian civilian population. Far from ensuring their welfare, the blockade of Gaza causes immense damage to the rights, freedoms and wellbeing of the Palestinian people. Both the UN and the International Committee of the Red Cross have deemed the blockade to be a form of collective punishment and in breach of international, humanitarian law.

Without international action, Israel will continue killing Palestinians, and their children, with impunity. Michael Lynk, the former UN rapporteur to Palestine, recently made it clear that the solution lies in the international community holding Israel to account, and that “the path to peace is through justice and human rights”.

We call on the government of Aotearoa New Zealand, and the international community, to act quickly and decisively to hold Israel to account. We call on the you as Minister of Foreign Affairs to make a public statement that the government of Aotearoa New Zealand:

- Condemns Israel’s killing of innocent Palestinians, including children
- Supports the current International Criminal Court investigation into war crimes in Palestine
- Will apply all measures necessary to pressure Israel to lift the siege of Gaza
- Insist on a return to meaningful talks to end Israel’s illegal occupation of Palestinian territory, and find a peaceful, just and rights-based solution that meets the needs of all of the peoples’ between the river and the sea

Finally, as a first step to a principled, rights-based solution, we urge the government of Aotearoa to join the vast majority of UN countries, including Iceland and Sweden, and recognise the state of Palestine.

In solidarity – ngā mihi nui,

Kate Stone, Secretary,

On behalf of **Justice for Palestine**

