

**President Ursula von der Leyen**

European Commission

Rue de la Loi 200

1049 Brussels

Dear Mrs Von der Leyen,

In the last week, we have witnessed unthinkable atrocities and a return to a barbarian past.

We, a group of European Commission and other EU Institutions staff, strongly condemn on personal grounds the terroristic attack perpetrated by Hamas against helpless civilians, the loss of life and the hostage-taking.

We equally strongly condemn the disproportionate reaction by the Israeli government against 2.3 million Palestinian civilians trapped in the Gaza Strip; a reaction that is considered by many observers as war crime.

Precisely because of these atrocities, we are surprised by the stance the European Commission has taken - and even of other EU Institutions - prompting what has been described in the press as “European cacophony”.

Notably, we are concerned by the unconditional support by the Commission you represent for one of the two parties. This support is being expressed in an uncontrolled manner e.g. EC buildings lit up with the Israeli flag.

We hardly recognize the values of the EU in the seeming indifference demonstrated over the past few days by our Institution toward the ongoing massacre of civilians in the Gaza Strip, in disregard for human rights and international humanitarian law. We have just learnt that a hospital was bombed with many casualties. According to UNRWA statements, not a drop of water, not a grain of wheat, not a litre of fuel has been allowed into Gaza since the start of the Israeli operation, generating an unprecedented humanitarian crisis that adds to 17 years

of siege of the Gaza Strip.<sup>1</sup> If Israel does not stop immediately, the whole Gaza Strip and its inhabitants will be erased from the planet.

We are saddened by the patent show of double-standards which considers the blockade (water and fuel) operated by Russia on the Ukrainian people as an act of terror whilst the identical act by Israel against the Gazan people is completely ignored.

We cannot remain silent observers when the Institution you represent as President not only has been unable to halt the Palestinian tragedy unfolding for decades in full impunity, but by its recent unfortunate actions or positions seem to give a free hand to the acceleration and the legitimacy of a war crime in the Gaza Strip.

In this critical time, we would have expected that the Institution you represent would have upheld its founding principles of peace, justice and human rights and would firmly stand up against their violation.

We would have been proud if the European Union, beacon of democracy, human rights, and rule of law, and Nobel peace prize in 2012, had called for an immediate cessation of hostilities and indiscriminate violence against civilians. Equally so, if the European Union had used the full range of diplomatic means at its disposal to engage the parties in a dialogue for the safe return home of the Israeli and international hostages and for the lifting of the siege of Gaza.

The Commission position, taken on the premises of polarised narratives, has reinforced an unfortunate ambient short-sightedness: like a chain reaction, the partisan position of the Institution is contributing to widen the gap between Europe and the Muslim world, inside and outside the borders of the Union, as well as increasing anti-semitism feelings.

This is not only hazardous from the security point of view including for EU staff in headquarters and in Delegations, but it fosters the emergence of ideologies that have affected generations of Europeans

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QkC3Gw7xLJc>

before us and that the founding Fathers of Europe have strived to eradicate through this very Europe we continue to believe in.

Dear Ms Von der Leyen

We are pleading with you to use your position to help put an end to the atrocities that unfold before our eyes.

We urge you to call, together with the leaders of the whole Union, for a ceasefire and for the protection of civilian life. This is at the core of the EU existence.

We urge you to uphold the conventions that the EU has ratified, and call out for other players, to do the same, regardless of their respective positions. Otherwise, the EU risks losing all credibility and the position as a fair, equitable and humanist broker, which can only be legitimate if we hold ourselves and all the nations equally accountable.

As per the Treaty of the European Union:

*In its relations with the wider world, the Union shall uphold and promote its values and interests and contribute to the protection of its citizens. It shall contribute to peace, security, the sustainable development of the Earth, solidarity and mutual respect among peoples, free and fair trade, eradication of poverty and **the protection of human rights, in particular the rights of the child, as well as to the strict observance and the development of international law, including respect for the principles of the United Nations Charter.***

Last but not least, we urge you, together with the highest management of the European Union, to relentlessly call and actively contribute to the creation of an independent Palestinian State, on the basis of the UNSC and UNGA Resolutions, living peacefully side by side with the State of Israel, along the borders of 1967.

*A collective of X EU staff members form Headquarters and third countries*