



## Urgent Call for Ceasefire and Protection of Health Rights in the Wake of Conflict in Gaza

26 February 2024

The European Public Health Association (EUPHA) condemns the murderous attack by Hamas militants on 7<sup>th</sup> October 2023 that led to the deaths of about 1,200 people in Israel<sup>1</sup> and the taking of an [estimated 240 hostages](#). EUPHA sends its heartfelt condolences to the families who have lost their loved ones and **calls on the parties involved** to ensure the release of those who continue to be held without further bloodshed.

EUPHA also notes the conclusions of the [International Court of Justice](#) on 26<sup>th</sup> January 2024 and its provisional orders requiring Israel to comply with its obligations under the Genocide Convention, as well as reports by various UN Specialised Agencies, including WHO and Special Rapporteurs. Individually and collectively, the content of these reports, as well as reporting by civil society organisations and the international media, provide prima facie evidence that Israeli authorities operating in Gaza are failing to apply the [doctrine of proportionality](#) and imposing collective punishment in violation of international law. Given this evidence, EUPHA is gravely concerned that the right to health of all people in Gaza, but particularly women and children, is not being respected.

Almost 30 000 deaths have already been reported by the Gaza health ministry,<sup>2</sup> [recognised widely as a reliable source](#), but several thousand more may be buried under rubble. The United Nation Secretary General estimates that “two-thirds of those who have been killed are women and children”. However, the ongoing military operations are not only causing countless deaths and direct injuries. They are also preventing care for patients with acute and chronic diseases as a consequence of the destruction of over 70% of Gaza’s health infrastructure: almost all of Gaza’s hospitals have suffered extensive damage and [large numbers of health workers have been killed, injured, or detained](#). In addition, hundreds of thousands of innocent civilians -not least children, women, and elderly people- have been deprived of access to water and a food supply as a result of deliberate destruction and blockade, which in turn has led to increases in malnutrition and risks of epidemic diseases transmitted by water and contaminated food. To all this must be added the indescribable anxiety and mental disorders that the population has suffered as a consequence of forced displacement from their homes and their inability to communicate with relatives both within Gaza and abroad. EUPHA also sends its heartfelt condolences to the families who have lost their loved ones.

EUPHA **adds its voice** to that of the [Secretary-General of the UN](#), the [High Representative of the European Union](#), [Médecins Sans Frontières](#) (MSF), [UNICEF](#) and other UN agencies, as well as [ASPHER](#) and many other public health organisations who have called for an immediate ceasefire and

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<sup>1</sup> 695 Israeli civilians (of which 36 children), 395 Israeli security forces, and 71 foreigners

<sup>2</sup> As at 2th February 2024

unimpeded access to humanitarian aid. Armed force cannot defeat an ideology and, indeed, is likely to be counter-productive, generating even more grievances that perpetuate the cycle of hatred, violence, and retaliation that has characterised this region for too long.

EUPHA also voices its strong support for the tireless work of our member, the Israeli Association of Public Health Physicians, who have, for so long, worked to promote peace and reconciliation, and for those in our other members from across Europe who are working [at great personal danger](#) in international and non-governmental organisations to bring much-needed help to those who remain in Gaza.

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The European Public Health Association (EUPHA) is the umbrella organisation for public health associations and institutes in Europe. EUPHA has 83 members from 47 countries. Our network brings together over 32,000 public health professionals. Our mission is to facilitate and activate a strong voice of the public health network by enhancing visibility of the evidence and by strengthening the capacity of public health professionals. EUPHA contributes to the preservation and improvement of public health in the European region through capacity and knowledge building. We are committed to creating a more inclusive Europe, narrowing all health inequalities among Europeans, by facilitating, activating, and disseminating strong evidence-based voices from the public health community and by strengthening the capacity of public health professionals to achieve evidence-based change.

**EUPHA** - European Public Health Association

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