

*Attn: Mr Josep Borrell, Vice-President of the European Commission and
High Representative of the European Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy*

February 1, 2021

Dear VP/HR Mr Borrell,

We are writing to request the European Union utilise its diplomatic links with the Israeli Government to ensure Israel organises a vaccination programme in the West Bank and Gaza. The United Nations, as represented by Special Rapporteurs Mr. Michael Lynk and Ms. Tlaleng Mofokeng, joins us in our indignation at Israel's current refusal to do so.

As an occupying power, Israel is required under the Fourth Geneva Convention, "to the fullest extent of the means available to it", to maintain health services in the occupied territory. Indeed, Article 56 requires Israel to adopt and apply "the prophylactic and preventive measures necessary to combat the spread of contagious diseases and epidemics" in cooperation with national and local authorities.

The UN rapporteurs clarified that "if the protected population is inadequately supplied, the occupying power is required under the Convention to facilitate relief schemes. Even if relief consignments, including 'medical supplies', are provided by others, Article 60 states that such consignments "shall in no way relieve the occupying power of any of its responsibilities" for health care to the protected population."

Additionally, Israel must vaccinate the thousands of Palestinian political prisoners it holds about 250 of whom have tested positive. We condemn the declarations of Israel's Public Security Minister that Palestinians would be last to be inoculated in the campaign to vaccinate all jailed persons.

The right to health is a fundamental human rights issue and, without Israel's intervention, more than 4.5 million Palestinians will remain unprotected and exposed to Covid-19, while Israeli citizens living near and among them – including the Israeli settler population – will be vaccinated.

As a promotor of peace and respect for human rights, the European Union must not ignore such violations of international law and moral depravity. Israel's refusal to meet its obligations must be challenged at every level; we are therefore urgently requesting to be provided with an outline of what action you intend to take on the matter.

Best regards,

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