

**STATEMENT  
OF THE GERMAN-PALESTINIAN  
PARTNERSHIP ASSOCIATIONS AND INITIATIVES**

As associations and initiatives dedicated to fostering German-Palestinian partnerships, we deeply regret the escalating violence in the Middle East. Our hearts go out to the victims on both the Palestinian and Israeli sides, and we extend our heartfelt sympathies to their families. We unequivocally condemn all forms of terrorism and warfare, and we are committed to promoting security and peace for all individuals in the region.

Terror and violence have injured and killed people in Gaza and Israel in unimaginable numbers. The civilian population in the West Bank is also suffering great reprisals and losses due to military and settler attacks, which have killed over 120 people so far.

In this crucial moment, it is paramount to sustain connections with our counterparts in Palestinian partner cities. By engaging in cultural exchanges, promoting fair trade initiatives, and facilitating visits and youth exchanges, we have made tangible strides in fostering international understanding, all the more significant in light of Palestine's isolation resulting from the occupation.

We are deeply concerned that the suffering of the Palestinian civilian population in Germany is at times overlooked. Today, both the German government and the government of the state of North Rhine-Westphalia have suspended their development cooperation with Palestine and they intend to reassess it. We are worried that this may lead to a misguided equating of the Palestinian civilian population with Hamas, perpetuating dehumanizing stereotypes of Palestinians. Such an approach is unacceptable to us. The reduction in public funding for cross-cultural encounters and international visits and dialog threatens to undo much of the progress we've achieved in recent years through our partnership-based association work.

We understand the immense significance of German support for the people in Palestine and the hope they invest in their relationships with German partners. It would be unfathomable to dash these hopes, especially during such challenging times for Palestinians, as it is sending the wrong message. We rely on the collective understanding of all stakeholders to remain committed to German-Palestinian cooperation and to persist in their endeavors.

The recent surge of violence affecting both Israeli and Palestinian civilians should serve as a catalyst for increased civil engagement and dialogue. It should not, by any means, serve as a justification for discontinuing these vital efforts.

The heinous war crime committed by Hamas fighters, resulting in killing more than 1,300 civilians, cannot be used to justify the indiscriminate killing of children, women, and men in Gaza by the Israeli military, where the death toll has now exceeded 6,000. The use of collective punishment, such as cutting off water, electricity, and fuel supplies, as well as blocking humanitarian aid deliveries, are not tools in the fight against terrorism.

The German-Palestinian Partnership Associations and Initiatives are dedicated to promoting peace and fostering global understanding. In alignment with UN Secretary-General António Guterres, we urge the conflicting parties to promptly halt all hostilities, enable the delivery of humanitarian aid to the Gaza Strip's population, and initiate immediate negotiations regarding a ceasefire and the release of hostages.

We urge the German government to abstain from any involvement in this war and to use its influence to convey the stipulated demands to the Israeli government. Peace in the Middle East can only be achieved with freedom, self-determination, and equal rights for both Israelis and also for Palestinians.

October 26, 2023

**Signatories:**

Partnership Association Bonn-Ramallah e.V.

Partnership Association Cologne-Bethlehem e.V.

Partnership Association Wuppertal-Salfit e.V.

Working Group Palestine Brühl-Battir

Working Group Palestine of the Local Agenda 21 in Neuwied City and District

Partnership Association Bergisch-Gladbach – Beit Jala e.V.

Responsible in terms of the press law

Partnership Association Bonn-Ramallah e.V.

*Ulrich Nitschke/ René EL Saman*

*Sebastianstr. 170*

*53115 Bonn*