

28 November, 2012

Mr Eamon Gilmore TD,
Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs,
Department of Foreign Affairs,
Iveagh House,
Dublin 2

RE: IMMEDIATE & EFFECTIVE' IRISH INTERVENTION FOLLOWING GAZA CONFLICT

Dear Tánaiste,

At our recent Executive Council meeting, it was agreed that we seek an urgent meeting with you to seek an 'immediate and effective' intervention by the Irish Government in light of the recent conflict in the Gaza Strip.

We note your reference to: "*Innocent civilians – on both sides – are caught up in this and counted among the dead and injured*". Congress deeply regrets the loss of over 170 Palestinian and 5 Israeli lives. The so called "Operation Pillar of Defence" in Gaza was however clearly not a battle between equals. Gaza has no air force, no air defenses, no standing army or any of the expertise and equipment possessed by Israeli forces. The 1.7 million people crammed into the Gaza Strip are subjected to both blockade and bombardment. This latest assault on the Gaza Strip, particularly the attacks on civilian targets constitute breaches of both international human rights law and the Geneva Convention.

In response, the Irish Government could take the following actions:

- Unequivocally state that those who are responsible for war crimes should be called to account;
- Demand that the favoured trading status Israel enjoys with the European Union under the Euro-Mediterranean Trading Agreement be revoked due to Israel's breach of the human rights clause in Article 2;
- Use its influence to help lift the continuing blockade of Gaza which has such devastating human, social and economic effects;
- Seek full implementation of the Agreement on Movement & Access which Israel signed with the EU but is refusing to implement. Needed to restore the right of Palestinians to movement in and out of Gaza, and between Gaza and the West Bank;
- In light of the fact that there are now more than 500,000 Israeli settlers living on occupied Palestinian land, and 42% of West Bank land has been allocated for

32 Parnell Square
Dublin 1

T +353 1 8897777
F +353 1 8872012
congress@ictu.ie
www.ictu.ie

settlements, and the resultant threat that poses any chance of lasting peace between Israelis and Palestinians, Ireland should push for the introduction of an EU ban on trade with Israeli settlements;

- We know that the people of Gaza have been protected by the presence in Gaza of a number of International leaders. We would request that the Irish Government take a lead here, not least because of the forthcoming presidency of the EU, and that you yourself should make every effort to go to Gaza during the Presidency.

Taking such actions would send a strong signal to Israel that EU-Israel relations are based on respect for human rights and it is only in the face of such determined international action that Israel will be forced to come to the table to seek a lasting settlement. We urge you to make this a key priority of our forthcoming presidency of the European Union and to seek a genuine engagement from the international community to begin the forging of a just settlement that is the only real guarantor of lasting peace in the region.

Congress greatly welcomes the ceasefire but notes that Israel has broken such understandings in the past and that it does little more than restore the status quo from 2008. The latest onslaught also followed Hamas rocket fire which only began after Israel had torn up its ceasefire agreement by the targeted assassination of Ahmed al-Jabaari. The lives that have been lost since then and the utter devastation that has been caused to Gaza – again – could all have been prevented had the international community acted in the intervening years.

What is needed finally is a credible diplomatic process that ends with a viable and independent Palestinian state and a secure Israel.

I look forward to hearing from you.



David Begg
General Secretary