

Deirdre O'Connor;
Ireland - Worker;
"Check against delivery".

Mr. President,

It is an honour to speak to this 44th Report of the Director-General on the situation of workers of the occupied Arab territories on behalf of the Workers of Ireland. It is crucial that this house, so committed to social justice, retain a focus on what is happening in the Occupied Territories especially at a time which the report correctly calls a "catastrophic situation".

Since the horrific attacks by Hamas on October 7th the Israeli response has killed more than 36,000 Palestinians in Gaza, including women and children, injured and maimed thousands more and traumatised the whole population. Education and health sectors destroyed and livelihoods shattered, unemployment at an all time high. All of this imposed on a population that has been subjected to a 17-year blockade by land, air and sea.

Over the years these reports have noted how laws applied in the West Bank & East Jerusalem, systematically discriminate against Palestinians. This is clearly a system of Apartheid as human rights groups, including in Israel itself, have concluded.

The report draws attention to the international law context of the situation including unprecedented rulings by the ICJ that Israel has a prima facie case to be answered under the genocide convention.

Further rulings have since been issued calling on Israel to halt the attacks on Rafah and applications for arrest warrants have been filed at the ICC.

All have been ignored by the Government of Israel.

Mr President, in a very welcome move, our Government recently recognised the State of Palestine - an important affirmation of the Palestinian people's right to self-determination and sovereignty. We also welcome the request (with the Government of Spain) for a review of the EU Israel Association Agreement and the decision of the EU to convene a meeting of the EU-Israel Association Council to assess compliance with its human rights obligations.

Trade with Israeli settlements, which we have now formally declared to be part of the Palestinian state, must now stop and the Government must reconsider its position on the Occupied Territories Bill.

Failure by the international community to impose sanctions has created Israeli impunity and lead to this catastrophic situation. We now urge the Government to take leadership on sanctions. Failure to do so will see the continuation of Israel's impunity.