From Ukraine to Palestine – Occupation is a Crime

*Ukraine socialist organisation, **Sotsialny Rukh** ('Social Movement') has published the following statement on the war against the Palestinian people in Gaza. The translation is by the Ukraine Solidarity Campa*ign.

> ***The Social Movement stands** for a just peace in the Middle East, which requires the elimination of structural oppression of Palestinians and systemic violence against the civilian population. We also condemn the Iron Swords Operation launched by the far-right Netanyahu government in response to the condemnable October 7 attacks and the war crimes being committed in its process.*

The war in the Gaza Strip has been going on for more than two months.

The Social Movement stands for a just peace in the Middle East, to achieve which it is necessary to eliminate the structural oppression of Palestinians and systematic violence against the civilian population. Our organization condemns the bloody attack carried out on October 7, 2023 against the civilian population as part of the attack on Israel by the militarized Islamist movement Hamas. The brutal massacres of kibbutzim women, foreign workers, Bedouins and other civilians, which claimed more than a thousand lives, as well as the kidnapping of civilians as hostages, cannot have any justification.

However, we condemn the Iron Swords Operation launched by the far-right Netanyahu government in response to the October 7 attack and the war crimes being committed in its process. The actions of the Israeli army in the Gaza Strip are punitive against its entire population, about half of which are

children. Israel has imposed a total siege on the Gaza Strip, which has been under an illegal Israeli-Egyptian blockade since 2007, preventing the supply of water, electricity, food and medicine to Gaza's more than 2 million people, turning it into "the world's largest open-air prison ".



According to various data provided by international organizations, within a few weeks of this operation, up to 18,000 civilians, including 7,800 children were killed and another 50,000 people were injured; 85% of the nearly 2 million population of the Gaza Strip – were forced to flee their homes. More than 200 medical workers and more than 100 UN employees were among the dead. UN confirms that at least half of the population of Gaza is reduced to starvation. It seems unacceptable to justify the imposition of a humanitarian catastrophe and the terror of a powerful military machine against the civilian population under the pretext of a "war on terror", as the Russians did in Ichkeria/Chechnya or the Americans did in Iraq.

Israel's next military operation in the Gaza Strip is the exact opposite of an effective resolution of the conflict. Such a policy has been going on for decades, since the state of Israel, after confrontation with neighboring Arab

countries, reinforced by British colonial policies, displaced hundreds of thousands of Palestinians from their land, after which millions of their descendants were doomed to flee (events known as the Nakba – "catastrophe" in Arabic). The Israeli authorities continue to ignore numerous UN resolutions, the latest of which was adopted on October 27 by the votes of 120 of the 193 member states in the General Assembly and called for a ceasefire. Reports from the UN and human rights organizations have repeatedly compared the segregation of Palestinians practiced by Israel to the apartheid regime in South Africa.

Israeli settlers, many of them militant fanatics, continue their policy of colonization and violence against the Palestinian population in the West Bank with the connivance of the Israeli authorities, who carry out the daily humiliation, arbitrary detention and killing of Palestinian men and **women {and children}??.** Even before this year's events, according to the calculations of the Israeli human rights organization Bezelem, since 2000, Israelis have killed more than 10,000 Palestinian men and women. Moreover, the general rule is the disproportionality of violence on the part of Israel, with which it responds even to exclusively peaceful protests. For example, during the suppression of the Palestinian **[Great March of Return]** to the wall blocking Gaza Israeli security forces killed 195 Palestinians, including 41 minors **[in a year since March 2018]** (data from the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs). And in terms of the number of Palestinians killed in the West Bank, 2023 became a record year for the entire time that the UN has been keeping statistics (and this is as of October, when Israeli security forces killed more than a hundred people in this part of Palestine, which does not have any Hamas bases). The indifferent reaction of the world community, no more than "deep concern", led to the further despair of local residents in peaceful ways of resolving the conflict, which is what the fundamentalist forces are using.

The current Netanyahu government, also filled with reactionaries and religious fanatics who openly dehumanize the Palestinians and call for their murder and genocide, has gone even further than its predecessors. Israel itself at one time played a not insignificant role in supplanting the mainly secular and non-violent resistance to the occupation among the Palestinians of the time of the first Intifada with a more right-wing, violent and fundamentalist variety. Netanyahu and his officials admitted that they have encouraged the reactionaries and religious fanatics from Hamas, because that weakened the Palestinian Authority, introduced additional discord into the condition of Palestinians and sabotaged the prospects of building a sovereign state for them.

This reckless policy did not change even after Egyptian, but also Israeli intelligence, current and retired military ranks warned of possible escalation as a result of the blockade and colonial policy. Thus, the former head of the Israeli Navy and the Shabak secret service, Ami Ayalon, warned that “when Palestinians see us destroying their homes, fear, frustration and hatred grow. These are the reasons that push people to terrorist organizations.”

Netanyahu, like other conservatives, constantly used the rhetoric of “defence against threats” to justify their attacks on democratic freedoms and further build-up of the security apparatus, which, however, did not avert the attacks of Hamas from Gaza but instead was preoccupied with terrorizing the Palestinians in the West Bank. After all, the never-ending spiral of violence has not and will not increase security for anyone except extreme conservative-nationalist forces. Such an atmosphere has already led to the most right-wing Knesset and government in Israel’s history. And the current war has provided an indulgence for the Netanyahu cabinet against which mass protests continued for most of 2023 (characteristically, a poll conducted on the eve of the escalation showed that the majority of the population of Gaza did not trust the Hamas

movement, which more than a decade and a half ago after a civil conflict with Fatah established an authoritarian one-party government here).

At the same time, the mainstream of both leading parties of the main patron of Israel – the United States – demonstrated an immediate readiness to provide unconditional military and diplomatic support for almost all actions of the Israeli government. Here, both the contrast with the hesitation regarding arms supplies to Ukraine and the desire of the most reactionary circles of the American ruling class – the right wing of the Republican Party – to finance the ethnic cleansing and adventures of the Netanyahu government at the expense of depriving Ukrainians of aid are notable. In this, the Trumpists are similar to many other far-right forces in the West: having many anti-Semites in their ranks, such parties at the same time protect the ability of both Israeli and Russian security forces to kill residents of Palestine and Ukraine with impunity.

What's more, Washington itself contributed to the current rise in tensions, supporting Israel's encroachment on Jerusalem as its capital exclusively since the Trump administration. Now the US is vetoing initiatives in the UN Security Council, such as Brazil's proposed provision of humanitarian corridors or the latest ceasefire resolution of December 8, which was voted for by 13 out of 15 members of the UN Security Council. As in the case of the Russian invasion of Ukraine, this once again proves that the permanent members of the UN should be deprived of their veto powers which paralyze the ability of the international community to stop the carnage.

Russia's full-scale aggression against Ukraine has increased the atmosphere of international tension and impunity, enabling the escalation of a series of conflicts that put entire communities on the brink of survival as already happened with the Armenian population of Nagorno-Karabakh as a result of the aggressive actions of the Aliyev regime in September of this

year. The current round of confrontation in the Middle East is of the same ilk and resulted in disturbing trends in the rest of the world, in particular, a surge in anti-Semitism and Islamophobia (up to attempted Jewish pogroms, such as in the North Caucasus controlled by Putin's Russia, armed attacks on Palestinians such as the students in Vermont, or the murder of people such as the Palestinian boy in Chicago or the police shooting of Jewish tourists and a local guide in Egypt).

Unfortunately, the reaction of the Ukrainian authorities also reveals an extremely biased and one-sided approach: rightly condemning the attacks on civilians in Israel and honouring the dead, it at the same time prefers to ignore the dead civilians in Palestine. Despite the fact that Ukrainian diplomacy at the UN has consistently condemned the illegal occupation of Palestinian lands and other violations by Israel in almost all cases, whose authorities take an ambivalent position on the Russian occupation and provide the latest precedents to follow. Instead, the shameful rhetoric of demonizing Palestinians, declaring all of them, from infants to the elderly, as "terrorists" prevails in the Ukrainian media.

Yes, one should be aware that for many of the self-proclaimed "friends" of Palestine, whether they are well-known Hamas partners and sponsors, such as the authoritarian authorities of Qatar, Turkey, Iran, Saudi Arabia, or Russia (which maintained emphatically friendly relations with both the Netanyahu government and with Hamas), the tragedy of the Palestinian people is only a bargaining chip. But reducing the Palestinians to "proxies of Tehran and the Kremlin" in the domestic information space is as illiterate and outrageous a caricature as the "proxy" justification of Russian aggression against Ukraine.

Instead, it is in Ukraine that the suffering of the Palestinian people should be understood: there, too, the occupation by a state that possesses nuclear weapons and

superiority in the armed forces continues, simply disregards UN resolutions and international law, denies the rights to subjectivity and resistance. The tragedy we are now experiencing should sharpen our sensitivity to similar human experiences in all corners of the world. The Ukrainian letter of solidarity with the Palestinian people, posted on the platform of the "Spilne" magazine website, demonstrated such alternative voices to the official one, which affirm the universal right to self-determination and resistance to the occupation.

"How lonely are you, our loneliness, when they win their wars," asked the Arab writer Hiba Kamal Abu Nada in her poem, when "your land is sold at auction, and the world is a free market… This is the age of ignorance, when no one will intercede for us." The 32-year-old poet became one of the thousands of civilian victims of Israeli airstrikes this year. The duty of the world is not to leave the oppressed alone, especially when faced with the threat of their physical extermination. Not to put up with bombs and rockets flying at their heads. Neither in Ukraine nor in Palestine.

Therefore, the "Social Movement" calls for an immediate ceasefire and the admission of humanitarian aid to the region, and also expresses its support for the Palestinian people in their legitimate desire for a just and lasting peace.

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