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To:

Ursula von der Leyen, President of the European Commission
António Costa, President of the European Council
Kaja Kallas, High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy and Vice President
Ekaterina Zaharieva, Commissioner for Startups, Research and Innovation

Dear Presidents von der Leyen and Costa, High Representative Kallas, and Commissioner Zaharieva:

I write as a principal investigator implementing several projects funded by Horizon Europe within the European Climate-Health Cluster¹ and Planetary Health Cluster² to demand that you *immediately suspend all ties with Israeli research institutions and revoke Israel's status as a Horizon Europe associated country*. I have joined thousands of others in making this and related demands to you in an open letter, which contains important background information that I urge you to read carefully.³ I write here separately to stress how important and urgent these steps are for researchers trying to implement Horizon Europe projects in an ethical manner and in accordance with European and international law.

There is overwhelming evidence that Israel is in violation of Article 2 of its Association Agreement with the EU. This was already clear more than a year ago when the International Court of Justice (ICJ) concluded that Israel's violations of the Genocide Convention were sufficiently plausible to warrant provisional measures to prevent irreparable harm.⁴ It was already clear in March 2024, when UN Special Rapporteur Francesca Albanese released her damning report, *Anatomy of a Genocide*, showing in detail how Israeli leaders and soldiers have intentionally distorted *jus in bello* principles in an attempt to legitimize genocidal violence against the Palestinian people.⁵ It was already clear in July 2024, when the ICJ

¹ <https://climate-health.eu>.

² <https://planetaryhealthcluster.eu>.

³ See <https://cryptpad.fr/form/#/2/form/view/uxLPEP5eOOjRVzyMytCgXdjV69udZD91jgt7mjFXtIQ/>. I have also joined hundreds of thousands of others in demanding that the EU immediately suspend the EU-Israel Association Agreement, stop all arms exports to Israel, and impose sanctions on Israeli officials and settlers responsible for the blockade and mass atrocities across Palestine. See <https://action.wemove.eu/sign/2025-05-EU-trade-Israel-petition-EN>.

⁴ Application of the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide in the Gaza Strip (South Africa v. Israel), Provisional Measures, Order of 26 January 2024, ICJ Reports 2024, p. 3, at <https://www.icj-cij.org/sites/default/files/case-related/192/192-20240126-ord-01-00-en.pdf>.

⁵ Francesca Albanese, *Anatomy of a Genocide, Report of the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Palestinian territories occupied since 1967*, A/HRC/55/73 (1 July 2024), at <https://docs.un.org/en/A/HRC/55/73>.

concluded that Israel is violating the prohibition against segregation and apartheid and that its continued presence in the occupied Palestinian territories is illegal.⁶ It was already clear in November 2024 when EU Special Representative Olof Skoog documented Israel's massive violations of human rights and international humanitarian law,⁷ and when the International Criminal Court (ICC) issued arrest warrants for Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and former Defense Minister Yoav Gallant for war crimes and crimes against humanity.

The evidence has only grown stronger in the subsequent months as increasing numbers of experts and human rights organizations have concluded that Israel is committing genocide in Gaza⁸ and that it is imposing a harsh system of apartheid throughout Palestine.⁹ Indeed,

⁶ Legal Consequences arising from the Policies and Practices of Israel in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, Advisory Opinion, ICJ, 19 July 2024, at <https://www.icj-cij.org/sites/default/files/case-related/186/186-20240719-adv-01-00-en.pdf>.

⁷ "Note to the HRVP - Situation in the Middle East," 11 Nov. 2024 (Accompanying document to HR Proposal HR(2024) 252), at https://drive.google.com/file/d/1FGKDJa_alCHXUYAY17sUm2LbQ3kUpBSU/view. See also Arthur Neslen, "EU Officials Will Claim Ignorance of Israel's War Crimes. This Leaked Document Shows What They Knew," *The Intercept*, Dec. 23, 2024, at <https://theintercept.com/2024/12/23/eu-report-israel-war-crimes-complicity/>; Andrew Rettman, "Leak of EU's full 2024 Gaza report piles pressure on Israel," *EU Observer*, June 3, 2025, at <https://euobserver.com/eu-and-the-world/ar13e20dff>.

⁸ See, e.g., Rabea Eghbariah, "The Harvard Law Review Refused to Run This Piece About Genocide in Gaza," *The Nation*, 21 Nov. 2023, at <https://www.thenation.com/article/archive/harvard-law-review-gaza-israel-genocide/>; Martin Shaw, "The Term 'Genocide' in Gaza," *New Lines Magazine*, Nov. 6, 2023, at <https://newlinesmag.com/spotlight/the-uses-and-abuses-of-the-term-genocide-in-gaza/>; Martin Shaw, "Inescapably Genocidal," *Journal of Genocide Research*, 3 Jan. 2024, at <https://doi.org/10.1080/14623528.2023.2300555>; Raz Segal, "Israeli Settler Colonial Genocide," *The Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History*, 24 Feb 2025, at <https://doi.org/10.1080/03086534.2025.2467876>; Francesca Albanese, Genocide as colonial erasure, *Report of the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Palestinian territories occupied since 1967*, A/79/384 (1 Oct. 2024), at <https://docs.un.org/en/A/79/384>; University Network for Human Rights, Genocide in Gaza: Analysis of International Law and its Application to Israel's Military Actions since October 7, 2023 (15 May 2024), at <https://www.humanrightsnetwork.org/publications/genocide-in-gaza/>; Al-Haq, How to Hide a Genocide: The Role of Evacuation Orders and Safe Zones in Israel's Genocidal Campaign in Gaza (9 June 2025), at <https://www.alhaq.org/publications/25781.html>; Amnesty International, 'You Feel Like You Are Subhuman': Israel's Genocide Against Palestinians in Gaza (5 Dec. 2024), at <https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/mde15/8668/2024/en/>; Human Rights Watch, Extermination and Acts of Genocide: Israel Deliberately Depriving Palestinians in Gaza of Water (19 Dec. 2024), at <https://www.hrw.org/report/2024/12/19/extermination-and-acts-genocide/israel-deliberately-depriving-palestinians-gaza>; "End unfolding genocide or watch it end life in Gaza: UN experts say States face defining choice," Press Release, Office of the United Nations Commissioner for Human Rights (7 May 2025), at <https://www.ohchr.org/en/press-releases/2025/05/end-unfolding-genocide-or-watch-it-end-life-gaza-un-experts-say-states-face>; Sondos Asem, "Top genocide scholars unanimous that Israel is committing genocide in Gaza: Dutch investigation," *Middle East Eye* (17 May 2025), at <https://www.middleeasteye.net/news/top-genocide-scholars-unanimous-israel-committing-genocide-gaza-investigation-finds>.

⁹ University Network for Human Rights, Apartheid in Israel: An Analysis of Israel's Laws and Policies and the Responsibilities of US Academic and Other Institutions (15 May 2025), at <https://www.humanrightsnetwork.org/publications/apartheid-in-israel-gaza-west-bank-universities>; "Experts hail ICJ declaration on illegality of Israel's presence in the occupied Palestinian territory as 'historic' for Palestinians and international law," Press Release, Office of the United Nations Commissioner for Human Rights (30 July 2024), at <https://www.ohchr.org/en/press-releases/2024/07/experts-hail-icj-declaration-illegality-israels-presence-occupied>; "Israel's 55-year occupation of Palestinian Territory is apartheid – UN human rights expert," Press Release, Office of the United Nations Commissioner for Human Rights (25 Mar. 2022), at <https://www.ohchr.org/en/press-releases/2022/03/israels-55-year-occupation-palestinian-territory-apartheid-un-human-rights>; Al-Haq, Israeli Apartheid: Tool of Zionist Settler Colonialism (2022), at <https://www.alhaq.org/advocacy/20931.html>; Amnesty International, Israel's apartheid against Palestinians: Cruel system of domination and crime against humanity (1 Feb. 2022), at <https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/mde15/5141/2022/en/>; Human Rights Watch, A Threshold Crossed: Israeli Authorities and the Crimes of Apartheid and Persecution (27 Apr. 2021), at

numerous members of the Israeli government and security services have made it clear that their goal is to render the entire Gaza strip uninhabitable, and this is what they are in the process of doing.¹⁰ The Israeli government is *intentionally starving 2.3 million people* as I write this.¹¹ It has already killed more than 55,700 Palestinians in Gaza in the past 20 months,¹² a figure that is increasing by the hour and is almost surely a vast undercount.¹³

Given these massive, systematic, and well documented human rights violations and international crimes, it is appalling that the EU has not yet suspended the Association Agreement with Israel, suspended ties with Israeli research institutions, or revoked Israel's status as a Horizon Europe associated country. These failures have direct ramifications for the work of researchers implementing Horizon Europe projects. My research in these projects, like that of many of my colleagues, focuses on health and inequality. Yet, we are doing this within a program that is funding entities responsible for intentionally destroying most of Gaza's health care system, damaging or destroying every hospital, killing more than 1,400 health care workers, and abducting more than 380 doctors, nurses, and paramedics along with thousands of other Palestinian civilians—in many cases subjecting these captives to horrific acts of physical and sexual violence combined with pervasive medical neglect and the withholding of painkillers during invasive procedures.¹⁴

<https://www.hrw.org/report/2021/04/27/threshold-crossed/israeli-authorities-and-crimes-apartheid-and-persecution>; B'Tselem, A regime of Jewish supremacy from the Jordan River to the Mediterranean Sea: This is apartheid (12 Jan. 2021), at https://www.btselem.org/publications/fulltext/202101_this_is_apartheid.

¹⁰ Meron Rapoport & Oren Ziv, "Render it unusable": Israel's mission of total urban destruction," +972 Magazine (15 May 2025), at <https://www.972mag.com/israel-gaza-total-urban-destruction/>; Human Rights Watch, Gaza: Latest Israeli Plan Inches Closer to Extermination (15 May 2025), at <https://www.hrw.org/news/2025/05/15/gaza-latest-israeli-plan-inches-closer-extinction>; Hebh Jamal, "How Israel's war is deliberately making Gaza uninhabitable," *The New Arab* (30 Nov. 2023), at <https://www.newarab.com/analysis/how-israels-war-deliberately-making-gaza-uninhabitable>; Forensic Architecture, 'No traces of life': Israel's Ecocide in Gaza 2023-2024 (29 Mar. 2024), at <https://forensic-architecture.org/investigation/ecocide-in-gaza>; Forensic Architecture, A Cartography of Genocide: Israel's Conduct in Gaza since October 2023 (25 Oct. 2024), at <https://forensic-architecture.org/investigation/a-cartography-of-genocide>.

¹¹ See Gaza Strip: IPC Acute Food Insecurity and Acute Malnutrition Special Snapshot (12 May 2025), at https://www.ipcinfo.org/fileadmin/user_upload/ipcinfo/docs/IPC_Gaza_Strip_Acute_Food_Insecurity_Malnutrition_Apr_Sept2025_Special_Snapshot.pdf; Alex de Waal, "Starvation in Gaza," *London Review of Books* (14 May 2025), at <https://www.lrb.co.uk/blog/2025/may/starvation-in-gaza>; Yara Ashour, Abdallah Abu-Jlambo, & Samer Abuzerr, "Starvation as a weapon of war in Gaza: violation of international law," *The Lancet* (2025), at [https://www.thelancet.com/journals/lancet/article/PIIS0140-6736\(25\)01018-9/fulltext](https://www.thelancet.com/journals/lancet/article/PIIS0140-6736(25)01018-9/fulltext).

¹² See "Israel's war on Gaza: At least 265 Palestinians killed in less than a week," *Middle East Eye*. 20 June 2025, at <https://www.middleeasteye.net/news/israel-iran-war-cost-week-war>.

¹³ Zeina Jamaluddine, Hanan Abukmail, Sarah Aly, Oona MR Campbell, & Francesco Checchi, "Traumatic injury mortality in the Gaza Strip from Oct 7, 2023, to June 30, 2024: a capture–recapture analysis." *The Lancet* 405, no. 10477 (2025): 469-477, at [https://www.thelancet.com/journals/lancet/article/PIIS0140-6736\(24\)02678-3/fulltext?gsid=139fe585-c860-45bf-bc3a-a5f47d3c6bc2](https://www.thelancet.com/journals/lancet/article/PIIS0140-6736(24)02678-3/fulltext?gsid=139fe585-c860-45bf-bc3a-a5f47d3c6bc2).

¹⁴ See World Health Organization, "Health system at breaking point as hostilities further intensify in Gaza, WHO warns," Press Release (22 May 2025), at <https://www.who.int/news/item/22-05-2025-health-system-at-breaking-point-as-hostilities-further-intensify--who-warns>; United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, Humanitarian Situation Update #294: Gaza Strip (5 June 2025), at <https://www.ochaopt.org/content/humanitarian-situation-update-294-gaza-strip>. United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, Reported impact snapshot: Gaza Strip (4 June 2025), at <https://www.ochaopt.org/content/reported-impact-snapshot-gaza-strip-4-june-2025>; Healthcare Worker Watch, The Killing, Detention and Torture of Healthcare Workers in Gaza (7 Oct. 2024), at <https://healthcareworkerswatch.org/publications/reports/the-killing-detention-and-torture-of-healthcare-workers-in-gaza/>; Human Rights Watch, Israel: Palestinian Healthcare Workers Tortured (26 Aug. 2024) at <https://www.hrw.org/news/2024/08/26/israel-palestinian-healthcare-workers-tortured>; Physicians for Human Rights – Israel, Torture of Medical Staff from Gaza in Israel (26 Feb. 2025), at <https://www.phr.org.il/en/torture->

I highlight this last point about medical abuse because at least one of the health facilities at which it is taking place is under the jurisdiction of the Israeli Ministry of Health,¹⁵ which is funded by the EU within the Climate-Health Cluster. While there are many more egregious examples EU funding aiding Israel's genocide and apartheid, this one affects me and others directly as members of that cluster. Retaining Israel as a Horizon Europe associated country means that you are asking us to collaborate on health and inequality research with a government that is simultaneously destroying an entire health care system, killing, abducting, and torturing health care workers—*our colleagues*—and imposing harsh policies of racial subjugation and systematic oppression that are crushing the lives and futures of millions of people.¹⁶ I am unwilling to accept this.

The EU funds researchers to generate knowledge and advice that can guide policy. My advice in this case is clear and it is also a demand: Suspend all ties with Israeli research institutions and revoke Israel's status as a Horizon Europe associated country. I would be happy to provide any additional information you need and to discuss this at any time.

Sincerely yours,
John Palmer

Since this letter began circulating, the following colleagues, who are also doing research with EU funding, have asked to add their names because they agree with the demand and the reasons behind it (affiliations listed for identification purposes only):

Jan C. Semenza, Heidelberg Institute of Global Health (HIGH), Heidelberg University Hospital, Heidelberg University, and Department of Public Health and Clinical Medicine, Section of Sustainable Health, Umea University.

Frederic Bartumeus, Department of Ecology and Complexity, Centre d'Estudis Avançats de Blanes (CEAB-CSIC), and ICREA.

Rachel Lowe, Global Health Resilience Group Leader and ICREA Professor, Barcelona Supercomputing Center, Spain and London School of Hygiene & Tropical Medicine, UK.

Anna Omazic, Dept. of Chemistry, Environment and Feed Hygiene, Swedish Veterinary Agency (SVA), Sweden.

[of-medical-workers/](#); Neve Gordon, Guy Shalev, & Osama Tanous, "The Shame of Israeli Medicine," *New York Review of Books* (31 May 2025), at <https://www.nybooks.com/online/2025/05/31/the-shame-of-israeli-medicine/>; Euro-Med Human Rights Monitor, Hostages of Israeli revenge in the Gaza Strip: Torture and inhumane treatment against Palestinian prisoners and detainees (30 May 2024), at <https://euromedmonitor.org/en/article/6351/Hostages-of-Israeli-revenge-in-the-Gaza-Strip:-Torture-and-inhumane-treatment-against-Palestinian-prisoners-and-detainees>; United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, Detention in the context of the escalation of hostilities in Gaza (October 2023-June 2024) (31 July 2024), at <https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/documents/countries/opt/20240731-Thematic-report-Detention-context-Gaza-hostilities.pdf>.

¹⁵ See Physicians for Human Rights – Israel, Torture of Medical Staff from Gaza in Israel (26 Feb. 2025), at <https://www.phr.org.il/en/torture-of-medical-workers/>; Neve Gordon, Guy Shalev, & Osama Tanous, "The Shame of Israeli Medicine," *New York Review of Books* (31 May 2025), at <https://www.nybooks.com/online/2025/05/31/the-shame-of-israeli-medicine/>.

¹⁶ See, e.g., Sandra L Babcock, Susan M Akram, Thomas Becker and James Cavallaro, "We are human rights lawyers. Our new report is clear: Israel perpetrates apartheid," *The Guardian* (15 May 2025), at <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2025/may/15/israel-apartheid-human-rights>; University Network for Human Rights, Apartheid in Israel: An Analysis of Israel's Laws and Policies and the Responsibilities of US Academic and Other Institutions (15 May 2025), at <https://www.humanrightsnetwork.org/publications/apartheid-in-israel-gaza-west-bank-universities>.