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*To: All participants in the Climate-Health Cluster and Planetary Health Cluster*

Dear colleagues:

It was truly a pleasure to participate in the European Climate-Health Cluster and Planetary Health Cluster meetings in Brussels last week. This is an incredible group of people, and it was wonderful to have a chance to speak with so many of you in person.

I want to repeat one of the issues I raised at our meeting: If we are serious in our commitment to health and equality, we need to end our complicity in genocide and apartheid. This means, among other things, refusing to collaborate with the governments of the United States and Israel or with any of the institutions and companies aiding in or profiting from the crimes these states are committing in Palestine. It means demanding that the European Union suspend all ties with Israeli research institutions and revoke Israel's status as a Horizon Europe associated country, while also committing to the reconstruction of Palestinian universities and institutions and investigating the human rights impact of the billions of euros in research funding that have been channeled from Europe to Israel since 2007. These steps are urgent.

You can make these demands by signing the open letter<sup>1</sup> at:

<https://cryptpad.fr/form/#/2/form/view/uxLPEP5eOOjRVzyMytCgXdjV69udZD9ljgt7mjFXtIQ/>

I propose that we also write a joint letter as members of the Climate-Health and Planetary Health Clusters. Please contact me if you would like to be part of that.

If you do not feel you are qualified to draw conclusions based on the legal definitions of genocide and apartheid, then I would point you to the large and growing number of legal experts, human rights organizations, and courts that have done the analysis.<sup>2</sup> I would also

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<sup>1</sup> This is the same letter that was previously circulated via Google Documents; it is also still available there but has been mirrored on CryptPad to protect against attempts at censorship.

<sup>2</sup> On the genocide in Gaza, see, for example, 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>; 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>; 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-

suggest that the moral imperative of these demands, irrespective of any legal analysis, flows from easily verifiable facts that are well within our expertise as scholars of public health and inequality: The Israeli government is *intentionally starving 2.3 million people* in Gaza.<sup>3</sup> It has already killed more than 54,927 Palestinians there in the past 20 months<sup>4</sup> (a figure that is increasing by the hour and is almost surely a vast undercount<sup>5</sup>). It has destroyed 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.<sup>6</sup> Many of these people have been tortured by the

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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>. On the Israeli apartheid in Palestine, see, e.g., 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>; Legal Consequences arising from the Policies and Practices of Israel in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, ICJ Advisory Opinion (19 July 2024), at <https://www.icj-cij.org/sites/default/files/case-related/186/186-20240719-adv-01-00-en.pdf>; "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 <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](https://www.btselem.org/publications/fulltext/202101_this_is_apartheid).

<sup>3</sup> 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](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).

<sup>4</sup> See "Gaza Death Toll Mounts: Scores Killed as Aid Centers Become Death Traps," *Palestine Chronicle* (9 June 2025), at <https://www.palestinechronicle.com/gaza-death-toll-mounts-scores-killed-as-aid-centers-become-death-traps/>; 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>.

<sup>5</sup> 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).

<sup>6</sup> 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

Israeli government. Many, including our friends and colleagues in the Palestinian health sector, are likely being tortured as you read this. The abuse these people face in Israeli custody includes not only horrific acts of physical and sexual violence<sup>7</sup> but also pervasive medical neglect and the withholding of painkillers during invasive procedures carried out under the jurisdiction of the Israeli Ministry of Health<sup>8</sup>—the same Ministry of Health that is currently receiving European funding within our Climate-Health Cluster.

If you have been paying attention to Gaza, you know that this is only the tip of the iceberg. I have given you a very short synopsis focused on the health system because we are all doing health research,<sup>9</sup> but if you have been paying attention you know that the situation in Gaza is even worse than what I have just described. You probably know that 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 that this is what they are in the process of doing.<sup>10</sup> You also probably know that what Israel is inflicting on Gaza's population is, in many ways, just a more extreme form of the harm it is inflicting throughout the occupied Palestinian territories, where racial subjugation and systematic oppression form core elements of Israeli policy, backed by violence and enabled by massive funding and support from the United States and Europe.<sup>11</sup>

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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-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/>.

<sup>7</sup> See 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>.

<sup>8</sup> 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/>.

<sup>9</sup> There are also important connections between climate change and the genocide and apartheid in Palestine. I do not go into those here but would be happy to address them in future discussions.

<sup>10</sup> 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-extermiation>; 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>.

<sup>11</sup> 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

We need to end this. We should not be willing to accept a world in which genocide and apartheid can be perpetrated, let alone with impunity. We should not be willing to accept that our research funding supports and normalizes governments and institutions carrying out these crimes. Demanding that the European Union end its complicity by stopping this funding is just one step—indeed, it is the bare minimum of what we should be doing—but it is an incredibly important step.

If you would like to be part of a joint letter from cluster members, please contact me. I would be happy to talk about any of this, and I look forward to seeing all of you again soon.

Sincerely yours,

John Palmer