



## OPINIE: 'Hoog tijd voor sancties tegen ons eigen land'

Geplaatst op vrijdag 25 juli 2014 | 

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**'Wij, Israëli's, Palestijnen en joden die in België wonen, zijn zelfs in deze zware tijden in staat om samen te komen en onze wil te uiten dat Palestina een waardig land om in te leven wordt. De Israëlische bezetting moet dringend ophouden.' Een zestigtal ondertekenaars laken in een open brief de Israëlische bezetting en de 'lakse' Belgische houding. Initiatiefnemer is Itamar Shachar (33), die deserterde uit het Israëlische leger, actief werd in de linkse beweging in Israël en nu doctoreert aan de UGent. Wij publiceren hierna de integrale tekst (in het Engels).**

Brussels, 23 July 2014 - Facing the horrifying news constantly arriving from the land that is so dear to us, we - Israeli citizens and Palestinians living in Belgium, together with members of the Belgian Jewish community – call upon the Belgian government to start taking concrete steps to stop the unnecessary suffering and bereavement in Palestine/Israel, and to stop the Israeli attack on the Palestinian population living under occupation.

Instead of embracing the formation of the unity government between Hamas and Fatah and negotiate with them on a viable peace agreement, the Israeli government has used the murder of 3 Israeli teens as a *casus belli* for a massive attack on the Palestinian people, which led to the loss of many more lives. The Israeli government initiated massive military raids and arrests in the West Bank, followed by inciting fascist groups within the Jewish-Israeli society to attack Palestinian citizens, and then embarking upon a murderous attack on the Gaza Strip.

The current assault on Gaza has led to a death toll of more than 500 Palestinians, while according to initial investigation by the Human rights group B'Tselem less than a quarter of them have been involved in combat. Thousands of homes have been demolished or damaged, while civilian institutions have been targeted as well. 7 years ago, an illegal closure was imposed on the Gaza Strip, one of the most densely populated areas in the world, entailing a collective punishment of the strip's 1.8 million residents. As a result of the closure, health and welfare institutions have been deteriorating, now struggling to provide remedy for the population suffering from the military attacks. The Palestinian population in Gaza - most of them are refugees deported in 1948 from their original towns and villages which are now under Israeli control - have no place to run away from the Israeli bombardments, no shelters to hide in and often no homes to return to afterwards.

The response of armed forces within the Gaza strip on the Israeli assault has also led to several deaths and causalities and vast distress among the civilian population in Israel. However, instead of halting this escalating violence, the Israeli government is only intensifying its attack on the Palestinian people in Gaza. The Israeli government is taking the Israeli population hostage by a misleading media use, inciting to racist violence and actively seeking to destroy chances of a real peace process. It is therefore unclear to us why the Belgian Minister of Foreign Affairs has uncritically adopted the Israeli government claim that the current operation is intended to protect its civilians, while it is actually doing the opposite, and why the minister is ignoring the attacks of Israel on Gaza's civilian population.

Facing the repeating violations of international law by Israeli governments, and their continuous refusal to stop the illegal occupation and respects the rights of the Palestinian people, we think that Belgium cannot uphold normal relations with Israel. We therefore ask the Belgian government to take the following steps, until Israeli stops its attack on Gaza and complies with international law:

- Use all diplomatic channels to pressure Israel to stop immediately its attack on Gaza, including arranging an urgent protest appeal of PM Di Rupo to PM Netanyahu, and inviting the Israeli ambassador for an urgent warning meeting;
- Suspend all military relations with Israel; export, import and transportation of arms and related products, joint military training and research with military implications;
- Suspend all association agreements and trade agreements with Israel;

- Use its influence at the European institutions to take similar actions on a European level, noticeably the suspension of the Israeli-EU association agreement following Israel's violation of its human rights' clause (Article 2).

As Israelis, Palestinians and Jews living in Belgium, we are able to come together even in these harsh days and express our desire to see Israel/Palestine becoming a human place, where the right of everyone to live in peace, equality and dignity is guaranteed. As citizens and residents of Belgium, we wish to see the Belgian government acting to make this vision a reality.

*Signed by 65 Israelis, Palestinians and Jews living in Belgium.*