



Op-Ed :

10 June 2026

Time for the EU to stop turning a blind eye to illegal Israeli conduct in Palestine

The European Union is founded on the rule of law and its laws and international agreements are binding on Member States.

Alarmingly, today, the EU's credibility in the eyes of its own citizens and voters - and most of the world - is being undermined by its failure to show moral and political leadership in upholding international law and, in particular, in enforcing the legal terms of the EU-Israel Association Agreement.

Article 2 of that Association Agreement requires that relations between the EU and Israel, as well as all the provisions of the Agreement itself, shall be based on the Treaty's essential element of **respect for human rights and democratic principles**.

Clearly this requirement is not met.

The heinous attacks of 7 October 2023 by Hamas and other armed groups against Israeli citizens and those of other nationalities cannot justify the Israeli Government's actions in decimating Gaza and systematically violating basic principles of international humanitarian and human rights law. Israel's military attacks in Gaza have killed at least 73,000 people including over 21,500 children since October 2023. Over 900 Palestinians have been killed since the October 2025 'ceasefire'.

The International Court of Justice (ICJ) has already determined that there is a real risk of irreparable damage to Palestinian rights under the Genocide Convention whilst arrest warrants have been issued against Israeli leaders by the International Criminal Court for war crimes and crimes against humanity.

Despite this the Israeli Government continues to impede the provision of necessary humanitarian aid to Palestinians in Gaza, including by UNRWA and international NGOs, while simultaneously obliterating Palestinians' means of producing food and water by laying to waste their farmland and destroying reservoirs and desalination plants. Having forced Palestinians to live in squalid and inhumane conditions, the Israeli Government now plans to further crush the entire population of Gaza into just 30% of their already severely overcrowded territory, further pressuring beleaguered Palestinian residents to permanently abandon their homeland.

In July 2024 the ICJ stated that all Israeli settlements in Palestinian occupied territories, now harbouring at least 750,000 persons, are illegal and must be dismantled. The Israeli Government has ignored this Opinion and instead continues to actively promote the further annexation of Palestinian land in the West Bank and East Jerusalem, inter alia by nurturing and supporting increased violence by extremists engaged in stealing more land and evicting Palestinians from their homes. To make matters worse the Israeli Government is preparing further land seizures in the E1 district and in Area C with the aim of bisecting the West Bank in two and undermining the two-state solution which is supported by the EU and the overwhelming majority of UN members.



The evidence is overwhelming : the Israeli Government is acting with total impunity in pursuing forced displacement to make way for illegal settlements in addition to other discriminatory policies against Palestinians.

The European Union cannot stand aside. It must now act **urgently** to implement recommendations such as those repeatedly made since July 2025 in a series of public statements by a group of now over 460 European former Ministers, ambassadors and senior officials. Specifically, the EU must **suspend Israel's preferential trade access under the EU-Israel Association Agreement**, thereby impacting one third of Israel's total trade in goods with the world. This requires **leadership from the European Commission and the European External Action Service** who, in line with past practice, should propose that these measures be enacted through a **qualified majority vote by EU Member States**. In the meantime **the EU must act immediately to prevent all exports from illegal settlements in the West Bank entering the EU**. In parallel the list of sanctioned Israeli Ministers, officials, individuals and entities associated with settlements and subject to visa bans and asset freezes should be extended. The EU should also suspend Israel's participation in EU research and other programmes where Israeli public and private entities are in breach of international law and halt trade in military and dual use goods.

For the EU to take these steps, the small number of EU Member States that have consistently blocked action against the Israeli Government should align with the majority opinion and allow the measures to be adopted.

In short, the EU must stop turning a blind eye to the present-day horrors the Israeli Government is inflicting on Palestinians in clear breach of the EU-Israel Association Agreement. Failure to act now will only further weaken the EU's global standing and influence at a time when a strong and united Union is needed to defend the multilateral order as well as European values and interests.

Signed:

List of 25* European high level signatories (* updated on 16 June 2026):

(list on next page.....)



NAME and Title(s)/former role(s):

- 1) Massimo D'ALEMA – former Prime Minister of Italy
- 2) Dominique DE VILLEPIN – former Prime Minister of France
- 3) Robert GOLOB – former Prime Minister of Slovenia
- 4) Alain JUPPÉ – former Prime Minister of France
- 5) Stefan LÖFVEN - former Prime Minister of Sweden
- 6) Romano PRODI – former Prime Minister of Italy; and former President of the European Commission
- 7) Leo VARADKAR – former Taoiseach (Prime Minister) of Ireland
- 8) Joaquín ALMUNIA - former Vice-President of the European Commission; and former Government Minister of Spain
- 9) Enrique BARÓN CRESPO - former President of the European Parliament; and former Government Minister of Spain
- 10) Hans BLIX – former Foreign Minister of Sweden; former Director General IAEA; and Executive Chairman of UN Monitoring, Verification and Inspection Commission
- 11) Josep BORRELL - former President of the European Parliament & EU High Representative/VP; and former Foreign Minister of Spain
- 12) Laurens-Jan BRINKHORST - former Deputy Prime Minister & Minister of The Netherlands
- 13) Willy CLAES - Minister of State and former Deputy Prime Minister & Foreign Minister of Belgium
- 14) Pat COX - former President of the European Parliament & Leader of the European Liberal Democrat and Reform Party Group at the European Parliament
- 15) Herta DÄUBLER-GMELIN - former Government Minister for Justice of Germany
- 16) Sigmar GABRIEL - former Vice-Chancellor of Germany & former Minister of Foreign Affairs
- 17) Slavko GABER - former Government Minister of Slovenia (various portfolios)
- 18) Eamon GILMORE - former Tánaiste (Deputy Prime Minister) & Minister of Foreign Affairs Ireland; and former EU Special Representative for Human Rights
- 19) Erato KOZAKOU-MARCOULLIS - former Foreign Minister of Cyprus
- 20) Mogens LYKKETOFT- former Foreign Minister of Denmark; and former President of the UN General Assembly
- 21) Poul NIELSON – former European Commissioner; and former Government Minister of Denmark
- 22) Jan PRONK - former Minister of Development Cooperation of The Netherlands
- 23) Emilija STOJMENOVA DUH – former Government Minister of Slovenia
- 24) Joris VOORHOEVE - former Minister of Defence of The Netherlands
- 25) Margot WALLSTRÖM - former First Vice-President of the European Commission; and former Foreign Minister of Sweden