

dëcolonize hellás

English translation of Open Letter for Palestine and Gaza (Oct. 31, 2023)

We, the members of the Greek academic community and other concerned members of the broader Greek society, express our unwavering solidarity with the Palestinian people in their just struggle for their liberation from colonial bonds. We demand an immediate ceasefire, condemnation of Israel as a colonial power, and the fair solution of the Palestinian crisis: which is nothing other than the decolonization of the land and the society of Palestine.

For the past weeks, the Gaza Strip, an area smaller than the island of Andros where 2.1 million people live, isolated and cut off for the past 18 years, surrounded by a wall, guard posts and soldiers, is being leveled by the Israeli state. On the 9th of October, two days after the attack by Hamas and other Palestinian organizations on Israeli targets, a [total shutdown of water, electricity and access to food and medicine was imposed on the entire population](#), as the Rafah border crossing - the only accessible point of entry of humanitarian assistance - was bombed. Four days later, [1.1 million people were called on to evacuate northern Gaza](#), in order not to be considered indiscriminately terrorists and murdered. Within ten days, Israel dropped as many bombs on densely-populated Gaza as the U.S on Iraq in a year. These bombs - many armed with white phosphorus that is banned by international conventions - have killed children, old people and women at a proportion of 70%. Hospitals, U.N. buildings, mosques, churches and the unarmed civilians attempting to move along exit corridors that Israel has told them to use have been bombed. The official number of Palestinian dead has already reached 5.000 [according to the U.N.](#) (at the time this letter was issued in Greek on October 24, 2023) and surpassed 8.000 (when this English translation was completed on October 31st). This situation is not restricted only to Gaza. In the West Bank, [90 Palestinians were murdered by the Israeli army and settler vigilantes](#). The Israeli government has also distributed thousands of weapons in the West Bank, destroyed Palestinian homes and covered up the ongoing [vicious pogroms by settlers on the local population](#).

The above paragraph contains references to many violations of international humanitarian law and clear indications of the perpetration of war crimes, including that of genocide, for which Israeli officials are calling more and more openly and publicly. Minister of defense Yoav Gallant declared: [“I have ordered a complete siege on the Gaza strip...We are fighting against human animals and we are acting accordingly”](#). Member of the ruling Likud party [Tally Gotliv, asked for a nuclear attack on Gaza](#), while her kindred spirit in the parliament Ariel Kallner, from his personal account on the former twitter, called [for a “new ‘Nakba’ \(catastrophe\) that will overshadow the Nakba of ’48”](#): a blunt call for genocide.

In 1948, just as in 1967, Israeli mopping-up operations expelled hundreds of thousands of Palestinians, without allowing them to return to their land and their homes since then. Almost 80% of the inhabitants of Gaza are refugees, while 6 million Palestinians -spanning three generations- live scattered across the planet without a right to return. The illegal and continuous extension of settlements in the West Bank, the appropriation of resources and territory in Palestinian land, the everyday exposure of Palestinians to the deadly violence of the Israeli army and settlers, the residential and social segregation, the economic strangulation, the restrictions on movement, the mass incarcerations, and the environmental degradation, paint a picture of a situation that in no way resembles an equitable distribution of power between oppressor and oppressed. As Paulo Freire has written: "Never in history has violence been initiated by the oppressed. How could they be the initiators, if they themselves are the result of violence?"

In western media, however, the oppressed have been accused for the crimes of their oppressors. The state of Israel, the US and the European Union have legitimized the crimes in the name of "self-defense". And yet, no colonial occupying power can call on the right to self-defense against an oppressed people who for the past 75 years have been enduring -on every level of its collective existence- practices of genocide, racial discrimination and destruction of the conditions and possibilities for the reproduction of their life and ability for self-determination.

The anti-colonial tradition has taught us that language is the first weapon of the colonizer. Thus in this case, the favorite terms of the self-appointed experts, such as 'humanitarian crisis', as well as the description of Israel as a 'democracy' and of Hamas as an 'islamic organization' conceal the colonial regime, as well as the anti-colonial resistance: neither the former, nor the latter, began with the attack on the 7th of October. Colonial violence is normalized through false information, the silencing of apartheid and the mobilization of dehumanizing, orientalist, racist and islamophobic discourses that characterize the colonial aspect of the oppression.

In the name of defending Israel, the repression now has spread also to the West. While the [US](#) and the [UK](#) send arms and military ships to support the slaughter of Palestinians by the Israeli army, western governments have launched an unprecedented wave of repression, intimidation and silencing of opposing voices, public events and solidarity movements, targeting the freedom of speech and the right to protest. [France banned all protests in solidarity with Palestine, in Germany the Palestinian flag and the keffiyeh have already been criminalized](#), and [Britain is following their example](#). Students in British schools and students in US universities have suffered penalties for expressing their support for Palestine. Protestors have been arrested, imprisoned and legally charged. Journalists and cartoonists have been censored, threatened and fired. Professors in universities in the US who have expressed their opposition to Israel have been accused of antisemitism, because they supported the primordial right of the oppressed to resist their oppression.

In Greece, the Prime Minister and well-known antisemitic ministers Vouridis and Georgiades have expressed their unreserved support for the government of Israel, within the context of tight military, diplomatic and arms agreements between the two countries, continuing a long history of support for Zionism by antisemitic, western racist politicians such as Churchill and Balfour. Just as in 1917, so today, support for Zionism initially and then Israel reflects the western need for colonial presence in the region, established on the backs of the local population and the Arab world.

Despite all this, societies and social movements around the world openly support the struggle of Palestinians against their tyrants, demonstrating that what is at stake is a just anticolonial and national liberation struggle. In Europe, against and despite the state prohibitions, hundreds of thousands of protestors have gathered in London, Paris, Lyon, the Basque country, Madrid, Berlin, Rome and Athens, rupturing in practice the colonial complicity that governments and the imperial media scribes want to impose.

We must act immediately. The mobilization for the support of Palestine must be a priority of academics, students, researchers and all thinking people. We cannot watch the genocidal war happening before our eyes as silent spectators. We cannot do our work as we wait for the genocide to be completed. We have a duty to protect the values of independent thought and critical thinking and research, especially for those who are subjected to colonial relations of power and the epistemic violence of fearmongering, Islamophobia, patriarchy and white supremacy - which often ratifies and conceptually frames practices of oppression, exploitation and genocide on a global level and, especially, in long-suffering Palestine.

Consequently:

-- Worried about the well-being of Palestinian universities and their communities, we condemn any attack whatsoever on these entities, their personnel and students. Schools, research centers and the [Islamic University of Gaza have suffered serious damage from Israeli bombings](#). We express our unequivocal support for Palestinian academics and teachers and positively respond to their calls for our participation in the [global, non-violent movement for Boycott, Divestment, Sanctions \(BDS\)](#) of Israeli apartheid, as well as support of other Palestinian resistance organizations (Palestine Action, Samidoun).

-- We recognize the need for a strong and long-term movement in solidarity with the Palestinian struggle for freedom and call on everyone to participate in events and protests in support of Palestine. There can be no justice in a condition of apartheid. There can be no democracy and freedom under colonial domination.

-- Let us all pressure our governments to retract all support for the Israeli attacks on Gaza and to put a stop to their complicity. We call on academic institutions and their unions to make public statements and call for an immediate ceasefire. We condemn the targeting and muzzling of

dissent, the transgression of academic freedoms and all forms of epistemic colonization that impose anti-Palestinian positions in return for the punishment of silence.

The initiative [dëcolonize hellás](#) calls on members of the academic community and the broader Greek society to publicly sign this letter to express their solidarity with the anti-colonial resistance in Palestine.

***Sign the open letter by filling out the form** If you do not feel comfortable filling out or signing some of the fields because you are worried about your safety and professional status, you can put your initials and/or leave your affiliation blank or fill in an «x». If you want to correct any of the fields after you have filled them out, please contact decolonizehellas@gmail.com.

*Note: This open letter was specifically addressed to members of Greek society.