

Ms Ursula VON DER LEYEN, President of the European Commission
Rue de la Loi 200, 1040 Bruxelles

Brussels, 15 October 2024

Subject: Open letter to the European Commission's President - Request for Arms Embargo on Israel and Compliance with International Legal Obligations of the EU.

Dear Ursula von der Leyen, President of the European Commission,

We urgently reach out to you with profound concern to highlight the critical importance of respecting and protecting human rights in all conflicts. Given the scale of the current crisis, we wish to emphasize the situation in Palestine and the surrounding region.

We stress the urgent need for international initiatives to promote peace and collective security.

Despite Israel's genocidal war against Gaza, which has resulted in more than 40,000 Palestinian deaths, thousands of injuries, and forced displacements, alongside the illegal occupation of territories, the European Union (EU) continues to allow arms exports to Israel, financing various Israeli entities. Furthermore, Israel continues to carry out attacks, causing destruction and death in the West Bank, Lebanon, and other parts of the region.

Despite condemnatory words from some European leaders, little has been done to halt this violence. In fact, some EU member states continue to support Israel both economically and militarily. Recent data shows that the EU has been the second-largest supplier of arms to Israel. Between 2018 and 2022, EU member states sold weapons to Israel worth 1.76 billion euros. These transfers have continued even after the International Court of Justice (ICJ) ruled in January that it is plausible that the Israeli military is committing genocide.

Despite the fact that all EU member states have signed and ratified the 2013 Arms Trade Treaty (ATT) and despite EU support for it, there have been insufficient efforts to implement the principles of the ATT in their arms export legislation and policies. This is particularly concerning in the context of the Israeli occupation of Palestinian territories, where states that continue to export arms to Israel, despite evidence of serious human rights violations and genocide in Gaza, are failing to meet their obligations.

It is crucial to recall that the Common Position 2008/944/CFSP of the European Union Council also sets strict criteria for arms exports, including the prohibition of exporting weapons to countries involved in armed conflicts that may violate human rights or International Humanitarian Law.

According to this regulation, the EU is obligated to impose an immediate arms embargo in such circumstances. This obligation extends to all member states, which should immediately suspend any arms sales to Israel in compliance with this legal framework. Additionally we demand the suspension of the EU-Israel association agreement.

In addition to arms sales, it is unacceptable that European public funds are being used to finance security and defence projects that directly benefit Israel's war machine. This not only contradicts the fundamental values of the EU but also implicates it as complicit in these massive human rights violations.

On behalf of the Party of the European Left, we demand the immediate imposition of a total arms embargo on Israel and the cessation of arms transfers, which are also prohibited under various European and international regulations, from U.S. through Europe to Israel.

The EU must assume a leading role in the pursuit of peace, facilitating an immediate ceasefire, and bringing the parties together to find a diplomatic solution to end this massacre. Furthermore, it is essential to apply International Law in the region, bringing those responsible for genocide before International Courts and directing economic resources to the reconstruction of areas devastated by the conflict.

We urge the European Commission to act swiftly. The risk of further escalation, potentially leading to nuclear conflict, is real, and EU inaction at this critical moment could make it complicit in these atrocities.

We thank you for your attention and hope that the European Commission will meet its moral, legal, and political obligations by taking decisive measures to stop the flow of arms, end the ongoing atrocity, and support peace in the region.

On behalf of the Executive Board of the Party of the European Left,



Walter Baier
President of the Party of the European Left

For information:
Mr Josep Borrell Fontelles, High Representative/Vice-President of the European Commission

