SAMI KHADER

DIRECTOR GENERAL, MA'AN DEVELOPMENT CENTRE

Dear friends, colleagues, and friends of Palestine,

I stand before you carrying the voices of 2.2 million Palestinians who cannot be here tonight, voices crying in hospitals without medicine, voices of mothers searching for the bodies of their children and husbands buried under rubble for weeks and months. They wait not with hope for life, but with the heartbreaking hope of simply finding their loved ones, holding them one last time, and burying them with dignity.

These are also the voices of more than 20,000 children killed, children who played football on the beach, filled their classrooms with laughter, children who dreamt of becoming doctors, teachers, engineers. Their dreams ended because the world failed to protect them.

Today in Gaza, mothers wake each morning with no certainty their children will survive the next hour. 4,000 children have lost limbs. 25,000 are orphaned. Children are starving, too weak to fight hunger, too fragile to withstand fear, and dying from preventable diseases.

Pregnant women walk for kilometers seeking a functioning clinic, only to give birth on cold floors, without anesthesia, clean water, or electricity, many under bombardment.

Tonight, I speak with the voices of the oppressed, the cries of the orphans, the hunger of the starving, the suffering of displaced families surviving in flooded tents. I speak for those whom war has silenced but who refuse to disappear, whose very existence is resistance.

Some figures to reflect the real catastrophic situation:

Human losses: More than 71,600 Palestinians killed, 65% of them children, women, and the elderly. Over 10,000 missing beneath the rubble. 172,000 were injured, including 4,000 amputees. 54,000 orphans after five consecutive wars on a besieged civilian population.

Infrastructure destruction: Israel has destroyed 85% of Gaza's water, electricity, sewage, internet, and road networks. Schools, universities, hospitals, mosques, churches, including three historic churches, leveled. Over 80% of housing units were completely or partially destroyed. Cancer patients die slowly, premature babies perish because incubators have no power, the injured lie untreated, and children cry from hunger with nothing to feed them.

Severe shortages of food, water, medicine, clothing, tents, and hygiene supplies deepen the crisis. Palestinian, national, and international institutions face escalating administrative obstacles meant to undermine and replace the existing humanitarian system with entities supervised by Israeli authorities. Poverty, unemployment, and food insecurity have reached unprecedented levels. Malnutrition is rapidly spreading among children and women. Entire families are surviving without clean water or safe shelter. Starvation is already killing people, and the long-term health impact will last generations.

Psychological trauma is universal. Every child in Gaza carries deep and permanent scars that will shape our society for decades.

Environmental devastation: 150 million liters of raw sewage now flow daily into the Mediterranean. More than 60 million tons of rubble cover Gaza. Over 20,000 unexploded bombs lie beneath the surface, rendering entire neighborhoods death traps. And 87% of agricultural land is destroyed or contaminated by 150,000 tons of explosives, the equivalent of nearly ten nuclear bombs.

In the West Bank, while the world focuses on Gaza, the West Bank bleeds. Settler attacks escalate. 898 checkpoints and 1,201 gates suffocate movement. 58% of West Bank land was confiscated. Forty entire communities in Area C were expelled. Over 1,460 Palestinians killed by settlers and soldiers since October 2023, all with impunity. Health and education systems barely function: 68% of health points operate only part-time, hospitals at 70% capacity, and schools face constant disruption. This is a coordinated attempt to empty Palestinian land of its people.

There are three truths we must state clearly:

- **First:** The genocide, war crimes, systematic destruction, and mass displacement are not isolated incidents or a reaction to October 7. They are part of a long-term strategy to fragment Palestinian society, dismantle our institutions, and erode the foundations of national life, rooted in decades of occupation, apartheid, and violations of international law.

Second: Israel's narrative of a "ceasefire" is a lie. Since the declaration on October 11, more than 630 Palestinians have been killed and hundreds wounded. Bombings continue. Israel has extended military control over what it calls the "area behind the yellow line," placing 54% of Gaza under direct military authority.

Third: What Palestinians suffer today is not only the result of genocide and ethnic cleansing but also the direct outcome of the complicity and inaction of many Western and Arab governments. For over 25 months, these governments provided Israel with political cover to pursue its goals. Their refusal to hold Israel accountable has given it a green light to continue its crimes.

- Some governments looked away.
- Some supplied weapons.
- Some defended the indefensible.
- Some blocked ceasefire resolutions.

This is not a conflict between two powers. This is a planned, well-designed genocide, a destruction of our people. Every moment of silence and every act of complicity deepens our suffering.

MA'AN staff delivering aid in camp in Gaza City, Dec 2024

Our demands are clear and simple:
1. Immediate and unconditional ceasefire and end to Israeli aggression, including settler attacks.
2. End the ethnic cleansing and land confiscation in the West Bank.
3. Open all crossings and allow unhindered humanitarian access—at least 600 trucks daily.
4. Support international legal action at the ICC and ICJ.
5. Stop military support contributing to violations of international law.
6. Impose sanctions until Israel complies with legal obligations.
7. Protect humanitarian workers and stop all restrictions on their access.
8. Support Australian NGOs and unions to continue lifesaving programs.
9. Demand real accountability for war crimes against civilians, children, hospitals, places of worship, and aid workers.
10. Empower Palestinian NGOs and UNRWA—the backbone of the humanitarian response.

Justice is not optional. Accountability is not negotiable. Human dignity cannot be selective.

To APHEDA, our strategic partner:

Your courage, solidarity, and humanity are a light in this darkness. You stood with us when others turned away. You spoke when others stayed silent. You saved thousands of families and restored hope. We will never forget it.

To the Australian people and unions:
Your marches, your statements, your donations, your voices reached us. You reminded us that humanity still exists. Thank you for standing on the right side of history and justice, for refusing silence, and for showing our people that we are not alone.

Dear friends, the occupation can destroy our homes, hospitals, schools, and cities, but it cannot destroy our determination. It cannot erase our identity or extinguish our hope for justice. The people of Gaza are exhausted but not defeated.

The people of the West Bank are wounded but not broken. Palestinians everywhere remain rooted in their land and identity.

This is not only a Palestinian struggle. This is a human struggle. And history will remember where each of us stood in these 25 months.

We ask you to walk with us, speak, act, and demand justice, because silence is complicity.

Together, we can protect what remains.
Together, we can rebuild.
Together, we can keep hope alive.

8 DECEMBER 2025