

The Role of the EU in the Face of the Human Rights Crisis in Gaza

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Role: Palestinian journalist

Target Group: European Union
Policy-Makers

KEY POINTS

- 1. The ongoing humanitarian crisis** between Israel and Palestine is not merely a war; it is a problem that endangers people's living conditions.
- 2. This crisis in Gaza is a problem involving serious violations of international law.**
- 3. As can be seen from the EU's own statements, it is that the aid sent is very low compared to the population in Gaza and the EU is insufficient in helping the people of Gaza.**

Summary

In the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights, protecting civilians' right to life was established as the highest priority in international politics (United Nations, 1948). The European Union also sees defending humanitarian values as one of the core principles of its foreign policy. But as a Palestinian journalist witnessing events in Gaza firsthand, I noticed that the current principles are completely inadequate in the face of loss of life and destruction. This policy brief, titled 'The Role of the EU in the Face of the Human Rights Crisis in Gaza' addresses the following research question: 'When faced with a humanitarian crisis, how much does the European Union actually uphold its fundamental principle of human rights?' This document argues that the EU member states' inability to take action due to internal disagreements shows that the human rights and humanitarian values the European Union claims to support are seriously conflicted in Gaza. The main findings of this summary, supported by the testimony of Palestinian journalist Alev CEMPEL, show that the principles and aid advocated by the EU are insufficient in the face of daily loss of life and destruction. As a result, this summary suggests that the European Union (EU) should go beyond just providing humanitarian aid and take solution-oriented actions.



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1. The Reality on the Ground: The Ongoing Humanitarian Crisis

Aside from what we review on news websites and what we hear on radios, what I see on these streets every day as a journalist is the fact that a people has disappeared along with their living spaces. Hospitals, schools, markets, and most importantly, even people's homes, which they need to survive, are being bombed. As stated in the Rapid Damage and Needs Assessment (RDNA) report jointly published by the European Union and the United Nations (UN), the destruction in Gaza has reached an unprecedented level (World Bank Group, 2026).

As I witnessed in Gaza, almost all schools were either destroyed or targeted for destruction. While I was photographing this in the field, it was also clearly displayed on the screens by the European External Relations Service (EEAS), where 31 out of 36 hospitals were damaged or destroyed in May 2024.

Gaza Rapid Damage and Needs Assessment Report (RDNA)



Damaged hospital — Al-Shifa Hospital:



2. Serious Violations of International Law

Throughout my journalistic life, I have seen how the European Union (EU) takes ownership of human rights in the interviews it gives to the press and in the news published on social media. However, I have witnessed that the EU's understanding of “normative power” displayed for many years on the Gaza issue is a serious lie.

Although it was clearly stated by the European Union (EU) in various statements that cutting off basic necessities such as food, water, electricity and medical supplies is not right, when it is clear that the Palestinian people are in need of assistance, we could not see the real value of these said sentences on the ground live. Because contrary to what was said, nothing happened on the pitch either.

If we consider the Ukraine crisis as a vivid example of this, the European Union (EU) opened border crossings shortly after Russia's attack on Ukraine, placed them under temporary protection and imposed sanctions. But when it comes to the Palestinian people, who are constantly exposed to bombs and attacks, the European Union (EU), which has been talking big in interviews, has done nothing concrete to stop the destruction on the ground or ensure the safety of civilians.

From my point of view as a journalist, the biggest contradiction also appeared here: how this great actor, who says he defends human rights and the protection of civilians, demonstrates these principles on the ground...

The European Union's press release and opening its doors to war victims fleeing Ukraine.



3. The Real Face of Humanitarian Aid in Gaza:

Why the European Union (EU) is Insufficient in Helping the people of Gaza?

While the civilian population who are there to work is being tested by basic needs such as hunger, the European Parliament (EP) adopted a resolution against malnutrition and starving people in Gaza in September 2025 (European Parliament, 2025). Members of the European Parliament had indicated that they supported the Commission President's proposal to ignore and suspend the EU-Israel Association Agreement on trade issues for the time being. But the truth was this: While we faced death every day, we never witnessed the official implementation of the "suspension" proposals. While European Union (EU) institutions have shared humanitarian aid flight support to Gaza in bulletins, I have witnessed that most of this aid has not been able to reach Gaza due to obstacles at the land gates and has been left to rot. At the same time, as we have seen in their official statements, 'We could not provide aid directly to Gaza, so it is futile to send aid from outside the border.' his words reflect the truth. As someone who has lived in Gaza and seen all the facts, I know what is happening on the ground better than they do. Throwing aid kits out of the air thinking that aid is being provided is nothing more than a relief for the international community, which condones politics for its ruthless interests.

4. My Recommendations: It's Time to Put Promises into Action

If the European Union (EU) respects the rule of law, which it claims in television and press reports, it must take these steps in the face of what we journalists, medics or people here have pulled out from under the rubble.

- The EU-Israel Association Agreement should not remain on the table as a proposal as has been suggested; it should be put on hold immediately if possible.
- An official arms embargo should be imposed. Instead of issuing empty condemnation statements, the European Union (EU) should impose an arms embargo on the weapons directly used in the deaths of civilians and halt arms shipments.
- The border gates must be opened unconditionally. For Gaza to survive and rebuild, this massacre must end.

FOOTNOTES:

1. Council of the European Union. (2022, March 4). Ukraine: Council unanimously introduces temporary protection for persons fleeing the war. <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2022/03/04/ukraine-council-introduces-temporary-protection-for-persons-fleeing-the-war/>
2. European Parliament. (2025, September 11). Gaza at breaking point: EU action to combat famine, the urgent need to release hostages and move towards a two-state solution (P10 TA (2025)0199). https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/T-A-10-2025-0199_EN.html
3. United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs. (2025, November 7). Gaza : Needs remain immense despite humanitarian scale-up. United Nations. <https://www.un.org/unispal/document/ocha-press-release-7nov25/>
4. World Bank Group. (2026, April 20). Rapid Damage and Needs Assessment, Gaza Strip, April 2026. <https://thedocs.worldbank.org/en/doc/e539cbf23b348c3d4fc69b8a7e9c9d7d-0280062026/>
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- 6- World Health Organization. (2026). Conflict in Israel and the occupied Palestinian territory and region. <https://www.who.int/emergencies/situations/conflict-in-Israel-and-oPt>
- 7- European Commission. Humanitarian Aid to Palestine : Data and Budget Decisions. European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations (ECHO). <https://civil-protection-humanitarian-aid.ec.europa.eu/>
- 8- European External Action Service (EEAS). Official Statements & Reports on Gaza Infrastructure Damage. EEAS Official. <https://www.eeas.europa.eu/>
- 9- World Health Organization (WHO). Damage Situation Reports on Health Facilities and Hospitals in Gaza. WHO Regional Office for the Eastern Mediterranean. <https://www.emro.who.int/>
- 10- Council of the European Union. Foreign Affairs Council Conclusions on the Humanitarian Crisis in the Middle East. Council of the EU (Consilium) Records. <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/>
- 11- United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA). Gaza Strip: Reports on Aid Obstacles and Living Conditions. UNRWA Emergency Response Archive. <https://www.unrwa.org/>



Will the European Union (EU) defend human rights, its fundamental principle, or will we just watch the collapse of its moral values in Gaza?



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The content of this policy brief lies entirely with the author. It does not reflect the official opinion of Çağ University.