

IUAES



May 24, 2024

Statement issued by the Steering Committee of the World Anthropological Union on the war in Gaza

As the global organization representing anthropology worldwide, the World Anthropological Union (WAU) is committed to peace, justice, mutual understanding, and respect. The escalation of hostilities between Israel and Hamas leads WAU to support the call for an immediate ceasefire, the release of all Israeli hostages, humanitarian aid for Palestinian civilians, and respect for international humanitarian law and its associated norms.



October 7th saw Hamas' brutal massacre of over a thousand Israeli civilians and abduction of hundreds more. The Israel Defense Forces' (IDF) extensive military response has caused the death, forced relocation, dispossession, psychological trauma, hunger, and destruction of livelihoods of Palestinian civilians, and must stop. The IDF's current ground offensive in Rafah, now the refuge for hundreds of thousands of Gaza's Palestinian population, will likely result in further loss of life and a worsening of the humanitarian catastrophe.

We believe that no warfare, including that against terrorism, can justify civilian deaths and suffering, even when civilians are trapped between the Hamas narrative of "liberation" and the Israeli state's narrative of "collateral damage" and "rightful self-defense." Moreover, this situation is leading to increasing Antisemitism and Islamophobia worldwide, both of which are dehumanizing practices of Othering that anthropologists have critically studied and decried for decades.

Acknowledging the long-term roots of the current war in the region, WAU urges all parties to the conflict to address their underlying practices of deprecatory Othering, which in the present instance have consequences such as Palestinian long-term statelessness and the absence of Palestinian territorial sovereignty. WAU, therefore, exhorts all involved to engage in constructive dialogue leading to a durable and just solution that would enable everyone to live in peace, dignity, and mutual respect. Equally important is the commitment to working towards preventing future conflicts in the region, especially any that might lead to civilian deaths, suffering, displacement, and statelessness.

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