On the occasion of the Ad Hoc Liaison Committee (AHLC) meeting on 20 March 2018, AIDA, a platform of more than 70 INGOs operating in the occupied Palestinian territory (oPt), calls on international donors to address the dire humanitarian situation in the Gaza Strip and ensure that humanitarian assistance to Gaza is not further politicized.

80% of Palestinians in Gaza depend on international assistance. The unemployment rate stands at a staggering 44% feeding into the perceptible sense of hopelessness and despair. Electricity supply amounts to only 5-6 hours a day, and is also being politicized while severely disrupting basic services and impacting all spheres of life in the Strip. The recent budget cuts by the US administration to UNRWA, affecting the services provided to Palestine refugees, as well as the implications of potential failing of reconciliation efforts, will only deepen the poverty and vulnerability of Palestinians in Gaza.

“The Gaza Strip is on the brink of collapse, its crippled economy resulting from Israel’s decade-long illegal blockade, and further compounded by recent public employee salary cuts by the PA. With purchasing power already at record lows, the impact of additional cuts in incomes in Gaza may result in a full-blown humanitarian crisis”, Rosella Urru, Head of Mission, Première Urgence Internationale, stated.

AIDA calls on donor countries to step up their support to prevent further deterioration, and apply pressure on Israel to end the blockade, and on Palestinian parties not to leverage cuts to basic services for political gains. Additionally, third states must accelerate their efforts to foster economic growth and promote sustainable development, including through ensuring predictable and sufficient energy supply to improve access to basic services, including healthcare, education, clean drinking water, and proper waste water treatment.

Under international law, Israel as the occupying power is responsible for the well-being of Palestinians in Gaza. It is obliged to facilitate humanitarian relief and development schemes to Palestinians living under occupation, including through allowing for the entry and exit of required items, and by facilitating the movement of INGO staff in and out of Gaza as a matter of humanitarian imperative.

In 2017, 54 Palestinians in Gaza died after missing scheduled appointments due to permit delays and denials to access vital health treatments not available in Gaza, such as Chemotherapy and Radiotherapy for cancer treatment. The approval rate for health referrals from Gaza is at the lowest point since 2008 with only 54% of applications being approved. This is a violation of Palestinians’ right to health.

AIDA urges third states, including AHLC participants, to apply pressure on Israel to adhere to its obligations under international law, and to support ongoing reconciliation efforts between the Palestinian factions, which can also have a positive impact on alleviating humanitarian needs in the Gaza Strip. Notwithstanding political progress, humanitarian aid should continue to be provided in a principled manner without any delay.

**ENDS**

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