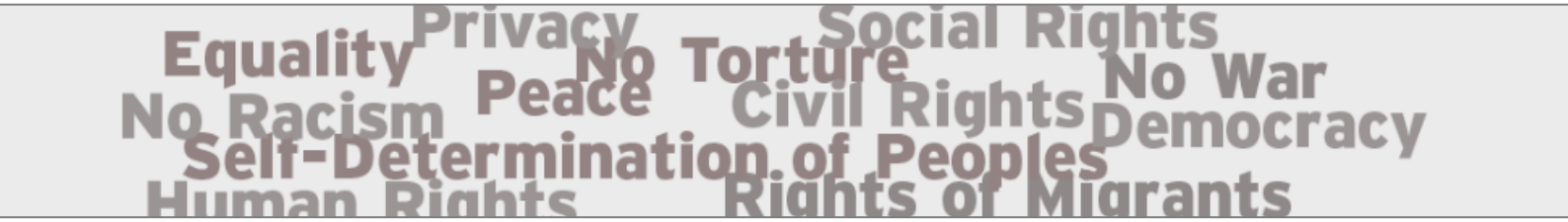
ELDH European Association of Lawyers for Democracy & World Human Rights

EJDM Europäische Vereinigung von Juristinnen & Juristen für Demokratie und Menschenrechte in der Welt
EJDH Asociacion Europea de los Juristas por la Democracia y los Derechos Humanos en el Mundo
EJDH Association Européenne des Juristes pour la Démocratie & les Droits de l'Homme
EGDU Associazione Europea delle Giuriste e dei Giuristi per la Democrazia e i diritti dell'Uomo nel Mondo

WITH LAWYERS IN 23 COUNTRIES



Bologna, Donostia, Düsseldorf, Vienna, 15/11/2026

ELDH Statement

Gaza Facing Winter: An Urgent Call for Humanitarian Protection, Unrestricted Aid and Compliance with International Law

10 November 2026

The European Association of Lawyers for Democracy and World Human Rights (ELDH) expresses its profound concern at the catastrophic humanitarian conditions facing the Palestinian civilian population in the Gaza Strip as winter approaches. ELDH fully supports the urgent appeal issued by the Palestinian Bar Association on 8 November 2026, calling upon the international community, the United Nations, European institutions and all relevant international organisations to take immediate and effective measures to protect the Palestinian population from the devastating consequences of displacement, destruction and the deprivation of essential necessities of life.

After years of devastating military operations, widespread destruction of civilian infrastructure and mass displacement, the people of Gaza are facing another winter under conditions that pose an immediate threat to their lives, health and human dignity.

More than one million Palestinian civilians, including children, women, older persons and persons with disabilities, face particularly serious risks as winter conditions intensify. Families displaced from their homes are forced to seek refuge in overcrowded shelters, makeshift tents and damaged buildings that offer little or no protection against heavy rainfall, cold temperatures and strong winds.

The destruction of homes, hospitals, water and sanitation infrastructure, together with continuing obstacles to the delivery of humanitarian assistance, has created conditions in which exposure to winter weather may lead to further preventable deaths, illness and human suffering.

ELDH emphasises that this humanitarian catastrophe is not merely a question of humanitarian assistance or international solidarity. It raises fundamental questions concerning the implementation of binding obligations under international humanitarian law, international human rights law and international criminal law.

Under the Fourth Geneva Convention of 1949, particularly Articles 55, 56 and 59, an occupying power has specific obligations concerning the provision of food, medical supplies, public health services and humanitarian relief for the civilian population. International humanitarian law further prohibits collective punishment, the starvation of civilians as a method of warfare, and unlawful interference with humanitarian relief operations.

ELDH recalls that the International Court of Justice, through its provisional measures in the case concerning the Application of the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide in the Gaza Strip, has emphasised the urgent necessity of ensuring the provision of essential humanitarian assistance and basic services to Palestinians in Gaza.

ELDH also recalls the International Court of Justice's Advisory Opinions concerning the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including its Advisory Opinion of 22 October 2025 addressing Israel's obligations in relation to the presence and activities of the United Nations, other international organisations and third states in the Occupied Palestinian Territory.

These legal obligations cannot be suspended, disregarded or made conditional upon political considerations. The protection of civilian life and dignity is an obligation under international law, not a matter of political discretion.

ELDH therefore calls for the following urgent measures:

1. Immediate and unrestricted humanitarian access

Israel must allow and facilitate the rapid and unimpeded delivery of humanitarian assistance at the scale required by the civilian population, in accordance with international humanitarian law. Restrictions obstructing the delivery of essential relief supplies must be removed.

2. Emergency winter protection and adequate shelter

The United Nations, European states and international humanitarian organisations must urgently mobilise resources to provide safe temporary accommodation, weather-resistant shelters, insulation materials, blankets, winter clothing, heating equipment and other essential supplies to displaced families throughout Gaza.

3. Restoration of essential civilian services

Urgent measures must be taken to restore access to clean drinking water, sanitation, electricity, healthcare and essential medicines. Particular attention must be given to the prevention of infectious diseases and other public health emergencies resulting from the destruction of civilian infrastructure and the accumulation of waste.

4. Protection of civilians and humanitarian personnel

All parties must comply with their obligations under international humanitarian law, including the protection of civilians, medical personnel, humanitarian workers, healthcare facilities and civilian infrastructure. Forced displacement and collective punishment must end, and the rights and safety of displaced Palestinian civilians must be guaranteed.

5. Concrete action by European states and institutions

ELDH calls upon the European Union, its Member States and other European governments to move beyond expressions of concern and adopt effective measures to ensure respect for international law.

European states must fulfil their obligations under Common Article 1 of the Geneva Conventions to respect and ensure respect for international humanitarian law, and comply with their obligations under the Genocide Convention and other applicable rules of international law.

They must use all lawful diplomatic, political and economic means available to prevent further violations, secure humanitarian access, and ensure that their own actions do not contribute to internationally wrongful acts.

6. International accountability and an end to impunity

ELDH reiterates its support for independent international investigations and accountability mechanisms, including the work of the International Criminal Court and the International Court of Justice.

Allegations of war crimes, crimes against humanity, genocide and other serious violations of international law must be investigated effectively and independently. Those responsible must be held accountable in accordance with international law.

The responsibility of the international community cannot be postponed

ELDH stresses that the arrival of winter makes an already catastrophic humanitarian situation even more urgent. Every delay in the delivery of shelter, food, medicines and essential supplies exposes civilians to additional and foreseeable risks to their lives.

The suffering of the Palestinian civilian population cannot be normalised, nor can the repeated failure to secure their fundamental rights be accepted as an inevitable consequence of armed conflict.

ELDH stands in solidarity with the Palestinian Bar Association and the Palestinian legal community in their efforts to defend human dignity, the rule of law and the fundamental rights of the Palestinian people.

International law must be implemented, not merely invoked. Humanitarian protection must be guaranteed, not merely promised.

ELDH therefore urges the United Nations, the European Union, European governments and the wider international community to act immediately and decisively to ensure that the Palestinian population in Gaza is not abandoned to face another winter without adequate shelter, essential services and the basic means of survival.

The protection of civilian lives is an immediate legal obligation. Failure to act in the face of foreseeable and preventable human suffering is unacceptable.