



The Hon Anthony Albanese MP  
Prime Minister  
Parliament House  
CANBERRA ACT 2600

**OFFICE OF THE CEO**  
Kon Karapanagiotidis  
3 November 2023

Dear Prime Minister

I am writing to you, shocked by the reports coming out of Gaza in the last 48 hours of refugees being killed and refugee camps being bombed in breach of international law. As the CEO of the largest independent refugee charity in Australia, I am compelled to call on you to do everything in your power to help end this violence against refugees and to ensure that international law is being followed.

Refugees are considered 'protected persons' under the 1951 Refugee Convention and its 1967 Protocol. However, in the last period, we have seen the bombing of three refugee camps by the Israeli Government. These are the Al Bureij Refugee Camp, the Al-Shati (Beach) Refugee Camp and three bombings of the largest refugee camp in Gaza, the Jabalia refugee camp.

It's been reported that the bombings have so far killed and injured hundreds of refugees. The Jabalia refugee camp alone is home to 116,000 Palestinian refugees despite being an area of just 1.4 sq kms.

The UN Human Rights Office has stated: *"given the high number of civilian casualties and the scale of destruction following Israeli airstrikes on Jabalia refugee camp, we have serious concerns that these are disproportionate attacks that could amount to war crimes."*

The UNRWA has reported four of their shelters in these refugee camps, hosting approximately 20,000 refugees, have been attacked in this period. These are shelters under the flag of the United Nations. International Humanitarian Law leaves no doubt that civilians and civilian facilities must be protected as these shelters are declared safe areas under the UN Charter.

There is a refugee catastrophe unfolding in Gaza. Australia, as a country that is a signatory to both the Geneva Convention of 1949 and the 1951 Refugee Convention, must speak out.



Palestinian refugees already make up 70% of the population of Gaza. We are now tragically seeing an entire new generation of refugees being created in a place that was already home to one of the largest refugee populations in the world.

We are witnessing forced displacement on a terrifying scale.

Refugees cannot again pay the price of war.

Article 33 of the Fourth Geneva Convention states that “*no protected person may be punished for an offence he or she has not personally committed.*”

We are seeing refugees being denied access to humanitarian aid for their essential survival, such as water, food, medicine and protected shelter.

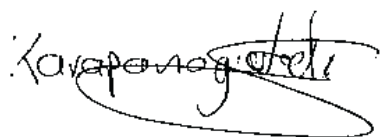
Under Article 8(2)(b)(xxv) of the 1998 ICC Rome Statute defines war crimes as including the act of “*intentionally using starvation of civilians as a method of warfare by depriving them of objects indispensable to their survival.*”

We are also seeing grave harm being suffered by refugee women and children.

Pregnant women have special protections under international humanitarian law. Article 16 of the Fourth Geneva Convention states that “*expectant mothers shall be the object of particular protection and respect.*” However, we are seeing that pregnant refugee women are being forced to give birth without anaesthetic in unsafe medical settings, without electricity, clean water, basic medicines or vaccines.

Similarly, children have special protections during times of war. Protocol I under Article 77 of the Fourth Geneva Convention states that “*children shall be the object of special respect and shall be protected against any form of indecent assault.*” The United Nations Security Council under adopted Resolution 1612 (2005) deems the killing and maiming of children as a grave violation against children in times of war. However, we are seeing thousands of refugee children being killed.

We urgently ask you and the Australian Government to show leadership and to call on the Israeli Government for the immediate protection of all refugees, unfettered and permanent access to humanitarian aid and shelter for refugees to ensure their safety and survival and an immediate end to the attacks on refugee camps and all refugees and displaced people in Gaza.



Kon Karapanagiotidis  
Chief Executive Officer