



Tourism Advocacy and Action Forum decries aggression against Gaza; calls for freedom and justice in Palestine

EQUATIONS
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We, members of the Tourism Advocacy and Action Forum, which includes tourism activists and representatives of civil society groups whose work focuses on advocating human rights, community rights and justice, gathered in Istanbul between 28th and 30th August, 2014 to plan advocacy of human rights and social justice concerns in tourism. We pronounce our strongest condemnation of the recent assault on Gaza and here want to draw attention to the issues that come out of this. Witnessing 51 days of extreme violence; criminality violating international human rights law and the Geneva Conventions; and unlimited damage to civilian lives, infrastructures and essential services, we assert these action are unacceptable. This occurs in a context of more than seven years of illegal occupation and brutal blockade of the Gaza Strip which has resulted in the imprisoning of the Gazan people in a virtual open-air prison in violation of international human rights law. The occupation and colonisation of the Palestinian peoples of the West Bank and East Jerusalem and the Syrian people of Golan Heights has had devastating effects on Palestinian and Golan Heights economies, society and cultural development and has severely obstructed the economic development of these communities. We strongly support the wider movement for the use of boycott, divestment and sanctions (BDS) which can pressurise Israel to cease its occupation and violations of Palestinian rights; this is done in support of the locally initiated action in Palestine of BDS. Gaza is devastated by the attack and will not be able to heal quickly from such a massive assault by the world's fourth biggest military, especially when civilians could find no place of safety as even schools, hospitals, Holy Places and UN compounds came under fire. While this aggression was being wrought on Gaza, the colonies, checkpoints, arrests, suppression of peaceful protests and settler violence was rampant in the rest of the occupied territories of the West Bank and East Jerusalem, terrorising these occupied peoples.

We affirm these principles:

The occupation must end immediately with all final status issues addressed comprehensively according to UN resolutions. These would include: the status of Jerusalem, the issue of the right to return, equitable sharing of natural resources, dismantling of colonies in occupied territories and dismantling of the wall.

We assert there are no military solutions to this conflict and we call for a reliable and durable mediation process that supports the freedom and rights of Palestinians.

As the Tourism Advocacy and Action Forum, we call for:

- 1) The freedom of movement for all Palestinian people, but especially the Gaza people who have been illegally blockaded, strangled and isolated for more than seven years, blocked from the benefits of travel and receiving people.
- 2) We express concern for the archaeological and touristic sites and the need to restore and protect them, noting Israeli responsibility and accountability for this. Israel deliberately targeted museums, old neighbourhoods, educational facilities, historical and archaeological sites and worship locations, in the recent Gaza war constituting a grave violation of international humanitarian law and a war crime punishable before international courts. We charge this is an effort to obliterate history for political purposes.
- 3) When there is a possibility to visit Gaza at the end of the blockade (as promised under the recent ceasefire agreement), we call on the International Community to "come and see" Gaza, and bear witness to the devastation to engage in solidarity with the people in a way that affirms the people's rights and dignity.

As the Tourism Advocacy and Action Forum, we join the Palestinian aspiration for freedom and justice as a matter of urgency. We call on all nations to stop supporting war, aggression and violence which enables this illegal occupation and instead invest in meaningful peace and justice processes that overturn the structural causes of this.

EQUATIONS, India

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