



4 November 2023

Dear friends,

It is often difficult to separate information from disinformation. It has to be said that we have entered an era where communication often takes precedence over action. Communication has become a weapon.

How can we form an opinion on the human tragedies and natural disasters that continue to unfold in 2023?

How can we maintain our neutrality and inform the members of our association without hurting anyone's feelings, without ignoring yet another tragedy?

I am therefore enclosing the excellent text from FAFICS, which was able to say it all in a concise and well-balanced way about the situation in the Middle East, a document that is both neutral and full of empathy for the people who are suffering and the humanitarian staff who are paying a heavy price in the current situation.

I am also enclosing the Secretary-General's message for United Nations Day.

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We invite you to visit our website regularly to keep in touch with your association.

[https://afics.unog.ch/AAFI-AFICS\\_News\\_F.htm](https://afics.unog.ch/AAFI-AFICS_News_F.htm)

We wish you a pleasant start to autumn.

For AAFI-AFICS, Odette Foudral



**THE SECRETARY-GENERAL**

24 October 2023

My dear Colleagues,

This United Nations Day comes at a time of sorrow and anxiety for everyone. The situation in Israel, the Occupied Palestinian Territory and the wider region is on the brink, and we are all fearful of what the next days and weeks will bring.

The conflict is marked by immense human suffering and heartache. I know many of us have family, friends and loved ones in the region and are experiencing this tragedy in a very personal way.

We are all devastated and horrified by the situation of our staff in Gaza. At least 35 of our UNRWA colleagues have been killed and many more injured. Sadly, that number continues to rise. We mourn those we have lost and send our deepest condolences to their families and friends. As I told the Security Council today, I owe their families the condemnation of these and many other similar killings.

On this United Nations Day, let us honour their memory and recognize that we are in this together. We are one United Nations family and we stand with you in solidarity.

Throughout this very difficult period, the United Nations is standing up strongly for the protection of civilians, for efforts to prevent further escalation and for a pathway to peace.

I spoke out immediately to condemn the unspeakable terror attacks on Israeli civilians on 7 October, and have repeatedly called for the immediate release of hostages.

Abhorrent as those attacks were, they cannot justify the collective punishment of the people of Gaza. Last Friday, I travelled to the Rafah crossing between Egypt and Gaza and appealed for an end to the siege conditions in Gaza. I am demanding full respect for international humanitarian law and unrestricted humanitarian access to all civilians in need. I have made an urgent appeal for a humanitarian ceasefire, so that we can rush supplies into Gaza, including support for our precious colleagues. And I am constantly calling for respect for the inviolability of United Nations premises which currently shelter nearly 600,000 people.

All United Nations Personnel

Please be assured that I am in continual contact with regional and global leaders, using every means possible to push for peace and to protect people on the ground. The terrible plight of our colleagues never leaves my mind.

While this United Nations Day comes at a time of profound anguish, it is also a moment of intense pride and a reminder of the invaluable role of the United Nations. Under extremely difficult and even dangerous conditions, the women and men of the United Nations are making a difference and providing hope. I am inspired and proud to call you my colleagues.

The conflict has also fuelled totally unacceptable antisemitism and anti-Muslim bigotry in many places. All of us stand with colleagues facing prejudice and hate.

Today, and every day, we are united by our commitment to peace and our dedication to our common humanity – values enshrined in the United Nations Charter.

This is a testing time. I am confident that together, we will come through it and find better days ahead.

Yours sincerely,

*with my warmest personal regards*

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'António Guterres', written in a cursive style.

António Guterres