

DECET open letter to European Commission

DECET (www.decet.org) is an international network representing 16 organisations in 11 European countries that promotes Diversity, Equality and Social Justice in Early Childhood Education and Care.

As members of DECET we believe that all children have the right to live and develop free of violence, discrimination and racism. All children regardless of their gender, ethnicity, religion, class or socio-economic status are entitled to live and grow up in an environment respectful of diversity and children's rights as defined in the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, and specified for the youngest children in General Comment No. 7.

While much remains to be done, particularly with regards to the most marginalised children, families and communities in Europe, we acknowledge the efforts made by the Union and the EU Commission to realise these rights for children within the European Union.

However, we are extremely concerned about the continued violation of children's rights in Gaza, the occupied Palestinian Territories and in Israel.

We condemn the violence and the war crimes committed against children and their families by all parties in the conflict. In particular we oppose the continued collective punishment of Palestinian children and their families by the State of Israel, and exploitation of children as pawns in the political conflict by Hamas.

The children of Gaza are the most vulnerable victims of conflict and war and, as we are writing this letter, are suffering from unimaginable physical and psychological trauma.

Experiences in the first years of life are crucial for children developing their identity: their concept of who they are, and their ideas about others. Growing up in a context of violence, injustice and racism therefore means children are likely to perpetuate the intergenerational cycle of hatred and violence unless they receive support and appropriate education.

The European Union is an important actor in the Middle East region; it can no longer remain silent. We therefore call on the European Union to use its political and economic influence to urge parties in the war in Gaza to immediately cease the violence against children and families, and to insist on a political solution in accordance with international laws and agreements.

We urge the EU to substantially increase its efforts to support children in Gaza and Israel to cope with their traumatic experiences and to support them to live lives free of oppression, violence and apartheid.

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