



# STATEMENT ON THE ONGOING AGGRESSION AND VIOLENCE IN PALESTINE

*December 21, 2023*

The Asian Pacific Resource and Research Centre for Women (ARROW), as well as the Safe Abortion Advocacy Initiative- A Global South Engagement (SAIGE), being platforms for the advocacy of rights of the Global South, are grief-stricken by seeing the death, destruction, and grave humanitarian catastrophe in the Occupied Territory of Palestine which has been ongoing for over 60 days. We condemn the violence outright and call for an immediate and permanent ceasefire and access to humanitarian aid including healthcare, food, and clean water to the Palestinian people.

Historically, the people of Palestine have suffered from long standing institutionalised discrimination which has led to a systematic denial of their socioeconomic rights. During times of conflict, women, youth, and children are disproportionately affected. Many women of reproductive age who have been living under occupation have continued to suffer disproportionately from malnutrition and anaemia, often related to early marriage and successive pregnancies. Israeli-imposed restrictions including checkpoints and roadblocks have resulted in delays in women in labour reaching hospitals, and at times being forced to give birth in unsafe, undignified, and sometimes fatal conditions.

Currently, the people of Palestine are completely denied access to health services, food, and clean water, in an extreme violation of their basic rights. As reported in the media, the Israeli military operations have specifically targeted civilians, by destroying hospitals, refugee camps, and infrastructure for the disabled. Diseases and illnesses including diarrhoea, food poisoning, meningitis, respiratory infections, chickenpox, and scabies are fast spreading inside shelters.

The ongoing aggression also translates into a grave reproductive justice issue as access to reproductive healthcare is severely limited. Shelters are reported to be suffering from a shortage of water, medicine, menstrual hygiene products, and experiencing increased rates of sexually transmitted infections and urinary tract infections posing long term risks to the reproductive health of women and girls in all their diversities. The situation has deteriorated to a complete lack of overall healthcare with the blocking of any humanitarian assistance including safe delivery kits for pregnant persons. An unprecedented number of miscarriages, emergency C-sections, and hysterectomies are reported, showing a stark increase in infant mortality and maternal mortality rates.

We welcome the UN General Assembly's Resolution adopted on the 12th of December 2023, with a large majority of 153 countries, demanding an immediate humanitarian ceasefire, immediate and unconditional release of all hostages and ensuring humanitarian access. Unfortunately, media reports show the continuation of violence and aggression towards the Palestinian people in complete disregard of the Resolution.

Now more than ever, ARROW and SAIGE jointly call upon all State parties to comply with their obligations under international law and international humanitarian law, notably with regard to the protection of civilians as per the resolution, and the international community to intervene and support these efforts to end the impunity of this continued violence and aggression with immediate effect.