Dear Mr. President,

We are writing to you in view of the step taken by United Nations Secretary-General, Antonio Guterres, invoking Article 99 of the United Nations Charter for the United Nations Security Council to address urgently the humanitarian catastrophe unfolding in Gaza. Two months since hostilities broke out, the death toll, the level of destruction, and the dire humanitarian situation in the Gaza Strip are alarming.

Given the gravity of the situation and the potential of an escalation in the West Bank and regionally, it is imperative for us to hold a serious debate on the war during the upcoming European Council that will take place on December 14 and 15. We call on your leadership to steer such a discussion, which should aim at agreeing on a clear and firm position by the European Union.

We reiterate our strong condemnation of the terrorist attacks committed by Hamas on October 7 and call for the immediate release of all hostages. We reiterate Israel’s right to defend itself in line with international law and international humanitarian law. We welcome the humanitarian pause that allowed for a partial release of hostages, for an increase in humanitarian aid, and for the protection of Palestinian civilians. But we have reached a moment in which the European Union must go further on three issues. First, and above all, we must call urgently for all the parties to declare a lasting humanitarian ceasefire that can lead to an end of hostilities.

Second, effective measures must be taken immediately to protect innocent civilians. We need to express our deep concern about the unbearable number of casualties in Gaza. Unhindered humanitarian aid must reach those in need immediately, in a sustained manner and in sufficient quantities. Willfully impeding relief supplies to civilians may be against international humanitarian law. The work of UN agencies must be facilitated, and vital infrastructure must be restored. This includes the opening of the Kerem Shalom crossing to provide direct access for humanitarian goods, such as water, food, medicine and fuel.

And third, we should recall the urgent need for a political process on the basis of the implementation of the two-state solution. We cannot go back to the status quo before October 7, with Hamas in control of Gaza and with the Palestinian Authority undermined by the lack of any serious political perspective. Providing it with such a prospect, and with proper financial and political support, is the best way to revitalize and reform the Palestinian Authority, in order for it to take back effective control of Gaza. This is vital for the security of Israel as well. We must avoid escalation in the West Bank, for which we propose imposing targeted travel bans and asset freezes on violent settlers who are attacking and displacing Palestinian communities.
We must insist on convening an international peace conference with the parties as soon as possible, in order to implement the two-state solution, in line with the European Council conclusions on October 26. Such a proposal was endorsed by of the Joint Summit of the League of Arab States and the Organization of Islamic Cooperation. A serious and credible prospect for the recognition of the Palestinian State, alongside the State of Israel, is the necessary basis to advance towards mutual recognition, peace and security in the region.

These are dark hours for millions of people in Palestine and Israel. Across Europe anti-Semitic incidents have resurged and this cannot be tolerated. It is time for the European Union to act. Our credibility is at stake.

Please accept, Mr. President, the assurances of our highest consideration.

Alexander De Croo
Prime Minister of Belgium

Leo Varadkar
Prime Minister of Ireland

Pedro Sánchez
President of the Government of Spain

Robert Abela
Prime Minister of Malta