

Utrecht  
21 November

**Dear Mr. Schoof,**

For many years, numerous Dutch organisations and citizens have been working tirelessly both in Israel, Palestine, and beyond to promote peace in the Middle East. Since Hamas' attack last October — a heinous act we unequivocally condemned — this work has become more vital than ever. For decades, Israel has violated international law and countless human rights in Palestine. We also strongly condemn Israel's most recent and horrific violence against Gaza, which has resulted in the deaths of tens of thousands of civilians, widespread war crimes, and escalating conflict across the region. Despite rulings from the highest international court in The Hague, the International Court of Justice, Israel's violence persists. We therefore advocate for measures, including an arms embargo.

Unfortunately, Israel routinely attempts to discredit anyone who raises legitimate, rightful criticism of its policies by labelling them as antisemitic and/or pro-Hamas. Even the United Nations has faced such accusations, along with attacks on its staff, facilities, and capacity to continue its work in Palestine. Dutch civil society organisations, activists, grassroots movements, and peace initiatives are increasingly confronted with these baseless allegations.

This letter is prompted by an article in the *Jerusalem Post*, which draws on a report from Israel's Ministry of Diaspora Affairs and Combating Antisemitism. The report levels false accusations against a staff member of the peace organisation PAX, among others. Articles in *De Telegraaf* and *De Limburger* have echoed parts of this fake news. These publications insinuate that PAX, other Dutch organisations, and human rights defenders are part of an antisemitic and pro-Hamas network. We categorically reject these shameful and unfounded accusations and expect the Dutch government to do the same.

PAX and other Dutch civil society organisations have advocated for peace in Israel-Palestine for years, consistently using international law as their guiding principle, in line with what the Dutch government claims to uphold. There is no trace of antisemitism or pro-Hamas sympathies in PAX's communications regarding the violence in Gaza. They have, however, called for a ceasefire and urged all parties to engage in this process.

These accusations, originating from the Israeli government, have been partially adopted by Dutch newspapers and politicians without investigation or consultation. This is nothing less than an attempt to suppress legitimate criticism of the Israeli government and silence critical citizens and organisations. Furthermore, it distracts from the real issue at hand: the plausible genocide in Gaza, as determined by the International Court of Justice on January 26 of this year.

Equating criticism of war crimes in Gaza, the use of starvation as a weapon, the killing of civilians, and non-compliance with international court rulings with support for Hamas or antisemitism is a dangerous narrative that crosses every boundary of integrity. Its intent is to intimidate concerned citizens, grassroots movements, and civil society organisations. This undermines freedom of expression. As long as critical expressions remain within the bounds of the law, any attempt to suppress such criticism is unacceptable.

We urgently call on you to publicly disavow these accusations and engage in dialogue with the Israeli government. Furthermore, we ask you to stand up for the rights of Dutch citizens and organisations to voice their opinions without fear of false accusations and to take serious action against the spread of Israeli propaganda and smear campaigns in the Netherlands. We would welcome the opportunity to discuss this with you further.

**Yours sincerely,**

PAX

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Cordaid

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Een Ander Joods Geluid

Extinction Rebellion

Free Press Unlimited

Fossilvrij NL

Grote Midden Oosten Platform

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