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## Asia Council calls for an ‘immediate and sustained ceasefire’ in Gaza

The Asia Council has issued an appeal to all countries in Asia to use their diplomatic leverage to push for an ‘immediate and sustained ceasefire’ in the Gaza Strip.

Six months into Israel’s military operation in Gaza, the humanitarian situation in the besieged enclave remains extremely grim, with over two million people on the verge of starvation.

According to Gaza health authority, more than 33,000 Palestinians have been killed and over 75,000 injured in Gaza so far in the Israeli offensive, a large majority being children and women. Official sources estimate nearly two-third of all infrastructures in Gaza has been destroyed including complete decimation of public utilities and health facilities.

The military offensive if not ended “immediately” will lead to a humanitarian catastrophe in the Gaza Strip. Each passing day, the conflict is only growing more ferocious, spreading to over half a dozen countries with potential to flare-up the entire region.

The Asian community must rise to the occasion and use every diplomatic resources at their disposal to press for an immediate and sustained halt to Israel’s military campaign in Gaza and ensure sufficient and uninterrupted humanitarian support for the affected population.

The council, in discharge of its mandate on peace and stability and regional cooperation, has further adopted that:

1. Asia Council recognizes the right of both Israel and Palestine to live peacefully side-by-side as sovereign nations

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2. The council appeals for release of all Israeli hostages
3. Civilian population, wherever they live, must not be harmed under any circumstance. All states are duty-bound under Geneva Conventions to protect civilian lives and property.
4. The council strongly condemns Israel's 'targeted killing' of 7 aid workers of World Central Kitchen, 175 UN humanitarian staff of UNRWA and over a dozen other humanitarian aid workers providing critical humanitarian assistance to the starving population in Gaza.

An independent probe by competent multilateral authority is a must to fix accountability.

5. The council strongly condemns the attack on Iranian diplomatic compound in Damascus, Syria. Diplomatic missions cannot be military targets or subjected to coercion. All parties must respect the Vienna Convention on Diplomatic Relations.
6. Ahead of the first Asia Council Summit scheduled for December 2024, the council has decided to convene a Meeting of Foreign Ministers at the earliest to huddle on the Gaza crisis, the escalating situation in the region and the need for a comprehensive and lasting peace plan.

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