

Support statement from the MedCities Secretariat General for the situation in the Middle East

Local governments at the frontline of crisis, war and reconstruction in the Middle East

The MedCities Secretariat General strongly condemns the ongoing escalation of violence in the Middle East, particularly the ongoing war in Gaza, continuous violence in the occupied West Bank and the current Israeli military aggression in Lebanon. We express our deep concern over the severe impact on civilian populations and local communities, and call for an immediate cessation of hostilities, full respect for international humanitarian law, including the protection of civilians and civilian infrastructure.

MedCities expresses its full solidarity with its member municipalities in Lebanon and Palestine, which continue to endure the direct consequences of war, destruction, and displacement. Since its creation in 1991, **MedCities** as a network for decentralised cooperation among Mediterranean cities, **has maintained a long-standing commitment to Lebanese municipalities**. Over time, this partnership has contributed to strengthening local capacities, promoting **sustainable urban development and reinforcing institutional resilience**.

The situation in Lebanon, Gaza and the West Bank must be understood within a broader and deeply alarming regional escalation. The current conflict, driven by military actions has expanded across the region, intensifying instability and directly affecting both civilian life and local governance systems. Its effects are increasingly visible also in Jordan, Syria, Türkiye, and Cyprus, where MedCities has member cities.

The progressive dismantling of key international humanitarian structures and the erosion of international support systems places an even **greater burden on local authorities**, who are left to respond with increasingly limited external humanitarian assistance. In this context, the international community must maintain its responsibility to ensure the protection of civilians, guarantee humanitarian access, and support the continuity of essential local services.

Local governments are on the frontline of crisis response. Despite the context, mayors and municipal teams continue to demonstrate extraordinary resilience and leadership to sustain day-to-day governance in emergency contexts adopting flexible approaches: reallocating limited resources, strengthening cooperation with civil society, and enhancing coordination at inter-municipal level.

From an international perspective, **support to municipalities in crisis must go beyond humanitarian assistance.** Decentralised cooperation, city-to-city partnerships, and municipal networks play a critical role in providing technical support, facilitating knowledge exchange, and maintaining political solidarity.

In this regard, **MedCities acts not only as a platform for project implementation, but also as a space for local diplomacy,** fostering dialogue, mutual understanding and exchange among Mediterranean cities and international stakeholders.

Local authorities and mayors also hold a significant political role, serving as direct witnesses to the impacts of war and violence, amplifying the voices of their communities and advocating for human dignity and accountability. Strengthening ties between cities enables continued solidarity, mutual support, and collective action. MedCities positions itself as a platform through which cities can share priorities, coordinate responses, and reaffirm a collective commitment to peace, resilience, and cooperation across the whole Mediterranean region.