

Mr. Shaï Cohen
Ambassador
Head of the Permanent Mission of Israel
to the Multilateral Organisations in
France

Ref ► CINGO/Pres/Israel

Strasbourg, 22 April 2026

Dear Ambassador,

As you know, the Conference of INGOs (CINGO) is the voice of civil society at the Council of Europe. It brings together around 270 international NGOs of all sectors of activity and backgrounds, all committed to supporting and upholding the ideals and principles of the Council of Europe in the area of human rights, democracy and the rule of law.

I was tasked by the Conference, following a discussion and decision at its General Assembly last week (Strasbourg, 14-17 October), to share with you our profound alarm and unequivocal condemnation of Israel's new law expanding the use of the death penalty, which is in addition discriminatory as it specifically targets Palestinians and would be mainly administered by military tribunals, which by no means live up to the standards of independent civilian courts.

The Council of Europe's Secretary General, Alain Berset, has already urged Israel to withdraw this legislation, recalling that the Council of Europe opposes the death penalty "everywhere and under all circumstances". The Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe has repeatedly reaffirmed the Organisation's aim to maintain a death-penalty-free zone in Europe and beyond, and to pursue the fight against any reintroduction and in favour of its universal abolition. For the Council of Europe, capital punishment is a cruel, inhuman and degrading punishment, fundamentally incompatible with human dignity and, because it is irreversible, impossible to reconcile with the reality of judicial error. Also, the President of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE) has expressed her concern and underlined that this move jeopardises the observer status of the Knesset to the PACE.

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Israel's special relationship with the Council of Europe presupposes a degree of commitment to these standards. By adopting a discriminatory death penalty law that effectively singles out one ethnic group, Israel is moving in the opposite direction.

I would be grateful if you could convey to your authorities in Israel the concerns of the Conference of INGOs about this recent legislative development. As this law has not yet been promulgated and the High Court of Israel is currently examining its compatibility with the Constitution, it is our hope that the said Court will rescind this law in its entirety.

The Conference of INGOs will therefore keep under scrutiny the evolution of the situation on this matter.

Yours sincerely,

Gerhard Ermischer
President of the Conference of INGOs

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "Gerhard Ermischer". The signature is written in dark ink and is centered below the printed name.

Copy: Ms Meirav Ben Ari, Chair of the national delegation of Israel to the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe