Stop Wars, Save Lives, Build Inclusive Peace

Statement of Globethics, 10 November 2023

The war in Israel and Gaza has made thousands of innocent victims among them civilians, including children, with high risk of escalation and expansion already actual in South Lebanon. We condemn the horrific slaughter of civilians by Hamas in Israel and holding hundreds of civilian hostages. We Globethics, as an international organisation for ethical leadership, join our voice to the Secretary General of the United Nations by condemning the collective punishment of the population of Gaza by Israel, causing thousands of civilian victims with a major humanitarian crisis, and call for an immediate ceasefire.

The Fundamental Human Values

Our humanity is rooted in three fundamental values, which allow it to flourish and without them it risks perishing: life, peace, and solidarity.

Life has equal importance and dignity for all human beings. Its profound respect is the foundation of human civilisation. The existence of law enforcement systems and legal armed forces is to protect life, all lives, not to destroy it. The Geneva Conventions affirm that: *"Civilians are to be protected from murder, torture or brutality, and from discrimination on the basis of race, nationality, religion or political opinion."* (Arts. 13, 32)

Peace is grounded in social trust, just laws, and regulated international relations. Peace is the path for stability, security, and sustainable development. Violence and terror cannot generate other than further conflicts and sufferings. Thus, the purpose of the United Nations, as stated in its Charter, is *"to maintain international peace and security, and to that end: to take effective collective measures for the prevention and removal of threats to the peace, and for the suppression of acts of aggression or other breaches of the peace, and to bring about by peaceful means, and in conformity with the principles of justice and international law, adjustment or settlement of international disputes or situations which might lead to a breach of the peace."* (Art. 1)

Solidarity constitutes a distinctive ethos of human beings, not only within national, ethnic, or religious groups, but also as an attitude towards the global human family and beyond. Selective and exclusive empathy risks to contributing to the dehumanization of certain communities, and hence sinking into barbarism. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights states that human beings are entitled to "*act towards one another in a spirit of brotherhood.*" (Art. 1)

The Shrinking Peace and Global Order

Since the end of the cold war, the international multilateral system seems still unable to prevent conflicts and wars. An increasing number of countries have been infringing the international law, creating, and perpetuating conflicts, directly or through proxies, such as in DRC, Iraq, Syria, Burma, Azerbaijan, Armenia, Ukraine, Sudan, Israel and Palestine, among a sad longer list. Many wars causing thousands of victims and hundreds of thousands of displaced and refugee people, are less on the

radars of media and the international community. If there is a lesson to learn from the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, it is that perpetuating conflict and procrastinating peace only lead to further violence, victims, and instability. The current war in Gaza is one of the consequences of the abortion of the Oslo peace accord signed between the Israeli and Palestinian authorities in 1993, based on the two country principles, as agreed, and supported by the international community. It is also the result of the neglect of strategic political investments in building a just peace for the Middle East by several parties since decades. Open conflicts nurture extremism and radical politics, while the innocent citizens who seek to live in peace pay the highest cost.

The three fundamental values of life, peace, and solidarity are dangerously challenged by the current war in the Middle East and the other open conflicts. They lead to unbearable losses and sufferings, growing instability, and global fragility. The international community is failing in transforming the principles of unity and solidarity into an order of peace and security. The multilateral system is blocked and failing its mediation role. Therefore, the UN's role is increasingly reduced to the humanitarian management of wars' consequences. However, the "United Nations" is supposed to be more than the sum of the members of the UN. It represents an ethical principle and a political will of making international peace and human solidarity as a common priority. This fact is currently challenged by the antagonist and double standard attitudes of many governments and global major players.

In addition to the political fragility, peace and lives are increasingly threatened by the rise of national, ethnic, and religious hatred, fuelled by a tsunami of disinformation. Antisemitic propaganda and hatred as well as Islamophobic prejudices are experiencing a disturbing new boom in several national contexts. We are concerned by the global spread of a climate of suspicion and fear. The dehumanisation narrative used by senior politicians in the context of the war on Gaza, and the blind-eye turned by many world leaders on the human cost of the war among the Palestinians, are setting the stage to societal divides and tensions in many societies. It is a pity to see in such a crucial moment, this ethically poor political leadership. We, however, praise the awareness and engagement of many citizens, journalists, academics, societal and humanitarian activists, and leaders, across the world, publicly denouncing the terror and war and its awful human cost.

Renewing the International Commitments

We are mourning and crying our indignation, in solidarity with the families of all victims and those who are terrorised by the war and its possible consequences on their lives and their beloved ones. However, we cannot despair as we continue to be committed to our core values of life, peace, and solidarity. The time now is for courageous engagement and responsible leadership. In a global world, we can all be to some degree complicit in this situation. We shall all take steps to stop wars, save lives, and build inclusive peace.

We reiterate our call for an immediate ceasefire in Gaza and the whole region, with the release of all hostages and those arbitrarily detained, and the removal of all obstruction for the provision of humanitarian aid to all in need.

We ask the international community, with the major players in the region, to work on a de-escalation plan and relaunch the talks about an achievable, sustainable, and just peaceful resolution of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and put an end to the suffocating occupation and life conditions in the Palestinian territories.

We urge the international community to collectively renewing the commitment to the adherence to international law, and the related universal legal and ethical frameworks. This shall go in parallel with the acceleration of the process of reforming the United Nations system, to become capable to assume

its responsibility of successfully mediating conflicts and preventing wars, to stop the increasingly destructive and growing trend of bloody armed conflicts.

Responsible Leadership of Higher Education Institutions

We, as a global network for ethics in higher education and policy engagement, invite our constituency and partners, and especially the higher education institutions, to protect their role of being a safe space for free thinking, open debate, and responsible engagement for peace and human solidarity. Academic institutions and think-tanks have a crucial responsibility in contributing to an understanding of the root causes of the existing conflicts and for identifying the fragile zones which require further attention, while deconstructing and denouncing all forms of manipulation, brainwashing, hatred, xenophobia, and discrimination. This may require courageous self-criticism of and awareness about any possible role in the polarised framework. History has taught us that biases can insidiously exist in curricula, dominant narratives, or policies, which require exceptional lucidity in times of crisis.

We, finally, engage ourselves to defend the shrinking space of dialogue across boundaries, despite the deep divisions entrenched by war and conflicts. We will continue convening different actors from academia, civil society, political institutions, faith-based organisations, and multilateral system to uphold and promote together the shared values that protect our humanity from further bloody conflicts, and foster justice and dignity for all. We also consider increasing our contribution to the development of resources and spaces for inclusive peace and responsible citizenship education, and post-war healing and reconciliation process, leading in the long-term to replace hatred and fear by mutual trust and common engagement.

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