

International Solidarity Student Activism for Peace

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The catastrophe of increased war and violent conflicts around the world has galvanized youth to engage in international solidarity actions in universities around the world. The core foundation of these movements is frustration with the non-responsiveness of states, academic universities, and non-state actors (including corporations) to uphold peace and human rights as core universal values by which to guide their policies and actions.

“Despite increasing polarization and division across the world, and despite the shrinking of civic space, child and youth human rights defenders continue to play an active role in protecting and promoting human rights. Even with pervasive age-based discrimination, there are many examples of child and youth human rights defenders standing up for the rights of individuals and communities.” (A/HRC/55/50)

International Solidarity addresses the “right to have rights” - in an interconnected world, today’s youth hold state and non-state actors accountable for their transnational impact on people’s lives across the globe. The ACLED Conflict Index estimates that 1 in 6 people around the world has been exposed to conflict in 2024. The fact that youth are demanding increased attention to the consequences of non-pursuit of peaceful dialogue as the primary means of conflict resolution and of the expansion of arms trade correlates with actual trends. According to [SIPRI Arms Transfers Database](#), arms exports have increased in a number of States. Calls for divestment or sanctions on delivery of arms due to the risk of serious violations of human rights and international humanitarian standards indicate the salience of creating forums to discuss the due diligence obligations of universities and corporations in an increasingly unstable and violent world.

The UN Charter, Article 1, calls for “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.” Youth are dismayed that the ICJ provisional measures issued (South Africa v. Israel), UN General Assembly Resolution ES-10/22, and UN Security Council Resolution 2728 have had little impact on the humanitarian situation in Palestine. Their actions may be interpreted as an attempt to stand up for the universal norms of peace and human rights as actually requiring practical implementation.

Some have indicated concern that the International Solidarity actions have created an unsafe space for Jewish students. This requires dissemination of human rights to solidarity activists to clarify the scope of peaceful assembly. International Solidarity for Peace movements should

abide by human rights standards regarding the right to peaceful assembly. According to the UN Human Rights Committee, peaceful assembly is to be interpreted in relation to an aim of peace and non-discrimination: "In accordance with article 20 of the Covenant, peaceful assemblies may not be used for propaganda for war (art. 20 (1)), or for advocacy of national, racial or religious hatred that constitutes incitement to discrimination, hostility or violence (art. 20 (2)). The UN has a Rabat Plan of Action on the ban of advocacy of national, racial or religious hatred that recommends a distinction be made between criminally punishable hate speech, hate speech that calls for civil or administrative sanctions, and hate speech that just raises concerns in terms of tolerance, civility and respect for the rights of others.

International Solidarity for peace activists should be allowed to uphold their right to freedom of expression without the threat of arrest, detention, and suspension. The deliberate mischaracterization of their calls on States to end human rights abuses, including violence against women and children, armed conflict, occupation, apartheid, food insecurity, forced migration, environmental degradation and violations of international humanitarian and human rights law (including genocide), among others, should not prevent young people from sharing their political demands and garnering public support for change. Moreover, mechanisms for students to engage in exercises of mutual respect and dialogue should be encouraged.

The UN Special Rapporteur on the right to freedom of peaceful assembly and of association created a toolbox for law enforcement officers in the context of peaceful protests that calls for dialogue before and during the protest, using the least intrusive methods and respect for the principles of participation, accountability, non-discrimination, differentiation and attention to vulnerability and equality.

The Revised Draft Declaration on Human Rights and International Solidarity calls upon States to "agree to take appropriate, transparent and inclusive action to ensure the active, free and meaningful participation of all individuals and peoples, including younger generations, in decision-making processes at the national, bilateral, regional and international levels on matters that affect their enjoyment of solidarity".

Today's youth demand recognition of their call to state and non-state actors to demonstrate responsibility to pursue peace and human rights (including women's rights and the right to a clean, healthy environment). This indicates that International Solidarity actions may be considered signatory vehicles of democracy in the 21st century, including to reduce and or prevent the financing of conflicts.

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