

ISRAEL-PALESTINE: STANDING UP FOR PEACE

As stated by the UN Secretary General, the hostilities in Gaza and Israel have generated unbearable human suffering, physical destruction and collective trauma in Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territory. Therefore, we endorse this call for the international community to take responsibility and use our influence to prevent further escalation and contribute to ending the current crisis.

Universities and science in general cannot shy away from this call to exert, to the best of our ability, our influence to achieve peace in the region for at least three reasons:

1. For the scientific responsibility inherent in our activity to put knowledge at the service of global progress and well-being.
2. For the non-negotiable commitment to the university values of peace, cooperation, democracy and human rights.
3. As a privileged space for rigorous analysis, pluralism and open dialogue.

Based on this firm conviction, we have organized this event, which is a continuation of the actions and commitment undertaken since the beginning of the current crisis. These actions are part of a long tradition of solidarity and scientific involvement in the Mediterranean region in general and the Israel-Palestine conflict specifically. This crisis is one of the most dramatic situations in decades of conflict, and we cannot afford to remain passive.

Thus, in the first phase of the current crisis, we contributed to the positions taken by the many university alliances and organizations of which we are part, such as the ACUP and the CRUE. Along the same lines, from the beginning of this crisis we have made ourselves available to members of our community who were in the region, as well as people from the region who are currently part of our community. Finally, we also initiated institutional actions with the university centers in the region with which we collaborate to learn about their situation given the current crisis and make ourselves available to them.

However, the continued escalation of the current crisis, as well as the decades of conflict and systematic violation of the fundamental principles of international law, lead us to take a step forward in coherence with the previously expressed motives that bind us as an institution, a community and a government. This is particularly urgent given the perpetuation of the abductions and the decision of the International Court of Justice of the United Nations decreeing that Israel must take all measures within its power to prevent genocide.



Faced with this situation, as the highest representative of the University of Barcelona, I would like to express that we would like for:

- 1) Unconditional humanitarian aid be allowed into the territory affected by the war in the Gaza Strip.
- 2) Any form of collective punishment of the civilian population to be avoided.
- 3) All people abducted or unjustly imprisoned to be released.
- 4) A ceasefire should be activated to create the necessary objective conditions for peace negotiations between all parties to the conflict.
- 5) A definite resolution of the conflict to be pursued under the aegis of the international community.

In order to contribute, within our possibilities, to the achievement of the previously mentioned points, we would like to announce that this event is the starting signal for four institutional initiatives that we will launch and lead from the University of Barcelona to be taken on by the Catalan university and research system as a whole:

- a) Launch of a specific line of academic work on the crisis in the Solidarity Observatory, the UB Solidarity Foundation's programme dedicated to monitoring armed conflicts and human rights.
- b) Design and deployment of a solidarity roadmap that allows, in isolation or, preferably, in collaboration with the system as a whole, the implementation of reception, development and training mechanisms for people in the university communities affected by the crisis.
- c) Offer the headquarters and experience of the University of Barcelona, as a reference and neutral institution in the Mediterranean, to host and contribute to the activities that may result from the activation of a negotiation process to achieve a just, lasting and stable peace agreement.
- d) Activation of a specific volunteer programme to, when conditions allow, encourage and support people in our community who want to collaborate in the reconstruction and provision of minimum welfare in a future post-war scenario in the region.
- e) Deployment of institutional and communicative actions for the prevention and eradication of any expression of hatred in general, and Islamophobia or anti-Semitism in particular, incompatible with university values and activity.

Dr. Joan Guàrdia

Rector

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