



Enduring peace in the Anthropocene

May 2024

Message from the co-presidents

The world is witnessing a devastating escalation of violence and suffering in the Middle East, as the conflict between Israel and Hamas has claimed more than 34,000 lives, injured thousands more, displaced hundreds of thousands of people and inflicted irreparable damage to the environment and infrastructure. As members of The Club of Rome, we are deeply concerned about the human and ecological costs of this war, and we urge all parties to cease hostilities and pursue a peaceful and just resolution.

We recognise that this conflict is not an isolated event, but a symptom of the deeper crises that afflict our global civilisation in the Anthropocene. The root causes of war are complex and intertwined, involving political, economic, social, cultural, and psychological factors, as well as the pressures of population growth, resource depletion, climate change and environmental degradation. These challenges require systemic and holistic responses, not military interventions that only exacerbate the problems and create new ones.

In the past seven months, we have engaged in ongoing conversations within our network to reflect on the role and responsibility of The Club of Rome in addressing the issues of peace and war. We have shared our diverse perspectives and experiences, and we have questioned the effectiveness and appropriateness of issuing statements on specific events, such as the one we made in response to the Russian invasion of Ukraine in 2020. We have also explored the potential and limitations of our vision of enduring peace in the Anthropocene, which calls for a radical transformation of our values, institutions, and behaviours towards a culture of cooperation, compassion, and care for all life on Earth.

As a result of these discussions, we have decided to adopt a different approach for this publication. Instead of presenting a unified voice or a single statement, we have invited many of our members to express their own views and concerns on peace and war in their own words and styles. We believe that this diversity of voices reflects the richness and complexity of our global network, and that it can open up more space for dialogue and learning within and beyond The Club of Rome. We also hope that it can inspire and encourage more of our members to join the conversation and to take action for peace in their own contexts and capacities.

This publication is a first collection of essays on peace and war in the Anthropocene and we thank the authors for their contributions. We consider these essays as works in progress, rather than definitive statements, and we welcome feedback and suggestions from our readers. We have invited other members who wish to share their thoughts and insights on this topic to submit their essays and will release future editions of this publication. In this respect, we plan a number of different activities in the coming months to facilitate further discussion and exchange on the prospects and challenges of peace in the Anthropocene and the dangers of growing conflict across the globe as we face future shocks and stresses from continued poly crises, and we welcome your participation.

We envision this publication as a step towards a more comprehensive and impactful report on peace and war in the Anthropocene as part of our contribution to the global dialogue and action for a peaceful and sustainable future. We believe that The Club of Rome has a unique and vital role to play in this endeavour, as a network of independent thinkers and changemakers who are committed to the common good of humanity and the planet. We invite you to join us in this journey, and to share your ideas, experiences and hopes with us.



Paul Shrivastava and Sandrine Dixon-Declève
Co-presidents of The Club of Rome

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Systemic actions for peace in Gaza and the world

by Dr. Paul Shrivastava, co-president, The Club of Rome, and Professor, The Pennsylvania State University

We have been watching in horror the Israel-Hamas war unfold, even as wars in Ukraine-Russia, Somalia-Darfur continue. Conflicts among humans are escalating, as the conflict of humans with nature brings us collectively to a crisis of survival. Since the October 7, 2023, Hamas attack and Israel's military response, attention has turned to conditions on the ground in Gaza. Many members of the Club of Rome have expressed their deep concern for the intense suffering of victims. The background of each conflict is very different, but escalating violence on children and women, and extensive environmental damages are common to them. This is challenging our collective sense of what it means to be human, of human rights and human dignity. In our professional roles we do not have advantageous standing to intervene in the immediate hot decisions of wars. But as individuals we do have the ability to affect the second and third circles of influence that shape the broader context of wars.

I recognise that throughout history countries/peoples have had different reasons for and responses to wars. Cultural differences trigger misunderstandings and tensions. Conflicts are no longer regional affairs. They are global points of interest yet judged from people's own cultural/historical and mostly local lenses. Like climate change, armed conflicts are simultaneously global and local. There is an urgent need to discover and create global conditions, institutions and human consciousness that will create lasting peace. Our world needs physical, emotional, and spiritual health and wellbeing, and rejection of all wars. If we do not stop fighting, the currently regional Israel-Hamas conflict may bring us to the brink of another catastrophic world war. The time to make the right decisions and take the right actions is now.

It does not benefit the cause of peace to pass judgment on which side is right or wrong, or to focus on geopolitical analysis. What we need is imagining a more human approach to avoid wars all together, and stopping the spiral of violence that they beget. Human values connect us as humanity. A deep human response would be for humanity to return to a higher state of conscience and create viable fair ways of eliminating all wars and seeking peaceful sustainable development worldwide. For the Club of Rome, this is a foundational truth. Peace and development were a key concern of our founder Aurelio Peccei, who in December 1983 organised a conference on "Development in a World of Peace" in Bogota, Colombia. I believe that enduring peace requires internal peace within one's self, both emotional and intellectual, and peace with nature. I do not have a plan for eliminating all wars, but I cannot be indifferent to the human suffering of wars. The current situation in Gaza, Ukraine and Somalia call for reiterating our common values, and advocating for systemic humanitarian actions.

Values

The core values of human life, human dignity and human rights are well captured in the 1945 UN Charter, which in its preamble states,

"WE THE PEOPLES OF THE UNITED NATIONS DETERMINED to save succeeding generations from the scourge of war, which twice in our lifetime has brought untold sorrow to mankind, and to reaffirm faith in fundamental human rights, in the dignity and worth of the human person, in the equal rights of men and women and of nations large and small, and to establish conditions under which justice and respect for the obligations arising from treaties and other sources of international law can be maintained, and to promote social progress and better standards of life in larger freedom,"

With these values it is possible to have peace that is necessary for a just and sustainable world as imagined by the UN Agenda 2030. Sustainable Development Goal # 16 specifically seeks to promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all, and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels.

Peace as a fundamental human right. Positive peace is not just the absence of war, it is a regenerative practice in the service of life. Peace is the continuous task of arresting the disorder in communities, seeking to do positive good, and creating the conditions for health and life to flourish. Such regenerative peace requires an infrastructure that addresses both causes and consequences of wars, to eliminate all wars and their preconditions. We must strive to imagine a world without war.

Future wars will occur on an Earth already facing a series of unprecedented challenges, including risks of nuclear annihilation, emerging pandemics, and climate change. The Covid-19 pandemic caused 3 million excess deaths worldwide. Climate change is already causing five million excess deaths per year globally. The conflict along the India-China border threatens the delicate ecological balance of all of South Asia. The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change has pointed out for the past thirty years that the planet is heating up and facing multiple tipping points. AI is upending many industries and public leaders have expressed concerns about it being an existential threat to humans. In the face of these challenges, we must reiterate the primacy of the value of human life and human rights.

We must also reject ideologies of hate and fascism that are gaining ground in many countries and underlie wars and social conflicts. We need to get beyond the narrow and parochial approaches of nation-states and regional alliances to build unified planetary solutions. We need to reject political leadership that caters to narrow local conditions and seeks short-term solutions in favour of long term planetary stability.

Actions

We must all denounce all wars, current and future, and call for the immediate cessation of the Israel-Hamas war, to stop the unfolding genocidal conditions that are being investigated by the International Court of Justice. It must be followed by the immediate release of hostages, and humanitarian aid to all victims on both sides, for reconstructing lives, dealing with trauma, and building an enduring infrastructure of peace. I also call for an end to the Ukraine-Russia war and the war in Somalia-Darfur, and addressing the many different layers of violence. They are interconnected on a system level of poly crises. Wars are an obsolete and dangerous tool for resolving modern-day conflicts. Wars do not resolve problems. With devastating effectiveness modern weapons kill and maim unbearable numbers, creating an unacceptable burden upon the survivors, and perpetuating cycles of violence.

We need to fully understand the systems and culture of war and killing that we live in today. Key support for our war system comes from the global military-industrial network and global defence expenditures, which doubled from \$1.1 trillion in 2001 to \$2.2 trillion in 2022, accounting for 2.3% of the global GDP. Enabling these war expenditures are extractive fossil and mining economies, nationalist jingoistic politics, religious and linguistic rivalries, and patriarchic values. We need transdisciplinary actions that would help resolve international and intergroup conflicts without resorting to violence or oppression, including;

Economic peace. Aurelio Peccei, said - if people are free from want and fear, the world will be in peace. Therefore, a high priority is to cooperatively build economic peace that provides a decent living for everyone, especially those in the current conflict zones of Gaza-Israel, Ukraine-Russia, Africa, India, China and other parts of the world. Preconditions of peace are a stable economy, good governance, employment, education, trade, and entrepreneurship. When healthy societies flourish, the seeds of war do not sprout. Economic peace can foster the consciousness and institutions that are conducive to individual health and wellbeing, freedom, and human rights of all people.

Humanitarian logistics. Post war humanitarian efforts are rarely successful in restoring war torn communities. There are too few resources and aid infrastructures lack capacity. The faltering post-war humanitarian efforts need a stronger aid infrastructure, more major humanitarian groups, greater funding support and higher logistical efficiencies. Nations would be well served by establishing specific government agencies responsible for humanitarian relief actions. Humanitarian agencies such as the Red Cross, the Green Crescent, UNWRA and Medcin Sans Frontiers, are key life support organisations with operational capacities that must be vastly expanded.

A just peace, memorialising victims, processing trauma. For peace to endure and be trusted, the peace infrastructure should include free and fair local, national and international judiciaries, courts of equity and arbitration, and expanded International Courts of Justice, modelled on a global constitution that protects human rights, while employing an independent, impartial judiciary. Memory and remembrance are a key aspect of long-term emotional and cognitive healing of victims. Nations need to build cultural institutions for memorialising peace, and war victims. South Africa's Truth and Reconciliation Commission offers a model for enduring civic forgiveness. They could also infuse current institutions, museums, monuments, memorials and memory discourses, to reinsert values of peace into these concrete situations. Individuals and institutions can be encouraged to hold space for and give voice to victims.

Humans are living war traumas of past centuries. There are ways and tools for collective action to process the trauma of wars. We encourage establishing centres for healing from the trauma of war, and centres of reconciliation, where healthier norms can be established and learned, that could lead to improved understanding. Neither war nor oppression are acceptable in a civilised world, nor is retribution a meaningful, much less useful, response.

Peace as health. Peace can be advanced by understanding it as a health issue on multiple levels. Healthy people at peace with themselves, healthy neighbourhoods, healthy communities, healthy societies and healthy nations are the best antidote to war. Violence is a disease that must be stopped from spreading. War and violence are the end stages of imbalance and corruption of health at all these levels. Understanding war as an imbalance like a disease, allows us to treat it as malfunctioning of individuals and societies. This disease can be prevented from arising and spreading, by creating the conditions that enable personal and social health and balance to flourish. This will require the consciousness and institutions that conduce to individual and collective peaceful health and political and economic wellbeing, freedom, and human rights in all the nations.

Empowerment of women and youth. Men and war have a deep historical, cultural and emotional connection which is at the root of patriarchal systems undergirding our war culture. Building a peace infrastructure must start from the assumption that as humans most of us are inherently relational and responsive beings. The human condition is one of connectedness, of our interdependence with nature and with others. We need a different ethic of care that integrates across self and others and integrates reason with emotion. Eliminating war and building cultures of peace will require transformative empowerment of women and youth in all walks of life, that can foster deep ethics of care and regenerative relationships. Youth (under 30 years age) that are already 50% of the world population, are disproportionately victims and actors in armed conflicts. The UN Security Council's resolutions (2250, 2419, 2535) peace and security agenda acknowledges youth's special role in peacebuilding processes.

I am deeply concerned about the continuing war in Gaza, the suffering of victims, and the destruction of the natural environment. I am also concerned about the potential of this war becoming a regional conflict. I invite friends and partners to not take peace for granted, and actively engage in eliminating wars, and building a future of peace and wellbeing of all on a healthy planet.



WE THE PEOPLES OF THE UNITED NATIONS

determined

to save succeeding generations from the scourge of war, which twice in our lifetime has brought untold sorrow to mankind, and

to reaffirm faith in fundamental human rights, in the dignity and worth of the human person, in the equal rights of men and women and of nations large and small, and

to establish conditions under which justice and respect for the obligations arising from treaties and other sources of international law can be maintained, and

to promote social progress and better standards of life in larger freedom,

and for these ends

to practice tolerance and live together in peace with one another as good neighbors, and

to unite our strength to maintain international peace and security, and

to ensure, by the acceptance of principles and the institution of methods, that armed force shall not be used, save in the common interest, and

to employ international machinery for the promotion of the economic and social advancement of all peoples,

have resolved to combine our efforts to accomplish these aims.

accordingly, our respective Governments, through representatives assembled in the city of San Francisco, who have exhibited their full powers found to be in good and due form, have agreed to the present Charter of the United Nations and do hereby establish an international organization to be known as the United Nations.

U N I T E D N A T I O N S

PREAMBLE TO THE CHARTER OF THE UNITED NATIONS

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Fundamentalism and extremism as fire accelerants

by Dr.-Ing. Dr. theol. [Christian Berg](#), member of The Club of Rome, and Honorary Professor, Clausthal University of Technology

Witnessing the terror, atrocities and suffering of innocent people and escalating violence in an entire world region is breathtaking. Helplessly and aghast we watch the unfolding of what seems inevitable in the logic of the parties involved.

The background of the current war in Gaza is complex and has a long history. Any analysis and evaluation will require intimate knowledge of the local conditions, cultures, internal logic of the parties involved, much more than I can claim to have.

What is the role of religion in this conflict, is it a conflict between Islam and Judaism? I do not think so. It is not a conflict between different religions. However, religious fundamentalism and political extremism play a crucial role; they act as fire accelerants. Fundamentalists become so obsessed with their worldview, with their particular interpretation of their belief system and their political goals that they disregard any other viewpoint and are insensitive to the suffering they cause.

In one way or another, the conflict in Gaza is aggravated by fundamentalists from the monotheistic religions of Judaism, Christianity and Islam – but fundamentalism also occurs in Hinduism and Buddhism, and it is often coupled with nationalism and populism. Despite their doctrinal differences fundamentalist currents in different creeds have surprising commonalities. Understanding those commonalities, the main characteristics of fundamentalism, we might be able to antagonise it or at least mitigate its harm. Fundamentalism is characterised by a binary logic, exclusive in its claims. It often exhibits rigid moral attitudes, intolerance against other belief or value systems, high esteem of strong leadership and an often questionable use of rationality, which does not accept general rules of reasoning. Furthermore, fundamentalists often have an extremist political agenda and sometimes use violence to reach their goals.

The terrorist attacks of Islamic fundamentalists have brought fear and loathing in many parts of the world in the recent decades. Of these the attacks of September 11, 2001 and October 7, 2024 were particular hard-bitten and cruel. Murdering innocent people cannot be justified by any means. Never.

When a former US president responded to the terrorist attacks of 9/11 by saying “if you are not with us, you are against us”, he evidenced the same kind of binary logic as his adversaries. When fundamentalist evangelicals in the US tolerate, or even support political leaders who bend and neglect the truth in a shocking and unprecedented way, it looks like a daunting backslide into pre-modern, if not pre-historic thinking. Public discourse must rest on a common ground, on the acceptance of solidly evidenced truths, on some kind of rational reasoning. However, in a fundamentalistic view even best-established scientific evidence is disregarded if it does not fit into their own worldview. This irrational moment, the neglect of basic facts, and the tendency to accept the nonsense of ‘alternative facts’ demonstrate underlying disruptive forces: When the very basis of reasoning, the most basic rules of rationality are not accepted anymore, we lose any ground for mitigating different points of view. On which grounds shall agreements between conflicting parties then be reached? On sheer power? Can this ever lead to a peaceful coexistence of human beings?

It is evident, that fundamentalism also exists in Judaism, like in extremist religious Zionism. Proponents proclaim Israel’s ‘exclusive and indisputable right to all parts of the Land of Israel’ – despite the fact that settlements for example in the West Bank, are violating international law. Extremist politicians, even members of the Israel government, provoked the Palestinian people by neglecting their sheer existence by saying there is ‘no such thing as a Palestinian people’.

Why has fundamentalism become so attractive to many, and what can we do against it?

For most people in the world, life has dramatically changed in just a few generations. How we live, what we learn, whom we trust, what we aspire, what we consume – everything is different today compared to the times of our grandparents. We use technologies our grandparents would not even have dreamed of. Consumerism has become the prevailing paradigm, global brands dominate people’s preferences, multinational corporations’ value chains spread across the entire globe, automated algorithms at the stock markets shift property of the rich world within seconds, driving commodity prices and affecting the lives of billions of people. Lifestyles are changing, trust in long-established institutions is eroding, long-held convictions are being challenged, societies are no longer as uniform as they used to be. Life has become complex and difficult, causing feelings of insecurity, anxiety and fear of deprivation and loss. This is the perfect matrix for fundamentalism and populism, promising clear answers, guidance and stability. With an increasing number of people relying on social media as their prime source of information, no wonder that fundamentalist messages resonate in the respective echo chambers, fueling heated discussions and poking aggressions.

Fundamentalism is a reaction against the complexities of (post-)modernity. It offers simple solutions for complex problems. But that has never worked. It is creating division and tension where peaceful coexistence has been practiced for hundreds of years. Fundamentalism is a distortion, a perversion of religion. The old Latin phrase *corruptio optimi pessima* is true – the depravity of the best is the worst. Moreover, fundamentalism is often related to questions of power, those in power utilise religious fundamentalism for their own vested interests.

We urgently need to reflect on the question of how our own value and belief systems relate to those of others and how their peaceful co-existence in our world can be conceived. What can be done, what needs to be done to fight religious fundamentalism?

1. When there seem to be unbridgeable differences because both sides adhere to their rigid fundamentalist convictions, there needs to be a neutral field of rational reasoning and negotiation. This cannot be anything but observing basic human rights, respecting international law and international humanitarian law, and accepting the judges of a neutral international law court.

2. Any religious believer, regardless of confession, should observe their own tradition and reveal and argue against fundamentalist convictions. This is even more important because bullheaded fundamentalists are more likely to listen to believers of their own tradition – even though they might consider them apostates. I doubt that any religious tradition justifies violence and cruelty against innocent civilians. Religious leaders, in particular, are called to study how their tradition can speak to the void which fundamentalists claim to fill. Rather than mindless repetition of phrases they should delve into the underlying truth of their historical tradition and seek to understand how that truth can be appropriated in today’s world.

3. Prejudices and preconceived opinions about others thrive when people have never met personally. Social media bubbles reinforce separation in the physical world, boosting biases and hatred. It is in such bubbles that preconceived ideas can blossom. It is always easy to judge on the caricature of somebody else. Quite often, however, that judgement reveals more about the judge than about the person condemned.

Is it not a sad irony that this hard-fought region contains ‘holy land’ for all the three great monotheistic religions? How can fellow humans who confess to have parts of their heritage in common fight each other in such ways? Hatred will always give birth to more hatred. The spiral of hatred and violence must be broken. Responsible leaders on all sides must prevent any further escalation and seek humanitarian support and a humane solution for an enduring and peaceful coexistence of all people in this region immediately – anything else will be lose-lose for all of us.

How can today’s ‘holy land’ become the promised land to all people who have been living there for decades? How can a future be conceived, in which people can peacefully live together and in harmony with their neighbours? Is the war in the ‘holy land’, which is so densely populated, not also a symbol for the severely battled conflict of so many divergent interests on our shrinking planet with its limited resources? In sad and violent times like these, it is needed more than ever to uphold the vision of a peaceful co-existence of all people in this region. Maybe it is such a peaceful co-existence by which the holiness of the land will be enacted.

Those in fundamentalist circles usually highly esteem worship. However, worship cannot substitute justice and ritual cannot substitute moral. This was one of the key messages of Amos, one of ancient Israel’s prophets, almost 2,800 years ago. Venerated by both Jews and Christians as one of the early prophets of ancient Israel, Amos harshly condemned his contemporaries and the disconnect between their words of worship and their immoral, unfair practice of life. The neglect of the poor and the oppression of the needy is a recurring criticism raised by the Hebrew prophets. Any radical, extremist view in the Judeo-Christian tradition must be calibrated by this measure.

“Let justice roll on like a river, righteousness like a never-failing stream!”

(Amos 5, 24)

I can only speak within my own tradition – but I’m convinced that religion can and must play a much more constructive role in these critical times of conflict. It is the joint responsibility of all humans and of believers in particular, regardless of their religion, to strive for such a constructive role and to put religious rabble-rousers into place.



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We are one human race: War and conflicts as symptoms of our self-negation

by Mamphela Ramphele, honorary president of The Club of Rome and chair of the Archbishop Tutu Intellectual Property Trust

The world renowned Palestinian born, Professor Edward Said's words speak aptly to our world today, including to us as members of The Club of Rome:

“Nothing in my view is more reprehensible than those habits of the mind in the intellectual that induce avoidance, **that characteristic turning away from difficult and principled position, which you know to be the right one, but which you decide not to take.** You do not want to appear too political; you are afraid of seeming controversial; you want to keep a reputation for being balanced, objective, moderate; your hope is to be asked back, to consult, to be on a board or prestigious committee, and so to remain within reasonable mainstream ... Personally I have encountered them in **one of the toughest of all contemporary issues, Palestine**, where fear of speaking out about one of the greatest injustices in modern history has hobbled, blinkered, muzzled many who know the truth and are in a position to serve it.”

In 2023 The Club of Rome in its updated Strategic Framework renewed its Essence as to be at the leading edge of systems change. The world system around us is changing and in desperate need of leadership from that leading edge of systems change. The urgent question we face as The Club of Rome today is how do we show up as leaders at the leading edge of systems change not afraid to not only to leave questions on the table of human community conversations, but insist on not avoiding serious conversations that might upset the status quo?

The Israeli War on Palestine did not start after 7 October 2023. It was set in motion by the Balfour Declaration signed in 1917 between British Foreign Secretary, James Balfour and Zionist Jewish leader, Lord Rothschild, to give to Jewish people land that did not belong to either the British or the Jewish people. The land belonged to Palestinian people, the descendants of Ismael, the son of Abraham. Occupation of Palestinian land is at the heart of this war and conflicts since the end of World War II.

It is curious that there was less controversy about making a statement about Russia's War on Ukraine than it has been Israel's War on Palestinians. The outrage of Russia's use of its muscle to humiliate and undermine Ukrainian sovereignty deserves the condemnation of freedom and human dignity revering people of the world. Russia deserved to be condemned, including by The Club of Rome. The State of Israel's disproportionate response to the outrageous attack by Hamas on 7 October 2023, has been met with unprecedented military support by America and European powers, and undignified silence by the majority of intellectuals, including shamefully, The Club of Rome. Why?

Some European leaders, including the President of the European Commission Ursula von der Leyen, proudly pronounced that Ukrainians were as blue eyed as themselves, therefore deserved to be defended. Many of us as democrats and freedom loving human beings believing in the dignity of all people, condemned, and continue to condemn Russian's attack on Ukraine as unjust and violating all the precepts of international law and the UN International Human Rights Conventions. We continue to stand with Ukraine in its assertion of its sovereignty and human right to freedom. Human beings are born to freedom, and strive always to assert and defend their freedom. To be human is to be free.

I am a citizen of a country and continent that have seen the worst of the horrors of slavery, colonial conquest and neo-colonialism. I am also a witness to, and participant in the unfolding of the power of self-liberation. Once the human spirit has been liberated from imposed identities and indignities of “othering” it becomes an unstoppable force for good imbuing those self-liberated with the infinite power to simply be. “Being” human becomes a more sacred asset than “having” all the material assets that the world can offer.

South Africans overcame a powerful apartheid/colonial machine despite the latter being supported by the Western powers who chose human rights abusers above those fighting for their rights to regain their human dignity and the lands of their ancestors, to secure sustainable futures for their children’s children. Amazingly, Nelson Mandela’s generation designated as terrorists by Western powers for decades, died as heroes for negotiating settlements that recognised that there be no peace without justice. This turn-around in fortune from terrorists to legitimate freedom fighters, was acknowledged by President Mandela as having been catalysed by the fearlessness of the generation of Black Consciousness Movement in the 1968-1980s.



Credit: Nelson Mandela. Av Ukjent. CC BY SA 3.0

Human beings are born to be free within interconnected, interdependent and mutually supportive relationships within the web of life. The emotional investments in human relationships at the personal, professional, and political levels are such that fractures extract a very heavy price from both sides of the broken relationship. Human beings are at their best when they are in supportive loving relationships. At the heart of the wars and conflicts in our world are acts that betray or violate the inalienable human rights to dignity, freedom, and basic essentials of life. Most of the most bitter wars and conflicts tend to be amongst those closely related where betrayal hurts the most.

The role of Britain, the USA, and Europe in supporting the original betrayal of Palestinian people by supporting occupation of their ancestral land by Jews who had long migrated from the region, is the original sin in the current Israeli/Palestinian struggle. The power of the Jewish lobby starting with Lord Rothschild, and continuing with the USA based Jews, is what has initiated, sustained, and turned a blind eye to the violations of the rights of Palestinian people and their humiliation in the land of their ancestors. Humiliation of any people triggers the worst instincts in them, but also hurts the violators. Racists become lesser beings than non-racists; sexists and misogynists diminish their own humanity, because our humanity is defined by the quality of our relationships. The October 7, 2023 attack by Hamas was an outrageous act by people responding to the outrage of occupation and daily humiliation. The original sin has to be acknowledged and amends be made to restore the dignity of all.

Peace is only possible when we recognise that we are one human race. Science and our own instincts tell us that we are inextricably interconnected and interdependent within the web of life on the only planet – Mother Earth. Violation of one, violates us all. We have all the resources and capacity to create a world where we can all thrive together as a human race within a sustainable Mother Earth.

To restore humanity, stop the genocide and make Israel accountable

by Chandran Nair, Founder and CEO, Global Institute for Tomorrow and Member of The Club of Rome

“If you are neutral in situations of injustice,
you have chosen the side of the oppressor.”

Archbishop Desmond Tutu

In Gaza, the echoes of violence have reverberated every single day for months. We are witnessing the erasure of an entire society in real-time, television cameras rolling, live-streamed, into living rooms across the planet, as children watch other children being killed.

Innocent Palestinian children and women continue to be slaughtered daily while the very foundations of society – hospitals, schools, power stations, factories, water supply infrastructure – are systematically destroyed by the most powerful military alliance in the world. This is a military alliance led by Israel and the USA, supported by other Europeans, mainly the UK, Germany and France. It is a modern military empire that has written itself into the history books with its moral vacuum. But it will have nowhere to hide when the truth is fully revealed, supported by thousands of pictures and videos documenting the destruction of Palestine and its inhabitants.

The repeated global calls for peace and a ceasefire have been ignored by the agents of this assault, hellbent on revenge, committing war crimes in the process. So how can a lasting peace be secured amid such a fraught situation?

It begins with a recognition of what so many have knowingly shied away from doing: classifying the premeditated slaughter of tens of thousands for what it really is – a genocide.

Through The Club of Rome – an institution that has prided itself on calling out inconvenient truths of grave magnitude – there is an opportunity to put this on the record. There is also the opportunity to bring attention to the fact that so many institutions and public figures - especially in the West - remain eerily silent for fear of being charged with the lame tag of being anti-semitic simply for standing up against a government that has oppressed Palestinians for decades and which is now engaged in systematic ethnic cleaning under the pretext of self-defence. The pursuit of an enemy in a war does not under international law permit a scorched earth policy. It is time to fight back on behalf of the thousands of innocent children killed and make sure we mean, “never again”.

And amidst the humanitarian disaster, a disquieting disparity has become apparent: while the suffering of the Palestinian people pierces the global consciousness, the response of Western governments to the architects of this slaughter remains woefully inadequate and often downright inhumane. There seems to be no Western-backed coalition of the willing to stop the slaughter of Palestinians, unlike the furious reaction to the war in Ukraine.

However, indignation in isolation cannot chart the course towards an enduring peace. The pressing question that demands the attention of all opponents of repression and crimes against humanity is this: How can the world cultivate a lasting resolution to this conflict in the Middle East and who should lead it going forward given the complicity of the West in the catastrophe? There are three aspects to consider.



Credit: Palestinian News & Information Agency (Wafa) in contract with APImages, CC BY-SA 3.0, via Wikimedia Commons

Internationally recognise the truth of genocide

The first step towards a sustainable and lasting resolution necessitates a unified stance from the international community. This both means and requires the involvement of the global majority, not another disingenuous process led by the usual suspects from the West.

As mentioned, this begins with an honest acknowledgment, shared by all nations including the United States and its Western allies, of the gravity of the situation in Gaza and that this is nothing short of a genocide, perpetrated by the state of Israel.

The report by the UN Special Rapporteur provides a crucial foundation for such recognition. It concludes, based on the Israeli government's intention to inflict collective punishment, the high civilian death toll, targeting of densely populated areas, and restrictions on humanitarian aid as well as forced starvation, that "reasonable grounds exist to believe the threshold indicating Israel's commission of genocide is met."

The statistics paint a chilling picture: Israel has unleashed 25,000 tons of explosives on Gaza, equivalent to the destructive power of two nuclear bombs. Over 30,000 Palestinians have lost their lives, including more than 13,000 children. An additional 12,000 are presumed dead, and 71,000 individuals have been wounded, many left with life-altering injuries. The assault has set records for the number of children, women, doctors, nurses, teachers and aid-workers killed in a short period. Residential areas have not been spared, with 70% of them lying in ruins. The conflict has uprooted 80% of the population, forcing them into displacement en masse.

Even typically pro-Western organisations like Human Rights Watch and Amnesty International have raised strong concerns about Israel's actions, suggesting potential genocidal elements or hallmarks.

South Africa, a country still bearing the deep wounds of apartheid and human rights violations, did the global community a service by bringing Israel before the International Court of Justice (ICJ), accusing it of genocide. Despite Israel's attempts to dismiss the case, the ICJ's panel of 17 judges chose not to do so. Instead, they issued a ruling that Israel must take measures to prevent genocide against Palestinians in Gaza, ensure the delivery of basic services and humanitarian aid, and deter and penalise any incitement to commit genocide. Would the court have issued such a directive if there wasn't substantial evidence of genocide to begin with?

Therefore, the assertion that Israel is committing genocide is now broadly accepted and is no longer dismissed as an unfounded allegation. The constant flood of deeply incriminating and painfully visual evidence has offered a burden of proof that will be hard to argue against in a court of international law. A significant portion of the global community already holds this belief. The ongoing catastrophe is visible to all, and the denial by the United States and its Western allies does not negate its occurrence, it only deepens the global resentment and loss of respect towards these Western powers.

The architects must face punitive action

Secondly, it is imperative that those within the Israeli government who have perpetrated this crime, along with their Western accomplices must be held accountable for its actions. Those responsible for this genocide must be subjected to the due process of international law. If not, the world will enter a new era in which international law lies irrelevant when it comes to crimes against humanity. Gaza would become the precedent that makes it very clear to the global majority that the West does not hold itself accountable to international law and dictates what is right and wrong, driven by its self-interests to maintain its global hegemony. This form of Western/white privilege in international rules-setting and enforcement must be buried in the ashes of Gaza once and for all.

This process will trigger a sequence of actions aimed at conclusively ending Israel's illegal occupation and oppression of Palestine. It will crucially curtail the economic and military support it has received from its Western allies over the years, which has perverted its sense of its own painful history and stymied appreciation to co-exist with Palestinians and its Arab neighbours.

Such a process will divest Israel of its much-abused privileges and the impunity that has facilitated its acts of violence and prolonged occupation. A carefully designed and targeted sanctions package will have to be part of this process, focused on military assistance, preventing Israel from gaining access to arms and exporting its own military technology and equipment to others.

Naturally, in terms of safeguarding Israel, an international security umbrella led by the UN must be established to uphold the country's security and ensure it is not threatened in any way as long-term peace is built, which will take a generation at least. The sanctions package should also impose restrictions on Israel's ability to engage with the wider world, effectively instituting a boycott. This would include banning Israel from participating in international sports and cultural events including the Olympics and soccer World Cup - as was imposed on apartheid South Africa and Russia - reinforcing its status as a pariah state for its crimes against humanity.

However, it will be important to remember that the sanctions should not be imposed indiscriminately on the Israeli public, as has been the case with the U.S. and European approach to countries such as Iran, North Korea, Myanmar and Cuba. The sanctions should not target the welfare of citizens and should not escalate to extreme levels. The primary objective of these carefully curated and targeted sanctions is to encourage massive reforms in Israel, make it commit to a long-term peace agreement with the Palestinians as brokered by the UN, prevent its allies from emboldening it to further its destructive path and prevent the Israeli state from destabilising the entire region as it has begun to.

This is neither a novel nor a severe approach; it has been employed in the past. In periods when humanity has witnessed the ravages of war, the pursuit of justice has led to the prosecution of those responsible. This was evident in the Nuremberg and Tokyo trials following World War II, the ICC trials in Cambodia and Kosovo as well as in South Africa's post-apartheid Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC).

Indeed, there are positive outcomes to be found in this. Germany is a prime example. In the aftermath of World War II, the nation emerged as a beacon of how to acknowledge and respond appropriately after committing crimes against humanity. It became a symbol of how a nation should take responsibility for committing genocide against a group of people, the Jews.

Successive German governments took it upon themselves to educate future generations about their past wrongdoings to prevent history from repeating itself. Demilitarisation was also part of the international consensus for both Germany and Japan.

Likewise, future generations of Israelis must come to terms with a similar reality. The acknowledgment of genocide must lead to sincere repentance and reform. It is this model of restorative justice that we should strive to emulate. Once this is accomplished, the international community can devise a plan for peaceful coexistence and hold all parties accountable in the construction of a new framework for peace and prosperity.

The West has forfeited the right to lead peace-making

This leads to the third and critically important point about who leads the process. The United States is not in a position to oversee this process nor is it capable of finding a solution. The responsibility of establishing a framework for peace and prosperity is a collective global effort.

The U.S., through its historical support of the Israeli regime, including supplying weapons and funding this massacre, has forfeited its ability to participate in this process as it is technically complicit in this act of genocide.

Despite the West's propensity to disregard international law, it is crucial the world does not allow it this time and works together to uphold it. Justice must be visibly served, as enduring peace can only be established once the current genocidal leadership in Israel and its various institutions - which have steered the country down a path of self-destruction - are disarmed. The blueprint for lasting peace must include all necessary guarantees for both Israel and the Palestinians, overseen by the UN or a specially established body. Once again, this cannot be led by the U.S. or the West.

A main reason why the U.S. cannot adjudicate this process is the blood on its hands thanks to the proliferation of the military-industrial complex (MIC) and its role in exacerbating the conflict in Gaza. The MIC is a significant component of the U.S. political economy, which stokes geopolitical tensions and enables nations and private entities to instigate and profit from conflict. The MIC blatantly finds the war in Gaza highly profitable.



Credit: IDF Spokesperson's Unit, via Wikimedia Commons

The MIC is quite open about this as well. Executives from weapons companies have publicly expressed their enthusiasm for the profitable opportunities that war presents. One defence executive, attending the biennial Defence and Security Equipment International (DSEI) conference at ExCel London in 2023, candidly told Reuters, “War is good for business.” Leaders from the private sector have been even more explicit. For instance, during a 2021 investor call highlighting the company’s robust growth, Raytheon CEO Greg Hayes stated, “Peace is not going to break out in the Middle East anytime soon. I think it remains an area where we’ll continue to see solid growth.”

Remarkably, the interest in the U.S. in safeguarding Israeli military interests is apolitical in nature. Despite being a deeply divided nation, the U.S. unites in its defence of Israel, a stance agreed upon by both Republicans and Democrats. The root of this support is the significantly large and powerful “evangelical lobby”, which exists on both sides of the political divide. The MIC requires an ideological base to politically support proxy wars, and that base is provided by Christian evangelicals. Because they exist on both sides, and all administrations and politicians must cater to this base, the support of Israel is unconditional.

Just take the Christians United For Israel (CUFI), America’s largest Christian Zionist organisation. They believe that as followers of Christ, they must ensure Washington’s commitment to Israel remains resolute. In 2023, CUFI lobbied for a dozen pro-Israel bills in the House and Senate.

It is untenable and unacceptable that global stability is so unduly influenced by a nation where internal political divisions and the quest for power, driven by amongst other things religious fanaticism, is allowed to exacerbate religious conflicts elsewhere, threatening world peace.

Another reason why the West cannot oversee the peace-building process is because there is a considerable likelihood that the U.S. and its allies may also be implicated alongside Israel. Over 600 legal professionals, academics and retired senior judges, including three former Supreme Court justices and former president Lady Hale, have cautioned that the UK government is violating international law by persisting in its arms supply to Israel.

As such, those who have fuelled the tensions in the past, such as the U.S., are naturally precluded from presiding over the matter. While they can participate in the process, they cannot be the arbiters. The decision must be rendered by an impartial entity composed of the international community, led by the UN and not solely Western nations.

In essence, the genocide must be halted, Israel must be held accountable on a global scale, and it must bear the consequences of this crime. Subsequently, peace must be constructed by the collective international community, not solely by the U.S. or the West, allowing both Israel and Palestine to thrive together. A key step toward this is for Palestine to be admitted as a full member of the United Nations and one can only hope that the U.S. does not veto its current application.

Indeed, many Israelis and Jews around the world who oppose Zionism could be motivated to initiate reform once the charge of genocide is internationally and legally recognised. The journey towards reform and redemption will be protracted, but it will establish the foundation for lasting peace. Such metamorphoses have been observed in the past, in Japan and Germany. Their economies have since ascended to remarkable heights. However, these transformations were not immediate. They were preceded by international acknowledgment, condemnation and punishment for wartime atrocities. Only then were the steps towards restoration embarked upon.

Despite the challenges, with unity and commitment to justice, we can achieve peaceful coexistence. This is our hope, our goal and our legacy.

“Our lives begin to end the day we become silent about the things that matter.”

Dr Martin Luther King.

Beyond patriarchal paradigms: Reimagining peace

by Dr. Petra Kuenkel, member of The Club of Rome and founder of the Collective Leadership Institute

This provocative thought-piece will depart from the current international debate on the ongoing atrocities happening in the Israel/Hamas conflict. It will take a feminist lens, and more specifically a bird's eye perspective on this conflict as one of the predictable processes of dehumanising human beings that is not only typical for patriarchal history, but at the core of patriarchal power pathologies.

Let us first describe the indescribable present: on 7 October 2023, male fighters of Hamas, an organisation stating in their charter that they aim to establish an Islamic Palestinian State in the place of Israel, hence deny the people of Israel their right to exist in the region, attacked an area of Israel bordering Gaza, killed around 1200 human beings, mostly Israeli civilians in an extremely dehumanising way. They also took 240 hostages. As a reaction, the state of Israel launched an ongoing military attack to wipe out Hamas as a terrorist organisation. In the course of these attacks about 35,000 human beings in Gaza have died, the majority of which are women and children, almost the entire population got displaced and or still live in an extremely dehumanising way. The 35000 people in Gaza and the 1200 people in Israel would have been entitled to benefit from the universal human rights declaration, passed by the UN in 1948, stating that the “recognition of the inherent dignity and of the equal and inalienable rights of all members of the human family is the foundation of freedom, justice and peace in the world”. But none of them had a chance to be treated like a member of the human family.

If we could propel ourselves 200 years into the future and had the opportunity to read a feminist analysis of an historic account of what happened in the world during 2023 and 2024, in places that, at that time were named “Israel” and “The Gaza Strip”, we would see people shake their heads in despair and disbelief of another severe manifestation of the degeneration of humanity sliding in their actions into waves of unimaginable atrocities. People would learn from the analysis that, despite the lessons humankind thought to have learned in 1948 from two world wars and a holocaust of unthinkable extent, namely the industrialised killing of 6 million Jews in Germany and other areas in Europe; despite the amazing attempts to build a global space called ‘The United Nations’ with emphasis on the word ‘united’; despite the development of an International Law that would outlaw states committing crimes against humanity; despite the establishment of an International Court of Justice; and despite the achievement of a global commitment to sustainable development in 2015, in which peace stood as central Global Goal – there was too little collective power in the world to prevent the dehumanisation of human beings at scale. The feminist historic analysis would explain that, at the beginning of the 21st century, humankind still lived in a world in which the typical patriarchal pathologies were at work: individual, collective, organisational, institutional and state-led legitimisation of power abuse, in its logical culmination manifested as violence and warfare. The patterns of patriarchal power pathologies had been repeated over centuries. They were pervasive and persistent, but also known and researched. They drove the worlds development, caused climate change and military armament. They made billions of people suffer. The numerous and laudable attempts to shift the human evolutionary paradigm into collective responsibility for the future had not yet yielded the intended results.

Yet patriarchy, the dominance of men over women as a blueprint for any other forms of dominance of some people over others, is not as old as humankind. Ample research shows that it emerged as a societal arrangement about 6,000 to 7,000 years ago, experienced fierce resistance over millennia up until today, but ultimately became the dominant arrangement of societies that we have only overcome to some extent in some countries. It could only be introduced using mechanisms to institute patriarchal power pathologies as normalised societal arrangements.

The *first* and obvious mechanism to introduce and maintain a patriarchal order of societal living is **coercion**. There are as many forms of coercion as there are and have been attempts to establish or ascertain patriarchy as a dominance culture. Coercion requires a variety of dehumanising measures such as violence, murder and mass murder, rape, enslavement, detainment, forced work and genocide. We can see this pattern of power pathologies playing out in the Hamas murderous attacks and Israel's murderous response in Gaza.

The *second* mechanism to reinforce a patriarchal order of societal living is **institutionalisation**. Institutionalisation can be used for the common good and the implementation of human rights, but throughout human history it was also continuously abused. Today it is held in laws, regulatory measures and institutional structures, the military being one of them. The typical contemporary steps towards patriarchal backlash and a resurgence of patriarchal power pathologies are the undermining of the constitutional state, the eroding of democracies, the legitimisation of injustice, and increasing armament. The intention of Hamas to establish an Islamic State is institutionalised power abuse. We also need to remember that Israel as a democracy went through a long phase of unsuccessful people's resistance against a far-right government that increasingly began to undermine the achievements of a democratic constitutional state.

The *third* mechanism to reinforce a patriarchal order of societal living is **gaslighting**. The term 'gaslighting' describes how someone deliberately alters and ultimately shatters another person's self-perception or their perception of others. This happens through lies, attributions, distortions, fabricated allegations, manipulations and insinuations. Today, social media are the perfect technology for such a purpose. Gaslighting is the basis for manipulation, because it makes people insecure, timid and discouraged. If it happens on a collective scale, it becomes the ground on which narratives about perceived enemies or causes of evil are built. Anti-Semitism has always worked and is still working as such a narrative. It has led ordinary people to commit crimes against people or stay silent in the face of mass atrocities against Jewish people. Yet, justifying the mass killing of civilians based on the narrative that they are allegedly used as a 'human shield' by a terror organisation is another example for a dehumanising narrative.

The *fourth* mechanism is the well-known strategy of **divide and rule**. It has worked very well in the history of patriarchal establishment, resurgence and reinforcement, helped to maintain power and does so today. Of course, it is a mechanism that has been applied not only to women, but to all forms of hierarchy and oppression. The strategy is simple: the ruling group is sowing discord and disunity among those that should stay in a subordinate position. This creates divisions among the oppressed, causes different factions to emerge that then are pitted against each other. This prevents any forms of potentially dangerous unified uprising against the patriarchal authorities.

The four mechanisms are intertwined and they all played out in the past and present developments in Israel and Palestine (by far not only in this region). Patriarchal power pathologies, their maintenance, their legitimisation and their continuous enforcement on all sides are at the core of a situation that dehumanises the Israeli hostages to trading objects in power pathologies and dehumanises Palestinians in Gaza to prisoners that no country in the world welcomes as refugees.



Credit: Nathan Fertig, Unsplash.com

With the advent of the UN and the Declaration of Human Rights, there would have been a chance to depart from these pathological power patterns, which, if understood as inherently linked to patriarchal domination, could have helped to predict conflicts, wars and particularly dehumanising atrocities. But nobody bothered to listen to far-sighted strategic futurists. There is still no early warning system in place for patriarchal power pathologies. What history books at the beginning of the 21st century do not teach, is that men behind violent oppressive dominance and dehumanising acts are the product of sanctioned societal and mental structures that rank women, others and enemies as secondary objects, the life of people not important enough to not dehumanise and kill them, and territories a place to conquer. Power, in this androcratic mental structure, is always a necrophilic power. This means the death and dehumanising of other human beings boosts the perception of power of the violent actors, almost like an addiction. What we know from the psychology of oppression is that the act of humiliation, torture and violence works as a psychological transfer of power from the victim to the perpetrator. One could even say, those consumed by their own weaknesses seek to appropriate at any cost the victim's life spirit, its innate power. With each act of dehumanising, tortured confession, with every rape, every killing, every mass murder, the feeling of power shifts from the persecuted to the persecutors, fueling their growth and sustenance. Yet, in their quest to gain power by eliminating human spirit or human life, the perpetrators unwittingly obliterate the very knowledge that could carry us into a different future.

Most societies have failed to identify power pathologies as aberrations of human behavior. Too few people understand that these regressive societal trajectories ultimately culminate in warfare, the epitome of male pathology, stripping men and women of their humanity and reducing many women to mere objects that become victims of rape and mass atrocities.

It is heart-breaking that the conflict between Israel and Hamas fits the description of power pathologies of Hanna Ahrend, the political scientist and journalist who has lived from 1906 to 1975, and is one of the best-known critics of the conventional definitions of power as domination, manipulation and coercion. As a woman and a Jew, she grappled with the dehumanising realities of power dynamics, particularly amidst the unleashed terror of the Nazi regime, compelling her flight from Germany. These harrowing encounters deeply influenced her perspective, leading her to discern between power and violence. She posited that effective power necessitates resonance and relationality, signifying a shared understanding of its impact among individuals. Violence, in her view, emerges when such consensus dissolves, and instead, power is wielded solely for its own sake. This marks the genesis of power pathologies, encompassing domination, terror, institutionalised brutality, and the tyranny of fear-based totalitarian regimes. For her, power, when exercised within mutual understanding and relational contexts, need not veer into pathological territory. It is in its essence neutral, namely something that a person or a group does not simply possess, but rather something situational. She sees it as a potentiality that manifests through attribution, hence it arises from perception and action in the relationship between people. In her view, power corresponds to the human ability to join forces with others and to act in agreement with them. It is based on relationships and therefore requires communication processes. It must resonate with people in order to be effective. If it doesn't do that or no longer does that, it loses its potentiality. It dissolves or, as described above, mutates into tyranny. In her view, the perceived fear of losing power is an important component in the pathologisation of power into violence and domination.

The systems scientist Riane Eisler, born in Austria in 1931, similar to Hannah Arendt, fled the Nazi Regime as a child with her mother and lives today in the US. Growing up in the slums of Havana, she began to draw a connection early on between the structures that produce poverty and those that produce terror. In her case, too, the attempt to understand how such structures arise and reproduce themselves again and again led to interdisciplinary research that produced a holistic approach to addressing power issues. She published a bestseller on the future of humanity titled *The Chalice and Blade*. The book is particularly relevant today, when sustainability challenges are mixed with populism and authoritarian forms of government. In her cultural transformation theory, she distinguishes between two fundamentally different narratives of power that shape societies and become the basic model of their organisation. One is the dominance narrative for which she chose the blade as a symbol. It thrives on enforcement, superiority and subordination, just as described in mechanisms of patriarchal enforcement above. Destruction of life and the living - in the form of nature as well as people - is to a certain extent sanctioned as normal in this narrative. The other is the partnership narrative, for which she chose the chalice as a symbol. It thrives on consensus, cooperation, commitment and diversity. Preservation of life and vitality are the focus here. Symmetrical relationships are the norm. She suggests that the partnership narrative of power must become mainstream, if humanity wants to survive.

The so deeply ingrained forms of inequality, the non-acceptance of diversity, the lack of respect and the dominance of some people over others, need to be seen as what they are – human pathologies that require treatment. Patriarchy is a mental infrastructure of the past. Time is of the essence. If we fail to abolish patriarchy, we will not be able to tackle the pressing problems of our time - be it climate change, exploitative economic structures, social inequalities or territorial expansions and wars. Because the central cause lies in the culture of dominance, be it of humans over nature, of men over women, of one region over others or of one skin color over another. Patriarchal mindsets permeate all of the global challenges of our time. The freedom of choice of women is a measure for the future-orientation and the collective wellbeing of societies. The freedom of women is a predecessor of peace, it is linked to political participation and participatory governance, be it in representative democracies or any other form of true people's representation. So, that one day we can change this trajectory, so that one day we will be able to break out of the inevitable dynamics of evolutionary destruction in combination with patriarchal retention of power.

With all due respect to the historic burdens, the actual development and the impossibilities to find solutions to the ongoing conflicts between Israel and Palestine and now in particular with Hamas, the patriarchal power pathology patterns clearly stand out, in different ways, from both sides. Both have strongly misogynist, patriarchal cultures with sanctioned male toxicity, have actors abusing religion as legitimisation and mobilisation to prepare people for atrocities, justifying dominance and the potential elimination of declared enemies. We do not know, if with enough international support, a two-state solution would have worked long ago or will work in the future without addressing patriarchal power pathologies; if the Israeli occupation could have been transformed into cooperation; if religious difference could have been a source of inspiration; if withdrawal from the territorial expansion of Israeli settlers would have opened pathways for peaceful solutions; or if structural collaboration would have led to honouring the possibilities for everybody to live in freedom instead of making Palestine a dependent and suppressed colony. But what we know, is that the addiction to patriarchal power pathologies including authoritarian political and institutional structures make solution finding difficult, if not obsolete. In addition, the surrounding countries suffer from similar patriarchal power pathologies, in which violent conflicts, human rights violations and wars are happening and can be further predicted. It is absolutely legitimate to use international law mechanisms and to bring what is happening to the International Court of Justice as South Africa did. These possibilities must be used, because such institutions exist for a good reason: not least the Holocaust was an important reason why the International Court of Justice was established. Yet, beyond legal processes and beyond serious diplomacy that is taking place at all levels, it is important to amplify how many people in Israel and Palestine (and abroad) pursue a different and peaceful vision. They see solutions on the horizon, want to engage in dialogue, fight for human rights, and want to live in peace. These initiatives look tiny in the current verbal and factual acts of violence, but they are the frontrunners of the future. You find them in music, in the arts and culture area, in education, in politics. They are many, but not enough to overcome the patriarchal power pathologies without global support.

If anything can be done in the form of global solidarity, then it is naming atrocities and patriarchal power pathologies, but not taking sides for any of these different version of patriarchal power pathologies in the form of dehumanising people. We do not need more dehumanising neither emotionally, verbally nor with military means. We need to support those that seek to overcome power pathologies. An immediate ceasefire would be the tiny little step on a long road back to the basic humanity that we need. So, that one day we can change this trajectory, so that one day we will be able to break out of the inevitable dynamics of evolutionary destruction in combination with patriarchal retention of power.

I summarise what we can do to increase the collective power to overcome patriarchal power pathologies and build peace in the Middle East.

- Name all atrocities as what they are - patriarchal power pathologies in the form of acts of dehumanising people who are part of the human family, no matter which side commits them. Scale counts, but every individual counts as well.
- Implement any possible diplomatic attempts that keep up and foster human rights, take a step in overcoming patriarchal power pathologies and base diplomacy on the feminist foreign policy principles of prioritising collaboration and cooperation over adversarial processes, championing and strengthening democracies, multilateralism, and a rules-based international system. Work by all means towards a ceasefire and take this as a reminder of the international importance of disarmament.
- Use legal mechanisms of the international (and national) rules-based system to bring to existing courts all cases of atrocities and dehumanisation.
- Implement gender-responsive humanitarian action and acknowledge women as powerful and to be supported agents of positive change rather than simply beneficiaries of assistance.
- Refrain from any emotional agitation to create win/lose situations that reduce the historic complexity of the situation to the simple identification of culprits, but name clearly what is happening, while it is happening and how it is happening. Do not become an amplifier of the conflict and take it to other regions by using verbal or physical violence.
- Show solidarity with dehumanised people in Gaza and in Israel, but avoid any kind of mobilising hatred, knowing that this only results in the continuation of patriarchal power pathologies: people being dehumanised by other people who have nothing to do with the direct conflict. Clearly distance yourself from anti-Semitic narratives and anti-Muslim narratives.
- Support every small and large initiatives towards peace and reconciliation between Israelis and Palestinians.
- Strengthen democracies everywhere in the world, prevent right-wing, militarist and authoritarian policies, and create an action plan of early warning systems for patriarchal backlash.

i Source: <https://www.un.org/en/about-us/universal-declaration-of-human-rights>, accessed 2nd May 2024

ii Source: Ahrend, H. (1970). *Macht und Gewalt*. Piper

iii Source: Eisler, Riane (1987): *The Chalice and the Blade – Our History, Our Future*. Published in 57 editions. Harper Collins Publishers;

iv Kuenkel, P. (2022): Can the Future be predicted? Deliberations on a war we cannot afford. *Cadmus Journal: The War in Ukraine, Global Perspectives and causes and Consequences*, July 2022, World Academy of Arts and Science. Accessed on 2nd May 2023: <https://cadmusjournal.org/node/946>



Honouring multiple truths: An integrative pathway to peace in Israel/Palestine

by [Jeremy Lent](#), member of The Club of Rome and founder of the [Deep Transformation Network](#)

A just resolution to the Israel/Palestine conflict requires acknowledging and honouring truths that are seemingly contradictory. Examples from other domains show how this can be accomplished and offer a potential pathway to an enduring, long-term peace.

Let us consider some facts of historical significance generally agreed to be unequivocally true:

In the sixth century BCE, a people who became known as the Jews were expelled from their homeland in Judah to exile in Babylon. After the Persians permitted their return, the Jews repopulated the region until being exiled again by the Romans in 69 CE. Since then, a powerful cohering tradition within the Jewish diaspora centered on the prospective return to Israel (Zion), a dream that was consummated by the United Nations declaration of Israel as a Jewish state in 1947. I can attest, as a Jewish child growing up in London, to hearing the solemn invocation “Next year in Jerusalem” uttered during the annual Passover Seder service—a supplication that had echoed through generations—and sensing its fruition through Israel’s existence.

Meanwhile, in the two millennia following their exile by the Romans, other populations, mostly Muslim and Arab, inhabited the region that became known as Palestine, calling it their home. After the fall of the Ottoman Empire in the aftermath of World War I, the British Empire took control of Palestine. The Balfour Declaration, a statement of British support for “the establishment of a national home for the Jewish people,” was proclaimed in 1917, in spite of the fact that 90 percent of Palestine’s inhabitants were non-Jews.

Who, one might ask, has the historic right to live there now: the Jews, for whom it represents an ancestral homeland, or the Arabs, for whom it also represents an ancestral homeland? Since both historical narratives speak the truth, the only pathway toward a just and enduring peace would be to honour them both. How might this be possible?

A similar set of antithetical narratives has arisen around other key aspects of the Israel/Palestine conflict. In the aftermath of the Holocaust—the systematic genocidal murder of six million Jews—the United Nations, driven by a sense of collective guilt, voted to partition the region into two independent states, one Palestinian Arab and one Jewish. The Arabs rejected this enforced expiation of a crime that was not theirs, declaring war on the newly formed state of Israel. Why should the inhabitants of Palestine be forced to make reparations for Europeans’ genocidal treatment of Jews? The birth of Israel, celebrated by Jews worldwide as a culmination of two millennia of collective longing, was correspondingly the initiation of the Nakba, the ongoing catastrophe that began by violently displacing 750,000 Palestinians from their homeland, imposing an exile that remains to this day.

The contradictory claims to moral righteousness and turpitude go on and on. While the Jews forcibly dispossessed Arabs in 1948, Arab nations expelled Jews who had lived in their lands for generations, frequently confiscating all their possessions. These Jews were welcomed by Israel, which declared a Law of Return allowing for the immigration of any Jewish family to Israel—a right of return that has been denied for the Palestinians driven out by the Israelis.

Since 7 October 2023, the conflicting moral interpretations have greatly intensified: the massacre by Hamas militants of over 1,100 people, mostly civilians, was the deadliest attack on Jews since the Holocaust. Israel’s ruthless response, resulting to date in the deaths of more than 34,000 Palestinians, around two-thirds of them women and children, is widely recognised as criminally disproportionate and has plausibly been prosecuted as genocide.

While these morally contrasting narratives both hold true, and their supporting evidence is readily available, most people engaging with this topic fervently repeat one set of shibboleths while refusing to acknowledge the other—as if adding to the decibels of one side will somehow drown the other into submission. Such a tactic might lead to short-term gains, but never to an enduring peace. For those who envision a long-term future where both Jews and Arabs can live together harmoniously in what both consider to be a Holy Land, what approach might offer a pathway forward? Let us begin to answer this question from a foundational perspective.

Holding and honouring conflicting truths

The dominant Western worldview arises from an ontology that takes an absolutist view of truth. If something is right, then it cannot be wrong. If it's black, then it can't be white. In ancient Greece, Parmenides first established the iron rule of systematic logic, which was further elaborated by the deductive reasoning of Aristotle to form a foundation for scientific thought. Alongside these developments, the religious absolutism of monotheism took root, claiming for the first time in the human experience that only one God existed, and all those who did not worship Him were sinners. Before the rise of monotheism, intolerance based on religious creed was virtually unknown.

This ontology, however, is not the only one available. Even among the Greeks there were those, such as Heraclitus, who claimed that “We both are and are not.” While systematic logic won out in the West, other cultural complexes such as Buddhism, Taoism, and many Indigenous traditions developed equally sophisticated conceptions of the universe that were more fluid. For example, the Huayan school of Buddhism, which flourished in Tang dynasty China over a thousand years ago, understood reality as an all-embracing web of causal relations between things. The Huayan philosophy emphasised that the significance of any object depends on how it's approached, with the result that phenomena could be interpreted in multiple ways without one interpretation invalidating the other. In the words of an old, wise adage: “We don't see things as they are, we see them as we are.”



Credit: wilsan u, Unsplash.com

This approach, at odds with Aristotelian logic, re-emerged in Western thought in the twentieth century as physicists, grappling with the paradox of quantum mechanics, realised that subatomic entities may be either a wave or a particle depending on how they're measured. More generally, the wide array of modern systems sciences—including such fields as complexity theory, chaos theory, systems biology, and network theory—recognises that complex systems manifest multiple layers of interactivity. While certain principles may hold true throughout the system, different parts within the system may exhibit behaviours that appear contradictory to other parts, even while all are contributing to the integrity of the system as a whole. Accordingly, a healthy living system represents a state of integration which may be understood as unity incorporating manifold differentiation.

The embrace of complexity has shown up more recently in therapeutic psychology, with the widespread adoption of parts work, based on the recognition that people hold different parts within themselves, some of which may contradict each other causing inner conflict. As Walt Whitman famously declared: “I am large, I contain multitudes.” In particular, Internal Family Systems (IFS) is a transformative therapy that helps people heal by accessing and honouring their inner parts, some of which are wounded, protective, aggressive, or defensive. Recognising that these parts are frequently at odds with each other, which causes internal suffering, IFS emphasises the importance of a core Self in a person which, if accessed skillfully, can attend with love to each part and encourage healing—not by rejecting those parts but by allowing them to feel acknowledged and become integrated into the greater whole.

There is much that could be achieved by applying this wisdom to the political process. What kind of political discourse might arise with respect to Israel and Palestine if such an approach were taken?

An integrative pathway to peace

Comparable to the Self in IFS, there are overriding values shared by virtually all human beings that transcend the parochial in-group values dominating the current political debate. In the resounding words of the UN Declaration of Human Rights—proclaimed the year following Israel’s birth as a nation—“Recognition of the inherent dignity and of the equal and inalienable rights of all members of the human family is the foundation of freedom, justice and peace in the world.” Acknowledging that “disregard and contempt for human rights have resulted in barbarous acts which have outraged the conscience of mankind,” the Declaration calls for “a world in which human beings shall enjoy freedom of speech and belief and freedom from fear and want . . . as the highest aspiration of the common people.”

Tragically, since 1948, Israeli forces have trampled on these rights of Palestinians, while many Arab nations and political groups have similarly flouted them. A few days after the 7 October massacre by Hamas and the initiation of Israel’s criminal collective punishment, author and social activist Naomi Klein [called for a global response](#) “rooted in values that side with the child over the gun every single time, no matter whose gun and no matter whose child.” This is the kind of deeply humanitarian orientation that is required for an integrative pathway to peace.

We must recognise that a humane response to the enormity of the Holocaust did not have to lead to an Israeli ethno-state. As essayist Pankaj Mishra [has demonstrated](#), many Jewish leaders surviving the Holocaust took the phrase “never again” to mean “Never again for any persecuted minority anywhere in the world” rather than “Never again for the Jews.” Nonetheless, we must appreciate that Israelis today continue to live under a constant existential threat with powerful enemies repeatedly calling for their annihilation. The Israeli political leadership, however, has thrived on weaponising fear, using it to motivate fervid allegiance to Zionism in many Jews around the world, and currently fomenting a worldwide conflation of anti-Zionist protests with anti-Semitism, in spite of the fact that many Jews join in the public outrage at Israel’s brutal campaign.

When we engage in political discourse, we must choose our words carefully to avoid adding to the polarised grandstanding dominating the media. As journalist Judith Levine [has pointed out](#), the mindless use of blanket terms such as “pro-Israel” or “pro-Palestinian” only serves to smother the deeper issues of human rights under a cacophony of tribal rivalry.

We must call urgently for a ceasefire in Gaza and a return by Hamas of all hostages. At the same time, we must recognise the deep power imbalance currently existing between the state of Israel and the Palestinians living in the occupied territories, and demand the end of Israel’s abuse of its military superiority. We must call for an end to the illegal Jewish settlements in the West Bank, and to the fanatical Jewish paramilitary gangs [currently terrorising Palestinian villagers](#) with the tacit—and sometimes open—support of Israeli armed forces. And when the current hurricane of violence subsides, we must call for a Truth and Reconciliation Commission, modeled on exemplars from South Africa, Rwanda, and Canada, and employing principles of restorative justice, that could facilitate a new generation to face into and move on from the current round of anguish toward a healed society.



Credit: wilsan u, Unsplash.com

Above all, an integrative pathway to peace calls for the boldness to imagine a transformed future for this divided region and to support those groups, currently nearly drowned out by the polarised voices on both sides, taking the first courageous steps in that direction. The [Standing Together](#) movement, which mobilises Jewish and Palestinian citizens of Israel in pursuit of peace, equality, and justice, envisions building a shared home for all through rejecting hatred and choosing compassion. [Combatants for Peace](#) is a grassroots nonviolence movement based in Israel and Palestine—the only peace movement in the world founded by former fighters on both sides of an active conflict. The [Holy Land Trust](#), a Palestinian organisation dedicated to fostering peace, justice, and understanding in the Holy Land, is committed to nonviolent activism, along with personal and spiritual transformation arising from honouring the dignity and equal rights of all peoples.

Beyond the horizon, an integrative path has the potential to lead to political solutions that are currently almost unimaginable. A movement of Israelis and Palestinians called [A Land for All](#), acknowledging that both peoples belong to the same ancestral land, envisages a shared homeland encompassing two sovereign states. Their proposal calls for two democratic states based on pre-1967 borders, with citizens of both states given the right to move and live freely in all parts of the homeland. With Jerusalem as a shared capital, both states would be responsible for the security of their residents, would enter into a mutual defense treaty against external threats, and would share a Human Rights Court empowered to rule on alleged violations of rights by non-citizen residents of either country. While current political and cultural conditions render such an arrangement unworkable on many counts, this is the kind of integrative visionary thinking that will be required to enable an enduring long-term peace for a region that has suffered too much torment throughout its embattled history.

Planetary reconciliation: Betting on the most improbable

by Carlos Alvarez Pereira, secretary-general of The Club of Rome

From Spain to the world?

As a Spaniard, I am African, Iberian, Phoenician, Greek, Roman, Germanic, Arabian, French, Christian, Muslim, Jewish, and more, all at the same time. I profit from a rich heritage, which is also a heavy burden. Spain experienced the first fantasy of worldwide supremacy in the 16th century. That was done by developing a centralised bureaucracy with early characteristics of what modern states would be, forcing Spanish Muslims and Jews either to convert to Catholicism or to flee, colonising a large part of the world to create the first Empire where the sun was never setting, and establishing for centuries the Holy Inquisition as a bloody police of bodies and minds.

Spain committed atrocities in America and, while recognising a soul to American natives, forced them into conversion, and enslaved many Africans to work in the “New World”. We lived tumultuous 19th and 20th centuries, including the first phase of World War II in the form of an implacable fratricide conflict, leading to 40 years of an equally implacable dictatorship. This is also part of my personal heritage: my parents strongly believed in social justice and the dignity of everyone, and because of that they had to flee and live in exile for most of their lifetime.

Having been for a long time the dominant power in Europe and the Americas, Spain nonetheless experienced total collapse. Maybe the complexity and infinite sufferings of our history helped acquiring a rather balanced understanding of conflicts and an educated scepticism regarding international relations. We lived for decades under the threat of nationalist terrorism, but we resisted the temptation of more violence and exclusion to end up violence and exclusion, and nowadays the Basque Country is probably one the happiest places to live on Earth. We also suffered from Islamist terrorism, but we reacted by resisting the temptation of revenge and racism, and by withdrawing in 2004 from the illegal and deadly invasion of Iraq.

Nowadays Spain is one of the few countries in Europe having reacted to the war in Gaza in a rather balanced manner, nurtured by a sense of human dignity. While condemning the horrendous actions by Hamas, we told our Israeli friends that blind revenge to the point of genocide (whether intentional or de facto) is not legitimate nor effective in providing Israel for a safe home. When it was argued that some workers of United Nations Relief and Works Agency were supporting Hamas, Spain decided to increase its support to the humanitarian organisation in compensation for the cuts it was suffering from other countries. And, trying to contribute to a better future, Spain has been actively campaigning for the immediate recognition of the Palestinian State. To be clear, this is not to say that my country is exemplary in any way. It is to say that my conclusion from Spanish history is that no nation is entitled to exceptionalism nor supremacy over others, moral or otherwise. There is no superiority of some humans over other humans. And then, let me ask: why does this simple conclusion seem so difficult to learn, especially by those pretending to set the moral standards in the relations between nations?

Us and them

As Terence put it, “*nothing human is alien to me*”. He was born in Africa more than two millennia ago and brought as a slave to Rome. That simple statement carries the mark of wisdom from ancestral times and resonates strongly today. I wonder if it could have been said by somebody that did not experience slavery. The experience of oppression or collapse might open the mind to a more holistic view of what makes us humans, for the good and the bad. In my reading, Terence’s statement does not only point to the fundamental relatedness of all humans. It brings a deeper reflection: any of us can connect with all human feelings and actions, even the most different from ours, and the most terrible. It is easy enough to connect with the many forms of beauty that

humans can produce, as well as with the pains of all victims. But we can also connect with the dehumanising rage that makes humans commit atrocities. It might be unpleasant to face it, but we must recognise that both the evil and the divine are in all of us. Moreover, the good and the bad are outcomes of collective patterns in which we are all involved.

When ignoring that fundamental ambivalence, we continue practicing the fantasy of exclusion. We still establish who are “Us” and “Them”. There is an “In” of the circle of people we treat by default with respect, trust, and generosity. And we continue drawing a line and leaving most of humanity “Out”. For sure others are not us, but there are critical differences between distinction (“you are not me”), separation (“you don’t belong to my circle”) and exclusion (“I don’t have to care about you”), and we override those differences all the time. People who are “Out” do not have by far the same rights as people “In”. Not only do we create artificial boundaries, still dealing with nationalisms originated in the 17th century. We also take for granted a moral superiority of “Us” over “Them”. We feel allowed to treat “Them” in ways which would be unacceptable among “Us”. And we avoid recognising the responsibility for the many forms of injustice and exploitation we impose on “Them”.



Credit: fauxels, Pexels.com

When Ursula von der Leyen said in 2022 “*Ukraine is one of us*”, she was also saying “*and Russia is not*”. By doing that she was reinforcing the “Us and Them” dynamic. Disgusting and difficult as it could be, we must start thinking that Putin, Netanyahu, Hamas and all perpetrators of violence and oppression are, well, part of “Us”. And that different people have different views on who is perpetrating violence. Recognising the state of oppression in which Palestinians have been living for decades is not a justification of terrorism nor a sign of antisemitism. Unless we recognise that everyone on the planet, human or not, is one of “Us”, we will not climb the steep ladder to overcome current wars and the structural elements leading to violence. With images of destruction flooding our screens every day, this may sound naive, utopian, or even cynical. But this perspective is not pantheist nor illusory, it is just systemic.

The violent nature of international relations

One essential aspect to overcome the logic of war is to realise that international relations continue to be dominated by the brutal exercise of power under “Us and Them” framings. We dream that a multilateral framework of global governance ensures most of the times that conflicts of interest are solved in a fair and peaceful way. Unfortunately, this is an illusion, at the very least for Most of the World. The dominant framing says that violence is associated with “under-development” and that once a society becomes “developed” in the Western sense of the term, it leaves violence behind. And then, the solution is obvious: apply the Western recipes to your own country and you will become peaceful and prosperous. But as Gandhi warned us, the issue with Western civilisation is that “*it would be a good idea*”. It is still that, an idea. My guess is that you can only assess the moral value of a political and economic system by asking the excluded how they feel they are treated. The incumbents profit from the system, it is all too human for them to see only its advantages. What do “Them”, those who are “Out”, think?

I am afraid that the excluded from power think the global system we have is brutal and totally unfair. It is based on the use of force of different kinds, including military power, and it is not at all democratic since power is concentrated in the hands of countries representing a small and declining minority of the global population. Moreover, once the Cold War finished, it is based on the idea that only one model of development is legitimate, and that is one providing advantages to the already powerful. The Cold War itself was a long sequence of brutal and mutually reinforcing interventions by the USA and the USSR to prevent any other country from following a path different from being with “Us” or “Them”. And then, with the collapse of the Soviet Union came the illusion of “*the end of History*” à la Fukuyama.

Powers, and especially the winners of the Cold War, continued to behave basically in the same way, including illegal and devastating military interventions whenever it suited their interests. And they continue to privilege their interests whenever a dilemma between values and interests exists. Most of the world’s population is aware of this. The fantasy of exclusion is all around and we should not ignore the cybernetic nature of this situation: in most conflicts, both parts are interested in keeping them alive. Geopolitics is built on a logic of power equally fed by all actors looking for hegemony. These may appear as enemies but they all contribute to keeping the logic alive. Nothing better for an empire than another one to fight, in a mutually reinforcing confrontation forcing everyone to choose between “Us” and “Them”.

Bridging the gap: Towards the improbable

We hear that the military actions in Gaza will not stop until Israelis feel safe. The way it goes, that means never. This is exactly the same logic that Putin applies in Ukraine. It is a weird logic, endlessly reinforcing loops of violence lasting forever. Violence destroys people and things, but it does not destroy itself. All the contrary, it guarantees the continuation of violence. The war is killing Hamas militants, but it is not destroying Hamas, it is confirming most Palestinians in the idea that they need Hamas. This reminds me of what the Black Consciousness Movement emphasised long ago: oppression also oppresses the oppressor. Violence also kills the killer.

Looking at these issues from the history and values of The Club of Rome, a humanistic and systemic approach is required. It was already set up many years ago, when in 1979 Aurelio Peccei was calling in “*No Limits to Learning*” to “*bridge the human gap*”, the one between our capacity to act and transform the world, and our capacity to understand and deal with the consequences of our actions. Five years later, Aurelio Peccei and Daisaku Ikeda called for a “*Human Revolution*”, a shift of mindsets by which we would liberate ourselves from the mental jails in which we are trapped, and most notably the “Us and Them” framing.

Safety does not come from the destruction of the “enemy”, because there is no way to destroy the enemy, because it is ourselves. Or, if you wish, destruction of the enemy is ultimately suicidal, a pathway in which humanity is well engaged right now. Safety is only mutual, or none. And, of course, the very first step is to stop the violence. But how could we understand that the actions by “Us” and “Them” are expressions of joint collective patterns requiring other lenses than confrontation? How do we shift from practices of confrontation and punishment to collective emergence and reconciliation across divides?

In other words, how do we open the space of possibilities for self-liberated humanity to build desirable futures? This is the critical question today. And it is hard to address within the prevalent paradigms in the global scene. The “One World” scenario was a misleading fantasy, but that does not make the “Multipolar World” in which we live the appropriate response to the existential challenges of humanity. In my view, it is more than time to consider our evolution into a “Pluriversal World”, multipolar but peaceful, built on love, trust and curiosity rather than fear and greed. The seeds of this world already exist, they play a silent melody that we do not hear, busy as we are in making a lot of noise to ignore our fears. They are trying to experience infinitely diverse pathways to something that could be called “ecological civilisations”.

We live now in a sort of time warp. The police repress demonstrations by students asking for peace and justice, as in 1968, the year The Club of Rome was founded. Western leaders are seriously speaking of war as a means to end war and violence, as if we had learned nothing from European history in the 20th century. So, I know that I am betting here on the most improbable option, but it is because all probable ones lead to dead ends and to unprecedented tragedies. I am sure time has come to open the space of possibilities for the sake of ourselves and of generations to come. And I am convinced The Club of Rome has an essential role in saying that a planetary reconciliation is actually possible, and, overwhelming as the mission sounds, in making it happen. This is a tall order, of course, but if not us, who? If not now, when? We must contribute to a second chance for humanity on Earth, one in which beauty and truth are finally reconciled through love.

Trusting our humanity in a crisis of humanity

by Karima Kadaoui, member of The Club of Rome

If I must die,
you must live
to tell my story
to sell my things
to buy a piece of cloth
and some strings,
(make it white with a long tail)
so that a child, somewhere in Gaza
while looking heaven in the eye
awaiting his dad who left in a blaze –
and bid no one farewell
not even to his flesh
not even to himself –
sees the kite, my kite you made, flying up
above
and thinks for a moment an angel is there
bringing back love
If I must die
let it bring hope
let it be a tale.

Rafaat Alareer

We are all part of Gaza, the concentration strip that condensates the unbearable suffering of the world. We are all witnessing unspeakable human suffering and destruction *and*, we behold the possibility, as humanity, to disarm *with* humanity the unhinged rage that dehumanises and destroys all including itself. In the midst of total despair and abomination, humanity is able to *fly a kite* invoking hope and love beyond time and place, beyond differences and divides.

Shane Claiborne's peace incantation evokes the way to the way; the widening of the field of possibility that widens and reflects the widening of the heart.

“Peace making doesn't mean passivity. It is the act of interrupting injustice without mirroring injustice, the act of disarming evil without destroying the evildoer, the act of finding a third way that is neither fight nor flight but the careful, arduous pursuit of reconciliation and justice. It is about a revolution of love that is big enough to set both the oppressed and the oppressors free.”

Witnessing

Peace making is the functioning of bearing witness.
Once we listen with our entire body and mind,
loving action arises.

Bernie Glassman

The witness bears testimony from the lived experience, even (and maybe more so) the one who turns one's eyes away. By witnessing we "*dissolve in the witnessed*". If we try to distance ourselves, we dissociate ourselves from ourselves. Such is the powerful beauty of our inherent empathy. Such is the *affect of Gaza* on our human collective psyche. We are witnessing like never before livestreamed crimes against humanity.

Our fellow human beings in Palestine are documenting the destruction of the very possibility of their existence, of the very probability of life. We are hearing them plead for their suffering to be seen and felt, for their nightmare to stop. We are witnessing unimaginable pain in the flesh and in the soul. The pain of a soul that supplicates for humanity and cries for her humanity to be recognised. The images of mothers and fathers having to display the lifeless bodies of their children to beg us to see them as our own will forever haunt the halls of dehumanisation.

Our fellow human beings in Israel, are imploring for their loved ones to come back, grieving for their lost souls and their heartless government. Young men and women in uniforms, are sharing videos of their fear, grief and trauma mutated into shocking and devastating dehumanising. Others without uniforms are shredding their trauma numbed basic human decency and are posting their obscene parodies and celebrations of deliberate starvation and killing of children. Extreme self-dehumanisation is pouring its drowning compassion into the abyss of eternal lamentations.

Murderous revenge is fuelled and armed by countries that still recognise themselves as upholding universal values of human rights. Lifesaving humanitarian aid is criminalised, defunded and hindered in the name of protecting democratic values and as a mean to fight terrorism. Self-deceiving political discourse and policies of cognitive dissonance are veiling discernment and humane rationality. Contracts of terror, selling arms, selling gas, selling geo-political influence are selling out our shared humanity.

The images of Gaza's social infrastructure total obliteration by Israeli (and supporting countries) bombs stand side by side with the surreal images of a port being built with the rubbles of homes and remains of human beings whilst buried alive children cannot be saved.

Countries' unconditional support to Israel's "*self-defence*" have enabled so called safe zones to turn into mass graveyards, hospitals into battlefields, journalists and humanitarian workers into obvious targets and starvation into a weapon of mass destruction.

International laws and governance institutions meant to prevent and stop crimes against humanity and intended for a world of peace are rendered moot, impotent and are perplexed to discover they always wore invisible chains ready to pull them back into irrelevance.

Young people around the world are being arrested and brutalised for denouncing and rejecting genocide. Universities are violently repressing their students, their professors and the values they consider they grew from and stand for. People fear losing their jobs if they speak out against the massacre of children and their fear is proven right. Peace marches of all faiths and walks of life are demonised, criminalised and repressed with terror.

The unjustifiable is justified, the unexplainable is explained and pushed down our throats by politicians dehumanising themselves to self-oblivion. Mass dissociative disorder is echoed and self-reinforced by hyper-reality broadcasting journalism.

Realising our shared humanity

All you have to do
Is close your eyes
(Seeing these days
Blinds our hearts.)
Close your eyes, tightly
So that you can see
In your mind's eye.
Then look into the mirror.
One. Two.
I am you.
I am your past.
And killing me,
You kill you.

Rafaat Alareer

And, in the midst of the most extreme forms of dehumanisation we are also witnessing extraordinary expressions of humanity finding healing in humanity:

Our fellow human beings in Israel denouncing the slaughter called self-defence and pleading for diplomatic means to ensure the return of their loved ones held hostage.

Our Jewish brothers and sisters around the world supplicating *“not in our name, do not weaponise antisemitism, never again for everyone and anyone”*.

Doctors and health workers in Gaza, exhausted, horrified, helpless, grieving their children and their patients and giving their lives to save their patients.

Neighbours relentlessly digging with their bare hands through the rubbles of destroyed homes seeking for a pulsation of hope, listening out for a breathing breath.

Palestinian journalists raising their words to describe the unspeakable whilst their family members live the abominable. Israeli journalists risking their all to seek the truth and questioning the sanity of their internationally assisted government blinded by revenge.

International humanitarian workers coming back to *“hell on earth”*, to the *“graveyard of children”* staggered by the *“never seen before”*. Saving lives at the risk of their own.

Hundreds of thousands of persons around the world sounding the drums of peace march after march. Students on campuses proving that the intergenerational gap is one of courage.

Politicians unshakingly remaining faithful to the memory of their own country's history of suffering, of apartheid, of colonisation and who understand that speaking out for justice and to stop crimes against humanity is not bound to time nor place. Countries such as South Africa, Colombia, Spain, Belgium, Ireland, taking actions upholding their moral grounds in the understanding that *injustice anywhere is injustice everywhere*. Suffering anywhere is suffering everywhere.

We are seeing both; expressions of inhumanity and humanity and as long as they reflect each other we can realise our shared humanity.

A crisis of humanity

The diameter of the bomb was thirty centimeters
and the diameter of its effective range about seven meters,
with four dead and eleven wounded.
And around these, in a larger circle
of pain and time, two hospitals are scattered
and one graveyard. But the young woman
who was buried in the city she came from,
at a distance of more than a hundred kilometers,
enlarges the circle considerably,
and the solitary man mourning her death
at the distant shores of a country far across the sea
includes the entire world in the circle.
And I won't even mention the crying of orphans
that reaches up to the throne of God and
beyond, making a circle with no end and no God.

Yehuda Amichai

We are witnessing sheer madness of apocalyptic proportion and consequence for the future of humanity. No one is spared. We are the destroyer and the destroyed. We are also the healer and the healed.

In this dystopian world to stand “with” or “for” opens pitfalls of polarity and discord and uncovers soul devouring quicksand. Neither pro-Palestinian nor pro-Israeli, Neither Christian, Jew nor Muslim. Neither North nor South. Neither West or East. Divides birth more divides. Only Humanity can disarm inhumanity.

We are able to recall how to stand “in” recognition of our shared humanity. We are able to seek how to stand “under”; growing a shared under-standing of what it means to behold a humanity that defines us and connects us to each other, to our natural world and to the whole beyond our conscious grasp.

In this dark unprecedented moment in our modern history, all discourse on justice, equity, human rights, climate change, education, sustainability, regeneration, systems transformation ... no matter how sophisticated the language, no matter how sincere the intent, sounds rhetorical, vain, artificial, disconnected, profoundly dissociated; a smoke screen fanned by our burning sense-of-life and sense-of-humanity.

We are experiencing a crisis of humanity and the so called polycrisis is maybe the multiplicity of manifestations of a dislocated locus of humanity value, of a blurred humanity proprioception (the faculty to sense one's motion and position) and of a dwarfed sense-of-humanity. When we elevate our discourse to the depth of what makes us human all questions are questioned and all matters shed a new light of understanding (climate change, circular economy, regenerative finance, education for the future of humanity ...).

Crisis etymologically means a “*decisive point in the progress of a disease*” also “*vitaly important or decisive state of things, point at which change must come, for better or worse*”. Trusting our humanity in a crisis of humanity is perhaps the most beautiful paradox of our human condition.

Standing “in” humanity, trusting our humanity

O HEART!

Always

Pulsate the drums of Life.

Vibrate the chords of Love.

Weep the tears that blossom Compassion.

Pray, plead, supplicate, speak out,

act upon, act now,

Whatever is at your brave reach.

For the children of Palestine,

For the children of Israel,

For all our children

Everywhere, anywhere,

And their children ...

Let's never forget, children are being murdered by mass bombing and bullets. Children are being buried alive under the rubble of their home. Children are being starved, maimed, orphaned and traumatised for life. More children have died in Gaza in the last 7 months than in all the war conflicts in the last four years. The bleeding wound of our humanity is widening every minute of every day. We can no longer wait. The announced calamity of Rafah is unforgivable and is still stoppable.

For the sake of our children of Palestine, for the sake of our children of Israel, for the sake of our children everywhere and anywhere and their children we must stand in humanity, have an immediate and unconditional cease fire, negotiate the release of all hostages held in Palestine and Israel and find a way to peace that mirrors our shared humanity. Trusting our humanity.



The Club of Rome is a platform of diverse thought leaders. Drawing on the collective know-how of our members, the organisation provides holistic solutions to global issues such as climate, economics and the wellbeing of humanity. It promotes policy initiatives and action so that humanity can emerge from its self-inflicted planetary emergencies.

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