

"Peace is urgent. Peace cannot be delayed!," by Jorge Cadima

Greetings to all the participants in this important initiative which, if it was already important when it was called, has become even more important in recent days, given the barbarity being committed against the people of the Gaza Strip.

On behalf of MPPM, I would like to put forward two ideas on the subject of this panel.

Firstly: there is no more important idea for the culture of, and education for, peace than the one expressed in the first article of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, approved by the UN General Assembly. Article 1 begins: "All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights".

And since all actions against civilians are reprehensible, we cannot accept the idea they want to sell us that there are first-class civilians and second-class civilians. There is an urgent, urgent need to put an immediate end to the massacre that Israel is committing in Gaza and throughout Palestine.

What is happening is a collective punishment of an entire population, it is a large-scale aggression against civilians, which are crimes under international law and international humanitarian law. We can't accept bombings that wipe out neighbourhoods, kill thousands, and decimate entire families. We cannot accept the cutting off of access to water, electricity, food and medical care for the 2.3 million inhabitants of Gaza. We cannot accept the intention expressed by Israeli leaders to carry out the expulsion and ethnic cleansing of the Palestinian population.

We can't accept a humanitarian ceasefire being blocked in the UN Security Council by the veto of the United States. And we can't accept anyone who defends a humanitarian ceasefire being labelled a friend of terrorists, as UN Secretary-General António Guterres was a few days ago.

Israel has been created and recognised as a state for 75 years. But the same UN General Assembly Resolution that foresaw the creation of Israel also foresaw the creation of an Arab state of Palestine. And despite decades of promises and countless UN resolutions, the State of Palestine has never seen the light of day. After all, it seems that we are not all born with equal rights.

That's the bottom line and the key to resolving the issue politically.

This brings us to the second question:

All of us here are in favour of political solutions, not military ones. But for political solutions to be possible, the political processes, negotiations and agreements that are signed must be taken seriously and truthfully.

Negotiation always involves concessions on both sides. More than 40 years ago, the Palestinian leadership agreed to start a political process within the framework of the UN. They accepted the very painful concession that the future State of Palestine would be made up of only 22 per cent of the historic territory of Palestine. But all the resolutions and agreements remained on paper. Israel never fulfilled its obligations under the agreements. On the contrary, it proceeded to create hundreds of settlements, where around 700,000 Israeli settlers live today, on that 22 per cent of territory earmarked for the State of Palestine. The Palestinian side's concessions were only seen as a starting point for ever new demands.

Something similar is happening with the nuclear agreement on Iran, which was signed and approved by the UN Security Council. Iran was subject to inspections by the International Atomic Energy Agency, which verified its compliance. But when it came time to lift sanctions on Iran, as provided

for in the agreement, Trump tore up the agreement and threw it in the bin. And it remains torn with Biden.

Systematically tearing up or violating signed agreements means destroying political and negotiating processes. It means that there is no point in negotiating, in making concessions in order to reach agreements, because they won't be honoured. And undermining political and negotiating processes inevitably means paving the way for violence and war.

Peace is urgent. Peace cannot be delayed.

But if it is to be achieved, it must be based on recognising the dignity, equality, and rights of all, and also on seriousness, truth and coherence.

When this is not the case, the result is the disaster we are witnessing today all over the world, and first and foremost in Palestine. A disaster that urgently needs to be stopped before it is too late. A disaster that threatens to lead us all into the abyss.

Long live peace!

Palestine will win!

Jorge Cadima is a university professor and a member of the National Directorate of MPPM.

This is the text of Jorge Cadima's intervention in Panel 2 - Education and Culture for Peace at the 3rd Meeting for Peace held in Vila Nova de Gaia on 28 October 2023.

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