

## **OBESSU Reacts to Recent Re-Escalation of the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict: Young People Deserve Peace Everywhere**

The Organising Bureau of European School Student Unions (OBESSU), represents school students in Europe since 1975 and has ever since been advocating for participatory, inclusive and quality education for all.

OBESSU has and always will stand with victims of violence and oppression. Violence has never and will never be the solution. We stand for international solidarity and peaceful action to combat violence, war, and oppression. In light of recent events in Gaza, the principles of peace, justice and international law must prevail.

We condemn the violent attack of Hamas on Israeli civilians as strongly as we condemn all retaliation currently happening in Palestine. Without yet and without but, the atrocities of war, limited in the Geneva Convention and its additional treaties, are clear: to protect people who do not take part in conflicts such as civilians, medics or aid workers. Over the past 17 years, we have been witnessing innumerable attacks towards civilians in Gaza either through direct violence or through the denial of basic human rights such as clean water, electricity, freedom to move and to flee from conflict<sup>1</sup>. The Gaza Strip has been in a long-term humanitarian crisis, and staying silent now, during the current re-escalation, would be a further breach of Human Rights and would bring us further from achieving a peaceful resolution. OBESSU demands compliance with international humanitarian law that regulates armed conflicts seeking to limit its effects and condemns all the attacks and violence perpetrated to civilians and to civil buildings such as schools, hospitals and homes. We ask European Institutions to stand by international law, to reconsider their position on funding Palestinian projects, including civil society projects and to provide humanitarian relief for civilians in Gaza.

As a student organisation, we are deeply concerned about the long term effect of violence on young people and students. They deserve the liberty to their Human Rights as granted under the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the UN Convention on Rights of the Child in particular the right to Peace, Safety and Education. We stand in solidarity with innocent victims, regardless of their ethnicity and/or religion.

In this climate of violence and hate, we want to safeguard access to education and to safe learning environments. Schools in Gaza (where 50% of population is under 15 years old), in Israel and in Palestine - just like schools in Nagorno-Karabakh, Ukraine and Yemen, should remain spaces of thinking and knowledge creation, through critical thinking and de-polarisation.

We call on Europe and all Europeans to actively engage in supporting peace and victims of war and oppression.

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<sup>1</sup> UNRWA,  
<https://www.unrwa.org/where-we-work/gaza-strip#:~:text=The%20Gaza%20Strip%20has%20a,some%201.7%20million%20Palestine%20Refugees.>

Our generation is witnessing an increase of armed conflicts all over the world. Peace cannot be achieved by deploying weapons. Peace needs to be taught, studied and practised from the schools to the world by cooperating and building solidarity.

Furthermore, we are saddened by the rise of hate speech, often stemming from fake news, against both the Israeli and the Palestinian community in the region, and all around the world. We commit to continue working in our schools against any kind of racism, antisemitism and islamophobia.

We are in a state of emergency and crisis. Our reaction stems from the urgency that we feel to see people all over the world treated as human beings. As people.

We hope we can find ways to build understanding, as a first step to building peace. We are the first piece of the puzzle in ending the polarisation in the public debate that is radicalising so many young people, fueling hate speech and preventing us from building bridges.