



Lay arms down

Gaza 2024

Image: Anadolu/Getty Images



Let the UN build peace

Mariupol 2022

Image: Anadolu/Getty Images

A new role for the countries of the world and the UN – Open letter and petition
All around the world, there are many conflicts causing major suffering and making it impossible for people to build a positive future.

Many of us feel despair at the unimaginable suffering and destruction in all these conflict zones. We also feel powerless due to our inability to contribute to the development of peace, coexistence and respect between human beings.

In this open letter and petition, we call upon policy makers and decision makers to take steps that will lead to lasting peace, friendship between human beings and the rebuilding of communities.

There is currently no single actor able to act alone to stop the fighting and offer solutions to build peace.

The UN is currently limited in its ability to take on such a role. This is partly due to its decision-making processes, in which individual countries have the power of veto, and its funding, with countries in conflict making contributions.

Our hope is that this can be changed if the countries of the world can agree to assign a partly new role and a new mandate to the UN.

We also want to put forward the idea that a peace plan does not necessarily mean that one party will be the winner when the warring parties lay down their arms. From an individual perspective, it can often be more important to avoid a situation in which the fighting continues. If it does, everyone loses!

There must also be other ways forward.

A possible path to peace

Each conflict has its own characteristics, with different underlying causes, problems and potential solutions. So, each peace plan will need to be unique.

Conflicts often inflict wounds that take a long time to heal, perhaps generations. That is why conflict resolution must also be allowed to take time.

The countries of the world should therefore task the UN with seeking solutions and implementing plans for peace and reconstruction that allow the time and opportunity for the population to shape their own path and their own future, instead of imposing a ready-made solution on those affected.

A peace plan should aim to achieve long-term sustainable peace in which the population can live together with respect for one another, working together to rebuild society so that everyone has the opportunity to lead a good life.

In such a process the countries of the world, through the UN, can commit to monitoring and demilitarising the affected areas, working with the local police to maintain law and order. They can also commit to leading and financing the reconstruction effort and to actively working to build respect and friendship.

The UN could also be tasked with leading a process towards holding free elections on governance, government, possible unions and/or independence and, in the long run, phasing out UN involvement in the areas concerned.

Final words

Without detracting from the gravity and suffering in other conflict zones, this letter has been prompted by two conflicts: the invasion of Ukraine and the war between Hamas and Israel. What these conflicts have in common is that they have been going on for a long time, causing great destruction and major suffering among the population. Moreover, they have the potential to develop into world wars. Their seriousness is underlined by the fact that several of the parties have access to nuclear weapons. So there is a clear risk of us being only one wrong decision away from the total destruction of the world as it is today.

Faced with the risk of a nuclear war forcing change through violence, the signatories of this letter call on world leaders and policymakers to:

- Work to assign the UN a partially new role with a broader mandate and enable it to intervene in conflict zones and lead processes that result in lasting peace and good living conditions for people in the affected areas. This should take place without the decision-making and financial deadlocks that currently stand in the way of such work.
- Convince the parties to current and future wars and conflicts to lay down their arms and accept a no-win solution at the political level, with civil society and individuals as the winners.

Changing the way the UN works is a process that will take time. For this reason, this open letter and petition are unlikely to influence the outcome of the wars in Ukraine and Gaza. Our hope is that a change will give the countries of the world and future generations a better chance to prevent and manage future conflicts.

Recipients

Petition recipients are Sweden's Minister for Foreign Affairs Maria Malmer Stenergard, Sweden's EU representatives, the leaders of the Swedish parliamentary parties and, by extension, policy makers around the world.

Initiators

Lars Lindstaf, architect (SAR/MSA), Vallentuna

in cooperation with

students from the pupils democracy committee at Södra Latins upper secondary school, Stockholm

Further information on the initiators and thoughts on the process and peace plan, along with the text of the open letter in several languages, is available at <https://www.layarmsdown.se>.