

Petition of Cologne physicists for a ceasefire

We have been following the events in the Middle East for the last year with great concern. In April 2024, "UN experts [...] expressed grave concern over the pattern of attacks on schools, universities, teachers, and students in the Gaza Strip, raising serious alarm over the systemic destruction of the Palestinian education system." [1] This pattern has only continued since, and all Universities in Gaza have now either been destroyed or severely damaged. [2] Most recently, a UN special Committee has found that:

"Israel's warfare in Gaza is consistent with the characteristics of genocide, with mass civilian casualties and life-threatening conditions intentionally imposed on Palestinians there". [3]

We stand in solidarity with our fellow students and colleagues in the Middle East facing death and the destruction of their livelihoods, and with those struggling for a ceasefire.

As physicists, we take collective responsibility for the weapons of mass destruction and other high-tech weapons developed by our colleagues. These weapons are currently facilitating the killing of tens of thousands of civilians and the eradication of entire cities.

Science and education can be a driving force for peace building and work towards global equality. Universities therefore need to relentlessly advocate for, and embody international law and the UN sustainable development goals.

In the face of mounting evidence of war crimes being committed by the Israeli government, we feel the need to speak up. We find the current position of our university to be insufficient. We demand, that it lives up to the important role played by science in public discourse.

With this petition, we demand of our rectorate to publicly assume the necessary responsibility and:

- Call for an immediate and permanent ceasefire
- Call for a complete stop of all exports of weapons and other equipment necessary for warfare to Israel
- Take initiative and increase efforts to rebuild the Palestinian science and education system, through cooperations and the offering of education resources

sources:

1: <https://www.ohchr.org/en/press-releases/2024/04/un-experts-deeply-concerned-over-scholasticide-gaza>

2: <https://cen.acs.org/education/Gaza-universities-are-gone-What-next-for-science-education/102/web/2024/06>

3: <https://www.ohchr.org/en/press-releases/2024/11/un-special-committee-finds-israels-warfare-methods-gaza-consistent-genocide>

Universities newest Position: <https://portal.uni-koeln.de/en/universitaet/aktuell/statements/single-view/statement-on-the-university-of-colognes-position-regarding-the-middle-east-conflict-israel-and-the-palestinian-territories>

SDGs: <https://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/>