



## **The IFS statement on the crisis of the Middle East**

The International Federation of Settlements and Neighborhood Centers (IFS) is a global movement of more than 11000 member associations that include multi-purpose, community-based organizations across the world. We believe in empowering the people who work for social justice by connecting, inspiring and supporting an inclusive global community.

We are deeply concerned about what is happening in the Middle East. We unequivocally condemn the terrorist attacks on Israel by Hamas and are shocked by the suffering of Israeli civilians. We also condemn the Israeli State's countermeasures in the Gaza Strip. The killing of thousands of innocent civilians in Gaza will prevent any positive development in the region for a long time to come. The perpetrators of war crimes must be brought to international justice on both sides. The violence must stop. The international community must intervene peacefully in a region where there is no room for negotiation between the parties. Without it, only guns will talk, and mutual hatred will grow. We understand that peace does not have to be built between friends. Peace is built between enemies. We also understand that only a just peace is a lasting peace. Also, between Israelis and Palestinians.

As a global movement, we are shocked by the rise of anti-Semitism in the world. It is not right that the actions and decisions of the State of Israel should be blamed on all the Jews of the world. We condemn as abhorrent any movement, including international politics, which seeks to foster hatred through the sowing of anti-Semitism and to destroy understanding between people, the will for peace and international integrity. In many of our communities around the world we have seen the simultaneous rise of Islamophobia, anti-Asian hate, and anti-Black racism, including violence by individuals and state actors. We condemn all of these inter-related systems and expressions of hate.

IFS is a UN organisation. Established after the Second World War, the aim of the Commonwealth was to ensure that there would never be another war. We are concerned that today the authority of the UN is being questioned and that, in part, its own structures are preventing effective action to resolve conflicts. If the UN had not been established in 1945, it would probably be impossible to establish it today. Through its own activities, the IFS seeks to support, strengthen, and reform the work of the UN.

IFS works in tens of thousands of local communities around the world. Through our own work, we know for sure that peace is possible. We often work in areas where many religions, cultures, ethnicities, and political opinions mix. Respectful encounters, open dialogue and fair treatment of the disadvantaged are the keys to peace. IFS is a movement of people. It builds peace from person to person, from block to block, from city to city and from country to country. "Think globally, act locally" is our movement's slogan.

We know that there is a lot of evil in the world. Evil strikes the face and blinds the sight. Evil breeds hopelessness and breeds new hatred. Evil is a spiral. We also know that there is much goodness in the world. Even goodness is a twist. By increasing goodness, we believe, evil is reduced. Therefore, the goodness in the world must be strengthened in every way possible. That is why IFS is committed to the UN Declaration of Human Rights and the Sustainable Development Goals.

On behalf of the IFS Board,  
Pentti Lemmetyinen  
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