

IASSW POSITION STATEMENT ON GLOBAL ATROCITIES

The International Association of Schools of Social Work (IASSW), considering that:

IASSW, founded in 1928, promotes excellence in social work education, research, and scholarship across the globe, in pursuit of a more just and equitable world. Through this mission, IASSW advances human dignity, social justice, and the peaceful resolution of socio-political conflicts. IASSW unequivocally condemns atrocities in all their forms, wherever they occur, and affirms its responsibility to uphold ethical, principled, inclusive, and political responses to human suffering.

IASSW identifies that one of the major causes of violence is that education globally is often viewed solely as a tool for economic production. From this perspective, it has indirectly contributed to current violence. It recognises that contemporary human beings are often unaware of the inertia of economic and technological production. Therefore, it is necessary to promote a new pedagogy for the awakening of consciousness. Only through recognition of one's own being and intrinsic values can humanity achieve authentic self-realisation that interrupts cycles of aggression and violence. To achieve this, the Association advocates for a structural transformation of education that goes beyond mere technical or productive instruction.

IASSW recognises the escalating scale and complexity of global crises and the profound human and environmental costs. These include, but are not limited to, armed conflict, genocide and ethnic cleansing, forced displacement, war-induced starvation, extreme poverty and inequality, xenophobia, gender-based violence, violence against children, and environmental destruction among other serious human rights violations that devastate lives, communities, and peoples. Such violations undermine the prospects for a just, peaceful, and sustainable future.

IASSW maintains that these crises are symptoms of exhausted political structures. Both capitalist and socialist models have shown limitations by prioritising material development over human development. A political shift is imperative—one that emerges from communities through collective cooperation that is not strictly economic but is based on awakened shared values in service to others, demystifying unrestrained production as the sole indicator of progress.

THEREFORE, IASSW ISSUES THE FOLLOWING STATEMENT:

IASSW strongly denounces the brutal and systematic violence against peoples who have suffered, and continue to suffer systematic aggression—such as the Palestinian people—as well as any massacre or genocide carried out under the protection of political and military impunity. We cannot speak of “conflicts” as if they were faceless natural phenomena; we must clearly identify the power structures that exercise oppression. Silence in the face of asymmetry in suffering is not merely an omission but a form of complicity that perpetuates human suffering.

IASSW affirms that all human rights are universal, indivisible, and interdependent. However, the protection of these rights requires a new type of leadership. We critique conventional leadership that seeks only superficial or external changes in societal structures. To overcome structural violence, authentic leadership is required—

individuals committed to goodness who actively work with integrity in the public sphere toward a peaceful world. All violations—civil, political, social, economic, or environmental—require coherent and collective global attention, regardless of geography, politics, or power.

IASSW further emphasises that leadership to overcome structural violence must be grounded in deeper human awareness and ethical self-development. In this regard, guidance from self-realised individuals is necessary—human beings committed to goodness, peace, and empathy, who project their personal integrity into the public and social spheres.

IASSW condemns the immeasurable human suffering caused by conflict and violence and calls for strict adherence to international humanitarian and human rights law. Governments and all actors must be held accountable for actions that violate these principles. IASSW rejects war and violence as means of resolving conflict and reaffirms its commitment to promoting peaceful, just, and sustainable pathways for addressing global crises. This dialogue must arise from a collective will to cooperate—from “being” rather than merely “having”—strengthening the social fabric from the grassroots rather than through impositions from major centers of economic power.

IASSW stands in solidarity with all people affected by atrocities and upholds the right of every person to live in dignity, security, and harmony within their communities and environments. The Association emphasises the importance of inclusive dialogue, ethical engagement, and the recognition of diverse perspectives, particularly in contexts marked by deep divisions and power imbalances. Social work values emphasise ethical and professional engagement that listens, connects, and contributes to peacebuilding through mutual respect and understanding.

IASSW declares that at the center of our response is the conviction that individuals and communities have the right to security, dignity, and the full realisation of their rights. This realisation is not only legal but also spiritual and human: the right to awaken from productive alienation and reconnect with one’s own essence, with others, and with our communities.

IASSW advances social justice and social transformation through a commitment to peacebuilding, human security, and the protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms for all. The Association recognises that social work educators, researchers, students, and practitioners cannot effectively fulfil their mandates in contexts marked by violence, instability, and systemic injustice. At the core of its response is the conviction that individuals and communities are entitled to safety, dignity, and the full realisation of their rights.

PRIORITY AND URGENT ACTIONS

Therefore, IASSW declares priority and urgent actions aligned with its vision of excellence in education, research, and scholarship in social work worldwide, in pursuit of a more just and equitable world:

- Implement activities that contribute to transformative and sustainable peace. This includes fostering inclusive dialogue across differing perspectives,

supporting engagement that acknowledges power imbalances, and creating platforms for shared learning and exchange across regions. Through these efforts, IASSW strengthens global solidarity and contributes to the co-creation of just and peaceful societies.

- Promote education, research, and knowledge development. The Association supports member institutions in integrating human rights, peacebuilding, and social justice into curricula, and in incorporating critical reflection that prepares students for ethical and informed engagement in crisis situations. In this sense, training future social workers must prioritise introspection and the development of personal ethical values, preparing professionals who are, above all, leaders of their own internal transformation, capable of inspiring genuine change in the environments in which they work.
- Strengthen the capacity of educators, researchers, and students to recognise early warning signs and processes associated with mass atrocities, including those identified in genocide prevention frameworks—such as patterns of exclusion, discrimination, dehumanisation, and escalation of violence—and to engage in preventive and responsive interventions.
- Promote research and scholarly production that deepens understanding of how these processes emerge and interact in different contexts, and how they can be resisted through ethical practice, advocacy, and collective action. In this way, the Association contributes to preparing current and future generations of social workers to challenge all forms of dehumanisation, defend human rights, and advance toward peaceful, democratic, and inclusive futures.
- Actively mobilise its global membership through education, research, dialogue, and practice, and strengthen the integration of human rights, peacebuilding, and social justice into social work education and scholarship. This includes advancing the development of learning platforms, scholarly engagement, and practice-based initiatives. In doing so, the Association ensures that its commitments translate into meaningful action that advances prevention, ethical engagement, and transformation.
- IASSW calls upon governments and global institutions to uphold human rights, social justice, peace, and human dignity everywhere and at all times, in accordance with international legal frameworks and obligations.
- IASSW further calls upon United Nations agencies, civil society, educational institutions, and partner organisations to collaborate in addressing human rights violations and global atrocities, to hold all actors accountable, and to work collectively toward a more just, inclusive, and safe world.

IASSW commits to sustained engagement based on guiding principles of action to address growing global atrocities and human rights violations. Through its structures and initiatives—including mechanisms dedicated to human rights, social justice, and global solidarity—the Association will facilitate dialogue, promote interregional collaboration, and support the co-creation and exchange of knowledge in diverse contexts. It will also do so by fostering an education that awakens consciousness, a

politics that humanises structures, and a leadership that emerges from goodness and personal and collective self-realisation.

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