



Freedom resolution: Just peace for all - A world free from occupation

***This resolution is proposed** by YWCA-YMCA of Norway, YMCA-YWCA of Denmark, YWCA-YMCA of Sweden and YMCA Sri Lanka, and **seconded by** YMCA South Africa, YMCA India, YMCA Switzerland, YMCA Bangladesh, YMCA Greece, YMCA Cambodia, YMCA Myanmar, YMCA Argentina, YMCA Japan, East Jerusalem YMCA, YMCA Gaza, YMCA Taiwan and YMCA Ukraine.*

Military occupation and a state of constant violence is a huge obstacle to young people's lives in freedom, dignity, and peace. Vision 2030 offers a unique possibility to unite in the peaceful struggle against occupation and injustice everywhere. The YMCA calls for decisive action in support of a rules-based international system that opposes illegal occupation, and defends human rights, freedom and security for all. We believe that just peace is possible if we listen to young people and act accordingly.

Vision 2030

The YMCA stands for a just, sustainable, equitable and inclusive world in which every young person and every human being of any background lives in harmony with oneself, with society and with all of God's Creation. These values challenge us and demands us to speak truth to power, to call injustice by its name and to be brave in the struggle for justice everywhere.

The YMCA believes in the power of young people and communities to inspire, mobilize, and engage for justice, peace, equity, and human rights for all. To make this belief a reality, the YMCA will amplify the voices of young people and communities where it is active and ensure that everyone's voice is heard regardless of where they come from, who they love or how they worship. We reaffirm the rights of all people, especially children and young people, to live in conditions of dignity, peace and safety, ensuring hope for the future and fostering the development of human potential.

"No one is free until we all are free"

These words were made famous by the great civil rights activist Martin Luther King Junior and are as true today as when first spoken. Through the rapid growth of global social justice movements such as Black Lives Matters, we are reminded that our struggles for justice and freedom are connected. One person's freedom is incomplete without the freedom of

her sister. Both Martin Luther King and the global social movements of today remind us of what solidarity truly is. Genuine solidarity prompts us to check our own privileges and to continue non-violent struggle for justice and peace until it becomes a reality for all people. This is a bold, wise vision that unites the YMCA behind a powerful idea; ***United for Just World***. It challenges us to raise our voice against injustice, even in situations where speaking out is difficult. We speak out not because it is popular, but because it is right.

It will be impossible to live up to our own ideals, our vision, and our mission if we remain silent while our fellow human beings live under military occupation – be it in Palestine^[1], Ukraine, Cyprus, Western Sahara or anywhere else. Living in a constant state of occupation is not just, not sustainable, and not a good environment to create harmony within young individuals, within and between societies and with Creation. This is true for the people living under occupation, but it is also true for the people living in the occupying country. Life in a militarized reality can move us further away from our own humanity and limit us from reaching our full potential. This resolution therefore also seeks to amplify the voices of young people living in countries that occupy other nations, calling for an end to unsustainable situations of oppression, violence and insecurity.

Just peace for Israel and Palestine

Several influential non-governmental organizations, Israeli, Palestinian and international, including the *UN special rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the occupied Palestinian territories*, have described the current situation in Israel and Palestine as apartheid*. Apartheid is considered a crime against humanity under international law and is in its nature in direct conflict with universal human rights and the idea that all people are created equal. When the fight against a different apartheid in South Africa triumphed, the late Nelson Mandela stated: “*We know all too well that our freedom is incomplete without the freedom of the Palestinians*”. Mandela knew that no one is free until all are free, and his words challenge us to this day.

Before 1948, Christians comprised a third of the Palestinians living in the Holy Land. Today the number is below 1%, as a direct result of occupation and apartheid. Without justice and peace, in a few years from now, the number of Christians in the Holy Land will be negligible and cities like Bethlehem will lose their Christian identity much like Jerusalem,

which was predominantly Christian at the turn of the 20th century, already has.

We have been silent for too long. The powerful nations of the world have been treating international law not as what it is – a rules-based international system – but as a policy tool to promote their own national interests. Not only does this weaken the important international institutions we have established over the past 70 years, but it also sets a dangerous precedence were the strong do as they wish – almost always at the expense of the weak. As the world's largest youth organization with members across the world, the YMCA condemns this behavior and call for decisive action in implementation of international legislation that supports human rights, freedom, and security for all.

The 20th YMCA World Council declare that:

1. We will amplify voices of young people calling for a just world, against all types of discrimination and racism, including antisemitism, islamophobia, and xenophobia, through supporting, defending, and upholding Christian values, international law and international institutions as key instruments for assuring peace, justice and human rights for all everywhere.
2. Guided by Vision 2030, we will engage on the advocacy messages coming from young people emphasizing that violations of international law should be costly, not profitable, seeking to support the initiatives to increase the cost of occupation and apartheid, when these initiatives are in line with international law, and reaffirming that Israel and Palestine are both legitimate countries under international law.
3. We will develop our advocacy policies based on messages from young people, and activate the existing policies we have adopted on the issue of just peace, calling on YMCA movements to implement policy advocacy to mobilize support for peaceful and just resolutions of all situations of occupation, including the situation of apartheid and occupation in the Holy Land.
4. We will engage to **keep hope alive** of people living under occupation, and protect the right to freedom, justice and self-determination as defined by international law, by promoting Just World tours so that young people can see injustice for themselves, including “Come and See” tours to Palestine and Israel.
5. We will support social movements working for just peace and implementation of United Nations Security Council Resolution



- 2250 Youth, Peace and Security, including YMCA programs in Palestine with focus on resilience of young people, gender justice, vocational training, advocacy, the Olive Tree Campaign and other youth empowerment programs.
6. Together we will create a global YMCA taskforce for just peace in Israel and Palestine, trusted with the overall implementation of this resolution, composed of appointed members from interested national movements, and coordinated by an externally funded coordinator, with the goal of supporting the East Jerusalem YMCA and Gaza YMCA in their work for justice and peace in the region.

Background

*The statements of Human rights Organizations on Israeli Apartheid:

- **Human Rights Watch:** [israel palestine0421 reportcover 8.5x11 \(hrw.org\)](#)
- **B'tselem:** [Apartheid | B'Tselem \(btselem.org\)](#)
- **Amnesty International:** <https://www.amnesty.at/media/9282/amnesty-report-israel-s-apartheid-against-palestinians-februar-2022.pdf>
- **Harvard Law School:** <http://hrp.law.harvard.edu/wp-content/uploads/2022/03/IHRC-Addameer-Submission-to-HRC-COI-Apartheid-in-WB.pdf>
- **Yesh Din:** [The Occupation of the West Bank and the Crime of Apartheid: Legal Opinion - Yesh Din \(yesh-din.org\)](#)

International law:

The Key international conventions:

- [International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights – Full \(1966\)](#)
- [International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights – Full \(1966\)](#)
- [International Convention on Crime of Apartheid – Full \(1973\)](#)
- [International Court of Justice, Advisory Opinion, Separation Wall, 2004 – Summary](#)
- [International Court of Justice, Advisory Opinion 2004 – Full, UN Press Release – ICJ Advisory Opinion 2004](#)
- [Convention on the Suppression and Punishment of the Crime of Apartheid](#)
- [Geneva Conventions of 1949 and Additional Protocols, and their Commentaries](#)
- [Rome statute of the International Criminal Court](#)

Key UN Resolutions on Palestine

- [UN General Assembly Resolution 194 \(1948\)](#)
- [UN Security Council Resolution 242 \(1967\)](#)
- [UN Security Council Resolution 252 \(1968\)](#)
- [UN Security Council Resolution 267 \(1969\)](#)
- [UN Security Council Resolution 338 \(1973\)](#)
- [UN Security Council Resolution 446 \(1979\)](#)
- [UN Security Council Resolution 452 \(1979\)](#)
- [UN Security Council Resolution 471 \(1980\)](#)
- [UN Security Council Resolution 476 \(1980\)](#)
- [UN Security Council Resolution 478 \(1980\)](#)
- [UN Security Council Resolution 2334 \(2016\)](#)

^[1] We apply the United Nations definition of occupation, meaning that when referring to occupied Palestine, we refer to the land within the borders of 1967