

# Current Concerns

The international journal for independent thought, ethical standards, moral responsibility,  
and for the promotion and respect of public international law, human rights and humanitarian law

English Edition of *Zeit-Fragen*

## What kind of world do we want?

by Erika Vögeli

Any reasonably sensitive person who reads Karin Leukefeld's interview with Dr Ghassan Abu Sitta (see page 3) about his work in the field of conflict medicine and his commitment to the children of Palestine cannot help but feel deeply moved: shaken by the fact that Abu Sitta's work has become necessary, because without his efforts – and those of many other people committed to humanitarian causes – the world would be even more unbearable than it appears here.

What we are witnessing in the Middle East – in the form of a genocidal strategy of extermination against the populations surrounding Israel, which violates international law – and, though receiving less media attention, in other parts of the world such as the Congo or Sudan – is the ugly face of humanity's worst perversion, driven by unbridled, self-serving lust for power and violence: a mental and emotional aberration and the resulting sick human behaviour, devoid of any human reason.

That is not to say that such sick behaviour does not follow a certain logic: the logic of power based on money, a logic that holds all those involved hostage – or binds them using *Epstein*-style methods – if they do not wish to lose their place within this power structure. And prevents the rest, through a constant barrage of media coverage and relentless manipulation, from giving their spontaneous human feelings enough space to allow them to be silenced. A lust for power and greed have – not for the first time in history – led to an outburst of violence that harms everyone: the victims, the perpetrators – and the “bystanders”.

For wherever international law is trampled underfoot, wherever the UN Charter is reduced to *absurdity*, wherever human rights appear to be non-existent – in all such places, the very foundations of human coexistence are denied. Denied – but not abolished. For they cannot be abolished. They are part of the *human condition*, the conditions of our existence as human beings. One can deny them. One can violate them – but they cannot be eradicated. They exist alongside us – and we alongside them.

However, failing to respect the demands of the *human condition* inevitably



One of millions of young children who have known nothing but war. According to a report by UNICEF, over 460 million children were growing up in war zones in 2024. (picture JINHA)

has consequences. The less we take note of them, the less we are aware of them, respect them and live by them, the less humane our social life becomes, on both a large and a small scale. Cutting a bird's wings may not kill it, but it does prevent it from flying. In order to realise their full potential, people need to live together in peace, freedom and dignity. For *everyone*.

These are not merely ideals. People throughout history and across all cultures have been and continue to be inspired by them. Wherever they have been and continue to be put into practice, they have fostered a flourishing of society – accompanied by greater opportunities for the development of individuality and enhanced social cohesion within communities. In terms of the potential inherent in their nature, human beings are “ultra-social” creatures. All their uniquely human abilities develop solely within social relationships: walking upright, language and thought, self-awareness, and the capacity for understanding – all these emerge only within and in relation to interpersonal relationships. It is only in and with them that we can develop the intellectual, emotional and technical skills whose combination in modern technology – for example, in medicine the art of healing – has enabled us to improve and safeguard life to such an extent.

Our social nature also includes the capacity for empathy, mutual support and being there for one another. As numerous results from modern developmental research show, children are born with this social orientation. However, it can only flourish within a social context, in trusting relationships where we are free to pursue our own interests in a way that serves social cohesion, and thereby to realise our freedom as human beings and our human dignity. Insights drawn from numerous fields of knowledge – including the study of human history, anthropology, cultural anthropology, philosophy, the philosophy of law, psychology and many related disciplines – provide ample material on this subject. Certainly, more so than an analysis of the stock market profits of arms manufacturers.

Anyone who wishes to dismiss this as idealism has to face the question whether they have really grappled with all the knowledge available today – and whether they are also aware of the considerable efforts that those in power throughout history have always made to prevent this knowledge from becoming common knowledge. Dismissing it serves the very same power interests. It is no coincidence that, for example, the psychology of *Alfred Adler* – who addressed

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### “What kind of world do we want?”

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the problem of power as a distortion of human emotional life and placed the social structure of human existence as a whole at the heart of psychological understanding – has been so little taken up to this day, and not just by the psychology department.

Decades after the end of the World War, the sincere hopes of humanity and of all those humiliated and wronged by the genocides rested on the prohibition of wars of aggression, based on the 1948 “*Universal Declaration of Human Rights*” – the first of its kind in world history – and its subsequent covenants, which are binding on states, as well as on the UN Charter. These were the achievements of people from all over the world, whose moral and legal conscience compelled them to build a dam of law to prevent a repeat of the catastrophes they had experienced.

Today we stand before the ruins of all that. The ruins of justice, humanity and human trust – without them, constructive living and rebuilding are impossible.

When the sole aim is to use one’s own “narratives” and “stories” to persuade others to accept or endorse such atrocities, the very foundations of human life are indeed called into question. A way of living together based on “cleverly” outwitting one another, on deceit, treachery and dishonesty – for example, negotiations conducted for the sole purpose of stalling, – disregard for generally accepted norms of international law, and the denial of human rights to entire groups of people held in an open-air prison – such a structure brings us to the brink of self-destruction. Such mafia-like structures cannot form the basis for human life on this planet. Just as an upbringing steeped in hatred, fostering a sense of one’s own superiority coupled with contempt for others, leaves psychological scars that are diametrically opposed to the idea of a humanistic personality capable of truly

realising its human potential. We are all dependent on one another. We need trusting human interaction, without which a child cannot develop into a fully-fledged human being, without which an adult would also perish, and without which no aspect of human life can truly function. We need to live together and cooperate with one another – no one can escape this logic of human coexistence. Politics must be founded on this.

What is happening in the Middle East – and not only there – is a damning indictment. Mistakes in history are always terrible enough when they stem from ignorance. But how are we to describe today’s “mistakes”, which are made against our better judgement – obscured by insidious talk of democracy, of supposed values, of the fight against terrorism and of threats – such as nuclear ones – which in reality have existed on our own side for decades?

In this country, it is still accepted that people who protest against being stripped of all their rights are subjected to genocide as alleged or “potential terrorists”. Meanwhile, the real terrorists – dressed in suits and ties – carry out the orders of their financiers from the invisible bridge of command of transatlantic geopolitics. And they pat each other on the back for it, spinning their “narratives” to justify actions that cannot be justified – actions that merely copy the logic of the absolute ruler who places himself above all law. Shielded by “ministries of truth” that persecute any dissenting opinion or reporting in transatlantic countries as a “threat”.

Admittedly, we have not yet realised the full extent of the consequences here. Life is still relatively good. Although the signs of decline are certainly visible in all Western countries – the “orchestra” is still playing.

What humanity achieved in the wake of the horrors of two world wars – the prohibition of the use of force enshrined in the UN Charter, the *Universal Decla-*

*ration of Human Rights*, the *Covenants on Civil and Political Rights* and on *Economic, Social and Cultural Rights*, the *Geneva Conventions* and much more – we must reclaim these achievements. This will require a wide-ranging discussion and the development of a broad understanding of why these agreements are not mere “deals”, but rather principles established on the basis of mutual understanding that are not up for negotiation.

However we look at it, the children in Gaza and the children in Lebanon are our children too. If we listen to our conscience and our capacity for compassion, they inevitably lead us to ask ourselves: what if I were in the other person’s shoes? One person alone cannot turn the world upside down. But there is one thing they can do, without which nothing else matters: they can ask themselves, “What if I were that child in Gaza, in Lebanon?” It is no merit to have been born elsewhere. We have the ability to empathise with other people – without this ability, we could not live, we could not grow up, and we could not find our way in the world. Unfortunately, this capacity is severely limited by numerous influences and misconceptions about human beings, above all by ideological prejudices and the divisive attitudes that go hand in hand with them. But it is a question that anyone can ask themselves. It is the inner voice of our social nature, the voice of conscience, that poses this question and thereby frees us from the shackles of the errors that hold us back – this is the first act, more than an “idea”, but the very first human act. Whatever each person then does, they know it and do it out of their own, newly reawakened human feeling.

Driven by the sentiment expressed by Ghassan Abu Sitta: “This has to stop!” And the realisation that: “Gaza is not an isolated case. What is happening in Gaza will be repeated everywhere.” This is not the world we want. *It must change. It must be a humane world for everyone.* ●

## Current Concerns

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# “When the world of children comes to an end”

Interview by Karin Leukefeld with Dr Ghassan Abu Sitta\*



Ghassan Abu Sitta and Karin Leukefeld  
(pictures gasfcf.org and ef)

Over more than 30 years, Ghassan Abu Sitta has gained experience in war and crisis zones, leading to the development of a form of “conflict medicine” taught exclusively in Beirut. Israel has carried out attacks on the healthcare system in Gaza and also in Lebanon in a truly “spectacular manner” and with complete impunity, the doctor said in the interview. Humanitarian and international law are being flouted. The genocide against the Palestinians in Gaza is currently continuing against the population of Lebanon, Abu Sitta said. He recalled the “pager attacks” carried out by the Israeli Mossad on 17 September 2024, in which more than 3,000 people in Lebanon suffered severe injuries that would mark them for life.

Israel has deliberately crossed all the red lines drawn after the Second World War and is being supported in this by the US and European states. “This means Israel is acting in their interests,” said Abu Sitta. This complicity must be clearly opposed. The fact that Abu Mohamed Al Jolani, a long-standing Al-Qaeda representative, has been exempted from US and UN sanctions, whilst judges at the International Criminal Court in The Hague and the UN Special Rapporteur on Human Rights in the Occupied Palestinian Territories, Francesca Albanese, are being punished with sanctions for calling the Israeli genocide against the Palestinians by its name, proves that international law is being undermined.

\* Karin Leukefeld is an ethnologist, scholar of Islam and political science, and historian. She has been working as a freelance correspondent since 2000. Her main areas of focus are the Near and Middle East. Her latest book is entitled “War in the Middle East: Geopolitics, Devastation, Resistance and the Awakening of a Region” (Hintergrund-Verlag 2024)

Ghassan Abu Sitta is a surgeon specialising in plastic surgery. As a volunteer for *Médecins Sans Frontières* (MSF), Abu Sitta has worked in many war zones and crisis areas. Since 2024, he has headed the newly established Chair of “Conflict Medicine” at the American University of Beirut (AUB).

International humanitarian and aid organisations in war and crisis zones are often deployed in conflicts that are also funded by their own governments. In light of the genocide in Gaza, a clear separation is necessary, according to Abu Sitta. What is needed is a “new social contract”, the doctor said. This is increasingly being discussed within humanitarian and aid organisations.

Karin Leukefeld: Ghassan Abu Sitta, you are Palestinian, but your homeland is occupied. Do you live in Beirut or do you live in the UK? As you are also Rector of the University of Glasgow?

Dr Ghassan Abu Sitta: I live between the two places. When I came out of Gaza, I tried to go back there a couple of times. The Israelis refused me entry. I had connections with the American University in Beirut, having been here between 2011 to 2019 as head of plastic surgery, very quickly we became aware that Israel’s war in Gaza is part of a much larger regional project to dominate and reshape the map of the region.

Quickly we started seeing the war in Lebanon. I moved here on 17 September 2024 (day of the pager attack). I had been asked to take up the professor’s chair in conflict medicine, which is basically a reflection of the fact that we live in a region where war injuries are a major determinant of human health. A place like Lebanon and a hospital like the American University in Beirut, have specially been shaped by these injuries in their history.

You have set up a relief fund for Palestinian children from Gaza.

When we sat up the Ghassan Abu Sitta Children’s Fund<sup>1</sup>, the idea was that we were going to bring Palestinian children from Gaza, because the level of expertise and experience that exists here specially at the American University Hospital in Beirut in treating this kind of injuries, doesn’t exist outside military hospitals in the world. You will not find a civilian academic institution seen this much in terms of war injuries. Just the Lebanese wars, the Israeli invasions on Lebanon, but also from the war in Iraq and the war in Syria we had patients from *Médecins sans Frontières*, MSF, here for treatment.

The complexity of a lot of injuries that I have seen in Gaza needed the expertise of doctors, of people who had been working treating war injured children all of their lives. We started bringing children from Gaza through Egypt to here. When the war 2024 started in Lebanon, we start-

ed treating Lebanese children in addition to Palestinian children. And we have been doing that since then. So there are around 1,400 children who were wounded in the last Lebanon war (2024) And we were treating them, providing reconstructive surgery, rehabilitation and health support. At the same time we are bringing more children from Gaza to Lebanon for reconstructive surgery.

The number of treated children is high, how many doctors are working in your team?

What we do is, we use the whole of the American University Hospital in Beirut. Depending on the type of injuries. Some children need orthopaedic surgery, other children need ophtomologist, other children need plastic surgeons, it is depending on the type of injury. We have at our disposal a large number of specialties that may match the patient’s needs, depending of what the injury is. Since this war started, we have a project with UNICEF and the Ministry of Health and so we became the referring for all paediatric war injuries in Lebanon.

How old are your patients?

I operated on a seven-month-old yesterday and the oldest is 17, 18. We define a child that is 18 and below.

## The sheer scale of the killing has reshaped Palestinian families

Part of the treatment of the Palestinian children is also, that after the surgery they can stay to recover with a guest family? Is that working?

We bring the families with them; a part of the family is with them. By nature of who Israel is allowed to leave Gaza is usually a single parent, that is with them. The devastation that is in Gaza, a lot of the time the parents have been killed. We have kids here who are being looked after by aunts or uncles or a single parent who survived or by the grandmother, who is the only surviving adult looking after them. The sheer scale of the killing has reshaped Palestinian families. That reflects who is able to (bring the children).

Did you give this kind of support also to children from Syria or from Iraq?

I had been involved in a similar project between 2012 and 2019 for war wounded children in Lebanon. Back then I was at the AUB as head of Plastic Surgery. We had a paediatric war injuries program for Syrian children. At that time, we had been treating also injured Iraqi children,

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*A visibly shaken Dr Ghassan Abu Sitta. Press conference two hours after the massacre at Al-Ahli Hospital in Gaza on 17 October 2023. According to local health authorities, 471 people were killed and 342 were injured. (picture gascf.org)*

but they had come through an agreement with the Iraqi Ministry of Health and the AUB-Hospital.

### **Their world has ended for these children**

*Are there similarities in the kind of injuries from the different countries, or are all of them different?*

The pattern of injuries is different. Palestinian children in Gaza and Lebanese children are injured in their homes, almost uniform. Or in a car trying to run away from their homes. Which means that they invariably have lost siblings or parents or both. The injury is not just physical, but it is also emotional and social and existential. Their world has ended for these children, the world that they knew is gone. Their home, their family, their neighbourhood, their siblings, their school, everything. This scale of wounding we are seeing in this war in the Lebanese children, all have been wounded in their homes. Almost all of them have either lost parents or siblings.

To the point where we now have a briefing team as part of the program. Because these kids, as they wake up from the intensive care period, then how do you tell them that their siblings have been killed? That their parents have been killed? So we have now a psychologist. One of our colleagues who works in the paediatric palliative care team in the hos-

pital now started working with us. So that we can tell these children the bad news. Because you need to be able to kind of do it in cooperation with whoever is left in the family. And do it in the right kind of way.

*AUB Hospital is a University Hospital. Do you also bring students of medicine into the project?*

Yes, we have, we use the medical students at the AUB. The idea of the chair of conflict medicine is in itself an educational chair. It is in recognition that any doctor being trained in this region needs to be trained in the treatment of the health consequences of war. Because it is a major determinant of health. If you graduate tomorrow and you work in Palestine or Lebanon or Syria or Iraq or Libya, there is a good chance that you going to see that. And therefore, part of medical education we believe in our region has to involve this.

*How do the students react, when they are working on the wounded children. Are there many, how do they cope?*

You will be surprised; a lot of students want to do this. What we try to do is show, that an understanding of the social and psychological is just as important as the understanding of the clinical. We are trying to kind of shape their way of viewing war injuries.

*They have probably never seen anything like those injuries, do they get support?*

There is support. That was the agreement with the medical schools, that there is support. Specially as we have paediatric war injuries, that are even more difficult to deal with.

*You said, in other countries war injuries are treated in military hospitals. But in Beirut it is, because there is a need?*

Yes, and experience. For me the belief is, *you can't keep thinking this is the last war.* The war to end all wars, so to speak ...

*... as it was said about the First World War, which resulted in "a peace to end all peace"<sup>2</sup> ...*

Yes.

*When you spoke about your experience in Gaza 2023, you said this war will come to Lebanon ...*

Absolutely. It is obvious that Israel wants to turn everything South of the Litani River into Northern Gaza. Scorched earth, including the companies they are hiring to bulldoze the rubble in the villages, so there isn't even any rubble left. Only flat land. It is 5000 Schekels per building, it is even the same amount, it is the same companies they paid for Beit Hanoun and Jabalia, they are paying for Khiam and Bint Jbeil.

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“When the world of children ...”

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*Let us speak about this Chair of Conflict Medicine, which is somewhat extraordinary. We do not have it at European Universities. How did it start?*

When I first came here in 2011, I noticed, that all the experience disappears with the generations that retire. My colleagues at the AUB who were treating the wounded, were trained in the civil war (unlike) the new guys who had just come back from the States or from Europe. The experience and the expertise had to be kept, had to be institutionalized. So that it stays in the hospital, in the university, to transfer the knowledge from one generation to the other. With the AUB I set up a program called Conflict Medicine program. With this we were looking at war injuries from a research point of view, from an educational point of view and from a clinical point of view. As I told you, we had a paediatric war injuries program for the Syrian kids and we had a partnership with the Iraqi Ministry of Health. This continued until the collapse of the banking system in Lebanon and I moved back to the UK.

*Wars in the region have been raging for a long time – Syria, Iraq, Yemen. As a doctor you have been at many frontlines?*

Yes, and when the war started again in Gaza 2023, there was a decision at the AUB to set out to do, what we were planning before. We needed a professorial chair of conflict medicine and embed it in the system. So I was approached by the AUB when I came out of Gaza. They asked, whether I would like to come back as Professor of Conflict Medicine. Specially as I have been the person who set up the Conflict Medicine program. And that was it.

Now it is an evolving program and we need to enhance the name Conflict Medicine as a Post War Surgery. War Surgery is what it used to be called. It is assumed, that the doctor is the guy who treats the bullet or the bone. But actually, every special field in medicine is affected by the injury. Because you need ophthalmologists, you need microbiologists, you need intensive care people, you need orthopaedic surgeries and vascular surgeries and so on. It is just like the idea that *like the industrial revolution shaped modern medicine, wars are an upheaval of a similar magnitude that shapes medicine in all its fields.*

*Could you please explain that to a layman?*

It is not about creating a new field but creating in each field an understanding of the specialty of war injuries, and the way, they manifest themselves. An ophthalmologist needs to understand how the blast



*A shop selling baby products, completely destroyed following an Israeli air strike in southern Beirut. In the foreground, a destroyed cot.  
(picture Karin Leukefeld)*

wave will burst the eye, how you best preserve how much you can, when shrapnel is inside the eye. An orthopaedic surgery needs to understand the difference between a traffic accident fracture and a blast fracture.

Even the field of microbiology. We have a huge problem in the region with multidrugresistant bacteria. It was first described after 2003 by the Americans, they called it “Iraqibacter”. They used to see them in Iraqi soldiers coming back from Iraq with bacterial infections, but these bacteria were resistant to most antibiotics. But now, almost all war wounded in Gaza and in Lebanon have multidrugresistant infections. So everything about human health gets shaped and reshaped by war. That is the need to have a kind of someone dedicated within an academic institution that sees these patients to understanding this relationship.

**Everything about human health gets shaped and reshaped by war**

*Not only are you an experienced surgeon and professor at the American University and Hospital of Beirut, but you also speak publicly about the war and its consequences. On one occasion, you described European states as the ‘axis of genocide’ – why?*

There is no doubt, that Israel could not have carried out the genocide in Gaza had it not been for the material support of certain states. The UK did not just give arms to Israel and financial support, 60 % of all electronic surveillance was done by Royal Airforce Planes coming out of Cyprus. When the Israelis would bomb Yemen,

Italian Airforce Jets would refuel (and Italy would) allow to do that. The Americans supplied 80 % of weapons and ammunition, the Germans follow right after. And I do believe in the *Edward Said* term, it is “the dog that wags the tail”. Israel remains a settler’s colony of Western Imperialism. That is why it is supported by Western countries.

*Some people in a similar position to you don’t speak out, or hardly ever do. You, on the other hand, speak your mind loud and clear – is that also a result of what you have experienced and witnessed over the decades?*

Absolutely. I don’t think there is room for restraint after 22.000 children were killed with complete impunity, 64.000 children have been made orphans. When I was in Gaza I started writing this thing on the patients notes, a code (...) “wounded child no surviving family” – WCNSF – so that the social department workers at *Shifa* (Hospital) would feed them. Because the following day someone has to feed this child and look after them and change them. And that is a phenomenon I now see here and it is a phenomenon that I had not seen anywhere before. We must put an end to this systematic form of genocide. *Gaza is not an isolated case. What is happening in Gaza will be replicated everywhere.*

*Thank you for this interview.*

<sup>1</sup> <https://gascf.org/>

<sup>2</sup> Fromkin, David. *A Peace to End All Peace*, Holt Paperbacks, 2001; the PDF version is available in the Internet archive

## States should uphold and strengthen the protection of medical care in armed conflict

*Joint call by the President of the International Committee of the Red Cross, the Director-General of the World Health Organisation and the International President of Médecins Sans Frontières on the 10th Anniversary of UN Security Council Resolution 2286*

Geneva (ICRC) – Ten years ago, the UN Security Council unanimously adopted Resolution 2286 on health care in armed conflicts. The situation is even worse compared to 10 years ago. Today, we mark not an achievement – we mark a failure.

As violence affecting medical facilities, transport and personnel continues unabated, the harm this resolution sought to prevent has not diminished. It has continued and, in many contexts, intensified. As the heads of the *International Committee of the Red Cross* (ICRC), the *World Health Organisation* (WHO), and *Médecins Sans Frontières* (MSF), we join others in the international community in issuing an urgent call for action.

Every day on the front lines of the world's most devastating crises, our teams witness the catastrophic consequences when the sanctity of health care is compromised. Hospitals are reduced to rubble, ambulances face delays and obstruction, doctors, nurses and patients are too often caught in attacks that result in death and injury. Patients die from otherwise treatable wounds, women are sometimes forced to give birth without adequate care, and entire communities lose access to life-saving services. When health care is no longer safe, it is often the clearest warning sign that the rules and norms intended to limit the harm of war are breaking down. When hospitals and those who provide care come under attack, we face not only a humanitarian crisis, but a crisis of humanity.

States and all parties to armed conflict must comply with the rules protecting health care. The obligation under international humanitarian law (IHL) to “respect and ensure respect... in all circumstances” requires states not only to abide by these rules themselves, but also to use all possible influence to ensure that other states and parties to conflict do the same.

The recommendations of the UN Secretary-General that accompanied Resolution 2286 remain a clear, actionable road-map for states. The ICRC, WHO and MSF



*“When hospitals and those who provide care come under attack, we face not only a humanitarian crisis, but a crisis of humanity.” (picture ICRC)*

stand ready with our presence in conflict settings, medical expertise and operational capacity to support states in implementing these critical measures.

We also recall World Health Assembly Resolution 65.20, adopted in 2012, which introduced systematic documentation and reporting of attacks on health care by WHO. Strengthening consistent and transparent reporting is essential to building the evidence base, informing prevention and response, and supporting accountability.

To uphold and advance Resolution 2286's demand “that all parties to armed conflicts fully comply with their obligations under international law... to ensure the respect and protection of all medical personnel and humanitarian personnel exclusively engaged in medical duties, their means of transport and equipment, as well as hospitals and other medical facilities”; and to prevent another decade of deteriorating norms and unjustifiable violence affecting health care in conflict settings, we call upon all states to urgently implement the following measures:

- Translate existing commitments into concrete action to implement Resolution 2286 and actively promote the positive efforts, including the outcome of the Global IHL initiative's workstream on achieving meaningful protection for hospitals.
- Integrate the protection of health care into armed and security forces' doctrine, rules of engagement and operational guidance to give practical effect to IHL obligations.

- Review, enact and strengthen domestic laws to protect health care in armed conflict.
- Allocate adequate financial, technical and operational resources to implement measures that protect health care and promote respect for its provision.
- Use all available means to influence other parties to conflict – including those that states support in any form – to comply with their obligations to protect health care.
- Conduct swift, transparent and impartial investigations into attacks on health care and support efforts to ensure accountability in line with applicable legal frameworks.
- Regularly and transparently report on the implementation of Resolution 2286, including progress, challenges, good practices and lessons learned to support its full implementation.

Ten years ago on this day, the international community reaffirmed that the laws of war must be respected and that the wounded and sick, as well as those who care for them, must be protected. Today, health facilities continue to be damaged or destroyed. Medical workers and patients are still being caught in attacks that result in death and injury. That is not a failure of the law. It is a failure of political will.

We urge world leaders to act and show the needed political leadership to end this violence. Health care must never be a casualty of war.

Source: <https://www.icrc.org/en/statement/icrc-who-msf-health-care-must-never-be-casualty-war-resolution-2286> of 3 May 2026

# Then there won't be much left of Germany

**Brigadier General Erich Vad has issued a stark warning about the irresponsible direction of German foreign policy**

by Peter Küpfer

In a recently recorded interview on *KLARTEXT Deutschland*, a serial of a private TV station in Austria, retired Brigadier General Erich Vad, a former adviser on military and security policy matters to the Bundestag and the German government, warns of an increasingly dangerous escalation in German security policy. Chancellor Merz's declaration, made before the whole world, that Germany aims to 'field the strongest conventional army in Europe' by 2039, forms part of a strategic shift that is no longer geared towards avoiding war, but towards victory through military means in a war against Russia. In Vad's view, this is unrealistic and "extremely dangerous". Below, key statements by Vad are summarised and reproduced verbatim based on the transcript. This is followed by a personal commentary.

## Doubts about the assessments of the actual threat situation

Erich Vad considers it a major risk that the shift in German security policy no longer seeks to keep war at bay from Germany, its people and its territory, but is instead moving towards it as if caught in a maelstrom. As Vad recalls, by contrast, when the German Bundeswehr was founded, the prevailing view was that, as a purely militia-based and defensive army, it had to keep a new impending war away from Germany. The purely military doctrine held that the Bundeswehr should deter a potential threatening power so thoroughly that war could not even occur on German territory.

Nowadays, however, the public is constantly bombarded with statements from the government, political parties and the media, all conveying the message that an imminent Russian attack on Ukraine's western neighbours in Eastern Europe is inevitable and that, following their defeat, this would lead to a Russian attack on Western Europe – and thus on Germany as well. For Vad, this new version of the American domino theory is not supported by any facts, not even as far as Russia is concerned. Vad counters this with what level-headed experts have consistently emphasised independently of one another since the start of the war in Ukraine: following the US's unilateral withdrawal from arms control (including nuclear arms control), Russia's primary objective is the security of its population. Conquering Europe is neither Russia's intention nor militarily feasible. The official threat

**"In the event of a war, the Americans will operate from Germany deep into Russia – but we will then get 'the full brunt' of it here – we, not the US."**

"The situation today is as follows: this year, we are deploying American medium-range missiles in the greater Wiesbaden area. Interceptor systems too, that's right. They are aimed at Russian systems in Kaliningrad, hypersonic weapons – the whole shebang. There is no discussion about this, no debate whatsoever. And if we do this in isolation, without balancing interests with the other side – as is currently the case with Russia – without even discussing it with them, then that is extremely dangerous. Because in the event of a war, the Americans will operate from Germany deep into Russia – something that some CDU politicians here find so wonderful. But we will then get 'the full brunt' of it here – we, not the US. [What

is happening now] is simply a decoupling of European security from American security.

Yet the aim, even during the Cold War, was always to prevent that from happening. Back then, here in Germany, we had the highest concentration of military forces in the world. We relied on deterrence and strength. And yet there was a high risk that it would go wrong. If it had, there would have been nothing left of Germany.

And the situation is much the same today, though many people fail to realise this."

(Brigadier General Erich Vad in an interview with *KLARTEXT Deutschland* on 30 April 2026)

(Translation Current Concerns)

scenario put forward by the EU and Germany – which Vad considers unrealistic – is, with its potential to cause panic, steering the situation towards a new major war against Russia. However, Russia is not just any adversary, but the world's strongest nuclear power, far superior to the US and even China in terms of destructive power.

## Aggressive language masks a lack of substance

Erich Vad is deeply concerned about Germany's aggressive official rhetoric: "Given the actual situation, we should show more moderation and restraint. [...] I don't like it when our politicians use inflammatory language towards Russia. [...] When you consider what a possible [Russian] armed response to Germany's ongoing provocative escalation might look like, this brash style is completely at odds with reality." Vad speaks unequivocally in this context when he emphasises: "With Russia, we are not dealing with just any country. Russia is the world's strongest nuclear power. They have more warheads than the Americans, far more than the Chinese. Russia would, of course, in the event of a foreseeable defeat, if they were forced to withdraw from the Donbas – then Russia would go nuclear. Much like *John F. Kennedy* in 1962. Kennedy would have had to resort to nuclear weapons if the Soviets had stood their ground back then and stationed Russian – that is, Soviet – missiles there [in Cuba]. That is precisely what the



Erich Vad  
(picture screenshot)

Russians want to prevent: the West doing that in Ukraine today, and that is also the reason why Russia does not want Ukraine to join NATO."

## One example clearly illustrates what the situation is

Vad illustrates the true nature of the threat with a chilling example: "We signed a defence agreement with the British two years ago. It covered matters in the maritime sector, but also the construction of combat drones. We signed a cooperation agreement to this end. Last week, the British informed us that Ukraine is to receive 120,000 of these combat drones. These are capable of striking targets deep within Russia. The Russians did not take long to react. They made their position crystal clear: 'Fine, but then we'll add all the

continued on page 8

### “Then there won’t be much ...”

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arms suppliers to our target lists too.’ This is precisely where Germany’s escalation is leading – into a complete dead end. I am certain that as soon as the Ukrainians have these systems, it will be open season for them.<sup>1</sup> [...] This is a disaster waiting to happen.”

Vad issues a similar warning to those forces he considers to be acting irresponsibly, who would like to see Ukraine as a member of the EU in order to demonstrate European solidarity: “I consider this approach to be extremely dangerous. We have Article 42 in the EU Treaty, the obligation to provide mutual assistance. If we bring a country at war into the EU, we are bringing war to Europe.”

### Germany’s precarious situation

For Vad, Germany’s grave strategic error lies in the fact that, even after the Cold War, it continued to side entirely with the supposedly stronger party, rather than actively working towards understanding on the highly contentious issue of security in a world that had become multipolar. A sound security policy requires an honest, consistent foreign policy with an emphasis on responsible diplomacy aimed at balance. Today, leading German politicians boast about the fact that they have severed all contact with Russia: “Germany no longer engages in any meaningful exchange with Russia. This is a dangerous imbalance for Germany, extremely dangerous [...]. If we end up with what the federal government’s ‘Operation Plan Germany’ envisages, then we have got everything wrong. If *Friedrich Merz* were to become a ‘war chancellor’ – the first in post-war history – then we have got everything wrong in terms of security policy. We might as well have the strongest conventional army in Europe standing in our backyard. It would be of no use to us. And that is where we need to rethink things. We need a new approach. One that requires us to admit: we must combine military strength with political wisdom, and ultimately also with a balancing of interests with Russia.”

### ‘Strategies that knowingly lead us into a hell of war bring us anything but security’

For Vad, another reason why a purely military security policy is likely to fail in a world that has become multipolar lies in the lack of persuasive power over the country’s own population. As he puts it, many people – particularly younger citizens – find it hard to accept the doctrine that Germany is being defended in the Hindu Kush or on the Dnieper (Ukraine). For him, this new doctrine of so-called “pre-emptive defence” represents a sharp departure from the essence and spirit of a Federal Republic



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lic that has long commanded respect worldwide. But how, Vad asks, is active peacebuilding in the world supposed to work if Germany, under the protection of a NATO that has become aggressive, actively supports a belligerent country with training, money, weapons and war rhetoric – and in future also with German soldiers? For Vad, this is a logical and strategically disastrous break: “Security guaranteed by the superpower USA and its interests is, and has long been, no longer a real security strategy; it is dependent on the fickle behaviour of the USA. The current national security strategy, however, must have the territorial integrity of Germany as its ultimate goal. These cannot be serious strategies that lead us, with our eyes wide open, into a hell of war.”

\* \* \*

*pk. Erich Vad* expresses alarm, partly due to his knowledge of the recently published German strategic documents preparing for a major war with Russia: the first German “Military Strategy” and the “Operational Plan Germany”. For Vad, these documents rely entirely on the threat narrative adopted from NATO, which demonises Russia, and thus fail to fulfil their actual purpose in this world: to address the security issue comprehensively, not merely in military terms. The new strategic concepts apparently grant the German government the authority – entirely within its own power – to replace positive law with emergency law “in the event of an increased threat”. It is not difficult to see that this is intended to further stifle the already severely curtailed right to freedom of expression.

The document recently published by the Swiss Federal Council on “maintaining internal security in situations of threat” takes a very similar line. Official Switzerland has not only voluntarily and uncritically implemented the EU sanctions against Russia,

it has also eagerly joined in the demonisation campaign against everything Russian, thereby provoking astonishment and even outrage in the non-Western world. Now, on top of this, uncomfortable expressions of opinion that do not toe the government line are to be treated as disinformation and as activities serving the “enemy”. Yet this authoritarian muzzling destroys precisely what constitutes a genuine democracy: dialogue and the thorough discussion of differing opinions. Against this backdrop, the courageous, serious public warning issued by a German career officer deserves attention and recognition, both in Germany and in Switzerland. Aware of the situation, he makes a serious plea for a return to the true tasks of a citizen’s and militia army in a democracy. What he has to say on the matter should also be discussed in Switzerland and certainly not decreed “from above”. •

<sup>1</sup> This has now come to pass and has apparently led to increased pressure within the Russian population, including in key Russian decision-making circles, to launch targeted counterstrikes against the manufacturing facilities producing long-range combat drones.

Source: *KLARTEXT Deutschland*: “Ex-General Erich Vad warnt vor Krieg: Dann bleibt von Deutschland nicht viel übrig” (Former General Erich Vad warns of war: Then there won’t be much left of Germany), 30 April 2026, accessed 10 May 2026

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# Germany – how to deal with the ongoing process of forced conformity?

by Karl-Jürgen Müller

Almost 200 years ago, *Georg Büchner* wrote his historical drama “Danton’s Death”. *Danton* initially was a radical but later became an increasingly sceptical champion of the French Revolution. One of the final scenes – at the public execution of Danton and his comrades in early April 1794 – depicts a “people” cheering the beheadings and speaking contemptuously of those doomed to die. The bloodlust of the even more radical Jacobins led by *Robespierre* – Danton’s adversary – had not alleviated the people’s suffering; on the contrary. And yet the cheering! – Or perhaps precisely because of that?

Just a few weeks later – though Büchner’s drama makes no mention of this – the very same people would cheer the execution of the radical Jacobins including Robespierre just as loudly. Büchner had one of Danton’s comrades say: “You are killing us on the day you have lost your reason; you will kill them [Robespierre and his comrades] on the day you regain it.” Would Büchner have agreed with this judgement? Was it “reasonable” to then execute Robespierre and his closest comrades in July 1794? What followed (the *Directoire* and then *Napoleon’s* autocracy) was hardly humanitarian either.

Did Büchner wish to criticise the people? That is hardly likely – after all, it was the same writer who penned the famous call: “Peace to the huts! War on the palaces!” Büchner suffered alongside the people.

Perhaps he felt much as *Alfred Adler*, the founder of individual psychology, did almost 100 years later. During the First World War, too, many people became brutalised; nations went to war and slaughtered each other. In 1919, Adler wrote regarding his own people<sup>1</sup>:

*“Daily, these people were subjected in their schools to lectures on their obligation to honor the ruling house. Distorted history boasts of bellicose glory of the fatherland [...]. Incessant eloquent sermons pour from thousands of pulpits preaching the exhilaration of servitude and slavish obedience. Every seat of learning teaches the student the art of subservience. Boredom hovers over peace organizations and there is no one, no popular movement, that organizes against this trend. Newspapers and periodicals, politicians and parties seek the favor of the ruling powers. [...] It took decades for the nation to be*

*trained in weakness and obedience to authority and for the people to forfeit their self-respect. Then came war and no one knew from where. According to tried military tactics, the authorities kept the people in the dark. Lacking all ties of mutual trust and a strong, developed sense of community, these people, who were kept in the dark, were incapable of any open resistance.”*

What happened instead:

*“They [the people] made virtue out of a necessity! In this chaos they seized at the call to arms that went out from the general staff and, reluctantly, they staggered to wherever the orders sent them. Suddenly, it seemed to them as if they themselves had uttered the call. It eased their soul. They had found a sought-after escape route. They no longer were the whipped dogs who against their will were being sacrificed to face the hail of bullets. No, they were heroes, the defenders of the fatherland and their honor! After all, they had made the call themselves and it is they who went out into a holy war as defenders of justice. Whatever might have prevented them as individuals from shedding the blood of brothers or to act against the sacred prohibition of murder disappeared in a rapture of having regained a feeling about themselves, and a newly found sense of irresponsibility that accompanies any mass movement. With this inner liberation from a feeling of the deepest humiliation and degradation, in this convulsive effort to find themselves, they timidly escaped seeing themselves as poor victims of power-lusting strangers and preferred to dream of having freely chosen to do heroic deeds.”*

But Adler does not hold the people guilty.

*“No! Whoever dwelled among these people will find them not guilty. They had no voice, no guidelines, and no leader. It was dragged to the slaughter, shoved, and driven. No one told them the truth. The writers and journalists were either under a spell or in the pay of the military. From shame for having been dishonored, people tried to save themselves by serving under the banner of their oppressors.”*

I find Alfred Adler’s text from 1919 highly topical. Hence the extensive quotations. A basis for discussion whose significance can scarcely be overestimated, even when it comes to our present day. A remedy for the helplessness in the face of developments in our Western countries, especially in Germany.

One example:

On 12 May, the German website *NachDenkSeiten* published a comprehensive, highly readable article entitled “EU sanctions against journalists: Alarming silence and active turning away by civil society”.<sup>2</sup> The author wrote to many German and international organisations and institutions concerned with fundamental and human rights, and in particular with freedom of expression and freedom of the press, asking for a statement on the current EU sanctions against citizens of Germany and Switzerland such as *Jacques Baud* and *Hüseyin Dođru*. Citizens questioning EU and German war propaganda, daring to have differing opinions. And they do so with sound reasoning and evidence to back it up. Mind you: the sanctions radically restrict, amongst other things, freedom of movement, freedom of occupation and property rights; the intention is to make a normal life impossible. Without due process under the rule of law. Without a comprehensible charge, without a fair trial, without the right for defence. Downright Kafkaesque! A glaring violation of fundamental and human rights. If things were still above board in our countries, there would have to be a huge outcry of dissent and protest.

The result of the request for comments, however, was devastating. *Reporters Without Borders*, the *German Union of Journalists* and the *German Journalists’ Association* responded evasively or acted as mouthpieces for the EU and the German government. Other organisations directly concerned with press freedom, such as the *Federal Association of Digital Publishers and Newspaper Publishers* (BDZV), the *Media Association of the Free Press* (MVFP), the *German Press Council* and the *Federal Press Conference*, did not respond at all. The same applied to *Amnesty International*, *Human Rights Watch*, the *Council of Europe*, the *European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights*, the *Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights*, the *Social*

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*Pro memoria: This is war. – First World War military cemetery, Douaumont near Verdun. – Alfred Adler knew what he was writing about. (picture Wikimedia Commons)*

#### **“Germany – how to deal with ...”**

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*Association of Germany, the German Trade Union Confederation (DGB), the German Bishops’ Conference, the Evangelical Church in Germany, the Central Council of Muslims in Germany, the Christian Democratic Union of Germany (CDU), the Christian Social Union in Bavaria (CSU), the Social Democratic Party of Germany (SPD), Alliance 90/The Greens, The Left, the Free Democratic Party (FDP), Federal President Frank-Walter Steinmeier ...* A constitutional law professor from Austria who was contacted justified the EU and German policy. Only the AfD and the BSW expressed serious concern for democracy and freedom in Germany (and the EU).

Now I must add: the organisations and institutions addressed are not the “people” of whom Georg Büchner and Alfred Adler wrote. But there are many organisations and institutions among them from which the “people” generally expect expert knowledge and a reasoned opinion, and which they can look to for guidance in forming their own views. Is not *Amnesty International* the guardian of human rights? Are not the Christian churches responsible for questions of morality and ethics? Are not professors of constitutional law responsible for determining what is right and what is wrong ... Where is the people to turn when all the important and influential organisations and institutions fail?

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“No! Whoever dwelled among these people will find them not guilty. They had no voice, no guidelines, and no leader. It was dragged to the slaughter, shoved, and driven. No one told them the truth. The writers and journalists were either under a spell or in the pay of the military. From shame for having been dishonored, people tried to save themselves by serving under the banner of their oppressors.” (*Alfred Adler*)

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The National Socialists had brought all major organisations and institutions into line and declared the “people” to be a “mass” devoid of individuals with dignity, which they called the “people’s community”: “You are nothing, your people is everything.” “One people, one Reich, one Führer.” “Führer, command! We follow you!” ... History does not repeat itself – but inhuman structures, attitudes and patterns of behaviour can return. And the danger grows all the greater the more a country’s politics – including Germany’s – opt for a state of war.

Georg Büchner and Alfred Adler did not condemn the people of the French Revolution and the First World War. Today we should also follow their example in this regard. There is still much to come. Reason and humanity will likely once again be unable to rely on the “people”. We can only live with dignity if we do not become disoriented as a result, if

we do not allow ourselves to be misled in our view of humanity.

PS I must add: Germany and the war-mongering leadership of the EU are not Europe, and certainly not the world. There are institutions and figures in positions of great responsibility there who are putting a stop to the clamour for war. One of them is Pope *Leo XIV*, the supreme representative of the Roman Catholic Church. In an address to the students and staff of the largest Italian university, “La Sapienza” in Rome, the Pope once again showed himself to be a voice for peace (see box on page 16). His large audience thanked him with a standing ovation. That, too, could provide guidance. ●

<sup>1</sup> Adler, Alfred. *The other side: A mass-psychological study*, in: *The Collected Clinical Works of Alfred Adler Vol 4: Journal articles : 1914–1920*, The Classical Adlerian Translation Project, Bellingham 2003

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.nachdenkseiten.de/?p=150304>

## “No to a war economy”

At their plenary meeting on 24 January 2026, the shop stewards of IG Metall\* – the Industrial Union of Metalworkers – at the Ford works in Cologne adopted the declaration “No to a war economy – we will not sacrifice our children for wars!”.

With this resolution, the shop stewards committee is taking a clear stand against the conversion of civilian industries to arms production. We invited colleagues from Ford Cologne and Mercedes-Benz Düsseldorf to discuss the situation at their workplaces and the fight against rearmament and war.

Here is the text of the statement:

### “No to a war economy – we will not sacrifice our children for wars!”

The IG Metall shop stewards committee at the Ford plant in Cologne views the global arms race and the rise in war-

fare with great concern. In Germany, the search is already underway for the first factories to switch to arms production. Anyone who promises us jobs in this way is attempting to exploit the existential fears of the workforce in the automotive industry in a despicable manner. Arms build-up does not secure peace; rather, it paves the way for war. When the government declares a “state of emergency”, the right to strike is curtailed, obligation to work are imposed, and orders are issued to drastically extend working hours. In the “event of war”, the “Employment Security Act” (ESA) provides for compulsory conscription, with the threat of imprisonment, for so-called specialists across all occupational groups. In the trenches of the world, ordinary people like you and me are dying not for higher ideals, but for the interests of big equity owners. The

arms industry is rejoicing over skyrocketing profits. Plans are underway to reinstate compulsory military service, so that our children too can be sent to war in the future.

We will not stand for this!

Arms build-up and the war economy run counter to the interests of our colleagues and our families, and are at odds with our trade union objectives. Let us reaffirm our slogan “Fight for every employment!” and actively work towards our goal of “peace, disarmament and international understanding”. (See Article 2 of the Constitution: “Tasks and Objectives of IG Metall”.)

And we call on the IG Metall executive committee and all members: No to the shift towards a war economy!

Source: <https://zakk.de/event-detail?event=16004>, 13 May 2026

## Petition: No to the shift to a war economy!

cc. With an online petition launched on May 2, 2026, members and officials of the German trade union IG Metall took up the concerns and passages of the Cologne Declaration “No to war economy – We will not sacrifice our children for wars!” and wrote their own petition on the subject.

We, the IG Metall colleagues at VW, are deeply concerned about the global arms buildup and increasing wars. In Germany, the first factories are already being sought to convert to arms production.

Anyone who promises us jobs with this is trying to exploit the existential fears of the automotive industry workforce in a despicable way. Rearmament doesn't secure peace, but rather prepares the ground for war. When the government declares a “state of emergency”, the right to strike is abridged, work obligations are imposed, and orders for extreme extensions of working hours are issued.

“In the event of war”, according to the “Employment Security Act” (ESA), compulsory service under threat of imprisonment applies to so-called specialists from all professional groups. In the trenches of the world, people like you and me are dying not for higher values, but for the interests of large capital owners.

The arms industry is celebrating exploding profits. The reinstatement of conscription is being prepared so that we and our children can be sent to war in the future. Currently, the war in the Middle East is immediately causing gas-

oline prices to rise. There is already talk of higher inflation.

We will not participate in this development!

Rearmament and a war economy are against the interests of our colleagues and our families and contradict our union goals. Let us reaffirm our slogan “Fight for every job!” and actively work towards our goal of “Peace, disarmament, and international understanding” (IG Metall statutes, section 2, Tasks and Goals of IG Metall). And we call upon the IG Metall Executive Board, the Works Council, and all members: No to the transformation into a war economy!

### Initial signatories

**Cem Ince**, IG Metall member, member of the Bundestages of the party „Die Linken“; **Lars Hirsekorn**, IG Metall works council member, Volkswagen plant Braunschweig; **Sven Schramm**, IG Metall shop steward and works council member, VW Saxony, The Transparent Factory Dresden; **Namik Sarikaya**, IG Metall shop steward, VW Kassel; **Tobias Blessmann**, IG Metall member, Volkswagen plant Kassel; **Dirk Hirsekorn**, IG Metall member, worker, VW Braunschweig; **Ronny Vornkahl**, IG Metall member on the works council, VW Braunschweig; **Mirco Baxmann**, IG Metall delegate, VW Wolfsburg; **Christoph Meyer**, IG Metall shop steward, VW Kassel; **Majuran Srisegarani**, IG Metall shop steward, VW Braunschweig; **Stephan Krull**, Former member of the works council, VW Wolfsburg; **Christos Paralidis**, IG Metall member of the works council (VKL) as spokesperson for migrants, VW Salzgitter; **Mark**

**Seeger**, IG Metall member on the works council, VW Braunschweig; **Ricardo de Allesandro**, IG Metall member on the works council, VW Braunschweig; **Hidir Budak**, IGM member, Volkswagen plant Kassel; **Michael Schulz**, IG Metall member, VW Braunschweig; **Martin Kollek**, IG Metall shop steward, Volkswagen Group Services Braunschweig; **Michael Werner**, IG Metall member, Volkswagen Wolfsburg; **Agid Acer**, IG Metall member on the works council, VW Braunschweig; **Franziska Reuter**, IG Metall member on the works council, VW Braunschweig; **Timo Reuter**, IG Metall delegate and shop steward, Salzgitter Peine, PowerCo; **Christoph Tonagel**, IG Metall member of the VKL, VW Braunschweig; **Thorsten Donnermeier**, IG Metall member of the VKL, Volkswagen plant Kassel; **Andreas Gärtner**, IG Metall member of the VKL, Volkswagen plant Kassel; **Ercan Laleli**, IG Metall member on the works council, Volkswagen plant Kassel; **Arzu Karabulut**, IG Metall member of the VKL, Volkswagen plant Braunschweig; **Michael Kunik**, IG Metall member of the VKL, Volkswagen plant Braunschweig; **Konstantin Antjushin**, IG Metall member, VW Kassel

\*IG Metall (Industrial Union of Metalworkers). With more than 2 million members, IG Metall is the largest single trade union in Germany and also in the world. (Editor's note)

Source: [https://storage.e.jimdo.com/file/41499154-3b3c-4374-ba01-497ee0c91cefi/Unterschriftenliste\\_5.2.1.pdf](https://storage.e.jimdo.com/file/41499154-3b3c-4374-ba01-497ee0c91cefi/Unterschriftenliste_5.2.1.pdf)

The petition can be signed at: <https://www.openpetition.de/petition/online/nein-zum-umbau-auf-kriegswirtschaft>

# Neutrality as an achievement of the enlightenment

by Hans Bieri and René Roca\*

Following the Thirty Years' War, the *Peace of Westphalia* in 1648 set important precedents in peace policy, including the principles of amnesty for those involved in the war and religious tolerance. These were also central elements of the early Enlightenment, which were later continued with the development of international law (including Emer de Vattel as a representative of the Western Swiss School of Natural Law) and with the discourse on human rights. Such elements were also important for the neutral Swiss Confederation, which was drawn into the armed conflicts, particularly the "Grisons Troubles". Switzerland also became a sovereign state with the *Peace of Westphalia*. Twenty-six years later, in 1674, the Swiss Diet officially designated Switzerland a 'neutral country' for the first time. However, the conclusion of defensive alliances remained permissible, and the Swiss Confederation was entangled in numerous alliances. This led to contradictions, and power-political interests repeatedly blocked peaceful development. Nevertheless, the declared neutrality of multicultural and multireligious Switzerland increasingly brought about the desired unity. The Confederation also succeeded in keeping itself out of the European wars of religion, conquest and succession of the early modern period. By 1647, armed neutrality had also taken on a more defined form with the "Defensionale of Wil", the first federal military code. Thanks in part to its neutrality, the Confederation also initiated comprehensive arbitration proceedings as part of its foreign policy and made a name for itself as a mediator. Mercenary services, too, came under increasing criticism and were eventually banned.

## What does Swiss neutrality mean?

The Congress of Vienna in 1815 and the founding of the federal state in 1848 were important milestones in strengthening Swiss neutrality, both nationally and internationally. The Hague Peace Convention of 1907 reinforced the neutral foundation of the Swiss Confederation significantly. Although over a hundred years old, this Peace Convention is still regarded today as customary international law. It sets out the rights and obligations of a neutral country. These are principles that reflect the achievements of the Enlightenment and modern natural law. Essentially, this means that Switzerland must not partici-

pate in wars waged by other states (a principle now further reinforced by the strictest possible legislation on war material). It must not attack anyone nor participate in any military alliances (such as NATO today). Switzerland must continue to ensure its self-defence within the framework of armed neutrality and must treat the belligerents equally. It must not provide mercenaries for warring parties. In this context, the "modern military services" provided by Swisskoy in Kosovo within the framework of NATO should finally be scrutinised. A further duty of a neutral country is not to make its own territory available to the warring parties, as well as the right to the inviolability of its own territory.

Neutrality is based on the experience that conflicts cannot be resolved by force, but only by addressing their causes. Neutrality requires us to follow conflicts closely, to process them, and not to "look the other way". Only a consistent stance of neutrality can keep Switzerland out of conflicts. The neutral state must focus on the conflict itself and not on a specific party involved in the conflict. By not supporting one side of a conflict unilaterally, neutral Switzerland can contribute to conflict resolution by offering mediation and reaffirm its role as a protective power. The Federal Council and Parliament has to clearly reject violence, war and terror from all sides, call for dialogue, and in doing so best promote peace. The uncompromising stance of neutral Switzerland is also central to our country's internal cohesion. Instead of moralising, Switzerland – that is, the Federal Council and Parliament – must consistently refrain from power politics. In doing so, Swiss citizens and the media need not remain ideologically neutral, but may form a critical opinion on any conflict and publicly express it. In this way, neutrality also protects a country's freedom of expression.

## Neutrality under pressure

Warring parties seeking to assert their superiority refuse to view the emergence and causes of conflicts as processes. For these reasons, warring parties relying on their superiority have no interest in neutral positions that could relativise their claim to dominance, either through argument or territorially. Warring parties striving for supremacy will therefore combat the neutral position, either openly or covertly. The ongoing, multifaceted attacks by the US on Switzerland must also be viewed in this context. Hegemony – particularly that of the US – shapes media coverage, increasingly diverting attention away from the temporal and spatial dimensions of conflict processes. As a result, the conflict



becomes increasingly obscured in terms of its origins, causes and development, and the clarity of the sequence of events is veiled. Consequently, the root causes of the conflict remain obscure, and all that is visible is what the relevant hegemonic power stages for media effect, decides upon without any significant opposition, and implements more or less ruthlessly.

## The Deconstruction of Neutrality

Belligerents seeking to assert their power perceive a neutral stance as a potential constraint. They therefore accuse the neutral party of acting in the interests of the opposing side. Attempts to deconstruct neutrality – portraying it as everything from a bystander turning a blind eye to a secret ally of the opposing belligerent – serve the interests of those eager for war and should be better explained. "We must simply bear in mind the fact that, fundamentally, no member of a belligerent nation considers a neutral stance to be justified. He can do so with his intellect, if he strains it mightily, but he cannot do so with his heart." Carl Spitteler (1845–1924) said this over 100 years ago. This is where opponents of neutrality still latch on today with their propaganda and their nonsensical insinuations. This is not "mainstream", but manipulation of public opinion: neutrality is denigrated as misconduct, as spying for the other warring party. Yet the traitor is not the neutral party, but the one who seeks to sell Switzerland out from behind its back to hostile foreign alliances. The Federal Council's security policy strategy of 12 December 2025 bears eloquent witness to this. Of the roughly 60 pages, only 1½ are devoted to neutrality. The National Council debate on the subject of neutrality during the spring session was also more than modest, and unlike that of the Council of States, it was shallow and devoid of substance.

Thomas Cottier (see "Neue Zürcher Zeitung" of 30 March 2026) and René Rhinow (see "Neue Zürcher Zeitung" of 7 April 2026) are also "architects" of such

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\* Hans Bieri, Swiss Association for Agriculture and Industry (SVIL), member of the Neutrality Initiative committee; René Roca, Research Institute for Direct Democracy (FIDD), member of the Neutrality Initiative committee.

# Framework agreement with Brussels

## De facto disempowerment of the Swiss Parliament

by Dr iur. Marianne Wüthrich

In substance, it is no world-shattering question: Are Swiss helicopter pilots allowed to commercially transport passengers in Swiss airspace until the age of 65, or must Switzerland adhere to the EU age limit of 60? But it is a plausible example of what being forced to adopt EU law would mean for Switzerland's sovereignty and for the freedom of our parliament to enact Swiss law. The adoption process would result in a massive shift of power from the legislative to the executive power within Switzerland. This case vividly illustrates which side the Federal Council takes when it has to choose between the interests of our country and the approval of Brussels.

### Integrating Swiss helicopter pilots into the EU bureaucracy?

The *Air Transport Agreement* between Switzerland and the EU is one of the seven Bilateral Agreements I of 1999, which entered into force on 1 June 2002. It is also one of the five agreements that are to be subordinated to the framework agreement.

**Background:** On 16 February 2021, the *National Council Transport and Telecommunications Committee* (TTC) submitted a motion to the National Council with the following content: "The Federal Council is instructed to create, in accordance with Article 23 of the *Air Transport Agreement*, the legal basis for a national professional pilot's license for Swiss airspace, which will allow pilots to fly until the age of 65."<sup>1</sup>

From the reasoning of the proposal: "Regulation (EU) No. 1178/2011 obliges Switzerland, like the EU, to limit the age of helicopter pilots to 60. This arbitrary

age limit makes no sense. The medical studies published by the European Aviation Safety Agency (EASA) show no increased medical risk for professional helicopter pilots up to the age of 65 that would endanger flight safety, provided they pass the medical tests and are deemed fit to fly."

Concerning the time between 2014 and January 2020, the *Federal Office of Civil Aviation* (FOCA), via EASA applied for and was granted several exemptions from the 60-year age limit by the European Commission. "A further exemption for January 2020 to January 2022 was rejected. Since then, negotiations have stalled."

**Comment:** Why should the EU determine the maximum age for Swiss helicopter pilots to fly in Swiss airspace? Especially considering that many of them also fly missions for *Swiss Air-Rescue Rega*, which is surely grateful for every experienced helper!

### Legislation is a matter for Parliament – the Federal Council is obstructive

For these reasons, the responsible National Council committee instructed the Federal Council, based on Article 23 of the *Air Transport Agreement*, "to create the legal basis for a national professional pilot license so that this question can be answered permanently and sustainably for Swiss airspace".

### Air Transport Agreement of 1999

Article 23 (1) of this Agreement does not affect the right of each contracting party to unilaterally amend its legislation on a matter regulated by the Agreement, subject to the principle of non-discrimination and the provisions of the Agreement.<sup>2</sup>

The Federal Council recommended rejecting the motion. However, the National Council and the Council of States approved the motion on 3 June and 28 September 2021, respectively.

So this is a clean-cut case. In Switzerland's democratic constitutional state, Parliament is responsible for legislation. Parliament uses a motion to instruct the Federal Council to "submit a draft decree to the Federal Assembly or to take a measure" (Art. 120 of the *Parliamentary Act*). The Federal Council is evidently refusing to fulfil its duty – the motion has now been stalled for almost five years. The current parliamentary record contains the cryptic words: "Status of deliberations: Report on the implementation status of the initiative is available."

### Transfer of EU law without consent of the electorate

From the Federal Council's statement: "Regulation (EU) No. 1178/2011 was transposed into the Swiss-EU *Air Transport Agreement* in 2012 [...] and has been applicable law ever since."

It should be added that the aforementioned Regulation No. 1178/2011 is one of numerous EU regulations and directives that have been incorporated into the annex to the *Air Transport Agreement* since the conclusion of the Bilateral Agreements I and are therefore "applicable law" for Switzerland. The Swiss people approved the Bilateral Agreements I in a referendum in 1999, but they did not agree to the incorporation of future, unknown EU law into the agreements. The *Air Transport Agreement* essentially anticipates the paradigm shift from bilateral agreements on

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### "Neutrality as an achievement ..."

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deconstruction. They apparently wish to revert to a pre-Enlightenment era, speak of "situational neutrality" (Rhinow) and thus attempt to promote an unspeakable "cherry-picking" approach by Switzerland. Rhinow continues: "In plain language: to be and remain neutral when it serves our security, and to abandon it when weighty foreign, economic and security policy reasons take precedence." As lawyers, Cottier and Rhinow are thus indulging in legal positivism and bluntly calling for Switzerland to be integrated into the centralist misconstructions of the EU and NATO. Both organisations are calling for a "war-ready Europe" and seek to achieve this through alliance politics and rearmament, just as on the eve of the First World War.

### Swiss neutrality beyond vassalage

The path for Europe to emerge from this hopelessly tangled situation and return to the universal mission of the Enlightenment lies through neutrality. This must be the contribution of the renewal of Swiss neutrality, and therefore a clear definition of it must be enshrined in the Federal Constitution with the help of the *Neutrality Initiative*. For Swiss neutrality is the result of its unique social and economic development, which from an early stage was oriented towards mutual economic benefit rather than colonial expansion. The restoration of the achievements of the Enlightenment, which includes neutrality, ultimately leads to the goal of a confederated Europe.

Switzerland must stand outside slavish alliance obligations and vassalage. In

this way, it can afford to hold an independent, well-founded opinion and remain in dialogue with all parties. Swiss neutrality is a political mandate for Switzerland that transcends all parties. The people's need for peace must take precedence over power-political interests. Only if Switzerland's political independence can be defended will it be possible to safeguard and further develop the achievement of an enlightened, liberal view of humanity. Those who have so far put forward the narrative of the "SVP" or "Putin initiative" are merely evading the question of the causes of the increasing conflicts. In doing so, they accept, partly unconsciously or with resignation, the ongoing process of disenfranchisement. •

An abridged version of this article appeared in the "Neue Zürcher Zeitung" on 30 April 2026.

## “Parliament would lose a significant amount of its importance”

mw. Federal Council: “These agreements safeguard the constitutional powers of the cantons, the Federal Assembly, the Federal Council, the courts and the people, as well as the rights of initiative and referendum.” (*Covering letter to the public consultation of 13 June 2025*)

Of course, the Federal Council is well aware that the Swiss Parliament would lose its legislative authority if it were compelled to adopt EU law. It indirectly admits as much when it asserts that it will ‘inform’ Parliament and all interested parties about forthcoming changes to EU law and their impact on the agreements. But we Swiss do not simply want to be informed; we are used to deciding our own affairs.

Paul Richli, Professor of Constitutional Law at the University of Lucerne, describes the erosion of the Swiss Parliament’s authority in no uncertain terms: “With the conclusion of this package of agreements, Switzerland’s autonomy

within the scope of the Single Market Agreements is a thing of the past. Switzerland no longer has the ability to enact its own laws and regulations. Regulatory authority lies exclusively with the EU institutions. Nor does the Federal Council have any formal means of requesting the European Commission, the European Parliament or the Council to enact an EU legal act. The same applies to the Federal Assembly. Should the Federal Assembly nevertheless decide to adopt a legislative proposal on its own initiative, this would constitute a breach of the agreement, which would entitle the EU to take compensatory measures.” In response to the journalist’s question: “The Federal Assembly is losing its legislative powers in the areas concerned – isn’t that effectively a stripping of Parliament’s powers?”, Richli replies: “Without a doubt, that is effectively a stripping of powers.”<sup>1</sup>

Professor *Andreas Glaser* (University of Zurich) gave a very similar response

to the question: “Where do you see the biggest change for the Swiss system?” Glaser: “In Parliament. Many changes to EU law are not currently adopted by Switzerland, for example regarding the free movement of persons. If Switzerland were to commit to dynamic adoption of EU law, Parliament would have no choice but to adopt changes to EU law and implement them domestically. [...] Parliament would lose a significant amount of its importance.”<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Odermatt, Marcel. “Schwächung der Eigenstaatlichkeit.” (The Erosion of National Sovereignty.) Interview with Professor Paul Richli. In: Weltwoche of 14 May 2026*

<sup>2</sup> *Fontana, Katharina. “Staatsrechtler Andreas Glaser: ‘In der Schweiz ist man sich über die Tragweite des EU-Abkommens nicht im Klaren.’” (Constitutional law expert Andreas Glaser: “In Switzerland, people are not clear about the implications of the EU agreement.”.) In: “Neue Zürcher Zeitung” of 23 January 2024*

### “Framework agreement with Brussels”

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an equal footing to the planned institutional adoption of EU law.

Due to the aforementioned regulation, Switzerland is already a member of the *European Aviation Safety Agency* (EASA), one of the EU’s overly bureaucratic agencies (to which we incidentally also have to pay substantial financial contributions). As a result, the Federal Council has to regularly travel to Brussels to ensure that Swiss helicopter pilots are allowed to transport passengers and conduct *Rega* emergency rescue missions in Swiss airspace!

#### Federal Council scurries to Brussels to say pretty please

The Federal Council continues: “Since 2014, the *Federal Office of Civil Aviation* (FOCA) has been requesting exemptions from this age restriction from the European Union Aviation Safety Agency (EASA). The EU Commission has approved these requests so far; however, since 2018, these exemptions have been limited. A further exemption for the period from 2020 to 2022 was granted only to pilots who also conduct emergency medical flights as part of their operations.” Furthermore, FOCA lobbied the *Joint Committee* of Switzerland and the EU for an increase in the age limit in 2020, and again in a letter to the EU Commission in February 2021.

Summary of the EU Commission’s response of 1 March 2021: After more than six years since the age restriction came into force, exemptions will no longer be granted to Switzerland. The Commission threatened to “take appropriate enforcement measures in the event of deviations from applicable law.”

### The Federal Council even proposes sanctions against Switzerland itself!

Instead of confronting the EU Commission, the Federal Council openly sides with them and even proposes appropriate sanctions against Switzerland on its own account: “For the time being, the EU Commission has left the scope of such measures open. However, based on Article 31 of the Air Traffic Agreement, a waiver of the mutual recognition of pilot licenses, including those for scheduled, business, and private aviation, or even significant market restrictions would, for example, be possible.”

Article 31 of the Air Transport Agreement: “If a Contracting Party refuses to fulfil an obligation arising from this Agreement, the other Contracting Party may [...] take appropriate temporary safeguard measures to maintain the balance of this Agreement.”

This too is a foretaste of what we are in for with the adoption of the framework agreement, concerning large areas of our law, but also with regard to the principles of our state structure: The authoritarian EU Commission imposes sanctions, and the Federal Council helps them along. This is executive branch rule instead of a liberal model of government.

#### Under the Air Transport Agreement Joint Committee has command authority

The Federal Council continues: “The motion demands that ‘the legal basis for a national professional pilot license be created in accordance with Article 23 of the Air Transport Agreement.’ However, this provision does not permit unilateral regulations that contradict the principles of the

agreement. While Switzerland can unilaterally adapt its regulations, these must be decided by the Joint Committee – that is, also by the EU Commission.”

Because, unlike in other agreements of the Bilateral Agreements I, the Joint Committee of the 1999 Air Transport Agreement is not a body where representatives of the Swiss Federal Administration and of the EU Commission exchange views as equals and where questions can remain open in case of disagreement. Article 22 stipulates that the decisions of the Joint Committee are binding on the contracting parties and that the EU can “take temporary safeguard measures under Article 31” if it disagrees with Switzerland’s application of its decisions. Furthermore, it is highly doubtful whether the Federal Council’s representatives on the *Joint Committee* would advocate for Switzerland’s interests.

#### Let us just please avoid provoking a conflict with the EU...

In its response to the National Council committee, the Federal Council makes no secret of which side of the *Joint Committee* table its team would be on in such a case: “Should the motion be implemented despite the risk of countermeasures from the EU, a legal basis would have to be created at the legislative level. In practice, Parliament would have to pass legislation reaffirming its intention to deviate from the Air Transport Agreement. *Switzerland would thus be deliberately provoking a conflict with the EU and jeopardising the hitherto very successful functioning of this agreement.*” (Emphasis added mw)

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# “It is a fight for truth, dignity and for our children’s future”

Interview with lawyer Srđan Aleksić on a new ruling



Srđan Aleksić (picture kpe)

ef. Current Concerns has repeatedly reported on the work of Srđan Aleksić, the courageous lawyer from Serbia who, five years ago, set about helping the many victims of the NATO war against the former Yugoslavia (1999) who developed cancer as a result of the attacks with depleted uranium (DU). Even 27 years after this NATO aggression, the number of cancer cases continues to rise.

Dragan Andric is another of the many victims affected by this war. He took part in the military operations in Kosovo and subsequently developed thyroid cancer. With the help of his lawyer, Srđjan Aleksić, he sued the Serbian state for damages in court in Vršac (Vojvodina) and won his case. The judgement states: “Following a legal assessment of the established facts, the court is of the opinion that the plaintiff’s claim is well-founded and has therefore acknowledged it in full.”

A notable feature: in its judgment, the court in Vršac explicitly adopted Italian case law regarding the causal connection between the occurrence of cancer and exposure to DU.

## “Framework agreement with Brussels”

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The Federal Council’s stance against the Swiss Parliament and its obsequious behaviour towards the EU should serve as a warning sign to us citizens. The fact that it is already so unilaterally advocating for the EU Commission’s position and thus against the independent legislative power of the Swiss legislature is alarming. In Switzerland’s direct democracy, it goes without saying that disempowering Parliament would also disempower the Swiss people, the sovereign. Without a law drafted by the Federal Parliament, there can be no referendum. ●

<sup>1</sup> Motion 21.3020 “Creation of a national professional pilot license”

<sup>2</sup> 0.748.127.192.68 Agreement between the Swiss Confederation and the European Community on air transport of 21 June 1999

Current Concerns: On 9 April 2026, you secured another favourable judgment at the court in Vršac. What makes this judgment so significant?

Srđjan Aleksić: This judgement is far more than just a legal success. It is a victory for justice and a victory for the people who have been fighting for years against a serious illness and for their dignity. The court has once again recognised that there is a causal connection between exposure to depleted uranium following the NATO bombing in 1999 and the occurrence of serious cancers.

The decision from Vršac confirms that the Serbian judiciary is increasingly will-

## DU rulings in Italy



Angelo Fiore Tartaglia (picture ma)

“The first court cases concerning the consequences of depleted uranium began in Italy, thanks to the extraordinary work of lawyer Angelo Fiore Tartaglia. He was the first in Europe to succeed in proving in court the causal link between exposure to uranium and cancer in Italian soldiers who served in Bosnia, Kosovo and Iraq.

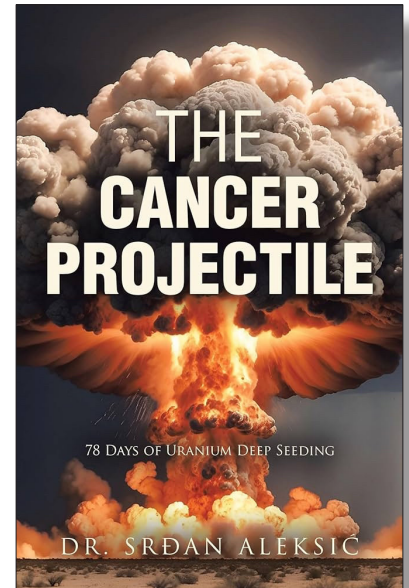
Based on the findings of Italian laboratories and nanotechnological tissue analyses, Italian courts recognised the state’s responsibility and awarded compensation to those affected [in over 500 cases to date]. These cases set a precedent in international law and form the basis for further proceedings throughout Europe.

Based on this, Serbia has initiated its own proceedings. These are not an isolated national initiative, but part of an international legal battle for the recognition of responsibility and the right to health.

The jurisprudence in these cases requires a combination of scientific, medical and legal evidence – and Italy was the first country to show how science can become evidence in the service of the law.”

Source: Srđan Aleksić, “Uranium 238 – Human Rights and State Responsibility”; excerpt from his speech in the German Bundestag on 5 November 2025.

(Translation Current Concerns)



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ing to acknowledge what many of those affected and their families have known for decades: Their illness is no coincidence, but the result of long-term contamination of soil, water and air. This judgement gives hope to thousands of people across Serbia who have lost their health, their quality of life or even loved ones.

For me, as a lawyer and as a human being, this judgement has a very personal significance. It shows that no fight for truth and justice is in vain, and that perseverance, expertise and trust in the law can lead to success even in seemingly hopeless situations.

What are the key principles on which this judgement is based?

The judgement is based on comprehensive medical documentation, reports from independent experts, and numerous national and international scientific studies. These demonstrate the harmful health effects of exposure to depleted uranium.

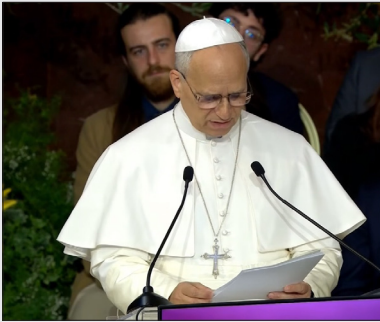
The court recognised that this is not a mere coincidence in timing, but a serious causal link between residence in contaminated areas and the subsequent occurrence of serious malignant diseases. Furthermore, it was established that the state is obliged to protect its citizens and to grant them fair compensation in the event of harm.

The experience of the Italian courts was also of particular significance, as they have reached the same conclusions in numerous cases.

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## Yes to life

*Address of Pope Leo XIV to students, teaching staff and invited guests during his pastoral visit to the University of Rome "La Sapienza" on 14 May 2026 (excerpt)*



*Pope Leo XIV during his address at the University of Rome "La Sapienza". (picture K-TV/screenshot)*

[...] It is the pervasive lie of a distorted system, which reduces people to numbers, exacerbating competitiveness and leaving us caught in spirals of anxiety. It is precisely this spiritual malaise felt by many young people that reminds us that we are not the sum of what we have, nor a random collection of matter in a silent cosmos. We are a desire, not an algorithm! It is precisely this special dignity of ours that leads me to share two questions with you.

To you young people, this unease asks: "Who are you?". Being ourselves,

in fact, is the defining commitment of every man and woman's life. "Who are you?" is the question we ask one another; the question we silently pose to God; the question only we can answer for ourselves, but which we can never answer alone. We are our relationships, our language, our culture: all the more reason why it is vital that our university years be a time of great encounters.

Therefore, to those who are more mature, the malaise of youth asks: "What kind of world are we leaving behind?". A world, sadly, crippled by wars and the rhetoric of war. This is a pollution of reason, which, from the geopolitical level, invades every social relationship. The simplification that creates enemies must therefore be corrected, especially in universities, through an appreciation of complexity and the wise exercise of memory. In particular, the tragedy of the twentieth century must not be forgotten. The cry, "Never again war!", of my Predecessors [...] spurs us on to a spiritual alliance with the sense of justice that dwells in the hearts of young people, with their vocation not to shut themselves away behind ideologies and national borders.

For example, over the past year, the increase in military spending worldwide, and particularly in Europe, has been enormous: let us not call "defence" a rearmament that increases tensions and insecurity, depletes investment in education and health, undermines trust in diplomacy, and enriches elites who care nothing for the common good. We must also keep a watchful eye on the development and application of artificial intelligence in both military and civilian contexts, to ensure that they do not absolve humans of responsibility for their choices and do not exacerbate the tragedy of conflicts. What is happening in Ukraine, Gaza and the Palestinian territories, Lebanon and Iran illustrates the inhuman evolution of the relationship between war and new technologies in a spiral of annihilation. Study, research and investment must move in the opposite direction: let them be a radical "yes" to life! Yes to innocent life, yes to young life, yes to the life of peoples who invoke peace and justice!

*Source: <https://www.vatican.va/content/leo-xiv/en/speeches/2026/may/documents/20260514-visita-pastorale-sapienza.html> of 14 May 2026*

### "It is a fight for truth ..."

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*To what extent can this new verdict support your long-term goal of suing NATO for damages?*

Every final judgement in Serbia is another step towards NATO being held accountable under international law. When national courts establish the causal connection between the bombing and serious illnesses, a solid factual and legal basis is created for future proceedings before international bodies.

Our aim is not merely to help individual families. We want to ensure that responsibility for the long-term consequences of these weapons is recognised both historically and legally. I am convinced that the day will come when those who decided to use such munitions will have to answer to international institutions and to history.

*Did Italian case law play a role in this ruling?*

Absolutely. My friend and colleague the Italian lawyer *Angelo Fiore Tartaglia* has demonstrated, through more than 500 successful rulings in favour of Italian soldiers and their families, that it is possible to en-

sure that the truth prevails in court even against powerful institutions.

These experiences have strengthened us not only legally, but also on a human level. They have proven that justice knows no bounds and that the same truth recognised in Italy can also hold true in Serbia.

*Why do you consider the use of depleted uranium to be a war crime?*

Because the effects of this munition do not disappear with the end of a war. They persist for decades, contaminating soil, water and air, and affecting civilians above all – children, pregnant women, farmers and future generations.

When weapons are used whose consequences are long-term, uncontrollable and indiscriminately affect the civilian population, the question arises, from a legal and moral perspective, of a serious violation of humanitarian principles. That is why their use must be comprehensively assessed from a legal standpoint.

*How do you explain to your fellow citizens why you are suing the Serbian state?* I am not suing Serbia as a nation, and certainly not my own people. On the contra-

ry: I am taking legal action so that Serbian citizens receive from their state the protection and compensation to which they are entitled by law.

If the state compensates its citizens, it gains the right to reclaim these sums from those actually responsible for the damage. This does not weaken Serbia, but strengthens it legally.

*What are your next steps?*

We will continue to file new lawsuits on behalf of affected citizens from all parts of Serbia.

At the same time, we are gathering additional medical, scientific and legal evidence and deepening our cooperation with experts from Italy, Germany and other countries.

Furthermore, we will continue our public and international advocacy work. My aim is to ensure that no family that has lost their health or a loved one is left without justice.

This is not merely a legal battle. It is a fight for truth, dignity and the future of our children. Justice may take time, but when it is based on truth, it is ultimately unstoppable. •