

International Humanitarian Studies Association (IHSA) Conference Statement on the humanitarian situation in Palestine

7 November, 2023

The International Humanitarian Studies Association today, at its biennial conference in Dhaka, Bangladesh, held a roundtable on the ongoing violence and humanitarian catastrophe in Palestine. The roundtable included contributions from Professor Dorothea Hilhorst (outgoing IHSA President), Research Professor Antonio De Lauri (incoming IHSA President), Professor Sk. Tawfique M. Haque (North South University), Professor Shahidul Haque (North South University), Professor Mohamed Nuruzzaman (North South University), and Dr Kaira Zoe Canete (International Institute of Social Studies).

The International Humanitarian Studies Association and Center for Peace Studies (CPS) at North South University would like to share this statement, following the IHSA Conference Roundtable in Dhaka, Bangladesh:

We extend our solidarity and sorrow towards those grieving loved ones in Palestine and Israel, and deplore violence carried out during this conflict. As scholars and practitioners of Humanitarian Studies, we strongly condemn acts of widescale and indiscriminate violence against civilian populations. This extends not only to ongoing military violence, but the blocking of humanitarian aid and assistance.

These actions by the Israeli state and military amount to multiple breaches of International Humanitarian Law (IHL), including the 1949 Geneva Convention that was signed by Israel. We condemn the collective punishment of over two million people in Gaza, of which more than half are children.

We also highlight UN Security Council (UNSC) Resolution 2417, which condemns the use of starvation as a weapon of war, and confirms that any blocking of humanitarian aid breaks IHL. Further, we draw attention to Israel's role as an occupying power in the Palestinian Territories, and its commitments to maintain medical services and infrastructure under IHL.

We call for respect for and adherence to IHL, International Criminal Law (ICL) and UNSC 2417 to prevent starvation (due to blocking access to food, water, electricity, health care and other items essential to survival) and death of civilians. This means allowing immediate access to aid for those who need it and protecting civilians.

Humanitarian Studies scholars need to use their knowledge and evidence to speak truth to power and counter any silencing mechanism that jeopardizes academic freedom and the freedom of expression. One of the challenges of wide-scale violence, wherever it happens, is that it makes us question the value of humanity. We need all voices in this discussion to maintain dignity and respect, and we condemn the use of antisemitic and Islamophobic language, as well as narratives of dehumanization and polarization especially when they come from powerful institutions, political leaders, and states.