Press release

Peace Report 2020 \ In the shadow of the pandemic—Global solutions for a global crisis

Berlin, 16 June 2020. The coronavirus pandemic is keeping the entire world on edge in 2020. It devours unprecedented amounts of resources and leads to comprehensive political interventions in societal coexistence. Socio-economic upheavals, political unrest and societal divisions are looming, particularly in fragile regions of the world. The leading German peace research institutes warn of this in their Peace Report 2020, which they presented at the Federal Press Conference in Berlin today. Titled "In the Shadow of the Pandemic: Last Chance for Europe", they call upon the Federal government to increase its commitment to cooperative solutions in the EU and across the globe, not only in the fight against the virus. They also urge that despite the pandemic, other important issues must not be overlooked. These include climate change, the danger of a cyberweapons build-up, rivalries between the superpowers and the dramatic situation of refugees and civilians in armed conflicts. However, as recent events following the death of George Floyd in the United States have shown, even peace within society itself is in danger. Cross-border issues are the commitment to human rights, handling mass protest movement constructively and the fight against politically and religiously motivated agitation on the Internet.

Key recommendations of the Peace Report 2020 to the German government

1. Germany must commit itself to a global recovery and cooperation programme

The editors of the Peace Report fear that "as much as the German government's economic recovery programme is to be welcomed, in terms of peace policy, it will peter out if not complemented by a global programme". Germany has to lobby for this at the EU and lead the way. If it is not possible to revive international trade and to prevent the deprivation of large parts of the population in counties of the Global South, all domestic programmes are doomed to failure. Furthermore, it is vital to stabilise international institutions—for they are the ones that can rightly recognise and deal
with adverse developments and local crises.

2. Climate change mitigation policy must remain a political priority

Climate change mitigation is to play a pivotal role in the economic recovery programmes that have recently been initiated. The editors welcome this but warn that the ramping-up of industry and the economy after the pandemic must also do justice to the climate protection goals in the long term. **They call on the German government to take measures at the nexus between climate, development and peace policy that also involve early warning, crisis prevention and the analysis of effects of climate change on peace.** Simultaneously, they point out: "A civilian climate policy consisting of avoiding emissions and adapting to climate change must be sensitive to conflict and do justice to the differences between those who cause climate change and those who suffer as a result".

3. Develop strategic guidelines for dealing with protest movements

Protest movements have high potential of achieving societal change. But if they aim at a fundamental transformation of existing power structures, they can also lead to chaos and violence. The German government already has a wide range of approaches at its disposal for addressing the threats to peace, human rights and political participation. There is no lack of tools to react not only to anti-regime protests but to many other kinds of mass protest. At the same time, the deployment of measures in corresponding crises was sometimes contradictory and did not reveal any strategy. **To achieve greater conceptual clarity and greater consistency in practical policy-making, the authors of the Peace Report recommend that the German government, in a dialogue with academia and civil society, review existing concepts and guidelines and strengthen its profile in crisis prevention and conflict management in this context.** At the same time, action must be geared to the individual case—this requires corresponding context analyses.
4. Armed conflicts: Ensure humanitarian aid for civilians and seek political solutions for violent conflict settings

Protecting civilians in armed conflicts becomes even more precarious in times of the coronavirus pandemic. This is why the call of UN Secretary-General António Guterres for a global ceasefire in all parts of the world was the right response. The EU should above all urge the external forces in the Syrian conflict—Russia, Iran and Turkey—to agree on a ceasefire to ease the situation around Idlib. "While it is, first of all, about securing cross-border humanitarian aid in the long term, the German government and the EU will, as a next step, quasi in the shadow of the coronavirus, have to aspire to work towards a political solution to the conflict", the peace research institutes stress. A similar approach is necessary for other conflicts, such as in Afghanistan, Somalia, the Congo, Yemen or Mali.

Not only the situation of civilians in war zones but also the situation of displaced people is deteriorating dramatically at the moment. Here, too, the Federal government and the EU can make a mark: "With the help of extensive EU support for Greece, the completely overcrowded refugee camps on the Greek islands ought to be dissolved, asylum procedures accelerated, and recognised refugees ought to be resettled in EU-countries that are willing to receive them", the editors of the Peace Report recommend.

The Peace Report is the annual publication by the Bonn International Center for Conversion (BICC), the Leibniz Institute Peace Research Institute Frankfurt (PRIF), the Institute for Development and Peace (INEF) and the Institute for Peace Research and Security Policy at the University of Hamburg (IFSH). It analyses current violent conflicts, highlights trends in international foreign, security and development policy and makes recommendations for policymakers.

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Events

Following the Federal Press Conference, the institutes will present the Peace Report to ministries and political parties in Berlin. On Tuesday, 16 June 2020, the editors will discuss the Peace Report 2020 at the Abendforum of the Evangelische Akademie zu Berlin in a digital forum. Interested citizens are invited to participate in a political dialogue. Information on this and other events is available at www.friedensgutachten.de

The Peace Report

Since 1987, the German peace research institutes have published the Peace Report as their central means of dialogue between research and politics. With its clear recommendations, the Peace Report translates academic findings into practical instructions for action. Interdisciplinary teams of authors from Political Sciences, Sociology, Ethnology, Physics and Area studies work together in writing the chapters and thus shed light on the topics from different angles.

The topics are divided into five, annually recurring, subject areas: "Armed conflicts", "Sustainable peace", "Armament dynamics", "Institutional peacekeeping" and "Transnational security risks". The additional chapter "Focus", examines one concerning event in the field of conflicts in greater depth. The Peace Report is supported by the German Foundation for Peace Research.

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Further information and the key recommendations of the Peace Report from 16 June 2020, 10:00 a.m. can be found at www.friedensgutachten.de