

Statement issued by the *Interreligiöser Arbeitskreis Kiel*

[Interreligious Work Group in Kiel]

*Comments made publicly on the Middle East conflict gave cause for this statement.
It also refers to other conflicts and wars throughout the world.*

Based on the peace among people of different religions and cultures that we have experienced here in Kiel, we recognise that peace is possible and necessary. Therefore, we are challenged by conflicts that may also be motivated by religious reasons. We consider the following steps to be necessary in such situations:

1. We attempt to put ourselves in the situation of those people who suffer from violence and grieve for those people they have lost in such a conflict. We attempt to perceive what has happened from their perspective.
2. We attempt not to be taken in by one-sided reports from the parties involved in conflicts and their media. We are aware of the danger of succumbing to a distorted perception; therefore, we consciously gather information from as many different sources as possible.
3. Not only a cease-fire is important, but also the interruption of previous fighting slogans, cheap propaganda and lines of argument that substantiate and justify psychological and physical violence.
4. Prayer and meditation are beneficial possibilities of pausing, achieving a new level of listening out of all the talking and arguing, discovering the link between all people, and sympathising with those who are suffering. We also attempt to develop a non-violent way of feeling, thinking and acting for ourselves.
5. Maintaining life must be our first priority. We regard the life of each individual person as infinitely valuable.
6. When a person is hurt or killed, their relatives and friends experience anger and grief; often they are traumatized. If they do not deal with their suffering, it often generates new violence, because victims may become perpetrators unless they work through their mourning process. Traumatisations can linger on through generations and promote a tendency towards violence. Therefore, we support projects to overcome traumatisations.
7. Violence that is carried out and experienced personally in ideas and feelings, in words and actions, is often connected with structural violence such as injustice, oppression and poverty. We work towards recognising the causes of violence and their elimination. This requires the solidarity of special interest groups in favour of those who are disadvantaged, with them and for them.

Religions may not be misused to legitimise violence. We are looking for healing powers in religions that will help us to withstand violence and overcome it.

- This initiative of the *Interreligiöser Arbeitskreis Kiel* is supported by the *Kieler Arbeitskreis Trauerbegleitung* [Work Group for Grief Counselling in Kiel] as well as by several bereavement support groups in Kiel in which people in mourning can receive counselling and give each other support.
- This initiative is supported by the *Nagelkreuzzentrum Kiel* [Cross of Nails Centre in Kiel].

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