



Sapienza for peace and freedom in education and research

Rome, April 16, 2024

In the weeks following the terrorist attack planned and carried out by Hamas on October 7, 2023, we have experienced a phase of violence that seems unstoppable. The war reaction to that heinous massacre against innocent people since October 28, the date of the entry of Israeli ground troops into the Gaza Strip, has produced, according to the most reliable sources, a total death toll of over 30,000 many of whom are Palestinian women and children. The number of civilian casualties has become incalculable and the humanitarian situation continues to worsen by the day. UN agencies have noted a severe shortage of food and water, and the starvation of many children in Gaza's hospitals. Blood is also flowing in Syria, southern Lebanon and the West Bank. In the last few hours, Iran has also directly entered the conflict, which is in danger of escalating further. The Middle East at war is a source of insecurity for the entire planet, while concern grows for the hostages held by terrorists for over six months. In this scenario, Sapienza's Academic Senate and Board of Governors share the following:

1. The Academic Senate and the Board of Governors of Sapienza share the growing feelings of grief and horror aroused by the military escalation and the resulting humanitarian crisis in Palestine, and reaffirm their firm commitment to peace. For this reason, they unreservedly support those States and organisations, starting with the UN Security Council Resolution 2728 of 25 March, which call for an immediate ceasefire, the entry of substantial humanitarian aid into Gaza and the intensification of negotiations for the release of the hostages. Like so many others in these hours, the Governing Bodies of Sapienza call on the international community to act in a coordinated manner to immediately stop the deaths and massacres among civilians, which have been steadily increasing since the Israeli troops entered the Gaza Strip, to care for the wounded and sick, to feed the defenceless, and to find negotiated solutions that guarantee a lasting peace based on the recognition of the right to exist of all the peoples living in the Middle East region.



2. At the same time, the Academic Senate and the Board of Governors, while emphasising their commitment to discussion, debate, confrontation and the free expression of dissent, as long as it does not become prevarication, in every place of our University, as recently reaffirmed by the Academic Senate in its meeting of 26 March, commit themselves to carrying out further actions of welcome, support and solidarity for academic communities experiencing tragic conflict scenarios and to contribute to the creation of humanitarian corridors. In this regard, they highlight that Sapienza has promoted the activation of the National Doctorate in Peace Studies and is coordinating its implementation. In addition, it has already joined the An-Najah National University initiative, in partnership with UNIMED (where Sapienza is present in the governing bodies) and the Palestinian Student Scholarship Fund (PSSF), aimed at facilitating the completion of university education, free of charge and through an e-learning platform, for students living in the Gaza Strip. Finally, it has earmarked 10% of the budget allocated to the annual call for visiting professors to fund visits by scholars from the conflict zones in the Middle East.
3. The Academic Senate and the Board of Governors consider Sapienza's international experiences in all fields of knowledge, starting from archaeological excavations in disputed territories, to be important examples of how the free movement of science and scientific research can be a powerful tool for peace, progress and multicultural encounter. Dialogue between peoples, on the shores of the Mediterranean Sea, took place in the past on the basis of exchanges between cultures, religions, traditions, scientific innovations and principles of common freedom, and universities have always made a decisive contribution to this exchange. By accepting the constitutional dictate that entrusts universities with the role of promoting freedom of research and teaching, they reaffirm their commitment to ensuring that it is carried out within the ethical boundaries defined by the constitutional values and established by international and national legislation, the Statute and the Sapienza Code of Ethics. In order to ensure that these principles are respected, the governing bodies of Sapienza, at the request of the Rector, set up the Ethics Committee for Transdisciplinary Research in 2021 and provided it with regulations that also address the issue of the possible misuse of research. The Academic Senate and the Board of Governors note that the principle of freedom corresponds to the principle of individual responsibility, of which each researcher must be fully aware. Research directions, methodological choices, collaborations and



results obtained may indeed be interpreted and used differently from what was originally intended or desired.

4. The Academic Senate and the Board of Governors of Sapienza University reject the idea that boycotting international scientific collaboration, renouncing the freedom of teaching and research, and denying the associated responsibilities of each individual researcher can promote peace and respect for human dignity. They therefore call upon all members of the scientific community to defend the universalistic and free character of scientific research, which is the condition of its very existence and the necessary premise for it to become an instrument of peaceful encounter, exchange and understanding between peoples and cultures.