



# CHE STATEMENT

For immediate release:

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## Council on Higher Education Statement on Global Conflicts impacting Higher Education

The Council on Higher Education (CHE) joins the international community in expressing deep concern on the humanitarian crises caused by armed conflicts in the Democratic Republic of Congo, South Sudan, Haiti, Ukraine, Mozambique, Palestine and many other places. Informed by South Africa's past, and in line with the Constitution of the Republic, the CHE fundamentally cherishes the values of social justice, human dignity, equality, peace and the inalienable right to life. Armed conflicts disproportionately affect the poor, marginalized and vulnerable. All human life is sacrosanct and must be treated as equally valuable.

With respect to the Israel-Palestine conflict, the CHE condemns the violent attacks on the people of Israel by Hamas and other groups on 7 October 2023. These attacks were targeted at innocent civilians, some of whom were taken hostage and have not been returned to their families. Whilst the long struggle of the people of Palestine is a legitimate cause, violence against innocent civilians for a political cause cannot be justified.

The CHE believes, as many organizations and states also do, that the violent response by the State of Israel has, however, been disproportionate, excessive and in violation of humanitarian and international law. The CHE condemns the indiscriminate destruction of public infrastructure such as places of worship, hospitals, homes, schools and universities, over and above the killing of more than 30 000 women and children, by the State of Israel. Thousands of people have been displaced from their homes and livelihoods, and are living in desperate conditions, without having access to adequate nutrition, health care, shelter and even water. The bombings have devastated healthcare and education infrastructure. The CHE joins the global calls for an immediate ceasefire, the release of all hostages, the opening of besieged areas to humanitarian aid and transparent and free media coverage,

and for a globally mediated dialogue that leads to a permanent viable solution for the people of Palestine.

The CHE is deeply concerned that the destruction of higher education institutions will affect the future prosperity of the Palestinian people in Gaza. The destruction of the higher education system destroys the very institutional infrastructure and people that are meant to be the bastions and custodians of knowledge that undergird cultural understanding and tolerance. Higher education, and education in general, is central to the long-term prosperity and dignity of a people. Without these institutions, the social fabric of a society unravels and peace and harmony falter. Without higher education, peace and security in all areas with conflict will continue to be threatened.

The international community must do more to prevent and resolve armed conflicts around the world to protect human lives. The CHE reiterates that life is sacrosanct, regardless of race, faith or nationality. The lives of innocent children need to be protected at all costs if the world is to be a better place. Education is integral to the promotion of peace and advancement of humanity, in service to the sanctity of life.



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