



schwelle Foundation
Contributions to Peace

SCHWELLE FOUNDATION'S UNDERSTANDING OF PEACE

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SCHWELLE FOUNDATION'S UNDERSTANDING OF PEACE

FROM THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES OF SCHWELLE FOUNDATION

Who doesn't want peace? We all want peace!! We are all familiar with these statements of self-reassurance from our conversations with friends or neighbours. In saying them, agreement on what peace means is taken for granted: destruction, death and suffering must end. Opinions diverge, however, when it comes to the means and ways of achieving peace. In these discussions, it quickly becomes clear that there are very different notions of what is understood by peace, both in politics and in our everyday surroundings.

What do we in the Board of Trustees of the *schwelle* Foundation understand by peace? Initially, our starting point was as diffuse as indicated above. A differentiated and sincere examination of the issue was needed. At their annual meeting from 2 to 4 August 2024, the Board members discussed their concept of peace. First, in open, associative rounds, working groups gathered many aspects, which were then weighed up, condensed and structured in further discussions. The following text is the result; it was adopted at the Board of Trustees meeting on 18 and 19 January 2025.

PEACE – A UNIVERSAL VALUE

The commitment of *schwelle* Foundation to peace, justice and the preservation of creation is based on a comprehensive concept of peace. For us and for future generations, peace is an absolute and universal value. The concept of peace is dynamic and changeable with respect to historical and cultural contexts, also against the background of the experiences and traumas of preceding and subsequent generations.

Peace means far more than the cessation of violence. Non-violence, respect for human rights, and social and political justice are the guiding principles of a peace that overcomes enemy images and strives for a non-violent balancing of interests. This requires just agreements, rules and laws. Peace cannot be achieved unilaterally through efforts to secure one's own safety, but only through the efforts of all actors in the search for common security.

PEACE – PERSONAL, SOCIETAL AND POLITICAL

We understand peace in a comprehensive sense that includes peace work at the personal, societal and political levels. Peace should be tangibly experienced by people at all of these levels, locally and globally. We also understand peace as respect for the nature that surrounds us with all its living beings, in a climate-just world.

Peace does not relate only to external political conditions and societal structures; its prerequisites also lie in the nature of the social and psy-

chological conditions of each individual person. The longing for peace is deeply rooted within us.

Being capable of peace is founded on an attitude of

- reflecting on one's own personal and structural contributions to conflict and violence in the world and in one's immediate surroundings,
- being open to change,
- being willing to engage with the resources and limits within one's own person and to deal with them appropriately.

PEACE – ENCOUNTER, DIALOGUE AND PRACTICAL PARTICIPATION

Peaceful coexistence in cultural diversity is achieved through encounters between individuals and social groups in which prejudices and enemy images can be dismantled. Encounter fosters and creates trust, and is therefore all the more important in times of crisis. A prerequisite at both the personal and the political level is the ability and willingness to engage in dialogue on an equal footing, with an openness to the perception of other positions and narratives.

Peace succeeds in ways of life in which people, through practical participation and democratic co-determination, can develop themselves and their projects and thus contribute to strengthening civil society.

The initiatives of die schwelle are aimed at

- supporting reconciliation and non-violent conflict transformation,
- exposing power structures that hinder peace,
- creating spaces for dialogue,
- giving impulses to and supporting "islands of peace" – that is, examples and places of peace –
- acting in a preventive way

SUPPORT FOR PROJECTS FOR PEACE

For the funding practice of *schwelle* Foundation, with its low-threshold access and its strong orientation towards the needs of its project partners, it makes sense for its ethical guidelines also to draw boundaries with respect to projects that do not fit within the framework of this concept of peace. For projects as well as for individual grants, this means that applicants are encouraged to articulate how their project relates to the theme of peace.



The schwelle Foundation accompanies and supports local peace organisations in various countries. In 2022, all project partners met in Bremen for a one-week conference under the theme: «Empowering Non-Violence in Times of Crisis»



Regular project visits are part of *schwelle* Foundation's work. In April 2023, a delegation travelled to Israel and Palestine and visited the partner organisation Combatants for Peace. At the «Joint Memorial Ceremony» in Tel Aviv, the Israeli and Palestinian victims of the conflict were remembered together. More than 15,000 Israelis and Palestinians were present.



At a ceremonial event held in the Bremen Town Hall, a UNESCO World Heritage Site, the 2024 International Bremen Peace Award of *schwelle* Foundation was presented to the organisation *Connexion* for its commitment to the right to conscientious objection to military service and its support for desertion, and to Maria Biedrawa for her peace work in Sudan, the Central African Republic and other African countries.

PROJECT PARTNER

Together with local organisations, we develop, accompany and support peace and reconciliation projects as well as projects in the fields of human rights and environmental protection. We give our partners the structural security of being able to rely on the foundation's support over a defined period of time. These are often also small organisations that have little or no fundraising experience.

The collaboration is regularly evaluated and, if necessary, modified. As of June 2024, project partnerships exist with:

- > Center for Peacebuilding CIM in Bosnia
- > Fenix in Bosnia
- > RAND in Croatia
- > INTeRo in Croatia
- > SOHRAM Casra in Turkey
- > Projet Espérance Afrique in Togo
- > MHOLA in Tanzania
- > Combatants for Peace in Israel and Palestine
- > gewaltfrei handeln e.V. in Germany
- > Church and Peace in Europe

INTERNATIONAL BREMEN PEACE AWARD

Every two years, the *schwelle* Foundation awards the International Bremen Peace Award. With this award, we honour people and organisations whose work serves as a role model in the commitment to peace, justice and the preservation of creation. Peace activists from all over the world nominate a large number of individuals and projects, from which the laureates are selected in two categories:

- > Pioneering Peace Work
- > Award of the Donors for Encouraging Initiatives

More informationen at:

www.dieschwelle.de/en