

2/10/2023

## **EPLO Ambassador at the celebration of the International Day of Non-Violence**

On October 2, a side event took place during the Human Rights Council's 54th Session on the modern connections between non-violence and human rights. The event commemorated the 154th anniversary of the birth of Mahatma Gandhi and is known as the International Day of Non-Violence, an occasion to promote awareness of the principle of non-violence and desire for peace, respect and understanding.

Diplomatic missions and international non-governmental organizations (INGOs) came together to observe the "International Day of Non-Violence: Preventing Human Rights Violations by Drawing Inspiration from the Principles of Non-Violence."

Ambassador George Papadatos of the Permanent Mission of the European Public Law Organization (EPLO) to the UN in Geneva offered a short speech at the side event.

Please find his thoughts hereafter:

### **Title: Non-Violence and the Rule of Law: A Path to Sustainable Peace**

Excellencies, distinguished panelists, delegates, and friends

I was asked to deliver a short presentation on non-violence and the rule of law while I was doing this, I decided to inject autocratic regimes into the equation.

The purpose of this presentation is to explore briefly the intertwined relationship between non-violence and the rule of law by illustrating how their coexistence is essential for achieving lasting peace and justice in the world. Non-violence and the rule of law are two fundamental principles that underpin the foundations of just and peaceful societies. They have played pivotal roles in shaping human history, fostering social progress, and resolving conflicts without resorting to destructive force.

Non-violence, as a philosophy and practice, is often associated with iconic figures such as Mahatma Gandhi and Martin Luther King Jr. It emphasizes resolving conflicts and addressing injustices through peaceful means. At times non-violence is mistakenly considered as a passive acceptance of oppression or injustice; instead, it is a proactive and principled stance that seeks to transform societies by appealing to reason, morality, and empathy. One of the most remarkable aspects of non-violence is its capacity to bring about profound social change. History is replete with instances where non-violent movements have toppled oppressive regimes, challenged institutionalized discrimination, and advanced civil rights. Gandhi's leadership in the Indian independence movement and the Civil Rights Movement in the United States led by Martin Luther King Jr, stand as prime examples of the transformative power of non-violence.

The Rule of Law is the Backbone of Democracy

The rule of law is a foundational principle of modern democracies and societies. It ensures that laws are

applied consistently and fairly and that no one is above the law, regardless of their status or position. At its core, the rule of law promotes the idea that justice is best served through legal processes rather than through arbitrary power or violence. The rule of law fosters stability, predictability, and accountability in societies. It establishes the framework for resolving disputes, protecting human rights, and upholding the principles of justice. Without the rule of law, societies would be vulnerable to chaos, arbitrary rule, and the erosion of individual freedoms. This is where autocratic regimes come into the discussion because there has been an erosion of democracy around the world. Nondemocratic transitions of power are often associated with violence, repression, and control. Autocratic regimes often have a higher degree of control over their populations compared to democratic governments. This control can manifest through censorship, surveillance, restriction of political freedoms, and suppression of dissent. In some cases, this control is maintained through the use of violence or the threat of violence to quell opposition. Some autocratic regimes have a track record of human rights abuses, including extrajudicial killings, torture, and imprisonment of political opponents. These actions can result in significant levels of violence, often perpetrated by state security forces. In brief there, the rule of law is broken with unwelcome developments.

In democratic societies, Non-violence serves as an effective tool for addressing grievances and conflicts peacefully, while the rule of law provides the mechanisms and institutions through which disputes can be resolved impartially. It can also bring about social change through changes in laws, policies, or societal norms and ensure that these changes are implemented and enforced thus preventing backsliding into previous injustices. Both principles prioritize the protection of human rights. Non-violence advocates for the rights and dignity of all individuals, while the rule of law establishes legal frameworks to safeguard these rights. In democratic systems, non-violent participation in elections and civic engagement upholds the rule of law by ensuring that leaders are chosen through legal and legitimate processes.

Lastly, the rule of law can help prevent violent conflicts by addressing underlying issues, ensuring equitable access to resources, and offering avenues for political participation.