



UNAOC
United Nations Alliance of Civilizations



Religions for Peace



Picasso's "Guernica":
A powerful anti-war masterpiece

A Call for **PEACE**,
the **END** of **WARS** &
RESPECT *for* **INTERNATIONAL LAW**

Join us for the Launch Event:
25–26 April 2025, Gernika, Spain

Concept Note [DRAFT]:

**Launch Event: “A Call for Peace, the End of Wars and Respect for International Law”
25–26 April 2025, Gernika, Spain**

Background

Throughout history, humanity has faced numerous cycles of confrontations, wars, and conflicts, leaving a painful legacy of violence. Despite the efforts of such visionaries as Emmanuel Kant and Victor Hugo, who advocated for peace in the 19th century, conflicts have persisted, culminating in catastrophic events such as World Wars I and II, which claimed millions of lives and shattered entire societies.

The aftermath of these horrors led to the establishment of the United Nations (UN) in 1945, with the primary aim of promoting global peace and security. However, in recent decades, humanity has witnessed an alarming setback, with the resurgence of increasingly prolonged and deadly armed conflicts, such as the war in Ukraine, conflicts in the Middle East and Africa, and a growing culture of militarization. The widespread despair of global citizens in the face of these tragedies have intensified, highlighting the urgent need for a profound shift toward peace.



The Initiative: A Call for Peace, the End of Wars and Respect for International Law

In response to this global crisis, the **United Nations Alliance of Civilizations (UNAOC)** proposed the creation of an "Alliance for Peace," during its 9th Global Forum in Fez, Morocco, which was then reaffirmed at its 10th Global Forum in Cascais, Portugal, in November 2024.

In this context, **UNAOC** and **Religions for Peace** have jointly committed to co-organizing the launch of "**A Call for Peace, the End of Wars and Respect for International Law**" — aiming to amplify their condemnation against war while fostering a message of peace and upholding respect for international law.

A Symbolic Launch in Gernika, Spain

The initiative will be launched in the symbolic and historic town of **Gernika in Basque Country, Spain**, on the 88th anniversary of its bombing. On **26 April 1937**, during the Spanish Civil War, the town was subjected to aerial bombardment. As one of the first deliberate attacks on civilians from the air, the tragedy left a deep trauma of suffering and destruction and ignited a global awareness on the human cost of conflict.

Today, Gernika stands as a powerful symbol of resilience and the enduring pursuit of peace. It has been immortalized in **Pablo Picasso's anti-war masterpiece, "Guernica"** — a powerful and haunting depiction of the suffering and chaos inflicted upon the town and its people. Today, a

tapestry reproduction of this iconic artwork hangs outside the United Nations Security Council Chamber, serving as a stark reminder of the consequences of violence and the urgent need for peace.

Official Launch of the Initiative

Spanning two days, the event will have the following components:

Day 1: 25 April 2025, Friday

- **Roundtables** featuring religious leaders, faith actors, and civil society representatives
- **Screening of “Why War”**, a film by Amos Gitai.

Day 2: 26 April, Saturday

- **Opening Ceremony** hosted by the municipality of Gernika
- **High-level Speakers:** The launch event will feature a prestigious roster of speakers, including high-level officials and eminent representatives from academia, civil society, the media, and the private sector, among others, as well as stakeholders committed to the cause of peace. A key focus will be placed on the role of women and youth as key promoters of peace, alongside notable figures from the world of sports who can amplify the message of peace on a global scale.
- **Cultural Activities**

Next steps: Following the launch, the initiative is envisioned to continue with a series of major events in historically bombed cities — such as Sarajevo, Bosnia and Herzegovina, and potentially culminating in Nagasaki, Japan — highlighting the devastating consequences of war.

Media Coverage and Livestream: The event will be broadcast live to engage and mobilize the global community in support of peace.

The International Year of Peace and Trust

In line with **United Nations General Assembly Resolution 78/266**,¹ which designates 2025 as the **International Year of Peace and Trust**, the initiative will be implemented throughout the year to raise global awareness and call for strengthened efforts toward sustainable peace. Through a series of global “peace events”, the initiative seeks to further the Resolution’s objectives by fostering cross-sectoral collaboration and meaningful action.

Goals

- **Raise global awareness:** Emphasize the urgency of ending wars and violent conflicts while upholding international law.
- **Mobilize Stakeholders:** Engage civil society, governments, international organizations, and key stakeholders to promote peaceful solutions to international conflicts.
- **Counter Militarization:** - Establish a united front against the influence of the military lobby, advocating for a “peace lobby” that promotes the peaceful resolution of conflicts.

¹ A/RES/78/266: <https://documents.un.org/doc/undoc/gen/n24/087/89/pdf/n2408789.pdf>

- **Promote the role of women, youth, and sports:** Highlight their essential role in the prevention and resolution of conflicts.
- **Strengthen international commitments and reaffirm the United Nations’ role in fostering and building peace.**
- **Change the global narrative:** Foster a shift in the global narrative around violence and militarization, promoting peace as a tool for development, stability, and human well-being.

An Urgent Call to Action

"A Call for Peace, the End of Wars, and Respect for International Law" is an urgent call for humanity to put an end to the vicious cycle of violence and destruction that has pervaded in recent history. By uniting global stakeholders and engaging communities most affected by conflict, this initiative aims to amplify the pursuit of a peaceful future for the next generations. Through diplomacy, collaboration, and dialogue, it envisions a world where peace prevails over war.

About the Organizers

United Nations Alliance of Civilizations (UNAOC)

The United Nations Alliance of Civilizations (UNAOC) is a United Nations entity that builds bridges between societies, promotes dialogue and understanding, and seeks to forge the collective political will required to accomplish these tasks. UNAOC works as a convener and facilitator to bring all sectors of society together to strengthen intercultural and interreligious dialogue to diminish hostility, and promote mutual respect and harmony among the people and cultures of the world. UNAOC's activities are fashioned around the five pillars of Education, Youth, Migration, Media, and Women as peace mediators in identity-based settings. UNAOC maintains a global network of partners, including states, international and regional organizations, civil society groups, foundations, and the private sector, to improve cross-cultural relations between diverse nations and communities.

Religions for Peace

Religions for Peace is an international organization dedicated to promoting peace through collaboration among the world's diverse religious traditions through interfaith dialogue. Founded in 1970, it unites religious leaders from various denominations and faiths to address global issues such as justice, security, human rights, and sustainability. The organization also has a broad network of women and youth working locally, nationally, regionally, and globally as agents of change.

TENTATIVE PROGRAMME

Launch Event: “A Call for Peace, the End of Wars and Respect for International Law”

Day 1: 25 April 2025, Friday		
Time	Event	Venue
09:30–10:30	Roundtable discussion featuring religious leaders	Liceo Theatre - Gernika
10:30–11:30	Roundtable discussion featuring civil society representatives	Liceo Theatre - Gernika
19:00–21:00	Discussion and screening of “Why War”, a film by Amos Gitai	Liceo Theatre - Gernika

Day 2: 26 April 2025, Saturday		
Time	Event	Venue
9:30–10:15	Welcoming all guests and family photo	Fronton Jai Alai - Gernika
10:30–11:30	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Official Opening Ceremony • Gernika Peace and Reconciliation Awards Ceremony 	Fronton Jai Alai - Gernika
11:30–11:35	<i>Musical Interlude</i>	
11:35–13:00	<p>Official Launch of “A Call for Peace, the End of Wars and Respect for International Law”</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • H.E. Mr. Miguel Ángel Moratinos, Under-Secretary-General, High Representative for the United Nations Alliance of Civilizations (UNAOC) • H. E. Dr. Francis Kuria, Secretary-General of Religions for Peace • H.E. Mr. José Luis Rodríguez Zapatero, Prime Minister of Spain (2004-2008) • Mr. Amos Gitai, Filmmaker • Youth representative • Female Athlete • Religious leader (TBC) 	Fronton Jai Alai - Gernika
	<i>Traditional Basque dance: “Aurreku”</i>	
16:30–17:30	A tribute to the victims and floral offering	Gernika Cemetery