

INTERNATIONAL SOLIDARITY WORK FOR PEACE, DEMOCRACY AND HUMAN RIGHTS

Operating Policy of The Olof Palme International Center

Adopted by The Palme Center Board on 22 March 2017

FOREWORD

Poverty does not happen by accident or by chance. Like slavery and apartheid, poverty is not natural. It is man-made and it can be overcome and eradicated by the actions of human beings.

Nelson Mandela, speech at Trafalgar Square 2005

The Palme Center's operating policy is the overall steering document for our operations. It forms the basis for the Palme Center's long-term strategic planning and its analysis and conclusions must permeate every part of the organisation. The operating policy is adopted annually by the Palme Center's Board and is grounded in the labour movement's values and social analysis and aims to achieve our overall objective of a world of peaceful societies founded on democratic principles and where all people are equal and have equal rights.

Today's globalised world is moving at an ever-increasing pace and is characterised by both an unprecedented level of prosperity and extreme injustices. The past few decades have brought greater prosperity and have helped to reduce poverty for several hundred million people. Globalisation has shortened the distance between people and increased awareness and understanding of living conditions on the other side of the planet. New advances in fields such as production technology and healthcare have given many people a more secure and richer life. And every day, the demand for democracy, human rights and social security grows all over the world. Never have there been as many democracies as there are today. At the same time, inequality is increasing all over the world and never before has there been such a high concentration of capital as there is today. A few individuals own more than most of the world's population put together and the largest proportion of poor people are today living in medium- and high-income countries. It is clear that the pursuit of quick, large profits has a human cost. People are at risk of being used like goods and the climate is being sacrificed. It is unacceptable to the labour movement that society is being torn apart by increasing inequality, that people are competing for jobs through low wages and unfit working conditions and with no respect for the environment. The informal economy is growing, particularly in developing countries. Unregulated and even illegal working conditions mean no legal rights for employees. The situation for the most vulnerable is tantamount to slavery. Human exploitation ignores human rights, increases inequality and hampers sustainable development. Measures such as guaranteeing social security systems, progressive taxation, contractual and workers' rights and implementing environmental legislation create the opportunity for sustainable and just development. The right to organise – in social movements, trade unions and political parties – is central to this.

The time in which we are living is characterised by deep divisions in terms of both welfare and power, between people and between countries, and our future is threatened by a model of development that pays inadequate consideration to the world's limitations. Around 1 billion

people live on less than two dollars a day and the majority of these are women. Every day, 16,000 children die of disease or starvation and almost 57 million children do not go to school. Around 40 million people are living with HIV and just over a billion people do not have access to clean drinking water. Every year, trade union activists are imprisoned and tortured and tens of thousands of workers lose their jobs for attempting to organise. Low-wage countries are being played off against one another, hampering the political and trade union fight for a better life for all. Democracy is under threat, as populist and xenophobic forces are gaining ground in an increasing number of countries.

Religion can play a key role in democracy and human rights work, as both a destructive and a constructive force. There are many examples today of how people, and women and minorities in particular, are oppressed and persecuted in the name of religion. At the same time, many people and societies have been strengthened by people and organisations whose faith inspires them to work for a better world.

We want to see a form of globalisation that is not purely economic, but also political, social, sustainable and will benefit all people. This is a social process that we cannot and should not attempt to prevent. The challenges, and therefore the answers, are global, but people must be given the opportunity to steer development. The world's political leaders have agreed on common objectives within the framework of Agenda 2030. The 17 different goals form the basis of a progressive and radical policy that is necessary if they are to be achieved. Goal 10, reducing inequality, is central to the work of the Palme Center and is vital for achieving many of the other goals.

Agreements such as Agenda 2030 and the Paris Agreement facilitate global solutions to shared problems. They form a framework for domestic policy, foreign relations and, not least, international development cooperation and they highlight the need for joint solutions. This requires social movements, firm political decisions and trade union mobilisation, both locally and globally. Just as the international labour movement has changed society and the world over the past century, so the Palme Center works together with its member and partner organisations to achieve the same in the future.

THE LABOUR MOVEMENT'S FIGHT FOR FREEDOM, EQUALITY AND SOLIDARITY

Many of the labour movement's organisations were founded towards the end of the 19th century as part of the struggle for co-determination, equality, freedom and solidarity. These ideals are summarised in the democratic society project. True democracy requires and creates freedom and equality, with solidarity as a unifying force. The labour movement has always been an international movement. International relations and international organisation have been linked with local and national organisation based on the knowledge that economic and political power goes beyond national borders. The labour movement is based on the conviction that it is only through organisation that we can change society and influence its development so that it benefits everyone. Together the labour movement's organisations have a unique history and long-standing practical experience in democratic development, alleviation of poverty and international solidarity. Work to achieve change in Sweden and internationally has been driven forward for more than a hundred years.

The Olof Palme International Center is part of the Swedish labour movement and was founded in 1992 to promote democracy, human rights and peace in the spirit of Olof Palme. At the same time, the Swedish Labour Movement's International Center, the Swedish Labour Movement's Forum for Peace and the Olof Palme Memorial Fund were established under the Palme Center. We are a democratically run organisation and our member organisations represent the Swedish labour movement, such as the Swedish Trade Union Confederation (LO) and its affiliates, the Workers' Educational Association (ABF), the Swedish Social Democratic Party and its secondary organisations, the Swedish Young Falcons, the Swedish Union of Tenants, the Swedish labour movement's educational colleges, Folkets hus och parker and Verdandi. The commitment and experience of our member organisations as social movements provides the platform for our work and their large international networks allow us to cooperate with organisations that share our values all over the world.

Our relationships and cooperation are defined by international solidarity. Our work is based on the principle that human rights are universal, inseparable and mutually dependent. We therefore strive towards a world in which everyone has the same opportunities and equality of condition. In order for this kind of development to happen you need peace, security, democracy and functioning government administrations that are accountable and respect international laws. The resulting prosperity must benefit all, and economic development must take into account that which is ecologically and socially sustainable. Equal societies promote trust, security, public health and individual freedom. Democratic political parties, strong trade unions and broad civil participation are vital for achieving social change that increases equality and justice. A social structure can only succeed and survive if it is built upon the free will of people to unite and organise. Strong social movements and an active civil society are not just forces of change, but also pillars of democracy. Organisation is often a prerequisite for individual freedom.

OUR POLITICAL PRIORITIES

The Palme Center's priorities are human rights, democracy and peace. To achieve these in a meaningful way requires a policy that creates social systems and structures that defend and promote justice, equality and freedom. A society is equal only if all people are guaranteed the same opportunities for freedom.

Human rights

All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights.

Article 1 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights

The equal worth of all people, no matter who we are or where we come from, is a fundamental requirement for freedom, justice and peace. Human rights – as expressed in *The Universal Declaration of Human Rights* of 1948, *The International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights* of 1966, *The International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights* of 1976 and other conventions – comprise a whole. They are universal, inseparable and mutually dependent. This means that political and civil rights are as important as social and economic rights. The fight against poverty is, at its core, a fight for human dignity and human rights. Fighting poverty is about efforts at many different levels of society in order to change structures and power balances so as to promote freedom. Poverty is as much about a lack of security and influence as it is about a lack of material wealth and opportunities to support oneself. At the same time it is important to note that occasionally human rights end up in conflict with one

another. For example, there is a risk that the right to believe and express what you like may infringe the right to freedom from discrimination. It is important that these situations are resolved with great care for the integrity of human rights and the inviolability of the individual.

Human rights provide the basis for people all over the world to exercise their human rights from governments. In legal terms, the government is also ultimately responsible for ensuring that human rights are respected, encouraged, defended and applied in each country. But in reality that responsibility is shared by society as a whole. Organisations, trade unions, political parties and religious groups, to name just a few, are under obligation to follow the human rights laws and systems that have been put in place by the government and they also have a responsibility to ensure that human value and dignity is respected by society. Respect for human rights is essential for the creation of an equal and sustainable world that is free from poverty and oppression for current and future generations. The Palme Center and our member organisations therefore work together to:

- support people organising in order to strengthen respect for human rights,
- influence public opinion on, and increase knowledge about, human rights,
- act to ensure that respect for human rights characterises all activities which the Palme Center organises or participates in.

Democracy

“For us, democracy is a question of human dignity. And human dignity is political freedom, the right to freely express opinion, the right to be allowed to criticise and form an opinion. Human dignity is the right to health and work, education and social security. Human dignity is the right and the effective means to shape the future with others. These rights, the rights of democracy, are not reserved for a select group within society. They are the rights of all the people.”

Olof Palme during his speech before the Swedish Social Democratic Party conference on 28 September 1975.

We believe in every person’s equal right and ability to take control of their lives and their surroundings and to participate in the governance of society. Democracy creates the conditions for people to live their lives freely. It is a form of government that has the ability to resolve conflicts peacefully. Conflicts of interest between the collective and the individual are easier to handle if individuals are given the same right to influence collective decisions. It also carries the potential for a fair redistribution of society’s resources. Faith in such a democratic society is fundamental to the labour movement; it is a pillar of our social analysis and has been decisive in making reformist achievements. Democracy is not static, however. It is a system that must be defended and developed to prevent it from stagnating, being taken for granted and exploited. Our experience shows that when there is a lack of trade unions, environmental organisations and social movements as dissenting voices against anti-democratic forces and as a counterweight to capitalist interests, the result is a weakening of democracy, a diminishing of respect for workers’ rights, a disregard for environmental considerations and an increase in exploitation. A healthy and dynamic civil society is vital for achieving the principles of democracy. The Palme Center and our member organisations therefore work together to:

- increase people’s opportunities and willingness to participate in democratic processes in order to influence the societies in which they live, and thereby their own lives,
- contribute to the development of democratic social movements, trade unions and progressive political parties throughout the world,
- influence public opinion on, and increase knowledge about, democracy and the democratic conditions around the world.

Peace

“We can hope that men will understand that the interest of all are the same, that hope lies in cooperation. We can then perhaps keep peace.”

Alva Myrdal's acceptance speech, Nobel Peace Prize 1982

It is the labour movement's view that peace is not simply the absence of war and conflict, it is also freedom from social, political and cultural oppression. This applies to both direct and structural violence. Therefore a society that guarantees stability by denying people freedom cannot be said to be living in peace. Peace is guaranteed through both personal security and political, social and cultural justice. Lasting peace can therefore only be achieved in societies that are built on human freedom and equality. The freedom and security of the individual is closely linked to the freedom and security of all. The fundamental principle of common security that Olof Palme often spoke of and worked for internationally means that people cannot achieve security through conflict with one another, but only together with one another. This is a world where disarmament and detente are common goals.

Globalisation characterised by increased peaceful interaction between countries, organisations, people and other actors strengthens peace. Mistrust and armament drive armed conflicts and threaten stability and security. International law and its institutions must therefore be strengthened as a fundamental tool for creating and spreading trust. A UN with the capacity and ability to stand up for human rights, democracy and peace and to act as a platform for dialogue is of the utmost importance. This also applies to various regional associations and collaborations, such as the European Union, the African Union (AU), the Union of South American Nations (UNASUR) and international bodies such as the International Criminal Court (ICC). The European Union has the opportunity to be a driving force for human rights, democracy and peace, outside as well as inside Europe. The EU has an important role in contributing to a more democratic world and has many tools at its disposal to achieve this end. In states neighbouring the EU, the process of joining the EU, for instance, can be used by people to pressure their regimes into fulfilling EU requirements on democracy and human rights.

The Palme Center and our member organisations therefore work together to:

- increase respect for and the operationalisation of adopted UN conventions and international law.
- support initiatives that promote dialogue and understanding between parties to existing or potential conflicts.
- contribute to the strengthening of the ability of people and societies to handle conflicts and crises peacefully, influence public opinion on, and increase knowledge about, peace and security.

GLOBAL CHALLENGES

The Palme Center sees a number of issues as particular priorities for contributing to its overall objective. These include the fight for gender equality and sustainable development, as well as the fight against corruption and increased tensions and conflicts.

Gender equality

The Palme Center is a feminist organisation that bases its work on the conviction that all people are equal and have equal rights. All people must have the same power to shape society and

their own lives, whatever their gender or gender identity and expression. Working for gender equality is about achieving democracy. It is a decisive factor for true political participation, as well as for freedom of association and assembly. There is also a need for gender equality in peace work, in part because peace negotiations and peace agreements that include women are better accepted and more long-lasting.

Society is characterised by a power structure that gives women a subordinate position. This means that men as a group generally have more power in society than women as a group. Other factors, such as ethnicity, age and class, also play a role, often in combination and in some cases reinforcing one another. Achieving gender equality requires changes in the structural imbalance of power that exists between men and women. This includes political, economic, social and cultural power. The Palme Center considers it important that gender equality is not reduced to being an issue only for women, but is something that affects us all. Both men and women are restricted in their life choices by stereotypical gender roles and behavioural patterns. Working for gender equality means working for liberation from subservience, from violence and from stereotypical expectations that limit people's freedom. Gender equality work involves fundamentally changing the prevailing power structures, but in the long term this will increase freedom for all through greater gender equality and men and women both have a responsibility to work towards gender equality.

Environment and climate work

Environmental damage and climate change affect us all, no matter where we live. Those who suffer the most, though, are those who live in poverty, with margins that are even smaller and little opportunity to withstand the consequences of environmental damage and climate change. The result is a widening of the gaps between people and an increased risk of war and conflict.

Continuing environmental and climate change is a matter of great importance. The development model that has for a long time delivered an ever-increasing living standard in our part of the world has done so at the expense of environmental damage and unsustainable use of our shared natural resources. We are facing the challenge of converting to fossil-free societies and sustainable consumption and production patterns and of breaking the link between economic growth and the depletion of our planet's resources. There was no mention of environmental issues in the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights. When the declaration was drafted, the environment was viewed primarily as a source of commodities and energy that each government could use as they saw fit. Today it is a well-known fact that there are clear links between promoting human rights on the one side and protecting the environment and climate on the other. The right to life, liberty and security of the person can, for example, be interpreted as the right to live in a healthy environment where a person's life and security are not under threat. In the same way, the right to a standard of living adequate for health and well-being could be seen as the right to uncontaminated food and water.

Working for a sustainable environment and a sustainable climate is as much about directly saving the environment and the climate as it is about fighting for human rights and against poverty and inequality and asserting future generations' rights. The labour movement has an important role to play in working for sustainable development, through organisation, mobilisation and shaping public opinion, as well as through its relationships with both economic and political decision makers who are engaged at grassroots level.

Anti-corruption

The Palme Center views corruption as an abuse of trust, power or legal obligations that results in unjust gain or benefit, often in financial terms, for a person, an organisation or a political party. Corruption occurs all over the world, but is more commonly found in countries with weak governments and institutions and in societies where people have limited opportunity for influence and where there are major shortcomings in terms of civil participation, transparency and separation of powers.

Corrupt actions and behaviour are not always illegal. Sometimes they are more a breach of what could be considered ethically and morally defensible. Whatever form it takes, corruption strikes at the very heart of democracy and law-abiding society. The use of money and position to gain power and influence undermines the legal system and democracy's basic principles of equality. Corruption is therefore also unjust and inexpedient from a social perspective. Striving for a stronger democracy is about striving for participation, insight, transparency and trust. Freedom of expression is one of the prerequisites for being able to hold political representatives and other decision makers responsible for their actions and participation is itself the basis of a democracy. This is guaranteed in things like the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights from 1966, Articles 19 and 25. The same principles can be applied within the organisations in which we work and with which we cooperate. The Palme Center does not tolerate corruption and actively works to fight corruption in all its forms. We see anti-corruption work as an integral and important part of our operations.

Conflict awareness

Conflict awareness is in many ways synonymous with establishing and protecting a democratic culture and promoting respect, the right to be heard, non-discrimination, participation and non-violence. Groups that are already marginalised during peacetime often have even more difficulty asserting their rights during unrest or armed conflicts. Attempting to counter oppressive structures from within their own group is particularly difficult when the group is under pressure. This particularly affects women's organisations, LGBT organisations and various minority groups. Which is why it is important for the Palme Center to establish the right conditions for a democratic civil society in which social movements and organisations can act. Preserving the scope for democratic action during armed conflicts is part of peacebuilding. Asserting neutrality in a conflict zone is not always easy. One rule of thumb is to differentiate between taking a stand for values and taking a stand for individuals or groups. Taking a stand against violence means criticising all violence regardless of who is committing the act. Taking a stand for democratic values, like the right to participation and non-discrimination, means preserving these values regardless of who has been deprived of them. The fact that a group has been subjected to oppression is never an excuse for them to subsequently persecute or dismiss others.

HOW WE CHANGE THE WORLD

The work that the Palme Center carries out should in the first instance be based on each community's own circumstances and forms of organisation and participation. The forces of change can be found in the commitment of people working together. Democratic associations, social movements and other civil associations are powerful tools for people to both influence and direct society. They create the conditions for popular acceptance of societal development, mobilise people for progressive social change and increase trust in society and its institutions. Society is not static but is in fact constantly changing and democratic associations have the

ability to follow and influence societal development. The Palme Center therefore aims to be an organisation on the move; a social movement that unites various organisations that have the same objective.

Solidarity

Solidarity means taking joint responsibility; when a member of a group acts with consideration and with no vested interest, for the benefit of the group. This is the guiding principle for our relationships and partnerships. International solidarity, through practical work, through making a difference together and achieving change, is what we strive for in all of our partnerships. In short, our theory of change means we see that the world is constantly changing and that people can influence the development. We believe in the positive force of people organising themselves into democratic associations, recognise the importance of debate between people and organisations and see the need to work together for change in a globalised world where alliances are becoming increasingly important.

Human rights in focus

The Palme Center's work takes a rights-based approach. We focus primarily on people's rights rather than their needs. This enables us to deal with the root causes of inequality and vulnerability. The Swedish labour movement's long experience of working for participation, transparency, insight and accountability forms the basis of our work. Central to this is organisation and we therefore want to help increase the ability and opportunity of organisations and people to achieve social change democratically by working together. An important part of our work is making sure that people have the tools with which to change their situation, by educating them about their rights and about their government's obligations to them.

HOW WE WORK

The Palme Center's view on change is based on the practical experiences gained by the Swedish labour movement over its long history. By focusing on the areas of civil participation, trade union community work and party political organisation, we can learn from the experience and knowledge of the labour movement, and at the same time strengthen and develop solidary alliances and provide support and contact details.

Civil participation

People must be given the opportunity to organise themselves so that they can change their society. Social movements that wish to change society must have knowledgeable and active members who support their work. Members who are responsible, independent and critical thinkers bring strength to democratic organisations. Furthermore, organisations enable citizens to exercise their rights from decision makers using a bottom-up approach. Active involvement in civil society is a key element of a democratic society. Through the Palme Center and our member organisations, our partner organisations receive help in establishing and developing their organisations. Popular education, such as study circles, is a democratic and effective way to reach socially vulnerable groups. The Palme Center's popular education activities focus on young people, women and the socially marginalised, as they are groups who usually have or have had fewer opportunities for influence in their community. When people learn more about their rights and opportunities, it empowers them to work towards change. Organisation leaders can also receive training through the Palme Center, in subjects including leadership, gender equality and internal democracy.

Trade union community work

Strong trade unions are extremely instrumental in bringing about change in a country and counteracting poverty. When people organise themselves, exercise their rights and demand fair working conditions, they change the power structures and, as a result, society as a whole. In today's globalised world, the power has shifted slightly, away from politicians and towards multinational corporations and financial markets. Companies are relocating their operations from country to country in pursuit of the highest return on their investment. Employees within a single corporation often have different employment terms and it is not uncommon for them to be on opposite sides. The Palme Center believes that the solution to this must be international political and union organisation. Strong, democratic, independent union organisations are essential for fair wages and good employment terms. They are also important contributors in ensuring that human rights are respected, and they play an important role in educating the public via courses and seminars. The Palme Center supports trade union partner organisations that focus on sociopolitical issues and need training in areas such as shaping public opinion, internal democracy, organisation, trade union and political cooperation or gender equality.

Party political organisation

Democratic parties and multi-party systems are essential for a parliamentary democracy to function. Democratic political parties are powerful tools that enable people to both influence and steer society. They increase civil acceptance, facilitate active citizenship and democratic participation and so contribute to social development and the growth of a sustainable democracy. In order to do this, however, they must be democratically organised and guarantee co-determination, influence and transparency, and therefore be stronger than any individual political leader. Democracy's potential is realised through properly functioning, democratically focused parties that are able to channel the commitment of citizens and represent their will. The participation of women and young people is restricted, both centrally within the parties and also through the failure to provide scope for women's and youth organisations to participate in decision-making. A lack of ideas development and debate further weakens the sister parties and their position and also has a negative impact on the basic concept of the multi-party system. Weak ideological anchoring also increases the risk of personification of the political system. The Palme Center therefore particularly encourages the participation, ideas development and promotion of internal democracy of young people, women and marginalised groups.

Influence and dissemination of knowledge

The Palme Center must be a clear and powerful voice for human rights, democracy and peace. If we are to change the world, we need to spread knowledge and form opinions. We will continue to work to secure the labour movement's involvement in and sense of responsibility for global development issues. Our communication work is inspired by Olof Palme's role as an educator and influencer. The aims of work to shape opinion include drawing attention to those structures that create and maintain inequality of condition. We will be a megaphone for our partner organisations and provide a voice for groups and individuals that today have little influence and few resources. In this way, we can increase understanding of and commitment to global development issues and the need for change. Our shaping of public opinion must increase international solidarity and drive the debate on human rights, democracy and peace. The aim is to increase people's commitment and influence the stance of politicians and other decision makers to better combat world poverty. Information must be structured in such a way

that we can make best use of the experiences of our partner organisations. Together with our member and partner organisations, we can involve more people in debate and shaping of opinion that lead to tangible results.

Quality assurance and learning

The Palme Center will be a learning organisation that carries out thorough quality assurance to continuously evaluate operations in order to increase our efficiency and competence. Learning within the organisation takes place through measures such as training, evaluations, methodology development and knowledge exchange. The quality of our work is also assured through good relationships within operations, clear application and reporting procedures, monitoring, auditing and continuous risk management work. The Palme Center's dual role as both a supportive and monitoring organisation means there is a great need for continuous dialogue, good partnership and robust systems for monitoring and reporting. It is vital to our success in this task that we ensure we have equal and reciprocal relationships where we learn together.