bicc Bonn International Centre for Conflict Studies
IFSH Institut für Friedensforschung und Sicherheitspolitik an der Universität Hamburg
Institut für Entwicklung und Frieden INEF
PRIF Peace Research Institute Frankfurt Leibniz-Institut für Friedens- und Konfliktforschung

Press release

The 2026 Peace Report Warns of a World of Warlords

Berlin, 8 June 2026. In the 2026 Peace Report, presented today at the Federal Press Conference in Berlin, the four leading German institutes for peace and conflict research analyse the collapse of the international order: States are flouting international law and are increasingly resorting to violence to assert their interests. Pillars of international peacekeeping, such as the United Nations and development cooperation, are in a fundamental crisis. At the same time, new technologies are transforming warfare and arms control. The researchers propose measures that contribute to a sustainable global peace and security policy.

In their annual Peace Report, the peace and conflict researchers from bicc, IFSH, INEF and PRIF conclude that military force has established itself as a regular instrument of international politics: They observe that governments act like state warlords, disregarding international rules and using force to assert political, economic and territorial interests. The dynamics and methods of these new warlords are particularly evident in the interventions of the United States, Russia and Israel, as well as in the regional power projections of Pakistan, Turkey, Ethiopia and the Gulf monarchies.

To contain the current dynamics of violence, Germany should consistently adhere to international law and use its role in Europe to strengthen multilateral institutions and push for new alliances in support of the rules-based international order. For Germany's security and stability, the 2026 Peace Report recommends building resilient value chains and striving for digital sovereignty. At the same time, policymakers should treat anti-Muslim racism, antisemitism and other forms of racism as serious social problems and respond accordingly.

Conflicts at record level: Gulf states' power politics exacerbate violence

The period between 2021 and 2024 marks the most violent phase since the end of the Cold War, according to the 2026 Peace Report: In that time, 61 armed conflicts involving at least one state actor were recorded in 36 countries. At the same time, the number of displaced people worldwide rose to over 120 million in April 2025.
The 2026 Peace Report concludes that states such as Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates and Qatar are playing out their rivalries in crisis regions, often acting simultaneously as party to the conflict and as mediator. This blurring of the lines between intervention and mediation hinders durable peace settlements and perpetuates existing conflicts.

The United Nations at a crossroads: reform or decline

The United Nations (UN) is in the midst of a deep structural crisis: Rivalries between major powers are blocking key decision-making processes, particularly in the Security Council. At the same time, funding cuts and competing political frameworks are undermining the UN's authority. Nevertheless, there is no viable alternative to the organisation. The German government should therefore work with middle powers and smaller states to advocate for stable funding and reforms.

Development cooperation as the key to sustainable peace

Development cooperation (DC) and, in particular, humanitarian aid are under massive pressure due to drastic cuts. Meanwhile, the scope of DC is expanding as conflicts increase and climate change intensifies. Cuts to international aid contribute to instability in fragile states and hinder the effective prevention of violent conflicts, warns the 2026 Peace Report. The researchers recommend that Germany advocate at European and international levels for better coordination and effectiveness of development cooperation programmes.

Shaping sustainable transitions to peace

The 2026 Peace Report emphasises that ceasefires alone do not secure peace. Sustainable solutions require credible security guarantees, arrangements consistent with international law, a controlled approach to sanctions and the establishment of stable state structures. This is demonstrated by the wars in Ukraine, Gaza and Syria. For a stable peace, measures for disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration, as well as reconstruction, must be built into negotiations from the outset.

New technologies exacerbate arms race dynamics

Technological innovations such as artificial intelligence, autonomous systems, cyber capabilities and biotechnology are driving global arms race dynamics and elude established forms of control. AI, in particular, accelerates military processes and intensifies cyberattacks and disinformation. However, new technologies also offer opportunities for improved arms control. Flexible and internationally coordinated regulations are therefore necessary to strengthen international security.

Domestic peace in Germany under pressure

The 2026 Peace Report examines the political climate in Germany and finds that anti-Muslim racism is structurally entrenched and reinforced by security policy discourses. Antisemitism is widespread in German society and must be addressed without being solely attributed to Muslim communities, according to the 2026 Peace Report. Democratic parties should counter polarising and racist discourse in areas such as migration and asylum policy. Otherwise, they will be advancing the agenda of authoritarian and far-right parties.

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Link to the Current Peace Report

The central recommendations of the German peace and conflict research institutes to the German Federal Governmentas are also available in English on the website of the Peace Report. The complete Peace Report (in German) with detailed information, figures and assessments on the individual aspects is available to download at: www.friedensgutachten.de. The Peace Report is published by transcript Verlag.
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Events

Following the federal press conference, the research institutes will present the Peace Report to the federal ministries and parliamentary groups. On 9 June at 6 p.m., the Evangelische Akademie zu Berlin invites you to an evening forum at the EKD building, Charlottenstr. 53/54, 10117 Berlin, to discuss the Peace Report.
Information on this and other nationwide events can be found at www.friedensgutachten.de.

About the Peace Report and the publishing institutes

The Peace Report is an annual publication of the Bonn International Centre for Conflict Studies (bicc), the Institute for Peace Research and Security Policy at the University of Hamburg (IFSH), the Institute for Development and Peace (INEF) at the University of Duisburg-Essen and the Peace Research Institute Frankfurt (PRIF). Since 1987, Germany's leading peace and conflict research institutes have been analysing current international conflicts, identifying trends in international foreign, security and development policy, and making clear recommendations for policymakers. Interdisciplinary teams of authors work together on the chapters, contributing different perspectives.

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