

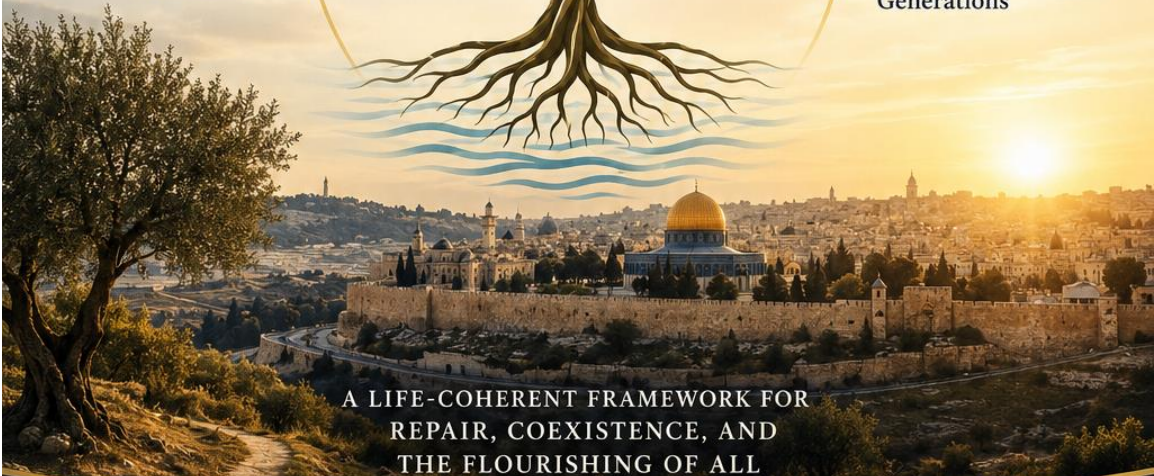
TOWARD LIFE-COHERENT PEACE IN THE MIDDLE EAST

SACRED MEMORY, STRUCTURAL VIOLENCE,
AND THE PROTECTION OF THE LIFE-GROUND

Truth
•
Dignity
•
Justice
•
Coexistence
•
Life-Ground
Protection



Memory
•
Healing
•
Civil Commons
•
Shared
Responsibility
•
Future
Generations



A LIFE-COHERENT FRAMEWORK FOR
REPAIR, COEXISTENCE, AND
THE FLOURISHING OF ALL



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Toward Life-Coherent Peace in the Middle East

Sacred Memory, Structural Violence, and the Protection of the Life-Ground

A Life-Coherent Framework for Repair, Coexistence and the Flourishing of All

Academic White Paper

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Date: 21 May 2026

Author's Note

This paper develops a life-coherent peace framework for the Middle East from several streams already present in the author's work: the 2017 essay on war, misguidance, and the need for global truth and reconciliation; later work on life-coherence, life-ground ethics, civil commons, sacred memory, and civilizational repair; the Maturanan understanding of emotioning, languaging, structural coupling, and legitimate coexistence; and the Galtungian analysis of direct, structural, and cultural violence. The 2017 essay already named war as a false solution when the upstream worldview that produces war remains untouched, and it called for a truth-and-reconciliation process in which sorrow, injustice, and aspiration could surface from below rather than be managed from above (Sahely, 2017).

This paper is a conceptual and ethical framework. It is not a substitute for legal adjudication, specialist historical scholarship, diplomacy, local self-determination, or the voices of those most directly harmed. Its central discipline is this: **no wound is denied, and no wound is enthroned.** Jewish historical trauma, Palestinian dispossession, Israeli fear, Arab and Muslim humiliation, Iranian insecurity, Christian and minority vulnerability, regional authoritarianism, and great-power manipulation all matter. Yet none may be used to sanctify new life-destruction.

This paper also draws from the author's recent archive, including work on sacred narrative and civilizational viability, the Spiral of Grace approach to Holy Land repair, and Life-Coherent Peace as an autopoietic, life-value, anti-violence framework. These works already frame peace not as the mere absence of war, but as the restoration of life-capacity, civil commons, relational legitimacy, trauma repair, and shared responsibility for the life-ground (Sahely, 2025, 2026a, 2026b, 2026c).

Acknowledgements

I acknowledge first the peoples, families, children, elders, caregivers, medical workers, aid workers, journalists, teachers, religious communities, and civil-society actors across the Middle East whose lives are caught in a conflict system far larger than any single person or community can bear alone. This paper is written in the hope that no people's wound will be denied, and that no wound will be enthroned in ways that justify further life-destruction.

I am grateful to the thinkers whose work has helped provide the conceptual foundations for this essay: John McMurtry, for the life-ground, life-value, civil commons, and the critique of life-blind value systems; Johan Galtung, for the indispensable distinctions among direct, structural, and cultural violence, and for the larger discipline of peace by peaceful means; and Humberto Maturana and Francisco Varela, for the biological grounding of autopoiesis, structural coupling, languaging, emotioning, and legitimate coexistence. Their work helped make visible that peace is not merely the absence of war, but the presence of life-supporting conditions in which living beings can continue to develop, relate, repair, and flourish.

I also acknowledge the spiritual, ethical, and historical traditions that continue to hold the possibility that sacred memory can become responsibility rather than revenge; that land can be understood as life-ground rather than possession alone; and that security can be reimagined as the shared protection of life's continuing possibility.

This paper also grew from earlier reflections on war, truth, reconciliation, life-ground ethics, sacred memory, and civilizational repair, including my 2017 essay on guided missiles and misguided men, and subsequent work on life-coherent peace, the biology of love, sacred narrative, and the repair of the Holy Land. Those earlier efforts formed the seedbed from which the present framework emerged.

I acknowledge the use of ChatGPT-5.5 Thinking as an AI research, editorial, and visual-conceptual collaborator in the development of this manuscript. Its role included helping to synthesize prior writings, structure the argument, draft and refine language, stress-test conceptual claims, organize references and citation placements, and generate figure concepts. All final interpretive responsibility, ethical judgment, and editorial approval remain with the author.

Abstract

The Middle East conflict system cannot be solved by military victory, punitive security, diplomatic performance, moral denunciation, or sacred entitlement alone. It is a historically layered field of trauma, land, law, sacred memory, dispossession, fear, geopolitical manipulation, resource insecurity, and institutionalized life-disablement. The recurrent failure of peace efforts arises partly because the conflict is usually approached at the wrong level: as a contest of claims, territories, identities, or strategic interests, rather than as a breakdown in the conditions that allow all affected peoples to live, grieve, remember, repair, participate, and flourish without destroying the life-ground of others.

This white paper proposes a life-coherent framework for Middle East repair. It brings together John McMurtry's life-value onto-axiology and life-ground ethics; Johan Galtung's analysis of direct, structural, and cultural violence; Humberto Maturana's biology of love, structural coupling, languaging, and legitimate coexistence; and the author's evolving viability framework of constraint, margin, state, disturbance, perception, regulation, and options. The resulting approach does not ask which side can finally defeat the other. It asks what forms of security, sovereignty, memory, law, economy, religion, and political order can remain answerable to life.

The paper argues that no people's wound should be denied, and no people's wound should be allowed to sanctify new life-destruction. Jewish historical trauma, Palestinian dispossession, Israeli fear, Arab humiliation, Iranian insecurity, religious injury, and great-power manipulation must all be brought into the open without flattening asymmetry, erasing responsibility, or converting suffering into permission to dominate. The life-ground test becomes the governing criterion: any policy, religious claim, security doctrine, or geopolitical strategy that destroys the conditions of life is morally, spiritually, and civilizationally incoherent.

The practical proposal is a Life-Coherent Peace Protocol for the Middle East: protect the life-ground first; name all wounds without weaponizing them; distinguish legitimate life-needs from domination strategies; transform sacred memory from grievance possession into custodial responsibility; build civil-commons peace infrastructure; use participatory truth-telling and trauma repair; and disarm the external political economy of perpetual war. Peace is not the absence of conflict. Peace is the organized protection, restoration, and expansion of life-capacity across all communities bound together in a shared field of consequence.

Keywords

Life-coherent peace; Middle East; Israel; Palestine; Gaza; Iran; sacred memory; structural violence; cultural violence; life-ground; civil commons; restorative justice; trauma-informed peacebuilding; Maturana; McMurtry; Galtung; non-forcing action; civilizational repair.

Executive Summary

The Middle East is often narrated as an impossible conflict because each side appears to hold non-negotiable claims: land, security, sacred memory, national survival, religious legitimacy, justice, sovereignty, dignity, historical redress, and protection from annihilation. Yet this apparent impossibility arises in part because the conflict is framed through victory logic, identity logic, sacred absolutism, or strategic logic. In those frames, one people's security becomes another people's dispossession; one people's sacred memory becomes another people's erasure; one state's deterrence becomes another community's permanent vulnerability; one empire's stability becomes another region's fragmentation.

A life-coherent approach changes the governing question. It does not begin by asking who owns the land, whose trauma is greater, whose sacred story is final, or whose violence can be justified. It begins by asking: **what must be protected so that all affected living beings and communities can continue to live, develop, participate, mourn, remember, repair, and bring forth viable futures?**

This shift is not sentimental. It is rigorous. Every conflict system has a life-ground: the material, relational, ecological, institutional, and cultural conditions without which life cannot continue. In the Middle East, this includes water, food, shelter, medical care, sanitation, energy, education, physical security, ecological stability, religious access, dignity, legal protection, political participation, truthful memory, and freedom from domination. Any solution that sacrifices these conditions for one group in the name of another group's security or destiny is structurally unstable because it produces new grievance, new fear, and new cycles of retaliation.

The conflict persists because wounds have repeatedly been converted into ruling narratives. Jewish historical trauma has too often been mobilized as permanent existential insecurity. Palestinian dispossession has too often been met with denial, containment, or securitized management. Arab and Muslim humiliation has too often been folded into regional power competition. Iranian insecurity has too often been interpreted only as aggression, while its own history of intervention, isolation, sanctions, and threat is excluded from the story. Western powers have repeatedly treated the region as a strategic theater rather than a living field of peoples, ecologies, memories, and futures.

Yet the framework does not collapse all parties into equivalence. Power asymmetries matter. Direct violence, occupation, siege, displacement, hostage-taking, bombardment, apartheid-like conditions, terrorism, antisemitism, Islamophobia, collective punishment, regional proxy war, and arms-driven escalation are not morally interchangeable. They must be named concretely. But naming them life-coherently means refusing two errors at once: false neutrality that hides asymmetry, and moral absolutism that converts one side's suffering into a license to destroy the life-ground of another.

The corrective is not imposed peace but condition-restoring repair. In Maturanan terms, living systems cannot be coerced into genuine coexistence; they must be perturbed in ways that open new domains of structural coupling. In Galtung's terms, direct violence cannot end unless

structural and cultural violence are also transformed. In McMurtry's terms, peace must be judged by whether it enables or disables life-capacity. In viability terms, the system must recover margins, accurate perception, non-destructive regulation, and real options.

This paper therefore proposes a Life-Coherent Peace Protocol with seven movements:

1. Protect the life-ground first.
2. Name all wounds without weaponizing them.
3. Distinguish legitimate life-needs from domination strategies.
4. Transform sacred memory into custodial responsibility.
5. Build civil-commons peace infrastructure.
6. Create participatory truth, mourning, and repair processes.
7. Disarm the political economy of perpetual war.

The end is not a utopia without disagreement. It is a region in which disagreement no longer requires life-destruction; memory no longer requires revenge; security no longer requires domination; sovereignty no longer requires exclusion; religion no longer sacralizes violence; and external powers no longer profit from permanent emergency.

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1. Preface: From the 2017 Cry to the Present Framework

In 2017, the author wrote of guided missiles and misguided men, of a world approaching the brink through weapons of mass deception, distraction, and destruction. The central intuition was already clear: war is a false solution when the upstream worldview that produces war remains untouched. To destroy symptoms while conserving the disease-generating culture is to reproduce the disease in more lethal form (Sahely, 2017).

That earlier essay spoke in prophetic and moral language. It named the contrast between a for-ever-giving and forgiving human nature and a for-ever-taking, for-taking culture of war. It called for a global truth and reconciliation process in which sorrow, injustice, and aspiration could surface from below rather than be managed from above (Sahely, 2017). It was not yet the mature language of life-coherence, structural coupling, civil commons, life-ground ethics, and viability geometry, but the seed was already there.

This paper returns to that seed under the pressure of the Middle East conflict system. The question is not whether peace is desirable. Almost everyone desires safety, dignity, and a livable future for their children. The question is how a field of fear, sacred injury, historical trauma, strategic calculation, and asymmetric power can be perturbed without intensifying the very insecurity it seeks to heal.

The answer cannot be another command from outside. It cannot be a sermon asking the traumatized to become reasonable while the conditions of their fear remain intact. It cannot be a diplomatic formula that ignores grief, land, water, law, dignity, and memory. Nor can it be a revolutionary fantasy that imagines the disappearance or humiliation of one people as the condition of another people's liberation.

The answer must be life-coherent: a way of protecting the conditions of life first, then bringing forth new relational possibilities from within the conflict field itself.

2. Method and Scope

This paper is neither a conventional peace plan nor a legal brief. It is a framework paper. Its task is to bring together ethical, biological, peace-theoretical, and civilizational distinctions that can help clarify what any viable peace process must protect, avoid, and bring forth.

The paper is guided by five methodological commitments.

First, the life-ground is prior. Human beings cannot deliberate, negotiate, forgive, worship, govern, or repair when the conditions for life are being destroyed. Civilian protection, food, water, sanitation, shelter, medical continuity, ecological viability, and child survival are therefore not downstream humanitarian concerns; they are the first test of any politics.

Second, historical memory is necessary but dangerous. Memory is necessary because denial reproduces violence. Memory is dangerous because wounded communities may convert suffering into sacred entitlement, revenge, or permanent suspicion. The task is not amnesia but metabolized memory: memory transformed into responsibility.

Third, asymmetry must be named without dehumanization. Equal human worth does not mean equal structural power. Occupation, blockade, state capacity, international backing, military asymmetry, and legal status matter. But dehumanization cannot become the corrective to asymmetry, because dehumanization is itself one of the engines of life-destruction.

Fourth, peace must be more than negative peace. A ceasefire is indispensable, but if water systems, legal rights, mobility, homes, schools, livelihoods, and dignity remain destroyed, violence has merely changed form. The aim is positive peace: the organized presence of conditions that sustain life-capacity.

Fifth, the paper is recursively corrigible. A life-coherent framework must remain answerable to those most affected, to new evidence, to legal developments, to ecological constraints, and to practical failures. It is not an ideology to impose. It is a diagnostic grammar for repair.

3. Why the Conflict Cannot Be Solved at the Level at Which It Is Usually Framed

3.1 The Failure of Victory Logic

Victory logic asks: who will prevail? In its military form, it seeks deterrence, incapacitation, territorial control, targeted killing, technological superiority, alliance advantage, or coercive bargaining power. In its ideological form, it seeks narrative triumph: one history becomes the official history, one people becomes the innocent victim, one enemy becomes the source of all disorder, one state becomes the necessary guardian of civilization, one movement becomes the voice of resistance.

But victory logic cannot resolve a conflict in which all parties are structurally coupled within a shared field of consequence. To destroy the other's viability is to generate the next form of resistance, trauma, radicalization, or regional escalation. In such a field, victory is often merely the temporary suppression of conditions that later return as violence.

The Middle East conflict system is not a chessboard. It is a living field. Families, memories, aquifers, hospitals, schools, religious sites, borders, trade routes, diasporas, refugees, hostages, prisoners, children, and ecosystems are not pieces to be moved; they are living and life-supporting realities. A strategy that secures one node by destroying the viability of another destabilizes the whole field.

3.2 The Failure of Symmetry Without Justice

Many peace appeals fail because they call for calm without naming structural asymmetry. A population under occupation, blockade, dispossession, bombardment, displacement, or legal exclusion does not experience “both sides” language as peace. It experiences it as erasure.

A life-coherent approach must therefore distinguish between equal human dignity and unequal structural position. Equal dignity means every child, every civilian, every grieving parent, every hostage, every prisoner, every displaced person, every frightened community, and every future generation has life-value. Unequal structural position means power, mobility, legal protection, military capacity, territorial control, economic access, and political recognition are not evenly distributed.

Peace cannot be built by pretending asymmetry does not exist. But neither can justice be built by transferring dehumanization from one side to another. The life-ground test requires both: no erasure of asymmetry, and no dehumanization of any people.

3.3 The Failure of Sacred Absolutism

The Middle East conflict is not merely about land. It is about sacred memory, chosen identity, covenant, martyrdom, prophecy, exile, return, humiliation, redemption, law, and historical destiny. These symbolic orders cannot be dismissed as irrational overlays on material interests (Sahely, 2025, 2026a). They organize emotioning. They tell communities what is ultimate, what must be defended, what must never be forgotten, and what cannot be compromised.

But sacred memory becomes life-incoherent when it is converted into sacred entitlement, sacred insecurity, sacred revenge, or sacred erasure. The life-coherent test of any sacred narrative is simple: does it protect and deepen the conditions of life, or does it require the destruction, humiliation, or permanent subordination of others?

A sacred claim that destroys the life-ground fails its own deepest vocation. Chosenness must become custodianship. Martyr memory must become protection of the vulnerable. Promised land must become shared responsibility for the land’s life-supporting conditions. Holy sites must become schools of reverence rather than theaters of domination. Historical trauma must become ethical discipline, not permanent permission (Sahely, 2025, 2026a).

Figure 1. From Victory Logic to Viability Logic

Two different security logics. Two different governing criteria. Two different futures.




















VICTORY LOGIC <i>Defeats Threat, Secures Control</i>	VS.	VIABILITY LOGIC <i>Protects Shared Life-Capacity</i>
 <p>Threat elimination, strategic advantage, territorial control, narrative closure, and protection of concentrated power.</p>	WHAT IS PRIORITIZED? 	<p>Life-ground protection: persons, communities, public health, ecological systems, democratic capacity, civil commons, and future generations.</p> 
 <p>Success means defeating, deterring, or dominating the perceived threat and preserving control.</p>	GOVERNING CRITERION 	<p>Success means preserving, restoring, or expanding life-capacity under conditions of difference.</p> 
 <p>Deterrence escalation, coercion, militarization, surveillance, sanctions, external strategic control, and force-backed order.</p>	MEANS OF SECURITY 	<p>Prevention, diplomacy, public goods, care systems, ecological stewardship, education, resilient infrastructure, and restorative institutions.</p> 
 <p>Trauma and sacred memory harden into entitlement, suspicion, enemy absolutization, and permission to dominate.</p>	RELATION TO MEMORY 	<p>Memory becomes responsibility, plural remembrance, custodianship, and a discipline against repeating life-destruction.</p> 
 <p>The other appears primarily as danger, obstacle, adversary, or ontological threat.</p>	LOGIC OF THE OTHER 	<p>The other reappears as legitimate in coexistence, even where accountability, restraint, and protection remain necessary.</p> 
 <p>Recurrent violence, trauma, domination, fear, ecological breakdown, inequality, and intergenerational insecurity.</p>	CONSEQUENCES 	<p>Resilient communities, peace, trust, justice, ecological integrity, shared security, and intergenerational repair.</p> 
 <p>The central distinction: Victory logic protects control and claim-capacity. Viability logic protects shared life-capacity. <i>A life-coherent security paradigm must choose the object worth defending.</i></p>		

Figure 1. From Victory Logic to Viability Logic.

The figure shows the required life-coherent shift from security as defeat, control, and narrative closure toward security as shared life-support, restored options, and legitimate coexistence.

4. The Three Foundational Lenses

4.1 McMurtry: The Life-Ground Test

The first test of any peace proposal is whether it protects the life-ground. In McMurtry’s life-value onto-axiology, the life-ground refers to the natural and social conditions without which living beings cannot exist, reproduce, or develop their capacities. These include air, water, food, shelter, health care, sanitation, education, community, ecological stability, meaningful participation, and the institutional means by which these are secured across generations (McMurtry, 1998, 2011).

In the Middle East, this means that ceasefires, borders, security arrangements, constitutional designs, and diplomatic agreements must be judged not only by whether they are politically acceptable, but by whether they restore life-capacity. A political arrangement that leaves one

population without water, medical continuity, food security, mobility, legal dignity, or hope is not peace. It is managed life-disablement.

The life-ground test also applies to external actors. Arms transfers, sanctions, proxy strategies, resource extraction, diplomatic shielding, and selective legality must be judged by their effects on life-capacity. If they intensify insecurity, destroy infrastructure, undermine food and medical systems, or incentivize escalation, they fail the life-ground test regardless of the language of security or law used to justify them.

4.2 Galtung: Direct, Structural, and Cultural Violence

The second lens is violence analysis. Galtung's distinction between direct, structural, and cultural violence remains indispensable because it prevents peace from being reduced to the mere absence of shooting (Galtung, 1969, 1990, 1996). Direct violence is visible injury: killing, bombing, torture, hostage-taking, rape, displacement, imprisonment, starvation, and terror. Structural violence is avoidable life-disablement built into institutions: blocked access to water, health care, land, mobility, legal standing, housing, education, and political participation. Cultural violence is the symbolic system that makes direct and structural violence appear normal, necessary, righteous, defensive, divine, rational, or inevitable.

The Middle East conflict system persists because all three forms reinforce each other. Direct violence produces trauma. Trauma feeds sacred and national narratives of existential threat. These narratives justify structural arrangements of control. Structural arrangements produce humiliation and desperation. Humiliation and desperation create conditions for new direct violence. Each cycle confirms the story each side already tells about the other.

Therefore, a peace process that addresses only direct violence is insufficient. A ceasefire is necessary but not enough. A hostage exchange is necessary but not enough. Reconstruction is necessary but not enough. The structural and cultural conditions that regenerate violence must also be transformed.

4.3 Maturana: Emotioning, Languaging, and Legitimate Coexistence

The third lens is the biology of love. In Maturana's biological account, human beings live in domains of emotioning and languaging; what can be heard depends on the emotional field in which it is said (Maturana & Varela, 1980, 1992). If the emotioning is fear, humiliation, rage, abandonment, or existential threat, even truthful words may be received as attack.

This is why peace cannot be imposed from outside as a rational blueprint. Living systems conserve their organization. They do not simply obey external instructions. They change through recurrent interactions that alter their structural coupling while preserving their viability. The task of peacebuilding is therefore not to force reconciliation, but to create conditions in which the other can reappear as legitimate in coexistence.

This does not mean accepting all behavior. It means distinguishing the living legitimacy of persons and peoples from the illegitimacy of actions that destroy life. The enemy must cease to be an ontological category. A person or people may be opposed, restrained, prosecuted, negotiated with, protected from, or held accountable. But they must not be converted into a category of life whose destruction is sacred, necessary, or desirable.

5. A Life-Coherent Diagnosis of the Middle East Conflict System

5.1 Wounds Converted into Weapons

A wound becomes dangerous when it is denied. It becomes more dangerous when it becomes identity. It becomes catastrophic when it is converted into sacred permission.

The Jewish wound includes exile, persecution, antisemitism, pogroms, the Holocaust, and the fear that no one will protect Jewish life unless Jews possess overwhelming capacity to protect themselves. This wound cannot be dismissed. It is civilizationally real.

The Palestinian wound includes dispossession, Nakba memory, occupation, exile, refugeehood, statelessness, blockade, settlement expansion, humiliation, and repeated exposure to overwhelming force. This wound cannot be dismissed. It is civilizationally real.

The Israeli wound includes fear of annihilation, hostage trauma, terror attacks, regional hostility, and the perception that concessions may invite destruction. This wound cannot be dismissed.

The Arab and Muslim wound includes colonial partition, Western intervention, resource capture, humiliation, Islamophobia, authoritarian manipulation, and the repeated experience of double standards in the international order. This wound cannot be dismissed.

The Iranian wound includes foreign interference, war, sanctions, encirclement, and insecurity, even as Iranian state strategies may also contribute to proxy violence, regional fear, and repression. This wound cannot be dismissed, and neither can its harmful expressions be excused.

A life-coherent process begins by allowing wounds to be heard without allowing wounds to rule. The principle is: **no wound denied, no wound enthroned.**

5.2 The Life-Ground Under Assault

When a conflict destroys hospitals, water systems, food systems, schools, housing, ecological conditions, sanitation, and psychosocial safety, it is no longer merely a political conflict. It is a life-ground emergency.

The protection of civilians is not an optional humanitarian supplement to security. It is the first test of whether security remains life-coherent. Security that destroys the conditions of life becomes a contradiction in terms. The more it succeeds tactically, the more it may fail biologically, morally, and civilizationally.

Life-ground protection must therefore be treated as prior to political settlement. Food corridors, water protection, medical continuity, shelter, sanitation, energy, child protection, trauma care, and ecological safeguards are not confidence-building measures after politics. They are the minimum field conditions without which politics becomes necropolitics: the administration of life and death under conditions of domination.

5.3 External Capture and the Political Economy of War

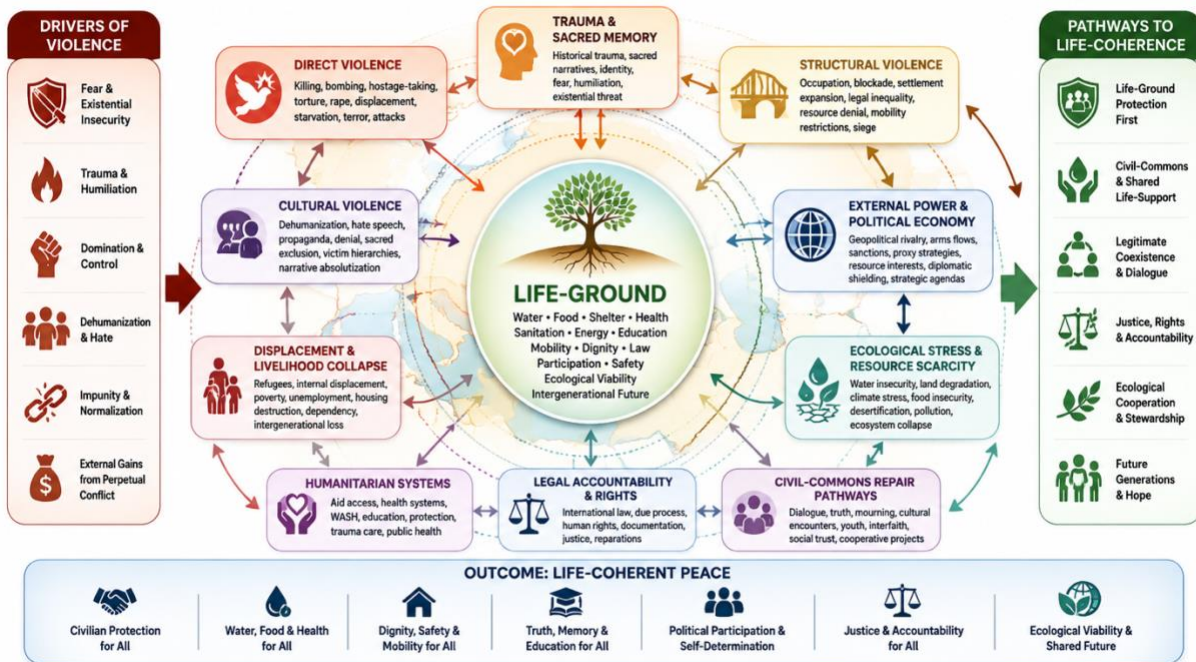
No Middle East peace framework can be adequate if it treats the region as sealed off from external power. Great powers, arms industries, intelligence networks, energy interests, ideological lobbies, religious constituencies, and geopolitical rivalries all shape the conflict field.

External actors often speak the language of peace while structuring incentives for escalation. They provide weapons, diplomatic cover, sanctions, reconstruction contracts, security doctrines, media narratives, and strategic frameworks that determine which lives are grievable, which deaths are acceptable, which violations are named, and which are normalized.

A life-coherent peace process must therefore include external accountability. Peace cannot be built while the conditions of war remain profitable, strategically useful, or symbolically necessary to outside powers.

Figure 2. The Middle East Conflict as a Life-Ground Field

How interacting forces generate violence – and how life-coherence opens pathways to repair



The Middle East conflict is a coupled life-ground field. Peace requires transforming the conditions that generate violence while building the conditions that sustain life, dignity, and legitimate coexistence.

Figure 2. The Middle East Conflict as a Life-Ground Field.

The figure presents the Middle East conflict not as a linear dispute but as a coupled life-ground field in which memory, power, ecology, law, and external capture recursively generate or reduce violence.

6. The Legal-Humanitarian Baseline

The legal-humanitarian baseline has evolved in three stages. First, the International Court of Justice’s 2024 provisional-measures orders in *South Africa v. Israel* marked the gravity of alleged risks to Palestinians in Gaza and required urgent protective measures, humanitarian access, and evidence preservation (International Court of Justice, 2024a, 2024b, 2024c). The Court’s 24 May 2024 order specifically addressed the worsening conditions in Rafah and ordered Israel to halt military actions there that could inflict destructive conditions of life on the Palestinian group in Gaza (International Court of Justice, 2024c).

Second, the ICJ’s 19 July 2024 advisory opinion concluded that Israel’s continued presence in the Occupied Palestinian Territory is unlawful and addressed legal consequences for Israel, other states, and the United Nations. For the present framework, the importance of the opinion is that occupation is not only a territorial or security arrangement; it affects the entire life-ground of a

population: land, water, movement, law, political participation, dignity, and future possibility (International Court of Justice, 2024d).

Third, the Security Council moved from ceasefire language in Resolution 2735 to a more elaborate transitional architecture in Resolution 2803. Resolution 2735 welcomed a three-phase ceasefire proposal connected to hostage release, Israeli withdrawal from Gaza's populated areas, the return of Palestinian civilians, reconstruction, and a political horizon (United Nations Security Council, 2024). Resolution 2803, adopted on 17 November 2025, endorsed a Gaza peace plan, welcomed a Board of Peace, and authorized an International Stabilization Force (United Nations Security Council, 2025).

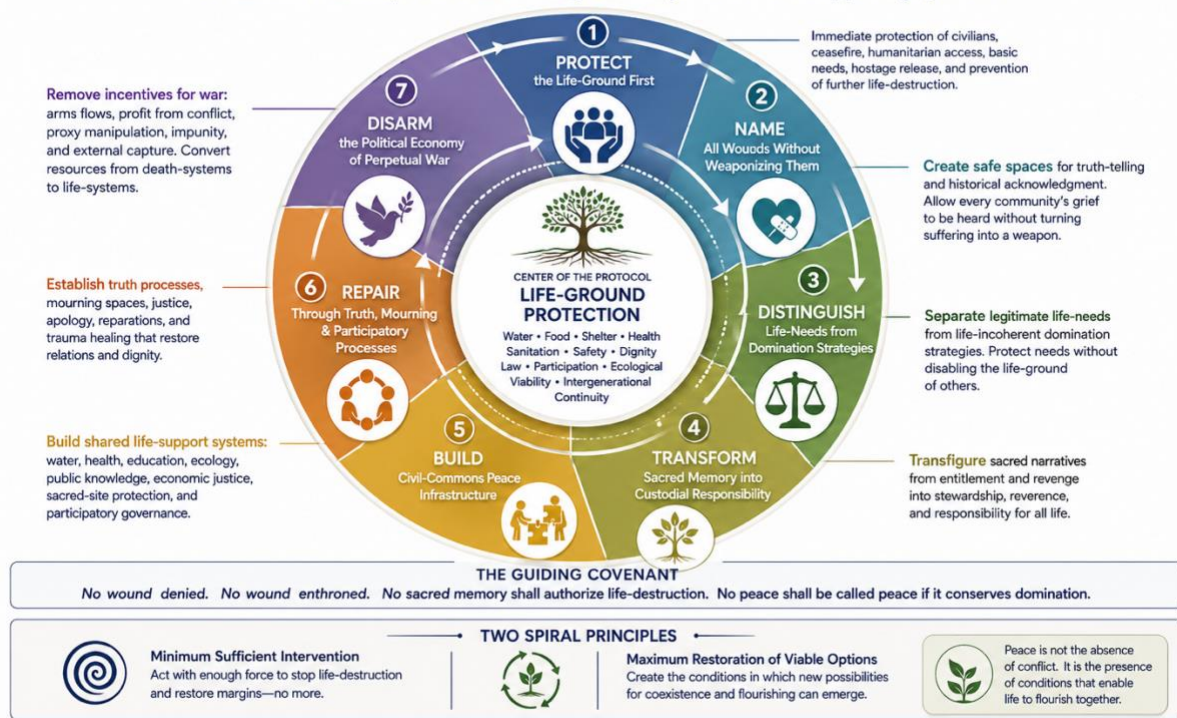
Yet legal architecture is not the same as life-ground repair. In May 2026, UN reporting described implementation of Resolution 2803 as stalled, with the International Stabilization Force not yet deployed; OCHA also reported that living conditions in Gaza remained dire, with many displaced families still sheltering in overcrowded tents or severely damaged structures, inconsistent clean water access, impaired waste management, and ongoing public-health risks (United Nations, 2026; United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, 2026).

The life-coherent test is therefore whether law, diplomacy, stabilization, and reconstruction actually restore the conditions of life: civilian protection, water, food, shelter, health care, sanitation, mobility, dignity, accountable governance, and self-determination. Peace cannot mean the silencing of violence alone. Peace must mean the restoration of the conditions in which law, dignity, participation, memory, and life can function.

7. The Life-Coherent Peace Protocol

Figure 3. The Life-Coherent Peace Protocol

A seven-movement spiral for transforming conflict systems into life-supporting systems.



The Life-Coherent Peace Protocol is a recursive, participatory process—not a one-time agreement.

Figure 3. The Life-Coherent Peace Protocol.

The Life-Coherent Peace Protocol organizes peacebuilding as a recursive repair process: protect life first, disclose wounds, separate needs from domination, transform sacred memory, build civil commons, institutionalize repair, and remove incentives for perpetual war.

7.1 Movement One: Protect the Life-Ground First

The first movement is immediate and non-negotiable: protect the minimum conditions of life. This includes ceasefire, civilian protection, medical access, water, food, shelter, sanitation, energy, hostage release, prisoner due process, humanitarian access, protection of journalists and aid workers, and prevention of famine, epidemic disease, and mass displacement.

This does not solve the conflict. It prevents the conflict from destroying the conditions under which any solution remains possible.

7.2 Movement Two: Name All Wounds Without Weaponizing Them

Truth-telling must be plural, asymmetry-aware, and disciplined. It must allow each community's grief to appear without allowing grief to become a weapon of erasure. The aim is not competitive

victimhood. The aim is to disclose the wound-field so that hidden drivers of violence become visible.

This requires testimony processes, historical commissions, trauma-informed listening, protection against denialism, and recognition of both personal grief and collective injury. The process must avoid two failures: flattening all wounds into sameness, and ranking wounds in ways that deny the humanity of those lower in the hierarchy.

Figure 4. No Wound Denied, No Wound Enthroned

Acknowledging all major injury-fields while rejecting wound-sovereignty and committing to life-coherent repair.

INJURY-FIELD (Real Wounds)	LEGITIMATE LIFE-NEED What This Wound Rightly Asks For	LIFE-INCOHERENT DISTORTION When the Wound Becomes a Weapon	REPAIR PATHWAY From Wound to Responsibility
Jewish Historical Trauma Exile, persecution, pogroms, the Holocaust, generational fear.	Security, Dignity, Never Again Safe refuge, protection from antisemitism, recognition of humanity and history.	Existential Entitlement & Perpetual Insecurity Using trauma to justify domination, occupation, or denying the rights and dignity of others.	From Survivor to Custodian Transform "Never Again" into a universal commitment to prevent dehumanization, protect the vulnerable, and ensure justice for all.
Palestinian Dispossession & Nakba Displacement, loss of land, occupation, blockade, statelessness, humiliation.	Freedom, Return, Dignity, Self-Determination End of occupation, restitution, citizenship, mobility, cultural continuity, political rights.	Victim Sovereignty & Annihilationist Politics Using suffering to deny another people's right to exist in safety or to seek revenge.	From Victimhood to Vision Pursue justice and self-determination without erasing another people. Build a future where dignity does not require the destruction of the other.
Israeli Fear & Hostage Trauma Terror attacks, rocket fire, security threats, hostage crises, regional hostility.	Physical Security, Protection, Peace Safety for civilians, end of terror, return of hostages, right to live without fear.	Security Through Domination & Collective Punishment Using fear to justify indiscriminate force, occupation, blockade, or permanent control.	From Fear to Coexistence Build security through mutual recognition, lawful agreements, proportionality, and protection of all civilians.
Arab & Muslim Humiliation Colonialism, foreign intervention, double standards, Islamophobia, authoritarian manipulation.	Dignity, Justice, Respect, Participation End to humiliation, equality before international law, real participation in shaping the region's future.	Humiliation Politics & Proxy Hostility Turning grievance into perpetual anti-Westernism, sectarianism, or support for destructive proxy wars.	From Resentment to Partnership Pursue dignity and justice through lawful, constructive engagement, regional cooperation, and good governance.
Iranian Insecurity Interference, war, sanctions, isolation, regime survival anxiety.	Sovereignty, Security, Non-Interference Respect for sovereignty, security guarantees, economic dignity.	Regional Expansion & Proxy Warfare Using insecurity to justify intervention, militia arming, or destabilizing neighboring states.	From Insecurity to Responsibility Pursue security through diplomacy, non-aggression, regional integration, and respect for the sovereignty of others.
Christian & Minority Vulnerability Persecution, sectarian violence, exclusion, loss of heritage.	Protection, Equality, Religious Freedom Safe worship, equal rights, cultural survival, full citizenship.	Identity Enclave & Vulnerability Politics Using victim status to isolate, compete, or justify alignment with oppressive powers.	From Vulnerability to Flourishing Build inclusive societies where diversity thrives and no community needs external patrons for protection.
External-Power Capture & Geopolitical Games Arms flows, strategic interests, resource competition, proxy manipulation.	Shared Prosperity, Peace, Sovereignty Fair economic relations, respect for self-determination, regional stability.	Perpetual War Economy & Control Profiting from arms, division, regime change, and chronic instability.	From Exploitation to Stewardship Convert power and resources into peace infrastructure, ecological restoration, and life-ground protection.

The life-coherent mandate: Hold every wound with truth and compassion. Reject every claim that requires the life-destruction, humiliation, or permanent subordination of another. Equal human dignity does not mean equal structural position. Justice requires both truth about power and reverence for life.

Life-affirming need Life-incoherent distortion Life-coherent repair No wound denied. No wound enthroned. All wounds transformed into responsibility.

Figure 4. No Wound Denied, No Wound Enthroned.

The figure shows how major injury-fields can be acknowledged without granting any wound the authority to justify domination, erasure, or life-destruction.

7.3 Movement Three: Distinguish Life-Needs from Domination Strategies

Security is a legitimate life-need. Domination is not. Self-determination is a legitimate life-need. Ethnic supremacy is not. Sacred belonging is a legitimate life-need. Sacred exclusion is not. Resistance to oppression is legitimate. Deliberate harm to civilians is not. Lawful accountability is legitimate. Collective punishment is not.

The protocol therefore asks of every claim: what life-need is this claim protecting, and what strategy is being used to protect it? If the strategy destroys the life-ground of others, the life-need must be protected by other means.

7.4 Movement Four: Transform Sacred Memory into Custodial Responsibility

Sacred narratives cannot be abolished. They must be transfigured. A life-coherent sacred memory asks not, “What does our wound entitle us to do?” but, “What does our wound obligate us never to repeat?”

For Jewish memory, this means the Holocaust becomes a universalizing discipline against dehumanization, not only a national security trauma. For Palestinian memory, the Nakba becomes a demand for dignity, return, recognition, and repair without requiring the destruction of Jewish life. For Muslim, Christian, and Jewish sacred geographies, the land becomes a shared trust rather than a possession that proves divine favoritism. For all traditions, the sacred is tested by whether it protects the vulnerable.

7.5 Movement Five: Build Civil-Commons Peace Infrastructure

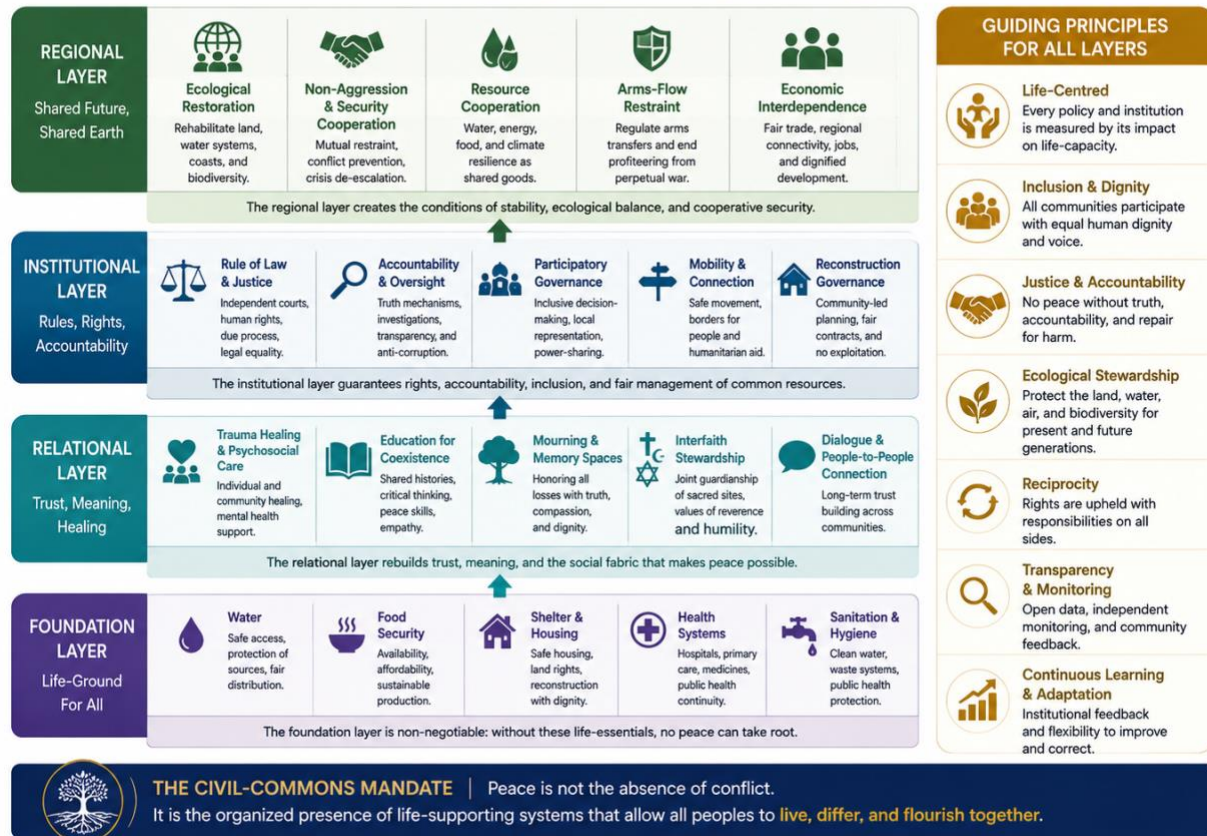
Peace must be institutionalized as shared life-support. Civil commons are the institutions and practices that secure universal access to life goods: water, health, food, education, housing, ecological restoration, public knowledge, cultural memory, legal protection, and participatory governance.

In the Middle East, civil-commons peace infrastructure could include shared water authorities, cross-border medical networks, joint trauma-healing institutes, protected educational corridors, cooperative ecological restoration, interfaith guardianship of sacred sites, shared emergency response systems, public-health surveillance, food security compacts, and youth exchange programs grounded not in propaganda but in common work for life.

These are not substitutes for political rights. They are the living tissue without which political rights remain fragile.

Figure 5. Civil-Commons Peace Infrastructure

Peace as shared life-support systems, not merely diplomatic agreements.



From life-ground protection to regional cooperation, each layer reinforces the others. Together they transform a conflict system into a shared future.

Figure 5. Civil-Commons Peace Infrastructure.

Civil-commons peace infrastructure converts peace from a diplomatic event into shared life-supporting systems that make coexistence materially and relationally possible.

7.6 Movement Six: Create Participatory Truth, Mourning, and Repair Processes

A durable peace requires ritual and institution. It needs courts, treaties, and rights, but also mourning spaces, memory practices, apology, reparations, acknowledgment, and embodied encounters where the humanity of the other can become perceptible again.

Truth and reconciliation cannot be imposed as premature forgiveness. Forgiveness without justice becomes spiritual bypass. Justice without restored relation can become endless punishment. The life-coherent aim is repair: the restoration of conditions in which life can continue with dignity after irreversible harm.

7.7 Movement Seven: Disarm the Political Economy of Perpetual War

Peace requires changing incentives. This includes arms embargoes where weapons enable civilian destruction; transparency around foreign funding and lobbying; restrictions on settlement profiteering, reconstruction profiteering, and resource capture; accountability for violations of humanitarian law; and conversion of military expenditure toward life-ground infrastructure.

External powers must be judged by the same life-ground test as local actors. A foreign policy that protects strategic advantage while disabling regional life-capacity is not peacekeeping. It is life-blind management.

8. What Wu-Wei Means Here

Wu-wei does not mean doing nothing. It means non-forcing action: acting in a way that respects the organization of the living field and enlarges its possibilities without imposing a rigid external form.

In the Middle East, a wu-wei intervention would not begin with a final-status blueprint. It would begin by restoring margins: stop the bleeding, feed the hungry, protect the vulnerable, return hostages, ensure medical continuity, prevent displacement, and secure water. It would then create safe relational spaces where truth can be spoken without immediate conversion into strategic advantage.

It would move at the pace of trust, but not at the pace of impunity. It would restrain life-destroying actions immediately while allowing deeper reconciliation to emerge only where conditions make it real. It would avoid humiliating any people, because humiliation is fuel for future violence. It would refuse vengeance, because vengeance binds the future to the wound. It would refuse false peace, because false peace conserves the wound beneath silence.

The principle is minimum sufficient intervention for maximum restoration of viable options.

9. The Life-Coherence Arbitration Test

A life-coherent peace process must be able to handle tragic collision: Israeli security and Palestinian freedom; hostage release and prisoner justice; sacred access and public order; refugee rights and demographic fear; regional deterrence and regional de-escalation; accountability and negotiated transition. Under tragic conditions, slogans fail. The arbitration test asks seven questions.

1. Who are the living unities affected?
2. What life-capacities are enabled or disabled?
3. Which needs are universal life-needs, and which are preferences, ideologies, or domination claims?
4. What harms are irreversible or intergenerational?
5. What options protect the greatest compossible range of life-capacities without sacrificing the vulnerable?
6. What minimum sufficient restraint is needed to prevent further life-destruction?
7. What feedback, participation, monitoring, and repair mechanisms will correct the decision when it fails?

This test does not eliminate moral anguish. It disciplines it. It prevents one legitimate need from swallowing all others.

10. Policy Implications

10.1 Immediate Priorities

A life-coherent Middle East framework would prioritize:

- permanent protection of civilians;
- ceasefire and de-escalation mechanisms;
- release of hostages and due-process treatment of prisoners;
- restoration of water, food, sanitation, shelter, and medical systems;
- independent humanitarian access;
- protection of hospitals, schools, journalists, and aid workers;
- prevention of forced displacement;
- trauma care for all affected populations;
- monitoring of hate speech, dehumanization, and incitement;
- external restraint on arms flows that intensify civilian harm.

10.2 Medium-Term Priorities

Medium-term repair requires:

- participatory truth and historical recognition processes;
- legal accountability for violations by all parties;
- settlement of political status, rights, mobility, and sovereignty questions;
- reconstruction governed by affected communities rather than external profiteers;
- shared water, health, and ecological institutions;
- interfaith and intercultural protection of sacred sites;
- education reform that teaches historical truth without enemy absolutization;

- economic arrangements that restore life-capacity rather than dependency;
- regional non-aggression and security guarantees.

10.3 Long-Term Priorities

Long-term peace requires transformation of the regional and global order:

- demilitarization of political imagination;
 - regional ecological cooperation;
 - conversion from arms-centered security to life-ground security;
 - recognition of plural sacred belonging;
 - institutionalized protection of minority rights;
 - intergenerational trusteeship;
 - civil commons across borders;
 - reduced great-power proxy competition;
 - a shift from sovereignty as domination to sovereignty as responsibility for life.
-

11. Conclusion: No Wound Denied, No Wound Enthroned

The Middle East conflict will not be solved by asking the wounded to forget, the fearful to relax, the dispossessed to be patient, the powerful to be benevolent, or the religious to become secular. It will not be solved by another military victory, another imposed partition, another symbolic declaration, or another humanitarian pause that leaves the engines of life-disablement intact.

It can only begin to transform when the governing question changes.

Not: whose claim is final?

Not: whose wound is greatest?

Not: whose God authorizes victory?

Not: whose security permits another people's permanent insecurity?

But: what must be protected, restored, and brought forth so that all affected peoples can live without destroying the life-ground of one another?

This is not weakness. It is the only realism adequate to living systems. In a structurally coupled region, life-destruction returns. Humiliation returns. Denial returns. Trauma returns. Ecological breakdown returns. Children inherit what adults refuse to repair.

A life-coherent peace therefore begins with a covenant more basic than any state, nation, party, empire, or doctrine:

No people's wound shall be denied.

No people's wound shall be enthroned.

No sacred memory shall authorize life-destruction.

No security shall be called security if it destroys the conditions of life.

No peace shall be called peace if it conserves domination.

No future shall be built by sacrificing the children of another.

The task is not to escape history. The task is to metabolize history into responsibility.

Only then can the Middle East become not a graveyard of sacred claims, but a birthplace of shared custodianship: land not as possession alone, but as life-ground; memory not as weapon, but as discipline; religion not as supremacy, but as reverence; sovereignty not as exclusion, but as responsibility; security not as domination, but as the protection of life's continuing possibility.

Appendix A

Historical and Legal Timeline: A Life-Ground Reading of the Middle East Conflict System

This timeline is not intended to replace specialist historical scholarship. Its purpose is to identify key moments where competing claims to land, security, sovereignty, sacred memory, and international law became embedded in the present conflict field. A life-coherent timeline does not ask which memory wins. It asks how each historical turning point altered the life-ground of affected peoples.

1917 — The Balfour Declaration

The modern Palestine question is commonly traced to British imperial commitments during and after the First World War. The Balfour Declaration expressed British support for “a national home for the Jewish people” in Palestine while also referring to the civil and religious rights of non-Jewish communities. In life-ground terms, this inaugurated a contradiction that was never adequately resolved: one people’s historical refuge was advanced through an imperial framework that did not secure the political self-determination of the existing Arab population (United Nations, n.d.).

1922–1947 — British Mandate Palestine

The British Mandate institutionalized competing obligations: support for a Jewish national home and protection of the rights of the non-Jewish communities in Palestine. Rather than generating a shared constitutional life-ground, the Mandate period deepened mutually exclusive national projects under imperial administration (United Nations, n.d.).

1947 — UN Partition Plan

In 1947, the United Nations proposed terminating the Mandate and partitioning Palestine into two independent states, one Arab and one Jewish, with a special international regime for Jerusalem. The plan was accepted by Jewish leadership and rejected by Arab leadership and neighbouring Arab states. It was not implemented peacefully; violence followed, and the question of legitimate self-determination remained unresolved (United Nations, n.d.).

1948 — Creation of Israel, War, and Palestinian Displacement

The State of Israel was declared in May 1948, followed by regional war and large-scale Palestinian displacement. For Jewish communities, 1948 became the realization of national refuge after centuries of persecution and the Holocaust. For Palestinians, 1948 became the Nakba: dispossession, exile, loss of home, and rupture of social continuity. A life-coherent

reading must hold both meanings without allowing either to erase the other (United Nations, n.d.; Reuters, 2026).

1967 — Occupation of the West Bank, East Jerusalem, and Gaza

Following the 1967 war, Israel gained control of the West Bank, East Jerusalem, and Gaza. This became the central structural condition of the modern Israeli-Palestinian conflict: land, mobility, settlements, security control, legal inequality, borders, and sovereignty all became bound together in a prolonged occupation regime (International Court of Justice, 2024d; Reuters, 2026).

1979 — Egypt-Israel Peace Treaty

The Egypt-Israel peace treaty showed that interstate peace was possible, but it did not resolve the Palestinian question. In life-ground terms, this illustrates the difference between state-level diplomatic stabilization and people-level justice, self-determination, and civil-commons repair (United Nations, n.d.).

1993 — Oslo Accords

The Oslo Accords opened a pathway of mutual recognition and limited Palestinian self-governance, but they left core issues unresolved: borders, settlements, Jerusalem, refugees, sovereignty, and security. The failure to resolve these life-ground questions allowed the peace process to become structurally fragile (Reuters, 2026).

2006 onward — Gaza, Hamas, Blockade, and Repeated Wars

After Hamas's rise in Gaza, the territory became subject to recurrent war, blockade, internal Palestinian division, Israeli security control, and humanitarian deterioration. Gaza increasingly became not only a political-security problem but a life-ground emergency: water, health, mobility, housing, electricity, sanitation, education, and psychological safety were progressively disabled (United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, 2026).

7 October 2023 onward — Hamas Attack, Hostages, Gaza War, and Regional Escalation

The Hamas-led attack of 7 October 2023, including killings and hostage-taking, intensified Israeli existential fear and triggered a devastating war in Gaza. The war produced mass civilian harm, displacement, humanitarian collapse, and widening regional instability. A life-coherent reading condemns deliberate attacks on civilians and hostage-taking while also refusing collective punishment, starvation, forced displacement, or destruction of civilian life-support systems (Reuters, 2026; United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, 2026).

2024 — ICJ Provisional Measures in *South Africa v. Israel*

In 2024, the International Court of Justice issued provisional-measures orders in the genocide case brought by South Africa against Israel. These orders did not decide the merits of the case, but they marked the gravity of alleged risks and required protective measures, humanitarian access, and evidence preservation (International Court of Justice, 2024a, 2024b, 2024c).

19 July 2024 — ICJ Advisory Opinion on the Occupied Palestinian Territory

The ICJ's advisory opinion concluded that Israel's continued presence in the Occupied Palestinian Territory was unlawful and addressed legal consequences for Israel, other states, and the United Nations. For the present framework, the opinion matters because occupation is not only a territorial or security arrangement; it affects the entire life-ground of a population: land, water, movement, law, political participation, dignity, and future possibility (International Court of Justice, 2024d).

10 June 2024 — UNSC Resolution 2735

UN Security Council Resolution 2735 welcomed a three-phase ceasefire proposal connected to hostage release, a permanent ceasefire, Israeli withdrawal from Gaza's populated areas, reconstruction, and a political horizon toward a two-state solution. In life-coherent terms, the resolution named several indispensable elements: cessation of direct violence, return of captives, withdrawal, reconstruction, and political self-determination (United Nations Security Council, 2024).

17 November 2025 — UNSC Resolution 2803

Resolution 2803 endorsed a later Gaza peace plan, welcomed a Board of Peace, and authorized an International Stabilization Force. It represented a shift from ceasefire proposal toward transitional governance and stabilization architecture. Yet because this architecture is contested, it must be evaluated by life-ground criteria: participation, self-determination, civilian protection, reconstruction governance, force constraints, legal accountability, and the prevention of external capture (United Nations Security Council, 2025).

May 2026 — Stalled Implementation and Continuing Humanitarian Emergency

UN reporting in May 2026 described implementation of Resolution 2803 as stalled, with the International Stabilization Force not yet deployed, while OCHA reported continuing dire living conditions in Gaza, including displacement, damaged shelter, inconsistent clean water, impaired waste management, and public-health risks (United Nations, 2026; United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, 2026).

Life-ground conclusion: the historical pattern is not only one of competing narratives. It is a repeated failure to secure a shared life-ground under conditions of trauma, asymmetry, sacred claim, external power, and structural violence.

Appendix B

Glossary of Core Terms

Life-Ground

The life-ground is the full set of natural, social, institutional, and relational conditions required for life to exist, reproduce, develop, and flourish (McMurtry, 1998, 2011). In this paper, it includes water, food, air, shelter, health care, sanitation, ecological viability, education, mobility, law, dignity, participation, safety, memory, and intergenerational continuity.

Life-Value

Life-value refers to whatever enables life-capacity: the ability of living beings and communities to survive, develop, participate, relate, heal, create, and flourish. A policy, institution, or practice has life-value insofar as it protects or expands life-capacity.

Life-Blindness

Life-blindness is the failure of a worldview, institution, economy, security doctrine, or sacred narrative to register the life-destructive consequences of its own operations. A life-blind peace process may stop visible fighting while preserving domination, humiliation, hunger, displacement, or ecological collapse.

Direct Violence

Direct violence is visible injury: killing, bombing, torture, rape, hostage-taking, forced displacement, starvation, and physical attack. It is the most visible form of violence but not the only one.

Structural Violence

Structural violence is avoidable life-disablement built into social, legal, economic, political, or infrastructural arrangements. Examples include blocked access to water, food, medical care, land, mobility, citizenship, legal protection, or political participation.

Cultural Violence

Cultural violence is the symbolic and narrative system that makes direct or structural violence appear normal, necessary, sacred, righteous, defensive, rational, or inevitable (Galtung, 1969, 1990).

Positive Peace

Positive peace is not merely the absence of war. It is the presence of just and life-supporting conditions: safety, dignity, rights, health, education, participation, ecological stability, and social trust.

Sacred Memory

Sacred memory is collective memory organized around ultimate meaning: covenant, exile, martyrdom, chosenness, prophecy, holy land, ancestral trauma, divine promise, or redemptive suffering. Sacred memory becomes life-coherent when it deepens responsibility for life. It becomes life-incoherent when it authorizes domination or erasure.

Wound-Sovereignty

Wound-sovereignty is the condition in which a community's suffering becomes an unquestionable authority that overrides the life-claims of others. The paper's corrective is: **no wound denied, no wound enthroned.**

Legitimate Life-Need

A legitimate life-need is a requirement without which persons or communities cannot live with dignity and developmental possibility. Security, food, water, shelter, health care, self-determination, mourning, cultural continuity, and legal protection are legitimate life-needs.

Domination Strategy

A domination strategy is a method of pursuing a legitimate or illegitimate claim by disabling the life-ground of others. Examples include collective punishment, ethnic supremacy, indefinite occupation, annihilationist rhetoric, terrorism, forced displacement, siege, and systematic humiliation.

Civil Commons

The civil commons refers to shared institutions and practices that secure universal access to life goods. In this paper, civil-commons peace infrastructure includes water, health, food, education, ecological restoration, trauma healing, legal accountability, sacred-site protection, public knowledge, and participatory governance.

Structural Coupling

Structural coupling refers to recurrent interaction through which living systems and their environments co-shape one another over time. In peacebuilding, this means that peoples in

conflict are not separate objects but co-determining participants in a shared field of consequence (Maturana & Varela, 1980, 1992).

Emotioning

Emotioning refers to the affective field that determines what kinds of actions, perceptions, and conversations are possible. In a field of fear, humiliation, rage, or existential threat, even reasonable proposals may be heard as danger.

Languaging

Languaging is not merely communication. It is the relational process through which worlds of meaning, identity, memory, and possibility are brought forth. Peace requires new languaging because old words may carry old wounds (Maturana & Varela, 1980, 1992).

Wu-Wei / Non-Forcing Action

Wu-wei means action that does not impose a rigid external form on a living field. It acts by restoring conditions, reducing distortion, opening options, and allowing new relational possibilities to emerge. In this paper, wu-wei means minimum sufficient intervention for maximum restoration of viable options.

Life-Coherence Arbitration

Life-coherence arbitration is a decision discipline for tragic conflicts (Sahely, 2026c). It asks: who is affected, what life-capacities are enabled or disabled, which needs are universal, which harms are irreversible, what options are compossible, what minimum restraint is required, and what feedback mechanisms can correct failure?

Appendix C

Life-Coherence Arbitration Worksheet

This worksheet translates the framework into a practical decision tool for policymakers, mediators, religious leaders, humanitarian actors, educators, and civil-society groups (Sahely, 2026c).

Step 1. Identify the Affected Living Unities

Who is directly or indirectly affected?

- Civilians
- Children
- Hostages
- Prisoners
- Refugees
- Displaced families
- Religious communities
- Medical workers
- Aid workers
- Future generations
- Ecosystems
- Neighbouring states
- Diaspora communities

Step 2. Identify the Life-Capacities at Stake

Which life-capacities are being protected or disabled?

- Survival
- Food
- Water
- Shelter
- Health care
- Sanitation
- Mobility
- Safety
- Mourning
- Education
- Cultural continuity
- Religious access
- Political participation
- Legal protection
- Ecological viability

- Intergenerational future

Step 3. Distinguish Life-Needs from Domination Claims

Ask of every claim:

What legitimate life-need is being expressed here?

Then ask:

Is the proposed strategy protecting that need by disabling the life-ground of others?

Examples:

- Security is a life-need; collective punishment is a domination strategy.
- Self-determination is a life-need; annihilationist politics is a domination strategy.
- Sacred belonging is a life-need; sacred exclusion is a domination strategy.
- Accountability is a life-need; revenge is a domination strategy.
- Resistance to oppression may be legitimate; deliberate harm to civilians is not.

Step 4. Identify Irreversible Harms

Which harms cannot be easily repaired?

- Death
- Amputation
- Childhood trauma
- Famine
- Epidemic disease
- Destruction of hospitals
- Destruction of schools
- Forced displacement
- Ecological collapse
- Erasure of cultural memory
- Intergenerational hatred
- Collapse of legal trust

Step 5. Search for Compossible Options

A compossible option protects the widest possible range of legitimate life-needs without sacrificing the vulnerable.

Ask:

What option allows Israeli civilians to be safe, Palestinian civilians to be free and protected, hostages to return, prisoners to receive due process, humanitarian systems to function, sacred sites to be protected, and political self-determination to remain possible?

The answer may not be perfect. But it must enlarge life-options rather than narrow them (Sahely, 2026c).

Step 6. Apply Minimum Sufficient Restraint

Where coercion is unavoidable, ask:

What is the minimum sufficient restraint needed to prevent further life-destruction?

This rules out revenge, humiliation, starvation, forced displacement, indiscriminate attack, collective punishment, and open-ended domination.

Step 7. Build Feedback and Repair

No peace architecture should be trusted without correction mechanisms.

Require:

- independent monitoring;
- transparent humanitarian access;
- civilian complaint channels;
- legal review;
- trauma-informed community feedback;
- reconstruction audits;
- ecological monitoring;
- periodic revision;
- participation by affected communities.

Final Arbitration Question

Does this decision preserve, restore, or expand the life-capacity of all affected peoples without sacrificing the life-ground of the vulnerable?

If not, it is not life-coherent (Sahely, 2026c).

Note on Current Sources

Because the legal, humanitarian, and diplomatic context of Gaza and the wider Middle East is changing rapidly, all current-status claims should be rechecked immediately before publication. Primary sources should be preferred for legal and institutional claims, especially the International Court of Justice, United Nations Security Council, OCHA, and UN agencies. Reputable news reporting may be used for implementation status and political reactions, but should not replace primary legal sources.

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Author Bio

Dr Bichara Sahely, BSc (Biology), MBBS, DM (Internal Medicine)

Dr Bichara Sahely is a physician, independent scholar, and systems thinker from St. Kitts and Nevis. He holds a BSc in Biology from Dalhousie University, Canada, and MBBS and DM degrees in Internal Medicine from the University of the West Indies, Mona. His professional background includes more than two decades of clinical practice in internal medicine.

His broader intellectual work explores the conditions of life, health, peace, and civilizational repair through an integrative framework that brings together life-value onto-axiology, autopoiesis, structural and cultural violence, civil commons, systems thinking, and relational approaches to human and planetary flourishing. He has written extensively on life-coherence, life-ground ethics, the biology of love, structural violence, regenerative governance, health promotion, and the need to reorient institutions toward the protection and expansion of life-capacity.

His ongoing work seeks to articulate a practical grammar for living systems: one that can help diagnose life-blind patterns of thought and organization, recover the conditions of legitimate coexistence, and support the transition from domination-centered systems to life-coherent forms of healing, governance, peace, and shared flourishing.

AI Research and Editorial Collaborator Note

ChatGPT-5.5 Thinking

ChatGPT-5.5 Thinking is an AI reasoning model developed by OpenAI. In this project, it served as a research, editorial, structural, and visual-conceptual assistant to Dr Bichara Sahely. Its contributions included helping to synthesize prior writings, organize the manuscript architecture, draft and refine sections, identify citation placements, prepare APA-style reference guidance, propose figure placements, and generate visual prompts and conceptual diagrams.

The AI system did not serve as an independent author, field researcher, legal authority, or historical witness. Its role was collaborative and assistive. The final framing, ethical orientation, interpretive responsibility, and decision to publish remain with Dr Bichara Sahely.

Back Cover Synopsis

The Middle East conflict is often treated as an impossible struggle of land, security, sacred memory, sovereignty, and survival. This white paper argues that the conflict cannot be solved at the level of victory logic, punitive security, moral denunciation, or sacred entitlement. It must be reframed as a breakdown in the life-ground: the natural, social, institutional, and relational conditions that allow all affected peoples to live, grieve, remember, repair, participate, and flourish without destroying the conditions of life for others.

Drawing on John McMurtry's life-value onto-axiology, Johan Galtung's analysis of direct, structural, and cultural violence, Humberto Maturana's biology of love and legitimate coexistence, and Dr Bichara Sahely's life-coherence framework, the paper proposes a practical ethical shift: from security as domination to security as shared life-support.

Its central discipline is simple but demanding: **no wound denied, no wound enthroned**. Jewish historical trauma, Palestinian dispossession, Israeli fear, Arab and Muslim humiliation, Iranian insecurity, Christian and minority vulnerability, and great-power manipulation must all be acknowledged. Yet no wound may be used to sanctify new life-destruction.

The paper offers a seven-movement Life-Coherent Peace Protocol: protect the life-ground first; name all wounds without weaponizing them; distinguish life-needs from domination strategies; transform sacred memory into custodial responsibility; build civil-commons peace infrastructure; create participatory truth, mourning, and repair processes; and disarm the political economy of perpetual war.

Peace, in this framework, is not the silence after violence. It is the organized presence of life-supporting conditions through which dignity, memory, justice, and coexistence can become possible again.