



## IFLA PRINCIPLES FOR RESPONDING TO CONFLICT

These principles aim to set out a basis for determining how IFLA should react to situations of civil or military conflict, in any part of the world, which impact on libraries. It is intended to complement, and not replace, the existing [Principles of Engagement](#) around disasters (both natural and human-made).

1. IFLA condemns conflict as contrary to the values and work of libraries. Conflict not only makes it harder or impossible for libraries to fulfil their missions, but runs counter to IFLA's own values, which all presuppose peaceful societies
2. We do not pass judgement on the reasons for entering into conflict, but rather underline that violent aggression is not legitimate as a means of achieving goals. It goes against the principles of the UN charter and in particular of UNESCO.
3. In times of conflict, we stress that our primary concern is harm to life. However, we should also emphasise the irreparable harm caused by damage to cultural property, including institutions and collections. There is no situation where the destruction of a library, by the illicit removal and/or intentional destruction of its collections, or harm to those who work in libraries, is acceptable.
4. As a rule, we do not hold individuals responsible for the positions of their government. It is contrary to the international nature and vocation of IFLA to discriminate against someone on the basis of their nationality, and we consider those engaging in our work to do so in a personal, not a national, capacity. Rather, we believe that cooperation between librarians can contribute to wider peacebuilding.
5. At the same time, we also expect IFLA's members (i.e. institutions and associations) and affiliates to make all reasonable efforts to abide by IFLA's values. Where there is clear evidence that members or affiliates themselves have knowingly and by choice failed to follow these values, we will consider options for suspension or removal from membership. Similarly, volunteers whose actions run counter to these values in a similar way may face consequences in line with IFLA's broader disciplinary procedures.
6. When determining whether IFLA makes a statement about a conflict in any specific country or region, we consider the scale of the conflict, as well as the potential benefits or harms to librarians from any decision. We do not discriminate in our approach by geography. Unfortunately, conflict remains a regular feature of human life, and it is not possible to react to every incident. We act in a timely fashion, after consideration of available evidence from trustworthy sources.
7. Within the limits of our resources, we will provide support to libraries and library and information workers affected by conflict, in line with the IFLA Principles of Engagement. We invite members to share validated evidence with us about impacts of conflict on libraries, their staff, and their collections, in order that we can both bring together



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resources from our networks, and engage international institutions such as UNESCO in providing relief to libraries.

*Endorsed by the IFLA Governing Board at its meeting on 27 February 2023.*