



# United Nations

## International Day of Non-Violence 2 October

### What is Non-Violence?

The principle of non-violence - also known as non-violent resistance - rejects the use of physical violence in order to achieve social or political change. Non-violence is subtly different to pacifism (the global, ethical commitment or stance that opposes violence), in that it is proactive and dynamic; a way of acting in the world to achieve peaceful outcomes. Often described as "the politics of ordinary people", this form of social struggle leverages the principle that leaders and governments rely on the consent of the population to exercise their power. Withdrawal of public consent and cooperation undermines this power and can be a persuasive force for change, circumventing the harm that inevitably accompanies violence.

### Why This Date?



The International Day of Non-Violence is observed on 2 October, the birthday of Mahatma Gandhi, leader of the Indian independence movement and pioneer of the philosophy and strategy of non-violence. Perhaps the most globally recognised proponent of non-violence, his philosophy, distilled in the aphorism "just means lead to just ends", points to the irrationality of using violence to achieve a peaceful society.

### The Current Imperative

We are living through a growing global drift towards autocracy. Democracies are backsliding while authoritarian regimes embolden one another and push anti-democratic agendas forward. Economic inequality, migration anxieties, and public mistrust of authority are fuelling populist and nationalist politics worldwide and raising the stakes for civic freedoms. Many states are imposing sweeping restrictions, curtailing opposition parties, silencing dissent, and curbing civil liberties.

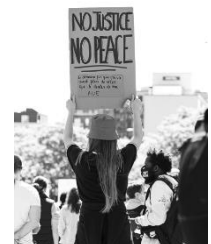
At the same time, we are witnessing governments doubling down on lethal force as international norms crumble. From brutal crackdowns on protesters - with live ammunition and the killings of students and journalists - to mass detentions, torture, and deportations, the machinery of repression is in overdrive and the Rule of Law seemingly unravelling.

As the unregulated drive to create general artificial intelligence speeds us toward an uncertain future and injustice and inequality rise, the call to action can no longer be ignored. Those with privilege and influence must stand in solidarity with those most affected to insist on transparent decision-making that upholds our shared human rights and dignity, and the best way to do this is through non-violent resistance.

### Successful Non-Violent Resistance

In her 2020 paper *The Future of Nonviolent Resistance*\*, Erica Chenoweth broadly outlines seven conditions for successful non-violent action:

- ✓ Shared, widespread grievances & inclusive identity
- ✓ Broad and large-scale participation
- ✓ Strong organizational capacity & leadership
- ✓ Political vulnerabilities & defections
- ✓ Effective communication & information flows
- ✓ Tactical innovation & discipline
- ✓ Ideally, international attention & solidarity



It is immediately apparent on reviewing this list that there are a number of countervailing forces at play in modern society working against this form of action e.g. lack of social cohesion and online polemics, distraction, apathy and a growing sense of inevitability and fatalism. At the same time technology affords us the opportunity to be more involved than ever.

## Intentionality as a Cornerstone of Non-Violence

In today's world we are, of necessity, required to spend so much of our life online. Technology allows us to be highly connected; interpersonally, locally, nationally and globally. The algorithms that shape what we see online don't just reflect our interests, they actively steer them. Left unchecked, they feed us distraction, outrage, and division. But when intentionally reshaped by our own choices, by platform accountability, or through community-driven alternatives, algorithms can help elevate what really matters. Through reliable news, grassroots voices, and stories of resilience we can be inspired. This is where non-violent action begins in daily life, by intentionally curating our feeds to privilege truth over noise, choosing to share content that empowers rather than inflames, and creating digital spaces where dignity and justice remain visible. Small, intentional acts of focus online ripple outward, strengthening our capacity for collective, peaceful resistance in the real world. Every act of mindful engagement pushes back against distraction and builds the clarity needed for sustained collective action.

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## Community as Strength

Whilst personal discipline, intention, focus and education are foundational, effective non-violent resistance is a collaborative undertaking. Our lived realities are shaped by those with whom we associate. More than ever, engagement with positive, values-driven communities - where discourse inspires action – is critical to the health of our society. HOPE Australia Inc. is one such community. Non-violence is central to our values: it is about protecting the Earth without exploitation, addressing conflict without harm, and advancing justice without leaving anyone behind. By embracing non-violent action in our households, local communities, and wider advocacy, we align our daily choices with a global movement for a fairer and more sustainable world. This observance is an invitation for us to redouble our efforts to be a peaceful force for good in this great country, and hence in the world.



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\* Chenoweth, E. (2020). [\*The Future of Nonviolent Resistance\*](#). *Journal of Democracy*, 31(3), 69–84.

*(Written by Perry Bowe, HOPE researcher Qld)*