



Blog post series “Justice and Peace”

In collaboration with Saferworld's security and justice adviser Will Bennett, the Platform introduces a new series of blogs exploring ways to include a much broader array of actors in the process of building peace and justice.

Background

If it's possible to end a conflict, but it means offering aggressors positions in the resulting political settlement and impunity for crimes they have committed, is the compromise acceptable? Or should full accountability and criminal procedures for aggressors be non-negotiable - even if it means that violence and killing is prolonged? What is the right thing to do? What does justice really mean to people and how can we take steps to provide it?

Questions such as these, where answers are typically either consequentialist or categorical, are at the core of a perceived tension between peace and justice: the result of which, sadly, is often the realization of neither.

This should not be the case. [As Louise Arbour has pointed out](#), in many ways peace and justice are in fact interdependent, with the challenge really being how to reconcile the inevitable tensions between them in a “workable fashion”. This is obviously much easier said than done. Even [Goal 16 of the new Sustainable Development Goals](#) ambitiously seeks to ‘*Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels*’, but is a little less sure on the how. Why has this proved to be so elusive?

Perhaps it has something to do with how ‘justice’ is defined. Too often it is understood very narrowly within the confines of criminal justice. As a result, interventions tend to focus their efforts on improving the capacity and procedural processes in rule of law institutions in attempts to improve people’s overall ‘access’ to it. This doesn’t quite cut it. Justice is not something that is merely *dispensed* through the criminal justice system, but *experienced* either positively or negatively through the quality of opportunities, relationships, transactions and behaviors between different sections of a society - each of which have a significant bearing on peace and development.

We need to acknowledge and act upon these experiences more. Legalistic approaches are important but cannot satisfy people’s complex peace and justice needs alone. In response, [Saferworld](#), in partnership with the Platform, is launching a discussion series of blogs to explore ways to include a much broader array of actors in the process of building peace and justice. How can we maximize the potential that the rule of law has to offer? How can fairer environmental, social, economic, or housing policies address injustices and contribute to peace and development? How can architecture and the use of space promote or reduce violent behaviors? How do gender roles reinforce injustices that contribute to violence? And why is injustice such a powerful motivator of violent behaviors?

It will be an interesting experiment in putting justice at the center of policies across multiple, interconnected fields. Please do join the discussions and comment and share widely.