HOW CAN THE UNIVERSITY RESPOND TO INTERNATIONAL CONFLICT?

A report on the outcomes and recommendations from the University Assembly held on Friday 14 February 2025

(Paul Gready, Claire Hajaj, Rebekah Widdowfield, Jo-Anne Murray)

Credit: Brian Stewart, University of Aberdeen

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

(i) This report outlines the key themes which emerged from the University Assembly convened to consider the question ***"How Can the University Respond to International Conflict?"*** on Friday 14 February 2025.

Assembly Model & Design

(ii) The establishment of the Assembly is a **groundbreaking and unique** way for a University to address a challenging topic and seek to resolve student/staff protest and has attracted attention from universities and researchers in the UK and overseas.

(iii) The event featured a mix of **expert presentations and independently facilitated discussion sessions** (in small groups and as a whole Assembly), providing opportunities to share relevant concerns, issues and recommend potential solutions. The Assembly is **not a decision-making body,** nor is it part of the University's governance structure. However, in establishing the event following discussions in Senate around conflict issues and the encampment on Elphinstone Lawn in Summer 2024, an institutional **commitment was made to listening to its outcomes and considering its priorities** – particularly in view of the importance of the question posed and the representative nature of engagement.

(iv) The Assembly was designed to consider **international conflict in its broadest sense** and not to focus on any one particular current or historic conflict. The broad nature of the topic was highlighted in pre-event publicity (website, promotional videos and email communications). However, it became apparent during the event that several delegates were of the clear view that they had expected (and would have preferred) the Assembly to have **focused solely on the Israel/Palestine conflict**, and that some organised political groupings external to the University had promoted the event in this way.

Israel/Palestine Conflict

(v) The Israel/Palestine **conflict** was a recurring theme throughout the group discussions and plenary session. The resulting **frustration around the mismatch in expectations around the topic of the Assembly** manifested itself in heated exchanges during the plenary session and requests for the **opportunity to discuss specific conflicts (particularly Israel/Palestine) in a separate forum** were received.

University Response to International Conflict

(vi) **Consistency** was a further recurring theme in discussions around previous University responses to conflicts. In looking to the future, it was suggested that a **framework and/or set of guiding principles** be established to underpin a **consultative structure and process** (including staff and student representatives) within which dialogue could place and decisions taken on (i) which conflicts the University will respond to, and (ii) the form of support that could be offered.

(vii) It was suggested that the **co-creation/drafting of institutional communication messages** could also take place within this forum.

(viii) It was suggested that the ethos and principles underpinning this framework for supporting decision-making could be based around **'Three A's':**

- **A**llyship;
- **A**dvocacy; and
- **A**ctivism.

(ix) The Assembly identified various sources of **practical and educational support** which could be provided to those affected by international conflict.

(x) The Assembly also considered University **procurement and investment policies and decisions,** alongside its **existing academic and business partnership arrangements**. It was

suggested that these activities represented 'levers' which could be used to **influence and lobby for change**. **Sector-wide discussions on divestment and national initiatives such as Demilitarise Education** were also noted.

(xi) The **University's leadership role** in the local community and its influence within the wider sector was highlighted as an opportunity to provide support to those affected by international conflict. The Assembly also highlighted the importance of **senior leaders** within the University ensuring that institutional commitments to providing support in conflict situations are delivered.

(xii) The active partnership involvement of Trades Union and Students' Association representatives working alongside University leaders as part of a **participatory structure** was identified as being key to the successful operationalisation of key themes arising from the Assembly.

Reflections & Next Steps

(xiii) There was **considerable support for the establishment of the Assembly** from delegates, although there was a clear **mismatch of expectations** amongst some in relation to its scope. Some delegates also expressed concerns about the **language used** in the feedback session. It was clear that participating in the Assembly was an **emotional experience**, for delegates and those supporting the event. Ahead of future similar events taking place, consideration of additional **pre-event communication and senior level University/Students' Association engagement with relevant representative groups** to clarify expectations – around both the aims of the event and expected norms of behaviours within it - could be beneficial.

(xiv) The following **'next steps'** are recommended:

- The Report is **published** in line with the Communication Plan;
- **Senior University and Students' Association representatives undertake an initial consideration** of the issues raised within the Report – with a view to identifying (i) existing structures within which the key themes arising from the Assembly could be considered, (ii) individuals, groups and/or committees which could be invited to assume responsibility for taking specific actions forward, and (iii) where resource allocation issues would need to be addressed;
- Upon the conclusion of this initial analysis process, a detailed **Implementation Plan** is developed and presented to the Senior Management Team for consideration and approval by May 2025; and
- A clear **communication strategy** should be implemented to demonstrate transparency in how the key themes raised have been considered and/or addressed.

(xv) It is recommended that a review of the progress made be undertaken in **February 2026** (12 months following the Assembly).

BACKGROUND

Context

1. Establishing the University Assembly is a **groundbreaking and unique** way for a University to address a challenging topic and seek to resolve student/staff protest.

2. Following discussions in Senate around conflict issues and the encampment on Elphinstone Lawn in Summer 2024, an Assembly was created to **seek input and guidance from staff and students** on possible University responses to international conflict. This commitment reflected the University's support for the right to peaceful protest and the need for our staff and students to have a voice in discussing challenging Environmental, Social & Governance (ESG) issues facing the University and our community.

3. In line with the statement to the University community following the summer 2024 encampment, the Assembly was initially scheduled to take place in December 2024. However, not all of the selected external speakers were available on this date. Therefore, it was agreed that it should be **postponed to early 2025 to accommodate speaker availability**.

Assembly Model

4. Assembly models have been successfully used in **Ireland and within the Climate policy arena amongst others**, addressing topics with highly diverse opinions and informing public policy. The basic premise is that a **group of individuals, representative of the characteristics of the population, can provide real insights into complex issues.** The strength of the Assembly model is the extent to which it allows **insight into community views and priorities, distinct from the opinions of usual voices heard in routine consultative processes.**

5. Assemblies feature a mix of **expert presentations and independently facilitated discussion sessions,** providing opportunities to share relevant concerns, issues and recommend potential solutions. The core question addressed by an Assembly is expected to be relatively broad, with no pre-determined 'solutions' or outcomes to be achieved.

6. An Assembly is not a decision-making body, nor is it part of the University's governance structure. However, in establishing the event, a commitment was made to **listening to its outcomes and considering its priorities,** particularly in view of the importance of the question posed and the representative nature of engagement.

Assembly Design

Topic

7. The topic for the Assembly – ***How Can the University Respond to International Conflict?*** - was discussed with members of the Elphinstone Lawn encampment, student representatives and with academic colleagues, who were subsequently involved in its planning and delivery. The detailed programme is attached as Appendix A.

8. The Assembly was designed to consider **international conflict in its broadest sense** and not to focus on any one particular current or historic conflict. The broad nature of the topic was highlighted in pre-event publicity (website, promotional videos and email communications). However, it became apparent during the event that several delegates were of the clear view that they had expected (and would have preferred) the Assembly to have focused solely on the **Israel/Palestine conflict**, and that some organised political groupings external to the University had promoted the event in this way.

9. In advance of the Assembly, and following the Elphinstone Lawn encampment, a range of meetings took place with key stakeholders, including members of the Senior Management Team, Students' Union, Palestinian Solidarity Society and other staff stakeholders. This group met to discuss the progression of the Assembly model and fed into the general direction of travel for the event.

Participation

10. Expressions of interest in participating in the Assembly were invited from staff and students to fill the 80 available places (40 staff/40 students). In line with the process adopted by the Irish Citizens' Assembly model, the intention had been to select delegates using a **stratified random selection process** to ensure that the Assembly was broadly reflective of the University community. However, this selection process was not undertaken as only 55 delegates registered an expression of interest and so **all were invited to participate**. This delegate self-selection process due to the lower than anticipated uptake of places was a **departure from the Citizens' Assembly model**.

11. Several invited delegates did not attend and so the Assembly ultimately comprised **33 individuals**.

Expert Input

12. The Assembly model includes the provision of expert input to inform discussion and debate. **Claire Hajaj** (Executive Director, Inter Mediate), a specialist in conflict and post-conflict dynamics, and **Professor Paul Gready**, Co-Director of the Centre for Applied Human Rights (CAHR) at the University of York, were invited to deliver 'Provocations' to stimulate conversation within the discussion groups. Speaker biographies and a summary of the Provocations are attached as Appendix B.

Discussion

13. A further key pillar underpinning the Assembly model is the focus on **constructive discussion and debate** with a view to reaching consensus.

14. Discussion sessions took place within **small groups of up to 8 participants**, each supported by a trained facilitator. The participants discussed the following questions:
    - *What support could be offered by the University to those impacted by international conflict?*
    - *What would be the potential consequences (positive and negative) of the University providing this support?*

15. A team of **Facilitators**, drawn from Sabbatical Officers and members of staff, supported the discussion groups during the Assembly. The role of Facilitator was to support group discussions and summarise the key themes/points emerging on behalf of the group during the larger plenary/feedback session. The Facilitators had attended training sessions delivered by Tavis Potts, Dean for Environmental Sustainability, to provide them with the skills required to support the group discussions and to summarise and report on the key points raised.

16. The final plenary session was facilitated by **Rebekah Widdowfield** (Vice-Principal for People & Diversity, University of St Andrews). It aimed to collectively identify key themes and areas of consensus/disagreement between the groups, then establish the key priorities arising from the Assembly.

17. The nature of the extended debate which took place around the types of support the University could offer to those impacted by international conflict (as identified during the small group discussion sessions) was heated and it proved challenging to focus discussion around the central topic. This meant that there was **insufficient time for the Assembly to reach consensus in terms of its key outcomes and priorities.** Similarly, although the individual groups also considered the consequences for the University in responding to conflict (both positive and negative), there was no time for views to be reported to and discussed by the whole Assembly in the plenary session. As a result, these issues are not included in detail within this Report.

18. Therefore, this Report is intended to **articulate the key themes** raised by delegates **to support future discussions** around (i) the issues identified by the Assembly, and (ii) the consideration of the suggestions brought forward.

KEY THEMES

ISRAEL/PALESTINE CONFLICT

19. The Israel/Palestine conflict was a recurring theme throughout the group discussions and plenary session. It was clear that this sensitive and emotive topic was the **primary focus of a significant proportion of the delegates** and that many were disappointed that the event had been structured around international conflict in its broadest sense, rather than that conflict in particular.

20. The resulting **frustration around this mismatch in expectations** manifested itself in heated exchanges during the plenary session and repeated requests for the **opportunity to discuss specific conflicts (particularly Israel/Palestine) in a separate forum** were made.

21. The behaviours exhibited, and the language used, by some delegates during the small group and full plenary discussions caused **offence and distress** to other delegates and also to staff involved in supporting the event. However, it is encouraging that after the Assembly concluded positive discussions with delegates with strong/opposing views took place, supported by senior representatives of the Students' Association, and further steps have been agreed. This demonstrates that in order to be productive and meaningful, any separate discussions around the Israel/Palestine conflict would require **careful facilitation** to ensure that respectful dialogue takes place in a 'safe space' where differing viewpoints could be equally heard.

UNIVERSITY RESPONSE TO INTERNATIONAL CONFLICT

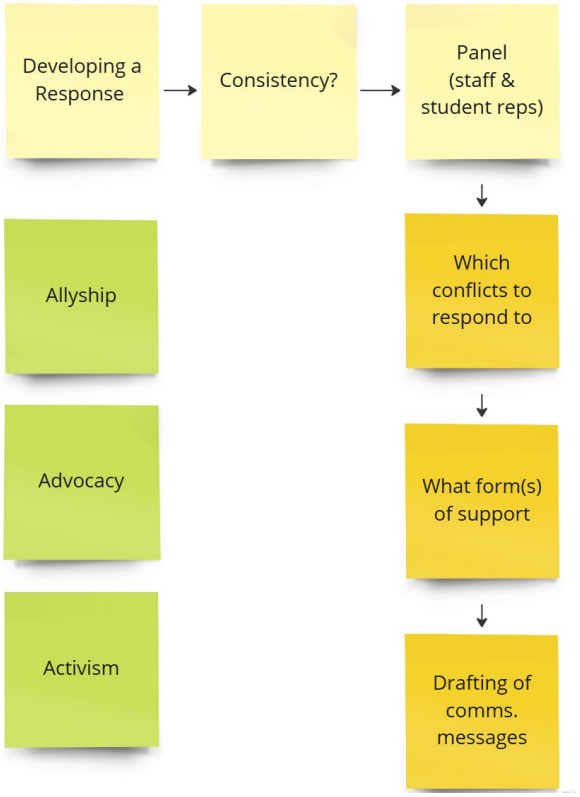

Fig. 1 Summary of key themes emerging from the plenary discussion around developing an institutional response to conflicts which break out.

Developing a Response

22. There was discussion around the process by which decisions are taken on the shape and scale of the University's response to international conflicts when they break out. It was suggested that a **framework and/or set of guiding principles** be established to underpin a **consultative structure and process** (including staff and student representatives) within which dialogue could place and decisions taken on (i) which conflicts the University will respond to, and (ii) the form of support that could be offered. It was suggested that the **co-creation/drafting of institutional communications with staff student representatives** could also take place within this forum.

23. There were divergent views expressed in relation to **consistency,** which was a recurring theme in discussions around previous University responses to international conflicts. Some delegates contrasted what was viewed as an immediate and substantial response in 2022 upon the escalation of the Russia/Ukraine conflict (including the level of support provided to those affected

in Aberdeen and in Ukraine, the suspension of bilateral agreements with Russia and calls to affirm solidarity with Ukraine) to what was seen as a lesser institutional response to the **Israel/Palestine** conflict. Others suggested that the University should remain **neutral** in conflict situations and advocate for peace. There was also a view expressed that (i) it was not practical or possible for the University to respond to every international conflict, and (ii) a 'one size fits all' approach would be impossible to achieve.

24. It was suggested that the ethos and principles underpinning this framework for supporting decision-making could be based around **'Three A's':**
    - **A**llyship;
    - **A**dvocacy; and
    - **A**ctivism.

25. It was anticipated that this **participative and inclusive decision-making structure** could enable all relevant voices to be heard and taken into consideration in framing the institution's public response to a conflict. It was also suggested that alignment to United Nations and other **recognised international norms of terminology** when drafting public statements and student/staff communication messages would be helpful.

Practical Support

26. Delegates identified the following **practical support** which could be provided to those affected by international conflict:
    - Partnership working with local organisations to support refugees and asylum seekers in the local community e.g. clothes, bedding, toys;
    - Legal and other professional support to refugees and asylum seekers from colleagues in relevant disciplines;
    - Opportunities for those from areas experiencing conflict to speak and raise awareness of the situation (internal to the University, guest speakers, award of honorary degrees);
    - Provision of counselling and mental health support – including information about how to access it;
    - Recognition of impact via mitigating circumstances/special provisions in coursework and assessments.

Educational Support

27. The role of the University in providing **educational support** to students affected by international conflict (those already enrolled and present in Aberdeen as well as students in the conflict area) was considered. The importance of the University **proactively demonstrating empathy and support to students and their families** was highlighted.

28. Delegates identified the following potential **educational support** activities which could be provided:
    - Library access;
    - Provision of scholarships (at Aberdeen and/or in-country);
    - Online courses;
    - Partnership activities with organisations in the affected regions to provide educational support.

Policies & Partnerships

29. A discussion took place regarding the University's **procurement and investment policies and decisions, alongside its continuing engagement in academic and business partnerships,** with organisations which were perceived by some delegates to represent complicity with armed conflict. It was also noted that these activities represented 'levers' which could be used to **influence and lobby for change**, with potential national and international impacts.

30. **Sector-wide discussions on divestment and national initiatives such as Demilitarise Education** (seeking the removal of financial involvement from the military and defence sector) were also noted as being influential in this regard.

Leadership Role

31. The **University's leadership role** in the local community and its influence within the wider sector was highlighted as an opportunity to provide support to those affected by international conflict. For example, it was suggested that the University could play a leading role in discussions within the local community – particularly in relation to **educating and supporting the community** to create a safe space for constructive discussions around the conflict to take place.

32. The importance of senior leaders within the University **ensuring that institutional commitments to providing support are delivered** was highlighted. For example, concerns were raised that the commitment to becoming a recognised **University of Sanctuary** had not translated into action.

33. The active partnership involvement of Trades Union and Students' Association representatives working alongside University leaders as part of a **participatory structure** was identified as being key to the successful operationalisation of key themes arising from the Assembly.

REFLECTIONS

34. Participants were invited to answer the following 3 questions prior to leaving the Assembly to evaluate its success. The comments from the evaluation sheets are highlighted below as Word Clouds:

- What did you particularly like about the Assembly?

- What could we have done differently to improve the Assembly?

- What other topics could be discussed at an Assembly if we run future events like this?

35. Twenty five responses were received from delegates. It was apparent from the feedback that several delegates had a **mismatch in expectations** around the Assembly considering the broad **topic of international conflict** as opposed to a specific discussion on the Israel/Palestine conflict (as a result of the perceived legacy of the Elphinstone Lawn encampment). Delegates also expressed concerns about the **language used** and the way in which the **feedback session** unfolded (many of the comments in this sphere also related back to the mismatch of expectations around the aims of the event).

36. However, there was considerable **support for the establishment of the Assembly** and some respondents recognised the opportunity it offered to engage in direct dialogue and provide **input to University decision-making**. The **small group discussion format** also proved popular and this session was viewed by several respondents as perhaps the most productive part of the event.

37. Suggestions for **other topics/future Assemblies** included (i) further discussion on specific international conflicts (particularly the Israel/Palestine conflict), (ii) climate issues, and (iii) internal University processes and structures (specifically the institutional financial position, education/other issues affecting students and engagement with the Senior Management Team).

38. It was clear that participating in the Assembly was an **emotional experience**, for delegates and those supporting the event. Some individuals experienced distress in relation to the topic under discussion and also the manner in which some of the exchanges took place in both the small group and larger plenary discussions. The provision of dedicated and professional support throughout the event was helpful in this regard. Ahead of future similar events taking place, consideration of additional **pre-event communication and senior level University/Students' Association engagement with relevant representative groups** to clarify expectations – around both the aims of the event and expected norms of behaviours within it - could be beneficial.

NEXT STEPS

Communication

39. This report will be shared initially with the Chief Executive and Student President (Students' Association) to verify its factual accuracy. Thereafter, it will be presented to the University's Senior Management Team for consideration by the Assembly Co-Lead, Jo-Anne Murray, Vice-Principal (Education). It is recommended that thereafter, the communication plan as outlined in Appendix C is implemented to disseminate the outcomes to delegates and the wider student and staff community.

40. It will be essential to ensure that a **clear communication strategy** is implemented beyond the publication of this report to (i) ensure that the momentum which has been gathered and the enthusiasm which has been harnessed by the Assembly is maintained, and (ii) demonstrate transparency in how the key themes raised have been considered and/or addressed.

Implementation

41. It was recognised during the Assembly that the event represented the **starting point for more detailed conversations** across the institution – not only in relation to the specific question around how the University can respond to international conflict, but also the way in which input and guidance from students and staff can be sought on other challenging issues.

42. The key themes and suggestions arising from the Assembly as articulated within this Report will require detailed consideration by senior representatives within the University and Students' Association. Therefore, it is recommended that the **Assembly Co-Leads (Vice-Principal (Education) and Deputy Director of People), Chief Operating Officer, Interim University Secretary, Students' Association Chief Executive, Student President and Vice-President for Communities** undertake an initial consideration of the issues raised within this Report, including:

    - Identifying existing structures within which the key themes arising from the Assembly could be considered;
    - Identifying individuals, groups and/or committees which could be invited to assume responsibility for taking specific activities forward; and
    - Identifying where resource allocation issues would need to be addressed.

    It is recommended that upon the conclusion of this initial analysis process, a detailed **Implementation Plan** is developed and presented to the Senior Management Team for consideration and approval.

43. In considering the next steps arising from the Assembly, **partnership working** between the University, Students' Association and relevant stakeholders (particularly staff and student representatives) will be essential. Actions identified will have to be taken forward through a

process of prioritisation and not all suggestions will be easily addressed. The depth of passions and emotions amongst Assembly delegates around international conflict, and the Israel/Palestine conflict in particular, was clearly evident and **the importance of supporting and facilitating constructive future discussions cannot be overstated**. Therefore, it is recommended that the Implementation Plan is agreed **by May 2025** and a **progress review** in relation to the key themes identified by the Assembly is undertaken **in February 2026.**

Acknowledgements

44. We would like to thank the representatives from the Students' Association and Palestinian Solidarity Society who contributed to the planning of the Assembly event and to individuals who supported its delivery, especially the Facilitators and members of the Event Support Team. Particular thanks are also extended to delegates and external speakers who contributed to the Assembly discussions.

Further information is available from Jo-Anne Murray (email: jo-anne.murray@abdn.ac.uk), Nick Edwards (email: n.edwarmur@abdn.ac.uk), Assembly Co-Leads, or Heather Crabb, Assembly Co-ordinator (email: h.crabb@abdn.ac.uk).

4 March 2025

FOI Status: OPEN

APPENDIX A

UNIVERSITY OF ABERDEEN

UNIVERSITY ASSEMBLY – HOW CAN THE UNIVERSITY RESPOND TO INTERNATIONAL CONFLICT?

Friday 14 February 2025

Venue	
King's Pavilion, King's Campus, Aberdeen, AB24 3UB	
Arrival	
08:30 – 09:00	Arrival in the Pavilion Refreshments available on arrival
Session 1 – Welcome	
09:00 – 09:10	Welcome & Introductions *Samantha Waters, University Secretary* Key Topics: • Welcome and housekeeping arrangements • Introduction to speakers • MC/host between sessions Welcome from Assembly Co-Lead *(Video from Nick Edwards, Deputy Director of People, University of Aberdeen) – 2 minutes* Introduction to the Assembly Concept *(Video from Professor David Farrell, University College Dublin) – 3 minutes*
Session 2 – Identifying Problems & Solutions	
09:10 – 10:15	Provocation 1: *The range, scale and impacts of international conflicts (Claire Hajaj, Executive Director, Inter Mediate)* • The range and scale of international conflicts (including examples from around the world) • The impact and consequences of international conflicts (physical, social, economic and academic) • Examples of the types of support needed by those impacted by international conflicts and the challenges in providing it Discussion Groups: • What support could be offered by the University to those impacted by international conflict? • What would be the potential consequences (positive and negative) of the University providing this support?
10:15 – 10:40	BREAK
Session 3 – Prioritising	
10:40 – 11:00	Provocation 2: *Prioritising how and where to respond (Paul Gready, Co-Director Centre for Applied Human Rights, University of York)* • Key factors impacting on how organisations prioritise their responses to international conflicts – including identifying which conflicts to respond to • The effectiveness of responses provided by organisations/universities to meet the needs of those impacted by international conflict
Session 4 – Recommendations	
11:00 – 12:45	Facilitator: *Rebekah Widdowfield, Vice-Principal for People & Diversity, University of St Andrews* • Feedback from discussion groups (session 2) • Collective identification of key themes and establishing priorities
Session 4 – Close	
12:45 – 13:00	*Jo-Anne Murray, Vice-Principal (Education), University of Aberdeen* • Vote of thanks to speakers and delegates • Next steps – publication of report and consideration of recommendations • Evaluation of session
13:00 – 14:00	A buffet lunch will be available in the main entrance area

APPENDIX B

'PROVOCATIONS'

Claire Hajaj, Executive Director, Inter Mediate

Biography
Claire Hajaj is a specialist in conflict and post-conflict dynamics. For 17 years, she has contributed to humanitarian, political and security strategies to mitigate conflicts in some of the world's most complex settings.

Prior to joining Inter Mediate, she worked for the United Nations in Lebanon, Kosovo, Iraq, Myanmar, Nigeria and Pakistan. Her experience ranges from negotiating community-level access for vaccinators in external regions on the Afghan-Pakistan border to supporting the UN Special Representative in Iraq at the height of the insurgency, to negotiating and producing a landmark stabilization strategy for Lebanon on the frontline of the Syria conflict and refugee crisis.

Sharing Palestinian and Jewish heritage, Claire's writing on conflict has appeared in Newsweek, the Sunday Times, the New Statesman, the Economist, Granta, and as the author of two novels. Her policy writing has appeared in Friedrich Ebert Stiftung, Global Journal of Health Governance and the UN Centre for Policy Research.

Provocation
Claire praised the establishment of the Assembly and welcomed the opportunity for staff and students to come together to discuss challenging problems and seek to work together to find solutions.

Claire provided a very personal account of her own experience of conflict in both her professional and private life, including growing up within a Palestinian-Jewish family living in Kuwait during the Iraq conflict.

She also considered how the nature, and the way in which the world relates to conflict, has changed in recent years and explained the role of Inter Mediate in seeking peaceful negotiated solutions to various global conflicts. Claire also described what she had witnessed in Syria shortly before travelling to Aberdeen, citing the destruction and human suffering as the visible costs of conflict. She also noted the global impact of the Syrian conflict, including the refugee crisis and geopolitical changes.

Claire summarised her key points as follows:

- All conflicts affect everyone;
- There is no one path to peace – all peaceful solutions are achieved via multiple paths;
- The importance of investment in long-term solutions;
- Citizens can encourage international leaders to take risks and engage in talks (even if it may risk political unpopularity) – negotiations are the only way of achieving peace;
- The importance of remembering the 'forgotten conflicts' – there are multiple conflicts going on across the world despite the prominence of some over others in the media;
- The importance of continuing to talk – making an effort to engage in meaningful dialogue with those with opposing views to seek peaceful resolution.

Paul Gready, Co-Director of the Centre for Applied Human Rights (CAHR), University of York

Biography
Paul Gready is the Co-Director of the Centre for Applied Human Rights (CAHR), University of York, and holds a UNESCO Chair, focusing on Protection of Human Rights Defenders and Expansion of Political Space. The UNESCO Chair supports a global network of partners with a shared interest in universities as sites of activism and protection. His research interests also include transitional justice, the arts and human rights, and human rights cities. He is the Principal Investigator on the research project titled,

Can the Arts Save Human Rights? Human Rights Truth Claims in a Post-Truth Era?, funded by the AHRC.

Provocation
Paul considered how universities can prioritise how and where to respond to international conflict.

He outlined 5 principles (PANEL) which institutions could adopt as a framework to support consideration of where and how to respond to conflicts:

- **P**articipation – who, how and where does institutional expertise lie;
- **A**ccountability – internal and external;
- **N**on-discrimination and equality – forgotten conflicts;
- **E**mpowerment – support for local actors; and
- **L**egality – in line with international and other laws.

In particular, he emphasised the importance of using networks and in engaging different groups in any institutional decision-making process around conflict response.

Paul encouraged consideration of key questions around the framing of institutional interventions e.g. whether it would be on a humanitarian, human rights and/or educational basis. He also noted the importance of considering whether a 'side' was being taken in a conflict situation (and if so, the criteria and/or principles which would be adopted in reaching that decision) and what a 'successful intervention' could look like.

Paul highlighted the importance of impartiality as a key pillar of humanitarianism and of ensuring that talks with state and non-state actors take place without judgement – noting that peace requires sacrifice and compromise to be enacted.

Rebekah Widdowfield – Vice Principal for People & Diversity, University of St Andrews (Facilitator)

Biography
A researcher by background, Rebekah worked in academia for a number of years, before joining the Scottish Government to pursue a more applied research career. She became a senior civil servant (SCS) in 2008 serving in a variety of analytical and policy roles including as Chief Researcher and as Head of Higher Education and Science. Rebekah left Government to become Chief Executive of the Royal Society of Edinburgh in September 2017, leading a programme of change to enhance the Society's visibility, impact and reach. She joined the University of St Andrews in June 2022 where she is responsible for delivery of the University's strategic ambitions around EDI and the staff experience. Rebekah led the University's successful submission for an Athena Swan Silver in March 2024 and, as Senior Sponsor, supported the University's work for a Race Equality Charter Bronze award which was secured in September.

APPENDIX C

UNIVERSITY OF ABERDEEN

UNIVERSITY ASSEMBLY

Communications Plan (Report Publication)

Date	**Activity**
14 February 2025	University Assembly takes place
17 February 2025	Press release issued (media, Ezine and website)
24 February 2025	Draft report issued to AUSA for factual review
6 March 2025	Draft report considered by Senior Management Team
w/c 10 March 2025	Report published: Ahead of public launch (first phase): • Delegates • AUSA • Encampment group (PSS, academic staff) • Facilitators Second phase: • UMG • Assembly website
w/c 17 March 2025	Student-facing video created to summarise outcomes and promote Assembly model