

The double standard of the West

and how research centers become complicit in violation of international law

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A few days after the invasion of troops from the Russian Federation into the territory of Ukraine many science organizations and institutes in the west have launched clear statements protesting against the war and have also installed immediately sanctions¹ against scientists affiliated with Russian institutions. Also immediately almost 8500 Russian scientists signed the open letter against the war². Today many of those who signed face issues by the state.

CERN has put the international cooperation agreements with Russia and Belarus on hold already in March 2022 with a decision of the CERN council, stating explicitly that *“That aggression of one country by another runs against the values for which the Organization stands”*³. Then by the end of 2023 the CERN council decided not to continue cooperation with Russian⁴ and Belorussian⁵ institutes. The Science4Peace Forum⁶ has criticized this decision very strongly in an article published on arXiv⁷, while encouraging at least to keep the cooperation with the international *Joint Institute for Nuclear Research* (JINR) in Dubna, which was approved by a vote in the CERN council in spring 2024⁸. Many of us were relieved, that at least some sense of the Science4Peace⁹ idea of CERN is kept and not all contacts are cut. Several scientists were hoping for continuing cooperating with CERN as they got an affiliation with JINR.

A few days ago (by end of May 2025), it came as a shock when the research director of CERN send a letter to JINR end of May 2025, saying that scientists, who have an affiliation with a Russian institute (in addition to the one with JINR) are NOT accepted as cooperating partner with CERN. Finally, the hardliners have won.

How can it be, that the CERN directorate did not have the stand to argue in favor of CERN's tradition and goal of Science4Peace, and did not even try to argue against the discrimination of scientists at CERN and against the exclusion of so many colleagues.

How can it be, that the research director of CERN said in an interview¹⁰ that the only responsibility for the exclusion of Russian institutes from CERN lies at the CERN council — the CERN directorate could have at least expressed concerns against this discriminatory and counterproductive decision.

¹ Albrecht, M. and others (2023). Beyond a Year of Sanctions in Science, <https://arxiv.org/abs/2311.02141>

² <https://t-invariant.org/2022/02/we-are-against-war-en/>

³ CERN council (2022). CERN response to the aggression against Ukraine, https://council.web.cern.ch/sites/default/files/c-e-3637Corr_Council%20resolution_%20RU_BY.pdf

⁴ CERN council (2023). Termination of the International Cooperation Agreement between CERN and the Russian Federation, <https://council.web.cern.ch/sites/default/files/c-e-3757-Resolution%20RU%2015%20December%202023.pdf>

⁵ CERN council (2023). Termination of the International Cooperation Agreement between CERN and the Republic of Belarus, <https://council.web.cern.ch/sites/default/files/c-e-3758-Resolution%20BY%2015%20December%202023.pdf>

⁶ Science4Peace Forum, <https://science4peace.com/>

⁷ Ali, A. and others (2024). A Science4Peace initiative: Alleviating the consequences of sanctions in international scientific cooperation, <https://arxiv.org/abs/2403.07833>

⁸ Gianotti, F. (2024). News from the June 2024 CERN Council Session, <https://home.cern/news/opinion/cern/news-june-2024-cern-council-session>

⁹ CERN Science for Peace, <https://home.cern/about/who-we-are/our-history>

¹⁰ Hauer, T. and Kirshey, R. NANO 3. April 2025, <https://www.3sat.de/wissen/nano/250403-sendung-nano-100.html>

How is this policy applied to other countries ?

Since nearly 2 years, Israel is waging a terrible war against the Palestinian population of Gaza and Westbank, the International Court of Justice (ICJ) has made a case against Israel¹¹. Since a few months Israel is blocking any humanitarian aid delivery to the people of Gaza and is using starvation as a weapon.

Israel is member state of CERN and member of the CERN council, CERN has cooperation agreements with Palestine¹². The statement of the CERN council "*That aggression of one country by another runs against the values for which the Organization stands*", which was used as an argument against cooperation with Russia has obviously no meaning here. Not only this, the EU is investigating whether the association agreement with Israel is still fulfilled¹³. At CERN, an investigation whether Israel is still fulfilling its duty as a member was not even considered at the council meeting in June 2025. There was no single statement about the war on Gaza nor on any empathy with the suffering people in Gaza and Westbank.

Now Israel has started also a war against Iran because of its nuclear program. The bombing is in clear violation of international law¹⁴. Iran also has a cooperation¹⁵ agreement with CERN. Iran is signee of the UN non-proliferation treaty of nuclear weapons since 1968¹⁶ and has one of the world best monitored nuclear program¹⁷. Israel itself has nuclear weapons¹⁸, but has not signed the NPT treaty.

Will there be any reaction on this double standard ?

Now, the US has bombed Iran, in clear violation of international law, and many western state applauded to this. The US also has a cooperation agreement with CERN. "*That aggression of one country by another runs against the values for which the Organization stands*"¹⁹, what is the meaning of this ?

Will there be any reaction ?

- It is not understandable, that CERN with UN observer status²⁰ does no longer dare to respect international law and resolutions of the UN general assembly.
- How can it be, that an institution which was respected internationally and had played an important role in science diplomacy and was pushing forward the Science4Peace idea, is now behaving with such a double standard ?
- How can it be, that a so-called "value-based science policy" has become a dominant part in CERNs policy ?
- How can it be, that none of the CERN directors stands up and demands a return to respecting international law.

¹¹ International Court of Justice (2024). Application of the convention on the prevention and punishment of the crime of genocide in the Gaza strip, <https://www.icj-cij.org/sites/default/files/case-related/192/192-20240126-ord-01-00-en.pdf>

¹² CERN (2025). CERN - our member states, <https://www.home.cern/about/who-we-are/our-governance/member-states>

¹³ Rankin, J. (2025). EU cites 'indications' Israel is breaching human rights obligations over conduct in Gaza, <https://www.theguardian.com/law/2025/jun/20/eu-israel-human-rights-obligations-gaza-document>

¹⁴ <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2025/jun/16/australias-claim-that-israel-has-a-right-to-defend-itself-against-iran-is-inconsistent-with-our-rules-based-order>

¹⁵ CERN (2025). CERN - our member states, <https://www.home.cern/about/who-we-are/our-governance/member-states>

¹⁶ Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, 1968, <https://treaties.unoda.org/t/npt>

¹⁷ <https://news.un.org/en/story/2025/06/1164611>

¹⁸ Borger, J. (2014). The truth about Israel's secret nuclear arsenal, in The Guardian, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2014/jan/15/truth-israels-secret-nuclear-arsenal>

¹⁹ https://council.web.cern.ch/sites/default/files/c-e-3638Corr_Council%20Resolution_JINR.pdf

²⁰ CERN (2012). CERN is granted the status of observer to the United Nations General Assembly, <https://home.cern/news/press-release/cern/cern-granted-status-observer-united-nations-general-assembly>

- How can it be, that there is so very little reaction from the scientific community on this double standard ?