

Institutional remarks at *Domus Sapientiae* Hall, Polytechnic University of Bari

Loredana Ficarelli¹

Good afternoon everyone, and welcome.

I bring greetings from the community of the Polytechnic University of Bari, which is hosting in this place, in this Department, an initiative of great importance, attended by the Apulia Region with its President, the Church of Bari, and the Municipality of Bari. We can now begin this second part of the day, devoted to the reconstruction of Gaza.

We see the reconstruction of Gaza as both a moment and an experience that gives life to words and actions emerging from the Academy, the University, and education more broadly. We firmly believe that research and teaching must be free: free from external pressures, free to choose their partners, and free to contribute to all States on the international stage, for the benefit of the entire world. This is evident—and I say this on a personal note, with emotion. Professor Borri and I wanted this day because we wished to give life and future to what words alone sometimes fail to achieve: giving voice to our inner responsibility.

We chose our inner voice; we chose the voice of all.

For this reason, without taking too much of your time, I would like to read a few excerpts from the declaration of the Academic Senate of the Polytechnic University of Bari, approved at its most recent meeting, in support of peace and

¹ Vice-Rector of Polytechnic University of Bari

the reconstruction of Gaza. The Academic Senate has firmly condemned all wars currently underway and has reiterated its commitment to peace, condemning all forms of violence that strike civilians, minorities, and vulnerable people. It reaffirms its dedication to promoting a culture of peace, dialogue, cooperation, and respect for human dignity, considering scientific, civil, and democratic progress as fundamental and non-negotiable values.

The conflict we are all aware of, which has affected the international community since October 7, 2023, following Hamas' initiative that caused thousands of deaths, has led to a disaster—indeed, to repeated disasters.

As recalled by the President of the Italian Republic, starving an entire people—from children to the elderly—is inhuman. Universities, as communities devoted to the development of knowledge and critical thinking, have the moral duty to promote peace, human dignity, and the rejection of all forms of violence and oppression.

We hope that an immediate truce may be achieved through a strong, coordinated international diplomatic initiative.

We believe in dialogue rather than force. This condition is necessary so that the Gaza Strip—and all conflicts currently active across our planet—may be freed from war and from terrorist organizations, and so that international organizations may act to bring peace, cooperation, and rights.

The Academic Senate has also expressed full support for the initiative launched by professors of the Polytechnic University of Bari who freely chose to participate in peace initiatives together with scholars from other Italian and international universities, offering their knowledge without compensation to support the reconstruction of Gaza.

No political or military consideration can justify hostile behavior toward populations, cultures, or individuals. In particular, the Polytechnic University of Bari intends to

protect every member of its academic community, with special attention to students—women and men—who are in vulnerable conditions and may be subject to discrimination and isolation.

The Academic Senate therefore commits the entire Polytechnic University of Bari to continuing and promoting, in all its activities, a culture of peace, dialogue, and respect for human dignity, in the awareness that only these values can contribute to sustainable progress based on freedom, knowledge, and responsibility toward humanity.

Michele Emiliano²

I was rereading the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide, adopted in 1948.

I returned to this text because, in my view, the cases addressed by the Convention are closely linked to what we are discussing today: the deliberate exposure of a group of people to living conditions intended to bring about their total or partial physical destruction; measures intended to prevent births within a group; the forced transfer of children from one group to another.

Article 3 of the Convention lists the punishable acts: genocide; conspiracy to commit genocide; direct and public incitement to genocide; attempted genocide; and complicity in genocide. The States Parties undertake not only to bring those responsible to trial, but also to promote all actions necessary to prevent such acts and their further consequences.

The purpose of this initiative by the Apulia Region, the Polytechnic University of Bari, and the authorities present here today is to open a discussion on how to prevent the

² President of Apulia Region

Palestinian people from being killed, from dying of hunger and thirst, or from being forced to abandon their land.

Our aim is to establish the foundations for the continued presence of the Palestinian community in its territory—structurally, legally, socially, and, above all, in terms of international relations.

The Apulia Region, the Municipality of Bari, the Emilia-Romagna Region, and, in a different but equally important form, the Tuscany Region, have taken a clear position so that, in the future, no one may say that the Italian Republic or the Italian people did nothing in the face of what is happening, and that they can therefore be considered accomplices to an ongoing genocide.

It must be clear that the plan for Gaza is open to the contribution of all humanity. It belongs to no one and must not be claimed by any single community. It is open to the widest possible range of contributions and should also serve as a lesson against the egoisms typical of local powers.

What is needed is great generosity, great creativity, and determination—determination that we may be permitted to call a distinctive trait of Apulian culture—as we begin this path of hope, a path we hope will soon attract women and men of goodwill. We started, this we want to say you today. Thank you.

Giuseppe Satriano³

Rebuilding Gaza, giving hope back to the world.

Today, we are here not only to discuss about projects and maps, but to listen to the deep cry of a broken land. Gaza, the strip overlooking the Mediterranean Sea, looks like a

³ Archbishop of Bari-Bitonto

wound and asks to be looked at with lucid eyes and open hearts. The same happens in Ukraine.

Father Ernesto Balducci, a priest, a writer and a peace builder, said that the history of a city is characterized by two instincts, Eros and Thanatos. The first one, Eros, is the vital and unitive spirit which offers us many beauties and wonders. The second one, Thanatos, the impulse to overpower someone, has defined, and still defines, the history of our cities in a tragic way.

Gaza and the strip of land taking its name are the most dreadful example of Thanatos's victory in the contemporary era.

This meeting shows our responsibility, as believers, as women and men of science.

Christian hope is not an illusion or an escape from reality. It is the ability to look upwards and keep the feet on the ground at the same time. Pope Francis, in a letter entitled "Fratelli tutti", writes that "no one can face life in an isolated way: we all need a community supporting us". Today, more than ever, Gaza needs a community who is able to give support and help, to look beyond the tragic current situation, tormented by the clear violation of the international law and the intentional willing to destroy and devastate a land.

Today, in this place, I want to remind you that no neutral sciences exist. Technical skills can be neutral, not sciences. City planning, architecture, engineering always bring values, ideas, plans.

Rebuilding Gaza means reshaping a vision for the future. What kind of city do we imagine? What kind of humanity do we support? A city can reflect a culture of exclusion or a culture of inclusion.

The wounds of Gaza are not the visible ones, the destroyed houses or the devastated streets. The wounds are the invisible ones, those mining the flesh and souls of women and men who are losing their loved ones, their dreams, their

future. If nobody heals these wounds, they will turn into revenge. For this reason, rebuilding Gaza also means healing moral wounds, promoting reconciliation acts among people, as it happened in South Africa after the apartheid or in Rwanda after the genocide against the Tutsi. Gaza has to be not just a construction site but, most of all, a school of humanity.

Nowadays, technology, instead of being a tool supporting life, is a tool supporting death. The news report that the Israeli forces are using sophisticated software, such as “Lavender” and “The Gospel”, which select and destroy human targets and buildings, even at the risk of causing collateral damage upon innocent civilians. This is a tragic paradox, when technology is used to commit a new kind of crime, the *domicide*, which is the systematic destruction of houses, buildings and infrastructures, of places where people live with their loved ones.

To defeat this death spiral, your contribution as women and men of science can be and has to be valuable. Gaza has to be a place of social relations again. We should follow the example of the Abrahamic Family House in Abu Dhabi, where a church, a synagogue and a mosque share the same urban space, respecting each other and promoting dialogue. Gaza can be a prophetic sign of peace, but to make this reality, we need brave choices and generous visions.

Maybe, today, this is just a dream. But, as Father Tonino Bello wrote, “if we do not dream, we cannot go ahead and build our peace”. Christian faith teaches us that resurrection happens in the most defeated land, in the most grieved place. We cannot celebrate the resurrection of Christ and then accept the death in Gaza. We hope to see again tree-lined avenues, big squares, alive schools, comfortable hospitals, requalified houses.

The auditorium where we are now, called Domus Sapientiae, the “House of Wisdom”, reminds us that being wise means putting together knowledge and life, projects and visions, reason and empathy. Today we are here not only as expert technicians, but also as the guardians of humanity. The reconstruction of Gaza is authentic only if it is able to give back hope to the world. It is not just about stones, but relations. It is not just about cement, but communities. It is not just about mathematical assessments, but compassion. So, Gaza claims our commitment: human talents and skills must not lead to death, they must lead to life. We are called to be builders of fraternity and not only builders of houses. Thank you for your commitment, for your expertise and, most of all, for being able to dream and not to give up.

Giovanna Iacovone⁴

Good afternoon to everyone, and I truly thank you all. I thank Polytechnic for this, for the invitation from the Municipality of Bari to this meeting, whose importance I grasp. Because it falls within that mobilization by those institutions and by that society that do not want to remain inert. Because doing nothing is not a neutral act. Indifference kills, Hannah Arendt taught us this. If Europe had not remained silent when it should have spoken, perhaps there would not have been the Shoah. I am a jurist before being deputy mayor and councilor for regeneration, and I know that omission has legal relevance and can meet the elements of a crime, and even before that, a political one. And in fact, the Municipality of Bari approved an agenda with which it not only promotes the recognition of the State of Palestine, but also committed the municipality to interrupt commercial

⁴ Deputy Mayor of Bari municipality

relations with the State of Israel, therefore declaring it not welcome at the Fiera del Levante, at the Levante trade fair. A small gesture for a local authority, for what it can do, but words are absolutely important because words can kill or save lives. Modern democracies, the rule of law, laws are made of words that obviously then must be implemented. But first of all they must be pronounced; one must take a position. Calamandrei said that even the Constitution is a little sheet of paper that we can let flutter slowly toward the floor and that instead must live, and must live with our commitment and with our responsibility. And among the responsibilities that we must take on there is that of calling things and situations by their name. And the word that we must responsibly name is that of genocide, a word coined by a Jewish jurist, later adopted by the United Nations. With this word one refers precisely to the commission of acts with the intention of destroying in whole or in part a national, ethnic, racial or religious group as such. And this is exactly what is happening in Gaza, which is before everyone's eyes, with the exception of the eyes of those who do not want to see. And we instead are, as was said by the institutional interventions that have just preceded me, among the subjects who want to see. Among these subjects there are the Municipality of Bari, the Polytechnic of Bari, Apulia Region, the Church, which responsibly have decided not only to denounce but to take a position against genocide. First, obviously, with declarations and with documents contained in official documents, and therefore in implementation of those words contained in the declarations. And then with acts, concrete acts, among which I believe today's conference must be counted, our moment of reflection that precisely raises the theme of the reconstruction of that land. And it is an essential and responsible way of acting against genocide. Why? Because genocide is the destruction of lives. And today we oppose it with an act exactly contrary, that is,

with reconstruction. Because a people is not erased only by physically killing people, but also by destroying the land on which it was born and on which it lives. So much so that in Gaza two million people have not died; tens of thousands of people have died. They are not few, of course, but the Palestinian people have not been physically annulled or erased; nevertheless, this is a genocide, because there is the will to annul this people. Moreover, we have all seen that video in which Trump and Netanyahu on the Riviera of Gaza were enjoying their cocktail with Arabs dancing around them. That video was not a joke, but a different project for treating that land, that is, a project of genocide. That video, in my opinion, truly frightened me. And this is exactly how it happened, as it happened in the 1930s in Hitler's Germany. But I would like to close by saying that the Municipality of Bari has in any case shown its political sensitivity also a few years ago, because October 7 is not the moment from which the genocide began; we have years, decades of occupation of those territories and living conditions at the limits of what is human. And in fact in 2019 the Municipality of Bari, with Acquedotto Pugliese—perhaps someone mentioned it this morning, because I saw that Acquedotto Pugliese was present with Francesca Portincasa—participated with the aqueduct in a project and obtained, with ING1 and the CIS, together with the municipality of Khan Younis, a project for the provision of fundamental sanitary services for the health of the population. Khan Younis is a municipality in the south of Gaza. Only 55% of the city's population is connected to the sewer system, while the remaining 45%, in the absence of a sewer network, uses septic pits, usually built in an improvised and permeable way, thus also creating pollution. And so, together with the aqueduct, we built several kilometres of sewerage, and in addition the network also connected a university building in the Salah Alden area that hosts about 2,000 male and female students. The last part of

the works dates to December 2022, and now we are about to resume with the second tranche of works with 11 kilometres of sewer network, indeed about twenty kilometres of sewer network. Moreover, the municipality is organising a meeting precisely to talk about this and has invited part of the Palestinian technical team, which will take place in September. And therefore on that occasion we can meet them, we can meet them together. Thank you.

Carlo Contesi⁵

I would like to add, Deputy Mayor, that in addition to the institutions you mentioned, we are also here—as the Order of Engineers and the Order of Architects.

We are among those who are witnessing what is happening in those areas, and so, with great enthusiasm, the Order I represent wanted to participate and co-organize this conference. I therefore bring greetings not only from the Council of the Order but from the entire community of 8,000 engineers in Bari.

I won't hide the fact that, when we discussed this conference in the Council and the Training Commission, in addition to enthusiasm, someone—with the pragmatism that often distinguishes us engineers—asked: "Are we really talking about reconstruction while those areas are still experiencing a state of war?" And that question has stayed with me for days.

So, I went to look at some data. The situation reports that about 70% of homes have been destroyed in those territories. Some have even coined new terms, like "*urbicide*". It is said that 88–90% of industrial plants have been destroyed, and perhaps 70% of agricultural land as well.

⁵ President of the Order of Engineers of Bari province

Then there are the networks, the infrastructures, public buildings...

This is the starting point for any discussion about reconstruction. Some, based on estimates from satellite images or satellite data, speak of around 50 million tons of rubble to be cleared—a staggering amount that, using traditional methods, might take ten years to remove. Who knows what lies in that rubble—very likely human remains, unexploded ordnance, perhaps asbestos. This is the reality. So, what can we do today? We must already begin to mobilize—that's why it's important to talk about it now—energy, strength, and resources, both financial and human. And here, the engineering community stands ready with its expertise and capabilities.

The Order of Engineers of Bari—and indeed all Orders across Italy—believes the National Council of Engineers, just as it has done in the past for natural disasters and earthquakes, will once again be willing to form expert teams ready to offer their help and contribution.

I would like to close with one final wish: that one day this reconstruction—surely led and coordinated by the United Nations and the governments involved—won't be imposed from above but will be shared with and shaped by our Palestinian colleagues. I believe this is a wish of great importance. Thank you.

Cosimo Damiano Mastronardi⁶

On behalf of the Council of the Order and the community of Architects, Planners, Landscape Architects, and Conservators of the Province of Bari, I extend my greetings

⁶ President of the Order of Architects, Planners, Landscape Architects, and Conservators of Bari province

to the civil and religious authorities, to the speakers, and to all those present.

It is not easy to speak of reconstruction while pain is still alive, and the images of destruction continue to shake our consciences. Yet, precisely for this reason, it is necessary to do so: to rebuild does not mean merely reassembling what has been shattered and erased by bombs, but rather interpreting the new needs of a population bowed and deprived of memory, imagining a possible future, and giving shape to hope.

Even though the war is not yet over, an important process of reflection and planning for the reconstruction of Gaza has already begun. In October 2023, an agreement was signed between the IUAV University of Venice and the UNDP — Regional Bureau for Arab States — aimed at drafting a comprehensive reconstruction plan.

Professor and architect Iacopo Galli, scientific director of the project, emphasized that reconstruction must be approached as a process, not as a single project: an open, evolving system that simultaneously acts on urban form, the local economy, building production, and financing models. It is a model that intervenes at the neighborhood scale, designing complete urban units: housing, schools, public spaces, and infrastructure networks.

It should be a progressive reconstruction, ensuring clear timelines, building quality, and social sustainability — but above all a reconstruction decided by the Palestinians. IUAV provides scientific support, while the UN must guarantee the participation of local communities.

This is a completely different approach from what was seen in post-war Europe, where major financiers often imposed settlement models from above. Here, the process starts from the bottom, with replicable, complete, and coherent urban cells.

Yet, as the researchers themselves affirm, Gaza cannot simply be “rebuilt as it was”: it had already been declared uninhabitable long before the current conflict. A radical re-founding of the urban fabric — building typologies, technologies, and resource systems — will be necessary, while taking care, of course, to preserve certain historical and identity-related elements, but also having the courage to imagine a profoundly different future.

It is precisely from this point that I would like to begin my reflections. Wars, beyond their human toll, inflict irreparable damage on cultural heritage, which in recent conflicts has become an ideal target for striking at the cultural identity of populations.

In Gaza, systematic destruction has reached unprecedented proportions: according to UN data, 66% of residential buildings have been destroyed or severely damaged. At the beginning of 2024, a new term appeared in the Italian lexicon: *domicidio* — the deliberate and systematic destruction of civilian homes during armed conflict.

The monumental heritage of the Strip, testimony to millennia of history as a crossroads of civilizations, has not been spared. According to UNESCO, as of 5 December 2024, 75 cultural sites have been destroyed or damaged: monuments, museums, archaeological sites — material traces of a deep identity.

As architect Andrea Mannocci wrote: “Every stone, every decoration, every historic structure told a story. The loss goes beyond material value: it is an offense to collective memory and to future generations.”

Think of a child in Gaza, growing up playing in the alleys beside the mosque or in the square near their home. All these places, steeped in memory, have been erased. Along with them, emotional reference points and everyday roots have been swept away. Those memories, without a physical place in which to take root, risk fading forever.

As architects, we have the duty to ask ourselves what it truly means to rebuild. It is not only about re-erecting walls, but about restoring meaning, identity, and belonging. For this reason, I believe the real challenge is not only technical but cultural and human: to rebuild the places of life where memory, affection, and community can be reborn. We must prevent haste, economic interests, or externally imposed models from taking precedence.

We need an architecture of memory, capable of preserving and reinterpreting the past to generate the future.

The Rector of IUAV, in a recent interview, announced that Palestinian universities — some of them severely affected — will also participate in the project, and that cross-disciplinary expertise will be involved. This is an important first step.

Allow me a suggestion: let us not forget Palestinian architects — not only researchers, but also local professionals who know the territory, its history, and its needs. Only with their contribution — and with genuine grassroots participation — can we imagine a future Gaza that is just, vibrant, and sustainable.

I conclude with a firm conviction: architecture can be a tool of peace. Building — today more than ever — is never a neutral act. It means deciding whether to nourish memory or oblivion, whether to restore dignity or impose models, whether to offer a future or simply cover over the rubble.

Today, here, we reaffirm our commitment: to build — together — spaces of life, community, and hope. I am proud of the involvement of our Order in today's event, because it reminds us how urgent and necessary it is, today more than ever, to give shape to hope. Thank you.

Atif Kubursi⁷*The Economic Costs of the Palestinian Genocide.*

Thank you very much doctor Caterina, my mother would be very proud of you. I am humbled.

I say very humbly that your words and your speaking about our undivided humanity are precious for me.

If the Palestinians have pain, we all have pain. If they are not free, we are not free.

It is very terrible that the Palestinian people have suffered and suffered so much. They are living in an open prison. They are shackled by very vicious restrictions. Their water is stolen water, their oil is stolen, their gas is stolen.

You may not know this, but in the Mediterranean there are more than one hundred twenty-eight billion cubic feet of gas.

And this genocide which is totally political is also largely an economic genocide.

I'm going to walk you through some of the costs that the Israeli occupation has charged on the shoulders of the Palestinians. From restrictions to theft of public money: money that belongs to the Government of the Palestinians and is intercepted by the Israelis.

If you go from one area to the other you could see the difference in the lighting and the electricity. The electricity of the Palestinians is dim. The electricity in the Israeli part is very bright.

The Palestinian economy is divided into three areas: Eastern Jerusalem, the West Bank, and Gaza, this after the Oslo agreement. A period existed in which the Palestinian people were optimistic and full of hope. At that time, Gaza, end of the 1990s, represented 40% of the Palestinian population and almost thirty-five percent of the economy.

⁷ Emeritus Professor McMaster University Toronto, Canada

After 1998 up to 2022 the population of Gaza increased to 40% of Palestine, but its economy collapsed to 16%.

At that time the per capita income in Gaza was 2,400 dollars: now it is less than 50%, less than 1,200 dollars. And in real terms, if you consider the inflation, the income is even lower, but this is not because the other economies are growing more.

Eight wars happened from 1992-93 to 2005-06: each of these wars implied massive destructions of the infrastructures, of buildings, universities, schools, hospitals. Now in Gaza all the buildings are destroyed.

We know that 65,000 persons, including many children, died and that 50% of them are women and children: a study from Harvard says that these numbers are underestimated and that the number of people killed is 300,000.

So the issue is not about reconstruction, the issue is about reinvigorating, giving a chance.

In 1980 I estimated the loss of the Palestinians in 1948: this because at that time we were able to lay our hands on all the documents of what people lost, we had every single piece of land, who owned it and who took it.

The loss was 400 billion dollars; this was the reparation payment they got from Germany and from Austria under the program called "Make Things Good Again".

This money was sufficient or not, this was the money that came from Germany and Austria, this is the story. They should have had to include the psychological pain of the Palestinians.

As an economist I made a very minor calculation on the back of an envelope. I took the difference between the Palestinian economy which is growing at the rate of that of Jordan, a country which is very similar to Palestine, a rate of 4.1%.

Currently, the three parts that I described for Palestine - Eastern Jerusalem, the West Bank, and Gaza - with the 4.1%

of growth per year generate in 1998-2022 a loss of growth of 69 billion dollars.

Somebody could say, "Oh, you should not add current dollars." So I did it in constant dollars and it was fifty-nine billion dollars.

Somebody could say that I am considering inflation. No, I am computing the numbers in current prices. Sixty-nine billion dollars.

This is something very annoying but at the same time very unacceptable.

Nobody is sending the Israelis the invoice of all the destruction and of this psychological destruction of the Palestinian population.

So far the only study where we estimated this - we said to the Palestinians: please send this bill to the Israelis, those who destroy are responsible to pay the bill. Nobody has sent them this message. The Palestinians do not consider all this, they have completely lost their hope.

And this is very important because we don't need the Saudis to pay. We don't need the West to pay. We don't need the Germans to pay. We don't need the Americans.

This is wrong. We do not have to send the bill to Austria or to Kuwait.

Is Israel responsible for these costs? The GDP, the gross domestic product of Israel is 400 billion dollars. Could they pay? Nobody is saying this, I said.

No right is lost if there are still persons who claim it.

And it is time that the Palestinians and the Arabs wake up to this reality. They have to ask what is their legitimate right.

This brings me to a very special person, a person that is probably your neighbor, the great Honorable Francesca Albanese. You must be proud of having her as your neighbor.

We are working and we ask you to join us in nominating her for the Nobel Prize for Peace.

She came up with something economists have failed to do. She came up with a theory about compensation that economists did not think of. She's a lawyer, but she came up with some very important points: the economy of occupation.

You do not care about the economy of occupation and about the new economy of today which is the economy of the genocide. We must consider the wives, the hundreds of thousands of persons who could not support their families, who are disappearing, who died.

We must consider the responsibility of all those who are helping Israel to continue its genocide and all the American and the Asian companies that continue to aid and facilitate this genocide.

She named one hundred forty-five major corporations that are benefiting from genocide, that can be accused of genocide: from Lockheed to all the airline companies, Boeing, McDonald's, and many other companies active in the field of food and technology.

Today, if you are being surveilled - anyone of you who uses a phone or uses social media - maybe the Israelis are monitoring you. The story is very clear.

All the social media are monitored by Israel. And they sell these controls, these informations, to a lot of countries, especially the non-democratic or not sufficiently democratic ones. Many Arab countries are surveilled in their activities, in their lives, and suffer from absence of privacy.

The economics of genocide is paying dividends to the Israelis and to their supporters. Could you think of Trump with his son-in-law Kushner who wants to change Gaza into a touristic city on the sea? I do not know how, but they are thinking about the real estate economy. Mister Trump: every piece of land is a building project for him even if this could happen at the expense of a family, of children, of the life of someone.

Clearly this is not an economic issue, it is an issue of justice: what about justice and civil rights? They are not things that can be object of negotiation, of commerce. Here we are really at an important crossroad.

What happens in the Middle East will not stay in the Middle East. It is spreading everywhere.

We are all going to be vulnerable. If the situation in Gaza continues as it is, our indivisible human dignity is in danger, at risk.

We should care about the children of the Palestinians. Today it is the children of Palestine, tomorrow it could be our children.

Because we need to defend the right of people to live.

We need to defend International Law and the sanctity of human life, the instruments of International Law and the dignity of human life.

Without law it is a jungle, a space in which anything can be said, where things that are false or that do not exist can be said, where humanity is not mentioned. Humanity needs law and order and we do not have any surrogate for law, for international law.

We cannot turn a blind eye to the ICC, to the International Criminal Court. We cannot ignore the International Criminal Court.

If Netanyahu flies over Italy, the Italians are responsible, they can imprison him, if I am not wrong.

And if we do not respect the ICC, we must respect the IJC, the International Court of Justice. My argument is very simple.

We are all responsible for this situation. It's our responsibility. We have to take into our hands the defense of International Law.

I would conclude by saying that I am very proud to be in Bari. I was very much energized by these speeches.

I am grateful to the Politecnico di Bari for its very honorable position and to all the professors who are breaking the walls of the ivory towers and coming with their expertise, their knowledge, and their humanity to defend the weak and the vulnerable.

Umberto Fratino⁸

Grazie. Thank you. Thank you all for coming and for listening. I would like to say just a few words.

As a human being, I want to express my deep sorrow for what has happened in Gaza. This is not acceptable—under any circumstances.

I believe that everyone bears responsibility in the face of this tragedy. We cannot remain in our homes, simply observing what is happening, without saying a word or taking a position. This responsibility lies first and foremost with institutions, which must set an example.

We must take a clear stance on what is happening around us. This is essential—it is part of our role.

I believe we must put culture first, because without culture, tragedies like this can happen again, just as they have happened in the past. What we are witnessing is a humanitarian catastrophe that cannot be accepted.

After more than a year and a half of war, we must be fully aware that approximately two million people are living in extremely dramatic conditions, deprived of basic necessities. This is, above all, a human crisis.

I hope that society as a whole, and the international community, will become fully aware of this and take meaningful action to support those affected.

⁸ Rector of the Polytechnic University of Bari

I have worked for many years with Palestinian people. Throughout my academic life, I have collaborated with many colleagues from that land—brilliant people, with the same talents, dignity, and potential as people anywhere in the world. What is happening to them today is profoundly tragic. As the incoming Rector of this University, I believe that our institution, our city, and our region must take a leading role, working together with others to provide concrete support. We are capable of welcoming people from the Palestinian territories and helping them grow through education and culture. Before any physical reconstruction, what is needed is a moral reconstruction of the human being.

Thank you all for being here.