

DECLARATIONS OF INTENT

OVERVIEW: DECLARATIONS OF INTENT

A declaration of intent is a statement released by one or more conflict parties that sets out their desire to move towards a ceasefire, and some of the general principles that they would like to underpin a future ceasefire agreement.

A declaration of intent:

- Does not include formal obligations or any specific ceasefire agreement.
- Provides a possible starting point that future ceasefires and agreements can build upon.

DECLARATIONS OF INTENT IN THE PEACE PROCESS

Common first step in a ceasefire process:

- Demonstrates conflict parties willingness to communicate, begin negotiations, and recognise a ceasefire's utility.
- Normally occurs in the pre-negotiation phase and creates the conditions for negotiations.

Provides an opportunity to:

- Assess the intentions of opponent(s).
- Establish broad guidelines for the future negotiation of ceasefire agreements.

However, not all ceasefire processes begin with a declaration of intent. Depending on the context, parties may:

- Negotiate confidentially.
- De-escalate violence unofficially.
- Agree to a truce or similar arrangement to signal intent.

Mediators, security advisors, and technical experts may be involved in negotiating a declaration of intent, but conflict parties may also take this step independently.

CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES OF A DECLARATION OF INTENT

Opportunities:

- Low cost form of commitment, particularly in a low-trust, complex environment.
- When successful, provides a framework and momentum to move towards peace

Challenges:

- May be used to feign peaceful intent for a variety of reasons (for example, reducing international pressure or misleading an opponent).