

DISCRIMINATION, PERSECUTION, MARTYRDOM:  
**FOLLOWING CHRIST TOGETHER**

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**Global Primary Sources:  
Freedom of Religion or Belief,  
Human Rights,  
and Responding to Persecution**

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As all the reliable reports show, only a small percentage of the world's population enjoys real freedom of religion. Discrimination and persecution are commonplace, and even martyrdom is far too common. And the lack of protection for the basic human right of religious freedom is very frequently connected with other human rights abuses. Torture, genocide, and ethnic cleansing often accompany religious persecution, while the lack of freedom of speech, freedom of travel, freedom of assembly, and freedom of the press are such normal parts of widespread religious persecution that they are sometimes no longer mentioned. Our united concern to address the problems of discrimination, persecution, and martyrdom facing Christians should be organically tied to our proper Christian concern for human rights protections on the global level. For this reason we are providing a small selection of primary source readings about human rights and religious freedom, to be supplemented by a small selection of essays by Christian scholars that help provide a philosophical, theological, and sociological framework for thought and action regarding religious freedom and other human rights.

## I. The United Nations

### Universal Declaration of Human Rights

#### Preamble

Whereas recognition of the inherent dignity and of the equal and inalienable rights of all members of the human family is the foundation of freedom, justice and peace in the world,

Whereas disregard and contempt for human rights have resulted in barbarous acts which have outraged the conscience of mankind, and the advent of a world in which human beings shall enjoy freedom of speech and belief and freedom from fear and want has been proclaimed as the highest aspiration of the common people,

Whereas it is essential, if man is not to be compelled to have recourse, as a last resort, to rebellion against tyranny and oppression, that human rights should be protected by the rule of law,

Whereas it is essential to promote the development of friendly relations between nations,

Whereas the peoples of the United Nations have in the Charter reaffirmed their faith in fundamental human rights, in the dignity and worth of the human person and in the equal rights of men and women and have determined to promote social progress and better standards of life in larger freedom,

Whereas Member States have pledged themselves to achieve, in cooperation with the United Nations, the promotion of universal respect for and observance of human rights and fundamental freedoms,

Whereas a common understanding of these rights and freedoms is of the greatest importance for the full realization of this pledge,

Now, therefore,

#### THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY

Proclaims this Universal Declaration of Human Rights as a common standard of achievement for all peoples and all nations, to the end that every individual and every organ of society, keeping this Declaration constantly in mind, shall strive by teaching and education to promote respect for these rights and freedoms and by progressive measures, national and international, to secure their universal and effective recognition and observance, both among the peoples of Member States themselves and among the peoples of territories under their jurisdiction.

#### Article 1

All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights. They are endowed with reason and conscience and should act towards one another in a spirit of brotherhood.

#### Article 2

Everyone is entitled to all the rights and freedoms set forth in this Declaration, without distinction of any kind, such as race, color, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth or other status.

Furthermore, no distinction shall be made on the basis of the political, jurisdictional or international status of the country or territory to which a person belongs, whether it be independent, trust, non-self-governing or under any other limitation of sovereignty.

#### Article 3

Everyone has the right to life, liberty, and the security of person.

**Article 4**

No one shall be held in slavery or servitude; slavery and the slave trade shall be prohibited in all their forms.

**Article 5**

No one shall be subjected to torture or to cruel, inhumane or degrading treatment or punishment.

**Article 6**

Everyone has a right to recognition everywhere as a person before the law.

**Article 7**

All are equal before the law and are entitled without any discrimination to equal protection of the law. All are entitled to equal protection against any discrimination in violation of this Declaration and against any incitement to such discrimination.

**Article 8**

Everyone has the right to an effective remedy by the competent national tribunals for acts violating the fundamental rights granted him by the constitution or by law.

**Article 9**

No one shall be subject to arbitrary arrest, detention, or exile.

**Article 10**

Everyone is entitled in full equality to a fair and public hearing by an independent and impartial tribunal, in the determination of his rights and obligation and of any criminal charge against him.

**Article 11**

1. Everyone charged with a penal offence has the right to be presumed innocent until proved guilty according to law in a public trial at which he has had all the guaranties necessary for his defense
2. No one shall be held guilty of any penal offence on account of any act or omission which did not constitute a penal offence, under national or international law, at the time when it was committed. Nor shall a heavier penalty be imposed than the one that was applicable at the time the penal offence was committed.

**Article 12**

No one shall be subjected to arbitrary interference with his privacy, family, home, or correspondence, nor to attacks upon his honor and reputation. Everyone has the right to the protection of the law against such interference or attacks.

**Article 13**

1. Everyone has the right to freedom of movement and residence within the borders of each State.
2. Everyone has the right leave any country, including his own, and to return to his country.

**Article 14**

1. Everyone has the right to seek and to enjoy on other countries asylum from persecution.
2. This right may not be invoked in the case of prosecutions genuinely arising from nonpolitical crimes or from acts contrary to the purposes and principles of the United Nations.

**Article 15**

1. Everyone has a right to a nationality.
2. No one shall be arbitrarily deprived of his nationality nor denied the right to change his nationality.

## Article 16

1. Men and women of full age, without any limitation due to race, nationality or religion, have the right to marry and to found a family. They are entitled to equal rights as to marriage, during marriage and at its dissolution.
2. Marriage shall be entered into only with the free and full consent of the intending spouses.
3. The family is the natural and fundamental group unit of society and is entitled to protection by society and the State.

## Article 17

1. Everyone has the right to own property alone as well as in association with others.
2. No one shall be arbitrarily deprived of his property.

## Article 18

Everyone has the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion; this right includes freedom to change his religion or belief, and freedom, either alone or in community with others and in public or private, to manifest his religion or belief in teaching, practice, worship and observance.

## Article 19

Everyone has the right to freedom of opinion and expression; this right includes freedom to hold opinions without interference and to seek, receive and impart information and ideas through any media and regardless of frontiers.

## Article 20

1. Everyone has the right to freedom of peaceful assembly and association.
2. No one may be compelled to belong to an association.

## Article 21

1. Everyone has the right to take part in the government of his country, directly or through freely chosen representatives.
2. Everyone has the right of equal access to public service in his country.
3. The will of the people shall be the basis of the authority of government; this will shall be expressed in periodic and genuine elections which shall be by universal and equal suffrage and shall be held by secret vote or by equivalent free voting procedures.

## Article 22

Everyone, as a member of society, has the right to social security and is entitled to realization, through national effort and international co-operation and in accordance with the organization and resources of each State, of the economic, social and cultural rights indispensable for his dignity and the free development of his personality.

## Article 23

1. Everyone has the right to work, to free choice of employment, to just and favorable conditions of work and to protection against unemployment.
2. Everyone, without any discrimination, has the right to equal pay for equal work.
3. Everyone who works has the right to just and favorable remuneration ensuring for himself and his family an existence worthy of human dignity, and supplemented, if necessary, by other means of social protection.
4. Everyone has the right to form and to join trade unions for the protection of his interests.

**Article 24**

Everyone has the right to rest and leisure, including reasonable limitation of working hours and periodic holidays with pay.

**Article 25**

1. Everyone has the right to a standard of living adequate for the health and well-being of himself and of his family, including food, clothing, housing and medical care and necessary social services, and the right to security in the event of unemployment, sickness, disability, widowhood, old age or other lack of livelihood in circumstances beyond his control.

2. Motherhood and childhood are entitled to special care and assistance. All children, whether born in or out of wedlock, shall enjoy the same social protection.

**Article 26**

1. Everyone has the right to education. Education shall be free, at least in the elementary and fundamental stages. Elementary education shall be compulsory. Technical and professional education shall be made generally available and higher education shall be equally accessible to all on the basis of merit.

2. Education shall be directed to the full development of the human personality and to the strengthening of respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms. It shall promote understanding, tolerance and friendship among all nations, racial or religious groups, and shall further the activities of the United Nations for the maintenance of peace.

3. Parents have a prior right to choose the kind of education that shall be given to their children.

**Article 27**

1. Everyone has the right freely to participate in the cultural life of the community, to enjoy the arts and to share in scientific advancement and its benefits.

2. Everyone has the right to the protection of the moral and material interests resulting from any scientific, literary or artistic production of which he is the author.

**Article 28**

Everyone is entitled to a social and international order in which the rights and freedoms set forth in this Declaration can be fully realized.

**Article 29**

1. Everyone has duties to the community in which alone the free and full development of his personality is possible.

2. In the exercise of his rights and freedoms, everyone shall be subject only to such limitations as are determined by law solely for the purpose of securing due recognition and respect for the rights and freedoms of others and of meeting the just requirements of morality, public order and the general welfare in a democratic society.

3. These rights and freedoms may in no case be exercised contrary to the purposes and principles of the United Nations.

**Article 30**

Nothing in this Declaration may be interpreted as implying for any State, group or person any right to engage in any activity or to perform any act aimed at the destruction of any of the rights and freedoms set forth herein.

## II. The Second Vatican Council:

### Declaration on Religious Freedom

#### *DIGNITATIS HUMANAE*

ON THE RIGHT OF THE PERSON AND OF COMMUNITIES  
TO SOCIAL AND CIVIL FREEDOM IN MATTERS RELIGIOUS  
PROMULGATED BY POPE PAUL VI  
DECEMBER 7, 1965

1. A sense of the dignity of the human person has been impressing itself more and more deeply on the consciousness of contemporary man,<sup>1</sup> and the demand is increasingly made that men should act on their own judgment, enjoying and making use of a responsible freedom, not driven by coercion but motivated by a sense of duty. The demand is likewise made that constitutional limits should be set to the powers of government, in order that there may be no encroachment on the rightful freedom of the person and of associations. This demand for freedom in human society chiefly regards the quest for the values proper to the human spirit. It regards, in the first place, the free exercise of religion in society. This Vatican Council takes careful note of these desires in the minds of men. It proposes to declare them to be greatly in accord with truth and justice. To this end, it searches into the sacred tradition and doctrine of the Church—the treasury out of which the Church continually brings forth new things that are in harmony with the things that are old.

First, the council professes its belief that God Himself has made known to mankind the way in which men are to serve Him, and thus be saved in Christ and come to blessedness. We believe that this one true religion subsists in the Catholic and Apostolic Church, to which the Lord Jesus committed the duty of spreading it abroad among all men. Thus He spoke to the Apostles: "Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have enjoined upon you" (Matt. 28: 19-20). On their part, all men are bound to seek the truth, especially in what concerns God and His Church, and to embrace the truth they come to know, and to hold fast to it.

This Vatican Council likewise professes its belief that it is upon the human conscience that these obligations fall and exert their binding force. The truth cannot impose itself except by virtue of its own truth, as it makes its entrance into the mind at once quietly and with power.

Religious freedom, in turn, which men demand as necessary to fulfill their duty to worship God, has to do with immunity from coercion in civil society. Therefore it leaves untouched traditional Catholic doctrine on the moral duty of men and societies toward the true religion and toward the one Church of Christ.

Over and above all this, the council intends to develop the doctrine of recent popes on the inviolable rights of the human person and the constitutional order of society.

2. This Vatican Council declares that the human person has a right to religious freedom. This freedom means that all men are to be immune from coercion on the part of individuals or of social groups and of any human power, in such wise that no one is to be forced to act in a manner contrary to his own beliefs, whether privately or publicly, whether alone or in association with others, within due limits.

The council further declares that the right to religious freedom has its foundation in the very dignity of the human person as this dignity is known through the revealed word of God and by reason itself.<sup>2</sup> This right of

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<sup>1</sup> Cf. John XXIII, encycl. "Pacem in Terris", April 11, 1963: AAS 55 (1963) p. 279; *ibid.*, p. 265; Pius XII, radio message, Dec. 24, 1944: AAS 37 (1945), p. 14.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. John XXIII, encycl. "Pacem in Terris", April 11, 1963: AAS 55 (1963), pp. 260-261; Pius XII, radio message, Dec. 24, 1942: AAS 35 (1943), p. 19; Pius XI, encycl. "Mit Brennender Sorge", March 14, 1937: AAS 29 (1937), p. 160; Leo XIII, encycl. "Libertas Praestantissimum", June 20, 1888: Acts of Leo XIII 8 (1888), p. 237-238.

the human person to religious freedom is to be recognized in the constitutional law whereby society is governed and thus it is to become a civil right.

It is in accordance with their dignity as persons—that is, beings endowed with reason and free will and therefore privileged to bear personal responsibility—that all men should be at once impelled by nature and also bound by a moral obligation to seek the truth, especially religious truth. They are also bound to adhere to the truth, once it is known, and to order their whole lives in accord with the demands of truth. However, men cannot discharge these obligations in a manner in keeping with their own nature unless they enjoy immunity from external coercion as well as psychological freedom. Therefore the right to religious freedom has its foundation not in the subjective disposition of the person, but in his very nature. In consequence, the right to this immunity continues to exist even in those who do not live up to their obligation of seeking the truth and adhering to it and the exercise of this right is not to be impeded, provided that just public order be observed.

3. Further light is shed on the subject if one considers that the highest norm of human life is the divine law—eternal, objective and universal—whereby God orders, directs and governs the entire universe and all the ways of the human community by a plan conceived in wisdom and love. Man has been made by God to participate in this law, with the result that, under the gentle disposition of divine Providence, he can come to perceive ever more fully the truth that is unchanging. Wherefore every man has the duty, and therefore the right, to seek the truth in matters religious in order that he may with prudence form for himself right and true judgments of conscience, under use of all suitable means.

Truth, however, is to be sought after in a manner proper to the dignity of the human person and his social nature. The inquiry is to be free, carried on with the aid of teaching or instruction, communication and dialogue, in the course of which men explain to one another the truth they have discovered, or think they have discovered, in order thus to assist one another in the quest for truth.

Moreover, as the truth is discovered, it is by a personal assent that men are to adhere to it.

On his part, man perceives and acknowledges the imperatives of the divine law through the mediation of conscience. In all his activity a man is bound to follow his conscience in order that he may come to God, the end and purpose of life. It follows that he is not to be forced to act in a manner contrary to his conscience. Nor, on the other hand, is he to be restrained from acting in accordance with his conscience, especially in matters religious. The reason is that the exercise of religion, of its very nature, consists before all else in those internal, voluntary and free acts whereby man sets the course of his life directly toward God. No merely human power can either command or prohibit acts of this kind.<sup>3</sup> The social nature of man, however, itself requires that he should give external expression to his internal acts of religion: that he should share with others in matters religious; that he should profess his religion in community. Injury therefore is done to the human person and to the very order established by God for human life, if the free exercise of religion is denied in society, provided just public order is observed.

There is a further consideration. The religious acts whereby men, in private and in public and out of a sense of personal conviction, direct their lives to God transcend by their very nature the order of terrestrial and temporal affairs. Government therefore ought indeed to take account of the religious life of the citizenry and show it favor, since the function of government is to make provision for the common welfare. However, it would clearly transgress the limits set to its power, were it to presume to command or inhibit acts that are religious.

4. The freedom or immunity from coercion in matters religious which is the endowment of persons as individuals is also to be recognized as their right when they act in community. Religious communities are a requirement of the social nature both of man and of religion itself.

Provided the just demands of public order are observed, religious communities rightfully claim freedom in order that they may govern themselves according to their own norms, honor the Supreme Being in public worship, assist their members in the practice of the religious life, strengthen them by instruction, and pro-

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<sup>3</sup> Cf. John XXIII, encycl. "Pacem in Terris", April 11, 1963: AAS 55 (1963), p. 270; Paul VI, radio message, Dec. 22, 1964: AAS 57 (1965), pp. 181-182.

mote institutions in which they may join together for the purpose of ordering their own lives in accordance with their religious principles.

Religious communities also have the right not to be hindered, either by legal measures or by administrative action on the part of government, in the selection, training, appointment, and transferral of their own ministers, in communicating with religious authorities and communities abroad, in erecting buildings for religious purposes, and in the acquisition and use of suitable funds or properties.

Religious communities also have the right not to be hindered in their public teaching and witness to their faith, whether by the spoken or by the written word. However, in spreading religious faith and in introducing religious practices everyone ought at all times to refrain from any manner of action which might seem to carry a hint of coercion or of a kind of persuasion that would be dishonorable or unworthy, especially when dealing with poor or uneducated people. Such a manner of action would have to be considered an abuse of one's right and a violation of the right of others.

In addition, it comes within the meaning of religious freedom that religious communities should not be prohibited from freely undertaking to show the special value of their doctrine in what concerns the organization of society and the inspiration of the whole of human activity. Finally, the social nature of man and the very nature of religion afford the foundation of the right of men freely to hold meetings and to establish educational, cultural, charitable and social organizations, under the impulse of their own religious sense.

5. The family, since it is a society in its own original right, has the right freely to live its own domestic religious life under the guidance of parents. Parents, moreover, have the right to determine, in accordance with their own religious beliefs, the kind of religious education that their children are to receive. Government, in consequence, must acknowledge the right of parents to make a genuinely free choice of schools and of other means of education, and the use of this freedom of choice is not to be made a reason for imposing unjust burdens on parents, whether directly or indirectly. Besides, the right of parents are violated, if their children are forced to attend lessons or instructions which are not in agreement with their religious beliefs, or if a single system of education, from which all religious formation is excluded, is imposed upon all.

6. Since the common welfare of society consists in the entirety of those conditions of social life under which men enjoy the possibility of achieving their own perfection in a certain fullness of measure and also with some relative ease, it chiefly consists in the protection of the rights, and in the performance of the duties, of the human person.<sup>4</sup> Therefore the care of the right to religious freedom devolves upon the whole citizenry, upon social groups, upon government, and upon the Church and other religious communities, in virtue of the duty of all toward the common welfare, and in the manner proper to each.

The protection and promotion of the inviolable rights of man ranks among the essential duties of government.<sup>5</sup> Therefore government is to assume the safeguard of the religious freedom of all its citizens, in an effective manner, by just laws and by other appropriate means.

Government is also to help create conditions favorable to the fostering of religious life, in order that the people may be truly enabled to exercise their religious rights and to fulfill their religious duties, and also in order that society itself may profit by the moral qualities of justice and peace which have their origin in men's faithfulness to God and to His holy will.<sup>6</sup>

If, in view of peculiar circumstances obtaining among peoples, special civil recognition is given to one religious community in the constitutional order of society, it is at the same time imperative that the right of all citizens and religious communities to religious freedom should be recognized and made effective in practice.

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<sup>4</sup> Cf. John XXIII, encycl. "Mater et Magistra", May 15, 1961: AAS 53 (1961), p. 417; idem, encycl. "Pacem in Terris", April 11, 1963: AAS 55 (1963), p. 273.

<sup>5</sup> Cf. John XXIII, encycl. "Pacem in Terris", April 11, 1963: AAS 55 (1963), pp. 273-274; Pius XII, radio message, June 1 1941: AAS 33 (1941), p. 200.

<sup>6</sup> Cf. Leo XIII, encycl. "Immortale Dei", Nov. 1, 1885: AAS 18 (1885) p. 161.

Finally, government is to see to it that equality of citizens before the law, which is itself an element of the common good, is never violated, whether openly or covertly, for religious reasons. Nor is there to be discrimination among citizens.

It follows that a wrong is done when government imposes upon its people, by force or fear or other means, the profession or repudiation of any religion, or when it hinders men from joining or leaving a religious community. All the more is it a violation of the will of God and of the sacred rights of the person and the family of nations when force is brought to bear in any way in order to destroy or repress religion, either in the whole of mankind or in a particular country or in a definite community.

7. The right to religious freedom is exercised in human society: hence its exercise is subject to certain regulatory norms. In the use of all freedoms the moral principle of personal and social responsibility is to be observed. In the exercise of their rights, individual men and social groups are bound by the moral law to have respect both for the rights of others and for their own duties toward others and for the common welfare of all. Men are to deal with their fellows in justice and civility.

Furthermore, society has the right to defend itself against possible abuses committed on the pretext of freedom of religion. It is the special duty of government to provide this protection. However, government is not to act in an arbitrary fashion or in an unfair spirit of partisanship. Its action is to be controlled by juridical norms which are in conformity with the objective moral order. These norms arise out of the need for the effective safeguard of the rights of all citizens and for the peaceful settlement of conflicts of rights, also out of the need for an adequate care of genuine public peace, which comes about when men live together in good order and in true justice, and finally out of the need for a proper guardianship of public morality.

These matters constitute the basic component of the common welfare: they are what is meant by public order. For the rest, the usages of society are to be the usages of freedom in their full range: that is, the freedom of man is to be respected as far as possible and is not to be curtailed except when and insofar as necessary.

8. Many pressures are brought to bear upon the men of our day, to the point where the danger arises lest they lose the possibility of acting on their own judgment. On the other hand, not a few can be found who seem inclined to use the name of freedom as the pretext for refusing to submit to authority and for making light of the duty of obedience. Wherefore this Vatican Council urges everyone, especially those who are charged with the task of educating others, to do their utmost to form men who, on the one hand, will respect the moral order and be obedient to lawful authority, and on the other hand, will be lovers of true freedom-men, in other words, who will come to decisions on their own judgment and in the light of truth, govern their activities with a sense of responsibility, and strive after what is true and right, willing always to join with others in cooperative effort.

Religious freedom therefore ought to have this further purpose and aim, namely, that men may come to act with greater responsibility in fulfilling their duties in community life.

9. The declaration of this Vatican Council on the right of man to religious freedom has its foundation in the dignity of the person, whose exigencies have come to be fully known to human reason through centuries of experience. What is more, this doctrine of freedom has roots in divine revelation, and for this reason Christians are bound to respect it all the more conscientiously. Revelation does not indeed affirm in so many words the right of man to immunity from external coercion in matters religious. It does, however, disclose the dignity of the human person in its full dimensions. It gives evidence of the respect which Christ showed toward the freedom with which man is to fulfill his duty of belief in the word of God and it gives us lessons in the spirit which disciples of such a Master ought to adopt and continually follow. Thus further light is cast upon the general principles upon which the doctrine of this declaration on religious freedom is based. In particular, religious freedom in society is entirely consonant with the freedom of the act of Christian faith.

10. It is one of the major tenets of Catholic doctrine that man's response to God in faith must be free: no one therefore is to be forced to embrace the Christian faith against his own will.<sup>7</sup> This doctrine is contained in the word of God and it was constantly proclaimed by the Fathers of the Church.<sup>8</sup> The act of faith is of its very nature a free act. Man, redeemed by Christ the Savior and through Christ Jesus called to be God's adopted son,<sup>9</sup> cannot give his adherence to God revealing Himself unless, under the drawing of the Father,<sup>10</sup> he offers to God the reasonable and free submission of faith. It is therefore completely in accord with the nature of faith that in matters religious every manner of coercion on the part of men should be excluded. In consequence, the principle of religious freedom makes no small contribution to the creation of an environment in which men can without hindrance be invited to the Christian faith, embrace it of their own free will, and profess it effectively in their whole manner of life.

11. God calls men to serve Him in spirit and in truth, hence they are bound in conscience but they stand under no compulsion. God has regard for the dignity of the human person whom He Himself created and man is to be guided by his own judgment and he is to enjoy freedom. This truth appears at its height in Christ Jesus, in whom God manifested Himself and His ways with men. Christ is at once Master and our Lord<sup>11</sup> and also meek and humble of heart.<sup>12</sup> In attracting and inviting His disciples He used patience.<sup>13</sup> He wrought miracles to illuminate His teaching and to establish its truth, but His intention was to rouse faith in His hearers and to confirm them in faith, not to exert coercion upon them.<sup>14</sup> He did indeed denounce the unbelief of some who listened to Him, but He left vengeance to God in expectation of the day of judgment.<sup>15</sup> When He sent His Apostles into the world, He said to them: "He who believes and is baptized will be saved. He who does not believe will be condemned" (Mark 16:16). But He Himself, noting that the cockle had been sown amid the wheat, gave orders that both should be allowed to grow until the harvest time, which will come at the end of the world.<sup>16</sup> He refused to be a political messiah, ruling by force.<sup>17</sup> He preferred to call Himself the Son of Man, who came "to serve and to give his life as a ransom for the many" (Mark 10:45). He showed Himself the perfect servant of God,<sup>18</sup> who "does not break the bruised reed nor extinguish the smoking flax" (Matt. 12:20).

He acknowledged the power of government and its rights, when He commanded that tribute be given to Caesar: but He gave clear warning that the higher rights of God are to be kept inviolate: "Render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's and to God the things that are God's" (Matt. 22:21). In the end, when He completed on the cross the work of redemption whereby He achieved salvation and true freedom for men, He brought His revelation to completion. For He bore witness to the truth,<sup>19</sup> but He refused to impose the

<sup>7</sup> Cf. CIC, c. 1351; Pius XII, allocution to prelate auditors and other officials and administrators of the tribune of the Holy Roman Rota, Oct. 6, 1946: AAS 38 (1946), p. 394; idem. *Encycl. Mystici Corporis*, June 29, 1943: AAS (1943) p. 243.

<sup>8</sup> Cf. Lactantius "Divinarum Institutionum", Book V, 19: CSEL 19, pp. 463-464, 465: PL 6, 614 and 616 (ch. 20); St. Ambrose, "Epistola ad Valentianum Imp.", Letter 21: PL 16, 1005; St. Augustine, "Contra Litteras Petiliani", Book II, ch. 83: CSEL 52 p. 112: PL 43, 315; cf. C. 23, q. 5, c. 33, (ed. Friedberg, col. 939); idem, Letter 23: PL 33, 98, idem, Letter 34: PL 33, 132; idem, Letter 35: PL 33, 135; St. Gregory the Great, "Epistola ad Virgilium et Theodorum Episcopos Massiliae Galliarum", Register of Letters I, 45: MGH Ep. 1, p. 72: PL 77, 510-511 (Book I, ep. 47); idem, "Epistola ad Johannem Episcopum Constantinopolitanum", Register of Letters, III, 52: MGH Letter 1, p. 210: PL 77, 649 (Book III, Letter 53); cf. D. 45, c. 1 (ed. Friedberg, col. 160); Council of Toledo IV, c. 57: Mansi 10, 633; cf. D. 45, c. 5 (ed. Friedberg, col. 161-162); Clement III: X., V, 6, 9: ed. Friedberg, col. 774; Innocent III, "Epistola ad Arelatensem Archiepiscopum", X., III, 42, 3: Friedberg, col. 646.

<sup>9</sup> Cf. Eph. 1:5.

<sup>10</sup> Cf. John 6:44.

<sup>11</sup> Cf. John 13:13.

<sup>12</sup> Cf. Matt. 11:29.

<sup>13</sup> Cf. Matt. 11:28-30; John 6:67-68.

<sup>14</sup> Cf. Matt. 9:28-29; Mark 9:23-24; 6:5-6; Paul VI, encycl. "Ecclesiam Suam", Aug. 6, 1964: AAS 56 (1964), pp. 642-643.

<sup>15</sup> Cf. Matt. 11:20-24; Rom. 12:19-20; 2 Thess. 1:8.

<sup>16</sup> Cf. Matt. 13:30 and 40-42.

<sup>17</sup> Cf. Matt. 4:8-10; John 6:15.

<sup>18</sup> Cf. Is. 42:1-4.

<sup>19</sup> Cf. John 18:37.

truth by force on those who spoke against it. Not by force of blows does His rule assert its claims.<sup>20</sup> It is established by witnessing to the truth and by hearing the truth, and it extends its dominion by the love whereby Christ, lifted up on the cross, draws all men to Himself.<sup>21</sup>

Taught by the word and example of Christ, the Apostles followed the same way. From the very origins of the Church the disciples of Christ strove to convert men to faith in Christ as the Lord; not, however, by the use of coercion or of devices unworthy of the Gospel, but by the power, above all, of the word of God.<sup>22</sup> Steadfastly they proclaimed to all the plan of God our Savior, "who wills that all men should be saved and come to the acknowledgment of the truth" (1 Tim. 2:4). At the same time, however, they showed respect for those of weaker stuff, even though they were in error, and thus they made it plain that "each one of us is to render to God an account of himself" (Romans 14:12),<sup>23</sup> and for that reason is bound to obey his conscience. Like Christ Himself, the Apostles were unceasingly bent upon bearing witness to the truth of God, and they showed the fullest measure of boldness in "speaking the word with confidence" (Acts 4:31)<sup>24</sup> before the people and their rulers. With a firm faith they held that the Gospel is indeed the power of God unto salvation for all who believe.<sup>25</sup> Therefore they rejected all "carnal weapons:"<sup>26</sup> they followed the example of the gentleness and respectfulness of Christ and they preached the word of God in the full confidence that there was resident in this word itself a divine power able to destroy all the forces arrayed against God<sup>27</sup> and bring men to faith in Christ and to His service.<sup>28</sup> As the Master, so too the Apostles recognized legitimate civil authority. "For there is no power except from God", the Apostle teaches, and thereafter commands: "Let everyone be subject to higher authorities.... He who resists authority resists God's ordinance" (Romans 13:1-5).<sup>29</sup> At the same time, however, they did not hesitate to speak out against governing powers which set themselves in opposition to the holy will of God: "It is necessary to obey God rather than men" (Acts 5:29).<sup>30</sup> This is the way along which the martyrs and other faithful have walked through all ages and over all the earth.

12. In faithfulness therefore to the truth of the Gospel, the Church is following the way of Christ and the apostles when she recognizes and gives support to the principle of religious freedom as befitting the dignity of man and as being in accord with divine revelation. Throughout the ages the Church has kept safe and handed on the doctrine received from the Master and from the apostles. In the life of the People of God, as it has made its pilgrim way through the vicissitudes of human history, there has at times appeared a way of acting that was hardly in accord with the spirit of the Gospel or even opposed to it. Nevertheless, the doctrine of the Church that no one is to be coerced into faith has always stood firm.

Thus the leaven of the Gospel has long been about its quiet work in the minds of men, and to it is due in great measure the fact that in the course of time men have come more widely to recognize their dignity as persons, and the conviction has grown stronger that the person in society is to be kept free from all manner of coercion in matters religious.

13. Among the things that concern the good of the Church and indeed the welfare of society here on earth—things therefore that are always and everywhere to be kept secure and defended against all injury—this certainly is preeminent, namely, that the Church should enjoy that full measure of freedom which her care for the salvation of men requires.<sup>31</sup> This is a sacred freedom, because the only-begotten Son endowed with it the Church which He purchased with His blood. Indeed it is so much the property of the Church that to act

<sup>20</sup> Cf. Matt. 26:51-53; John 18:36.

<sup>21</sup> Cf. John 12:32.

<sup>22</sup> Cf. 1 Cor. 2:3-5; 1 Thess. 2:3-5.

<sup>23</sup> Cf. Rom. 14:1-23; 1 Cor. 8:9-13; 10:23-33.

<sup>24</sup> Cf. Eph. 6:19-20.

<sup>25</sup> Cf. Rom. 1:16.

<sup>26</sup> Cf. 2 Cor. 10:4; 1 Thess. 5:8-9.

<sup>27</sup> Cf. Eph. 6:11-17.

<sup>28</sup> Cf. 2 Cor. 10:3-5.

<sup>29</sup> Cf. 1 Pet. 2:13-17.

<sup>30</sup> Cf. Acts 4: 19-20.

<sup>31</sup> Cf. Leo XIII, letter "Officio Sanctissimo", Dec. 22 1887: AAS 20 (1887), p. 269; idem, letter "Ex Litteris", April 7 1887: AAS 19 (1886), p. 465.

against it is to act against the will of God. The freedom of the Church is the fundamental principle in what concerns the relations between the Church and governments and the whole civil order.

In human society and in the face of government the Church claims freedom for herself in her character as a spiritual authority, established by Christ the Lord, upon which there rests, by divine mandate, the duty of going out into the whole world and preaching the Gospel to every creature.<sup>32</sup> The Church also claims freedom for herself in her character as a society of men who have the right to live in society in accordance with the precepts of the Christian faith.<sup>33</sup>

In turn, where the principle of religious freedom is not only proclaimed in words or simply incorporated in law but also given sincere and practical application, there the Church succeeds in achieving a stable situation of right as well as of fact and the independence which is necessary for the fulfillment of her divine mission.

This independence is precisely what the authorities of the Church claim in society.<sup>34</sup> At the same time, the Christian faithful, in common with all other men, possess the civil right not to be hindered in leading their lives in accordance with their consciences. Therefore, a harmony exists between the freedom of the Church and the religious freedom which is to be recognized as the right of all men and communities and sanctioned by constitutional law.

14. In order to be faithful to the divine command, "teach all nations" (Matt. 28:19-20), the Catholic Church must work with all urgency and concern "that the word of God be spread abroad and glorified" (2 Thess. 3:1). Hence the Church earnestly begs of its children that, "first of all, supplications, prayers, petitions, acts of thanksgiving be made for all men.... For this is good and agreeable in the sight of God our Savior, who wills that all men be saved and come to the knowledge of the truth" (1 Tim. 2:1-4). In the formation of their consciences, the Christian faithful ought carefully to attend to the sacred and certain doctrine of the Church.<sup>35</sup> For the Church is, by the will of Christ, the teacher of the truth. It is her duty to give utterance to, and authoritatively to teach, that truth which is Christ Himself, and also to declare and confirm by her authority those principles of the moral order which have their origins in human nature itself. Furthermore, let Christians walk in wisdom in the face of those outside, "in the Holy Spirit, in unaffected love, in the word of truth" (2 Cor. 6:6-7), and let them be about their task of spreading the light of life with all confidence<sup>36</sup> and apostolic courage, even to the shedding of their blood.

The disciple is bound by a grave obligation toward Christ, his Master, ever more fully to understand the truth received from Him, faithfully to proclaim it, and vigorously to defend it, never-be it understood-having recourse to means that are incompatible with the spirit of the Gospel. At the same time, the charity of Christ urges him to love and have prudence and patience in his dealings with those who are in error or in ignorance with regard to the faith.<sup>37</sup> All is to be taken into account-the Christian duty to Christ, the life-giving word which must be proclaimed, the rights of the human person, and the measure of grace granted by God through Christ to men who are invited freely to accept and profess the faith.

15. The fact is that men of the present day want to be able freely to profess their religion in private and in public. Indeed, religious freedom has already been declared to be a civil right in most constitutions, and it is solemnly recognized in international documents.<sup>38</sup> The further fact is that forms of government still exist under which, even though freedom of religious worship receives constitutional recognition, the powers of government are engaged in the effort to deter citizens from the profession of religion and to make life very difficult and dangerous for religious communities.

This council greets with joy the first of these two facts as among the signs of the times. With sorrow, however, it denounces the other fact, as only to be deplored. The council exhorts Catholics, and it directs a plea

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<sup>32</sup> Cf. Mark 16:15; Matt. 28:18-20, Pius XII, encycl. "Summi Pontificatus", Oct. 20, 1939: AAS 31 (1939). pp. 445-446.

<sup>33</sup> Cf. Pius XI, letter "Firmissiman Constantiam", March 28, 1937: AAS 29 (1937), p. 196.

<sup>34</sup> Cf. Pius XII, allocution, "Ci Riesce", Dec. 6, 1953: AAS 45 (1953), p. 802.

<sup>35</sup> Cf. Pius XII, radio message, March 23, 1952: AAS 44 (1952) pp. 270-278.

<sup>36</sup> Cf. Acts 4:29.

<sup>37</sup> Cf. John XXIII, encycl. "Pacem in Terris", April 11, 1963: AAS 55 (1963), pp. 299-300.

<sup>38</sup> Cf. John XXIII, encycl. "Pacem in Terris", April 11, 1963: AAS 55 (1963) pp. 295-296.

to all men, most carefully to consider how greatly necessary religious freedom is, especially in the present condition of the human family. All nations are coming into even closer unity. Men of different cultures and religions are being brought together in closer relationships. There is a growing consciousness of the personal responsibility that every man has. All this is evident. Consequently, in order that relationships of peace and harmony be established and maintained within the whole of mankind, it is necessary that religious freedom be everywhere provided with an effective constitutional guarantee and that respect be shown for the high duty and right of man freely to lead his religious life in society.

May the God and Father of all grant that the human family, through careful observance of the principle of religious freedom in society, may be brought by the grace of Christ and the power of the Holy Spirit to the sublime and unending and "glorious freedom of the sons of God" (Rom. 8:21).

### III. The Oslo Declaration on Freedom of Religion or Belief

**Background:** In August 1998, the international conference on the freedom of religion was held in Oslo, Norway. Around 150 representatives from religious and humanist communities, governments and academic institutions worldwide attended the conference. The conference was hosted by the Norwegian Council of Religious and Humanist Communities, with the aim of focusing on freedom of religion and belief in the light of the U.N. Universal Declaration of Human Rights. The conference was held in connection with the celebration of the 50th Anniversary of the Declaration of Human Rights, and the U.N. High Commissioner for Human Rights, Ms. Mary Robinson and the Norwegian Prime Minister, Mr. Kjell Magne Bondevik took part. The conference was chaired by three presidents: The international representative for Won Buddhists to the U.N., Dr. Chung-Ok Lee from New York, Special Rapporteur on the U.N. Declaration on Freedom of Religion or Belief (1981), professor Abdellefatah Amor from Tunis and the (Lutheran) bishop of Oslo, Norway, Gunnar Staalsett. The conference adopted the following statement:

*Whereas* the Oslo Conference on Freedom of Religion or Belief, meeting in celebration of the fiftieth anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, reaffirms that every person has the right to freedom of religion or belief;

*And whereas* participants in the Oslo Conference have accepted the challenge to build an international coalition and to develop a strategic plan of action to achieve substantial progress in and give practical support to the implementation of Article 18 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, Article 18 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, and the 1981 United Nations Declaration on the Elimination of All Forms of Intolerance and of Discrimination Based on Religion or Belief;

*Therefore*, we the participants in the Oslo Conference:

*Recognize* that religions and beliefs teach peace and good will;

*Recognize* that religions and beliefs may be misused to cause intolerance, discrimination and prejudice, and have all too often been used to deny the rights and freedoms of others;

*Affirm* that every human being has a responsibility to condemn discrimination and intolerance based on religion or belief, and to apply religion or belief in support of human dignity and peace;

*Consider* the founding of the United Nations and the adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights to be watershed events, in which the world community recognized for the first time that the existence of human rights transcends the laws of sovereign states;

*Confirm* that Article 18 of both the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights together with other instruments create both a mandate for freedom of religion or belief and a universal standard around which we wish to rally;

*Recognize* that the U.N. has made significant accomplishments in strengthening this universal standard by passage of the 1981 U.N. Declaration on the Elimination of All Forms of Intolerance and of Discrimination Based on Religion or Belief, by the appointment of a Special Rapporteur to monitor its implementation, and

by further defining freedom of religion or belief in the General Comment on Article 18 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights;

*Recommend* that the U.N. Commission on Human Rights change the title of the Rapporteur to Special Rapporteur on Freedom of Religion or Belief;

*Urge* increased financial and personnel support to the U.N. to implement the work of the Special Rapporteur and his recommendations;

*Request* the U.N. High Commissioner for Human Rights to develop a coordinated plan to focus resources of the United Nations, including all specialized agencies and bodies such as UNESCO, ILO, UNDP, and UNHCR on problems involving freedom of religion or belief;

*Call* for UNESCO to expand work for peace through religious and cultural dialogue and encourage intensified co-operation with UNESCO in this field;

*Urge* scholars and teachers to study and apply the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the 1981 Declaration as universal standards on freedom of religion or belief and as a way to solve problems of intolerance and discrimination caused by competing beliefs;

*Challenge* governments, religious bodies, interfaith associations, humanist communities, non-governmental organizations and academic institutions to create educational programs using the 1981 Declaration as a universal standard to build a culture of tolerance and understanding and respect between people of diverse beliefs;

*Further urge* U.N. member states to use the 1981 Declaration and other relevant instruments to mediate, negotiate, and resolve intolerance, discrimination, injustice and violence in conflicts where religion or belief plays a role;

*Support* research and development of other informational resources and methodologies for collecting information, monitoring compliance and initiating comparative country studies to strengthen the work of the United Nations and protect freedom of religion or belief;

*Urge* the organizers and sponsors of the Oslo Conference, in consultation with Conference participants:

to review the discussions and recommendations of the Conference, with the purpose of creating an “Oslo Coalition on Freedom of Religion or Belief,” inviting support and participation by governments, religious or belief communities, academic institutions and non-governmental organizations; and to develop a strategic plan of action and seek funding to carry out programs and projects based on its recommendations, in cooperation with the United Nations system.

## IV. Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace

### Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church

The Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church was published in 2004 by the Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace at the request of John Paul II. The document was presented by Renato Martino, President of the Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace. The English translation, including the preface, references, and indices, is over 500 pages in length. We present here the chapter on human rights.

#### Chapter IV. HUMAN RIGHTS

##### a. The value of human rights

**152.** *The movement towards the identification and proclamation of human rights is one of the most significant attempts to respond effectively to the inescapable demands of human dignity.*<sup>39</sup> The Church sees in these rights the extraordinary opportunity that our modern times offer, through the affirmation of these rights, for more effectively recognizing human dignity and universally promoting it as a characteristic in-

<sup>39</sup> Cf. Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, Declaration *Dignitatis Humanae*, 1: AAS 58 (1966), 929-930.

scribed by God the Creator in his creature.<sup>40</sup> The Church's Magisterium has not failed to note the positive value of the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights*, adopted by the United Nations on 10 December 1948, which Pope John Paul II defined as "a true milestone on the path of humanity's moral progress".<sup>41</sup>

**153.** *In fact, the roots of human rights are to be found in the dignity that belongs to each human being.*<sup>42</sup> This dignity, inherent in human life and equal in every person, is perceived and understood first of all by reason. The natural foundation of rights appears all the more solid when, in light of the supernatural, it is considered that human dignity, after having been given by God and having been profoundly wounded by sin, was taken on and redeemed by Jesus Christ in his incarnation, death and resurrection.<sup>43</sup>

*The ultimate source of human rights is not found in the mere will of human beings,<sup>44</sup> in the reality of the State, in public powers, but in man himself and in God his Creator.* These rights are "universal, inviolable, inalienable".<sup>45</sup> *Universal* because they are present in all human beings, without exception of time, place or subject. *Inviolable* insofar as "they are inherent in the human person and in human dignity"<sup>46</sup> and because "it would be vain to proclaim rights, if at the same time everything were not done to ensure the duty of respecting them by all people, everywhere, and for all people".<sup>47</sup> *Inalienable* insofar as "no one can legitimately deprive another person, whoever they may be, of these rights, since this would do violence to their nature".<sup>48</sup>

**154.** Human rights are to be defended not only individually but also as a whole: protecting them only partially would imply a kind of failure to recognize them. They correspond to the demands of human dignity and entail, in the first place, the fulfilment of the essential needs of the person in the material and spiritual spheres. "These rights apply to every stage of life and to every political, social, economic and cultural situation. Together they form a single whole, directed unambiguously towards the promotion of every aspect of the good of both the person and society ... The integral promotion of every category of human rights is the true guarantee of full respect for each individual right".<sup>49</sup> Universality and indivisibility are distinctive characteristics of human rights: they are "two guiding principles which at the same time demand that human rights be rooted in each culture and that their juridical profile be strengthened so as to ensure that they are fully observed".<sup>50</sup>

#### b. The specification of rights

**155.** *The teachings of Pope John XXIII,<sup>51</sup> the Second Vatican Council,<sup>52</sup> and Pope Paul VI<sup>53</sup> have given abundant indication of the concept of human rights as articulated by the Magisterium. Pope John Paul II has*

<sup>40</sup> Cf. Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, Pastoral Constitution *Gaudium et Spes*, 41: AAS 58 (1966), 1059-1060; Congregation for Catholic Education, *Guidelines for the Study and Teaching of the Church's Social Doctrine in the Formation of Priests*, 32, Vatican Polyglot Press, Rome 1988, pp. 36-37.

<sup>41</sup> John Paul II, Address to the 34th General Assembly of the United Nations (2 October 1979), 7: AAS 71 (1979), 1147-1148; for John Paul II, this *Declaration* "remains one of the highest expressions of the human conscience of our time": Address to the Fiftieth General Assembly of the United Nations (5 October 1995), 2: *L'Osservatore Romano*, English edition, 11 October 1995, p. 8.

<sup>42</sup> Cf. Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, Pastoral Constitution *Gaudium et Spes*, 27: AAS 58 (1966), 1047-1048; *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 1930.

<sup>43</sup> Cf. John XIII, Encyclical Letter *Pacem in Terris*: AAS 55 (1963), 259; Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, Pastoral Constitution *Gaudium et Spes*, 22: AAS 58 (1966), 1079.

<sup>44</sup> Cf. John XXIII, Encyclical Letter *Pacem in Terris*: AAS 55 (1963), 278-279.

<sup>45</sup> John XXIII, Encyclical Letter *Pacem in Terris*: AAS 55 (1963), 259.

<sup>46</sup> John Paul II, Message for the 1999 World Day of Peace, 3: AAS 91 (1999), 379.

<sup>47</sup> Paul VI, Message to the International Conference on Human Rights, Teheran (15 April 1968): *L'Osservatore Romano*, English edition, 2 May 1968, p. 4.

<sup>48</sup> John Paul II, Message for the 1999 World Day of Peace, 3: AAS 91 (1999), 379.

<sup>49</sup> John Paul II, Message for the 1999 World Day of Peace, 3: AAS 91 (1999), 379.

<sup>50</sup> John Paul II, Message for the 1998 World Day of Peace, 2: AAS 90 (1998), 149.

<sup>51</sup> Cf. John XXIII, Encyclical Letter *Pacem in Terris*: AAS 55 (1963), 259-264.

<sup>52</sup> Cf. Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, Pastoral Constitution *Gaudium et Spes*, 26: AAS 58 (1966), 1046-1047.

<sup>53</sup> Cf. Paul VI, Address to the General Assembly of the United Nations (4 October 1965), 6: AAS 57 (1965), 883-884; Paul VI, Message to the Bishops Gathered for the Synod (26 October 1974): AAS 66 (1974), 631-639.

drawn up a list of them in the Encyclical *Centesimus Annus*: “the right to life, an integral part of which is the right of the child to develop in the mother's womb from the moment of conception; the right to *live in* a united family and in a moral environment conducive to the growth of the child's personality; the right to develop one's intelligence and *freedom* in seeking and knowing the *truth*; the right to share in the work which makes wise use of the earth's material resources, and to derive from that work the means to support oneself and one's dependents; and the right *freely to establish* a family, to have and to rear children through the responsible exercise of one's sexuality. In a certain sense, the source and synthesis of these rights is religious *freedom*, understood as the right to live in the truth of one's faith and in conformity with one's transcendent dignity as a person”.<sup>54</sup>

*The first right presented in this list is the right to life, from conception to its natural end,*<sup>55</sup> which is the condition for the exercise of all other rights and, in particular, implies the illicitness of every form of procured abortion and of euthanasia.<sup>56</sup> *Emphasis is given to the paramount value of the right to religious freedom: “all men are to be immune from coercion on the part of individuals or of social groups and of any human power, in such wise that no one is to be forced to act in a manner contrary to his own beliefs, whether privately or publicly, whether alone or in association with others, within due limits”.*<sup>57</sup> The respect of this right is an indicative sign of “man's authentic progress in any regime, in any society, system or milieu”.<sup>58</sup>

### c. Rights and duties

**156.** *Inextricably connected to the topic of rights is the issue of the duties falling to men and women, which is given appropriate emphasis in the interventions of the Magisterium. The mutual complementarities between rights and duties — they are indissolubly linked — are recalled several times, above all in the human person who possesses them.*<sup>59</sup> This bond also has a social dimension: “in human society to one man's right there corresponds a duty in all other persons: the duty, namely, of acknowledging and respecting the right in question”.<sup>60</sup> *The Magisterium underlines the contradiction inherent in affirming rights without acknowledging corresponding responsibilities. “Those, therefore, who claim their own rights, yet altogether forget or neglect to carry out their respective duties, are people who build with one hand and destroy with the other”.*<sup>61</sup>

### d. Rights of peoples and nations

**157.** *The field of human rights has expanded to include the rights of peoples and nations:*<sup>62</sup> in fact, “what is true for the individual is also true for peoples”.<sup>63</sup> The Magisterium points out that international law “rests upon the principle of equal respect for States, for each people's right to self-determination and for their free cooperation in view of the higher common good of humanity”.<sup>64</sup> Peace is founded not only on respect for human rights but also on respect for the rights of peoples, in particular the right to independence.<sup>65</sup>

<sup>54</sup> John Paul II, Encyclical Letter *Centesimus Annus*, 47: AAS 83 (1991), 851-852; cf. also Address to the 34th General Assembly of the United Nations (2 October 1979), 13: AAS 71 (1979) 1152-1153.

<sup>55</sup> Cf. John Paul II, Encyclical Letter *Evangelium Vitae*, 2: AAS 87 (1995), 402.

<sup>56</sup> Cf. Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, Pastoral Constitution *Gaudium et Spes*, 27: AAS 58 (1966), 1047-1048; John Paul II, Encyclical Letter *Veritatis Splendor*, 80: AAS 85 (1993), 1197-1198; John Paul II, Encyclical Letter *Evangelium Vitae*, 7-28: AAS 87 (1995), 408-433.

<sup>57</sup> Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, Declaration *Dignitatis Humanae*, 2: AAS 58 (1966), 930-931.

<sup>58</sup> John Paul II, Encyclical Letter *Redemptor Hominis*, 17: AAS 71 (1979), 300.

<sup>59</sup> Cf. John XXIII, Encyclical Letter *Pacem in Terris*: AAS 55 (1963), 259-264; Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, Pastoral Constitution *Gaudium et Spes*, 26: AAS 58 (1966), 1046-1047.

<sup>60</sup> John XXIII, Encyclical Letter *Pacem in Terris*: AAS 55 (1963), 264.

<sup>61</sup> John XXIII, Encyclical Letter *Pacem in Terris*: AAS 55 (1963), 264.

<sup>62</sup> Cf. John Paul II, Encyclical Letter *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis*, 33: AAS 80 (1988), 557-559; John Paul II, Encyclical Letter *Centesimus Annus*, 21: AAS 83 (1991), 818-819.

<sup>63</sup> John Paul II, Letter on the occasion of the fiftieth anniversary of the outbreak of the Second World War, 8: *L'Osservatore Romano*, English edition, 4 September 1989, p. 2.

<sup>64</sup> John Paul II, Letter on the occasion of the fiftieth anniversary of the outbreak of the Second World War, 8: *L'Osservatore Romano*, English edition, 4 September 1989, p. 2.

<sup>65</sup> Cf. John Paul II, Address to the Diplomatic Corps (9 January 1988), 7-8: *L'Osservatore Romano*, English edition, 25 January 1988, p. 7.

The rights of nations are nothing but “‘human rights’ fostered at the specific level of community life”.<sup>66</sup> A nation has a “fundamental right to existence”, to “its own language and culture, through which a people expresses and promotes ... its fundamental spiritual ‘sovereignty’”, to “shape its life according to its own traditions, excluding, of course, every abuse of basic human rights and in particular the oppression of minorities”, to “build its future by providing an appropriate education for the younger generation”.<sup>67</sup> The international order requires a *balance between particularity and universality*, which all nations are called to bring about, for their primary duty is to live in a posture of peace, respect and solidarity with other nations.

#### e. Filling in the gap between the letter and the spirit

**158.** *The solemn proclamation of human rights is contradicted by a painful reality of violations, wars and violence of every kind, in the first place, genocides and mass deportations, the spreading on a virtual worldwide dimension of ever new forms of slavery such as trafficking in human beings, child soldiers, the exploitation of workers, illegal drug trafficking, prostitution. “Even in countries with democratic forms of government, these rights are not always fully respected”.*<sup>68</sup>

*Unfortunately, there is a gap between the “letter” and the “spirit” of human rights,*<sup>69</sup> which can often be attributed to a merely formal recognition of these rights. The Church's social doctrine, in consideration of the privilege accorded by the Gospel to the poor, repeats over and over that “the more fortunate should *renounce* some of their rights so as to place their goods more generously at the service of others” and that an excessive affirmation of equality “can give rise to an individualism in which each one claims his own rights without wishing to be answerable for the common good”.<sup>70</sup>

**159.** *The Church, aware that her essentially religious mission includes the defence and promotion of human rights,*<sup>71</sup> “holds in high esteem the dynamic approach of today which is everywhere fostering these rights”.<sup>72</sup> The Church profoundly experiences the need to respect justice<sup>73</sup> and human rights<sup>74</sup> within her own ranks.

*This pastoral commitment develops in a twofold direction: in the proclamation of the Christian foundations of human rights and in the denunciation of the violations of these rights.*<sup>75</sup> In any event, “proclamation is always more important than *denunciation*, and the latter cannot ignore the former, which gives it true solidity and the force of higher motivation”.<sup>76</sup> For greater effectiveness, this commitment is open to ecumenical cooperation, to dialogue with other religions, to all appropriate contacts with other organizations, governmental and non-governmental, at the national and international levels. The Church trusts above all in the help of the Lord and his Spirit who, poured forth into human hearts, is the surest guarantee for respecting justice and human rights, and for contributing to peace. “The promotion of justice and peace and the penetration of all spheres of human society with the light and the leaven of the Gospel have always been the object of the Church's efforts in fulfilment of the Lord's command”.<sup>77</sup>

<sup>66</sup> John Paul II, Address to the Fiftieth General Assembly of the United Nations (5 October 1995), 8: *L'Osservatore Romano*, English edition, 11 October 1995, p. 9.

<sup>67</sup> John Paul II, Address to the Fiftieth General Assembly of the United Nations (5 October 1995), 8: *L'Osservatore Romano*, English edition, 11 October 1995, p. 9.

<sup>68</sup> John Paul II, Encyclical Letter *Centesimus Annus*, 47: AAS 83 (1991), 852.

<sup>69</sup> Cf. John Paul II, Encyclical Letter *Redemptor Hominis*, 17: AAS 71 (1979), 295-300.

<sup>70</sup> Paul VI, Encyclical Letter *Octogesima Adveniens*, 23: AAS 63 (1971), 418.

<sup>71</sup> Cf. John Paul II, Encyclical Letter *Centesimus Annus*, 54: AAS 83 (1991), 859-860.

<sup>72</sup> Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, Pastoral Constitution *Gaudium et Spes*, 41: AAS 58 (1966), 1060.

<sup>73</sup> Cf. John Paul II, Address to Officials and Advocates of the Tribunal of the Roman Rota (17 February 1979), 4: *Insegnamenti di Giovanni Paolo II*, II, 1 (1979), 413-414.

<sup>74</sup> Cf. *Code of Canon Law*, canons 208-223.

<sup>75</sup> [338] Cf. Pontifical Commission “Iustitia et Pax”, *The Church and Human Rights*, 70-90, Vatican City 1975, pp. 45-54.

<sup>76</sup> [339] John Paul II, Encyclical Letter *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis*, 41: AAS 80 (1988), 572.

<sup>77</sup> Paul VI, *Motu Proprio Iustitiam et Pacem* (10 December 1976): *L'Osservatore Romano*, 23 December 1976, p. 10.

## V. The World Evangelical Alliance:

Resolution on religious freedom and solidarity with the persecuted church

Resolved by the delegates at the WEA General Assembly at Pattaya, Thailand, 30 October 2008.

1. The members attending the 12th General Assembly of the World Evangelical Alliance (WEA) affirm its history of working towards religious freedom for all people. This was one of the motives for the founding of the Evangelical Alliance in 1846. We affirm the advocacy for persecuted Christians and adherents of other faiths towards those in government, exemplified by the first Evangelical Alliance delegations sent to the Turkish Sultan and the Russian Tsar in the 19th century, and as now expressed by the work of Religious Liberty Commission, its Goodwill Ambassador, and its International Institute for Religious Freedom.
2. The activities of the WEA in this regard are founded on Scripture which reveals that every human being is created in the image of God and thus has indelible dignity.
3. The WEA therefore affirms human rights as expressed in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights on the occasion of its 60th anniversary.
4. The WEA affirms religious freedom to exercise any or no religion as defined by the relevant declarations of the United Nations. The right to religious freedom is indivisible and cannot be claimed for one particular group only to the exclusion of others.
5. The WEA therefore aims to work collaboratively with all who share its goals of supporting religious freedom, be it political powers or representatives of other or no religions. The WEA affirms the intention of Christians to live together peacefully with adherents of other or no religions and to work together for the common good and reconciliation.
6. The WEA differentiates between advocating the rights of members of other or no religions and the truth of their beliefs. Advocating the freedom of others can be done without accepting the truth of what they believe.
7. The WEA takes seriously the command of Scripture to be on the side of the persecuted. When any part of the body of Christ suffers, we suffer with them, as we consider ourselves to be one part of the Christian community.
8. The WEA notes with great concern the increasing persecution of Christians across the world. We have heard first hand reports at our assembly of Christians being killed and churches being burned in India, of Christian minorities driven out of Iraq and numerous other examples of grave and violent persecution. We weep with our brothers and sisters and pray with and for them that the Holy Spirit may comfort and strengthen them in their witness. Following the example of our Lord Jesus Christ we pray for the persecutors that God may forgive them.
9. The members attending this assembly therefore call upon all churches worldwide to regularly intercede in prayer for the persecuted church, especially in their Sunday services. We also invite them to join us in the International Day of Prayer for the Persecuted Church and similar initiatives. We appeal to all churches to deepen and teach a biblical theology of persecution, to practise advocacy on behalf of the persecuted church and to work towards peace among the churches, as well as between Christians and adherents of other or no religions.
10. We appeal to the adherents of other or no religions to join hands with us in the effort to eliminate religious persecution and to restrain those within their communities committing discriminatory and violent acts.
11. We call upon the media to report on religious persecution worldwide. We appeal to them to treat this massive and widespread violation of human rights with the same seriousness as any other human rights violations. We appeal to the media to beware of being abused for disinformation and defamation of religious minorities.
12. We thank all governments which have protected or improved religious freedom in their own countries or have used their influence to do so in other countries.

13. We call upon the United Nations, other international agencies and national governments to do all within their power to stop such brutal infringements of fundamental human rights in contravention of the International Declaration of Human Rights and other international instruments.

14. We especially urge the United Nations and the UN Human Rights Council to stand against any attempt to lower or dilute the right to change one's religion as affirmed in article 18 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

## VI. The Bad Urach Call

### Toward understanding suffering, persecution, and martyrdom for the global church in mission

The Bad Urach Call is a summary of the extensive Bad Urach Statement issued by evangelical leaders from many lands who gathered on September 16-18, 2009, in Bad Urach, Germany, on the invitation of the Religious Liberty Commission of the World Evangelical Alliance and other bodies, organized by the International Institute for Religious Freedom. This summary, edited by Thomas K. Johnson, was issued by the World Evangelical Alliance in 2010.

#### I. Preamble

By any definition of persecution, the worldwide Body of Christ can count many millions of Christians experiencing persecution today. Their sufferings range from violent death and martyrdom, to physical or psychological torture, to invasive rules confining their worship activities to church buildings, to lower-level forms of discrimination in countless other countries, including many with strong rules protecting religious freedom. Due to the massive rise in population and the explosion in the numbers of Christians, never in the history of the Church have so many of Christ's followers experienced persecution as today, though the number of those who die as martyrs for the faith is not often so large. This situation gives three tasks to the Body of Christ:

1. **Remembrance:** The persecuted are not remembered, prayed for, and assisted by the general Body of Christ as well as they should be.
2. **Understanding:** There is a complex blend of ancient cosmic antagonisms and contemporary factors that drive persecution. These are not well enough understood, which results in ineffective intervention. While the persecution of Christians is ultimately due to the enmity between Christ and the fallen spiritual realm joined with human rebellion, four secondary forces deliver persecution to the church: religious extremism, totalitarian insecurity, religious nationalism, and secular intolerance. Thoughtless public statements or symbolic actions by Christians in contexts with substantial freedom of speech can unleash violent reactions against Christians in other contexts.
3. **Transformation:** Persecuted Christians have learned truths about God that Christians under less pressure need to hear in order to experience the fullness of God. The spiritual insights of the persecuted are vital to the transformation of the lives of the rest of the Body of Christ. One of these essential insights is that we will all be – if witnessing for Christ – in some sense persecuted. There is a grander, greater narrative of God's action underneath the stories of individual pain, suffering, deliverance, and endurance.

#### **Our call to the Church of Jesus Christ:**

**We must willingly, actively, and corporately take up the cross of Christ in our time.**

## II. Explanation

### 1. We need to respond to suffering appropriately.

We should distinguish between general human suffering, in which Christians partake, and the suffering of Christians for the sake of Christ. We recognize that much suffering has nothing to do with persecution, but obedience to God and allegiance to Christ lead to additional suffering. We must always respond to suffering with compassion, but suffering for Jesus requires additional responses.

The mature Christian knows that all suffering can become meaningful. No one wishes to suffer, but many Christians who have suffered do not regret it. God also suffers because the people he created suffer, and he suffers for their redemption. He suffers because he loves us. The suffering of God in Christ can shape our thinking on the suffering of the Church. Christians should suffer in sympathy with others who suffer. Because Jesus commands us to love, we should voluntarily suffer to help others who are suffering, to reduce their suffering. We suffer as part of the general human condition and also because we must take up the cross as disciples of Jesus Christ. If we participate in the sufferings of Jesus, we will also share in his glory. Some of us must choose to make sacrifices and to suffer on behalf of fellow Christians who are being persecuted.

### 2. We need to properly understand religious persecution of Christians.

Religious persecution is an unjust action against a believer or group of believers of a certain religion or worldview. This may be by systematic oppression, genocide, discrimination, annoyance, or other means. Persecution may not prevent victims from practicing their beliefs. Religious persecution has religion (not ethnicity, gender, political persuasion, etc.) as its primary motivation, though other factors can be involved. Persecution of Christians is a form of religious persecution in which victims are targeted primarily because they are Christians. Victims may be of varying levels of commitment to Christianity and be subject to varying levels of animosity and harm.

### 3. We need to understand our place in history.

The persecution of Christians is rooted in our place in salvation history. A new age has been inaugurated by Christ, overcoming the age of sin and death which began with the fall. The second coming of Christ will visibly usher in God's rule and victory, making all things new. Until then the old age is still present, waging its war against the new age; the life of the Christian is marked by this tension. In this sense, suffering is a mark of the Church. This suffering of the Church was prefigured by the suffering of God's people in the Old Testament, from Abel through the prophets, leading to Herod's pursuit of Jesus, reaching its high point in the murder of Jesus on the cross. Jesus' death on the cross was as a substitute for our sins, making full payment; by his death Jesus was also our representative, calling us to follow him to suffer in order to fight against sin and the devil.

### 4. We need to react properly to the conflict.

The nature of the conflict in which we are involved is characterized by the nature and methods of the two leaders in the conflict. Jesus reveals the character of Satan as evil, which brings forth the weapons of hate, lies, deception, falsehood, violence, and murder to bring destruction and death. Jesus confronted Satan's lies with the truth of God, Satan's evil with the goodness of God, Satan's hatred with the love of God, and Satan's violence and murder with God's self-sacrifice, out of which arise new creativity, healing, and restoration. This is the way in which Jesus fought and defeated evil, and this is the kind of war into which he sends his disciples. They must love their enemies, do good to those who hate them, and, like their heavenly Father, show goodness, mercy, and forgiveness to those who are evil and ungrateful. They must stop the chain of poisoning God's creation with Satan's deadly products by absorbing it in union with Christ, responding in love and goodness, thereby demonstrating God's character in the world. Jesus was sent as the Lamb of God to defeat the great dragon and to destroy his works. In the same way, he sends us as lambs to defeat wolves by transforming them into children of God. Christ's ultimate weapon is self-sacrifice, and our ultimate weapon must be the same, to draw people to Jesus.

### 5. We must remain faithful to Christ.

Jesus points out the seriousness of remaining faithful to him and confessing him in moments of trial. He warns his disciples that he would reciprocate their public acknowledgement or denial of him on this earth before his Father in heaven. While the love of many will grow cold, those who endure to the end and remain victorious will be saved. In order that his disciples do not fall away from him when persecution arises, Jesus has given advance warning and prays that God will keep them safe from the evil one.

### 6. We need to embrace suffering as part of our mission.

Jesus described suffering as a normal part of discipleship. Not all suffer equally; not all are persecuted equally, and only a relatively small proportion of Christians suffer martyrdom. In the mission that is the central purpose of the interim period in God's history of salvation, Christians must engage with their whole lives, including a readiness for suffering and martyrdom. Suffering is not just something that has to be endured passively, but it becomes a mode of mission, a mission that is done in weakness, focusing on service, and by its nature is accompanied with sorrow and affliction. The precious gospel treasure comes in perishable containers, in our weak bodies, so that everyone can see that the light that shines in us is not our own but God's. Martyrdom is the most radical form of discipleship and missionary witness. While Christians will not seek martyrdom, it is a risk of discipleship we must accept.

Witness to Christ can be a main cause of suffering, persecution, and martyrdom. The gospel certainly brings with it liberation from all kinds of slaveries and can lead to the improvement of the quality of living. This even may translate into material blessings. At the same time, it brings the hatred of the world, persecution, suffering, and martyrdom. We must keep these two aspects of the gospel in balance. The mission of God needs to be accomplished in spite of and through suffering, persecution, and martyrdom.

### 7. We need to stand up for religious freedom and human rights.

As a part of our proclamation of Christ we should always mention two truths about people, that people are both sinners in need of the gospel and also created in the image of God, carrying a God-given dignity. This dignity requires that we call on governments and all in positions of public authority to protect religious freedom and all fundamental human rights. When there is severe religious persecution, there is often a government that is failing to protect justice. Like the apostle Paul, Christians should appeal to legal rights to protect themselves and their fellow Christians.

***We therefore call on the Body of Christ to take up the cross of Jesus actively, willingly, and corporately, in order to implement the mission of Jesus. This will include remembrance of those persecuted (with prayer and assistance), understanding (joined with informed efforts to reduce persecution), and transformation (so that the entire Body of Christ is renewed through the insights of those who are persecuted and martyred). May the grace of the Lord Jesus be with you all!***

## VII. Christian Witness in a Multi-Religious World

### Recommendations for Conduct

World Council of Churches  
Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue  
World Evangelical Alliance

In June, 2011, for the first time in history, the World Council of Churches, representatives of the Vatican, and the World Evangelical Alliance issued a joint declaration which articulates global standards for the ethics of religious persuasion in the context of religious persecution.

## Preamble

Mission belongs to the very being of the church. Proclaiming the word of God and witnessing to the world is essential for every Christian. At the same time, it is necessary to do so according to gospel principles, with full respect and love for all human beings.

Aware of the tensions between people and communities of different religious convictions and the varied interpretations of Christian witness, the Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue (PCID), the World Council of Churches (WCC) and, at the invitation of the WCC, the World Evangelical Alliance (WEA), met during a period of 5 years to reflect and produce this document to serve as a set of recommendations for conduct on Christian witness around the world. This document does not intend to be a theological statement on mission but to address practical issues associated with Christian witness in a multi-religious world.

The purpose of this document is to encourage churches, church councils and mission agencies to reflect on their current practices and to use the recommendations in this document to prepare, where appropriate, their own guidelines for their witness and mission among those of different religions and among those who do not profess any particular religion. It is hoped that Christians across the world will study this document in the light of their own practices in witnessing to their faith in Christ, both by word and deed.

## A basis for Christian witness

1. For Christians it is a privilege and joy to give an accounting for the hope that is within them and to do so with gentleness and respect (cf. 1 Peter 3:15).
2. Jesus Christ is the supreme witness (cf. John 18:37). Christian witness is always a sharing in his witness, which takes the form of proclamation of the kingdom, service to neighbour and the total gift of self even if that act of giving leads to the cross. Just as the Father sent the Son in the power of the Holy Spirit, so believers are sent in mission to witness in word and action to the love of the triune God.
3. The example and teaching of Jesus Christ and of the early church must be the guides for Christian mission. For two millennia Christians have sought to follow Christ's way by sharing the good news of God's kingdom (cf. Luke 4:16-20).
4. Christian witness in a pluralistic world includes engaging in dialogue with people of different religions and cultures (cf. Acts 17:22-28).
5. In some contexts, living and proclaiming the gospel is difficult, hindered or even prohibited, yet Christians are commissioned by Christ to continue faithfully in solidarity with one another in their witness to him (cf. Matthew 28:19-20; Mark 16:14-18; Luke 24:44-48; John 20:21; Acts 1:8).
6. If Christians engage in inappropriate methods of exercising mission by resorting to deception and coercive means, they betray the gospel and may cause suffering to others. Such departures call for repentance and remind us of our need for God's continuing grace (cf. Romans 3:23).
7. Christians affirm that while it is their responsibility to witness to Christ, conversion is ultimately the work of the Holy Spirit (cf. John 16:7-9; Acts 10:44-47). They recognize that the Spirit blows where the Spirit wills in ways over which no human being has control (cf. John 3:8).

## Principles

Christians are called to adhere to the following principles as they seek to fulfil Christ's commission in an appropriate manner, particularly within interreligious contexts.

- 1. Acting in God's love.** Christians believe that God is the source of all love and, accordingly, in their witness they are called to live lives of love and to love their neighbour as themselves (cf. Matthew 22:34-40; John 14:15).
- 2. Imitating Jesus Christ.** In all aspects of life, and especially in their witness, Christians are called to follow the example and teachings of Jesus Christ, sharing his love, giving glory and honour to God the Father in the power of the Holy Spirit (cf. John 20:21-23).

**3. Christian virtues.** Christians are called to conduct themselves with integrity, charity, compassion and humility, and to overcome all arrogance, condescension and disparagement (cf. Galatians 5:22).

**4. Acts of service and justice.** Christians are called to act justly and to love tenderly (cf. Micah 6:8). They are further called to serve others and in so doing to recognize Christ in the least of their sisters and brothers (cf. Matthew 25:45). Acts of service, such as providing education, health care, relief services and acts of justice and advocacy are an integral part of witnessing to the gospel. The exploitation of situations of poverty and need has no place in Christian outreach. Christians should denounce and refrain from offering all forms of allurements, including financial incentives and rewards, in their acts of service.

**5. Discernment in ministries of healing.** As an integral part of their witness to the gospel, Christians exercise ministries of healing. They are called to exercise discernment as they carry out these ministries, fully respecting human dignity and ensuring that the vulnerability of people and their need for healing are not exploited.

**6. Rejection of violence.** Christians are called to reject all forms of violence, even psychological or social, including the abuse of power in their witness. They also reject violence, unjust discrimination or repression by any religious or secular authority, including the violation or destruction of places of worship, sacred symbols or texts.

**7. Freedom of religion and belief.** Religious freedom including the right to publicly profess, practice, propagate and change one's religion flows from the very dignity of the human person which is grounded in the creation of all human beings in the image and likeness of God (cf. Genesis 1:26). Thus, all human beings have equal rights and responsibilities. Where any religion is instrumentalized for political ends, or where religious persecution occurs, Christians are called to engage in a prophetic witness denouncing such actions.

**8. Mutual respect and solidarity.** Christians are called to commit themselves to work with all people in mutual respect, promoting together justice, peace and the common good. Interreligious cooperation is an essential dimension of such commitment.

**9. Respect for all people.** Christians recognize that the gospel both challenges and enriches cultures. Even when the gospel challenges certain aspects of cultures, Christians are called to respect all people. Christians are also called to discern elements in their own cultures that are challenged by the gospel.

**10. Renouncing false witness.** Christians are to speak sincerely and respectfully; they are to listen in order to learn about and understand others' beliefs and practices, and are encouraged to acknowledge and appreciate what is true and good in them. Any comment or critical approach should be made in a spirit of mutual respect, making sure not to bear false witness concerning other religions.

**11. Ensuring personal discernment.** Christians are to acknowledge that changing one's religion is a decisive step that must be accompanied by sufficient time for adequate reflection and preparation, through a process ensuring full personal freedom.

**12. Building interreligious relationships.** Christians should continue to build relationships of respect and trust with people of different religions so as to facilitate deeper mutual understanding, reconciliation and cooperation for the common good.

## Recommendations

The Third Consultation organized by the World Council of Churches and the PCID of the Holy See in collaboration with World Evangelical Alliance with participation from the largest Christian families of faith (Catholic, Orthodox, Protestant, Evangelical and Pentecostal), having acted in a spirit of ecumenical cooperation to prepare this document for consideration by churches, national and regional confessional bodies and mission organizations, and especially those working in interreligious contexts, recommends that these bodies:

1. **study** the issues set out in this document and where appropriate formulate guidelines for conduct regarding Christian witness applicable to their particular contexts. Where possible this should be done ecumenically, and in consultation with representatives of other religions.

2. **build** relationships of respect and trust with people of all religions, in particular at institutional levels between churches and other religious communities, engaging in on-going interreligious dialogue as part of their Christian commitment. In certain contexts, where years of tension and conflict have created deep suspicions and breaches of trust between and among communities, interreligious dialogue can provide new opportunities for resolving conflicts, restoring justice, healing of memories, reconciliation and peace-building.
3. **encourage** Christians to strengthen their own religious identity and faith while deepening their knowledge and understanding of different religions, and to do so also taking into account the perspectives of the adherents of those religions. Christians should avoid misrepresenting the beliefs and practices of people of different religions.
4. **cooperate** with other religious communities engaging in interreligious advocacy towards justice and the common good and, wherever possible, standing together in solidarity with people who are in situations of conflict.
5. **call** on their governments to ensure that freedom of religion is properly and comprehensively respected, recognizing that in many countries religious institutions and persons are inhibited from exercising their mission.
6. **pray** for their neighbours and their well-being, recognizing that prayer is integral to who we are and what we do, as well as to Christ's mission.

#### Appendix: Background to the document

1. In today's world there is increasing collaboration among Christians and between Christians and followers of different religions. The Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue (PCID) of the Holy See and the World Council of Churches' Programme on Interreligious Dialogue and Co-operation (WCCIRDC) have a history of such collaboration. Examples of themes on which the PCID/WCC-IRDC have collaborated in the past are: Interreligious Marriage (1994-1997), Interreligious Prayer (1997-1998) and African Religiosity (2000-2004). This document is a result of their work together.
2. There are increasing interreligious tensions in the world today, including violence and the loss of human life. Politics, economics and other factors play a role in these tensions. Christians too are sometimes involved in these conflicts, whether voluntarily or involuntarily, either as those who are persecuted or as those participating in violence. In response to this the PCID and WCC-IRDC decided to address the issues involved in a joint process towards producing shared recommendations for conduct on Christian witness. The WCC-IRDC invited the World Evangelical Alliance (WEA) to participate in this process, and they have gladly done so.
3. Initially two consultations were held: the first, in Lariano, Italy, in May 2006, was entitled "Assessing the Reality" where representatives of different religions shared their views and experiences on the question of conversion. A statement from the consultation reads in part: "We affirm that, while everyone has a right to invite others to an understanding of their faith, it should not be exercised by violating others' rights and religious sensibilities. Freedom of religion enjoins upon all of us the equally non-negotiable responsibility to respect faiths other than our own, and never to denigrate, vilify or misrepresent them for the purpose of affirming superiority of our faith."
4. The second, an inter-Christian consultation, was held in Toulouse, France, in August 2007, to reflect on these same issues. Questions on Family and Community, Respect for Others, Economy, Marketing and Competition, and Violence and Politics were thoroughly discussed. The pastoral and missionary issues around these topics became the background for theological reflection and for the principles developed in this document. Each issue is important in its own right and deserves more attention that can be given in these recommendations.
5. The participants of the third (inter-Christian) consultation met in Bangkok, Thailand, from 25-28, January, 2011 and finalized this document.

## VIII. Religious minorities and rights for religious freedom

**World Council of Churches, 2 December 2011**

***Commission of the Churches on International Affairs***

**Study Consultation on Freedom of Religion and Rights of Religious Minorities, Istanbul, Turkey  
COMMUNIQUÉ**

We, the participants of the *International Study Consultation on Freedom of Religion and the Rights of Religious Minorities* - drawn from churches, church related organisations, academia, civil society and human rights organisations and the legal profession in 23 countries in Africa, Asia, the Middle East, the Americas and Europe - met in Istanbul, Turkey as part of an international study consultation organised by the *Commission of the Churches on International Affairs of the World Council of Churches*. The Consultation analysed the situations of rights of religious minorities and freedom of religion in various contexts.

We wish to express our deep gratitude to His All Holiness, the Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew I for welcoming us and addressing the participants, and express our joy in sharing in an audience with Him and in attending the Holy Liturgy for the Feast of St. Andrew, Patron Saint of the Ecumenical Patriarchate.

During the Study Consultation we received reports on the position of religious freedom and the rights of religious minorities in 27 countries. These furthered our common understanding of the rights to which all people are entitled, highlighted many human rights concerns and enabled us to identify a number of steps to be taken to ensure freedom of religion and belief and the rights of religious minorities in various contexts.

We recognise that respect for freedom of religion or belief is a common good and a prerequisite for the democratic and peaceful progress of human society. Widespread and grievous violations of this freedom affect the stability, security and development of many states and severely impact upon the daily lives of individuals, families and communities, especially their peaceful coexistence.

We affirm that all people are endowed with inherent dignity. We recognise and reiterate the significance of international human rights standards relating to religion and belief and to religious minorities. In relation to matters of religion or belief the international human rights framework provides all persons with the right to:

- have or adopt the religion or belief of one's choice, including the right to change one's religion;
- manifest religion both privately and publicly, alone or with others, in worship, teaching, observance and practice;
- protection from discrimination in any sphere of life on the basis of religion or belief; coercion in matters of religion or belief;
- bring up children in accordance with their own beliefs;
- conscientious objection.

It is the duty of states and governing authorities to respect, protect and promote the freedom of religion or belief, in all its dimensions, for all individuals under their jurisdiction or control without regard to their religion or belief.

We recognise and welcome positive steps taken towards a fuller respect for freedom of religion or belief in a number of contexts. However, we also witness serious violations of these rights with grave concern.

During the study consultation several examples regarding the non-fulfilment of the right to religious freedom have been highlighted. In several contexts practices exist to limit the right to change one's religious status that can result in the separation of families, material and social deprivation or even criminal prosecution, imprisonment or the death penalty. Anti-conversion provisions found in a number of countries, are open to misuse, and contribute to negative public perceptions of and violence towards religious minority communities.

Many individuals are facing serious difficulties in freely professing and practicing their religion or belief as they see appropriate in the face of state or religious compulsion. In certain cases there is also state interference in the decision making processes of a religious group, while in other cases religious law and jurisprudence is imposed by state sanction. At the same time, existing blasphemy laws have a chilling effect on public discourse and on the right to profess religion or belief, and impact disproportionately on members of minority religions.

Numerous religious communities encounter problems in obtaining the legal status necessary to function; in acquiring, building or maintaining of properties such as places of worship and burial grounds or facilities; and in providing religious and theological training. These difficulties seriously impact on their ability to manifest religious faith.

Discrimination on the basis of religion or belief is also seriously affecting the ability of religious minorities to access their rights to education, healthcare and employment and to participate in the democratic process. Discriminatory legislation and state practices provide a legitimising framework for wider discrimination in society. Deprivation, social exclusion and violence towards minorities are the inevitable results of systematic discrimination and threaten the social fabric of society.

In many instances, educational syllabuses and text books portray negatively or under-represent the role of religious minority groups in society and serve to affirm existing societal prejudices and promote intolerance and discrimination. Moreover, obligatory religious education of children of minority religious backgrounds in the majority faith, violates the rights of parents and children. Furthermore, existing legislation and state practice with regard to mixed marriages in certain countries can also impact negatively on the right to religious freedom with regard to the bringing up of children of such marriages.

Also the media in many countries are responsible for the negative portrayal of religious groups, thus perpetuating false stereotypes and exacerbating discrimination.

Lastly, the failure of states to protect religious minorities from violence, threatens, in some cases, the very survival of communities and is in violation of states' international obligations. The culture of impunity created by failures to investigate and prosecute crimes against members of minority communities is a threat to the long-term stability of nations.

In moving forwards, the participants in the Study Consultation:

- o urge states to strengthen the existing protection mechanisms and devise effective safeguards against violations of national and international law relating to religious freedom;
- o call for concerted and coordinated efforts on the part of religious, civil society and state actors in order to address violations of this right;
- o invite the Commission of Churches of International Affairs (CCIA) of the World Council of Churches (WCC) to do a follow up to this Consultation and elaborate an action plan which can address among others the relationship between secularism and religion, the issue of growing nationalism and politicization of religion, the rights and obligations of religious minorities and awareness raising and education for the promotion and protection of the right to freedom of religion or belief;
- o propose as possible follow up, the organisation of thematic and region-specific Consultations and the exploration of the possibility for the creation of an ecumenical Forum on religious freedom and human rights;

The promotion and protection of freedom of religion or belief should be the concern and work of all. The participants recalled the statement by the Ecumenical Patriarch, "*we are called to be prophetic societies of transformation in a world that has reached a deadlock. Prophetic societies of peace in a global society threatened by war, prophetic societies of dialogue in a civilization characterized by ambivalence and hostility and prophetic societies of reconciliation with the creation of God in an era, that the future of the earth is at risk*".

## IX. The Global Charter of Conscience<sup>78</sup>

### A Global Covenant concerning Faiths and Freedom of Conscience

Keenly aware of the titanic promise and peril of our time, as forms of global interconnectedness reach an unprecedented speed, scale, and scope across the earth, we issue and subscribe to this Charter to address a major world challenge whose resolution will be decisive for the cause of civilization and human flourishing. That is, we address the urgent problems raised by the challenge of “living with our deepest differences” when those differences involve core beliefs, worldviews, and ways of life, and when they are increasingly found within single communities, nations, and civilizations.

Our purpose is to set out a vision of the rights, responsibilities, and respect that will be the foundation of a civil and cosmopolitan “global public square,” and the habits of the heart for those who would be “citizens of the world” as well as patriots in their own countries, and so to advance the cause of a “good world” and thus of global civilization over against the forces of global chaos.

#### PREAMBLE

Whereas a fundamental feature of our human life is the characteristic drive for meaning and belonging;

Whereas for most people in most of history, and still today, this drive for meaning and belonging has been satisfied through ultimate beliefs and worldviews, whether supernatural or secular, transcendent or naturalistic;

Whereas religious and naturalistic beliefs and worldviews have inspired some of the best and some of the worst human attitudes and behavior throughout history – the worst including terrible examples of prejudice, hatred, conflict, persecution, censorship, repression, crimes against humanity and genocide that stain the pages of the human record;

Whereas the challenge of living with our deepest differences has been raised to a new level of intensity in the modern global era, because of the flow of people and ideas, and especially the impact of the media, travel, and the migration of peoples, so that it is now said that “everyone is everywhere” and diverse beliefs and worldviews are both in constant contact and interdependent;

Whereas the world is witnessing two opposing trends – the revitalization and growing political influence of religions, with the danger of attempts to retain the supremacy of one religion at the expense of others, and the spread of naturalistic worldviews, with the equal danger of excluding all religions from public life and thus favoring an exclusive form of non-religious worldview – and as a result, many of the traditional settlements of religion and public life show signs of stress and a need to be renegotiated;

Whereas the many trends of the advanced modern era – such as global communications, migrations, multicultural diversity, and the revolutions of science and technology – indicate that ethically contentious issues are likely to increase rather than diminish, and to demand clear values and wise solutions that transcend the conflicts between religions and non-religious worldviews;

Whereas there is a grave awareness of the terrible specter of weapons of mass destruction in the hands of violent extremists;

Whereas there are leaders and peoples in the world who in either theory or practice still deny the universality and equality of human rights to all human beings;

Whereas the idea of “the public square,” where citizens may come together to deliberate and decide issues of common public life, has long been precious and vital to peoples who value freedom and desire to take responsibility for their own lives and political affairs;

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Whereas modern global communications, and above all the Internet, have expanded the notion of public life and created the possibility of an emerging “global public square;”

Whereas ultimate beliefs of all sorts have a primary and positive role in the diverse movements and organizations representing burgeoning civil society around the world;

Whereas human dignity, justice, and order are the necessary foundations for free and peaceful societies;

Whereas the history of human affairs is the story of the conflict between Right and Might, and between Reason and Conscience on one side and of Power and Interest on the other;

Whereas the Universal Declaration of Human Rights has become the most influential statement of rights in human history, and therefore the champion of reason and conscience in the Age of Rights and in the long human struggle to realize freedom, justice, and peace on earth;

## **DECLARATION**

We therefore set out the following declarations on freedom of conscience, faiths, civility, and peace on earth, to supplement and provide unreserved support for *The Universal Declaration of Human Rights* (The United Nations Assembly, Paris, December, 1948), and in particular to support Article 18 of *The Universal Declaration*, which reads: “Everyone has the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion; this right includes freedom to change his religion or belief, and freedom, either alone or in community with others and in public or private, to manifest his religion or belief in teaching, practice, worship and observance.”

### **Fundamental freedom**

*Article 1:* Freedom of thought, conscience, and religion, which together may be described as religious freedom, is a precious, fundamental, and inalienable human right – the right to adopt, hold, freely exercise, share, or change one’s beliefs, subject solely to the dictates of conscience and independent of all outside, especially governmental control.

### **Birthright of belonging**

*Article 2:* This right to freedom of thought, conscience, and religion, is inherent in humanity and rooted in the inviolable dignity of each human individual, in particular in the character of reason and conscience. As a birthright of belonging, freedom of conscience is the equal right of all human beings regardless of their religion, gender, race, class, language, political or other opinion, or nationality, and regardless of any mental and physical handicap and any social, economic, or educational deprivation. Freedom of conscience is the right of believers, not beliefs, and a protection for human beings rather than ideas.

### **Independent of governments and majorities**

*Article 3:* As a right that is inherent in humanity and in the dignity of the human person, freedom of thought, conscience, and religion does not finally depend on the discoveries of science, the favors of the state and its officials, or the changing will of majorities. It is therefore not a government’s right to grant or to deny, but a government’s responsibility to guarantee and guard. Human rights are a bulwark against all undue interference and control of the human person.

### **Integral and essential**

*Article 4:* Freedom of thought, conscience, and religion is among the earliest of the human rights to be recognized, and a primary and essential human right that is integral and essential to other basic rights and may not be sundered from them. Just as the right of freedom of assembly assumes and requires the right of freedom of expression, so the right of freedom of expression assumes and requires the right of freedom of conscience. Freedom of conscience, or freedom of religion or belief, is therefore far more than freedom for the religious: it is a core right for all human beings. While there are different systems for the protection of human rights, there are no alternative systems of human rights, but an equal and universal system of rights for all human beings and the whole world. Without respect for rights, human dignity suffers. Without respect for human dignity, there can be no justice. And without respect for justice, there can be no true and lasting peace on earth.

### **Yardstick of freedom**

*Article 5:* Freedom of thought, conscience, and religion, or freedom of religion or belief, protects different aspects of religious freedom that are integral, interlocking and essential for a full understanding of freedom. To the extent that a society protects all these aspects of freedom for people of all faiths and none, it may be considered free and just, for freedom too is an aspect of social justice. Conversely, to the extent that a society refuses to protect any or all of these aspects of freedom, it forfeits its claim to freedom and justice.

### **Double protection**

*Article 6:* Freedom of thought, conscience, and religion is among the civil and political rights enumerated in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, but it must not be separated from the social and economic rights also enumerated. Both together serve the fundamental requirements for just and free societies. The former protects the dignity and freedom of the human individual, whereas the latter protects the solidarity and justice of human society.

### **Foundation of society**

*Article 7:* Freedom of thought, conscience, and religion is fundamental for societies as well as for individuals, because it serves both as a protection for individual citizens and as a prerequisite for ordering the relationship of religions, ideologies and public life. This is especially important in today's world where pluralism makes religious liberty more necessary, just as religious liberty makes pluralism more likely.

### **Unconditional**

*Article 8:* The right to freedom of thought, conscience, and religion is absolute and unlimited in terms of belief, though not in terms of practice. No human being should therefore suffer discrimination, persecution, penalties, imprisonment, or death because of beliefs with which others disagree. In terms of practice, this right is limited because of the equal rights of others on whom practices impinge. However, any limitation to freedom of religion or belief is a matter of exception, which demands restrictive conditions prescribed in international instruments, such as the *International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights*. Consideration for the rights and responsibilities of each citizen and the wider common good is an ongoing challenge for societies that would be both just and free.

### **Rights and responsibilities**

*Article 9:* The right to freedom of thought, conscience, and religion, or religious freedom, contains a duty as well as a right, an obligation and not only an entitlement, because a right for one person is automatically a right for another and a responsibility for both. All citizens are responsible for the rights of all other citizens, just as others are responsible for theirs. A society is only as just and free as it is respectful of this right, especially toward the beliefs of its smallest minorities and least popular communities.

### **Golden Rule**

*Article 10:* The principle that the right to freedom of thought, conscience, and religion is inalienable and equal for all represents the universal Golden Rule for religious freedom, and underscores the importance of the universality of rights in different societies and nations. There are no rights exclusive to any privileged religion, worldview, or group. Any assertion of a claim to rights with respect to faith, whether in regard to freedom to believe, or to worship, or to build places of worship, or to convert others, automatically requires the claimants to offer that same right to people of all other faiths.

### **The rights of believers in association**

*Article 11:* The rights to freedom of thought, conscience, and religion apply not only to individuals, but to individuals in community with others, associating on the basis of faith. Each person treasures the rights that inhere as in their person as an individual. Equally, each person treasures membership in families, communities, religious groups, and other deep affiliations that are essential to culture. The rights of people in association are as meaningful and significant as the rights we enjoy as individuals.

No community of faith has rights that are superior to any other community, but the rights of thought, conscience, and religion are rights both for individuals and individuals in community because belief is both an individual assent and an associative practice. As such, religious groups must be free to govern their internal affairs free from governmental or outside interference in questions of doctrine, ethics, selection of leaders, design of organizational polity, the admission and dismissal of members, and the future direction of the organization or community.

### **No one settlement**

*Article 12:* Each community, nation, or civilization is free to forge its own unique settlement of the relationship of religions, worldviews, and public life, and will do so naturally in light of its own history and its own culture. There is therefore no single, uniform settlement to be agreed upon by all, or imposed on all. But at the same time, diverse local settlements of religion and public life should embody the common universal rights and principles that are the hallmark of rights-respecting peoples everywhere. According to their success or failure to recognize and implement these rights in their local situation, communities, nations, and civilizations may be judged as more or less just, and more or less free.

### **Beware false ordering**

*Article 13:* An undeniable lesson of history is that the greatest threat to freedom of conscience is when the ordering of religion and government becomes coercive and oppressive to those who do not share the official views. This happens especially when government uses the mantle of an ultimate belief, or when an ultimate belief uses the power of government to coerce conscience and compel belief. This problem persists today when religious tests are used to proscribe speech or to bar individuals from political office; or when even moderate forms of religious or secularist settlement deny or curtail the rights of those within their society who hold different beliefs and worldviews; or when a state uses laws and actions to discriminate against religious minorities.

### **Dignity of difference**

*Article 14:* Freedom of thought, conscience, and religion means that human diversity represents a dignity of difference as well as a danger in difference, though there is always a responsibility to find common ground across the differences without compromising the differences that matter. Rightly respected and ordered, diversity based on the dignity of difference is positive and can lead to richness, strength, and harmony in society, rather than to conflict, weakness, and disunity. In contrast, for a community or country to speak of harmony and diversity with no regard for religious freedom is a contradiction in terms and politically unsustainable in the age of global rights.

### **Differences irreducible**

*Article 15:* Freedom of thought, conscience, and religion means there is a beneficial value but a definite limitation to the approach that seeks unity and resolution through dialogue and co-operation between religions and worldviews. In the end, the decisive differences between the world's ultimate beliefs are ultimate and irreducible – and these differences are crucial for both individuals and for societies and civilizations. This realistic recognition of the limits of dialogue is rooted in the constraints caused by deep commitments to truth claims. Religious freedom is the freedom to be faithful to the faiths in which individuals and communities believe on the basis of the dictates of conscience.

### **Civil public square**

*Article 16:* The public place of freedom of thought, conscience, and religion in a world of deep diversity is best fulfilled through the vision of a cosmopolitan and civil public square – a public square in which people of all faiths, religious and naturalistic, are free to enter and engage public life on the basis of their faith, but always within a double framework: first, under the rule of law that respects all human rights, freedom of conscience in particular, and makes no distinction between peoples based on their beliefs; and second, according to a freely agreed covenant specifying what each person understands to be just and free for everyone else too, and therefore of the duties involved in living with the deep differences of others.

### **Conversation for the common good**

*Article 17:* Among the responsibilities and duties required of citizens by virtue of their respect for freedom of thought, conscience, and religion is engagement in public conversation over the common good, and a recognition that persuasion has replaced coercion in public debate. In particular, human beings who engage in public life require a willingness to listen to others, and an ability to persuade others in terms that are accessible and persuasive to them -- recognizing always that it is persuasion that bridges the gap between personal beliefs and the public good, and that the more diverse a society is, the more persuasive individuals and groups must be if they wish their views to prevail in public life.

### **Articles of peace**

*Article 18:* This model of a civil public square attains its unity through articles of peace rather than articles of faith. Based on articles of peace, unity is forged through a framework of common rights, responsibilities, and respect, within which each faith and worldview is free to be faithful to its own beliefs and moral visions, yet also knows how to differ and live peacefully with the differences of others. Importantly, the model of a civil public square does not aim for a unity based on articles of faith. The dignity of difference and the fact of human diversity mean that unity can never be attained by a search for a lowest common denominator religious unity, or through interfaith dialogue.

### **Civil society**

*Article 19:* This declaration of the rights to freedom of thought, conscience, and religion, as well as its accompanying vision of a civil public square, is vital to the flourishing of civil society. As individual societies and the whole world come to thrive through the energy and dedication of citizens engaging in a myriad of voluntary and non-governmental organizations, it is necessary for them to have the freedom to express their moral visions in their chosen channels of voluntarism, philanthropy, reform, and social entrepreneurialism. A civil public square is therefore essential to a healthy civil society, just as a healthy civil society is vital for fostering a civil public square.

### **Peace through justice**

*Article 20:* This Charter of the rights to freedom of thought, conscience, and religion assumes that peace is more than the absence of conflict, and that peace through justice and the wise ordering of religion and public life is always better than peace through victory and the force of arms. Workable and lasting peace is not utopian, and does not envision the ending of all tyranny and the arrival of final peace on earth. The human goods of justice and freedom are always hard won and maintained at a cost, but peace ordered through justice is the only peace that is a true foundation for human wellbeing.

### **Challenge to the religious**

*Article 21:* The rights to freedom of thought, conscience, and religion, as well as the realities of modern religious diversity, and the responsibilities of a civil public square all pose a particular challenge to the traditional standing of established, or monopoly religions. We live at a time when fewer and fewer countries are dominated by one religion or worldview, and all the beliefs of the world are either present or available everywhere. Among the major challenges to traditional religious believers are an acknowledgment of the excesses and at times evils of religions, a recognition of the rights of other religious believers, and an equal regard for the rights of the increasing number of people who are non-religious in their worldview and ultimate beliefs.

### **Challenge to the secularists**

*Article 22:* The same rights of freedom of thought, conscience, and religion, as well as the same realities of contemporary diversity, and the same responsibilities of a civil public square all pose an equally fundamental challenge to those who adhere to a restrictively secular worldview, as well as to the notion of strictly secular public life in which religion is excluded from public discussion and engagement. Among the major challenges to these secularists are an acknowledgment of the role of exclusive forms of secularism in many of the world's recent oppressions and massacres, an appreciation that the process of secularization is not necessarily inevitable or progressive, and a proper recognition of the rights of religious people in public life -- the denial of which is illiberal, unjust, and a severe impoverishment of civil society.

**First step only**

*Article 23:* This declaration of the rights to freedom of thought, conscience, and religion is foundational and necessary, but only the first step in furthering religious freedom in just and free societies. As a form of moral suasion, it must always be followed by a second step – legal implementation of the same rights in national and international law – and then by a third step: cultivating, through civic education and transmission, the habits of the heart that alone ensure that respect for rights and responsibilities are handed on from generation to generation. All three steps are needed for a society, or for the world, to achieve a genuine and lasting measure of justice and freedom.

**Ongoing questions**

*Article 24:* As the history of *The Universal Declaration of Human Rights* shows, its powerful influence in advancing the Age of Rights has gone hand in hand with enduring questions and criticisms. In particular, there have been persistent challenges to the basis of its affirmations, to the universality of its claims, and to the inclusiveness of its reach – and thus to “the right to its rights.” Because of the changing fortunes of human philosophies and the recurring fact of the deliberate abuse of human rights by certain authorities, such challenges will always persist and will always require a robust response, and by advocates of this Charter too, especially to the challenge to universality.

**Claim to universality**

*Article 25:* *The Global Charter of Conscience* asserts its claim to universality in terms of its scope, though not its observance. It is universal in that it is grounded in the dignity and equality of all human beings, and it is addressed to all the citizens of the world, on behalf of all the rights-respecting citizens of today’s world. We make this declaration with the full realization that to claim to speak from *nowhere* is impossible, and that to speak from *everywhere* is incoherent. We speak from *somewhere*, and in our own time, but with the sure confidence that these declarations, agreed on by people of many traditions and perspectives, are universal affirmations that speak to and for all human beings across all continents and all centuries – even to those who now resist the equality and universality of human rights.

**Enduring obstacles**

*Article 26:* All declarations of human rights encounter enduring obstacles, above all the realities of human nature and the crooked timber of our humanity. Just as *The Universal Declaration of Human Rights* has advanced the cause of justice in the face of deliberate, flagrant, systematic, and continuing violations of human rights, so this Charter openly acknowledges that it will encounter similar challenges and opposition. Problems such as neglect, forgetfulness, hypocrisy, deliberate violations, and criminal abuses of human dignity and rights are both to be expected and resisted. Far from nullifying the rights asserted here, such violations highlight their character and importance.

**First principles best**

*Article 27:* This Charter of the rights to freedom of thought, conscience, and religion starts and proceeds by the consideration of fundamental first principles. It therefore stands in strong contrast to other approaches to resolving problems of religious conflict that will always prove inadequate or dangerous because they ignore or bypass the primary rights of freedom of conscience, and the fact that freedom of conscience is a protection for believers, doubters, and skeptics, but not for beliefs.

Two such faulty approaches are especially common. On the one hand, some people view tolerance as the attitude of those who believe nothing and as the fruit of indifference toward faiths. On the other hand, some people believe that disagreement with, and criticism of other beliefs is innately intolerant. In response: Discourse concerning the ultimate beliefs of others must be respectful, but many critiques and caricatures are not ‘blasphemy’ or ‘defamation.’ There must be a commitment to the equality of freedom of conscience and religious freedom for all. Like all human rights, freedom of thought, conscience, and religion is the right of every human being without exception. There can be no human rights for some but not others.

All approaches that ignore the consequential character of ultimate beliefs in life and the primary place of religious freedom, and its rights, responsibilities, and respect, are inadequate for the proper defense of justice and freedom. Worse, such faulty approaches can also be dangerous, because either their motive or their unintended effect is to favor one religion or worldview at the expense of others, and so to undermine the equality and universality of the right of freedom of conscience in another way. It is never an advance in human rights when special protection for some people becomes oppression or discrimination for others. Nor when law is used to provide protection for a particular belief to the detriment of individuals who do not subscribe to that belief.

### **Pacesetter for tomorrow**

*Article 28:* The rights to freedom of thought, conscience, and religion, as well as the vision of a cosmopolitan and civil global public square are a crucial pacesetter and precedent for preventing global chaos and moving toward the governance of the global civilization of tomorrow. As globalization has advanced and human interconnectedness has increased, it is evident that global communications and global economics have far outstripped global politics. What global governance will mean in the future is not yet clear. But if the world is to respect both diversity and universality, and justice is to strengthen freedom in the search for peace, then a cosmopolitan and civil public square is a necessary stepping stone toward the global governance that is to come.

### **No final word**

*Article 29:* The stern verdict of time on all human endeavor is “This too shall pass,” which means that the wisest and best intentioned settlements of religion and public life are no more than the best so far. We therefore acknowledge humbly that this Charter is neither perfect, nor final, nor agreed by all. It represents our best current judgment as to the place of the rights to freedom of thought, conscience, and religion in our world. But it is always open to future generations to improve and advance these affirmations, aiming always to build societies that are yet freer and more just, and thus more favorable to the highest human flourishing and the creation of a good world.

## **CONCLUSION**

In conclusion, we issue *The Global Charter of Conscience* in the strong hope that, like *The Universal Declaration of Human Rights*, it will advance the cause of freedom of thought, conscience, and religion for people of all faiths, religious or naturalistic. Our express goals for the Charter are three:

First, that it will be a beacon expressing the highest human aspirations for freedom of thought, conscience, and religion.

Second, that it will be a benchmark enabling the most rigorous assessments of freedom of thought, conscience, and religion, which communities, countries, and civilizations have achieved so far.

Third, that it will be a blueprint empowering the most practical implementation of freedom of thought, conscience, and religion, in both law and civic education.

In sum, *The Global Charter of Conscience* is a response to a crucial and unavoidable part of the promise and peril of our time. Only by the wise and courageous application of these affirmations can humanity turn the danger of the differences between ultimate beliefs into a dignity of difference that will help make the world safer for diversity.

## **X. Statement on the Politicization of Religion and Rights of Religious Minorities**

*Adopted by the World Council of Churches 10th Assembly as part of the Report of the Public Issues Committee, 8 November 2013.*

As Christians we confess the dignity accorded to all human beings by God the creator. This forms the basis for a Christian understanding of human rights. We consider freedom of religion a foundational and distinctive human right of particular importance. We want to acknowledge with gratefulness that in many contexts the importance of religious freedom as expressed in Article 18 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) is acknowledged and safeguarded as a right for all to experience.

The World Council of Churches (WCC), from its inception, has consistently expressed its concern regarding the freedom of religion. The WCC through its Commission of the Churches on International Affairs (CCIA) engages member churches through various initiatives in addressing specific situations of freedom of religion and human rights. However, the WCC has never dealt with the issue of the right to religious freedom in isolation. The first WCC assembly in 1948 stated its conviction regarding “freedom of religion as an essential element in good international order” and also affirmed that in “pleading for this freedom, Christians do not ask for any privilege to be granted to Christians that is denied to others”. The 10th Assembly meeting in Busan during the year of the 1700<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the issuance of the Edict of Milan granting tolerance to Christians and all religions reiterates its commitment to religious freedom.<sup>79</sup> The WCC has upheld these principles during the past decades of its struggle for religious freedom and human rights.

Over the years, the WCC has adopted different statements addressing questions related to freedom of religion and human rights as well as responses to specific situations of denial of the right to religious freedom. In recent years the WCC has been concerned about the alarming trend of growing instances of hatred, intolerance and discrimination based on religion or belief in different parts of the world where religious minorities have been forced to live in vulnerable circumstances. There have been a number of instances reported in recent years from different parts of the world on a rise in the denial of religious freedom to religious minorities. It is in this context that the WCC has taken several initiatives during the past three years specifically to address problems related to the rights of religious minorities.

Freedom of Religion: an inherent human right

Respect for freedom of religion should be treated as an inherent human right and political virtue which is a fundamental prerequisite for the democratic and peaceful progress of human society. Freedom of religion cannot be enjoyed without equality and justice. There can be no real freedom without equality and there can be no equality without the potential inclusion and participation of all citizens in any society. An adequate Christian understanding of human rights emphasizes freedom, equality and participation as embodiments of human rights. Freedom of religion is based on the intrinsic dignity of a human being, who is endowed by God with reason and free will. The cardinal principle of right to religious freedom, besides being a natural human right and a civil right, is rooted in biblical teaching and a theological emphasis of human dignity. We reiterate our affirmation that all human beings are created in the image of God, and Jesus Christ is the one in whom true humanity is perfectly realized. The presence of the image of God in each human person and in the whole of humanity affirms the essentially relational character of human nature and emphasizes human dignity. Widespread and grievous violations of this freedom affect the stability, security and development of any society and severely impact upon the daily lives of individuals, families and communities and the wellbeing of the society. It is therefore essential first to affirm that all people are endowed with inherent dignity. This is not only because human beings are made in the image of God (Gen.

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<sup>79</sup> The Waldensian Church delegation wished to register its dissent to the mention of the Edict of Milan, feeling that it is unhelpful to make reference in a statement on religious freedom to an historical moment when Church and State became closely aligned, resulting in an era of freedom for only one religion.

1:26-27), but Christians make the further assertion of this universal and inherent value of all from a Trinitarian perspective.

The WCC has always recognized the significance of international human rights regimes and standards relating to the freedom of religion and belief. During the work of the United Nations while drafting the UDHR of 1948, the CICA took an active role in formulating Article 18 of the UDHR which articulates “Everyone has the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion; this right includes freedom to change his religion or belief, and freedom, either alone or in community with others and in public or private, to manifest his religion or belief in teaching, practice, worship and observance”. It contains normative core values which constitute the minimum standard that should be protected: inner freedom, external freedom including the propagation of one’s religion, freedom from compulsion or coercion, freedom from discrimination, respect of the rights of parents and guardians and the right of the child to religious self-determination, as well as corporate freedom and legal status of religious bodies. This includes the right of conscientious objection as well as reasonable accommodation of employees’ belief by employers.

This commitment was subsequently affirmed in the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, both of 1966. This was further expanded in the Declaration on the Elimination of all Forms of Intolerance and of Discrimination Based on Religion or Belief, of 1981. These rights also extend to those who do not profess a religion as their thought and conscience enjoy the same freedom. It is our firm conviction based on our theological underpinnings that human rights do not constitute a goal in themselves for protecting the interests or rights of only certain groups, but we see human rights show us the direction in which society should develop towards peace with justice. They are a vehicle enabling the life of everybody to acquire fuller and richer quality. It is in relation to life that all aspects of human rights must be assessed and in this context, the rights to freedom of religion and freedom of expression by individuals must be realized in every society.

We have reiterated the principles and values of freedom of religion and the duty of states and governing authorities to respect, protect and promote the freedom of religion or belief, in all its dimensions, for all individuals under their jurisdiction or control without regard to their religion or belief. It is with these convictions that the WCC emphasises the need to strengthen the existing protection mechanisms and devise effective safeguards against violations of national and international law relating to religious freedom. We are of the opinion that there should be concerted and coordinated efforts on the part of religious, civil society and state actors in order to protect the right to freedom of religion. In the current context, the fear is quite real that religious minorities may be further suppressed in certain countries by a rising wave of religious extremism. The rights of minority religious communities to live in peace and harmony amidst their neighbours belonging to majority religious communities is vital not only for the people belonging to faith minority groups but also for overall stability and democratic governance, especially in countries that are liberated from past elements of authoritarianism.

Rights of religious minorities in all contexts should be rooted in a democratic principle that majority and minority are to be treated as equal beneficiaries of the state, and that dignity and human rights of all people are respected and valued. Governments, religious communities, national and international human rights institutions and civil society organizations should play different roles in order to protect the rights of religious minorities and promote religious tolerance, especially when politicization of religion intensifies religious hatred and violates rights of religious minorities. Violations of freedom of religion or belief against persons belonging to religious minorities, whether perpetrated by states or non-state actors, need to be combated, be it in forms of disinformation, discrimination or persecution. Individual and communitarian rights of people belonging to all religious minorities should be respected. This is what the United Nations Special Rapporteur on Freedom of Religion or Belief pointed out in his recent report, saying that, in keeping with the principle of normative universalism, “the rights of persons belonging to religious minorities cannot be confined to the members of certain predefined groups. Instead, they should be open to all persons who live *de facto* in the situation of a minority and are in need of special protection to facilitate a free and non-discriminatory development of their individual and communitarian identities”. The rights of persons belonging to all minority religious groups therefore should be treated as fundamental human rights.

## Politicization of Religion and Religionization of Politics

The contemporary world is witnessing a trend of politicization of religion. As religion occupies a more and more critical space in politics and public life, the politicization of religion and the religionization of politics have become pervasive phenomena in many parts of the world. The trend is that politicization of religion adds to political polarization, and hence the religious divide manifests itself in almost every corner of the globe. When religion becomes a dividing force in the social and political arena, in its more intensive and durable form, it can contribute to a religious chasm. Choosing political allies with more radical positions allows a religion better to defend its interests in the political arena so as to win a privileged position and favours from the government. In recent history we have witnessed the multifaceted trend of politicization of religion, but the flip side of this phenomenon, especially the impact of the religionization of politics, has not always been identified.

The religionization of politics, which destroys communal harmony and intensifies religious hatred, is simultaneously being instrumentalized for political purposes. The religionization of politics in this context ultimately leads politics to pander to the interests of religious groups and leaders who would like to influence and control political power. Religion is being used as an effective instrument in several countries during national elections in order to create specific vote banks, especially prior to elections. The problems, by and large, persist in the assumption that parties or movements are only successful if they invoke religious identity during elections. The strategies used by certain religious groups are to devise and carve roles for themselves in politics by way of invoking religious sentiments against other, minority religious groups. At the same time they position themselves as true champions of their religion which is under threat from minority religions and their foreign affiliation. When religion is used for political gain, relations between different religious communities are increasingly impacted by changes in local and national politics which have been largely reconfigured along particular religious lines. This trend also adds reasons for people of different religions to think in narrow terms of religious sentiments and consider that their religion is more prominent than others. The rising trend of the politicization of religion thus causes serious problems not only for Christians, but it affects different religious communities who live as minorities in many areas of the world. The politicization of religion and the rise of religious extremism in many societies mutually reinforce each other. It not only poses a threat to freedom of religion of the adherents to minority religions, but the survival of religious minorities is affected.

## Rise in religious intolerance and discrimination against religious minorities

We have observed with great concern several cases where the exercise of freedom of expression has been used as an excuse to violate freedom of religion for religious minorities. While the concept of “minority” is mostly a social and political construct, on a practical level these socio-political constructs can and do have a devastating effect on the group of people who lack the strength of numbers amid a “majority” religious community, although this situation is not restricted to religion alone.

While we recognize and indeed welcome the many positive steps taken towards a fuller respect for freedom of religion or belief in numerous contexts, we are also cognizant of the many serious violations of these rights which are of grave concern, such as the violation of the fundamental right to religious freedom by governments, individuals and majority religious groups. The continuing practices which limit the right to change one’s religious status can result in the separation of families, material and social deprivation or even criminal prosecution, imprisonment or the death penalty. Anti-conversion provisions, which are open to misuse and contribute to negative public perceptions of, and violence towards religious minority communities, as found in the legislation of a number of countries should be reconsidered.

We note with concern the tendency in recent years that the discussion on freedom of religion and belief has focussed more on issues related to defamation of religion; this negates the spirit of the universally accepted norm of an individual’s right to freedom of religion and belief. Moving to an approach that protects religions rather than people only undermines the basic human rights principles and international human rights standards as well as giving way to abuse laws in local contexts that persecute religious minorities. The provisions introduced in criminal procedures to misuse blasphemy laws in several countries are clear examples of this. Article 20 of the ICCPR lays down principles that “any advocacy of national, racial or reli-

gious hatred that constitutes incitement to discrimination, hostility or violence shall be prohibited by law". However, the trend is that "incitement to hatred" has been increasing, even in countries that have acceded to the ICCPR. Hence it has become a major concern that incidents which concern article 20 of the ICCPR are not being prosecuted and punished. At the same time a report of the Office of the United Nation's High Commissioner for Human Rights in 2012, "Rabat Plan of Action on the prohibition of advocacy of national, racial or religious hatred", observed that:

"the members of minorities are *de facto* persecuted, with a chilling effect on others, through the abuse of vague domestic legislation, jurisprudence and policies. This dichotomy of (1) no prosecution of "real" incitement cases and (2) persecution of minorities under the guise of domestic incitement laws seems to be pervasive. Anti-incitement laws in countries across the world may be qualified as heterogeneous, at times excessively narrow or vague; jurisprudence on incitement to hatred has been scarce and *ad hoc*; and while several states have adopted related policies, most of them too general and not systematically followed up, lacking focus and deprived of proper impact-assessments".

We see the danger that, as majority religious groups use their religion as a tool to influence the political system and political rulers, religious minorities living in the same societies are persecuted and discriminated against. Often their strategies lead to violence which threatens the very existence of the religious minorities. The alarming trend we note is that there are cases where a conflict in one place, with its local causes and character, is misinterpreted and instrumentalized as part of a conflict in another place, especially when extremist groups use religion to legitimize violence. However, it is heartening to note that the key role religion plays in conflict resolution, reconciliation and peace-building is often evident and recognized. In several countries in the world, people who identify themselves as being politically and economically excluded often feel that dominant religious groups which wield power apply discriminatory standards in dealing with minority rights issues such as freedom of religion. Although the reasons for the problems have their roots in socio-economic factors, social fragmentation and communal hatred, such actions may increase even in traditionally tolerant societies when religion is mobilized for political purposes. The prevailing situations, especially in Asia, Africa and the Middle East prove that religions can impact and influence the geo-political contexts of countries and regions. The new developments in the context of the "Arab Spring" witnessed a number of groups and parties in the Middle East and North Africa ascend into dominant positions in the name of majority religion. In countries in the Middle East region such as Egypt, Syria, Iraq and Iran, religious minorities live in a situation of fear and insecurity.

There are instances that restrict or limit religious freedom of minority religious communities which have been observed in recent years in the United States, Canada, Latin America and the Caribbean as well as in certain European countries. In practice, the discrimination and intolerance against religious groups in these countries are evident in discourses and regulations introduced by governments that question or ban religious dress, symbols and traditions.

Religious minorities in various countries face discrimination on the basis of religion or belief. Discriminatory legislation and state practices provide a legitimatizing framework for wider discrimination in society. Deprivation, social exclusion and violence towards minorities are the inevitable results of systematic discrimination which threatens the social fabric of society. Numerous religious communities encounter problems in obtaining the legal status necessary to function, as well as in acquiring, building or maintaining properties such as places of worship and burial grounds or facilities. In particular, religious minorities in several countries are denied their rights in this regard. Discrimination against religious minorities is also seriously affecting their ability to access their rights to education, healthcare and employment and to participate in the political process. In many instances, educational syllabuses and text books portray negatively or under-represent the role of religious minority groups in society. This also serves to affirm existing societal prejudices and promote intolerance and discrimination. Obligatory religious education of children of minority religious backgrounds in the majority faith violates the rights of parents and children. Existing legislations and state practices with regard to mixed marriages in certain countries negatively impact the right to religious freedom in bringing up children of such marriages of people who belong to religious minorities.

The failure of states to protect religious minorities from violence threatens the survival of communities and is in violation of states' international obligations. The culture of impunity created by failures to investigate

and prosecute crimes against members of minority communities in a number of countries is evident in the politicization of religion. For example, the inaction of government and failure to implement a proper law enforcement mechanism results in gradual erosion of a long-nurtured tradition of religious tolerance. This encourages a culture of politicization of religion which threatens the very existence of religious minorities. In a country like Pakistan, the politicization of religion by military dictatorships, introduced through changes in the penal code, systematized the misuse of the Blasphemy Law which is now a major instrument used by the religious extremists against the religious minorities in the country. The politicization of religion in the Indian context constantly threatens communal harmony and peaceful co-existence of people belonging to different faiths. Constitutional guarantees of the right to religious freedom face continual threat and minority religious groups are often under attack from religious extremist groups who try to mobilize religions and religious sentiments for political gains. The politicization of religion and the religionization of politics in different African nations intensify religious hatred, communal violence and political instability. Religious extremist groups of majority religions as well as political parties are responsible for creating such situations. Northern Nigeria, Tanzania, Sudan, Indonesia, Sri Lanka and Myanmar among others, provide examples of continuing violence in the name of religion and the spread of religious hatred. In certain other situations, ruling governments are using religion to wield the support of majority religions with an aim to create communal vote banks and political power. Often such actions lead to conflicts and violence, especially when governments deny religious freedom as well as when social and government restrictions on religion or a minority group are imposed. Some examples of cases where the WCC has been involved: In Malaysia, where objections to using the word "Allah" by Christians have exacerbated religious hatred and tension over the years, pro-government political parties have been responsible for intensifying the controversy. The Methodist Church of Fiji has been denied its freedom to exist as a religious body and has been continuously denied permission to convene its national assembly in the country due to interference by the government. The government of the Former Yugoslavian Republic of Macedonia (FYROM) has categorically denied the Orthodox Archdiocese of Ochrid the right to registration as a religious body. The interference of the government in the country's legal system resulted in the illegal detention of the head of the church. Kosovo faced in recent times systematic destruction of over 100 Orthodox Christian shrines while leading to historical revisionism with regard to their cultural patrimony, threatening the very existence of the Serbian Orthodox faithful. In Albania Orthodox churches are not always adequately protected, with regard to recent incidents of extremely violent actions that have occurred during times of living worship.

The 10th Assembly of the World Council of Churches held in Busan, Republic of Korea, from 30 October to 8 November 2013, therefore:

1. **Reaffirms** the commitment of the WCC to the principle of the universal right of all persons to freedom of religion or belief;
2. **Reiterates** our conviction that the Church is an important element in promoting and defending religious freedom and rights of religious minorities, based on its historic values and ethos of upholding human dignity and the human rights of every individual;
3. **Recognizes** and reiterates that the promotion and protection of freedom of religion or belief should be the concern and work of the churches and the ecumenical community as part of their prophetic witness;
4. **Calls** upon WCC member churches to engage actively in defending the rights of all religious minorities and their right to freedom of religion or belief, especially in opposing legislation or regulations that would limit religious freedom in contravention of international human rights standards;
5. **Recognizes** the positive steps being taken by various states towards a fuller respect for freedom of religion or belief in a number of contexts;
6. **Expresses** grave concern on the increasing trend of politicization of religion and religionization of politics as well as the growing trend of terrorism that threaten the social fabric of a society and the peaceful co-existence of religious communities;
7. **Expresses** grave concern on state interference in the decision-making processes of religious groups, and the imposition of religious law and jurisprudence through state sanctions;

8. ***Calls*** upon the ecumenical community around the world to mediate with their respective governments to develop policies of providing effective protection of persons and communities belonging to minority religions against threats or acts of violence from non-state actors;
  1. ***Calls*** upon governments to strengthen the existing protection mechanisms and enact legislation to protect the rights of members of religious minorities and introduce effective measures and apply universal normative status regarding freedom of thought, conscience, religion or belief; including the right to change religion and to manifest your belief;
  2. ***Urges*** states to repeal criminal law provisions that misuse blasphemy laws, apostasy laws or anti-conversion laws to punish deviation from majority religions or to discriminate against religious minorities and violate their right to freedom of religion or belief;
  3. ***Urges*** states to implement anti-discrimination legislation to protect persons and communities belonging to different religions, especially to end discrimination and persecution for their faith or belief;
  4. ***Commends*** the UN for its advocacy of freedom of religion or belief and *calls* on the UN, especially the Human Rights Council, to give the same priority to freedom of religion or belief as is given to other fundamental human rights and to resist any attempts to weaken the principle of freedom of religion or belief;
  5. ***Calls*** on the UN to strengthen the office of the Special Rapporteur on Freedom of Religion or Belief; and
  6. ***Calls*** for concerted and coordinated efforts on the part of religious, civil society and state actors in order to address violations of rights of religious minorities and their freedom of religion and belief.

## **XI. Declaration of the Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue on Iraq**

*August 12, 2014*<sup>80</sup>

The whole world watches, amazed, at what is now called "the restoration of the Caliphate", which was abolished October 29, 1923 by Kamal Ataturk, founder of modern Turkey.

Despite most Muslim religious and political institutions contesting that "restoration", it has not prevented the jihadists "Islamic State" to commit and continue to commit unspeakable criminal acts.

The Pontifical Council, all those engaged in interreligious dialogue, the followers of all religions as well as men and women of good will can only denounce and condemn unambiguously these shameful practices of man:

- the slaughter of people solely because of their religious beliefs;
- the abhorrent practice of beheading, crucifixion and hanging corpses in public places;
- the choice imposed on Christians and Yazidis between conversion to Islam, payment of tax (jizya) or exodus
- the forced expulsion of tens of thousands of people, including children, the elderly, pregnant women and the sick;
- the kidnapping of girls and women belonging to the Yazidi and Christian communities as war booty;
- the imposition of the barbaric practice of infibulation;

<sup>80</sup> Working translation from French by Zenit.org.

- the destruction of places of worship and Christian-Muslim mausoleums;
- the forced occupation or desecration of churches and monasteries;
- the removal of crucifixes and other Christian religious symbols and those of other religious communities;
- the destruction of the invaluable, Christian religious and cultural heritage;
- the abject violence that terrorizes people into surrendering or fleeing.

No cause can justify such barbarity and certainly not a religion. This is an extremely serious offense to humanity and to God who is the Creator, as Pope Francis has often said.

We cannot forget, however, that Christians and Muslims have lived together - it is true with many ups and downs - over the centuries, building a culture of friendliness and a civilization of which they are proud. Moreover, it is on this basis that in recent years, the dialogue between Christians and Muslims has continued and deepened.

The plight of Christians, Yazidis and many other religious and ethnic minority communities in Iraq demands a clear and courageous stance on the part of religious leaders, especially Muslims, those engaged in inter-faith dialogue and everyone of goodwill. All must be unanimous in condemning unequivocally these crimes and denouncing the invocation of religion to justify them. Otherwise what credibility will religions, their followers and their leaders have? Even after patiently pursuing interreligious dialogue in recent years, what credibility will there be?

Religious leaders are also called to exercise their influence on rulers to help end these crimes, punish those who commit them and restore the rule of law throughout the country, ensuring that those expelled return home. Recalling the need for ethics in running humane societies, these same religious leaders must not fail to stress that the support, funding and arming of terrorism is morally reprehensible.

That being said, the Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue is grateful to all those who have raised their voices to condemn terrorism, especially those who use religion to justify it.

We unite our voice with that of Pope Francis: "May the God of peace stir up every genuine desire for dialogue and reconciliation. Violence is never defeated by violence. Violence is conquered by peace".

## **XII. Council of Europe, Parliamentary Assembly**

### **Tackling intolerance and discrimination in Europe with a special focus on Christians**

Resolution 2036 (2015). Origin: Assembly debate on 29 January 2015 (8th Sitting) (see Doc. 13660, report of the Committee on Equality and Non-Discrimination, rapporteur: Mr Valeriu Ghiletschi). Text adopted by the Assembly on 29 January 2015 (8th Sitting).

1. Intolerance and discrimination on grounds of religion or belief affect minority religious groups in Europe, but also people belonging to majority religious groups. Numerous acts of hostility, violence and vandalism have been recorded in recent years against Christians and their places of worship, but these acts are often overlooked by the national authorities. Expression of faith is sometimes unduly limited by national legislation and policies which do not allow the accommodation of religious beliefs and practices.
2. The reasonable accommodation of religious beliefs and practices constitutes a pragmatic means of ensuring the effective and full enjoyment of freedom of religion. When it is applied in a spirit of tolerance, this concept allows all religious groups to live in harmony in the respect and acceptance of their diversity.
3. The Parliamentary Assembly has recalled on several occasions the need to promote the peaceful coexistence of religious communities in the member States, notably in Resolution 1846 (2011) on combating all forms of discrimination based on religion, Recommendation 1962 (2011) on the religious dimension

of intercultural dialogue and Resolution 1928 (2013) on safeguarding human rights in relation to religion and belief, and protecting religious communities from violence.

4. Freedom of thought, conscience and religion is protected by Article 9 of the European Convention on Human Rights (ETS No. 5) and considered as one of the foundations of a democratic and pluralist society. Limitations on the exercise of freedom of religion must be restricted to those prescribed by law and necessary in a democratic society.
5. The Assembly is convinced that measures should be taken to ensure the effective enjoyment of the protection of freedom of religion or belief afforded to every individual in Europe.
6. The Assembly therefore calls on the Council of Europe member States to:
  - 6.1. promote a culture of tolerance and “living together” based on the acceptance of religious pluralism and on the contribution of religions to a democratic and pluralist society, but also on the right of individuals not to adhere to any religion;
  - 6.2. promote reasonable accommodation within the principle of indirect discrimination so as to:
    - 6.2.1. ensure that the right of all individuals under their jurisdiction to freedom of religion and belief is respected, without impairing for anyone the other rights also guaranteed by the European Convention on Human Rights;
    - 6.2.2. uphold freedom of conscience in the workplace while ensuring that access to services provided by law is maintained and the right of others to be free from discrimination is protected;
    - 6.2.3. respect the right of parents to provide their children with an education in conformity with their religious or philosophical convictions, while guaranteeing the fundamental right of children to education in a critical and pluralistic manner in accordance with the European Convention on Human Rights, its protocols and the case law of the European Court of Human Rights;
    - 6.2.4. enable Christians to fully participate in public life;
  - 6.3. protect the peaceful exercise of freedom of assembly, in particular through measures to ensure that counter-demonstrations do not affect the right to demonstrate, in line with the guidelines on freedom of assembly of the European Commission for Democracy through Law (Venice Commission) and the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights of the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE/ODIHR);
  - 6.4. uphold the fundamental right to freedom of expression by ensuring national legislation does not unduly limit religiously motivated speech;
  - 6.5. publicly condemn the use of and incitement to violence, as well as all forms of discrimination and intolerance on religious grounds;
  - 6.6. combat and prevent cases of violence, discrimination and intolerance, in particular by carrying out effective investigations in order to avoid any sense of impunity among the perpetrators;
  - 6.7. encourage the media to avoid negative stereotyping and communicating prejudices against Christians, in the same way as for any other group;
  - 6.8. ensure the protection of minority Christian communities and allow such communities to be registered as a religious organisation, and to establish and maintain meeting places and places of worship, regardless of the number of believers and without any undue administrative burden;
  - 6.9. guarantee the enjoyment by minority Christian communities of the right to publish and use religious literature.