



THE
LUTHERAN
WORLD
FEDERATION

A Communion
of Churches

lutheranworld.org

Public Statement - Protracted Conflicts and the Over-stretched Humanitarian Response

The Council of the Lutheran World Federation is alarmed by the latest UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR) report, released 18 June 2015. In our world today, nearly 60 million people are forcibly displaced as result of conflicts, persecution, and human rights violations. This is more than at any time since the Second World War. More people had to flee in 2014 than in any other year in UNHCR's records—on average 42,500 people were forced to leave their homes every single day. More alarmingly, the report states that over half of the world's refugees and displaced persons are defenceless children.

While Syria remains the largest single source of global forced displacement, other parts of the world have also seen a sharp increase in the number of refugees and internally displaced persons. Within just the past five years, 15 countries have witnessed fresh conflicts or relapsed into violence.¹ As a consequence, there has been an unprecedented growth in the numbers of refugees seeking safety through dangerous sea journeys, including on the Mediterranean, the Gulf of Aden, and the Red Sea, and in Southeast Asia.

The world's humanitarian responders are over-stretched and unable to properly respond to the needs of those affected by these violent conflicts. The scale of suffering and the necessary response is overwhelming the system. We experience this also at the LWF, where LWF World Service is already working with victims of violence from, inter alia, Syria, South Sudan, Sudan, Somalia, Iraq, Central African Republic, Mali, DR Congo, Burundi, Myanmar, Colombia, and Central America.

The international community, and especially the United Nations Security Council, has failed to put a halt to a number of these protracted conflicts which have caused massive suffering among civilians. The most prominent example is Syria. This calls for a fundamental shift from business as usual in the way in which the Security Council functions.

Therefore, the Lutheran World Federation Council calls upon the:

United Nations Security Council to:

- Suspend the use of the veto power by the Permanent Five members in matters related to preventing or ending genocide, war crimes or crimes against humanity.

- Protect civilians and ensure greater accountability for violations of international humanitarian law.
- Parties to the Conflicts to:
 - Respect international humanitarian law and facilitate humanitarian access to all people in need without discrimination in the respective areas under their control.
 - Protect and promote the safety, space and freedom of humanitarian personnel to carry out their work free of political pressure.

All governments, non-state armed groups and the private sector to:

- Refrain from the transfer and sale of arms to warring parties.

LWF Member Churches to:

- Open their doors to welcome the refugees and peoples in need as stipulated in the LWF 2013 and 2014 council statements on “Welcoming the Stranger”.
- Provide spiritual, moral, material and other types of support to churches and Christians under persecution in the Middle East region and elsewhere.

¹ Africa (Cote d'Ivoire, Central African Republic, Libya, Mali, north-eastern Nigeria, Democratic Republic of Congo, South Sudan and Burundi); Middle East (Syria, Iraq, and Yemen); Europe (Ukraine); Asia (Kyrgyzstan, Myanmar and Pakistan).