



THE
LUTHERAN
WORLD
FEDERATION

Office of the
General Secretary

TO:
LWF World Service
Country Program Staff

lutheranworld.

19 August 2015

Re: World Humanitarian Day

Dear Colleagues,

Greetings to you from the LWF Communion Office!

I want again to take the opportunity of the UN World Humanitarian Day to express my deep appreciation for you, for your humanitarian commitment, and for the outstanding service for people in need that you are undertaking on behalf of the Lutheran World Federation – A Communion of Churches.

Through your passion and your work of upholding the rights of the poor and oppressed, you put into practice the commitment of the LWF to be a communion “living and working together for a just, peaceful and reconciled world”.

Your work is highly appreciated by the LWF member churches and by the LWF governing bodies. This is because of your commitment and the quality of the programs and services you offer. We thank you for your important achievements and hard work.

The United Nations established World Humanitarian Day to commemorate all those who have lost their lives in humanitarian service and to celebrate the spirit that inspires humanitarian work around the world. Twelve years ago, on 19 August 2003, 22 aid workers were killed in the bombing at the UN headquarters in Baghdad. Some of us knew and had worked with some of those who lost their lives that day.

The Council of the Lutheran World Federation this year addressed its attention to the extraordinarily difficult challenges that you face in your work. Meeting in June, the Council expressed its alarm that in our world today, nearly 60 million people are forcibly displaced as a 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 UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR) records—on average 42,500 people were forced to leave their homes every single day. More alarmingly, over half of those refugees and displaced persons are defenseless children.

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Through your efforts, the LWF is today able to help and work with some 2 million of those refugees and forcibly displaced persons. Yet the need is much greater. The Council recognized that the world's humanitarians are over-stretched and unable to properly respond to the needs of those affected by 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, Yemen, Central African Republic, Mali, DR Congo, Burundi, Myanmar, Colombia, and Central America.

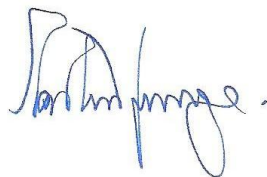
The international community, and especially the United Nations Security Council, has failed to put a halt to a number of these protracted conflicts which have caused massive suffering among civilians. The most prominent example is Syria. The LWF Council called for a fundamental shift from business as usual in the way in which the Security Council functions. Too many innocent people are suffering. No matter how compassionate or courageous are humanitarian responses, they cannot resolve political problems.

You work and live in difficult places, places where all too often violence, displacement, hunger and lack of basic human rights prevail. In fact, none of the places where you serve are safe places. Some of them, however, are particularly precarious when it comes to security issues. I remain deeply concerned for your wellbeing and safety.

In several violent conflicts, and this is often the environment in which you work, there seems to be a total absence of respect for international humanitarian law. While there is no such thing as a civilized war, it is not acceptable that aid workers and the people they serve should be targets and victims. The LWF remains committed to speak out more clearly and loudly that it is simply unacceptable that any fighting force should target civilians and aid workers. The international community needs to take decisive steps against the perpetrators.

Thank you again for your work, which the Lutheran World Federation deeply appreciates, values and celebrates. Our prayers continue to be with you for your own safety and that of your families. We pray for your continued commitment, courage, creativity, skill, wisdom, and yes—joy in the work!—as you continue to carry out your vocation to serve the neighbor in need.

God bless you!



Rev. Martin Junge
General Secretary