



THE
LUTHERAN
WORLD
FEDERATION

A Communion
of Churches

lutheranworld.org



Photo: Paul Jeffrey

Statement of the LWF President and LWF General Secretary on Human Rights Day 2015

Syria: Violence is engendering more violence

On this Human Rights Day, 10 December, it is well to recall the beginning of the Preamble of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, proclaimed in 1948:

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 ...

We are now in another time in human history when barbarous acts have outraged the conscience of humanity. The Lutheran World Federation (LWF) continues to deplore the

vicious terrorist attacks which have been perpetrated in many cities on many continents. It rejects any justification for such actions on any grounds.

The LWF believes that terrorism must be countered and its root causes addressed.

On this Human Rights Day, the LWF expresses its grave concern over the current actions to counter terrorism as they unfold today, notably in Syria.

Disproportionate massive airstrikes hitting cities in Syria have resulted in an unacceptably high death toll among civilian populations. This suffering only exacerbates pressure on the remaining population to flee and seek refuge elsewhere. When they do flee, these refugees all too often come up against increased restrictions in too many countries.

The LWF Council has spoken strongly for the region's conflicts to be resolved through negotiation rather than through compounded violence. Previous "coalitions of the willing" have not only failed to suppress extremism, but can be seen today as a major contributor to its growth. In recent years, such military coalitions have significantly eroded the instruments that the community of nations—not least the United Nations—has developed with great difficulty over many years in order to cooperate at an international level around issues of conflict and war. It is a matter of grave concern to the LWF that the military intervention in Syria does not have a UN mandate. Extremist violence and terrorist acts can be most effectively countered through enhanced cooperation through existing international instruments and institutions, and not through the development of a new military coalition with no UN mandate.

The world is trapped in a vicious circle of violence engendering more violence. Terrorism cannot be effectively addressed by military power alone. In confronting conflicts that are in part justified in the name of religion, the LWF calls upon political and religious leaders to consider the roles of inter-cultural and inter-religious engagement in promoting conflict resolution and peace-building.

We call upon the community of States to:

- Stop the disproportionate, massive airstrikes on cities and villages in Syria with their large impact on innocent civilian populations;
- Analyze lessons learned from earlier, similar responses to terrorist attacks and draw conclusions for the approach applied today;
- Adhere to internationally binding legal instruments—both in international humanitarian law and in human rights law—in the case of continued military intervention;
- Uphold the duty to protect civilian populations in the context of military intervention, allowing as much as possible for vulnerable people to remain in their homelands; and
- Provide generous humanitarian assistance, without discrimination, to the victims of violence and persecution, including the protection and welcome of refugees.

There is a duty to counter terrorism and to bring it to a halt; there is a grave risk that current strategies will achieve the opposite.

Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good. (Romans 12:21)

Bishop Dr Munib A. Younan
President
The Lutheran World Federation

Rev. Dr Martin Junge
General Secretary
The Lutheran World Federation