



Demonstrators at the World Social Forum, Porto Alegre, Brazil, January 2001.
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Office for International Affairs and Human Rights (OIAHR)

Key International Developments

The following developments dominated international affairs during the period under review:

- A rise in militant activism against globalization
- Tension between growing internationalism/multilateralism and resurgent unilateralism
- The collapse of the Oslo peace process in the Middle East, and the commencement of the second Intifada
- The terrorist attacks against the United States in September 2001, and the response described as the “war against terrorism”.

These developments have strongly influenced, though not dictated or limited, the LWF agenda in the field of international affairs and human rights.

Freedom of Religion

The Ninth Assembly called for “a comprehensive report ... on the involvement of member churches in promoting and defending religious freedom” to be presented to the Council. Twenty-three reports were received from member churches in response to a letter of request from the General Secretariat. These were compiled and presented to the Council in 2000. (Two additional reports have been received in the meantime.)

Nearly all the reports referred to the crucial role of churches in awareness raising and education for religious tolerance. There was almost unanimous endorsement of ecumenical and interfaith dialogue. The reports paid close attention to national, constitutional provisions concerning religious freedom, and the legislation regulating the life of churches and religious communities. Some member churches have been very active in their efforts to influence legal frameworks for the exercise of religious freedom.

Some reports highlighted the connection between latent racism and xenophobia and expressions of religious intolerance, especially against immigrants and refugees. It can be difficult to distinguish religious intolerance from racism or xenophobia, and determine which predominates.

Commitment to religious freedom for all seems broadly accepted. Although religious fundamentalism or extremism was not a major topic in most reports, such extremism is increasingly obvious in several countries. The complex interrelationships between religious differences, political agendas, racial and ethnic discrimination and economic injustice are hard to untangle.

There was a strong correlation between the views of member churches and the key issues identified by the UN Special Rapporteur on Freedom of Religion or Belief.

During the 56th session of the UN Commission on Human Rights (2000), the LWF joined with the WCC, WARC, CEC, and the Oslo Coalition on Freedom of Religion or Belief to convene two meetings in which

the Special Rapporteur was the principal speaker. The Special Rapporteur stressed particularly the need for preventive strategies, especially in the area of education.

Theological and Ethical Implications of Armed Intervention to Defend Human Rights

The Council meeting in Bratislava in 1999 was held shortly after the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation’s intervention in the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (FRY). The Council discussed the impact of these events upon the churches and people of the FRY and neighboring countries. It then asked the General Secretary to “institute a process of interdepartmental reflection on the theological and ethical implications of the concept of armed intervention to defend human rights”.

This reflection was undertaken by the Staff Working Team on International Affairs and Human Rights, and involved colleagues from DTS and DWS, as well as OIAHR. Discussions were also held with the WCC, CEC, and the Quaker UN Office. The resulting discussion paper presented to the Council in 2000 outlined some theological issues, reviewed previous LWF studies and stances, and discussed ethical considerations. Its observations included the following:

- A strict reading of the existing law under the UN Charter indicates that there is no right of intervention for humanitarian purposes without Security Council authorization.
- However, this interpretation is in tension with a widespread popular sense of moral obligation to act in response to large-scale violations of human rights in another state—if necessary by military means. This tension becomes intolerable when the Security Council is prevented from acting in response to clear and grave violations of human rights, either by a failure to achieve consensus

or when a permanent member of the Security Council exercises its veto.

- Armed intervention without a Security Council mandate may undermine one of the basic tenets of the existing international legal order (the prohibition against the use of force) and jeopardize collective security.
- In any event, military force is generally ineffective in securing human rights for all. Military activity usually exacerbates human rights violations. Hence, armed intervention must be seen as an instrument of last resort. Its inherent limitations and inevitably negative outcomes must be recognized and addressed in a more comprehensive international response.
- Much greater attention needs to be given to the early and effective application of alternative measures that promote dialogue and foster mutual understanding.

The complexity of this issue highlights the need for detailed guidelines firmly based upon ethical foundations. The role of the churches in witnessing to the love and compassion of Christ requires continued, in-depth discussion, always from the point of view of the victims of violence and abuse.

Peacemaking and Reconciliation

After the Ninth Assembly, the Council asked the LWF to focus its efforts on 'Working for Peace in Africa'. Therefore, LWF concentrated its activities in the field of peacemaking and reconciliation on situations in the African continent, but not to the exclusion of attention to the serious conflicts in Israel–Palestine and Colombia.

Working for Peace in Africa

In the period under review, the LWF's initiatives focusing on Africa have included:

- Namibia/Botswana: facilitating cross-border contact between the national councils of churches in both countries in the context of a border dispute
- Ethiopia: promoting dialogue between the government and the Oromo Liberation Front (OLF)
- Liberia: participating in election observation, and promoting dialogue between the government, religious leaders and NGOs
- Promoting a continent-wide consultation and follow-up process on inter-faith dialogue and cooperation for



Participants gather at the Interfaith Peace Summit in Johannesburg, South Africa, October 2002.
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peace (launched at the ‘Interfaith Peace Summit in Africa’, which was held from October 14 to 19, 2002 in Johannesburg, South Africa).

Namibia and Botswana

The LWF convened two meetings—including a visit to an area the subject of a tense border dispute between the two governments—involving the councils of churches



Child soldier in Sinyea Village, Liberia.
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of Namibia and Botswana. The councils were involved in assisting refugees and returnees in the context of the instability generated by the dispute. The two councils committed themselves to working together to reduce cross-border tensions between the communities on either side of the disputed border. An exchange of vis-

its by the leaders of both countries also helped to lessen tensions. A decision about the main disputed border area was made by the International Court of Justice in Botswana’s favor in December 1999 and was accepted by both governments.

Ethiopia

Contacts were established with the Prime Minister of Ethiopia and senior representatives of the OLF in an effort to promote a peaceful and just solution to the longstanding internal conflict. Contacts had to be suspended during the hostilities between Ethiopia and Eritrea from 1998 to 2000 and were taken up again after the peace agreement.

Recent discussions with the OLF leadership have focused on promoting consensus within the Oromo community on peaceful approaches to resolving the conflict between the OLF (and other insurgent groups) and the Ethiopian government. The LWF has provided finance for broad-based consultations for this purpose.

Fighting erupted between Ethiopia and Eritrea in May 1998. Leaders of the religious communities in both countries came together with the assistance of Norwegian Church Aid to promote a peaceful end to the conflict. A peace agreement brokered by the OAU was signed in Algiers in June 2002. A decision on the delimitation of the border between Ethiopia and Eritrea was handed down in April 2002 by an International Boundary Commission based in The Hague.

Liberia

The six-year civil war in Liberia came to an end formally with the signing of the Abuja Agreement in August 1996. Presidential and general elections were held in July 1997. Following the recommendation of a pastoral team in April 1997, the LWF participated in election observation initiatives. The General Secretary visited Liberia in September 1998 in an effort to encourage dialogue between the government, the

church and other religious leaders, and between the government and those international NGOs (including LWF Liberia) so essential to maintaining and restoring infrastructure. A major concern is the social reintegration of former child soldiers: about a third of the estimated 60,000 combatants were under the age of 17.

Interfaith Peace Summit in Africa

Over the last several years, the General Secretary has promoted the vision of a regional approach to interfaith dialogue and cooperation for peace in Africa. This vision was supported by African religious leaders and endorsed by the All Africa Conference of Churches (AACC), the WCC, WARC, and the Vatican Secretary of State. The LWF acted as lead agency/facilitator to organize and hold a major interfaith summit—the ‘Interfaith Peace Summit in Africa’—from October 14 to 19, 2002 in Johannesburg. The Summit, which involved over 100 religious leaders from 21 countries and from all of the major religious traditions represented in Africa—Christianity, Islam, African religion, Hinduism, Judaism, Buddhism and the Baha’i Faith—adopted a declaration and a concrete plan of action to promote interfaith dialogue and cooperation for peace in Africa.

Israel–Palestine

At the invitation of the ELCJ, the 2001 session of the Council was due to take place in Bethlehem–Jerusalem, but the deteriorating security of the region made it necessary to change the venue to Geneva. The situation in Israel–Palestine remained a key subject of the meeting, and one day was devoted to a series of events highlighting the issue.

The LWF has undertaken frequent advocacy with Israeli and Palestinian political leaders in this deteriorating situation. It has actively supported activities promoting peace, including the establishment of the Ecumenical Accompaniment Programme in Palestine and Israel.



Rev. Dr Mitri Raheb shows the Dar al Kalima Lutheran School in Bethlehem to Evangelical Lutheran Church in Jordan Bishop Munib A. Younan, LWF General Secretary Rev. Dr Ishmael Noko, and LWF President Bishop em. Dr Christian Krause.
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Colombia

The collapse of negotiations between the Colombian government and the largest left-wing guerrilla group, the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia, has dashed hopes of a peaceful solution to this longstanding and vicious internal conflict. Plan Colombia (the USA’s program of support for the Colombian government), particularly its significant military and quasi-military elements, has caused grave concern among churches and civil society.

The LWF, the WCC, the Latin American Council of Churches, and the National Council of Churches of Christ in the USA—together known as the “Four Councils”—were called to support the peoples of Colombia in their search for peace. Their efforts included:

- A visit to Colombia in November 1997 to support the internal efforts of churches and civil society
- Discussions with high-level representatives of the two main guerrilla movements
- Funding for a human rights workshop convened by the International Service for Human Rights
- Convening an ecumenical forum in Bogota that brought together national and foreign organizations to improve coordination of peace initiatives
- Providing a human rights training internship for a member of the Evan-



IDPs in Colombia.
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gical Lutheran Church of Colombia at the time of the 2000 session of the UN Commission on Human Rights.

More than a million people have been displaced in Colombia and impunity for violations of human rights is estimated at 98 percent.

Economic Justice: Economic Globalization and Human Rights

Within the loose coalition of organizations known as the International NGO Committee on Human Rights in Trade and Investment (INCHRITI), the LWF has been a key proponent of the primacy of human rights in international economic law and policy, and the use of human rights principles in the analysis and critique of economic neoliberalism. Within the UN human rights system, many advances have been made

The LWF is a member of the Global Trade Strategy Group of the Ecumenical Advocacy Alliance. Campaign goals include advocating for:

- Recognition of the priority of international human rights, and social and environmental agreements, over trade agreements and policies
- Regulation of transnational corporations to ensure that they contribute to poverty eradication, promotion of human rights and the protection of the environment
- Agricultural trade rules that further the right to food, food security for all, sustainable agriculture and promote greater self-reliance in developing countries
- Global and national policies and trade rules to ensure access for all to essential services based on human rights principles.

on this issue through the direct advocacy of the LWF. Together with other INCHRITI members, the LWF has worked especially closely with the UN Sub-Commission on the Promotion and Protection of Human Rights and with the UN Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights.

In the Sub-Commission, the LWF and its INCHRITI partners lobbied successfully for a series of resolutions on the impact on human rights of specific aspects of international economic policy. The LWF also helped to facilitate a number of workshops with the members of the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights and contributed to the process that led to the adoption of a statement by the Committee to the Third Ministerial Conference of the World Trade Organization (WTO) (held in Seattle in November–December 1999). In that statement, the Committee declared that “Trade liberalization must be understood as a means, not an end. The end which trade liberalization should serve is the objective of human well-being to which the international human rights instruments give legal expression.”

The LWF also lobbied successfully for the establishment of a mandate by the UN Commission on Human Rights on “Economic globalization and its impact on the full enjoyment of all human rights.”

The LWF has promoted actively a human rights framework in its contacts with the WTO, the World Bank, the UN Conference on Trade and Development, and others, as well as in major civil society gatherings in Seattle (for the Third Ministerial Conference of the WTO) and Porto Alegre (for the World Social Forum).

In the context of its participation in the Global Trade Strategy Group of the Ecumenical Advocacy Alliance, founded in December 2000, LWF has also focused on human rights.

In other activities related to economic justice, the LWF:

- Participated in the Paris planning meetings of the NGO campaign



Dalits clean public lavatories bare-handed.
© LWF/Dalit Solidarity Network (UK)/D.Haslam

against the Multilateral Agreement on Investment in October 1997

- Participated in the Rome planning meetings of the Jubilee 2000 campaign, in which future directions for the international Jubilee 2000 movement were discussed. In that context, the LWF sought to introduce human rights elements into the structure of the Jubilee 2000 campaign.
- Issued an edition of the *Development Education Forum* devoted to international debt and its human consequences in December 1999
- Participated in the successful NGO lobbying effort for the appointment by the Commission on Human Rights of a Special Rapporteur on foreign debt and human rights. This mandate was established in 1998.
- Worked with Franciscans International to convene a series of seminars on the right to development during 1999–2001 for representatives of diplomatic missions in Geneva, in an attempt to promote progress on what has become a highly politicized and difficult issue.

Dalit Human Rights and Caste-based Discrimination

In March 2000, the LWF joined with numerous grassroots organizations and international NGOs to found the International Dalit Solidarity Network (IDSN). The LWF's special contribution is advocacy for Dalit human rights in major UN human rights forums.

An early result of this advocacy was the adoption in August 2000 by the UN Sub-Commission on the Promotion and Protection of Human Rights of a breakthrough resolution on the topic of "Discrimination based on work and descent". It identified key features of the type of discrimination experienced by the Dalits of South Asia and other communities. The resolution led to an examination of the global dimensions of caste-based discrimination and similar forms of discrimination based on occupation and descent—the first time that a UN human rights body had embarked upon a detailed examination of this politically sensitive issue.

The LWF helped to coordinate international advocacy on the issue of caste-based discrimination at the World Conference Against Racism, Racial Discrimina-

tion, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance held in Durban, August-September 2001. Intense NGO lobbying failed to ensure the inclusion of explicit reference to the situation of Dalits or of other groups suffering similar forms of discrimination in the Declaration and Program of Action of the World Conference. However, it provoked an unprecedented debate, both internationally and in some of the countries which practice this form of discrimination.

The LWF also supported discussions in the UN Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination in August 2002, examining the application of the “descent” limb of the definition of racial discrimination (contained in Article 1 of the Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Racial Discrimination) to caste-based discrimination and similar practices.

The IDSN has formed alliances with organizations representing the ‘Buraku’ people of Japan, who suffer a very similar form of discrimination. The LWF has sought actively to identify and forge alliances with people and groups suffering caste discrimination in parts of Africa.

Other Advocacy Priorities

Bhutanese Refugees

Through DWS, LWF has supported the 100,000-strong Bhutanese refugee population in camps in eastern Nepal for over 10 years. These people were forced to flee

their homes in southern Bhutan during an orchestrated campaign of ethnic cleansing.

The LWF has been engaged in an advocacy campaign on this matter since 1996, stressing the rights of the refugees to return to their places of origin and not to be arbitrarily deprived of their nationality. Advocacy has been taken up directly with the governments concerned (Bhutan and Nepal), with the UN High Commissioner for Refugees and in international human rights bodies. The pressure created by this advocacy led eventually to the establishment of a joint verification process by the governments of Bhutan and Nepal, but progress has been painfully slow. At the time of writing, not a single refugee has been allowed to return home, and reports are emerging of widespread government-sponsored resettlement of the lands from which the refugees fled.

Human Rights Defenders

In 1997, the LWF joined NGO lobbying efforts for the adoption of a declaration on the rights and responsibilities of human rights defenders. This declaration was adopted ultimately by the Commission on Human Rights in 2000. In the same year, the UN Secretary-General appointed a Special Representative to report on the situation of human rights defenders around the world. Recently, the LWF has sought closer cooperation with the Special Representative, especially with regard to human rights defenders and clergy in Colombia.

Children in Armed Conflict

In 1999, after a visit by the General Secretary to Uganda, during which he met with representatives of the United Nations Children’s Fund and parents of children abducted by the Lord’s Resistance Army, the LWF made this an advocacy priority. It hosted a parallel meeting to the Commission on Human Rights, during which a publication was launched, and joined lobbying efforts for specific attention to be given to this matter by the Commission.

Bhutanese refugee in Nepal weaves bamboo mat.

© LWF/DWS Nepal



It has since been included as an item on the Commission's agenda.

Capacity-building for Human Rights Ministries: Equipping the Churches

The regional human rights training workshops that commenced prior to the Ninth Assembly have continued, with workshops in Guyana in January 1999 (for the English-speaking member churches in South America), Romania in May 1999 (jointly with CEC, for member churches in Eastern and Central Europe), and Bangkok in September 2000 (for member churches in Asia). Additional workshops are planned for Jerusalem, Latin America, and Africa.

The LWF has also provided an annual human rights training internship for representatives of member churches; assisted the human rights training and awareness-raising initiatives of individual member churches; and established an e-mail network for exchange of information among representatives of member churches and related agencies.

Regional Training Workshops

Guyana/Suriname

Earlier plans envisaged that a workshop for the small number of member churches in the Caribbean subregion might be included in an ecumenical initiative with other church organizations, including the Caribbean Conference of Churches. This did not prove possible. However, the recipient of the 1998 training internship, a pastor of the Lutheran Church in Guyana, organized a workshop for her church and the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Suriname. Held in Georgetown, Guyana, in January 1999, the workshop brought together 20 persons from the two churches, plus staff from the LWF field program in Haiti and two visiting seminarians from the USA. Following the workshop, the

Lutheran Church in Guyana urged the government of Guyana formally to fulfill its outstanding reporting obligations under the various human rights treaties to which it is a signatory.

Central and Eastern Europe

A training workshop, organized jointly with CEC, took place in Sibiu (Hermannstadt), Romania in May 1999, with the theme "Seeking justice for national, ethnic and religious minorities". Hosted by the Evangelical Church of the Augsburg Confession in Romania and the Ecumenical Association of Churches in Romania, the workshop brought together 28 participants from 21 churches of different confessions and 12 countries.

Follow-up included advanced human rights training in Geneva for an alumnus from Latvia (sponsored by CEC) at the time of the 2000 meeting of the Commission on Human Rights, and joint advocacy training for other alumni at the time of the October 2000 Human Dimension Implementation meeting of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe in Warsaw.

Asia

A second workshop for member churches in the Asian region took place in Bangkok, Thailand in September 2000, with the theme "The human rights of the poor: the eradication of poverty as a human rights challenge". Hosted by the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Thailand, the workshop gathered 24 representatives from 18 member churches in seven countries, two representatives of the Standing Committee for International Affairs and Human Rights and three representatives from two field programs in the region.

An alumnus was included in the LWF delegation to the Asia regional preparatory meeting for the World Conference Against Racism, which took place in Tehran, Iran, in February 2001. Another alumnus was a member of the LWF delegation to the World Conference Against



Racism and preceding NGO forum. Some workshop participants have reported on plans for follow-up within their churches or congregations.

Jerusalem

A workshop for the member church in Jerusalem and its local ecumenical partners on the theme “Promoting and protecting human dignity in the midst of violence” was scheduled for February 2002, but was postponed due to the crisis.

Annual Human Rights Training Internship

This is provided for representatives of member churches in the context of the annual sessions of the UN Commission on Human Rights. Representatives from member churches in the Philippines, Guyana, Liberia, Colombia, Argentina, India, and Swaziland have been awarded internships.

Support for Local Training Initiatives

The LWF has assisted with the human rights training and awareness-raising initiatives of individual member churches (including those in Guyana, Liberia, Chile, Congo, Brazil, Indonesia, Cameroon,

Malawi, and the Democratic Republic of the Congo) and the participation of church representatives from the Central African Republic, Brazil, Latvia, Slovakia, the Czech Republic, India, South Africa, and the United States of America in international and national human rights conferences and other meetings.

E-mail Network

The OIAHR has established an e-mail network primarily for representatives of member churches and related agencies, in order to share information about human rights issues and international affairs. The network has an ever-growing list of addresses.

Monitoring of UN-related Activities/Events

Fiftieth Anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR)

The LWF marked the 50th anniversary of the UDHR in 1998 by participating in the ecumenical preparation of human rights-themed liturgical materials, distribution of appropriate language versions of the UDHR to member churches, and a staff e-mail “discussion” of the UDHR article by article.

UN Human Rights Bodies

The LWF participated in each of the annual six-week sessions of the UN Commission on Human Rights—the world’s most important international human rights forum—and monitored its special sessions on East Timor (September 1999) and Israel/Occupied Palestinian Territories (October 2000). Together with its ecumenical and secular partners, the LWF has issued public statements in the Commission and has organized frequently parallel events (briefings and workshops) on a range of issues. It has also promoted ecumenical information sharing and cooperation through regular ecumenical briefings during each session of the Commission and by supporting jointly with WARC and the WCC a full-time monitor of recent sessions.

The LWF has engaged actively in the annual sessions of the UN Sub-Commission on the Promotion and Protection of Human Rights (a body of independent experts operating as a think-tank for the Commission) and conducted some of its most fruitful advocacy in this forum.

Some of the UN human rights treaty bodies have also been monitored periodically, in particular the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination and the Committee on the Rights of the Child.

Major World Conferences

The LWF was represented at the Treaty Conference to establish a permanent International Criminal Court, held in Rome in July 1998. (At the Ninth Assembly, support was expressed for the establishment of an International Criminal Court.) The

institution described in the statute resulting from that conference has been affirmed by the LWF as a viable and valuable tool in the struggle against impunity. The 60 ratifications required in order to bring the International Criminal Court into existence were obtained much sooner than expected and the treaty came into force on July 1, 2002.

The LWF delegation to the World Conference on Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance (Durban, August–September 2001) was led by the General Secretary, and included representatives from member churches in India, South Africa, and the USA, the Bhutanese refugee community, and Dalit organizations supported by the LWF Nepal field program, as well as a representative of the Jewish community in Durban.

The LWF was also represented at other major UN conferences:

- UN General Assembly Special Session on Social Development (Geneva, June 2000)
- UN General Assembly Special Session on HIV/AIDS (New York, June 2001)
- UN General Assembly Special Session on Children (New York, May 2002)
- The preparatory process for the International Conference on Financing for Development (Monterrey, March 2002)
- The World Summit on Sustainable Development (Johannesburg, August–September 2002)



**From Hong Kong
to Winnipeg**

