

Declaration by Church and Peace on the Concept of Responsibility to Protect (R2P)

Church and Peace, the European network of Peace Churches, has considered at various meetings (1) the Concept of R2P as well as the position of the World Council of Churches at Porto Alegre in 2006 in respect of R2P. We submit the following reflections to the World Council of Churches.

- 1) Our peace is in Jesus Christ. "Jesus met his own violent death with nonviolence, and his way remains the model for Christians to follow in overcoming violence." (2) The call to be his disciples means putting his nonviolence into practice. He is the heart of the Church. His nonviolence brings about the Kingdom of God where peace and justice reign. Rooted in this vision, all Churches are called to walk the path of nonviolence which Jesus defined in the Sermon on the Mount and which he put into practice.
- 2) Church and Peace understands the need to stand alongside people whose lives are threatened and who call for security and protection.
- 3) Church and Peace appreciates that the United Nations' Organisation and some regional organisations are seeking to accomplish these tasks by taking measures which pre-empt the causes of conflicts as well as assisting in the reconstruction and reconciliation process after violent conflicts have ceased.
- 4) Based on our understanding of Christian discipleship and peace making, we oppose that section of the Concept which allows the use of military force to ensure the protection of threatened peoples. Even if military force is held only in reserve for use as a measure of last resort, this influences the planning of civil action during the earlier phases of conflict by consuming a disproportionately high share of the resources available for aiding civilians. Also its availability strengthens the traditional attitude that military force is the inevitable answer.
- 5) We maintain our rejection of using violent means to attempt to create good outcomes, even when under the guise of policing. In conflicts referred to under R2P, the use of military weapons is assumed and these weapons would kill and wound without distinguishing between those people involved in the violence or those not, and their use has nothing in common with procedures governing police interventions under national law.
- 6) Even in situations where no solution seems possible and where violence is so endemic that a call to counter it with further violence rises amongst victims and within us too, we persist in recommending the use of nonviolent means towards every human being, means which we as disciples of Christ have in abundance. We plead for strengthened commitment of OSCE missions (Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe) as well as substantial support for nonviolent intervention organised by the state as well as by churches, inspired by the models of Alternative Service for Peace, Christian Peacemaker Teams, Ecumenical Accompaniment Programme in Palestine and Israel and Peace Brigades International. Violence in any form can never serve to bring about lasting peace with justice. Only the path of loving one's neighbour and loving one's enemy holds any promise. We invite all churches to resist together with us the temptation of justifying the use of deadly weapons even as a last resort.

(1) At the General Assembly at Barchem in May 2008, at the anglophone regional meeting in Ammerdown in July 2008 and at the German-language regional meeting in Thomashof in November 2008.

(2) From the WCC's Initial Statement on Just Peace, par. 56