



How do we Protect, “Responsibly”?

IN THIS ISSUE

- 2 World Council of Churches
Statement on the
Responsibility to Protect
- 6 From “humanitarian
intervention” to
“responsibility to protect”:
An Ongoing Ecumenical
Ethical Conversation
by Fernando Enns
- 10 The Responsibility to Protect
and the Decade to Overcome
Violence (2001–2010)
by Hansulrich Gerber
- 11 Reflections on a brief
encounter with R2P at
the WCC Assembly
by Nancy R. Heisey

Introduction

by Robert Herr and Judy Zimmerman Herr

If war is not the answer, what then is the answer when human security and safety are threatened? This question often comes to those who critique war as a matter of principle, from human moral grounds or from a foundation in a Christian, biblical tradition. At times Mennonites have dismissed the issue with the claim we have better things to do, other things to focus on, than to be concerned with questions of security and safety.

The recent debate on the issue of intervention for humanitarian purposes has again placed the ethical question on the table. If countries have a “responsibility to protect” and if Christians have a responsibility to engage this question, what is a faithful response from those who hold to an ethic of nonviolence and Christian pacifism?

The most recent issue of the *Peace Office Newsletter* (Vol. 36, No. 3, July–September 2006) noted questions that come to Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) when it works in the context of military interventions. Frequently these interventions are in response to situations in which protection of vulnerable populations is crucial and is missing. That *Newsletter* reflected on the question of protection from the vantage point of the practical work of MCC.

In this current issue, we follow up by exploring a wider discussion. The question of protection has been a focus in recent years among nations through proceedings at the United Nations. And this question has also been on the agenda of Christian churches through discussions at the World Council of Churches. In February, 2006 a resolution on “Vulnerable Populations at Risk: A Statement on the Responsibility to Protect” was

passed by the World Assembly of the World Council of Churches (WCC). As Fernando Enns notes, this statement “deserves special attention since churches from different traditions—Orthodox, Anglican, Protestant, and Historic Peace Churches—have never before agreed to this extent.”

The issue of protection poses ethical questions to all Christians, no matter the tradition we stand in and no matter the answers our different traditions may have put up in the past. The question comes to us in the Christian pacifist tradition as urgently as it comes to others. And we too need to reflect on these challenges, in light of recent experience, in order to discern how to remain faithful for our time. If war is not the answer, what practices can we put forward, from our experience, in order to respond to the challenge posed by a responsibility to protect?

Two recently developed resources (in addition to this *Newsletter*) have been put forward to assist our discernment. One is the published result of the MCC Peace Theology Project, *At Peace and Unafraid: Public Order, Security and the Wisdom of the Cross*¹, and the other is a study project sponsored by the Eastern Mennonite University and MCC Washington Office called the “3-D Security Initiative.” The Peace Theology Project raises the question: if we must learn to address the issue of security and safety, then what kind of security and safety are we to be concerned about and what methods for that security does the “wisdom of the cross” bring to the discussion? The EMU/Washington Office 3-D Security Initiative likewise suggests that we must learn to address three important aspects of national life that build a country’s security: Development, Diplomacy and Defense. The

initiative calls on citizens of the United States to think of their security in terms of a balance between these three components, rather than focusing their resources overwhelmingly on the third one, defense. It again brings up the question: if security, protection, safety is a reality we need to learn to address, how does this happen consistently with the “wisdom of the cross?”

How churches speak to a “Responsibility to Protect” in the international sphere is another facet of this discussion. We are pleased to here share with readers of the *Peace Office Newsletter* the text of the WCC statement, together with comments from three Mennonites who were involved in the Assembly. Fernando Enns, as a member of the WCC Central Committee since 1999, has been

involved with the history of this discussion for a number of years. Nancy Heisey was present in the February 2006 WCC Assembly as President of Mennonite World Conference, which is invited to send “advisors” because of its status as a Christian World Communion. Hansuli Gerber serves as Coordinator for the WCC’s Decade to Overcome Violence. We offer their observations, and the text of the document, as contributions to the on-going conversation.

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Note

1. Gerald Schlabach & Duane Friesen (eds), *At Peace and Unafraid: Public Order, Security and the Wisdom of the Cross*, Herald Press, November, 2005.

Vulnerable populations at risk. WCC Statement on the responsibility to protect

The responsibility to protect the vulnerable is an ecumenical responsibility, conceiving the world as one household of God.

Introduction

1. In January 2001, the Central Committee of the World Council of Churches (WCC) received the document “The protection of endangered populations in situations of armed violence: toward an ecumenical ethical approach”. The document, which requested the churches to further study the issue, was also the beginning of a study and consultation process within the WCC, carried out by the Commission of the Churches on International Affairs (CCIA). A deeper reflection on ethical and theological aspects of the Responsibility to Protect is not only of concern to the churches. In a meeting in New York City in 1999, UN General Secretary Kofi Annan asked the WCC General Secretary, Rev. Dr. Konrad Raiser, to contribute to the international debate on “humanitarian intervention” by bringing a theological and ethical perspective on the issue of intervention for humanitarian purposes.

2. The use of force for humanitarian purposes is a controversial issue in most intellectual and political spheres. While some believe that the resort to force must not be avoided when it can alleviate or stop large-scale human rights violations, others can only support intervention by creative, non-violent means. Others again, give a very high priority to territorial integrity and sovereignty. Churches too have necessarily entered this debate and the current dilemma among the WCC’s constituencies has prevailed since the

very beginnings of the Ecumenical Movement. During the 1948 WCC first Assembly in Amsterdam, the Assembly restated the opposing positions:

“a) There are those who hold that, even though entering a war may be a Christian’s duty in particular circumstances, modern warfare, with its mass destruction, can never be an act of justice.

In the absence of impartial supra-national institutions, there are those who hold that military action is the ultimate sanction of the rule of law, and that citizens must be distinctly taught that it is their duty to defend the law by force if necessary.

Others, again, refuse military service of all kinds, convinced that an absolute witness against war and for peace is for them the will of God, and they desire that the Church should speak to the same effect.”

3. In history, some churches have been among those legitimizing military interventions, leading to disastrous wars. In many cases, the churches have admitted their guilt later on. During the 20th century churches have become more aware of their calling to a ministry of healing and reconciliation, beyond national boundaries. The creation of the WCC can be interpreted as one result of this rediscovery. In the New Testament, Jesus calls us to go beyond loving the neighbor to loving the enemy as well. This is based on the loving character of God, revealed supremely in the

death of Jesus Christ for all, absorbing their hostility, and exercising mercy rather than retribution (Rom 5:10; Luke 6:36). The prohibition against killing is at the heart of Christian ethics (Mt 5: 21–22). But the biblical witness also informs us about an anthropology that takes the human capacity to do evil in the light of the fallen nature of humankind (Gen. 4). The challenge for Christians is to pursue peace in the midst of violence.

4. The member churches of the World Council confess together the primacy of non-violence on the grounds of their belief that every human being is created in the image of God and shares the human nature assumed by Jesus Christ in his incarnation. This resonates with the articles of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. The WCC has therefore initiated an ecumenical “Decade to Overcome Violence 2001–2010: Churches Seeking Reconciliation and Peace” parallel to the United Nations “Decade for the Culture of Peace. 2001–2010”. It is in those who are most vulnerable that Christ becomes visible for us (Mt 25: 40). The responsibility to protect the vulnerable reaches far beyond the boundaries of nations and faith-traditions. It is an ecumenical responsibility, conceiving the world as one household of God, who is the creator of all. The churches honor the strong witness of many individuals who have recognized the responsibility to protect those who are weak, poor and vulnerable, through non-violence, sometimes paying with their lives.

From “humanitarian intervention” to the “responsibility to protect”

5. The concept of Responsibility to Protect was developed by the International Commission on Intervention and State Sovereignty (ICISS) in its December 2001 report. It shifted the debate from the viewpoint of the interveners to that of the people in need of assistance, thus redefining sovereignty as a duty-bearer status, rather than as an absolute power. This innovative concept focuses on the needs and rights of the civilian population and on the responsibilities of sovereignty, not only on the rights of sovereignty. Hence, the shift from intervention to protection places citizens at the center of the debate. States can no longer hide behind the pretext of sovereignty to perpetrate human rights violations against their citizens and live in total impunity.

6. The churches are in support of the emerging international norm of the responsibility to protect. This norm holds that national governments clearly bear the primary and sovereign responsibility to provide for the safety of their people. Indeed, the responsibility to protect and serve the welfare of its peo-

ple is central to a state's sovereignty. When there is failure to carry out that responsibility, whether by neglect, lack of capacity, or direct assaults on the population, the international community has the duty to assist peoples and states, and in extreme situations, to intervene in the internal affairs of the state in the interests and safety of the people.

Our primary concern: Prevention

7. To be faithful to that responsibility to protect people means above all prevention—prevention of the kinds of catastrophic assaults on individuals and communities that the world has witnessed in Burundi, Cambodia, Rwanda, Sudan, Uganda, the Democratic Republic of Congo, and other instances and locations of human-made crises. WCC studies showed that although churches have different views on the use of force for human protection purposes, they agree on the essential role of preventive efforts to avoid and, if possible, tackle the crisis before it reaches serious stages. Protection becomes necessary when prevention has failed. Hence, churches emphasize the need to concentrate on prevention. While external intervention—by the use of force or non-violently—may seem unavoidable in some situations, churches should nevertheless be engaged in increasing the capacity of the local people to be able to intervene themselves by strengthening structures of the civil society and modern public-private partnerships, in terms of prevention as well as protection. Churches are called to offer their moral authority for mediation between differently powerful actors.

8. The prevention of catastrophic human insecurity requires attention to the root causes of insecurity as well as to more immediate or direct causes of insecurity. Broadly stated, the long-term agenda is to pursue human security and the transformation of life according to the vision of God's Kingdom. The key elements of human security are economic development (meeting basic needs), universal education, respect for human rights, good governance, political inclusion and power-sharing, fair trade, control over the instruments of violence (small arms in particular), the rule of law through law-biding and accountable security institutions, and promoting confidence in public institutions. On the other hand, the more immediate preventive attention to emerging security crises must include specific measures designed to mitigate immediate insecurities and to instill the reliable hope that national institutions and mechanisms, with the support of an attentive international community, will remain committed to averting a crisis of human insecurity.

To be faithful to that responsibility to protect people means prevention of catastrophic assaults on individuals and communities.

Faith communities are playing a major role in trust-building and truth finding processes in many contexts of crisis.

Civilians, especially women and children, are the primary victims in situations of extreme insecurity and war.

9. At the national level, governments should undertake self-monitoring to become aware of emerging threats, establish mechanisms for alerting authorities and agencies to such emerging threats, engage civil society and churches in assessing conditions of human security and insecurity, initiate national dialogues, including dialogue with non-state actors, to acknowledge emerging problems and to engage the people in the search for solutions, and develop national action plans.

10. Prevention requires action to address conditions of insecurity as they emerge, before they precipitate crisis, which in turn requires specific prevention capacities such as early warning or identification of emerging threats or conditions of insecurity, and the political will to act before a crisis occurs. To act before a crisis is present requires a special sensitivity to and understanding of the conditions and needs of people, which in turn requires the active co-operation of civil society, and especially faith communities which are rooted in the daily spiritual and physical realities of people. Faith communities are playing a major role in trust-building and truth finding processes in many contexts of crisis, such as truth and reconciliation commissions, trauma-healing centers, providing safe meeting places for adversarial groups, etc.

Forming the ecumenical mind on the dilemmas of the use of force

11. It is necessary to distinguish prevention from intervention. From the church and ecumenical perspectives, if intervention occurs, it is because prevention has failed. The responsibility to protect is first and foremost about protecting civilians and preventing any harmful human rights crisis. The international community's responsibility is basically a non-military preventive action through such measures as the deployment of humanitarian relief personnel and special envoys, through capacity building and the enhancement of sustainable local infrastructure, and the imposition of economic sanctions and embargoes on arms, etc. The international community has a duty to join the pursuit of human security before situations in troubled states degenerate to catastrophic proportions. This is the duty of protection through prevention of assaults on the safety, rights, and wellbeing of people in their homes and communities and on the wellbeing of the environment in which they live.

12. In calling on the international community to come to the aid of vulnerable people in extraordinary suffering and peril, the fellowship of churches is not prepared to say that it is never appropriate or never necessary to

resort to the use of force for the protection of the vulnerable. This refusal in principle to preclude the use of force is not based on a naïve belief that force can be relied on to solve intractable problems. Rather, it is based on the certain knowledge that the objective must be the welfare of people, especially those in situations of extreme vulnerability and who are utterly abandoned to the whims and prerogatives of their tormentors. It is a tragic reality that civilians, especially women and children, are the primary victims in situations of extreme insecurity and war.

13. The resort to force is first and foremost the result of the failure to prevent what could have been prevented with appropriate foresight and actions, but having failed, and having acknowledged such failure, the world needs to do what it can to limit the burden and peril that is experienced by people as a consequence. This force can be legitimized only to stop the use of armed force in order to reinstate civil means, strictly respecting the proportionality of means. It needs to be controlled by international law in accordance to the UN Charter and can only be taken into consideration by those who themselves follow international law strictly. This is an imperative condition. The breach of law cannot be accepted even when this, at times, seems to lead—under military aspects—to a disadvantage or to hamper the efficiency of the intervention in the short term. Just as individuals and communities in stable and affluent societies are able in emergencies to call on armed police to come to their aid when they experience unusual or extraordinary threats of violence, churches recognize that people in much more perilous circumstances should have the right to call for and have access to protection.

14. Churches may acknowledge that the resort to force for protection purposes in some circumstances will be an option that cannot guarantee success but that must be tried because the world has failed to find, and continues to be at a loss to find, any other means of coming to the aid of those in desperate situations. It should be noted that some within the churches refuse the use of force in all circumstances. Their form of responsibility is to persist in preventative engagement and, whatever the cost—as a last resort—to risk non-violent intervention during the use of force. Either of these approaches may fail too, but they both need to be respected as expressions of Christian responsibility.

The limits of the use of force

15. The churches do not, however, believe in the exercise of lethal force to bring in a new order of peace and safety. By limiting the

resort to force quite specifically to immediate protection objectives, the churches insist that the kinds of long-term solutions that are required—that is, the restoration of societies to conditions in which people are for the most part physically safe, in which basic economic, social, and health needs are met, where fundamental rights and freedoms are respected, where the instruments of violence are controlled, and in which the dignity and worth of all people are affirmed—cannot be delivered by force. Indeed, the limiting of legitimate force to protection operations is the recognition that the distresses of deeply troubled societies cannot be quickly alleviated by either military means or diplomacy; and that in the long and painstakingly slow process of rebuilding the conditions for sustainable peace, those that are most vulnerable are entitled to protection from at least the most egregious of threats.

16. The use of force for humanitarian purposes can never be an attempt to find military solutions to social and political problems, to militarily engineer new social and political realities. Rather, it is intended to mitigate imminent threats and to alleviate immediate suffering while long-term solutions are sought by other means. The use of force for humanitarian purposes must therefore be carried out in the context of a broad spectrum of economic, social, political, and diplomatic efforts to address the direct and long-term conditions that underlie the crisis. In the long run, international police forces should be educated and trained for this particular task, bound to international law. Interventions should be accompanied by strictly separate humanitarian relief efforts and should include the resources and the will to stay with people in peril until essential order and public safety are restored and there is a demonstrated local capacity to continue to build conditions of durable peace.

17. The force that is to be deployed and used for humanitarian purposes must also be distinguished from military war-fighting methods and objectives. The military operation is not a war to defeat a state but an operation to protect populations in peril from being harassed, persecuted or killed. It is more related to just policing—though not necessarily in the level of force required—in the sense that the armed forces are not employed in order to “win” a conflict or defeat a regime. They are there only to protect people in peril and to maintain some level of public safety while other authorities and institutions pursue solutions to underlying problems.

18. It is the case, therefore, that there may be circumstances in which affected churches actively call for protective intervention for

humanitarian purposes. These calls will always aim at the international community and pre-suppose a discerning and decision-making process in compliance with the international community, strictly bound to international law. These are likely to be reluctant calls, because churches, like other institutions and individuals, will always know that the current situation of peril could have been, and should have been, avoided. The churches in such circumstances should find it appropriate to recognize their own collective culpability in failing to prevent the crises that have put people in such peril.

Proposals

That the 9th Assembly of the WCC, meeting in Porto Alegre, Brazil February 14–23, 2006:

a) *Adopts* the statement on the Responsibility to Protect and expresses thanks to all member churches and individuals involved in the study and consultation process on “The Responsibility to Protect: Ethical and Theological Reflection” and asks the Central Committee to consider further developing guidelines for the member churches, based on the principles in this report.

b) *Fosters* prevention as the key tool and concern of the churches, in relation to the Responsibility to Protect. Because churches and other faith communities and their leadership are rooted in the daily spiritual and physical realities of people, they have both a special responsibility and opportunity to participate in the development of national and multilateral protection and war prevention systems. Churches and other faith communities have a particular responsibility to contribute to the early detection of conditions of insecurity, including economic, social and political exclusion. Prevention is the only reliable means of protection, and early detection of a deteriorating security situation requires the constant attention of those who work most closely with, and have the trust of, affected populations.

c) *Joins* with other Christians around the world in repenting for our collective failure to live justly and to promote justice. Such a stance in the world is empowered by acknowledging that the Lordship of Christ is higher than any other loyalty and by the work of the Holy Spirit. Critical solidarity with the victims of violence and advocacy against all the oppressive forces must also inform our theological endeavors towards being a more faithful church. The church’s ministry with, and accompaniment of, people in need of protection is grounded in a holistic

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The 9th Assembly of the WCC (2006) Adopts the statement on the Responsibility to Protect; and Reaffirms the churches' ministry of reconciliation and healing as an important role in advancing national and political dialogue to unity and trust.

sojourning with humanity throughout all of life, in good times and in bad.

d) *Reaffirms* the churches' ministry of reconciliation and healing as an important role in advancing national and political dialogue to unity and trust. A unifying vision of a state is one in which all parts of the population feel they have a stake in the future of the country. Churches should make a particular point of emphasizing the understanding of sovereignty as responsibility. Under the sovereignty of God we understand it to be the duty of humanity to care for one another and all of creation. The sovereignty exercised by human institutions rests on the exercise of the Responsibility to Protect one another and all of creation.

e) *Calls upon* the international community and the individual national governments to strengthen their capability in preventive strategies, and violence-reducing intervention skills together with institutions of the civil society, to contribute to and develop further the international law, based on human rights, and to support the development of policing strategies that can address gross human rights violations.

f) *Urges* the United Nations Security Council, in situations where prevention has failed and where national governments cannot or will not provide the protection to which people are entitled, to take timely and effective action, in cooperation with regional organizations as appropriate, to protect civilians in extreme peril and foster emergency responses designed to restore sustainable safety and well-being with rigorous respect for the rights, integrity and dignity of the local populations.

g) *Further calls upon* the international community and individual national governments to invest much greater resources and training for non-violent intervention and accompaniment of vulnerable peoples.

h) *Asks* the Central Committee to consider a study process engaging all member churches and ecumenical organizations in order to develop an extensive ecumenical declaration on peace, firmly rooted in an articulated theology. This should deal with topics such as just peace, the Responsibility to Protect, the role and the legal status of non-state combatants, the conflict of values (for example: territorial integrity and human life). It should be adopted at the conclusion of the Decade to Overcome Violence in 2010.

From “humanitarian intervention” to “responsibility to protect”: An Ongoing Ecumenical Ethical Conversation

by Fernando Enns

The WCC document “Responsibility to Protect” deserves special attention since Orthodox, Anglican, main-line Protestant, and Historic Peace Churches have agreed.

The Ninth Assembly of the World Council of Churches (WCC) in Porto Alegre, Brazil adopted a document that is the preliminary result of a discussion that has lasted for many years. If we—the churches worldwide of the ecumenical family—agree that war is incompatible to the will of God (as stated by the First Assembly in Amsterdam, Netherlands, in 1948), how do we protect those who are exposed to severe violence and who cannot defend themselves? How do we stop large-scale violations of human rights, such as the genocide in Rwanda ten years ago or the horrible situation in Sudan these days? What is the Christian responsibility? In 1999, UN General Secretary Kofi Annan asked the WCC to contribute to the international debate by bringing a theological and ethical perspective on the issue of intervention for humanitarian purposes.

The WCC document “Responsibility to Protect”¹ is not to be understood as the

churches’ “final word” on this demanding question. But it deserves special attention since churches from so many different traditions—Orthodox, Anglican, main-line Protestant, and Historic Peace Churches—have never before agreed to this extent. In a procedure new to WCC, the document was adopted by consensus without disagreement from any delegate.

In order to evaluate the degree of agreement it is necessary to know some of the discussions that led up to the Porto Alegre document.²

The History of the Debate

As early as 1937, a decade before the WCC was founded and while facing the danger of a second world war, one of the preparing conferences (“Church, Community and State”) in Oxford stated: “If war breaks out, then pre-eminently the Church must manifestly be the Church, still united as the one

Body of Christ, though the nations wherein it is planted fight each other, consciously offering the same prayers that God's name be hal- lowed, His kingdom come, and His will be done, in both, or all, the warring nations". Despite this wide consensus as stated in the first Assembly in 1948, three main opposing positions remained in all the discussions up to Porto Alegre.

a. In the absence of impartial supra-national institutions, there are those who hold that military action is the ultimate sanction of the rule of law, and that citizens must be distinctly taught that it is their duty to defend the law by force if necessary.

b. There are those who hold that, even though entering a war may be a Christian's duty in particular circumstances, modern warfare, with its mass destruction, can never be an act of justice.

c. Others refuse military service of all kinds, convinced that an absolute witness against war and for peace is for them the will of God, and they desire that the Church should speak to the same effect. In all the debates this third position has been the official one of the Historic Peace Churches (HPC), as well as a large number of individual mem- bers from other church traditions.

Shortly after this first Assembly, Willem A. Visser't Hooft, the first WCC General Secre- tary, invited the Historic Peace Churches (HPCs) to share their conviction with the wider ecumenical family. This resulted in the well-known series of Puidoux Conferences,³ and all major theological arguments on war, peace and the relation of church and state can be found in the documentation of these conferences. During the decades since then, WCC meetings have continued to debate the appropriate Christian response to violent conflicts, and have repeatedly condemned both the use of disproportionate armed force and the failure of the international commu- nity to protect populations in the face of pre- dictable massive violence.

In 1999 the Central Committee (CC) of the WCC adopted a Memorandum that called for *new approaches* to international peace and security in the post-Cold War world and highlighted the dilemmas around "human- itarian intervention" raised especially by the Kosovo experience and the failure of the international community in the genocide in Rwanda. A first result of the study process, "The protection of endangered populations in situations of armed violence", was presented to the CC in Potsdam in 2001. Although the promising subtitle of the 2001 paper read "an ecumenical ethical approach", it basically was

nothing but a new formulation of the just- war theory in modern terms without even reflecting the complexity of that theory. It included a list of criteria to guide the "UN reform and to be respected in the interim whenever armed intervention for humanitar- ian purposes is undertaken." We Mennonites argued strongly against it. During the lengthy discussions we were supported by more and more delegates from other churches. We made the point that such a statement would stand in clear opposition to our ecclesiological identity as a peace church. In the end this document was changed drastically and it was only *received* as a study paper for further reflection, and member churches were invited to react.

One of the reactions came from representa- tive theologians from all Historic Peace Churches who gathered in Bienenberg, Switzerland and formulated "Just Peace- making: Toward an Ecumenical Ethical Approach from the Perspective of the His- toric Peace Churches."⁴ This document called for deeper theological and ethical reflection and correlated peace with justice.

1. "A biblically and theologically grounded pacifism regards seeking God's Justice as central and integral to a non-violent phi- losophy of life. To state the issue as if we have to choose between non-violence and justice is a false dichotomy".
2. We identified a number of normative practices for seeking justice within "prin- cipled pacifism", which can be supported both by pacifists and those who accept "just war" reasoning.
3. "The use of violent force as a 'last resort' to secure justice creates conditions that inhibit the achievement of justice. Too often we work under the false assumption that, if we cannot find a non-violent solu- tion to a conflict, the use of violent force will take care of the problem."
4. "We call on the churches to emphasise the distinctive witness to the world that flows from our commitment to the Spirit of Jesus Christ and our identity as the body of Christ in the world."
5. "Though both pacifists and those who reason with 'just war' principles seek jus- tice, neither tradition can guarantee that justice will be accomplished. The pacifist commitment to non-violence is ultimately grounded in an eschatology of trust in the victory over evil of God revealed in Jesus' life, teachings, death, and resurrection."

A second reaction, "Vulnerability and Security," came from the Lutheran Church of Norway. It deepened the relationships

The Norwegian statement emphasized the victim's perspective and the service of reconciliation as being at the very core of the Christian message.

The Historic Peace Churches have been heard and have experienced great respect by the other WCC members.

The international Decade to Overcome Violence 2001–2010 provides the common ecumenical space for reflection on peace with justice.

The churches honor the strong witness of many individuals who have recognised the responsibility to protect through non-violence.

The use of force can only be legitimized to stop armed force in order to reinstate civil means, and needs to be controlled by international law.

between the concepts of vulnerability and security, and focused on “the international use of force on the territory of other states and without their consent with the aim of (re-) establishing elementary human security when it has been grossly and persistently violated”. The study revisited the criteria for a ‘just war’ [Just cause, Just intention, Rightful authority, Current rules for warfare to be complied with (jus in bello), Last resort, Proportionality]. It acknowledged that the criteria represent an important ethical framework. However, the Norwegian statement emphasized the victim’s perspective and the service of reconciliation as being at the very core of the Christian message (cf. 2 Corinthians 5, 18) in the context of security policy. Reconciliation processes require respect for truth and justice, remorse, forgiveness and a new beginning. With this, a new tone and important component was accepted which we had asked for.

The Protestant Church in Germany (EKD) responded in a letter which related the issue to the broader perspective of security as well. A reliable structure of peace includes the rule of international law to ensure the protection of freedom, economic balancing, international organizations, and a culture of social manners and respect for minorities. Hence it includes conflict prevention, conflict solution and post-conflict reconciliation. The concept of Just Peace (instead of Just War) is presented as the basic idea of Christian peace ethics. It calls for the strengthening of the International Peace System as intended and drawn up in the Charter of the UN. The universal acceptance and implementation of human rights is an important factor. The use of military force must remain a borderline case. The letter ends by affirming that the dilemma of the use of violence or a radically pacifist position on the level of the fundamental ethical discussion will not and probably cannot be resolved. The defensive war can never be excluded completely.

The debate has been reshaped immensely by these contributions. Despite the lasting differences concerning last-resort, a common tendency and willingness to approach the challenge in a much more holistic way emerged. The 2003 CC meeting paved the way for fruitful ecumenical discussions in the following years⁵, leading up to the 2006 document.

Mennonites—together with the other HPCs—have been heard and have experienced great respect by the other WCC members. Prior to and at the Assembly in Porto Alegre, the final draft was handed to the delegates of the HPCs, and the final content was significantly

shaped by them. Personally, I am grateful for this rich experience of ecumenical conversations with brothers and sisters from other church traditions who were able to listen and understand even when not in full agreement, to seek together a faithful peace witness by the worldwide Christian community.

The entire debate took place and continues within the framework of the international Decade to Overcome Violence 2001–2010 (DOV) as the common ecumenical space for reflection on peace with justice. The DOV is a great step, maybe even a paradigm shift within the ecumenical movement. It provides a great opportunity to reflect together on ethically-justified reactions to the threat of violence. The Porto Alegre Assembly unanimously agreed to the proposal to start an extensive study project for an ecumenical declaration on “just peace”, firmly rooted in an articulated theology. All churches will be invited to participate in this process and the declaration is to be adopted at the end of the DOV at an “international peace convocation.”

The Document

The new document starts with a clear Christological confession, providing the argument for the Christian Ethic: “In the New Testament, Jesus calls us to go beyond loving the neighbour to loving the enemy as well. This is based on the loving character of God, revealed supremely in the death of Jesus Christ for all, absorbing their hostility, and exercising mercy rather than retribution (Rom 5:10; Luke 6:36). The prohibition against killing is at the heart of Christian ethics (Mt 5: 21–22).” On the other hand, we realize the very realistic picture of violence and evil in the Scriptures: “the biblical witness also informs us about an anthropology that takes the human capacity to do evil in the light of the fallen nature of humankind (Gen. 4).” So the “challenge for Christians is to pursue peace in the midst of violence”, and every member church agrees “on the primacy of non-violence”. In ecumenical theology, the world is perceived first of all as the one household of God, the creator of all.

Given this solid common theological ground, the document continues to mark several major shifts through many discussions that have made the agreement possible:

a. As stated in this document, the primary responsibility of national governments is to provide welfare and safety for their citizens, rather than hide behind the pretext of national sovereignty to perpetrate human rights violations against their citizens and live in total impunity.

b. The churches agree that preventive efforts to avoid serious crisis is the only reliable means of protection. Elements of prevention are economic development and fair trade, education, respect for human rights, good governance, political inclusion and power-sharing, control over the instruments of violence (small arms in particular), the rule of law, and to promote confidence in public institutions.

c. A major role of churches and other faith communities is their ministry of reconciliation and healing (for example, in truth and reconciliation commissions, trauma-healing centers, and providing safe meeting places for adversarial groups). They can play an important role in trust-building and truth-finding processes in contexts of crisis because they are rooted in the daily spiritual and physical realities of people.

d. When prevention fails, protection becomes necessary. In such a situation the churches must recognize their "own collective culpability." "Interventions should be accompanied by strictly separate humanitarian relief efforts and should include the resources and the will to stay with people in peril until essential order and public safety are restored and there is a demonstrated local capacity to continue to build conditions of durable peace."

e. The churches recognize the dilemma of the use of force. They "honor the strong witness of many individuals who have recognized the responsibility to protect through non-violence, sometimes paying with their lives." Nevertheless the fellowship of churches "is not prepared to say that it is never appropriate or never necessary to resort to the use of force for the protection of the vulnerable." Both positions need to be respected as "expressions of Christian responsibility."

f. The churches do not believe it possible to bring peace and safety by lethal force, nor to "militarily engineer new social and political realities."

g. The churches make it clear that the use of force can only be legitimized to stop armed force "in order to reinstate civil means." It should be controlled by international law under the UN Charter. The breach of law by those who intervene can never be accepted, even when the efficiency of the intervention is hampered.

h. The churches wish to distinguish the use of policing force ("just policing") from "military war-fighting methods and objectives." Just as communities in stable societies can call on armed police to come to their aid

when they experience unusual or extraordinary threats of violence, all people should have the right to call for such protection while other authorities and institutions pursue solutions to underlying problems.

The community of churches calls on the international community and individual national governments to strengthen their capability in preventive strategies and violence-reducing intervention skills, and for much greater investment in resources and training for non-violent intervention and accompaniment of vulnerable peoples.

Finally the churches of the ecumenical community repent for their collective failure to live justly and to promote justice. Such repentance is empowered by acknowledging the Lordship of Christ and by the work of the Holy Spirit. Critical solidarity with the victims of violence and advocacy against all the oppressive forces informs our theological endeavors towards being a more faithful church.

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Notes

1. *Vulnerable populations at risk. Statement on the responsibility to protect.* Document No. PIC 02-2 of the World Council of Churches IX. Assembly in Porto Alegre / Brazil 2006, <http://www.wcc-assembly.info/en/theme-issues/assembly-documents>.

2. I have outlined this in more detail in "Public Peace, Justice, and Order in Ecumenical Conversation" in *At Peace and Unafraid. Public Order, Security, and the Wisdom of the Cross*, ed. by Duane K. Friesen and Gerald W. Schlabach, Scottsdale, Pennsylvania: Herald Press 2005, pp. 241-259.

3. Donald Durnbaugh (ed.), *On Earth Peace: Discussions on War /Peace Issues between Friends, Mennonites, Brethren and European Churches 1935-1975*. Elgin IL: The Brethren Press, 1978. See also my analysis in Fernando Enns, *Friedenskirche in der Ökumene. Mennonitische Wurzeln einer Ethik der Gewaltfreiheit*, Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht 2003 (soon to be published in English by Pandora Press).

4. Appendix to Fernando Enns, Scott Holland, Ann K. Riggs (eds.), *Seeking Cultures of Peace. A Peace Church Conversation*, Geneva: WCC, and Telford, Pennsylvania: Cascadia, 2004.

5. Cf. Semegnish Asfaw, Guillermo Kerber, Peter Weiderud (eds.), *Responsibility to Protect. Ethical and Theological Reflections*. Geneva: World Council of Churches 2005. Arnold Neufeldt-Fast was asked to present the "pacifist view" in this conference, p. 31ff.

Resources for further Reading

BOOKS AND ARTICLES

WCC discussions from 2003 in preparation for the February 2006 statement are included in Semegnish Asfaw, Guillermo Kerber, Peter Weiderud (eds). *The Responsibility to Protect: Ethical and Theological Reflections*. Geneva: World Council of Churches, April 2005. Arnold Neufeldt-Fast was asked to present the "pacifist view", p. 31ff.

Durnbaugh, Donald (ed). *On Earth Peace: Discussions on War/Peace Issues Between Friends, Mennonites, Brethren, and European Churches, 1935-75*. Elgin IL: The Brethren Press, 1978.

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Gros, Jeffrey, and John D. Rempel (eds). *The Fragmentation of the Church and Its Unity in Peacemaking*. Grand Rapids MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2001.

Van der Bent, Ans. *Commitment to God's World: A Concise Critical Survey of Ecumenical Social Thought*. Geneva: WCC Publications, 1995.

Fernando Enns, "Public Peace, Justice, and Order in Ecumenical Conversation", pp. 241-259. In Friesen, Duane K., and Gerald W. Schlabach (eds). *At Peace and Unafraid: Public Order, Security, and the Wisdom of the Cross*, Scottsdale, Pennsylvania and Waterloo, Ontario: Herald Press, 2005.

"Humanitarian Crises, Aid Agencies, The Military," *Mennonite Central Committee Peace Office Newsletter*. Vol. 36, No. 3 (July-September 2006).

WEBSITES

The "3-D Security Initiative" www.3dsecurity.org

The churches wish to distinguish the use of "policing" force from "military war-fighting methods and objectives".

The Responsibility to Protect and the Decade to Overcome Violence (2001–2010)

by Hansulrich Gerber

The Decade to Overcome Violence challenges Christians and churches to overcome the spirit, logic, and practice of violence.

God's people all over the world are enjoying the beauty and power of being created in God's image and intention for them to live life in all its fullness, to live in peace, to do justice and be merciful. Yet too many are living under the threat of violence. Natural disasters and diseases have always threatened human beings, but the greater threat has come from fellow human beings whose intention was to gain control and power or property rather than pursue the well-being and peace of all. Thomas Hobbes said: "Homo homini lupus est"—The human being is a wolf to the human being.

That has not changed. Jesus' words to his disciples ring loud and pertinent: "You know that those who are recognized as rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them; and their great men exercise authority over them." Authority here implies coercion and terror rather than gentleness and kindness. A peaceable biblical pacifist ethos assumes that government is to make sure that citizens are safe and well. At the beginning of the 21st century we know all too well that humanitarian work built on this assumption is unrealistic.

The first half of the World Council of Churches Decade to Overcome Violence (DOV) has emphasized the findings of the World Health Organization in regard to Violence and Health. Most deadly violence happens on the home front. Most casualties of interpersonal physical violence are to be found at home and in the neighborhood. But much collective (political) violence also happens on the home front. Most of the world's refugees are refugees in their own homeland—and are thus not "official" refugees. Sometimes governments actually perpetrate attacks against their own people's rights, dignity and property.

People who are subject to violence by their own partners, relatives, peers, fellow citizens or governments need and deserve protection. That is fully within the biblical vision of being merciful and of doing justice.

To place the Responsibility to Protect within the framework of the DOV it may be helpful to sketch the commitment of the ecumenical movement to peace and justice.

The end of World War II stimulated international Christian bodies to move beyond the

call to mission and focus also on the call to peace-making. The World Council of Churches (WCC) from its first Assembly in Amsterdam in 1948 emphasized the role of the church in working towards peace and justice: "War as a method of settling disputes is incompatible with the teaching and example of our Lord Jesus Christ."

Twenty years later in Uppsala, the WCC was asked to "promote studies on non-violent methods of achieving social change." And in 1969, the Gandhi Centenary year, the WCC recommended that "the teaching and leadership of Mohandas K. Gandhi in encouraging non-violent political and social change be considered in these studies, in view of his influence on Martin Luther King, Jr. and the way in which they both sought to make real the teaching of Jesus about love and justice."

In the 1970s and 1980s the issues of liberation, racism and justice were prevalent and the debate over whether violence was ever acceptable continued. It is probably fair to say that the ecumenical movement would not watch while people suffer simply because pacifist principles prohibit armed intervention. While the WCC never endorsed violence, its support of movements and personalities struggling for human rights and freedom (for example, Nelson Mandela) generated controversy. Social change, liberation and justice, human rights and dignity, and finally protection and prevention mark the progression of the debate and state of mind of the ecumenical movement.

Shortly after the turn of the century, the 2001–2010 Decade to Overcome Violence (DOV) was born with the theme of "Churches Seeking Reconciliation and Peace." It carries the long-standing commitment of the entire ecumenical movement to peace, justice, reconciliation and healing.

The ecumenical discourse on peace and justice, violence and non-violence, has generally focused on the political agenda, armed conflict and social justice. But since the end of the cold war the agenda has changed. First, violence is being perceived with greater sensitivity as an abuse of human rights and a violation of dignity—one of the major plagues of humanity. Second, the discussion is no longer primarily focused on how to help people gain independence or freedom,

but rather on how to prevent them from being subject to willful and indiscriminate abuse by domestic, local, national, or international powers. Third, the notion of the rights of those subject to injustice and violence is also being complemented by the notion that those watching the news or sitting in offices and control rooms may also bear some responsibility.

For the DOV, there are several steps in a meaningful move towards the Responsibility to Protect. It is necessary to understand the history, circumstances, motives, and mechanisms of violence. It is also important to prevent violence. Finally, one should work to overcome violence by changing patterns, motives, assumptions, behaviors and mechanisms. The WCC has very deliberately sought to make prevention a key element, and therefore avoid the use of force. Preventive and protective measures are crucial in situations where human suffering is caused by human action. To be a good neighbor as the Bible portrays often means intervention—sometimes armed intervention.

The possible resort to armed intervention implied by R2P is a thorn in the flesh for the Historic Peace Churches, as for many others. It is very likely that, under certain circumstances, protection that involves the use of force or the threat of it may be inevitable. I suggest that it may be more helpful to be principled in regard to the dignity of people and their safety than to let the pacifist perspective keep us from living our responsibility towards those who don't have a choice of their fate. Violence is always destructive. Yet our struggle for non-violence and peace is not rooted simply in wanting to be pure and right, but rather in giving Glory to God through protecting human lives and stand for their dignity as created by God. The Decade to Overcome Violence challenges Christians and churches "to overcome the spirit, logic, and practice of violence; to relinquish any theological justification of violence; and to affirm anew the spirituality of reconciliation and active non-violence." The notion and approach of the Responsibility to Protect is a significant step to actually doing that.

Rev. Hansulrich Gerber is Coordinator of the World Council of Churches Decade to Overcome Violence in Geneva, Switzerland.

People who are subject to violence need and deserve protection.

Reflections on a brief encounter with R2P at the WCC Assembly

by Nancy R. Heisey

I grew up knowing about the Armenian genocide and the Jewish Holocaust, but I can't remember as a child anyone raising the question about how such violence could have been prevented or arrested. Many years later, at the beginning of the genocide in Rwanda, I was in Tanzania and heard of refugees fleeing to Tanzania and ponderings about whether Tanzania would "do something" in response. During the years of recent civil conflict in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, as millions were killed while forces backed by different internal factions and external powers ranged across the country, not only northern Mennonite development and aid administrators, but leaders of African Mennonite and Brethren in Christ leaders called out for intervention. At the 2000 meeting of the Mennonite World Conference General Council in Guatemala, the delegates drafted letters to leaders of the Congo, France, and the U.S., and to the United Nations, calling for help to stop the violence.

Yet until I was invited to sit in as an observer in the Public Issues Committee of the World

Council of Churches February 2006 assembly, I had never heard the phrase "responsibility to protect" or its catchy acronym "R2P". In a broad sense, I had some sense of twentieth-century history, had international connections, was keenly aware of the devastating problem of mass murder carried out on innocent populations, and the painful challenge such events posed to Christian pacifists about how to respond. But I found that I was not an expert and was not following the contemporary debates among professionals about philosophical foundations and practical approaches to such violence.

I was delighted by the privilege to observe some of the inner workings of the WCC assembly, for it was indeed a global event. The Public Issues Committee of about thirty committed church leaders from around the world, together with WCC staff, gave up their lunch hour nearly every day of the assembly to work through drafts of statements on many issues in addition to R2P. I expected to sit back quietly and watch, but I discovered that I was expected to have some-

I learned how deeply seriously other Christians within the WCC family have come to take the perspectives of Christian pacifists.

More care was given to taking seriously everyone's point of view than I have ever experienced in all my career of church meeting attendance.



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thing to contribute. This was largely due to the major work that had been done for years on the WCC's Decade to Overcome Violence by German Mennonite theologian and pastor Fernando Enns. It also reflected the influence of Canadian Mennonite Ernie Regehr, senior policy advisor of Project Plowshares and on the WCC's Commission on International Affairs. And it reflected the fact that, unplanned by me but perhaps Spirit-directed, I was lodged in the same hotel as other Mennonite observers and WCC delegates from Friends World Committee for Consultation and several national meetings.

I thus became a means of communication between the committee's sub-group on the R2P statement and a cluster of committed pacifists who had intense interest and concern in the wording of the statement. I was struck by several things. First, I learned how deeply seriously other Christians within the WCC family have come to take the perspectives of Christian pacifists. Second, I noted that the same debates that go on between Anabaptist-related peacebuilding practitioners and theologians about what kinds of language to use to define our work go on in the broader Christian communion. Third, I

learned something new about the intensity with which some Christian communions hold views entirely foreign to me, such as the need to protect territorial integrity. (I have never lived in a country that was invaded.) Fourth, I developed a healthy respect for the WCC's sometimes apparently unwieldy "politics" of inclusiveness and consensus decision-making. In our committee more room was made for all voices, and more care was given to taking seriously everyone's point of view, than I have ever experienced in all my career of church meeting attendance. Fifth, it was striking to interact with committed WCC staff, who offered many extra hours to talk with me and others about controversial aspects of the R2P statement drafts. Finally, I came away with a deeper awareness of our complex world, and a commitment within our own global communion to build a radically flexible Christian pacifism which is true to the gospel and real for Anabaptist-related sisters and brothers who live in many different places.

Nancy R. Heisey is Associate Professor of Biblical Studies and Church History at Eastern Mennonite University, and president of Mennonite World Conference.