



## Economic and Social Council

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### Commission for Social Development

#### Fifty-fifth session

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**Follow-up to the World Summit for Social Development  
and the twenty-fourth special session of the General Assembly:  
priority theme: strategies for the eradication of poverty  
to achieve sustainable development for all**

### **Statement submitted by International Prison Chaplains' Association and Citizens United for Rehabilitation of Errants, non-governmental organizations in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council\***

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 36 and 37 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

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\* The present statement is issued without formal editing.



## **Statement**

### **A Human Dignity and Faith Perspective on the Eradication of Poverty for the Incarcerated Population of the World**

We, the International Prison Chaplains Association (IPCA), and Citizens United for the Rehabilitation of Errants (CURE), are NGO organizations with worldwide membership. We are very grateful for this opportunity to share our thoughts on the costs of poverty, including the often forgotten multitudes of men, women and youth incarcerated in prisons, jails and detention centres throughout the world.

One of the strategies that we believe necessary to eradicate poverty is to first raise awareness of the costs to ALL of us of poverty, in society in general and specifically in relation to our prison system. Those who are incarcerated have been segregated from society and are then isolated in our prison system. Therefore, society has a unique opportunity for providing education and rehabilitation to those who feel, and have been, outcast. Experience shows that a reformed law breaker is the best advocate for reform in society, including the eradication of the poverty that many of them know so well.

Our joint approach is articulated from a social justice, faith-based perspective with emphasis upon human rights for all, even those who have violated the laws of society and been sentenced to incarceration. While violators need correction, they also deserve an opportunity for repentance, forgiveness and redemption.

We would like to share with you some specific examples of engagement/ accomplishment by our two organizations in relation to the alleviation of poverty:

The International Prison Chaplains Association (IPCA) has about two thousand members serving as prison Chaplains in more than fifty countries. These chaplains address not only the humanitarian and spiritual needs of people in prison, but they also assist in educating the public in their respective local communities. In addition, IPCA organizes global conferences for training of its members and for public awareness-raising on prison related issues. The 7th World Conference of the International Prison Chaplains Association in Sydney, Australia in September of 2015 attracted close to three-hundred prison chaplains to a five day event.

Citizens United for Rehabilitation of Errants (CURE), as an international grassroots effort by people in prison, their families and other concerned citizens to reduce crime through criminal justice reform, has thirty-nine chapters in the United States and representatives in close to thirty countries. From its Washington, DC headquarters, CURE engages in legislative prison reform efforts in the US. The Seventh International CURE Conference, to be held in April 2017 in Costa Rica, will include visits to, and dialogue with, the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights.

It is a worldwide truth that a large portion of the incarcerated population is composed of marginal or outcast members of a country's populace, such as Native Americans in Canada; the Aborigines in Australia; Gypsies and Refugees in Europe; and both Native Americans and African Americans in the United States.

As a general comment We challenge the principle that imprisonment is a successful way to solve the problem of crime in every society. We reaffirm the work being done by some governments in improving regimes and the respect for human rights in prisons. We reiterate and reaffirm our emphasis of the following points: the inherent dignity of all prisoners, our particular concern for vulnerable prisoners, and our commitment to work with others including NGOs, World Organizations, and Faith Groups to address poverty and facilitate access to food, clothing, medicines and literacy supplies needed in prisons. We advocate for the freedom of religion and for respect and resources for Prison Chaplains from all Faith Communities in their ministry of love and hope.

In addition to these efforts we especially nominate three developments in the world that influence the correctional systems and the prison ministry:

1. More than ever an increasing number of people are fleeing from their home countries due to war, terrorism, persecution and poverty to seek asylum in the safer countries of the world. We challenge the use of detention facilities for refugees and migrants as the European Court of Human Rights (ECtHR) has aptly declared as being unacceptable.
2. In many countries people are still imprisoned because they are conscientious objectors. We affirm that the rejection of military service is a human right and should not lead to imprisonment.
3. We call again for an immediate worldwide moratorium on executions and the abolition of the death penalty.

We welcome the revision of the United Nations Minimum Standard Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners, developed by UN Commission on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice with support of NGOs with consultant status, such as our Catholic sister organization International Commission of Catholic Prison Pastoral Care (ICPPPC). We ask that these rules, now called “The Mandela Rules”, be applied in all countries.

We commit ourselves to use our consultant status in the UN for reconciliation in the societies in which we live and work.

We ask that Governments, Churches and Faith Communities move away from the philosophy of retributive justice and encourage restorative justice strategies.

We are encouraged by examples of Faith Communities being involved in the reintegration of ex-offenders and we pray that this will be developed further in the world.

We encourage Prison Administrators, Governors and Staff in the difficult challenges that face them. We urge them to always carry out their duties with integrity, humanity, justice and care.

We affirm our commitment to prisoners, and we encourage them to take part in programs that address offending behaviour, victim/offender reconciliation programs, wider education and restorative justice initiatives.

We are aware of the pain of the victims of crime and the lack of opportunity for them to express it. We urge Faith Communities to be more available to help victims work through their pain.

We recognize the need for professional training for Prison Chaplains and ask that Churches and Faith Communities support such programs. We pray for Prison Chaplains worldwide.

We pledge the support of our joint organizations, IPCA and CURE, to the efforts of the Fifty-fifth Session of the Commission for Social Development.

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