

The Gothenburg Process

International Ecumenical Conference on Arms Transfers

May 26-27th, 2009 in Bogota, Colombia

Short background to the conference

Latin America is one of the most violent regions in the world – this in spite of that there are very few traditional armed conflicts. One example of this situation is that 42% of all the homicides at a global level are being committed in Latin American countries. The possible explanations behind the social violence in the region could be many but one of the most central is the proliferation of small arms. The proliferation and the lack of control of the arms, each year causes thousands of deaths all over Latin America. In some cities it is even more probable to die by a bullet than in traffic accident or in cancer.

Apart from the pain and suffering that armed violence causes on a daily basis it also constitutes a considerable economic cost to society. According to figures from the UNDP, the armed violence in Latin America each year causes a loss of 15-20% of the regions GDP¹ – resources that could have been used to improve livelihood conditions if invested in health care, education or housing projects.

The weapons does not only contribute to the high level of homicides, they also contribute in violations of human rights and breaches of international humanitarian law. There is also a constant danger of the weapons being diverted to none state actors.

At the moment though we are at a crossroad – a majority of countries world wide are interested in establishing a global and legally binding treaty that would function as to assure that the arms trade is being conducted in a responsible and transparent manner. This possible treaty is called an Arms Trade Treaty, ATT.

In recognition of our common vulnerability as human beings, churches need to respond to the realities of arms trade from a theological and ethical imperative. In many countries, churches are also in a position to invite different actors to engage in dialogue. Within the Gothenburg process, churches and church related organisations are working together ecumenically, with the aim to raise the understanding and the knowledge of the ethical challenges posed by the arms trade. The process encourages an inclusive and constructive dialogue with the defence industry, with control authorities and armed forces.

The planned conference is hosted by three ecumenical organisations based in Sweden; Christian Council of Sweden, Swedish Fellowship of Reconciliation and Swedish Mission Council. In recent years this group has been organising a series of international ecumenical seminars and conferences on arms trade, labelled 'The Gothenburg Process'. For more information on the Gothenburg Process, please see the attached annex and this web site: www.gothenburgprocess.org.

¹ "Development held hostage"; UNDP; Muggah, Robert y Batchelor, Peter; 2002

Practical Information

The venue for the meeting is Epsicopal Conference of Colombia, Carrera 58 No 80- 87, Barrio Entrerios, where also board and lodging will be provided. The conference will be inaugurated on the morning of the 26th of may, and be concluded the following day, the 27:th of may. The number of participants will be limited to 30-40 persons.

On the 28th we will hold a closed session where strategies and methods for churches to get involved in the work against armed violence will be discussed and on the following day, the 29th, there will be an open meeting on armed violence in Colombia at the Javeriana University.

For more information, and confirmation of attendance, please contact:
Jesper Wiklund of the Swedish Fellowship of Reconciliation:
jesper.wiklund @ krf.se, telephone + 46-8-453 68 46.

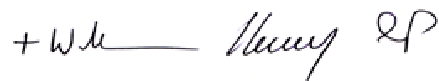
The Gothenburg Process will cover the costs related to your lodging. We might have possibilities to cover part of the travel costs. Please inform us if you wish to receive this support. We kindly ask you to inform us of the dates of your attendance for us to be able to proceed with logistical arrangements as soon as possible.

Your participation is important for the success of this conference. With this in mind, we hope you are able to join us for these discussions of great immediate interest. In case you are unable to attend the seminar, we ask that you propose a substitute. In the meantime, we wish you the all very best.

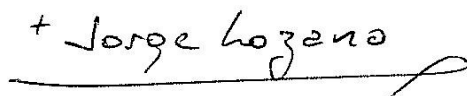
Yours sincerely,



K.G. Hammar
Former Archbishop
Church of Sweden



William Kenney
Auxiliary Bishop of Birmingham
International President of the Gothenburg
Process



Mons. Jorge Eduardo Lozano
Obispo de Gualeguaychú – Argentina
Responsable de la Sección de Pastoral Social
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Pastor Nilton Giese
Secretario General del Consejo
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