

# UFER

International Movement for Fraternal Union  
Among Races and Peoples



## An Idea in Action

UFER News 01/ June 2013

The International Movement for Fraternal Union among Races and Peoples (UFER) is a federation of organizations and persons involved in the promotion of understanding, dialogue and cooperation between races, peoples, ethnic and cultural groups, in the spirit of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights

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# EDITORIAL

*By Elly Koenig, President of UFER*

Let me talk to you about my home country, the Netherlands. It is a small green country in Western Europe. With its West coast lying on the North Sea. The average feeling of well being is high. The average income allows you to go on holiday. The houses are warm, because the roofs are in good condition. Tourists like the tulip fields and Amsterdam with the pretty houses and the canals, and the access to soft drugs.

The country also actively and legally supports the right to die in dignity. There are special homes where people can spend the last days of their life. If there is no hope for recovery you can refuse further palliative care and even ask for medical help to end your suffering, so called euthanasia, under the condition that you have the mental capacity to do so. As you can read in the article about the situation in Bolivia, palliative care is not yet available in all countries. The Prague Charter urging governments to relieve suffering through "palliative care" and to recognize the access to such care as a human right still has to be implemented.

The Netherlands is also a paradise for multi-nationals as well as a tax paradise, because it gives them tax concessions that reduce their tax paying in their own countries enormously.

The Netherlands is not, however, a paradise for those who come here as asylum seekers or for economic reasons and did not get a permit to stay. If they do not leave of their own free will, there is a big chance that they will be put in jail, where they will be locked in for 16 hours a day in a cell they will have to share with another person. At this moment, there are several people in jail on hunger strike; they protest against being treated like criminals. Earlier this year, the Dutch section of Amnesty International has started an action to make the politicians and civil society aware of this unbearable situation. The way refugees and migrants are treated in rich countries is far beneath the human rights standards.

This brings me also to the large number of people being trafficked in the Netherlands. In 2012, 1711 people registered themselves by the police as victims of trafficking; only very few convictions followed. Forcing people into slavery is an inhuman treatment which needs our attention. That is why UFER is joining efforts with other organizations and individuals to combat this type of modern slavery. As you will see in this issue of the Newsletter, UFER organized a side event on this topic during the last session of the Commission on the Status of Women, in New York, and is planning, together with local partners, a seminar in Nepal, in March 2014, on the same subject. Those interested in participating in this seminar should let us know after having read the information contained on page 14 of the Newsletter.

On behalf of the Board of UFER, I wish you a good summer in the North and a not too cold winter in the South, as well as the necessary strength to pursue your work for the promotion and protection of human rights.

# HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL

*By Paul Beersmans, Berhane Raswork &  
Raymonde Martineau*

The Human Rights Council (HRC) met in Geneva, from 25 February to 22 March, 2013, for its 22<sup>nd</sup> session.<sup>1</sup> On the opening day, the Council marked the **20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the adoption of the Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action and of the creation of the post of High Commissioner for Human Rights**. For the first few days, 88 high ranking personalities, from the President of Germany to the Minister of Human Rights of Yemen, from the Deputy Prime Minister of Equatorial Guinea to the President of the International Committee of the Red-Cross and the Vice-President of Iraq, addressed the Council to describe what their country or organization is doing to promote and protect human rights.

## **Highlights**

Interactive dialogues with **Special Rapporteurs and Working Groups** took place during the second week on issues as varied as the right to food and to adequate housing, the rights of children of parents sentenced to the death penalty or executed, the abuse of force during peaceful protests, the prevention of torture, the work and employment of persons with disabilities, the negative impact of corruption and of the transfer of funds of illicit origin on the enjoyment of human rights, etc.

At a time when human rights defenders are under threat in many parts of the world, the Council, in a strong resolution,<sup>2</sup> “acknowledged that **human rights defenders** play an important role at the local, national, regional and international levels in the promotion and protection of human rights” and “reiterated the grave concerns expressed by the General Assembly in its resolution 66/164 regarding the serious nature of risks faced by human rights defenders due to threats, attacks and acts of intimidation against them”.

The Council also examined **situations which required particular attention**, such as the ones in Syria, in the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea (DPRK), in Myanmar and in Iran and decided to extend the mandate of the Special Rapporteurs on these countries. In addition, it established a Commission of Inquiry to investigate into violations of human rights in DPRK.

A decision was taken to hold a discussion, at the session of March 2014, on the question of the **death penalty** with the aim of exchanging views on advances, best practices and challenges relating to its abolition.

The mandate of the Working Group on the Effective Implementation of the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action, has been extended for another three years. The Council also adopted a resolution on education as a tool to prevent **racism**.

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<sup>1</sup> See Roundup of the session:

[http://www.unog.ch/unog/website/news\\_media.nsf/%28httpNewsByYear\\_en%29/F0DA7C27E30B0898C1257B440045045C?OpenDocument](http://www.unog.ch/unog/website/news_media.nsf/%28httpNewsByYear_en%29/F0DA7C27E30B0898C1257B440045045C?OpenDocument)

<sup>2</sup> Resolution A/HRC/RES/22/6, *Protecting Human Rights Defenders* :

<http://www.ohchr.org/EN/HRBodies/HRC/RegularSessions/Session22/Pages/ResDecStat.aspx>

Six resolutions have been adopted on the Human Rights Situation in **Palestine** and Other Occupied Arab Territories, all of them by vote with each time United States voting against. In these resolutions, the Council expresses, among others, its grave concern at the continuing Israeli settlement and related activities and also calls upon Israel to cease its imposition of prolonged closures and economic and movement restrictions.

One week was dedicated to the examination of the periodical reports of the Czech Republic, Argentina, Gabon, Ghana, Ukraine, Guatemala, Benin, Republic of Korea, Switzerland, Pakistan, Zambia, Japan, Peru and Sri Lanka.

### **Controversial issues**

A full-day meeting, introduced by a report of the High Commissioner, was dedicated to the right of the **child** to the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of **health**. Different aspects were considered such as access to health services, malnutrition, harmful practices such as female genital mutilation, palliative care, violence against children such as the sale of children, child prostitution and pornography, etc. When it came to the drafting of a resolution, there was a strong debate on issues such as access of children and teenagers to sexual education, contraception, abortion, the rights of homosexual youth, etc. Some countries considered that certain provisions did not respect the rights of the parents. A long resolution was finally adopted by consensus after some of these controversial issues were practically left out or considerably watered-down.<sup>3</sup>

Another controversial draft resolution on **protection of the family**, presented by a coalition of countries,<sup>4</sup> which called for the holding of a UN panel on the issue, was finally deferred to a further date after heated informal discussions. The main concern of the opponents was that the resolution did not specify which type(s) of families the sponsors had in mind and did not take into account the need to protect the human rights of individual members of families. The sponsors argued that as this was a purely procedural resolution aimed at producing a panel discussion, they did not want to go into substantive issues at this stage.

There was no further discussion on another controversial issue of violence and discrimination against persons because of **sexual orientation and gender identity**.

### **Various**

The High Commissioner paid tribute to **Stephan Hessel**, who died on 26 February and had been involved in the drafting of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. She praised him for having “supported the core human rights principles with a fierce integrity and never allowed politics or personal history to cloud his judgement on major unpopular issues, such as migration and racism”. She also made reference to the “12-page pamphlet entitled “Indignez-vous!” which urged people, especially young people, to take a stand against discrimination, inequality and indifference”.

Of the 35 **resolutions** adopted by the Council, 15 required a vote, among them the six on Palestine. This reflects the growing **polarisation** of the Council. The School for Applied Political Studies of the University of Sherbrooke, Québec, Canada, has undertaken an analysis of the evolution of the vote in the Commission on Human Rights and the Council which succeeded it, between 2000 and 2012. It shows, inter alia, the growing polarisation, not only on political issues such as the question of Palestine, but also on the conception of right and on societal values which seems to be irreconcilable. This study will be presented at a side event at the 24<sup>th</sup> session of the Council in September 2013.

<sup>3</sup> Resolution A/HRC/RES/22/32 : *Rights of the child ...*

<http://www.ohchr.org/EN/HRBodies/HRC/RegularSessions/Session22/Pages/ResDecStat.aspx>

<sup>4</sup> Bangladesh, Egypt, Jordan, Libya, Mauritania, Morocco, Qatar, Russian Federation, Saudi Arabia, Tunisia, United Arab Emirates, Uganda and Zimbabwe.

Because of the very limited time allotted to them, **NGO's** organised as usual many **side events** in order to share information, provide testimonies and make their demands known.

It is interesting to note that, this year, only one of the permanent members of the Security Council, the United States, is a member of the Council.

## Censorship

The state-owned Sri Lanka Broadcasting Corporation (*SLBC*) has repeatedly censored its FM retransmission of the *BBC's* Tamil-language broadcasts since 16 March, the day after the Human Rights Council began its Universal Periodic Review of the situation in Sri Lanka during its 22<sup>nd</sup> session. <sup>5</sup>

## Racism

- The Special Rapporteur on contemporary forms of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance, Mutuma Ruteere, has expressed his concern, in his last report to the 23<sup>rd</sup> session of the Human Rights Council (27 May – 14 June, 2013), about the fact that “the ongoing economic and financial crisis and its consequences on unemployment and poverty has further contributed to the rise of extremist political parties, movements and groups, and exacerbated identity related issues ... Reports received indicate the growing tendency of political leaders to promote their agenda in ethnic terms, while stigmatizing certain groups and blaming them for any problems endured. In this regard, it appears that extremist political parties have effectively succeeded in putting the burden of the negative consequences of the crisis on minorities, foreigners, migrants, including irregular migrants, refugees and asylum seekers. These groups have been labelled a threat to the standard of living of the general population, and blamed for being responsible for the rise in unemployment and State debt.” He also notes with preoccupation that “some mainstream political parties that have been in power for long periods have engaged in rhetoric similar to that of extremist political parties, and have also treated vulnerable groups as scapegoats.”<sup>6</sup>
- The Minister of justice in the French government, Christiane Taubira, from French Guyana, as well as the Minister of integration in Italy, Cécile Kyenge, from the DR of Congo, have both been victims of vile racist insults from colleagues of extreme right parties as well as in social Medias.

The Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights has issued a *Practical Guide for Civil Society: Human Rights Funds, Grants and Fellowships*. It can be found on the Website of the OHCHR with other useful resources for NGOs: <http://www.ohchr.org/EN/AboutUs/Pages/CivilSociety.aspx>

<sup>5</sup> Reporters without Borders – Press release of 27 March, 2013

<https://en.rsf.org/sri-lanka-sri-lanka-censors-bbc-s-programmes-27-03-2013,44271.html>

<sup>6</sup> Report of the Special Rapporteur on contemporary forms of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance : A/HRC/23/24, par. 7 & 9:

<http://www.ohchr.org/EN/HRBodies/HRC/RegularSessions/Session23/Pages/ListReports.aspx>

# WOMEN'S RIGHTS

## End violence against women!

### A report of the 57<sup>th</sup> session of the Commission on the Status of Women

*Par Raymonde Martineau, Secretary General*

This was the theme which the Commission on the Status of Women had chosen for its annual session from 4 to 15 March, 2013, in New York, which UFER attended with several thousands participants, from governments, inter-governmental organizations, UN bodies and specialized agencies as well as NGOs. These two weeks were an occasion of rich exchanges, frank debates and very intense negotiations. An agreement on the final conclusions was reached at the last moment. Several sessions of the Commission were held in private, which was rather frustrating for NGOs. There were several contentious issues: reproductive rights, the term "gender" including the issue of gay and lesbians; even the concept of equality was questioned by a group of "like-minded" governments proposing to replace it by "harmony". Finally, unlike last year, the governments managed to reach an agreement on the final conclusions which reaffirmed the international commitments made at relevant United Nations summits and conferences in the area of gender equality and the empowerment of women.<sup>7</sup> See also the final Press Release.<sup>8</sup>

At the end of the session, Mrs Michelle Bachelet, Executive Director of UN Women, announced that she was leaving the organization. She went back to Chile to run again for the presidency of her country, in November 2013.

Alongside the governmental meeting, an NGO Forum, organized by the NGO Committee on the Status of Women in New York, was held. This Forum required months of preparation by several working groups which were meeting on a regular basis. One of them was the Group on Girls in which our representative in New York, Sharon Joslyn, participated actively. On the eve of the opening of the Commission, a day of consultation and information for NGO participants took place. A special orientation session for girls was also organized the same day. This year there were 200 young participants.

Each day, tens of events (caucuses, panels, fairs, etc.) organized by individual NGOs or coalitions were held - especially the first week - from 8.30 a.m. to 8 p.m., in four different locations in Manhattan: between the 35<sup>th</sup> and 51<sup>st</sup> streets and the 1<sup>st</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> Avenues. We had to move constantly from one place to another within Manhattan in addition to traveling, each day, from the Bronx, where most of the UFER delegates stayed, to Manhattan. The events dealt predominantly with the various forms of violence against women in all regions of the world by a whole range of actors: family, government, army, religious instances, etc. There were, inter alia, several events on human trafficking which we attended in priority. On 8 March, International Women's Day, a march for the end of violence against women was organized (in the rain) from the UN Headquarter to the Dag Hammarskjöld place.

In the first week, Berhane was also invited to be on a panel organized by the *Women's Front of Norway* on female genital mutilation, a type of violence against women which UFER has been combating for a long time.

<sup>7</sup> Agreed conclusions: [http://www.un.org/ga/search/view\\_doc.asp?symbol=E/CN.6/2013/L.5](http://www.un.org/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=E/CN.6/2013/L.5)

<sup>8</sup> Press Release : <http://www.un.org/News/Press/docs//2013/wom1952.doc.htm>

## **Panel organized by UFER « *Born free ... Sold into Bondage* »**

This panel took place on 12 March, from 12.30 to 2 p.m., in the Church Center, across the UN. We were faced with a major problem: one of our panellists, Sunita Dunawar from Nepal, who was invited to give a testimony as a survivor of human trafficking, did not get her visa. We had to reorganize the panel. Fortunately, Sunita sent us the PowerPoint presentation which she had prepared for her contribution. The message of courage and resilience which she delivered through this virtual presentation moved the listeners who much regretted her absence. Berhane Raswork gave a vibrant testimony on trafficking of young Ethiopian women as domestic workers in the Gulf area and Lebanon. Ivonne van de Kar opened the panel with a presentation on the problematic of trafficking and on the work done by her organization (SRTV) with regard to prevention and information. Thanks to Ivonne's expertise we had interesting audio-visual material to show during the panel. The last half-hour was dedicated to questions and comments from the participants, which were all very pertinent. We had a room with a capacity of 70 filled with over 80 people, as we saw from the list of participants. Several could not get in.

I want to express my thanks to Ivonne van de Kar and Berhane Raswork for their very good contributions as well as to the Grail members in New York – especially to Sharon Joslyn and Mary Kay Louchart – for their tremendous help in the organization of this panel. It meant a lot of work, but it was a positive experience.

My stay in New York also enabled me to see by myself the wonderful work accomplished by the members of the Grail with the young girls/women from different countries who are given an opportunity each year to attend the meetings of the Commission and to familiarize themselves with the work of the UN. A special program is organized for them. Such an experience can change their life! This year, they came from, Mozambique, Papua New Guinea, Brazil, El Salvador, Uganda, South-Africa and USA. Grail members from USA, Brazil and Germany as well as Ivonne and I joined them. Each evening, we gathered at the Grail house in the Bronx for supper. We exchanged information and comments on the events which we had attended as well as on the progress in the negotiations. These intergenerational exchanges were very enriching. We hope that other UFER members will have the opportunity to take part in such an experience in the future.

There remains the problem of the visas. Several NGO participants are denied visas, each year, by the US authorities. That was the case, two years in a row, for two young women from India invited by UFER and, this year, for two young Nepalese. We discussed about this and decided to ask the NGO Committee on the Status of Women to take up this issue and adopt a strategy to obtain a better cooperation on the part of the US authorities.

## **INDIGENOUS PEOPLES RIGHTS**

- More than 2000 representatives of indigenous peoples gathered in New York for the twelfth session of the **Permanent Forum on Indigenous issues** which took place from 20 to 31 May, 2013. This year, the meeting focused on education, health, culture, youth and the situation of indigenous peoples in Africa (see below). The participants asked governments, civil society, the private sector, academia and above all indigenous communities for their support for the World Conference on Indigenous Peoples, a High-Level Plenary Meeting of the General Assembly, which will take place in New York, on 22 & 23 September, 2014.
- The **Pygmies** of the region of the Nyiragongo volcano, near Goma, in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (**DRC**), were driven out of their forests in 1925 by the Belgian colonial authorities who wanted to protect the gorillas and to promote tourism. Since then, the Pygmies squat public or private lands on the edge of the Virungas park where they suffer from various types of discriminations and struggle along doing various small



jobs.<sup>9</sup> The exact number of Pygmies in DRC is not known: estimations go from 150,000 to 600,000. The United Nations Special Rapporteur on the rights of indigenous peoples, James Anaya, made an official visit in DRC, in December 2010, where he witnessed “the extreme social and economic disadvantages of these peoples and their discrimination and marginalization in comparison to the rest of Congolese society, especially in labour relations, housing, education, access to health services, lack of civil status, participation in public life, as well access to land and natural resources.”<sup>10</sup>

- The **Truth and Reconciliation Commission on Indian residential schools in Canada** held a meeting in Montreal, from 24 to 27 April, 2013, with a view to provide information and education to the public, especially in Quebec, about the history of the residential school system and their effects on former students, their families and their communities. Heartbreaking testimonies were given by survivors of these residential schools as well as members of their families.

“Residential schools for Aboriginal people in Canada date back to the 1870s. Over 130 residential schools were located across the country, and the last school closed in 1996. These government-funded, church-run schools were set up to eliminate parental involvement in the intellectual, cultural, and spiritual development of Aboriginal children.

During this era, more than 150,000 First Nations, Métis, and Inuit children were placed in these schools often against their parents' wishes. Many were forbidden to speak their language and practice their own culture. While there is an estimated 80,000 former students living today, the ongoing impact of residential schools has been felt throughout generations and has contributed to social problems that continue to exist.”<sup>11</sup>



## REFLECTIONS ON THE UNIVERSALITY OF HUMAN RIGHTS

*By Colette Pasquis, member of the editorial Board*

Sometimes we feel so ambivalent that we are tempted to withdraw into the past. When the resolution<sup>12</sup> to oppose culture and tradition to the universality of human rights presented by China and Russia was adopted by 25 pros (southern countries) against 15 cons (northern countries), some people must have felt the urge to weight the voices instead of counting them, as if in ancient Greek. These southern countries are not only standing out in the global economy, but also in the United Nations, they speak out more strongly than before and most of them do not sell their votes anymore. This vote, apparently not so important and that should not disturb much, still raises rather

<sup>9</sup> From the Daily Newspaper *Le Devoir*, Montreal, of 21\01\2013 (in French):

<http://m.ledevoir.com/international/actualites-internationales/340771/les-pygmees-chasses-de-la-foret>

<sup>10</sup> Report A/HRC/18\35/Add.5 of 11/07/2011 : <http://documents-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/G11/146/46/pdf/G1114646.pdf?OpenElement>

<sup>11</sup> From the Website of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission:

<http://www.trc.ca/websites/trcinstitution/index.php?p=3>

<sup>12</sup> Resolution adopted by the Human Rights Council at its 21st session (10-28 September 2012): “*promoting human rights and fundamental freedoms through a better understanding of traditional values of humankind: best practices*”. See UFER Newsletter, December 2012, p.5 & 6 “*Universal Values*”.

ambiguous questions or, if the questions are clear, at least the answers are complex. The northern countries believe that human rights are universal, while an even larger number of other countries oppose their culture and their traditions to that belief. But what is culture? What is tradition? Are human rights really universal? Let us not argue about the use which some make, for political reasons, of the acceptance or rejection of human rights, even though this is often the real issue. One just has to look at the war raging between China and the United States over the *Reports on the Universal Declaration of Human Rights*. On April 19, the United States published their own *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices 2012* where they have underlined the disrespect for human rights in China during the year 2012. Like every year, China's answer was to publish its *Official Annual Report on Human Rights in the U.S. for 2012*, on April 21. China finds the situation of human rights in the U.S. *distressing*, they mention it all: women's condition, torture, wars, restriction to civil and political rights, racial discrimination, increasing economic iniquity and, supreme outrage, *it is the most armed country of the planet*. The only good news being, while they are thus arguing, they are not firing at each other.

Anthropologists differ on a definition of culture and tradition; however, all agree that culture cannot be contrary to fulfillment, development and openness of one people to the world. Nevertheless, if it so happens, we can be sure that this is a morbid trait of this given culture, however rich and beautiful it may be. Tradition cannot be sealed: it is nourished and transformed by those who live it. Human beings treasure some sacred texts and oral transmissions as well: unailing supports that can be religious, social or political. History is paved with charters, treaties, constitutions to ensure peace and social harmony, in fact, it brings a certain assurance to know that we have sealed in writing or in stories and oral poems our rules of living and representations of the universe, there is no need to think about them anymore. But in these days of rapid change, we cannot afford to ignore the challenge at stake: texts, constitutions, charters, all can become rapidly obsolete. This fidelity to the texts can lead to dangerous archaic situations. The best example is the arm lobby in the U.S. that is based on an article of the Constitution written during the days of the Far West to justify the carrying of firearms.

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights, written at the end of the Second World War, cannot but be influenced by an event of such magnitude. The Collegium International ([www.collegium-international.org](http://www.collegium-international.org)) gives this warning: *Avoid a fundamentalism of human rights that will prevent their implementation.*<sup>13</sup> The fundamentalism in question here is having a strict attachment to principles. Like, in the present case, not taking into consideration the fact that a majority of countries oppose their cultures and traditions to the human rights. Some even suspect them of manoeuvring in order to jeopardize the political and social acquired rights of women. Which is quite strange when we think of the situation of women, in countries such as China or Russia, that have no cause to be jealous of the Occident. This being said, instead of arguing indefinitely over universality and cultural traditions, let us raise the debate. Nobody can better achieve this than Raimon Panikkar, quoted by Frédéric Lenoir in his last book<sup>14</sup>.

*Human rights express a universal truth on a specific mode: the occidental logos... No culture, religion or tradition, by itself, can pretend to represent the global universal human experience, nor detain the power to reduce the diversity in human kind to a unique form, as broad as it may be ... We must disconnect the human rights from the occidental form that they have taken in order to really make them universal. Then, we could adapt them to all languages, representations of the universe and contexts.*

To recognize the universality of human rights or the various cultures or traditions, it is essential not to stagnate, to be in perpetual movement, to challenge ourselves; it is not always comfortable, but it allows expending the cultural space of our discussions.

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<sup>13</sup> Collegium international, *Le monde n'a plus de temps à perdre*. Paris, Les liens qui libèrent, 2012, p.50.

<sup>14</sup> Lenoir Frédéric, *La guérison du monde*, Paris, Fayard, 2012, pp.219-222. :

## THE RIGHT TO DIE WITH DIGNITY

The population ageing in quite a number of countries, mostly industrialized, raised questions about how to deal with the end of life. We hear more and more about the right to die with dignity. This is expressed differently according to cultures, religions and philosophical approaches.

In 2012, palliative care and human rights organizations met in Prague and adopted a Charter<sup>15</sup> in which they urge governments to relieve suffering and recognize palliative care as a human right.

Some countries, such as Belgium, the Netherlands, Luxemburg, Switzerland and a few states in the USA go even further. Legislation has been adopted authorizing, in very well defined circumstances, the right to die with medical assistance also called assisted suicide and even, in the case of the first three countries, euthanasia. A reflection on this subject is also taking place in several countries, for example in Québec where a bill on respecting end-of-life care has just been introduced in the provincial parliament.

If the aim of international human rights instruments is to ensure to all human beings, without distinction of race, colour, sex, language, religion, social origin, a life of dignity, isn't normal that it be the same at the time of death? But does this mean to go as far as putting an end to life? And what about extraordinary means of prolonging life?

We want to open a reflection of the subject through a first article on palliative care in Bolivia. We encourage other readers to share their experience and reflections on the subject.

*“Palliative care affirms life and regards dying as a normal process; it neither hastens nor postpones death. It sets out to preserve the best possible quality of life until death”.*

*Prague Charter*

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<sup>15</sup> See the Website of the European Association of Palliative Care: <http://www.eapcnet.eu/> where the text of the Charter can be found. There is even an AVAAZ petition which can be signed : [http://www.avaaz.org/en/petition/The\\_Prague\\_Charter\\_Relieving\\_suffering](http://www.avaaz.org/en/petition/The_Prague_Charter_Relieving_suffering)

# PALLIATIVE CARE IN BOLIVIA

*From Els van Hoeck, La Paz, Bolivia*

## **Development**

The first initiatives to put in place a pain relief Unit in La Paz and to organize information days at the universities of Aquino and San Francisco de Asis (La Paz) started in 2004 already. The organizations ‘Cuerpo de Cristo’ and ‘the Order of Malta’ opened a home rapidly closed down for unknown reasons.

In 2009, the NGO SENTEC SALCO de Oruro (mining region) published a book *“When life comes to an end – Guide to accompany terminally ill patients”* which I wrote on the basis of my experience in my country of origin, Belgium, and my work in the mining region of Bolivia. At the same time a team for palliative care started to work in El Alto (popular part of La Paz) under the responsibility of the Pastoral Care services of the Diocese of El Alto.

In 2011, the first seminar on palliative care was organized with the help of Spanish doctors (Societat Espanola de Cuidados Paliativos) and the participation of interested individuals from La Paz, El Alto, Cochabamba and Oruro.

In 2012, the teams for palliative care of La Paz and El Alto started jointly a radio campaign at the Salesian university, organized public conferences and elaborated a course for the training of volunteers. The following means are used to disseminate information about palliative care:

- Radio & television
- E-Mail [cuidadospaliativosb@gmail.com](mailto:cuidadospaliativosb@gmail.com)
- Blog “cuidadospaliativosbolivia »
- Facebook “cancerbolivia »

In order to make palliative care accessible for everyone in Bolivia in the future, we have regrouped individuals, small interested groups, doctors, psychologists, people working in social services and volunteers. The AFI/ICA (Association fraternelle internationale/Intercultural Association) is providing us moral and financial support through a subsidy for a small project which will give us a minimum of infrastructure such as a computer, a telephone and the necessary documentation to enable us to receive people and handle the requests for help.

In 2012, the first International Congress of Oncology Patients took place in La Paz. The participants were:

- several professionals with a training in oncology and pain treatment
- representatives of volunteers organizations
- foundations
- patients. They are the ones who expressed their feelings and criticisms about the treatments they receive. They are above all looking for answers to their doubts and insecurity. Once they have received the diagnosis of their illness, they want to know what treatments are available, what types of help they can receive and where to find them. The main criticism towards the doctors, nurses, interns, as well as the various services of chemotherapy and radiotherapy is their cold and distant attitude, the lack of information and explanations for them and their families. In short, they find treatments in the medical field “inhuman”.

## **In brief, what is the health situation in Bolivia?**

Inland, there are local health centers and hospitals of the first and second levels. Hospitals of the third level (oncology) can be found in the three main cities, among them La Paz. In Oruro, where our NGO is involved, no oncology service exists. The patients must go to La Paz, which means five hours drive or even more if one comes from the north of the department. None of the hospitals of the third level has a palliative care unit.

The infrastructure of these hospitals is not sufficient for the number of patients. When no bed is available, patients are being put on mattresses on the floor and even in the corridors, which means a lack of elementary well-being. Patients are being sent home very rapidly for lack of space but also because “there is nothing which can be done”. Patients who do not have insurance (a large portion of the population) must pay for all medical assistance, medicaments, lodging, transportation for the patient and the family. When they have to come from inland it is unaffordable for a lot of them. Being sick costs a fortune for a lot of patients. Private care is better, but there is a lack of infrastructure for specialized therapies. But what is even worse, is the lack of empathy on the part of the personnel. The families who can afford it go to foreign countries such as Cuba, Mexico and Chile.

## **International relations**

In 2011, we got in touch with organizations in Latin America, especially in Argentina, where the *Asociacion Latinoamericana de Cuidados Paliativos* has its headquarter. This organization provides distance learning; this gives access to pre- and post doctorates levels which do not exist in Bolivia.

We also got in touch with WHO/PAHO (World and Pan American Health Organizations) which is interested in seeing progress in Bolivia. At the international level, we are in contact with palliative care centers in Spain, Belgium, Germany, Argentina and United Kingdom.

## **At the governmental level**

Authorities know little about palliative care which is thus not integrated in the National health System of the country. There are very few statistics and no research or publications on the subject.

There is a very restrictive policy with regard to access to opioids. Only registered doctors with the Ministry of health can prescribe them with special forms, authorized by the ministry. There are no subventions; patients must pay for the assistance and the medicaments. Several doctors do not want to prescribe morphine because of the existing taboos. Even in the centers of the third level it is very difficult to obtain them.

The few specialists in palliative care trained abroad (several in Argentina) cannot find work. Palliative care is not included as subject at the university.

We are now contacting the Ministry of health and other governmental services to urge them to take seriously the Prague Charter, *Palliative care: human rights* adopted in 2012.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> See previous note

## The future of palliative care

In November 2012, a few doctors from the pain relief Unit (for chronic diseases) and the La Paz Center and El Alto initiatives created the Bolivian Association for Palliative Care. They have undertaken the necessary steps to be legally recognized. We were able to gather twelve professionals for the publication of a book on palliative care, mainly to assist the health personnel but also the public in general.

The different groups agreed to pick the 8 of October for the DAY of palliative care in Bolivia. It is a great step towards making public opinion and health personnel aware of the importance of this care. The final aim is to establish a National Programme of Palliative care of a high quality and accessible to all.

## UFER CHRONICLE

The preparations for the **Seminar on human trafficking** which UFER is organizing, **from 22 to 29 March, 2014, in Nepal**, together with local partners, are progressing well. As indicated in the previous issue of the Newsletter (December 2012). The purpose of the Seminar is to bring together people from our networks, who are working or eager to do something to combat this evil trade.

The objectives of the seminar will be to:

1. Hear testimonies and receive information from both survivors and people working in prevention and rehabilitation.
2. Share information and experience among participants coming from different parts of the world and concerned by these issues.
3. Open channel of communication, identify proper mechanisms and develop common strategies, among members of our networks, to assist each other in the fight against exploitation and trafficking of women and girls.

Those interested in participating in this seminar, should contact: [raymonde.martineau@sympatico.ca](mailto:raymonde.martineau@sympatico.ca) before 1<sup>st</sup> September. UFER is not in a position to cover travel and accommodation expenses of participants. Some financial assistance might, however, be provided to a few participants with a particular expertise or experience coming from countries where it is difficult to find funding. As places are limited, a selection will have to be made by the Board of Directors at its next meeting in September 2013.

*"We need everyone's help to fight human trafficking. I encourage all partners to come together: Governments, the private sector, non-governmental organizations, the media and the public. Nobody can do everything, but everybody can do something ... All can be part of our global movement to stop this terrible human rights abuse." Jan Eliasson, UN Deputy Secretary-General, 25 June 2013.*

## AT THE ORIGIN OF UFER

Some readers have expressed the wish to know a bit more about the two founding members of UFER still involved in the organization: the Association fraternelle internationale/Intercultural Association (AFI/ICA) and the Grail. In this issue of the Newsletter, we present AFI/ICA and in a next issue you will find a presentation of the Grail.

The history of AFI/ICA begins in the first part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Colonialism is at its peak. The western world is convinced of the superiority of its culture, of its right to govern the rest of the world and, consequently, of its right to exploit natural resources. Even the structures of the Catholic Church reflect this attitude of superiority. Evangelism goes through the adoption of the language, the customs and the religious expression of the colonialist countries.

A man, a priest, Vincent Lebbe, goes to China and decides to reverse this model. Instead of saying “my culture is the best, you have to adopt it”, he says “your culture is great, I adopt it”. He becomes Chinese with the Chinese and dedicates his whole life to the establishment of a real Chinese Church.

A few years before the Second World War, a woman, Yvonne Poncelet, a visionary also, got a group of young women to join her in the adventure of Father Lebbe, which means to dedicate one’s life to the proclamation of the message of the Gospel while being Chinese with the Chinese, Indian with the Indians, Syrian with the Syrians, Congolese with the Congolese, etc., in a spirit of universality. The small group of women became a registered organization with the appropriate structures. First known as International Catholic Auxiliaries, it became Intercultural Association in English and, later on, Association fraternelle internationale in French, when male members joined the association. It established its headquarter in Brussels till 1968 and moved to Geneva from 1968 to 2000 and since then it is again based in Brussels.

Nowadays, members of AFI/ICA, women and men, are involved in about thirty countries. All active members are working, professionally or voluntarily and in a Christian spirit, towards the promotion of justice and solidarity among peoples and social groups in order to reduce inequalities, for dialogue and cooperation in order to overcome misunderstandings and conflicts based on differences of race, language, religion, culture.

The creation of the United Nations, on the ruins of the Second World War, was a sign of hope for the young AFI/ICA association. Consequently, when the possibility arose for such organizations to intervene as consultants within the United Nations to share their experience and expertise, Yvonne Poncelet started to make plans to involve AFI/ICA. But since the organization was young and had limited resources, she thought it would be good to join other organizations with similar aims and create a movement which would represent them in the UN. During a congress in Rome, in 1950, she met leaders of other lay missionary organizations with whom she discussed about her project.

In 1951, representatives of 17 lay missionary organizations decided to create a non-confessional movement to make their views known within the organizations of the United Nations system. Only two of these organizations, the Association fraternelle internationale/Intercultural Association (AFI/ICA) and the Grail are still involved in UFER. The others have left the Movement or have ceased to exist. In 1952, UFER obtained a consultative status with UNESCO and, in 1953, it received one from the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) of the United Nations. UFER is one of the oldest organizations in consultative relationship with ECOSOC.

## NEWS FROM MEMBERS & PARTNERS

### 🌱 Early Childhood Education – Cooperation between UFER members in Asia

One of the Millennium Development Goals fixed by the United Nations for 2015 is to ensure primary education for all. UFER members in Cambodia, India and Korea are joining efforts to work towards achieving this goal.

In 2000, Lieke Coenegrachts, member of UFER working in **Cambodia**, started a Kindergarten program in remote areas for children whose families are too poor and thus can't afford studying. These children have to stay at home helping their parents with the daily work or looking after younger siblings. Girls are particularly discriminated. These kindergartens are in Vietnamese villages, built on illegal land, on the Mekong River. Those villages are well separated from the Khmer villages and some even close their gates at night time. Preparing the kids to enter public elementary school after age seven is one of the objectives of this program. Now there are practically as many girls as boys attending kindergarten training. Another positive point is that parents also get educated through the kindergarten. The mentality is slowly changing as the parents notice the benefit and the effect on their children of early childhood care and education. Teachers are provided with regular training sessions. One UFER and AFI member in **Korea**, An Myong Ja, who has a long experience in training kindergarten teachers, has been called as a consultant to set up this training program.



Now several more villages enjoy Early Childhood Education thanks to the commitment of several other NGOs who have become conscious of the need to provide a good preparation to primary school. Since 2010, a new structure set up by the Church for continuous training has been put in place. All teachers are provided with a contract and the salary scale is upgraded. Each organization shares in the costs according to the number of teachers they send.

Bijay Singh, who had the opportunity to visit the UFER kindergartens, when he was working in Cambodia, was very much inspired by this example. He decided to set up a similar program in Orisha, **India**, for the neglected communities of Adivasis (Tribal) and Dalits (Untouchables) children. After a first unsuccessful attempt, he finally managed to realize his project in 2011. In October-November 2012, he contacted An Myong Ja, whom he had met during the UFER training on conflict management, in Korea, in 2004, to conduct a six-week training programme for pre-school teachers in three groups, totalling about 75 pre-school teachers. She provided her own teaching material. All the teachers and colleagues appreciated Myong Ja's attitude, skills and spirit. Bijay and his colleagues are now working with 26 pre-schools and 10 primary schools. Myong Ja is willing to go again to India, in October-November, 2013, for another six weeks. They are looking forward to it.

This is a good example of cooperation between UFER members from different countries.



## ● Human Rights education in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC)

The Union for Development of Humanity (UDH) organized a human rights training programme in Kananga, county town of the province of Eastern Kasai, in February-March, 2013. The training dealt with issues such as violence against women, conflict management, discrimination against people with HIV/AIDS, abolition of torture, etc. The UDH team also visited detention centers together with members of the UN Mission in DRC (MONUSCO) and a magistrate of the public prosecutor's office of Kananga. They were able to intervene on behalf of prisoners, some of which were detained in inhuman conditions. The team also visited hospitals and maternity homes where they found many malnourished children, a growing rate of child mortality, undesired pregnancies due to rapes, many cases of teen pregnancy, cases of sexually transmitted diseases and HIV/AIDS, malaria, etc.

In the course of 2013, UDH intends to set up branches in North-Kivu, Equateur, in the regions of Kikwit and Bas-Congo. The organization is launching an appeal to all those who could provide them with material and financial support, because they lack the resources to meet all the demands they receive.

## ● Empowering tribal people in the Indian state of Odisha

Access to forest land and produce, water and other natural resources plays a critical role in the livelihood of the tribal people of India. However, instead of nurturing tribal livelihood, developmental interventions in India have often resulted in the curtailment of tribal people's access to traditional sources of livelihood. In the state of Odisha, on the subcontinent's east coast, the situation is further complicated by the presence of the naxalites, a far-left radical Maoist group performing sporadic armed attacks. It is in this challenging environment that the Folk School of Koraput, a charitable trust, was established, in April 2011, to assist with the development of neglected indigenous tribal people of Koraput. Folk School is presently working with eight community-based organisations in the Koraput district, plus three tribal networks in adjoining districts. One of the founding members of the School is **Anuradha Kandala**, a member of UFER. You can find more information on an article which she wrote in *Local First Blog*: <http://www.localfirst.org.uk/2013/06/empowering-tribal-people-in-the-indian-state-of-odisha/>

● **Violet Nevile**, UFER member, passed away on 5 February, 2013, at the age of 89. She was born in Dinard, in France, and was raised in Lincolnshire, in England. She has studied architecture. In 1950, she joined AFI/ICA and served as its Vice-President from 1956 to 1966. She was involved in the founding of UFER and always showed an interest for its activities. She has been living in Sherbrooke, Québec, Canada, for many years and worked as English teacher and interpreter.

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UFER will hold its next Board meeting in Vogelenzang in the Netherlands, from 9 to 13 September, 2013. The main item on the agenda will be the organization of the seminar on human trafficking to be held in Nepal in March 2014. The Board will also start preparing for the next General Assembly to take place in 2014-2015. Communications to the Board can be sent to: [raymonde.martineau@sympatico.ca](mailto:raymonde.martineau@sympatico.ca)

## PUBLICATIONS

### The Price of Inequality

Published in 2012, in the editing house W. W. Norton & Company, Inc., this is the latest book from Joseph Stiglitz. The author is an American economist and a professor at Columbia University. He was the vice-president of the World Bank from 1997 to 2000 and won the Nobel Prize for Economics in 2001. Although his book describes the situation in the United States, he makes constant references to the current reality in other countries.

In April he was in Montreal at the invitation of the New Democratic Party (NDP), a center left federal political party of Canada. In an interview with the Montreal daily *le Devoir*, Stiglitz explained that because of the growing income inequalities, in the majority of western countries, there is a loss of influence by the population over their elected representatives and their right wing economic medicine of austerity. The stubborn refusal of a majority of conservative officials to consider anything other than austerity is surprising considering a constant public dissatisfaction. Joseph Stiglitz attributes this single minded approach as responsible for another growing problem: inequality. Quoted from the article in *le Devoir*, Stiglitz said, “*The growing inequalities of income go together with the growing political inequalities. Our democracy is being deformed . . . We know since the Great Depression that austerity does not work. . . . It’s as if Governments have stopped listening. . . . We now find ourselves in a situation where not only do we have great inequalities between incomes but also great inequalities between the chances to profit through hard work and talent - the myth at the heart of the Great American Dream.*”

Even though certain regulations have been tightened, banks in general have rebounded stronger than ever from the recent crises. On a more positive note, Stiglitz also remarks that certain countries have begun to correct the situation and that inequalities have narrowed in countries such as Scandinavia and Brazil.

*Review made by Lise Gagné, member of the Editorial Board*

### A Reminder

The annual membership for 2013 is of 35 € or 50US\$. It can be:

- # sent to the following account in Belgium  
Banque Fortis: IBAN: BE50 0013 6970 0018 BIC: GEBABEBB
- # or transmitted to a member of the Board of Directors or the IS of AFI/ICA

*We need your support for our future activities!*