

Message from the Secretary General

Stop Violence Against Children

Message to religious leaders and faith communities on the occasion of the World Day of Prayer and Action

Every 20th of November, the world marks the World Day of Prayer and Action for Children (DPAC). In Africa, the African Council of Religious leaders – *Religions for Peace* (ACRL-R/P) in collaboration with the Global Network of Religions for Children (GNRC) marked this day by remembering children in prayers and, concretely took action to help better the lives of the many children in difficult situations. Despite the existence of international laws particularly the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) and its two Optional Protocols, violence against children is on the rise. More disturbing is the continued disregard for national laws and policies that protect children from violence in many African countries.

The ACRL-R/P deplors this state of affairs. We are deeply concerned by the continued violation of child rights across Africa.

Violence against children is not only a serious violation of human rights with devastating effects on the social and health dimensions with far reaching ramifications on the development of the child, but also a major hindrance to achieving Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). Universal Free Primary Education for instance cannot be realized if schools are not perceived as safe.

ACRL-R/P urges all our Interreligious Councils (IRCs) to join in solidarity with the rest of the world to speak for children.

ACRL-R/P urges religious leaders, Women of Faith and Religious Youth to use the unique resources (moral, spiritual and social) that exist among religious communities to argue for the protection of children.

We urge religious communities to support and pressure governments to implement the recommendations of the UN which include:

- Development of a multi-faceted and systematic framework to respond to violence against children; Prohibit all violence against children;
- Prioritize prevention through addressing the underlying causes;
- Promote non-violent values and awareness-raising;
- Capacity enhancement of all who work with and for children;
- Provide recovery and social reintegration services;
- Ensure the participation of children in all aspects of prevention, response and monitoring of violence against them, and respect their views;

African Council of Religious Leaders



- Create accessible and child-friendly reporting systems and services;
- Ensure accountability and end impunity through building community confidence in the justice system by bringing all perpetrators of violence against children to account;
- Address the gender dimension of violence against children by formulating anti-violence policies and programmes with a gender perspective;
- Develop and implement systematic national data collection and research efforts towards reducing violence against children; and
- Strengthen international commitment by ratify and implementing the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

“It is your responsibility to take action”

Signed: For ACRL—RfP

Dr. Mustafa Y. Ali

Secretary General/ Africa Representative

The African Council of Religious Leaders — Religions for Peace (ACRL—RfP) is the largest and most representative multi-religious platform in Africa. ACRL—RfP mission is to mobilize African religious communities and their leaders to build peaceful, just and harmonious societies in common action. The Council's objectives include transforming conflicts and advancing sustainable development; promoting peaceful co-existence and respect of religious diversity; facilitating and promoting mediation and conflict resolution within and outside faith communities; facilitating cooperation among African National Inter-Religious Councils (NIRCs), the Sub-Regional Inter-Religious Coordinating Bodies (SIRCBs), Women and Youth of Faith networks in responding to pan-African challenges. ACRL—RfP takes action within African states in times of emergency or crisis, and advocating for, and promoting human rights, justice and the rule of law.