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**Expert talk „Practical orientation or a mere pathos formula? Human dignity in politics“**

The expert talk „Practical orientation or a mere pathos formula? Human dignity in politics“ took place on 27 January 2012 in Berlin. With this talk the working group „Human dignity and human rights“ finished the first part of its work programme. Although the participants basically confirmed the significance of human dignity for the legal system, they differed on the assessment of the concrete significance. According to Volker Gerhardt even a mere „pathos formula“ in international treaties should not be underestimated. Stefan Gosepath objected that it was a fundamental principle but that it did not have to be put into words as the term human dignity was overloaded. So human dignity was not an empty formula but nevertheless a formula. The second part of the expert talk focussed on the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. This convention was considered a means to change views on socially disadvantaged people. According to Prof. Herta Däubler-Gmelin, not the adaptation of the individual considered to have deficits was an aim of the convention but changes of society. So policy concerning the disabled was no longer a section of welfare but the result of human rights policy.

For a detailed report on the conference please see Herder Korrespondenz, issue 3 of March 2012.

**Human dignity as the foundation for human rights – Focus of the JP Commission conference**

During its spring conference held on 9/10 March 2012 in Cologne, the Commission discussed the memorandum of the working group “Human dignity and human rights”, which also served as a background paper for the event on human dignity in politics held on 27 January 2012. In his introduction, Prof. Heiner Bielefeldt pointed out that the objective to be achieved is the protection of human rights by a strengthening of the concept of human dignity. In recent debates the protection of human rights is at risk of being undermined by a weakening of human dignity as the foundation for human rights. Prof. Wildfeuer of the Catholic University of Applied Sciences Cologne, explained the compatibility of the arguments with the Catholic Social Doctrine from a theological-philosophical perspective. The central statements of the memorandum are to be prepared in a policy-paper for use in further political debates.

Moreover, the Commission talked about the orientation aid *„Decent income in a globalized world“*, which had been prepared by the discussion group trade unions and JP during their last meetings. The central question in this context is to find ethically based criteria which help to define a decent income and which are valid in a globalized world where more than 50 % of all people are working in the informal economy, said Hubert Tintelott, chair of the discussion group. It is planned to publish the orientation aid together with the DGB (German Confederation of Trade Unions).

In addition, the group talked about the continuous violence in Syria and especially about the special situation of Christians living there. Politicians should display solidarity with the victims of violent actions and they should work towards ending the killing and towards free access to humanitarian aid, if necessary protection zones should be established.

### ***Annual meeting „Mission-Development-Peace“***

The topic of this year's annual meeting, which took place in Rottenburg from 2 to 4 February 2012, was "Migration and migrants – the universal Church in the diocese". One point of discussion was the potential of foreign-language communities for universal church work in Germany. Starting point of the reflections was the fact that in the meantime approx. 20 % of German Catholics either have an immigrant background or are migrants themselves. For this reason, it is important to take them more into account as far as the different church activities are concerned. Though the meeting was successful in ascertaining the problems which impede a better integration of foreign-language communities and of foreign priests into universal church work, only a few concrete examples of prospects for future action could be found.

Among others, Auxiliary Bishop Thomas Maria Renz, Canon Dr Stäps and Mr Johannes Bielefeldt represented the diocese of Rottenburg/Stuttgart.

### ***Talk with the German Government Africa Commissioner at the Foreign Ministry, Ambassador Dr Walter Lindner***

During the 'Round Table Africa', which took place on 19 December 2011, a discussion on the Africa concept of the Federal Government (of June 2011) was held. One of the German JP Commission's representatives in this discussion was Auxiliary Bishop Thomas Maria Renz. It was welcomed that the concept strives for integration into existing regional strategies and that an increase of coherence of German politics as against the African Continent should be achieved. In his introduction, Auxiliary Bishop Renz pointed out that the protection of human rights is not a "value" but an obligation to be observed by the governments. At the end of the talk, Ambassador Dr Lindner suggested an evaluation process; after one year, approximately, the effectiveness of the paper should be examined and, if necessary, be revised as far as its orientation and its main emphasis are concerned. The 'Round Table Africa' showed interest in this evaluation and in putting the concept into practice, but regrets were expressed that proposals regarding the measurement of effectiveness were not included in the concept.

### ***Talk with Bishop Kyrillos William Samaan of Assiut, Upper Egypt***

During a journey organized by Misereor, Bishop Kyrillos visited Justice and Peace on 16 January 2012. He informed about the situation of Christians in Egypt after the victory of Islamic/Islamist parties in the recent parliamentary elections. Bishop Kyrillos explained that the Society of the Muslim Brothers was acting in a moderate way and that the party secretary was an evangelical Christian (a son of the former president of the Egyptian Church Council). The Muslim Brothers regarded Turkey as their political model, but there were also good personal contacts to some Salafists. In Assiut cooperation between Muslims and Christians worked well. Religious leaders met regularly in churches and mosques. In general, the situation of Christians was slowly improving. Now it was easier to obtain building permits for churches than at the times of Mubarak. Clashes between Coptic Christians and Muslims were provoked by an unspecified "third party" which was interested in destabilization.

Christians are not persecuted in the country and one can live one's faith, but one has to face discriminations. According to Bishop Kyrillos education and education for tolerance are important challenges.

## Sri Lanka



At the invitation of Bishop Joseph (Mannar), Pax Christi and JP made a journey to Sri Lanka from 7 – 15 February 2012. The aim of the journey was to get to know the current situation, especially in the Tamile North and to discuss with the partners in Sri Lanka about possibilities to deal constructively with the social situation after the decades of civil war. In view of the current conflict situation – Sri Lanka's North remains under de facto military occupation – and the concrete threats involved, due caution is required.

Moreover, the Church itself has to deal with considerable inner tension which on the one hand is due to the classical dilemma of church activities under authoritarian/dictatorial conditions and on the other hand to the ethnic division between Tamils and Singha- lese.

The Church's constructive efforts to settle these issues can be recognized. One of the tasks resulting from the journey will be to find out how this process can be supported.



## Wide support for the ratification of the Convention for domestic workers

Also in Germany many people support the ratification of the Convention for the protection of the rights of domestic workers:

*This year's World Day of Prayer of the women of Malaysia* makes the rights of domestic workers a subject for discussion and supports an initiative of the Malaysian WDP women. The idea of Justice and Peace to organize also in Germany a signature campaign for the ratification of the convention to be submitted to the local members of Parliament was taken up occasionally.

The *Annual Meeting of the Forum Illegalität* took up the subject matter on March 8, 2012 and invited, among others, Ms Karin Pape, European Commissioner of the International Domestic Workers' Network, as well as the other participants of last year's JP Round Table Gender „Decent work for domestic workers- a question of gender justice and solidarity“.

On the occasion of the International Women's Day on 8 March, the *Catholic Workers' Movement (KAB)* published a press release in which it called for the ratification of the Convention for domestic workers.

On 23 March 2012, *Don Bosco Mondo* organized a workshop discussion on the subject "origin doesn't matter – is the aim clear? Migration as a chance for development" and invited Justice and Peace to illustrate the development-policy aspects of migration by the example of domestic workers.

From 3 to 5 May 2012, the *Office of Pastoral Care of Women* of the German Bishops' Conference will hold its European expert conference "poverty touches – spiritual challenges for women in Europe" in Salzburg. Justice and Peace will participate in one of the workshops dealing with the rights of domestic workers.

*VENRO*, too, is concerned with this matter and has prepared a statement on the connection between the protection of domestic workers and development-policy questions in its working group on migration. It is planned to discuss this VENRO-statement with members of the Bundestag and with government bodies.

### ***"Combat Racism – Invest in Young People" Concerted Action 2012 of JP Europe***

The Conference of European Justice and Peace Commissions has launched its Concerted Action 2012 "Invest in Young People to Combat Racism and Political Extremism" in March. With this action it opposes racism and political extremism in Europe and calls for a determined engagement of political and social sectors, financial and educational institutions as well as of the media. The action underlines the necessity of a comprehensive promotion of or investment in young people and a sustainable commitment to their education and formation as an education based on participation and values can deprive exclusion, xenophobia and anti-democratic tendencies in Europe of their breeding ground. Irrespective of the economic and financial crisis, the countries must prioritise investing in the education and formation of young people. The earlier educational disadvantages for example of young migrants are perceived, the better are the prospects to overcome them. This requires to develop strategies for a consequent inclusive policy – especially, but not exclusively in education.

In their Concerted Action, the European Justice and Peace commissions simultaneously present their concern to their national governments and members of the European Parliament.

### ***JP at Katholikentag in Mannheim***

"Daring a new beginning". This will be the motto of the forthcoming Convention of German Catholics which will take place in Mannheim from 16 to 20 May 2012. Justice and Peace has made particular contributions to events of the working group "Ways to a sustainable culture – ways to a culture of justice" (TB 2), for example on "religious freedom as human right. Challenges for Europe and worldwide threats" with Bishop Kyrillos William from Assiut, Egypt. The GKKE pharadiologue contributed an event to the forum "church/economy/world of employment" which is entitled "access to health care on a local and global level. New challenges for pharmaceutical industry and churches".

Continuing the tradition at former Katholikentage, JP Germany will be represented with a stand or tent at the "Kirchenmeile". The tent will be a meeting point and drop-in centre for members of JP commission and working groups as well as for cooperating and committed partners from the dioceses and associations. These persons will be available for talks at the tent, probably about selected themes or fields of work.

It is planned to hold a stand-up reception with Bishop Dr Stephan Ackermann. The activities in the tent will be outlined in a leaflet and distributed in advance.

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