



# The Human Rights and Peace Unit

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Bread for the World -  
Protestant Development Service  
Protestant Agency for Diakonie  
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Caroline-Michaelis-Str. 1  
10115 Berlin (Germany)

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Telephone +49 30 65211 0  
info@brot-fuer-die-welt.de  
www.brot-fuer-die-welt.de

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# Contents

Editorial .....	4
Protection for everyone who defends human rights .....	7
Businesses also need to respect human rights .....	10
Civil society needs worldwide support .....	12
Self-determined migration promotes development .....	14
Transforming conflicts without violence and contributing to a just peace ..	16

# The Human Rights and Peace Unit

## Editorial

This brochure is aimed at helping you to find out more about the Human Rights and Peace Unit at Bread for the World. It explains what the unit stands for, the issues that we hold dear, and how we go about approaching them. Importantly, it also sets out what you and others can expect from us.

### What we stand for

Our work is grounded in a respect for universal human rights. As everyone has the right to live in dignity, we fight for laws that guarantee and protect this right. We involve ourselves in politics in our own country and make sure that our politicians and judiciary comply with and safeguard human rights. And we also support international and domestic institutions that campaign for human rights, and make peace possible.

A good and sustainable development policy depends on everyone being able to exercise their rights without exception. This aim is at the centre of our work. The right to participation - the right to help shape political processes - is a universally recognised human right. This right is also applied to projects that we fund and those that are undertaken by our partner organisations around the world. Put simply, the best experts on a particular country are

the people who live in that country; they are the ones that know what they need. Our work involves enabling these people to shape and decide what is best for them and their country, while providing support and helping them to exercise their rights.

### What we do

The Human Rights and Peace Unit has direct contacts with marginalised, disadvantaged and persecuted people in developing countries. Often people who are affected by human rights violations bring (individual) cases to our attention. Our work on these issues always reflects the wishes of the people who are affected. We work together with many organisations that are active in Germany and around the globe, and accompany and support organisations that protect people from persecution including through the provision of financing.

We are also represented within diverse decision-making settings in our own country. We demand that decision-makers in Germany set out what they are actively doing to protect and respect human rights. We ensure that civil societies throughout the world are strengthened; that businesses respect the economic needs and rights of people who live in the



The Human Rights and Peace Unit. From left to right: Andreas Dieterich, Dr Julia Duchrow, Eimear Gavin, Sophia Wirsching, Alexandra Prieß, Sieglinde Weinbrenner, Sarah Lincoln, Melanie Bleil, Maren Leifker, Nils Utermöhlen, Christine Meissler, Dr Martina Fischer, Karin Saarmann, Caroline Kruckow (not on the photo).

countries in which they operate; that the causes of migration are eliminated so that people are no longer forced to leave their homes; that when people do have to leave, they are protected during their journey; that people who defend human rights do not have to fear marginalisation and persecution; that weapons are no longer exported to states that systematically violate human rights; and, finally, that we can arrive at a culture of peace.

### **How we work**

Our contacts are members of the German Bundestag, representatives of the German government, as well as interested members of the public. The political positions that we represent are developed together with Bread for the World's partner organisations that are active in the Global South. We ask uncomfortable questions, adopt clear positions and do so in order to have an influence. In the past, we have of-

ten managed to bring the attention of the German government to the issues of our partner organisations. This shows us that we are on the right track.

If you need any more information or

would like to work with us, feel free to get in touch.

**Dr. Julia Duchrow**, Head of Unit

[Julia.Duchrow@brot-fuer-die-welt.de](mailto:Julia.Duchrow@brot-fuer-die-welt.de)

## **Brot für die Welt (Bread for the World)**

Bread for the World - Protestant Development Service is active in more than 90 countries across the world. Our work is based on cooperation in partnership with organisations at home and abroad, and focuses on the demands made by projects situated in countries in the Global South.

Since 2012, Bread for the World - Protestant Development Service has been part of the Protestant Agency for Diakonie and Development, which is located in Berlin. Our funding is based on three financial pillars: the public funds we receive from the Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development, financing from donations and collections, and church funds. In 2014, Bread for the World had a total of around EUR 255 million available for development work.

Bread for the World primarily operates in Africa, Asia, Latin America and the Pacific region. We provide people and organisations with expertise and financial resources so that they can secure food, promote education and health, gain access to water, strengthen democracy, respect human rights, ensure peace and preserve creation. Alongside our project work, we focus on political dialogue and development policy advocacy, campaigning and publicity. Bread for the World also provides specialist professionals to partner organisations: The organisation has already supported the services provided by more than 140 specialists to partner organisations in Asia, Africa and Latin America.

# Protection for everyone who defends human rights

Throughout the world, women and men peacefully ensure that civil, political, economic, social and cultural human rights are protected and promoted. Representatives of indigenous peoples, farming and fishing associations, lawyers, journalists, community leaders, trade unionists, health workers, teachers, mothers and the relatives of people who have disappeared are campaigning for land rights, against expulsions and exploitation, for political and economic participation, for the rights of particularly threatened groups, such as ethnic and sexual minorities, and for girls and women who face discrimination.

Many of our partner organisations work in countries without reliable governmental or legal structures and face corruption and repression. Moreover, many people do not have a voice when it comes to land distribution, the use of natural resources and influencing politics. In situations such as these, conflicts with the authorities, businesses and other state and non-state actors are only to be expected.

Human rights defenders always put themselves on the side of people whose rights are disregarded during conflicts such as these. This can place them, as well as the people working for our part-

## Sponsoring trips made by partners for lobbying and advocacy work

The measures we implement under this heading help partners and other strategic actors to participate in conferences, training sessions and seminars (such as at UN bodies in Geneva or EU institutions in Brussels). The aim is to enable people to set out their concerns, influence political decision-makers in the North, and develop and deepen their international contacts. All that is

needed is a short application providing details about the person in question, the purpose of the trip and the proposed budget. Two people per trip can be provided with financing of up to EUR 2,000 each.

**Karin Saarmann**

[Karin.Saarmann@brot-fuer-die-welt.de](mailto:Karin.Saarmann@brot-fuer-die-welt.de)

ner organisations, in grave danger. They may receive anonymous telephone calls or letters, be followed, placed under surveillance, discredited in the media, criminalised, arrested, convicted through unfair judicial proceedings, abducted, and even threatened with murder. The offices

## Emergency measures

The Human Rights and Peace Unit can react quickly and flexibly. This can be essential, for example, when a partner organisation or its workers are threatened, and the regional unit does not have enough resources to cover the necessary costs. We can also cover the costs of legal aid. In situations where acute threats exist, financing can be made available to help people leave the conflict zone quickly and find temporary accommodation, a secure escort, and emergency medical and psychological care.

Further information is available at:  
[www.brot-fuer-die-welt.de/politik](http://www.brot-fuer-die-welt.de/politik)

**Melanie Bleil**

[Melanie.Bleil@brot-fuer-die-welt.de](mailto:Melanie.Bleil@brot-fuer-die-welt.de)

belonging to their organisations are often broken into, their computers are confiscated or stolen, and incriminating data disappears. The aim of these crimes is to scare people and paralyse organisations so that they can no longer conduct their work; and key individuals are often isolated as spurious grounds for their prosecution are found.

Administrative hurdles are another, more subtle, means of silencing unwelcome critics. This can include enforcing new registration procedures for non-governmental organisations (NGOs) that are almost impossible to complete. It can also include governments raising the bar on transparency and reporting requirements to the extent that NGOs are subject to almost total surveillance. Organisations that ignore these requirements, and even those that do try to comply with them, face issues such as having their project accounts frozen (see below: Civil society needs worldwide support).

Often, it is our representatives at the local level who are the first to find out and inform us that one of our partner organisations or their workers are in danger or under threat. We take these warnings extremely seriously and act immediately. The Human Rights and Peace Unit has developed a clear strategy that details



how to respond quickly in acute cases. We take action with the respective regional units and in consultation with the person or partner organisation concerned.

### What we do immediately

- We contact the Federal Foreign Office and write advocacy letters and urgent actions.
- We speak with political leaders in Germany and in the country concerned.
- We contact international human rights organisations such as Frontline Defenders, Organisation Mondiale contre la Torture (OMCT), Amnesty International and Peace Brigades International (PBI) that specialise in providing protection to human rights defenders.
- We have an emergency fund that we can use to cover legal aid, health and court costs, visa applications and safety training.

### What we do in terms of long-term prevention

- We help draw up and provide safety training sessions, which we can also fund.
- We advise and support partners in advocacy work in Berlin and at the UN Human Rights Council in Geneva.

- We provide assistance on gaining visas to leave the respective country.
- In exceptional cases, we provide support to temporarily evacuate people in danger.

The most effective forms of protection are undertaken in the country in question. With our help, many of our partner organisations have developed best practices that set out the ways in which they can protect themselves. Other organisations can also benefit from this and they can help each other further.

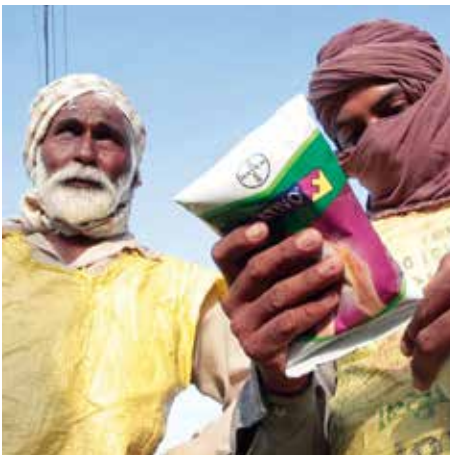
**Sieglinde Weinbrenner**  
[Sieglinde.Weinbrenner@  
brot-fuer-die-welt.de](mailto:Sieglinde.Weinbrenner@brot-fuer-die-welt.de)

# Businesses also need to respect human rights

German and other European companies are regularly responsible for massive human rights violations. In 2013, more than 1,000 workers died under the rubble of a collapsed textile factory in Bangladesh, yet seamstresses continue to slave away in factories there for up to 16 hours a day for a pittance in order to produce clothing for the European market. In Peru, people are forcibly evicted from their land so that companies can mine copper: a raw material also used by German car manufacturers. At the same time, the environment is

constantly being polluted: about 300,000 people die every year from acute pesticide poisoning, with up to 50,000 deaths resulting from the long-term effects of these chemicals. Nevertheless, European chemical companies continue to sell their pesticides without informing people of the risks.

Clearly, far too many people are still at risk from human rights violations caused by businesses. Local laws are often weak or not properly enforced, and at international level there are only non-binding recommendations in this regard. This problem is compounded by the fact that the countries where these companies are based refuse to put in place mandatory standards for the international operations of their companies.



Together with local human rights organisations, Bread for the World campaigns to block the sale of toxic pesticides by Bayer in India.

## What we do

We stand by NGOs in the Global South when companies violate human rights. We assist local initiatives during court appearances and in their dealings with governments. And we ensure that these cases are branded as scandals and garner international attention. This includes using the OECD's international complaints procedure, or supporting and accompanying actions brought against European companies before the European courts.



Bread for the World calls for binding human rights standards for global businesses instead of investors' rights.

- We campaign at the United Nations for binding human rights standards in global business.
- We call on the German government to ensure that the due diligence requirements of German companies are enshrined in law and that they also apply to the business these companies conduct throughout the world.

We need to do more than just hope that businesses will voluntarily choose to respect human rights, or implement any commitments they make. We need binding laws that everyone has to comply with. Moreover, when such laws are ignored or

undermined, people need the opportunity to defend themselves in the courts. Consequently, Bread for the World supports all efforts to ensure that mandatory international standards are implemented at the UN level. Furthermore, we campaign in the long term for a radical rethink of global economic policy: we need to move away from the continued emphasis on economic growth, as it only benefits a small minority, and towards greater justice in the distribution of wealth.

**Sarah Lincoln**

[Sarah.Lincoln@brot-für-die-welt.de](mailto:Sarah.Lincoln@brot-für-die-welt.de)

# Civil society needs worldwide support

Throughout the world, civic engagement is linked to ever higher levels of risk. Activists, employees and volunteers working for associations, NGOs and social movements are increasingly being threatened, arrested and even murdered. In addition, their organisations face systematic restrictions on their abilities to conduct their work. They may have their licenses withdrawn or simply be outlawed. In fact,



A standoff with the police on “International day against violence against women” in San José, Costa Rica.

more and more countries are establishing laws or adapting existing legal frameworks to make civic engagement almost impossible. Bans on foreign financing are becoming increasingly common. Some countries have even implemented complicated and expensive administrative processes, such as extensive reporting requirements, or demand that every activity undertaken by an organisation is subject to time-consuming advance approval from a government agency. This thwarts the work of these organisations and curtails their independence.

Countries that silence independent voices, punish critical intervention, and massively violate people’s freedom of opinion, assembly and association, also face grave difficulties in terms of their political, economic and social development. A vibrant democracy that aims to fight poverty and to secure justice and peace needs a strong, independent civil society that is involved in and critically accompanies democracy in the country. This is the only way of ensuring that poor and vulnerable people can gain a voice and that the fruits of development and economic growth reach them instead of merely benefiting the privileged. Poverty, marginalisation, violent conflicts over increasingly scarce resources, and the destruction of the en-

environment continue to present significant challenges to development policy. This is why we remain committed to ensuring that civil society organisations throughout the world are able to conduct their work, are heard, and can help shape development.

### What we do

- We advise and support organisations and colleagues when governments use laws, regulations and threats to systematically hinder our work with them.
- We document people's experiences and produce comparative country reports to ensure that other sponsors and affected organisations have in-depth information about the problems people face, but also approaches aimed at developing solutions to these problems.
- We develop common positions with affected organisations and our partners. We also seek to influence domestic and international politics with the aim of defending and protecting civil society's scope for action. Together with local and international networks (particularly ACT Alliance), we organise regional consultations to enable affected organisations to share experiences and develop common counter-strategies.

Civil society organisations are hugely important for society: the analyses and documentation produced by NGOs enrich public debates and provide important facts on which political decisions can be based. They also ensure that contrasting views of official government reports are heard at the UN level. In countries with significant levels of social inequality, NGOs undertake work that is relevant to the development of the entire country. For example, they critically monitor budgetary, labour, health and social policy, but also large investment projects such as dams and nuclear power plants. This work promotes transparency, restricts corruption and helps ensure that disadvantaged groups are also able to benefit from economic growth.

**Christine Meissler**

[Christine.Meissler@brot-für-die-welt.de](mailto:Christine.Meissler@brot-für-die-welt.de)

## Self-determined migration promotes development

People who leave their homes to live in another country do so for a variety of reasons: they may have found a job or be looking for one, they may hope for a better education, be following family members or wish to escape poverty. Throughout the world, there are more than 240 million people who can be viewed as ‘migrants’. This includes more than 20 million refugees, who are seeking protection from persecution, violence, war or terrorism. Moreover, structural inequalities and the extreme effects of climate change, such as droughts, mean that increasing numbers of people will have no other choice but to leave their homes.

Bread for the World fights against human rights violations and for better living conditions, and thus against situations that force people to leave their homes. However, we also campaign to ensure migrants are safe in transit and upon arrival in destination countries, and that they are protected from exploitation, abuse and violence. Everyone has the right to leave the country in which they currently live; yet legal routes are denied to many people. This forces millions of people into perilous migration and refugee routes and into illegality.

We aim to change this. People who decide to move to new countries of their own ac-

cord are important for development; the enormous sums of money that migrants send to their families and communities in their home countries are testimony to this. Development cannot happen without migration. Migrants enrich the countries they travel to with their skills, their economic power, and their ideas and cul-



Refugees protesting against the closure of the border between Serbia and Hungary.

tures. And they also encourage exchange and progress in their countries of origin. But if migrants do not have the necessary paperwork, a residency card or work permit, they can easily become victims of exploitation, slavery and trafficking.

Human rights violations against migrants are particularly common because many states believe they are less responsible for the protection of migrants than for their own citizens. This situation is worsened by the fact that migrants are often socially marginalised and criminalised.

### What we do

- We campaign for the rights of migrants around the world. This includes strengthening migration policy networks and sponsoring legal advice, for example in Southeast Asia, where hundreds of thousands of female migrants work as domestics, cleaners and nannies. These women usually receive low wages and face highly precarious working conditions.
- We support organisations and initiatives such as the Asia Pacific Mission for Migrants (APMM), an organisation that uses workshops to inform migrants about their rights, publishes information, creates educational material, provides financial and medical

assistance in emergency situations, exerts political pressure, and networks between migrant initiatives throughout South Asia and the Pacific.

- We critically engage with the EU's and Germany's migrant and refugee policy. We call for legal access routes to be opened up for refugees and jobseekers who wish to travel to Europe.

Moving away from Europe's policy of isolationism would mean that migrants no longer have to remain in miserable transit conditions where they are neither able to travel further nor return home. Migrants would no longer have to die as a result of putting themselves into the hands of human traffickers and smugglers while trying to find protection in Europe.

**Sophia Wirsching**

[Sophia.Wirsching@brot-fuer-die-welt.de](mailto:Sophia.Wirsching@brot-fuer-die-welt.de)



## Transforming conflicts without violence and contributing to a just peace



Participants from Nepal and Nigeria at the workshop “Building Peace in Societal Conflicts” in Nairobi.

Everywhere in the world, conflicts over political participation and self-determination, resources and economic power are dealt with recourse to weapons and the use of force. These conflicts frequently go hand in hand with new forms of oppression and discrimination, displacement and the violation of human rights. At the same time, commitment to de-

velopment, democracy, and a more just world can also lead to conflict.

Our aim is not to avoid conflicts, but to prevent them from escalating into violence, and to put an end to existing violent conflicts. We also help people to reconstruct communities that have been destroyed by war.



The small-scale farmer who opposes being forced off her land because it is being confiscated for large-scale soya plantations; the herdsman who is in a dispute with farmers over the same piece of land; the lawyer who campaigns for the rights of minorities and who is therefore being placed under pressure; the indigenous village community that is resisting a mining company because it is destroying the environment, livelihoods and sacred sites; the pastor who is promoting reconciliation and peace after a civil war: all of these people are fighting for more justice, peace and the preservation of creation and thereby come into conflict with their governments, companies and other social groups. The challenge, however, is to ensure that these inevitable conflicts are resolved without violence. Importantly, this can also lead to the development of new relationships and maintain existing ones, and, as such, lay the foundations for the peaceful coexistence of all.

In 2015, the Human Rights and Peace Unit at Bread for the World invited to Berlin people from 20 countries who live and work in areas faced with armed conflicts (such as Palestine, India, Nigeria, Sudan and Mexico) or in fragile states with a long history of civil war (such as Liberia and Sierra Leone). Under the motto of “learn-

ing from experience”, these people shared the experiences they have gained from socio-political engagement and peace work during and after violent conflicts. They also analysed these experiences, which enabled them to learn from one another. Despite the immense differences between their daily lives, the discussion led to the discovery of numerous commonalities in dealing with conflicts and their causes.



A debate between participants from Nepal, Nigeria and Kenya during a workshop on promoting peace.

## Working Group on Peace and Development (FriEnt)

The Working Group on Peace and Development (FriEnt) is an association consisting of state organisations, civil society networks, political foundations and the church agencies Misereor and Bread for the World - Protestant Development Service. It was founded in September 2001. FriEnt aims to pool skills, promote networking and cooperation, and to contribute towards conflict-responsive development cooperation.

Although the members of FriEnt are united in their engagement for peace and development, they differ in size, their aims, their project work, their approaches and their partner networks, which may consist of governmental or civil society organisations abroad. The aim is to apply the diverse perspectives and experiences of these organisations to a common and productive approach to peace and development. FriEnt's strategic framework and its overall political direction are decided upon by a joint steering committee consisting of one representative from each of FriEnt's affiliates.

The FriEnt team works on behalf of its member organisations. Bread for the World has a representative on the team (as do all other FriEnt members). The team members spend part of their time at FriEnt and the rest of their time in their

own organisations, which enables them to develop close synergies and build expertise in key issues.

This work has also enabled FriEnt to document and analyse large-scale investment in land ("land grabbing") and related conflicts under the project heading "Land and conflicts". Moreover, it has done so across organisations. During this time, Bread for the World has produced various case studies on land grabbing in Asia, Africa and Latin America and investigated the impact of land grabbing on peace, security and stability. At the same time, FriEnt analyses the issues related to diverse topics by concentrating on certain exemplary regions. For example, a roundtable on the South Caucasus, organised by FriEnt, provides regional leaders from member organisations with the opportunity to regularly inform themselves about the current need for peace, and the challenges this poses. Moreover, it also enables them to advise each other and to learn new skills.

For more information, see FriEnt's website: [www.frient.de](http://www.frient.de).

**Caroline Kruckow**

[Caroline.Kruckow@brot-fuer-die-welt.de](mailto:Caroline.Kruckow@brot-fuer-die-welt.de)

This knowledge and these innovative approaches and newly constructed networks regularly provide the participants with so much strength that they do not give up hope, even during protracted crises or periods of recurrent violence, and instead continue to campaign for a constructive approach to conflicts, the reduction of inequalities and a more peaceful future for their home countries.

### **What we do**

- We ensure that civil society's experiences of dealing with conflicts find their way into the peace policy discussions taking place within the church and the parliament. This enables us to strengthen the potential for a just peace and the awareness of conflicts in policy and practice, and to build the necessary capacities for non-violent civil conflict management.
- As part of our political work, we campaign against weapons exports to countries in crisis. Together with the Joint Conference Church and Development (GKKE) and "Aktion Aufschrei", we call for restrictions on small weapons exports, as these can spread uncontrollably throughout the world.
- We work as part of different alliances, such as the German Platform for

Peaceful Conflict Management, where we critically monitor the work of state institutions and parliaments on civil crisis prevention and conflict management. We are also equally active in different regional networks, the World Council of Churches and especially in the Working Group on Peace and Development/Fri-Ent (see box).

Working for peace is a continual process, and we want to contribute towards it by ensuring that political and social inequalities are overcome, that human rights are respected and conflicts are transformed without violence. This will not be done through quick solutions, but through long-term processes that alleviate hardship, build new relationships, develop competencies together, build trust, and, above all, give birth to new hope.

### **Andreas Dieterich**

[Andreas.Dieterich@brot-fuer-die-welt.de](mailto:Andreas.Dieterich@brot-fuer-die-welt.de)

### **Dr. Martina Fischer**

[Martina.Fischer@brot-fuer-die-welt.de](mailto:Martina.Fischer@brot-fuer-die-welt.de)

### **Caroline Kruckow**

[Caroline.Kruckow@brot-fuer-die-welt.de](mailto:Caroline.Kruckow@brot-fuer-die-welt.de)

**Bread for the World -  
Protestant Development  
Service**

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Caroline-Michaelis-Str. 1  
10115 Berlin (Germany)

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Telephone +49 30 65211 0  
info@brot-fuer-die-welt.de  
www.brot-fuer-die-welt.de