



**IPCA Europe**

**International Prison Chaplains' Association in Europe**

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**IPCA Europe Kiev Conference**

**Tue 24th – Fri 27th April 2018**

*"Learn to do right; seek justice. Defend the oppressed" Isaiah 1:17*

## Conference Declaration

Over the last four days we, 60 Prison Chaplains from 16 European Countries, have enjoyed the invitation, welcome, and hospitality of our brothers and sisters in the Ukrainian Prison Chaplaincy services. We are thankful for the invitation to the Ukraine and for the sense of family shared as we have met and learned from one another.

As a consequence of World War II, the United Nations was founded on three pillars: there should not be more misery in the future; human rights should be in effect for every human being; and there should be security for all Nations and every individual. 73 years later, these pillars seem to be in danger. We see misery on an international scale with economic and environmental disasters being daily occurrences alongside war in nations such as Syria, Sudan, Yemen, and Ukraine. Torture, wholly condemned by the UN, is known to be present in 30% of nations.

The Ukraine is the biggest country within Europe, with a rich history. It is a key region between East and West and as a result has suffered more than many other areas in the past centuries. Empires have tried to dominate Ukraine, a country still in conflict as we meet here in 2018. However, the Ukraine also unifies western and eastern traditions in its people, its culture, and its religions, with an ongoing history of inter-religious welcome. Since independence in 1991 the people have continued to struggle as they develop their deep-rooted sense of self. It has been encouraging to see at the conference that despite all these troubles, Ukraine is continuing in its drive towards being a reforming society, so excellently displayed in the participation of the conference speakers as they discussed positive ways of developing a modern and effective prison system within the Ministry of Justice. We have had the unique opportunity get to know more about the Ukrainian prison reality through presentations from representatives of the justice system, both academic and practice-focussed.

It is recognised that you can judge a society by how well that society treats its prisoners. We recognize the efforts that many Eastern European countries have made in the past decades to develop reforms of their penitentiary systems and we are aware that these efforts often are made within difficult social, economic, political and sometimes warlike circumstances. We pray that the tense political situation in many countries of Eastern Europe does not lead to an increase in exclusive, identity-based ideologies.

## Faith in Justice; from sentence to community

Our faith also challenges our relationship with justice. Theological concepts of justice and a country's system of justice can often seem to be quite different. Christian theology often relates concepts of justice to restoring peace, derived from the Judaeo-Christian idea of "shalom". Shalom includes meanings of peace, but peace in a very extensive, profound, enclosing way. Shalom in the bible is peace in justice, peace in community, satisfying the basic needs of all mankind, including the excluded. Our national justice systems need to ensure people leaving prison can find integration and welcome in the community. To see Shalom established, victims, offenders, children, the strangers, the most vulnerable and even those whom we consider our enemies deserve a justice that brings about renewed opportunities for life through the healing of the damaged *imago dei* in mankind. Justice cannot be frozen in time, but is a movement, a searching for... For Justice!

As a conference, we challenge the principle that imprisonment is a successful way to solve all diverse social problems, or the problem of crime in every society. We wish to encourage more programmes of reconciliation in communities that are alternatives to prison instead of placing such a high emphasis on imprisonment.

As a conference, we affirm the work being done by some governments in improving prison regimes, respecting human rights and dignity. However, we also express our dissatisfaction at conditions in prisons in many countries for men, women, young people, and children, where physical and psychological abuse, including slavery, still degrade human beings.

We wish to name three developments that influence correctional systems and prison ministry:

- More than ever, increasing numbers of people are fleeing their home countries because of war, terrorism, persecution, and poverty to enter the richer countries of the world. We oppose any detention facilities for illegal immigrants, as the European Court of Human Rights has already done.
- In an increasing number of countries, people are also imprisoned because they refuse to become soldiers. We affirm that the refusal of the duty to be trained as a soldier is a human right and should not lead to imprisonment.
- We call again for an immediate moratorium on executions and the abolition of the death penalty.

### Mandela Rules

We welcome the revision of the United Nations "Minimum Standard Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners", developed with the support of NGOs with consultancy status. We ask that these rules, now called "**Mandela Rules**" be applied in all countries following their unanimous adoption in 2015 by all member states.

The conference has emphasised in many ways the value of and need for high-quality training for **Prison Chaplains** and asks that Governments, Churches and other Faith Communities support such programmes. We urge all chaplains to use the support offered through IPCA and other networks for training and professional development. We encourage the development of multi-faith and ecumenical Chaplaincy Teams that are firmly rooted in their communities, both to support and challenge.

We send our prayerful greetings to our fellow Prison Chaplains throughout the world, and in conclusion, we offer thanks to God for all the blessings of this Conference. We pray that God will continue to guide and strengthen us in our ministries in prison. There is hope, and that even in the darkest moments there is always a way forward as together we "learn to do right; seek justice. Defend the oppressed" (Isa 1:17). We have faith in God's justice.