



**‘Discrimination, Persecution, Martyrdom:  
Facing the Challenge Together’**

**Plan for a Common Global Christian Initiative**

In September 2013, the Global Christian Forum Committee decided to convene a global initiative enabling Christian churches to respond together to the common challenge of discrimination, persecution, and martyrdom (see attachment) — a particularly painful challenge all churches face today somewhere in their world communions. The Global Christian Forum (GCF) envisions this initiative as necessarily a cooperative one, convened by the Forum but undertaken in full partnership with GCF participant churches and organisations.

In June 2014, representatives of the Forum met together with representatives of four primary Forum participants — the Catholic Church (Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity), the Pentecostal World Fellowship, the World Council of Churches, the World Evangelical Alliance — to consider how best to shape and move forward with the initiative. Together they developed description and plan for the initiative.

**1. Goals**

- 1.1. To better listen to, learn from, and accompany churches in situations of discrimination, persecution, and martyrdom
- 1.2. To inform one another of our activities in support of churches in situations of conflict, discrimination, persecution, or martyrdom
- 1.3. To seek a common understanding of the facts of the situations as well a more common framework and language for the development of appropriate Christian responses to them
- 1.4. To encourage GCF participant churches and organisations to speak and work together in response to these situations

**2. Methods**

Three simultaneous processes (see #4, #5, and #6 below) will lead to a global interchurch consultation (see #3 below).

- 2.1. Reflection on language used to describe situations of discrimination, persecution, and martyrdom
- 2.2. Visits of small interchurch teams to countries where churches face discrimination, persecution and/or martyrdom
- 2.3. Collation and summary of existing data on and voices from churches in situations of discrimination, persecution, and martyrdom
- 2.4. Meeting in a global consultation, which will incorporate the fruit of the three prior processes and enable the participant bodies to better face the challenge together

**3. Global Consultation**

**3.1. Participants**

- 3.1.1. Church leadership, especially church leadership with global or continental region responsibility
- 3.1.2. Representatives of churches experiencing discrimination, persecution, or martyrdom, as nominated by participating church bodies
- 3.1.3. Representatives of para-church agencies as well as specialists focusing on churches facing discrimination, persecution or martyrdom, as nominated by the participating church bodies

### 3.2. **Venue**

- 3.2.1. A place whose identity supports the goals and does not send an unwanted political message
- 3.2.2. A place sufficiently accessible and stable in terms of cost, travel, visas, and security
- 3.2.3. A place where one can speak relatively freely about the situations of Christians under duress
- 3.2.4. Preferably a place where the church's story is a hard story of persecution and/or a hopeful story of 'resurrection' after persecution

### 3.3. **Dates**

- 3.3.1. Preferably before the end of 2015, possibly early November. Consideration will be given to linking the consultation to a day of commemoration for Christian martyrs or the persecuted church.
- 3.3.2. The anticipated duration of the consultation is three full days (not including arrival and departure days).

## 4. **Reflection on Language**

### 4.1. **Participants**

All GCF related churches and organisations will be invited to take part in this process of reflection through completion and submission of a reporting form standardized for ease of processing.

### 4.2. **Outcome**

This process of reflection will result in a comparative glossary, initially mainly in English, which describes the main concepts and terms related to the realities of discrimination, persecution, and martyrdom — terms and concepts that churches and agencies consider helpful, less helpful and unhelpful.

- 4.2.1. The glossary will show how these terms are differently understood as well as why and in which contexts they are used or avoided. It will include comment on advantages and disadvantages of the various terms as perceived by the different groups.
- 4.2.2. The glossary should be completed before the team visits (see #5 below) are made, namely by the beginning of 2015.
- 4.2.3. The glossary will serve as a resource for the global consultation.
- 4.2.4. In advance of the consultation, the Planning Group will consider other uses for the glossary as well as how to interact with the outcomes of the process summarized in it.

***Note** — Prior to the September 2014 meeting of the Planning Group, the WEA-related International Institute for Religious Freedom (IIRF) will submit a more detailed proposal for this process.*

## 5. Visits to Churches

Leading up to the global consultation, small interchurch teams will visit countries where Christians and churches face discrimination, persecution and/or martyrdom. A different team will visit each country. The results of these visits will flow into the collation of data and voices (see #6 below) as well as into the global consultation.

### 5.1. Purpose

The team visits will serve the dual purpose of:

- 5.1.1. Exposing and sensitising high level church leaders to the realities of discrimination, persecution and martyrdom in contexts different from their own.
- 5.1.2. Listening to, learning from, and accompanying churches in such contexts.

### 5.2. Countries

Visits should include the following regions: Asia, Middle East, Africa, and Europe or North America. The following countries should be included for consideration: India; Lebanon or Egypt; Nigeria; France or Canada.

### 5.3. Composition of Teams

The team will include at least one participant from each major stream of global Christianity (Catholic, Evangelical, Independent, Orthodox, Pentecostal, Protestant/Anglican) and a GCF representative. Team members should be high-level representatives of GCF participant churches and organizations. Team members and at least some of the church leaders visited should participate also in the global consultation.

### 5.4. Dates

The visits will preferably take place during the first half of 2015.

*Note* — Prior to the Planning Group meeting in September 2014, the GCF secretary and Hielke Wolters, WCC Associate General Secretary, will submit a more detailed proposal for the team visits.

## 6. Collation and Summary of Data and Voices

### 6.1. Purpose

This written documentation will:

- 6.1.1. Introduce team members to the situations they will visit.
- 6.1.2. Give consultation participants basic information as well as serve as a reference work on the state of global discrimination, persecution and martyrdom of Christians.
- 6.1.3. Make more time available during the consultation for interaction and discussion by reducing the time needed for information sharing.

### 6.2. Content

The documentation will:

- 6.2.1. Contain the best available and most current information from a diversity of sources, with particular reference to the views of GCF participant bodies and the agencies affiliated with them.
- 6.2.2. Consider interpretations from different views, both from a domestic perspective and from an external perspective.

*Note* — Prior to the September 2014 Planning Group meeting, the IIRF will table a detailed proposal for this process of documentation, addressing the following questions:

- *What should be achieved?*
  - *A concise version for obligatory reading?*
  - *A handbook?*
  - *Advance briefing material on countries to be visited by the teams?*
- *Who should be involved in the process?*
- *By when should the documentation be available?*
- *How much will it cost?*

## 7. **Finances**

The costs of the initial planning meeting will be paid for by the GCF. Finding the funds to cover ensuing expenses will require a cooperative effort of the GCF, the bodies represented in the Planning Group, and other participants in the initiative.

*Note* — Prior to the September 2014 meeting of the Planning Group, Hielke Wolters together with the GCF Secretary will prepare an overall budget proposal for the implementation of this plan.

## 8. **Planning Group**

The Planning Group will be composed of representatives of the GCF Committee together with one or two of each of the following: the Catholic Church (Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity), Pentecostal World Fellowship, World Council of Churches, World Evangelical Alliance, the Conference of Secretaries of Christian World Communions.

Attachment: ‘Discrimination, Persecution, Martyrdom: Facing the Challenge Together — Towards a Global Consultation’ (summary of the proposal approved by the GCF Committee, 10 September 2013)

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Strasbourg, 2014 July 9