

Nonviolence conference : out of my experience

Context of conflict. I have been living in Somalia, an in particular in Mogadishu from 1978 to 1991. The country was “peaceful” though under a severe form of dictatorship in the name of Scientific socialism. During the last years of the 80s the power was more and more concentrated on the clan of the ruler at that time, Mohamed Siad Barre. This prompted the birth of different “liberation movements” practically all with a clan affiliation. When the civil war broke out from 1990 the country went into pieces. Since then Somalia has become a land of violence: the stronger groups or clans have been taking any law into their hands. The result is evident: a million of Somali refugees in neighbouring countries, and 1.2 million of internally displaced.

Our action, as Church, as Caritas had different form of intervention like assisting groups of journalist to organize themselves and providing them with formation on human rights; assisting groups of Somalis with “road shows” against violence entitled “put down the gun take the pen”. We used also the Radio with special programs on the Social teaching of the Church. We took part and invited more expert people to organize meetings among political/factional leaders. Prayer meetings were organized among different religious leaders.

Where to invest our energy. I think that we should work more and more through an appropriate use of liturgy (Masses for peace and non violence). Catechesis to children and young people is very important: there we have the possibility of forming the mentality of people. Retreats/spiritual exercises are also to be exploited for a spirituality which has a socio/political dimension. Campaigns against violence should be used in the manner that Caritas Internationalis has made the campaign “one human family, food for all”. Meetings of bishops and priests are organized frequently: some of these meetings could be utilized for a non violence greater encouragement, etc.

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