



Geneva Reporter

Quaker United Nations Office Geneva

Children of Parents Sentenced to Death or Executed

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QUNO upholds a focus on children of prisoners, especially children of parents sentenced to death or executed

Children are often directly and deeply affected when their parent is involved in the criminal justice system, especially when their parent faces capital punishment.

On 11 September the United Nations substantively addressed, for the first time, children of parents sentenced to death or executed with a Panel in the Human Rights Council.

Experts from around the world, such as Associate Professor Sandra Jones from Rowan University in the United States, described the trauma, grief and internalised shame that these children experience. Francis Ssuubi, from Wells of Hope in Uganda, called for criminal justice systems that were child-friendly, for instance allowing contact between children and their parents in prison. Professor Jorge Cardona from the Committee on the Rights of the Child, emphasized that when a parent was sentenced the best interests of the child had to be considered.

After the presentations, some States expressed a desire for more information about this topic, including how many children have a parent sentenced to death or executed. Others asked for examples of good practice or recommendations in order for the rights and best interests of children to be better protected when their parent faces capital punishment.



Credit OHCHR,
EPA Dai Kurokawa

QUNO chaired a side-event the following day, in which we were able to explore more fully how children are affected. The event focussed on visitation between child and imprisoned parent, the period before and after an execution, including secret executions, as well as the impact of the death penalty on prisoners abroad and their family at home.

In preparation, QUNO produced a new publication, *Children of parents sentenced to death or executed: How are they affected? How can they be supported?* on behalf of the Child Rights Connect Working Group on Children of Incarcerated Parents. This publication describes the impact of a parental death sentence on children, which include emotional and psychological distress, social isolation, inadequate support and care, and the development of a conflictual relationship with the State.

In addition, recommendations are made, namely an immediate official moratorium on the use of the death penalty with a view to abolition, respect for the best interests of a child when sentencing a parent, and assistance to children of parents sentenced to death or executed.



Exploring a New Framework for Trade and Investment in Agriculture

QUNO is working with others towards a food trade and investment system that is more equitable for people and the environment

Today there is widespread agreement – amongst free trade advocates as well as its critics – that international rules relating to agriculture trade and investment do not contribute to a sustainable, equitable, people-centred food system.

QUNO has long been following talks in the World Trade Organization (WTO), working with delegates to achieve fairer outcomes from global trade. The objective of WTO rules on agriculture is to establish a “fair and market-oriented agricultural trading system”.

Rules governing international trade as well as investment in agriculture can have profound effects on all countries’ food, environmental, economic and social policies. Given the current political and legal constraints of the WTO, we have realized that even the improvements that might be politically achievable within that institution would not sufficiently respond to the main challenges that we see as facing agriculture today.

WTO’s main thrust is “out of synch” with the world’s realities. WTO rules were drawn up in the early 1990s and designed to respond to the features of that time, particularly low and declining agricultural prices. However, today food prices are often high and potentially volatile.

QUNO also believes that there is an urgent need to take better account of the social and environmen-

tal aspects of agriculture and the long-term impact of intensive production visible in excessive use of water or soil degradation.

We therefore decided to step back from the WTO negotiations to think more radically about the purpose, structure and directions for governance of agriculture trade and investment.

QUNO believes that by placing people’s livelihoods and dignity alongside sustainability and food security as the central objectives of agriculture trade, it is possible to envision a new framework that would better enable countries to meet peoples’ long-term food security needs and objectives.

We believe that through sharing expertise and experience, civil society, academics and others can jointly propose a new, credible and robust framework for agriculture trade and investment. Some important work has already been undertaken, for instance through the EcoFair Trade project.

We hope to work with the EcoFair Trade dialogue and others to create a shared space in which to talk about and develop alternatives, and in 2014, identify the main issues to include into a new framework instrument for trade and investment in agriculture. We will dedicate at least 3 years to this work, in an ongoing process in which different actors will be able to share and develop ideas, and strategize on a shared plan for change.

At this stage of the work, we are seeking views about what the current challenges for the current framework are and how these might be addressed. We invite you to give your input to a survey. This is available in English, French and Spanish at <https://www.surveymonkey.com/s/PBGHQRN> or to contact us to participate in person, at nftia@quno.ch

For more information about the project, please visit www.quno.org/economicissues/food-sustainability/index.html or email us at nftia@quno.ch



Produce market in China.
Credit, Martin Kunz



Conscientious Objection to Military Service

On 27 September 2013, the UN Human Rights Council adopted, without a vote, its first substantive resolution on conscientious objection to military service

This new measure supercedes and develops the resolutions adopted in the (former) Commission on Human Rights. In particular, it recognizes the right to conscientious objection to military service, acknowledges that an increasing number of States recognize conscientious objection for volunteer/professionals as well as conscripts, and permits applications prior to, during and after military service, including reserve duties. It also calls on States to stop imprisoning, and repeatedly punishing, conscientious objectors and addresses the question of asylum for them.

The resolution also highlights that the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) has issued a publication on Consci-

entious Objection to Military Service (available <http://www.ohchr.org/EN/PublicationsResources/Pages/Publications.aspx>), as well as a report to the Council under the new mandate for a report every four years on new developments, best practices and remaining challenges in relation to conscientious objection to military service.

The on-line Conscientious Objector's Guide to the International Human Rights System, prepared jointly by QUNO, War Resisters International, Conscience and Peace Tax International and the Centre for Civil and Political Rights (available in English and Spanish at: <http://co-guide.org>) was launched at a side event organised by QUNO during the June session of the Human Rights Council.

New Energy on Nuclear Disarmament

Long stalled discussions on nuclear disarmament show signs of progress

The Conference on Disarmament in Geneva has been blocked for the past 17 years, yet the long stalled discussions around nuclear disarmament showed signs of life recently as the General Assembly established the open-ended working group (OEWG) on "taking forward multilateral nuclear disarmament negotiations for the achievement and maintenance of a world without nuclear weapons" with Ambassador Dengo of Costa Rica as chair.

The OEWG was given 15 days, spread over 3 months, to explore ways forward to finally bring progress in this area. The format was informal, allowing for panels on various aspects of the topic to provide expertise from academic, NGO and UN agency representatives. A whole range of proposals were discussed, some of which were already well-worn but others tried to break out of the traditional approaches.

The non-nuclear states are promoting the idea that it is possible for them to bring progress by helping to create an international norm that makes the

production, or holding, of nuclear weapons unacceptable. One argument supported by a number of states, is that those willing to ban nuclear weapons should move ahead with a treaty.

Norway hosted a large event in March 2013 (and Mexico will follow up with a similar event in February 2014) with a focus on the humanitarian consequences of the use of nuclear weapons. Other states are looking for ways to move forward simultaneously on several fronts (the so called building blocks approach) rather than using the "stepping stones" framework within which it has proven so easy to stall all progress.

The report of the OEWG has gone to the General Assembly and comprises a summary of all the ideas and proposals presented rather than any attempt at consensus. Most nuclear weapons states have refused to take part in any of the discussions on nuclear disarmament outside of the Conference on Disarmament, insisting that this is the only legitimate forum for multilateral nuclear disarmament negotiations.

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Nevertheless, the High Level Meeting on Nuclear Disarmament in New York, held on 26 September, was a further indication of a new impetus to push this topic further up the international agenda. Whether the non-nuclear weapons states are able to

build on this momentum or the Conference on Disarmament is prodded into life, this fresh energy provides the best opportunity for progress in years.

Highlights from QUNO New York

On 23 September QUNO partnered with the Civil Society Platform for Peacebuilding and Statebuilding (CSPPS) to welcome over 90 diplomats, UN staff, NGOs, and members of civil society for a discussion titled, “Stability and Peace: Finding the Heart of Sustainable Development.”

In 2015 the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), established by the UN at the Millennium Summit in 2000, will expire and a new agenda to address development will be put in place. The eight MDGs focused on priorities such as maternal health, eradication of hunger and poverty, and reducing child mortality. It is clear that to achieve meaningful development the root causes

of violence must be addressed.

This event sought to share peoples’ experiences and to inform policy making for global development goals. Panelists spoke about the inclusion of peace and stability in the post-2015 Development Agenda. This event sparked a fruitful discussion from the floor during which most notably, all agreed that violence is a universal phenomenon.

The world is coming together to envision the world we want to see in 2030, and QUNO is working with others towards a world where peoples can live free from the fear of violent conflict.

News in Brief

At the beginning of September, QUNO held a workshop at Stockholm World Water Week on “Water Management and Peacebuilding: Connecting the Local to International Policy” The workshop was organised with a number of partner organisations including the Challenge Programme on Water and Food, IUCN and CARE International.

During this workshop, QUNO presented its new publication, *Building peace around water, land and food: Policy and practice for preventing conflict*.

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If you would like to receive the Geneva Reporter by e-mail instead of post please contact Claire Rodgerson at quno1@quno.ch

QUNO welcomes new Programme Assistants **Claire Rodgerson** (Food & Sustainability) and **Emily Graham** (Human Rights & Refugees).

We said “farewell and sincere thanks” after three years to **Oliver Robertson** who has taken up new work at Penal Reform International and also to Programme Assistant **Haifa Rashed** who will join the Resident Programme at Pendle Hill, USA.

The QUNO Committee discerned that we should increase our staff commitment to the UN climate change negotiations. **Lindsey Cook**, a member of German Yearly Meeting based in Bonn, is helping us take this work forward. Meanwhile, a selection process for the position of Representative, Climate Change starting in 2014 is taking place.

If you would like to donate to QUNO’s work, please visit our website at www.quno.org for our bank details. Many thanks!