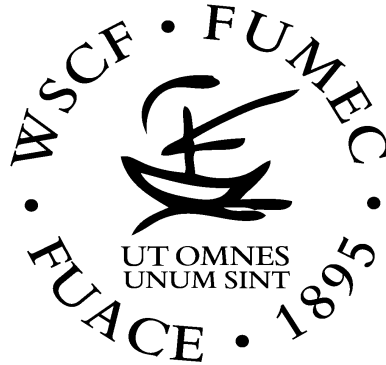


World Student Christian Federation, Geneva

Overcoming Violence Programme 2014



**Concept Paper
Inter-Regional Leadership Development Programme**

**Amman - Jordan - Palestine
20 February 2014 to 3 March 2014**

***“Towards solidarity for the future of the Arabs”
(Christian youth witness today)***

Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth... Blessed are the merciful,
for they shall obtain mercy... Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be
called sons of God. Matt 5:5-9.

Be not overcome by evil,
but overcome evil with good. Romans 12:17-21

“Darkness cannot drive out darkness: only light can do that.
Hate cannot drive out hate: only love can do that.” Martin Luther King Jr.

Overcoming Violence Programme : Middle East

Background

The WSCF has defined a Middle East focus to our Development Programmes on Overcoming Violence in order to engage the entire Federation in learning from and accompanying the students and youth in our SCMs there and developing actions to promote justice and peace in the region.

The Middle East Region of the WSCF has been working to engage student from Syria, Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon, North Sudan, and Palestine in the issues, questions, challenges, needs, and possibilities in the region today, and to equip them to play a strong role as citizens and Christian leaders working for peace with justice. The Federation leadership has made some steps to demonstrate solidarity through statements, prayers, and a solidarity visit to Egypt. WSCF is now ready to design global programmes, policies, and initiatives to build on the excellent work of the Middle East Region, to create more understanding of the situation of Christian students and all people of the region, and to equip our global community to better encourage, support, speak, and act.

The project presented in this proposal aims to gather:

- students and youth from around the world,
- students and youth from the Middle East Region
- who have been active participants in regional trainings, strategic planning, and projects and activities in the region, and staff, in an intensive development programme in leadership formation, solidarity, and planning.

This meeting is also part of a WSCF process to create a WSCF position on Palestine and to create further plans for our Overcoming Violence Programme. The results and recommendations of this meeting will go to the Executive Committee (ExCo), whose recommendations will then be processed by the General Assembly (GA).

Overcoming Violence: Middle East Programme Development Goals

To promote solidarity with the Middle East region through bridge-building initiatives and activities at all levels

1. Create awareness among students and youth in the Federation, and our friends, of the Middle East situation
2. Encourage and strengthen solidarity with the Christian youth
3. Promote justice and peace in the region

Context

The Middle East Region is continuously suffering from all forms of injustice and violence. Iraq, where the populations are still seeking stability; Syria where the revolution is causing much cruel oppression; Egypt where students and young people are primary movers in the movement toward change in an environment of uncertainty; occupied Palestine where great injustices are still creating victims under the Israeli occupation and rules supported by international dominating powers; and all countries of the Arab spring where the drive for change is creating energy and where uncertainty and violence is still making victims. Christian individuals, communities, and churches are some of those who have been targets of violence in the midst of the environment of upheaval and change. Christians, and especially Christian youth, all over the world feel and express the need to create an active solidarity with the Arab population in general and with the Palestinians in particular. To respond to this call, the WSCF has created its global Overcoming Violence: Middle East Programme.

The Arab Christian Churches have been strongly challenged by the innovations brought by the “Arab Spring” and have a variety of reactions and responses. There is hope and there is fear because some of the developments are threatening their existence and presence. Bridging solidarity between the regions through the global WSCF means also sharing the challenges of the Christians and especially the Arab youth in these various Arab countries.

The “Arab Spring” represents a major turning point not only for the Arab populations but also for Churches and the life and witness of the Christians, especially the youth, in the Middle East.

The Christian community has been victim of multiple forms of violence in the region, forced to emigrate, often fighting for their lives, and nowadays the revolutions around has intensified this insecurity. Many Christian youth followed the revolutionary movements, advocating for a new society based on Human Rights values, democracy, and freedom. For them, these revolutions represented opportunities to become full partners in rebuilding the concept of citizenship using the basic concepts of dignity, justice, and peace.

In the ongoing post-revolution era, these dreams started quickly to die: the expected opportunities did not materialize and instead other social and political realities are struggling for prominence, where “islamisation” is a real danger. The Christian communities are again skeptical about their role in the political and social life as their full citizenship is threatened in a society where now the majority of the everyday principles and rules are inspired by the Islamic “shariaa”. In this region, the Christians feel they are more likely to exist as a social group than a Church witnessing for its belief in Jesus Christ.

The Arab Church were often reluctant in the past to engage with Muslim clerics, and have been positively influenced by the revolutions on this issue. They have initiated many forms of dialogue, especially because of the need expressed by the youth “to breathe the liberation values of the revolution”.

The Ecumenical movement, the movement to develop unity between the various Christian traditions and together to work for peace between all people, in the Middle East continues to struggle for commitment and focus. This ongoing crisis is also demonstrated by the churches alienation from and inability to respond to all the recent challenges appearing through the deep changes of the Arab Spring. Arabic Churches need an “Ecumenical Spring” to be initiated by the youth to renew the life of the Christian communities in their struggle, and to witness for Jesus in the diversity of religious and cultural heritages of their people.

The World Student Christian Federation in the Middle East is everyday working to reflect and help the Christian students and youth have a space to reflect, be encouraged, and be equipped and motivated to take up a leadership role in their churches, schools, communities, countries, and region.

The World Student Christian Federation as an international community is committed to accompany, encourage, advocate, and pray for the life, witness, and justice of the students and churches in the region.

Inter-Regional Leadership Development Programme Overcoming Violence Programme 2014

“Peace cannot be kept by force; it can only be achieved by understanding.”
Albert Einstein

Thematic areas of work

- 1- Understanding of realities in the Middle East.
- 2- The Palestinians today: realities and challenges.
- 3- Youth witness in the era of Revolutions in the Arab World.
- 4- Renewal of the Ecumenical movement in the Church of the Arabs
- 5- Christian – Muslim dialogue
- 6- Renewal of the concept of Citizenship.

Objectives of the Development Programme

- To express solidarity with SCM Palestine and, following the call of the KAIROS document, to “Come and See” the situation there in order to develop an informed response
- To study the KAIROS document and develop an outline of a Policy Paper on Palestine for WSCF
- To express solidarity with all the SCMs in the Middle East and broadcast from the experience of the students and young people there to the youth around the world
- To develop recommendations for the WSCF Executive Committee and General Assembly for future advocacy and solidarity priorities and strategies in the Middle East

Components of the Development Programme

- Solidarity Development Programme in Palestine, hosted by SCM Palestine
- Testimonies from students from SCMs in Palestine, Lebanon, Egypt, Syria, Iraq, North Sudan about Middle East realities, from the perspective of students and youth in the middle east
- Analysis of KAIROS Palestine document
- Develop outline for a policy paper on Palestine
- Develop advocacy and solidarity recommendations to be presented to the Executive Committee and General Assembly of WSCF on strategies in the Middle East

Participants

10	Students from Middle East Region (Palestine, Lebanon, Egypt, Syria, Iraq, North Sudan)
16	Students from other 5 regions
6	Regional secretaries and the General secretary of WSCF
1	Senior Friend
2	Resource personal

The students chosen from other regions will be chosen based on involvement in the SCM, interest in the Middle East, and their willingness to share with other students, SCMs, and WSCF about their learnings while in the Middle East and further develop the Overcoming Violence: Middle East Programme. 6 of the students will be members of the global Advocacy and Solidarity Committee (ASC) who will make recommendations to the Executive Committee (ExCo) about future actions and programmes to implement as a part of the Middle East Programme.

Date - Duration - Venues

20 February- 3 March 2014,
hosted by SCM Palestine and the WSCF Middle East Regional Office

02 Day solidarity field visit to Palestine
Meetings in Amman - Jordan

Conclusion

We believe that the Federation exists precisely to allow students and youth from around the world to learn from one another and together engage the most pressing issues and challenges of the times.

Today WSCF with students and youth plays a role in communicating, interpreting, and providing leadership for the rapidly-unfolding developments in the Middle East.

WSCF is called to support our Christian students and youth in the region and to play a role in the future of Christianity, future of ecumenism, and future understanding of peace for all in the Middle East.

The linking of the SCM and regional work with the larger WSCF community and creating explicit global platforms specifically for Middle East issues will be an important strategic contribution toward the development of vibrant citizens and lasting peace in the Middle East.