

Oral Statement from Fraternite Notre Dame

54th Session of the Commission on Social Development

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Fraternite Notre Dame, founded by His Excellency, Bishop Jean Marie Roger Kozik, thanks you for allowing us to speak on the occasion of this 54th Session of the Commission on Social Development.

The economic and social development of a country cannot be realized, unless that country is at peace. This is a prerequisite. But in order to realize such peace and social development, you need a certain stability and you need respect for other people's differences. Thus, one of the required conditions, is that religious freedom, along with freedom of worship and freedom of thought be respected. The situation of Christians in the East and in Africa illustrates such attempts on social development: there are residents who live in conditions of extreme exhaustion, in the cold, or deprived of water, electricity and food; children who can no longer go to school. But the Christians do not want to flee, they live in trying conditions, and fall victim to segregation and exclusion. For instance, the children born to Christian or Yazidi families, if one of the parents become a Muslim, have to become Muslims too.

It seems that fundamental freedoms and rights no longer exist. Therefore, without freedom of worship, there will be no peace, and no social development.

Education is another requirement, when it comes to economic and social development. Our Founder, His Excellency Bishop Jean Marie Roger Kozik, has well understood this, when he opened schools and other services for poor and deprived children. His primary, secondary and high schools at our Niger Mission offers an education to over 800 children, and most of them are Muslims. For centuries, the founders of Christian Orders have enabled children to find a way out of their social misery. Along the centuries, thanks to this education from the Religious, our society was able to evolve. The Religious from the Catholic Orders have always contributed to social development.

Furthermore, the duty of a democratic society is to protect the weakest of its members. When you separate people by age group and condition, you start hindering social development. Therefore, allowing elderly persons to help young children and advise them using their experience, can improve social cohesion. The handicapped also need to benefit from a greater integration, both at school and in the professional arena. Are not the elderly, the sick and the handicapped, among the weakest amongst us, who should be protected?

The schools that welcome children with a handicap should be located in the vicinity of nursing homes, to teach generations again how to live together. Because persons more vulnerable such as the handicapped, cause valid persons to practice charity. Now, without charity, without the merciful message of Christ, Peace is impossible.

[End of Fraternite Notre Dame's Oral Statement]

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