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LWF Update

16 April 2015

LWF Update on Dadaab Refugee Camp in Kenya

In a letter on 8 April to the Bishops of the two LWF member churches in Kenya—Evangelical Lutheran Church in Kenya and Kenya Evangelical Lutheran Church—The Lutheran World Federation (LWF) General Secretary Rev. Martin Junge condemned the Garissa attacks in the firmest terms. These attacks have no political, religious or moral justification. The LWF joins in prayers for the families, communities and the people of Kenya at large, who in pain over the loss of precious lives, and dismayed by the circumstances under which this happened, are seeking to find peace and comfort in their hearts and minds.

We also wish to underline how generous and admirable the Kenyan people have been in granting refuge to so many vulnerable people over so many years. This has not been easy, yet the Kenyans have persevered in doing the right thing. The LWF continues to express its deep appreciation for the hospitality and compassion of Kenya.

The Deputy President's statement is to be taken seriously and respectfully, in the wake of the horrific attacks at Garissa. However, we wish to underline that there has been no decision of the Kenyan government. Neither the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) nor the LWF have received any demand that the Dadaab camp be closed.

It is unrealistic at this point to expect that Dadaab should be closed, for several reasons. Firstly, conditions in Somalia are still not such that refugees can return in safety and dignity. It would violate Kenya's international legal obligations and its domestic law to send people back under such circumstances. Secondly, it is not clear that closing the camp would improve the security situation in Kenya. The vast majority of the refugees are themselves victims of persecution and violence, and the great majority of them are women and children. Forcibly returning them to Somalia would be a form of collective punishment not against terrorists or criminals, but against innocent vulnerable people.

And lastly, closing the camp would provide a victory for those who carry out attacks such as in Garissa. It would reinforce the mind-set that spoke through the attacks, separating people and communities, instilling mistrust and hatred as the driving force in people's

relationships. None of these features relate in any way to what we have learned through Scriptures about God's vision for humanity.

It continues to be a privilege for the LWF to work with the government and people of Kenya and with UNHCR in providing services for the refugees in Kenya.

LWF direct assistance to refugees at the camps in Dadaab:

As of 31 March 2015, the camps in Dadaab had 351,446 refugees, nearly all of who are Somalis.

LWF works mainly and foremost in the Hagadera (106,000 refugees) and Kambioos (21,000 refugees).

LWF's assistance to refugees mainly focuses on primary education, early childhood development, community services—persons with specific needs (including a main focus on person with disabilities).

LWF directly supports 30,000 refugees, out of which 24,000 are children in primary schools. In addition, LWF's community mobilization reaches all the 127,000 refugees in Hagadera and Kambioos camps.

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