



Our basic principles 2017

EIRENE: What characterizes us

Non-violence

The peace service of EIRENE is based on the values of non-violence, the respect for human dignity and a deep sense of solidarity and unity in the world. We want to live our daily lives committed to these values and we want to implement them professionally in our programs.

In situations of injustice and social exclusion, of hatred and violence EIRENE advocates social and political participation, a fair distribution of resources and non-violent transformation of conflicts.

Internationality

EIRENE is an international organization that cooperates with partners in the global South and the global North. National and international peace workers and volunteers work together in joint programs.

Peace service is a cross-border task which tackles causes and consequences of violence, demands social and global justice and seeks to overcome discrimination and misuse of power.

Spirituality

Working for peace requires inspirations and non-violent peace service needs spirituality of peace. As individuals of different religious, humanistic and political affiliations we seek for what unites us and what promotes peace. In our community, in open dialogue as well as in our day to day activities we find the strength to resist violence.

I Non-violent Peace Service

I.1 Our concept of peace

Peace means more for us than the mere absence of war and armed force. Peace stands for a world in which a good life is possible for everyone – for today's as well as future generations. Peace means wholeness of each individual, of the human society and of our one world. Such peace is not conceivable without justice and the conservation of the environment in its planetary boundaries.

We are far from the ideal of a peaceful and just world. However, we do not want to be daunted by injustice and social exclusion, hatred and violence. Instead, they urge us to act. Eugen Rosenstock-Huessy said: "The opposite of war is not peace, but peace service". Peace is not a static condition, but a dynamic process supported by everyone which we have to strive for every day anew. We understand peace work to be a holistic, permanent task.

I.2 The meaning of non-violent action

We at EIRENE live, promote and demand active, consistent non-violence. Worldwide there have been and continue to be many movements and campaigns refining the theory and practice of non-violence. EIRENE's founding organizations are among them. EIRENE's founder André Trocmé and his wife Magda are our role models: André was a pastor of the reformed church in France during the Second World War. Together with Magda and his congregation he committed civil disobedience. All refused orders to surrender Jews, but accompanied them secretly to secure Switzerland instead. Such a commitment inspires many EIRENE members up to this very day and motivates us to unfaltering commitment and brave decisions in our lives.

Also our partner organizations maintain longtime traditions of consistent non-violence to which they adhere despite numerous repressions. Non-violent campaigns not only become increasingly successful but are also much more effective than violent campaigns, especially regarding long-term peace building.

The refusal and rejection of the use of physical or psychological violence are essential for non-violent attitude and non-violent action. Non-violence is indeed a fundamental critique of any kind of exercise of power which avails itself of structural-institutional, cultural or direct violence. We are aware of the fact that our own acting is embedded in structures of violence. Ultimately, non-violent acting is not possible while simultaneously participating in society. For us, that does not mean to give up. We have to honestly scrutinize ourselves over and over again and break new grounds. At the same time, we also have to learn to brave those contradictions which we cannot resolve.

Non-violent methods are our tools. We experience their impact in project practice. Non-violence means neither to be powerless nor to endure grievances. On the contrary: non-violent peace service requires creativity, action and moral courage. Non-violent interventions and embodying of alternatives to the use of violence are steps on the way to peace.

To us non-violence is our central position, leading way and aspired goal of peace service. We are convinced that non-violence is the only possible way to handle conflicts serving peace. For no reason, associated with whatever good intentions – a violent approach always results in further destruction, harm and counter-violence.

However, we are aware that our non-violent approaches can and will fail. That's why we want to repeatedly pause in our activities and reflect on the way which has been chosen in order to plan the next steps together with our allied stakeholders as learning organizations.

I.3 Peace Service in the tradition of the historical peace churches

EIRENE was founded at a conference of Historical Peace Churches in Chicago on 14 September 1957. The tradition of pacifist refusal to carry weapons was something that EIRENE was born with. The first volunteers came from peace churches in the Netherlands, France and the United States, that supported the volunteers financially and socially. Since 1961 until the suspension of compulsory military service EIRENE also offered (Western) German conscientious objectors an alternative to the military service: international voluntary peace services instead of enforced military services.

Back then as well as today, the main motivation for peace service is the intention to work on alternative non-violent action for a peaceful world. This happens in dedicated services in the global South and the global North:

- through strengthening of people who are discriminated against by structural or direct violence, in order to facilitate their civil participation;
- through direct involvement in and support of the peace work of partner organizations, other social actors and individuals and
- through the implementation of social alternatives and visions.

I.4 The impact of peace services

Only together, we can come closer to the goal of just peace: Through close cooperation with partner organizations on site, through international volunteers and peace workers and local supporters, as well as through the general public's attention. The peace service at EIRENE is taking place on three levels, which are varying in extent depending on the kind of service:

- **Learning and growing from this learning experiences**

Peace service with EIRENE is a learning service, in which the participants enrich each other with their various perspectives and backgrounds and learn something new together.

Especially, essential for **voluntary service**: This time should not only be another section in ones CV (curriculum vitae), but thoroughly sensitize volunteers to non-violence, the just distribution of resources and the strengthening of the rights of disadvantaged groups. We want that voluntary service makes aware of injustices, politicizes and generates impulses for the future biography. The volunteers are given freedom to grow within and beyond their limits. Only by going along with living conditions and life realities of others, understanding and appreciating them, this personal growth is possible. This growth needs an appropriate supervision. Therefore EIRENE continues to develop its structures of supervision and back up services.

For professional peace workers the aspect of learning together in the professional context is most important: local and international experts and their partner organizations offer divers personal backgrounds and theories of change, different approaches and visions of peace to the cooperation and thereby design new peace projects. EIRENE promotes this exchange at regional and continental level. The experts themselves keep working as a connecting link to the whole of EIRENE. They share knowledge about the effects of peace services. Therefore, the learning process of each participating organization is promoted.

- **Create common know how and apply it effectively**

Within the collaboration of local partner organizations, the EIRENE-office and international volunteers and peace workers, transfers of resources in form of time and money, as well as in form of competences and experiences take place. Ideally, those transfers happen in all three directions and on various levels.

Furthermore, joint planning, implementing, and evaluating of peace activities create new know how, which both sides only gain by and through their collaboration. Especially, when it comes to working on conflict the involvement of a person can be helpful whom the disputants perceive as an outsider.

- **Create long-term political alliances for peace**

Connected to our partners we recognize the potential for a global network for peace, in which we work together in solidarity for our common goal. We would like to offer our network to the partners as a direct line towards Germany and Europe, through which they can address themselves with their own words to allies as well as to the public.

Volunteers and experts are getting active beyond the setting of the service before, during and after their service. They contribute to alliances between the regions. This can happen in various ways: by way of campaigning, demonstrations or talking about personal experiences which makes aware of global injustice and regional grievances. This can also mean a participation in transnational visions of a peaceful community or maintaining friendships across any kind of border.

I. 5 People making Peace

Peace service needs people, their personal commitment and their trusting collaboration as international teams. Peace service is neither easy nor comfortable and there is no simple solution. Non-violence demands creativity, courage and endurance. Again and again peace workers have to opt for non-violence. Thereby, they preserve respect for political opponents or people acting violently whose human dignity is as inviolable as of like-minded people. Human dignity needs respect and protection. Non-violent action implies rather to accept ones own suffering than harming other people. In that we are better trained concerning direct violence than structural violence. Peace service requires sober-minded acting. Naïve daredevilry or heroic acting is just as little valued as recklessness.

Non-violent acting often involves risks. Peace teams make themselves vulnerable, when they side in solidarity with disadvantaged people and face the powerful. Peace service often takes place in contexts of distress, violence and injustice. A non-violent peace service does not make itself dependent on special security or military protection. This makes it vulnerable and, at the same time, a strong counter force against the powerful.

People serving peace may regularly be shattered in body and soul. This also applies to situations in which they are only in indirect contact with victims and perpetrators and their own existence is not threatened. The following are highly relevant factors for the impact of peace service: to be vulnerable and shattered but still keep working in the peace teams and offer your empathy and presence close to those directly involved. For that peace teams need to keep a professional distance as well as use opportunities for retreat and reflection. Thus recovered and strengthened they will face new challenges together again.

II. Internationality

II.1 Being an international organization

Since its foundation EIRENE has been an international organization. Being international means more than just seeking for international collaborations and enabling international peace services. EIRENE's principle of internationality challenges us over and over again to reflect and shape structures, relationships, as well as the distribution of decision-making power to the various locations of our activities.

In the history of EIRENE the organizational structure has changed multiple times. At the beginning, EIRENE was an organization of the North American founding organizations. Europeanization had been an early goal of internationalization. EIRENE were formed in France, Switzerland, the Netherlands and Germany, which in turn became members of the organization EIRENE International.

Due to increased applications for public funding in Germany since 1970 by EIRENE International it became possible to facilitate more peace services. Thereby the importance of the branches, which partly became independent (EIRENE Nederland and EIRENE Suisse) and partly merged into EIRENE International inclined. As a result, Germany became the focus of the organization, from where it engaged in international cooperation. Moreover, EIRENE International opened for individual membership in 2010, so that individuals from all over the world can become members. Even new institutional members joined.

In 2017 EIRENE International has regional coordination offices in Niamey (for the Sahel region), in Bujumbura (for the Great Lakes region), in Managua (for Nicaragua) and in La Paz (for Bolivia). EIRENE is registered as a civil society organization in these regions as well as in Germany. In total, EIRENE International maintains partnerships in 19 countries.

II.2 The international character of Peace Service

For centuries, crossing social and political, ethnic and religious frontiers has inevitably been part of peace service. The efforts involve overcoming exclusion as well as to facilitate encounters and dialogues even after (violent) conflicts.

For those serving peace, crossing borders means to step out of their social, linguistic, cultural and religious environment. International peace volunteers and peace workers face new situations, in which they – ideally – establish new contacts across local lines of conflict, strengthen connecting factors as well as make friends. International peace service is about recognizing common ground aside from expected and actual differences and build bridges between individuals from differing contexts. Fear, exclusion and deterrence should not determine political and individual thinking and acting. It is much more about tearing down walls in people's mindsets as well as in the landscape – with the goal of an international peace including everyone. The international ambition of peace service also means to critically question one's own behavior within its historical, global economic, political, and social context over and over again.

II.3 The distribution is underdeveloped – we want that to change

In the colonial period urban centers of the global North violently gain access to natural resources and human labor of large sections of the world. Since then, financial capital, access to education and healthcare services, political power, the privilege of interpretation as well as resources are geographical extremely unequally distributed.

Within the system of capitalist value adding those global inequalities are regularly generated and strengthened. Privileged players expand their position of power, by for example limiting access to public goods like water, subject possibilities of social and political participation to nationality and allow trade only under unfair terms. Additionally, the present excessive exploitation of natural resources disregards planetary boundaries and mainly benefits the wasteful, consumption-intensive lifestyle of the global North. Weaker individuals, however, are pushed to the margins and often forgotten there.

Still, not only upper and middle class in New York, Tokyo, or Washington are benefiting through this system of global value adding, but also parts of the elites of Managua, Ouagadougou or Kampala. In all regions of the world, people are marginalized, treated unfairly and are structurally disadvantaged and discriminated against – in each specific contexts, at various levels and embedded in particular historical developments. A one-sided comparison of a “rich West” who exploits a “poor South” often falls too short.

Therefore, we want to deal with the specific situations on-site as well as with their complicated embedding in global relations. In this process EIRENE works together with partner organizations in the global North and the global South. Together we support the marginalized directly and contribute to spaces aside from the dominant economic logic. Not in pursuit of a more and more advantageous and privileged life for a few, but in pursuit of a good life for everyone – within our planet’s ecological limits. We are inspired by concepts such as Buen Vivir, Ubuntu, and Shalom, expressing ideas of a peaceful, social, and environmentally sustainable coexistence.

II.4 International co-operations

EIRENE establishes long-term relationships with organizations whose values we share. When EIRENE plan projects and programs, it happens in full recognition of the partner organization’s professional and local expertise. Partners define what threatens peace in their context and decide in which way they want to contribute to promoting peace. If in specific situation such partner organizations do not exist or cannot act, EIRENE itself is the structure offering learning and reflection spaces to committed people where this is needed. EIRENE provides human and financial resources for the cooperation and acquires public funds as well as donations and grants.

Some partner organization ask us to help them build their capacities in financial management with the aim of being able to apply for international funding themselves.

Most of the public funds are from Germany. We welcome that the federal government supports civic peace building. We demand that it increases such funding and furthermore that it pledges itself to peace politics rather than following military politics. Sustainable conflict transformation can only be achieved through diplomatic means and by strengthening local capacities for peace. Military actions often destroy the tediously built up trust and openness to dialogue. Additionally they lead to a stronger hazard to civil peace actors. Therefore, we work hard at formulating government issuance guidelines and advocate the needs of our partner organizations. At the same time, we realize that the one-way street of cash flow complicates an equal cooperation between organizations of the global North and the global South. That puts EIRENE in a powerful position, which we do neither want to take advantage of nor use. The discrepancy that EIRENE mainly finances its non-violent peace services through public donors, who do not prioritize civil, non-violent conflict management, remains unresolved.

II.5 Change and Development

EIRENE wants to drive change processes. We do so by strengthening people and organizations, which ensure a broad participation and are self-determined. On the road towards peace and justice we all have to develop. For EIRENE only a common development of the global North and the global South can overcome injustice and poverty and enable an economy for life. This concept of development is expressed also in the 17 adopted goals for sustainable development of the United Nations. Institutions and systems of the global North are also seen as a field for development. Especially, the topics “Peace and Justice”, “Reduce inequality within and among countries”, and “Global partnership for sustainable development” are areas in which EIRENE acts.

The term “development”, however, is also connected to a colonial tradition: Societies are divided in “developed” and “underdeveloped”. Thereby, from the perspective of societies of the global North the term “developed” is equipped with specific positively understood properties, like progressive, productive, secular, and democratic. Societies in the global South, on the other hand, are seen as backward stages of the “developed” societies of the global North. To this day “development cooperation” is often shaped in line that solutions of the “developed” North are initiated and financed for the problems of the “developing” South. It is assumed that the South only has to go through the same stages, in order to arrive at “western modernity” in the end. In the conventional sense of development the implementation should be moderated and guided by western “experts” from the global North. The EIRENE partner organizations are also shaped by the historical context of their foundation and today’s context in which they thrive.

EIRENE has to examine critically its role in international relations, whether colonial thinking and patterns are reproduced and held high or whether opportunities are used to break with unequal power distributions.

In practice, EIRENE’s work has always moved between the ideal of self-determined development and the export of euro-centered expectations. Hence, the auto promotion processes in Niger had been shaped by a high level of self-determination of the local partners. But there were also EIRENE-projects in which the topic gender in terms of that western development concept should have been embedded. EIRENE wants to overcome these unequal cooperation relations. We explore how power within the structures of development cooperation can be shared. The reflection with our partners takes us forward. Together we think of new content and terms for social change.

II.6 Overcome misuse of power and discrimination

EIRENE as an organization rejects any kind of abuse of power, oppression, and discrimination, be it regarding gender, sexual orientation, disability, ethnic affiliation, religion, or skin color. In the last years, EIRENE has intensively and self-critically been dealing reflecting on racism through a change process.

A big part of the people connected to EIRENE have grown up in Germany, that means in a society with colonial, racist patterns and structures. This becomes obvious when people are being segregated into groups based on their external features and specific properties are attributed to them (civilized vs. barbaric, always late vs. punctual, enlightened vs. superstitious). These patterns and structures are passed on through a common socialization, among others in families, in educational institutions, and through mass media. The so-called majority society defines what is seen as “normal” and what is seen as “different”. As a result, Black people in Germany face racism throughout their entire lives. Moreover,

they do not enjoy the same privileges as white people with a German passport. It is often hard to recognize these privileges as such and to share them.

Another form of discrimination, which EIRENE confronts firmly, is the systematic bias against women. Women are far more often affected by poverty than men, because they do not have the same access to education, land- and ownership rights, credits or equal pay for equal work. Additionally, women are exposed to everyday sexism, domestic and sexual violence – not only in conflict situations – whereby their right to physical and mental integrity is infringed. In some of our projects and programs we directly aim at gender equality. We make aware for the causes and various forms of cultural and institutional discrimination of women; distressed women are empowered.

We are conscious that racism and sexism are only two dimensions of discrimination. Next to them many other dimensions exist, which can determine life opportunities as well as realities in different contexts. Especially, when different forms of discrimination meet, very complex constellations can occur, with which the affected persons have to learn to deal with.

Time and again, special efforts are needed to make collaborations equal and fair. EIRENE claims for itself the ambition to create spaces for people from different backgrounds and with different ideas and views of life to meet, exchange in dialogue, and learn from each other. The internal principles at EIRENE of collaboration and leadership are namely responsibility, participation of all concerned, individual responsibility of the work's good quality, and decision making by consensus. They promote power sharing. We want to use and further develop those principles. We recognize the need to continuously self-critically question all relations that EIRENE fosters and promotes as well as the internal EIRENE-structures for power allocation and to overcome all excluding mechanisms firmly.

III Peace spirituality

III.3 Together, ecumenical, open for dialogue

For EIRENE peace spirituality means the search and the practice of an attitude, which renounces violence. We hope – and reinforce each other in our hope - for peace. We convert our hope into concrete peace work.

To renounce violence is a multi-dimensional task. Violence can be renounced for scientific reasons, as it does not make a positive contribution to peace. Violence can be renounced for political reasons, because it ties up an enormous amount of resources and impedes alternatives. Violence can be renounced emotionally, because it scares and harms. Violence can be renounced for ideological reasons, as it does not conform with human rights, because it breaks the solidarity between all human beings or because it is contradictory to religious values and beliefs.

Over and over again we fail to resist the temptation of a quick solution using violent means. We often fail to recognize our own actions as violent and to reject violence on “our” part.

Non-violent actions and peace service require encounters that inspire us to free us from our own fears and false imaginations. It requires encounters that inspire us to act yet with humility. In order for an encounter to have an inspiring effect openness and respect for the perspectives and doctrines of all parties concerned is needed. We practice to consider all of these as legitimate and to have constructive debates. We want to overcome alienation and distance. This may cause frictions and controversies. Nevertheless, we grow through exchanges if the concerned parties participate on the basis of their beliefs and attitudes. We are confident that people of all beliefs and non-believers at EIRENE can draw strength from encounters. For us the pursuit of peace and a good life for everyone includes the whole world.

Peace spirituality needs and creates community in which hope and know how, doubt and grief are being shared. EIRENE forms a community which creates a safe space full of trust and appreciation where personal growth, learning from others and exchange is made possible. We are taking action, because together we overcome our powerlessness in the face of injustice and violence.

EIRENE sees itself as ecumenical. People of any kind of faiths and ideologies, who want to participate in peace dialogue and peace practice, are welcome. No one at EIRENE has to have a specific religious affiliation or has to confess to any creed. One of EIRENE’s founders, the Mennonite Pastor Peter Dyck, expressed in 1959 that at EIRENE there is no room for nationalism, racism, or religious borders. The commitment for reconciled humankind cannot accept sectarianism nor dogmatism. That’s why collaboration between confessions, religions, and ideologies is important in peace work all over the world and in our own organization.

III.2 Taking part in peace spirituality

At EIRENE we want to respect the various attitudes and beliefs in a way that they find public expression and each will be strengthened in its tradition. Hence, our peace spirituality expresses itself in many different ways. We provide opportunities for meditations at the international office at the beginning of the week, at resting points and meditations during all workshops, at communal meals. The forms are diverse: silence and singing, praying, involved discussions in search of understanding and struggles for a common position on subjects, which stimulate us.

In EIRENE, agape meals are crucial for this kind of encounter. Agape is Greek and means love. During agape celebrations we turn to each other lovingly and share food and concerns. In the New Testament we read, that the first community of Jesus' followers did so too. Content and form of EIRENE's agape celebration do not follow a fixed order, but is created together by the group who is celebrating.

Peace spirituality is often a concrete practice, too, and makes non-violence visible in daily life: joint vegetarian cooking, using products of organic farming and fair trade, power supply from renewable energies, and the procurement of sustainable produced office supplies, are not trivialities for us. They clarify EIRENE's concerns for peace.

The way we work together shall be a practice of non-violent acting as well. We attach importance to participative, transparent decision makings aligned with the consensus at all levels. The General assembly decides the goals and strategies for the work of EIRENE also elects the honorary members of the Board. The board regulates, accompanies, and advises the international office's work. In the office we discuss decisions which are relevant for all staff members like the salary system in a monthly plenary meeting. Since the beginning of 1980s staff members of the international office are receiving a uniform salary independent from their position and qualification. It is oriented towards the German average salary. That is a characteristic element on our joint peace trail.

III.3 Christian Peace Theology

In the New Testament Eirene is the word for peace. From that the International Christian Service for Peace EIRENE takes its name. The Christians at EIRENE who seek for the source of their peace commitment hear God's promises of peace, as they are passed down in the Bible, and practice mercy and the love towards their enemies. In dealing with suffering, violence, and injustice, Christians look at Jesus' life and his suffering. In the encounter with him Christians find inspiration, strength, and healing.

A very famous peace prophecy is what the prophet Micah tells: *And they shall beat their swords into plow-shares, and their spears into pruning hooks; nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war anymore. (Micah 4, 3)* Many conscientious objectors at EIRENE have been strengthened in their decision by this vision. This vision gained political momentum in the peace movement in the former German Democratic Republic.

The prophet Isaiah explains the peace to come as follows: *The wolf shall dwell with the lamb. And the lion shall eat straw like the ox. (Isaiah 11, 6-7)* Christian peace theology explains this image as the overcoming of violence and supremacy by powerful people. Those have to change their behavior totally. Jesus expressed the same thought: *"You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great ones exercise authority over them. It shall not be so among you. But whoever would be great among you must be your servant," (Matthew 20, 25-26)*

The biblical concept of peace is comprehensive. Justice and peace are not being played off against each other but rather *righteousness and peace kiss each other. (Psalm 85, 10)*

The Christian image of humanity namely that all humans are created in the image of God and bear a holy dignity in themselves, leads Christians to behave merciful towards themselves and others. They think it is right to *clothe strangers and homeless people, to take care of needy people, to visit sick people and prisoners (Matthew 25, 36)*. Mercy is not a top-down charity, but based on the understanding that all humans are like me. God demands: *You shall love the stranger as yourself, for you were strangers in the land of Egypt. (Leviticus 19, 34)*.

Jesus says: *Love your enemies (Matthew 5, 44)*. Enemies are those people who threaten your life the most. According to common consensus violent self-defense and violent protection of vulnerable fellow human beings against those people is permitted. However, not for Jesus. When he challenges the people to love their enemies, he reckons with the possibility of a transformation of their relationship. Everyone can become a fellow human being and conflict transformation can become a dialog among them. Jesus does not promise that this will be successful. He himself experienced that the violence of his enemies killed him. However, he adhered to the attitude of loving the enemy and prayed for them who nailed him to the cross: *Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do” (Luke 23, 34)*. Paul demands Christians *not to be overcome evil by evil, but overcome evil with good (Romans 12, 21)*. That lets them believe that there are ways out of the spirals of violence.

We are aware of the fact that not all churches propagate such a peace theology and hardly one of them consequently aligns their teaching and activities with it. In European history church circles often found it difficult to vouch for the equality of all people and to contribute to the liberation of the suppressed. Rather they shun moral and political resistance, and suppressed it in their own ranks. Despite many ecumenical dialogues on world level, up to today churches legitimate violence, declare wars and military interventions as fair, and bless weapons on all sides. Also the historical peace churches did not always hold on to their pacifistic position. EIRENE participates in the peace discourse of individual churches and in the ecumenical dialog about just peace.

III.4 Islam and non-violence

EIRENE has been working in Niger since 1973, a country with a Muslim population of 95 %. Thereby, the network Réseau GENOVICO has been developed, which promotes and propagates civil conflict management. It is in demand for mediation of social conflicts all through the region. The ideological basis of this work is the access to non-violence embedded in Islam. In 2008, a paper on Islam and peace building and non-violent conflict management was written. This happened within the framework of an EIRENE-program and in close collaboration with the Islamic University Say, the Niger Ministry for Religious Matters and teachers of coranic schools. It points out that non-violence is an integral part of the Islam's principles. Sura 42, Verse 34 says: *And not equal are the good deed and the bad. Repel (evil) by that (deed) which is better; and thereupon the one whom between you and him is enmity (will become) as though he was a devoted friend*. In Hadith Sunan Ibn Madscha it is reported that the prophet Mohammed says, that the best Jihad would be a just word, which is directed to a corrupt power.

The paper elaborates: *Non-violence as such is not only the rejection of violence but the fight against violence. That means that its goal is to destroy the cause and effect of injustice and suppression. We can never emphasize enough that non-violence does not mean silence, resignation and let-it-happen, or passivity. Non-violence does not mean to give up resistance, either. Non-violent people are fighters against injustice, against exclusion, against violence. Non-violence is the way to create a better world.*

In 2016 a second reworked version of the paper was published. With its new chapters about Islam and responsible citizenship, as well as Islam and terrorism, it speaks in the current situation which challenges politics and peace in Niger. The paper is not only a product of EIRENE-work, but an important work tool: It is used for peace pedagogics at coranic schools, a project of EIRENE.

III.5 Humanistic and other emancipatory movements

Many of us reach a non-violent attitude and peace service through moral and political believes. There are divers ways to this goal: People can draw strength from the belief in the good in people, the dream

of the utopia of a specific social organizational form or the feeling of duty to contribute to a better world. The reason why people turn to non-violent resistance against injustice may range from personal consternation due to discrimination up to abstract political considerations. Encounters and community are always needed, and a common commitment for the aim of a just world in order not to give up despite disappointment. Role models encourage us.

In past and present times many examples of movements can be found, in which marginalized people stood up in order to fight for their own rights with non-violent means. From the end of 19th century till the beginning of 20th century the suffragettes in Great Britain fought for women's suffrage. A method often used by them was the hunger strike, in order to be recognized as political prisoners in prison. A famous example, which inspired many following non-violent movements, was the anti-colonial resistance in India with its Salt March in 1930, which was meant as protest against too high taxes and eventually led to India's independence. The civil rights movement in the USA from 1954 till 1968 achieved to abolish racial segregation by means of civil disobedience like sit-ins in restaurants for whites and achieved unrestricted right to vote by longstanding non-violent protests.

A current example for a successful non-violent initiative is the movement of the landless people, who want to obtain a land reform in Brazil where the allocation of land is extremely unequal. In order to achieve first redistribution, previously uncultivated land is occupied and landless families are settling there. They receive training in order to cultivate and manage the land collectively. They also work against sexism and racism and for a diversified press, and income convergence.

For many people at EIRENE the concept of equal and inalienable human rights is a sustainable foundation for political action. They are convinced that no matter where and under which conditions we have been born, each individual has the same rights, which have to be fought for. Many EIRENE peace services are about protecting children from violence and strengthening disadvantaged people in such a way that they can defend their rights.

Nowadays critical aspects of enlightenment and human rights are increasingly pointed out: The values of equality, freedom, and brotherhood connected to the French Revolution have not been used comprehensively during the Age of Enlightenment. Neither were the new rights applied to sisters, the working class, Black people, or non-Christian people, nor were their specific life situation considered. Only that person could lead a free and self-determined who could not get pregnant, was not depending on salaried work, nor embedded in a plantation system, and at the same time was seen as a white and Christian person. While the civil rights met growing respect, the European philosophy and politics of the Age of Enlightenment reinforced global hierarchy. The majority of the world population was denied being human. Discourses like that prompt us to self-critically question our view on the world.

III.6 “Be the difference you want to see in the world”

This quote by Mahatma Gandhi summarizes what is a core belief for EIRENE: If we want to change the world, we have to start with ourselves and return to ourselves over and over again. That's why we not only align the work of our programs with our values and principals. We also make efforts to live and to implement these values in our daily working together at the association and the office. We understand that as an important expression of our peace spirituality. Change starts with us.