

Child Incarceration

Resolution submitted to the United Methodist General Conference 2020 by UMKR and partners

Whereas both the Social Principles of The United Methodist Church and the United Methodist Council of Bishops have commended the Universal Declaration of Human Rights as a common standard for all peoples and nations,¹ and

Whereas the Book of Discipline of The United Methodist Church explicitly affirms the rights of children,² and

Whereas The United Methodist Church has specifically affirmed the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child,³ which says “No child shall be subjected to torture or other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment” and that “No child shall be deprived of his or her liberty unlawfully or arbitrarily. The arrest, detention or imprisonment of a child shall be in conformity with the law and shall be used only as a measure of last resort and for the shortest appropriate period of time,”⁴ and

Whereas the Nobel Prize winning non-profit organization Human Rights Watch reports that the United States leads the industrialized world in the number and percentage of children in juvenile detention facilities,⁵ and

Whereas Human Rights Watch also reports that children are routinely imprisoned in the Democratic Republic of Congo, Iraq, Somalia, and Syria for alleged association with armed or extremist groups, that Egypt and Israel try and subsequently imprison children through military rather than civilian courts,⁶ and that the United Methodist Council of Bishops, United Methodist Women and the United Methodist Board of Church and Society have all denounced parent child separations at the US border⁷, and Whereas United Methodist Women has made the issues of incarceration of racial minorities and the well-being of children and young people as two of their priorities for the 2016-2020 quadrennium,⁸

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the 2020 General Conference of The United Methodist Church formally endorses the application of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights as it relates to incarcerated children, and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the 2020 General Conference of The United Methodist Church charges the General Board of Church and Society, in consultation with the General Board of Global Ministries, and United Methodist Women, to formulate a plan that addresses:

- A. how best to educate and inform United Methodists about the issue of child incarceration;
- B. how best to interact with lawmakers and leaders around the world but particularly in the United States about the issue of child incarceration;
- C. possible actions United Methodists can take to avoid contributing to the suffering, abuse and imprisonment of children.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that recommendations produced by the aforementioned consultation be brought to the 2024 General Conference of The United Methodist Church for review and/or action.

FOOTNOTES

1. ¶162A, The Book of Discipline 2016 and <http://www.umc.org/what-we-believe/globalization-and-its-impact-on-human-dignity-and-human-rights>
2. ¶162C, The Book of Discipline 2016
3. ¶162A, The Book of Discipline 2016

4. United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, Articles 37 A, B
<https://www.ohchr.org/en/professionalinterest/pages/crc.aspx>
5. <https://www.hrw.org/world-report/2016/children-behind-bars>
6. <https://www.hrw.org/world-report/2016/children-behind-bars>
7. <https://www.umcjustice.org/news-and-stories/what-you-can-do-right-now-to-end-child-detention-859> and <https://www.unitedmethodistwomen.org/news/statement-on-immigrant-parent-child-separation>
8. <https://www.unitedmethodistwomen.org/general-conference/issuepriorities2016-20.pdf>