



# International Day of the Eradication of Poverty

17 October



Geneva International Centre for Justice

[www.gicj.org](http://www.gicj.org)

***“Wherever men and women are condemned to live in extreme poverty, human rights are violated. To come together to ensure that these rights be respected is our solemn duty”.***

Joseph Wresinski,  
Text Engraved on Original Commemorative Stone in Paris.  
17 October 1987.

## Contents

Historical Landmark.....	1
Poverty and Human Rights .....	2
Global efforts to eradicate poverty. ....	4
Current Plight of the Poor.....	7
An incessant stand for the most disadvantaged.....	8
GICJ's Recommendations. ....	9

## International Day of the Eradication of Poverty

The International Day of the Eradication of Poverty, observed each year on October 17, seeks to raise awareness on the still-existent poverty issue in our global society, pursuing to bolster dialogue between the poor and their communities while commemorating the importance of the values of dignity and solidarity. This year's theme was established by the United Nations as "Answering the Call of October 17 to end poverty: A path toward peaceful and inclusive societies", which aims to respond to the Call to Action made by Father Joseph Wresinski, 30 years ago.

### Historical Landmark

On October 17th of 1987, Catholic priest: Father Joseph Wresinski launched a Call to Action before approximately 100,000 people at the Trocadéro in Paris, the same place where the Universal Declaration of Human Rights was signed in 1948. The call to action got recorded on a Commemorative Stone at the Human Rights and Liberties Plaza to honour the victims of "hunger, ignorance and violence", affirming that human misery is not ineluctable and urging the world to eradicate poverty. Father Joseph Wresinski's call to action recognized the importance of reaching out to the poorest and building an alliance with citizens to put an end to poverty. In 1992, five years after this public call, the United



Fr. Joseph Wresinski was born into poverty. He established many important landmarks throughout his life in the fight against extreme poverty.



Nations officially designated October 17 as the International Day for the Eradication of Poverty<sup>1</sup>, inspired on Father Wresinski's public call to action.

## Poverty and Human Rights



*"Why Nigerians are poor".*

economicplatform.ng

On this International Day of the Eradication of Poverty, Geneva International Centre for Justice – GICJ would like to note that the Charter of the United Nations, which is the most fundamental treaty of the United Nations, supports the realization of fundamental human rights for all, and it expresses its faith in the

dignity and in the equal rights of men and women to promote social and economic progress.

Additionally, the International Bill of Human Rights reaffirms the importance of building a world in which people can enjoy their rights safely and fearlessly, by creating necessary conditions for them to fully enjoy their economic, social and cultural rights, along with their civil and political rights.

GICJ also notes that Article 3 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) asserts that everyone has the right to life, liberty and security. Moreover, the UDHR recognises the right to work in just and favourable conditions. The UDHR also declares the right to protection against unemployment and to the access to social protection. Likewise, the UDHR addresses the universal right to an adequate standard of living including well-being in aspects related to food, clothing, housing and medical care.

---

<sup>1</sup> <http://undocs.org/a/res/47/196>

Furthermore, GICJ notes that both the UDHR, and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights-(ICESCR) proclaim the right of everyone to gain their living by working; the right to an adequate standard of living; and the right to education.



An Iraqi girl searches through garbage for recyclable items on June 10, 2014, at a waste dump on the outskirts of the shrine city of Najaf, in central Iraq.

(HAIDAR HAMDANI/AFP/Getty Images)

However, from families to communities, from cities to entire nations, poverty remains flaming in all societies, hampering the enjoyment of the most fundamental rights for people, including food-security, and the right to health and well-being. Due to extreme levels of poverty, children are subjected to lose their right to education because they lack the financial means to go to school and therefore have to assume the role, at a very young age, of being their families' financial supporters, which goes in contravention to other children's human rights treaties and declarations, including the prohibition of child labour.



Child Labour in India

[yourstory.com](http://yourstory.com)

Geneva International Centre for Justice maintains that extreme poverty is not only “a lack of income”, it also represents the main cause for hunger, malnutrition, and for a limited access to education in entire societies. GICJ notes that poverty is also the cause of social discrimination, exclusion and a lack of participation in decision-making processes. Additionally, people living in poverty are more vulnerable because they often lack access to health care and feel forced to accept unsafe housing and working conditions, accept unequal access to justice within their communities, and the fact that they lack political voice and power.

GICJ also highlights that people living in poverty are often ignored by policy makers, so their needs are usually overlooked in policy debates. On the other hand, despite international treaties, agendas, declarations and commitments, most of developing and low-income countries have failed to provide policies designed to protect families in situations of unemployment or disability due mainly to the generalized lack of state-income and the still scarce international cooperation earmarked for what it was originally set up as a big priority for the international community.

## **Global efforts to eradicate poverty.**

Most states have signed a significant number of human rights and sustainable development treaties and conventions to address the problem of global poverty and inequity as the biggest priority for sustainability. These international instruments obligate governments to ensure that everyone within their jurisdiction can enjoy the fulfilment of their fundamental human rights. However, the level of commitment, their practical implementation, and the prioritization of the issue varies significantly from one region to another. GICJ presents hereby a compilation of the most important international commitments made by states on the still latent issue of poverty:

- In 1992, Agenda 21 for Sustainable Development recognized poverty as a multidimensional problem. Chapter 3 of Agenda 21 sets combating poverty as a relevant objective by seeking international effort.
- In 1995, The Copenhagen Declaration on Social Development<sup>2</sup>, the outcome document of the World Summit for Social Development, has set its second commitment to address the causes and consequences of poverty,

---

<sup>2</sup> A/CONF.166/9 Available at: <http://www.un-documents.net/cope-dec.htm>

unemployment and social exclusion. In this Summit, heads of States convened to address social development issues and they committed to eradicate extreme poverty and to halve, by 2015, the proportion of the world's people whose income was less than one dollar a day.

- In 1997, the UN General Assembly's Programme for the Further Implementation of Agenda 21, asserted that poverty eradication should be considered a fundamental goal of the international community.
- The first Decade for the Eradication of Poverty was marked from 1997 until 2006. In this period, several United Nations summits and conferences were held, resulting in negotiated outcomes that focused on national, regional and international efforts on poverty eradication.
- In 2002 at the World Summit on Sustainable Development, the Johannesburg Declaration and Plan of Implementation was adopted, stressing that eradicating poverty is the biggest global challenge facing the world.
- After the 2002 World Summit on Sustainable Development, the Commission on Sustainable Development (CSD) adopted the multi-year programme of work putting "poverty eradication" as a "cross cutting issue" to be present in all its working cycles.
- In December 2007, the General Assembly proclaimed the Second United Nations Decade for the Eradication of Poverty<sup>3</sup>, from 2008 to 2017, and it reiterated that eradicating poverty was the greatest global challenge facing the world, especially for developing countries.<sup>4</sup>
- In 2012, The Human Rights Council adopted the Guiding Principles on Extreme Poverty and Human Rights,<sup>5</sup> by consensus. It was the first global policy focused specifically on the human rights of people living in poverty. The development of the Guiding Principles was initiated by the former Commission on Human Rights in 2001. The final draft was prepared by the United Nations Special Rapporteur on extreme poverty and human rights, and presented to the Human Rights Council's 21st session<sup>6</sup>.

---

<sup>3</sup> A/RES/62/205 available at: <https://documents-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/N07/476/07/PDF/N0747607.pdf?OpenElement>

<sup>4</sup> Resolution 62/205 of 19 December 2007 available at <https://www.un.org/development/desa/socialperspectiveondevelopment/united-nations-decade-for-the-eradication-of-poverty/second-united-nations-decade-for-the-eradication-of-poverty.html>

<sup>5</sup> resolution 21/11, in September 2012

<sup>6</sup> (A/HRC/21/39).



- In 2012, "The Future We Want" document was established at Rio+20 in which Member States recognized that poverty eradication together with the promotion of sustainable patterns are the essential goals for achieving sustainable development, addressing the root causes and challenges of poverty.
- Last but certainly not least, the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, adopted by the United Nations General Assembly on September 25th-2015, is designed to protect People, bolster Prosperity, protect the Planet, achieve Peace and foster Partnerships. Referring to People, the 2030 Agenda shows determination to end hunger and poverty in all its forms, ensuring that all humans can fulfil their potential in dignity and equality<sup>7</sup>.

The UN 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development sets poverty eradication as a cross cutting issue and an overarching goal. As one of the most urgent issues that need to be addressed, the 2030 Agenda has set “ending poverty” as the first Sustainable Development Goal, or Goal 1, aiming to put an end to poverty everywhere, currently measured as people living on less than \$1.25 a day.<sup>8</sup>



The main targets of Goal 1 in the 2030 Agenda seek to halve the amount of people living in poverty; ensure that all people have equal rights to economic resources, and access to basic services, ownership and control over properties; reduce the vulnerability of the poor to climate-related extreme events and other economic, social and environmental disasters; and achieve significant protection of the poor by 2030.

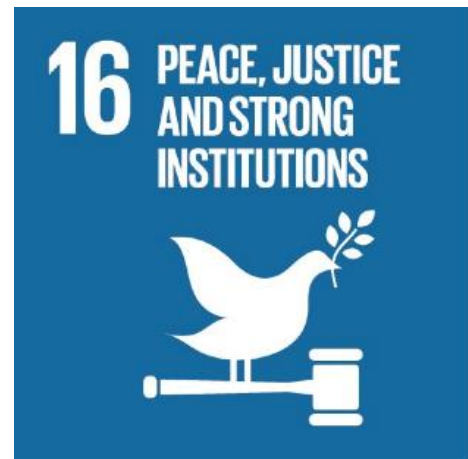
---

<sup>7</sup> A/RES/70/1

<sup>8</sup> The World Bank first introduced a global poverty line in 1990, setting it at \$1 a day. It was adjusted last in 2008, when the group raised it to \$1.25 a day. Extreme poverty has long been defined as living on or below \$1.25 a day, but the World Bank's adjustment now set the poverty at \$1.90 a day.

The achievement of a world that is free from poverty, provides the path towards peaceful and inclusive societies, as envisioned in Goal 16 of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

Goal 16 underlines an important element of the above-mentioned Call to Action made by Father Joseph Wrisinski, because it encourages people living in poverty to break the silence, also encouraging to act in solidarity with them and join the fight against poverty.



## Current Plight of the Poor



naij-ask.gencdn.com: *"Causes of poverty in Nigeria"*

GICJ laments the unfortunate fact that extreme poverty persists today, regardless of the economic, social and cultural situation of states. According to the United Nations SDGs' figures, 836 million people still live in extreme poverty, the vast majority belonging to

Southern Asia and sub-Saharan Africa. The consequences of extreme poverty are particularly severe in developing countries as one out of five people live with less than \$1.25 a day in those countries.

GICJ notes that, although the Universal Declaration of Human Rights was signed by all UN Member States, today, the respect for human rights still represents an empty commitment for people living in extreme poverty.

Moreover, there exist some vulnerable population groups across the world that are more likely to fall into extreme poverty due to deep-rooted stigmatization and discrimination. This category of groups include women, ethnics, minorities, irregular migrants, refugees and asylum seekers, indigenous populations, people with disabilities, and persons living with HIV/AIDS.

On the other hand, high levels of poverty are often associated with conflict-affected countries. Based on recent data on the Global Finance Magazine's compilation of the World Bank sources<sup>9</sup>, it can be evident that the most fragile economies have recently been through a civil war or are still suffering from ongoing conflicts: ranking the Central African Republic, Congo, Burundi and Liberia as the poorest countries in the world.



Poverty in Africa

[www.pinterest.co.uk](http://www.pinterest.co.uk)

## **An incessant stand for the most disadvantaged.**

Geneva International Centre for Justice has persistently expressed its dismay for people living in poverty to the main international human rights bodies such as the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights and to the UN Human Rights Council (UNHRC).

At the 36th session of the UNHRC, in the Interactive Dialogue on People of African Descent, GICJ has addressed that the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action is vital for the full enjoyment of human rights and the right to development, and that historic injustices have contributed to various forms of poverty for people of African Descent. GICJ has asked the Council to acknowledge this negative impact and it has recommended that policies and best

---

<sup>9</sup> <https://www.gfmag.com/global-data/economic-data/the-poorest-countries-in-the-world?page=12>

practices, as underlined in the DDPA, must be addressed and full engagement with local communities must be pursued.

Moreover, GICJ has constantly called the attention, in the forms of press releases, about the lamentable and persistent existence of extreme poverty in the world, its consequences and its many relations to human rights. GICJ has noted that armed conflict, poverty levels, and labour shortages are the main cause for millions of people migrating to foreign lands. Furthermore, it has addressed that enhancing literacy skills has multiplier effects on empowerment, promotion of human rights, poverty eradication, and in building more inclusive and sustainable societies. Moreover, GICJ has stated that young people who lack access to education get trapped in a cycle of poverty, unemployment and low-paid jobs. Likewise, GICJ has constantly pointed out through its press releases and urgent appeals, about the dire plight of civilians living in poverty who are remain trapped in armed conflict in Syria, Iraq, Yemen and Palestine.

## **GICJ's Recommendations.**

On this International Day of the Eradication of Poverty, GICJ desires to show its solidarity with people living in poverty by urging the international community to intensify international cooperation for poverty eradication.

In its ceaseless search for the universal enjoyment of human rights, GICJ acknowledges, endorses and supports all international efforts aimed at eradicating poverty in all corners of the world. For its part, GICJ would like to call on the International Community and all relevant UN bodies to provide more assistance to low income countries on policy-making capacities and shares of Official Development Assistance earmarked to poverty eradication and to the protection of human rights of the poor, implementing strategies to provide universal access to basic social services and social protection systems to support those who cannot support themselves.

GICJ states that building a sustainable future requires all stakeholders to intensify efforts towards ensuring the full participation of people living in poverty, particularly in the decisions that affect their lives and communities.



Furthermore, Geneva International Centre for Justice maintains that global economic growth must be inclusive to provide sustainable and stable employment to all people. Additionally, GICJ stresses the importance of acknowledging the struggle of people living in poverty and continue implementing cooperation strategies to honour human dignity and eliminate discrimination, deprivations, social injustice, stigmatization, humiliation and social exclusion.

Additionally, GICJ recommends that public policies reaching the poorest members of society should be given number one priority, recognizing that extreme poverty is a form of violence and therefore creating the fighting path for reaching global peace by protecting the dignity and fundamental human rights of all citizens of the world.



# Geneva International Centre *for* Justice

*Independent, non-profit, non-governmental organization*

GICJ is an independent, non-profit, non-governmental organization dedicated to the promotion and reinforcement of commitments to the principles and norms of human rights. GICJ is based in Geneva, Switzerland and is governed by the Swiss Civil Code and its statutes. Basing its work on the rules and principles of International Law, International Humanitarian Law and International Human Rights Law, GICJ observes and documents human rights violations and seeks justice for their victims through all legal means available.



## Mission

GICJ's mission is to improve lives by tackling violations and all forms of violence and degrading or inhumane treatment through the strengthening of respect for human rights; reinforcing the independence of lawyers and judiciaries; consolidating the principles of equity and non-discrimination; ensuring rule of law is upheld; promoting a culture of awareness on human rights; and combating impunity.

## Work

GICJ has been tackling issues of justice and accountability since it was established. GICJ maintains a partnership with various NGOs, lawyers and a vast civil society network around the world. Through these channels, GICJ is able to receive documentation and evidences of human rights violations and abuses as they occur in several countries. GICJ continues to bring this information to the attention of relevant UN bodies and Special Procedures in order to gain justice for all victims. In particular, GICJ engages extensively with UN human rights mechanisms through active participation in Human Rights Council (HRC) sessions and through the submission of reports, statements and urgent appeals.





## Human Rights Training Courses

To contribute to the promotion of human rights, GICJ offers Training Courses. These include theoretical and practical components, including extensive information on human rights; the UN, its bodies and mechanisms; international law instruments; and the rules and mechanisms for civil society participation. The practical component includes participating in HRC sessions and possibly side-events. Successful participants will receive a Certificate of Completion from GICJ.



## Internship

Through its internship programme, GICJ provides interns with opportunities to deepen their knowledge and acquire professional experience in the field of International Law (IL), International Human Rights Law (IHRL), and International Humanitarian Law (IHL) as well as multilateral diplomacy. Interns obtain a unique understanding of the workings of both international organizations and non-governmental organizations. Tasks and responsibilities of GICJ interns include participation in UN human rights meetings and activities, especially the HRC; research and analytical work on human rights violations and applicable international law; and the writing of reports, letters, statements, and urgent appeals to UN mechanisms.





## Geneva International Centre *for* Justice (GICJ)

### Postal address:

P.O. Box: GICJ 598 CH-1214  
Vernier, Geneva – Switzerland.



+41 22 788 19 71



info@gicj.org



+41 79 536 58 66



facebook.com/GIC4J

### Office address:

150 Route de Ferney, CH 1211  
Geneva 2 - Switzerland



@Geneva4Justice



geneva4justice

[www.gicj.org](http://www.gicj.org)