



VIOLENCE IN OUR WORLD

Issue Paper

BACKGROUND

The ELCA's social teaching around citizenship gives all citizens the responsibility to "...defend human rights and to work for freedom, justice, peace, environmental well-being, and good order in public life."ⁱ As part of that understanding, this church has consistently supported efforts, whether community, national, or global, to protect human rights and recognize the inherent dignity of each person.

Christians are called both to proclaim the Gospel of God's final peace, and to work for earthly peace, understanding earthly peace as "relations among and within nations that are just, harmonious, and free from war."ⁱⁱ Earthly peace is fleeting, and can be disrupted in many ways. Violence is rightly understood as physical confrontation but can also be understood more broadly. For instance, ELCA social teaching on gender-based violence has described violence as harm directed at a person or group in order to maintain power and control. It can be inflicted in many forms: social, physical, and emotional, and thus we may recognize that violence is more than armed conflict between two nation states. Violence pervades all aspects of life in our world. Intersecting identities such as ethnicity, immigration status, sexuality, economic means, age, and level of education all render people more or less vulnerable to personal and systemic violence.

This issue paper addresses issues related to armed conflict, such as antipersonnel landmines and other weapons with indiscriminate effects, as well as nuclear, biological, and chemical weapons. The ELCA's peace statement calls the people of this church as peacemakers to advocate for "...an earthly peace that provides security from violence and aggression, seeks just order in place of tyranny or anarchy, checks unrestrained power, and defends and enhances the life of people who are poor and powerless."ⁱⁱⁱ In keeping with a broadened understanding of violence, this paper also addresses community violence, sexual exploitation, gun safety, and workplace violence and harassment.

Corporate Social Responsibility in the ELCA uses the tools of screening of investments, shareholder advocacy and community investing to work with corporations, calling them to ensure that people are treated fairly and with dignity and to create sustainable communities.

More at [ELCA.org/CSR](https://www.elca.org/CSR).

i *Church in Society: A Lutheran Perspective* (ELCA social statement, 1991), pg. 5

ii *For Peace in God's World* (ELCA social statement, 1995), pg. 1

iii *For Peace in God's World* (ELCA social statement, 1995), pg. 7

ELCA SOCIAL POLICY

Historically the Lutheran church—the ELCA and its predecessor church bodies—has been committed to the support of human rights and the struggle against injustice. In terms of global issues of human rights, the ELCA social statement [For Peace in God's World](#) and the ELCA social message “[Human Rights](#),” call for respect and dignity for each person. The church is meant to be a disturbing, reconciling, and deliberating presence in word and deed in order to create an environment conducive to peace. The statement on peace develops the global perspective for individuals and our church body to join with others in searching for what makes for peace.

In terms of domestic issues of violence, the ELCA Church Council has also adopted messages that pertain to particular expressions of violence. The 1994 message on “[Community Violence](#)” deals with such issues as proliferation of guns and the culture of violence. Depictions of violence in the media and mediation toward just and peaceful solutions to conflict are also addressed. In the 2001 message on “[Commercial Sexual Exploitation](#),” pornography and sex trafficking are examined, calling the church to look at corporations whose earnings come from making, selling, promoting, or profiting from the pornography industry. The 2009 social statement [Human Sexuality: Gift and Trust](#) characterizes the misuse and abuse of sexuality for profit as always wrong. The 2015 social message “[Gender-Based Violence](#)” understands violence as an exercise of power and form of control. Gender-based violence is perpetrated through means such as media portrayals of women as objects, sexual exploitation, economic subjugation, and legal bias, and across intersecting identities such as race, sexual orientation, and age. ELCA Churchwide Assembly actions have included other issues relating to violence.

CORPORATE RESPONSE

These issues address the variety of aspects of violence in all its forms: physical, sexual, psychological, economic, and social, both internationally and domestically. In order to counter the culture of violence that pervades the national culture and media in this country, all of our society—including the corporate world—must find creative ways to work toward peace and nonviolence. Sometimes it is simple, such as a corporation having a policy not to display guns and ammunition in family friendly areas. Other times, especially when human rights, national security and weapons are involved, it is more complex. The call to corporations is to recognize their role in the problem and to work to become part of the solution.

SOCIAL CRITERIA INVESTMENT SCREENS

The social criteria investment screen on [military weapons](#), revised and approved by the Church Council in 2014, responds to this issue. The social criteria investment [screen on gambling](#), revised and approved by Church Council in 2016, responds to this issue. The social criteria investment [screen on pornography](#), revised and approved by Church Council in 2013, responds to this issue. The social criteria investment [screen on political and civil human rights](#), approved by the Church Council in 2018, responds to this issue. The guidelines here gather together each

RECOMMENDED by Advisory Committee on Corporate Social Responsibility, January. 22, 2004

ENDORSED by Division for Church in Society Board, February 27, 2004

APPROVED by Church Council, April 16-18, 2004

UPDATED by Advisory Committee for Corporate Social Responsibility, January 11, 2008

APPROVED by Church Council, April 2008 [CC08.04.XXa]

APPROVED by Church Council, November 11, 2012 [CC12.11.44w]

UPDATED by the Corporate Social Responsibility Review Team October 4, 2019.

APPROVED by Church Council, November 10, 2019 [CC19.11.47i].

of these for this issue paper.

RESOLUTION GUIDELINES FOR ELCA

1. We support requests to establish policies renouncing involvement in the production, sale, and use of antipersonnel landmines, cluster bombs, autonomous weapons systems, and other weapons with indiscriminate effects.
2. We support requests to establish policies renouncing involvement in the production, sale, and use of biological and chemical weapons.
3. We support reports describing involvement in the use of depleted uranium.
4. We support requests for reports describing involvement in the production of nuclear weapons.
5. We support reports concerning involvement in space-based weapons.
6. We support requests to establish policies to make arms sales open to public scrutiny and reduce the arms trade including reports on foreign sales of weapons- related products and services.
7. We support requests for formal written workplace anti-violence policies.
8. We support requests for reports on policies and procedures aimed at stemming gun violence, increasing gun safety, and mitigating harm associated with gun products.
9. We support requests to report involvement in the pornography industry and policies to reduce involvement.
10. We support requests to disclose policies aimed at stemming the production and sale of violent video media, including video games.
11. We support policies (including reports on such policies) aimed to eliminate exploitation, whether through slavery, human trafficking, or sexual exploitation, especially of minors.
12. We support reports on policies to address the negative effects of gambling and programs to assist individuals who have a gambling addiction.
13. We support reports that address the possible negative effects of any policies that may preclude due process on harassment and discrimination.
14. We support assessments of risk in conflict-affected areas.

RESOLUTION GUIDELINES FOR ELCA - GENERAL

We support practices of good governance, specifically:

- A company having an independent board chair or independent lead director;
- Reports on policies and procedures for political contributions and expenditures (both direct and indirect) made with corporate funds;

- Reports on any portion of any dues or similar payments made to any tax exempt organization that is used for an expenditure or contribution which might be deemed political;
- Guidelines or policies governing the company's political contributions and expenditures; and
- Reports on diversity for corporate boards and upper-level management.

RESOLUTIONS ON RELATED TOPICS FROM OTHER ISSUE PAPERS

Codes of Conduct: child labor, human trafficking and forced labor, including prison, bonded, or indentured labor.

Domestic: Access to Health Care; gambling

Extractive Industries: rights of indigenous peoples

Human Rights: areas experiencing conflict or occupation, consent of indigenous people, sexual exploitation of minors, modern day slavery, governments complicit in genocide, detention of asylum seekers