

Statement on restorative justice

by the Friends World Committee for Consultation to
the UN Congress on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice
Kyoto March 2021

The Quakers (Friends World Committee for Consultation) strongly support the UN's Sustainable Development Goals, but there is a lot of hard work to be done. Quakers are dedicated to these aims out of a deep concern that our criminal justice systems promote respect for the humanity of everyone involved in crime and conflict – people who have offended, victims, or both, and those indirectly affected, especially children whose parents are in conflict with the law.

There are direct links between inequality and the harm caused by crime. Crime prevention will be most effective where inequalities are recognised as a major root cause of crime, as acknowledged by SDG 10.

Quakers have long advocated restorative justice. Restorative justice contributes to peace, justice and strong institutions (SDG16) by helping to build and maintain peace in situations of conflict. Restorative justice empowers participants, reducing inequalities and increasing trust in justice.

We encourage governments across the world to ensure that their restorative processes genuinely help victims to recover, offenders to be reintegrated, and to prevent crime and recidivism.

We advocate a broad application of restorative justice. We envision the concept of a restorative city, where restorative values are embedded in government policies; relationships are based on respect; those who have caused harm are encouraged to take responsibility for making amends; and dialogue promotes the constructive resolution of conflicts.

Properly implemented, restorative justice will contribute to the SDG aims of wellbeing, improve the quality of education, reduce inequalities, help to build sustainable communities, and promote peaceful and inclusive justice for all.

We have been saddened by the impact of Covid-19 in prisons, which has caused both the loss of life and increased harm to the mental health and wellbeing of prison staff and prisoners and their families. Quarantine measures in prison which replicate solitary confinement, not only inflict harm to mental health and wellbeing, they bring states into conflict with the absolute prohibition of all forms of torture or other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment. Governments need to be better prepared for future pandemics. We ask States to be mindful of the dangers of eroding human rights in responding to the pandemic.

Quakers welcome the statement of principle that people in prison remain members of their communities. When people in prison are treated fairly and with respect, they respond in ways likely to reduce the risk of reoffending. States must minimise the harm done to children by criminal justice processes and uphold the rights of children whose parents are in conflict with the law.

Thank you.