

History

Fellowship of Reconciliation (FOR)

International Fellowship of Reconciliation (IFOR)

Internationaler Versoehnungsbund (IVB)

HISTORY

Created shortly after the outbreak of World War I, The International FOR (IFOR) is an international organization that actively seeks to use positive, nonviolent means to transform unjust social, political, and economic structures throughout the world. The membership of FOR includes Christians, Jews, Muslims, Buddhists, Hindus and people of other faith traditions, as well as those with no formal religious beliefs. The U.S. chapter of FOR was established in Garden City, New York, on November 11, 1915. FOR USA is the largest oldest, interfaith peace organization in the USA. In 1919, representatives from a dozen countries met in Holland to officially establish the International FOR (IFOR).

The U.S. chapter of FOR worked during WW I to support conscientious objectors. After the war, the organization expanded its mission to work for labor rights and an end to racism. FOR members helped create other organizations dedicated to anti-racism and worker's rights. FOR founding members Norman Thomas and Jane Adams (Nobel Prize 1931) helped organize the National Civil Liberties Bureau, now known as the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU). Another FOR founding member, Rufus Jones, traveled to India during the 1920's and met with Mahatma Gandhi. FOR also founded the Congress of Racial Equality (CORE) in 1942, which consisted of an interracial group of students, mostly from the University of Chicago. Utilizing Gandhian non-violence strategies, CORE members pioneered the use of nonviolent direct action in America's civil rights struggle and provided much-needed advice and support to Martin Luther King Jr. Martin Luther King's relationship with the Fellowship of Reconciliation (FOR) began during the Montgomery bus boycott, when Dr. King invited FOR and C.O.R.E. field secretary Bayard Rustin (who organized the first Freedom rides and the March on Washington) and FOR national field secretary Glenn E. Smiley to Montgomery, Alabama, to train him and others in Gandhian active non-violent techniques. Dr. King remained a member of the National Council of the Fellowship of Reconciliation (FOR) until his death in 1968.

FOR Austria, the Vienna, Austria branch of IFOR, referred to as Internationaler Versoehnungsbund in German-language countries, was founded in 1920. At its beginning, FOR Austria was a very small group within the Catholic peace movement in Austria, which organized lectures, held conferences, created a library, and published books and articles on nonviolence and peace-related issues. Kaspar Mayr, the father of the current honorary IFOR president, Hildegard Goss-Mayr, was central to the spread of active nonviolence in Austria. Hildegard and her late husband, Jean Goss from Paris, France, were nominated three times for the Nobel Peace Prize and were central to the spread of active nonviolence in Eastern and Central Europe and Latin America. Out of their labors with Nobel Prize winner Adolfo Perez Esquivel arose Servicio Paz y Justicia (SERPAJ), a Latin American affiliate organization of IFOR. During the 1980's Hildegard, Jean, and Richard Deats of FOR USA contributed significantly to the nonviolent "people-power" overthrow of the Marcos dictatorship in the Philippines.

IFOR has had a number of extraordinary successes over the years. Members have rescued civilians from war-torn areas during both World War I and II, protested racial segregation in the United States and South Africa, promoted the peaceful resolution of both the Korean War and the Vietnam War, stood up for just labor rights in Poland, and organized resistance to end military dictatorships in the Philippines and Chile.

WHO WE ARE

IFOR's dynamic international team is comprised of people of diverse backgrounds who are united in their commitment to active nonviolence and enacting social change. As of 2008, IFOR's international representation has branches, groups, and affiliates in more than 45 countries all over the world. We maintain permanent representatives at the United Nations (UN) in New York, Vienna, and Geneva, and are affiliated with the UN's UNESCO and ECOSOC organizations.

Among IFOR's former and present members are six Nobel Peace Prize recipients, Jane Addams (1931), Emily Green Balch (1946), Chief Albert Luthuli (1960), Dr. Martin Luther King (1964), Mairead Corrigan-Maguire (1976), and Adolfo Perez Esquivel (1980) and others such as Buddhist Monk and Zen Master Thich Nhat Hanh, (the Ex-president of the International Fellowship of Reconciliation (IFOR), author of many books and nominee for the Nobel Peace Prize in 1968 by Martin Luther King Jr.)

WHAT WE DO

All of our activities revolve around our central belief in the peaceful resolution of conflicts and our dedication to eliminating fear and hatred and the structures from which they result. Our efforts include, but are not limited to: working for disarmament, creating awareness through public education campaigns, training programs, and fostering interfaith alliances. We also conduct global education school projects seeking to empower and creatively inspire youth by giving young people the skills they need to become active citizens and young peacemakers.

WHY OUR WORK MATTERS

Today, nearly a century after IFOR was created, the need for international cooperation and reconciliation is as important, as ever. Armed conflicts and wars, civil unrest, climate injustice, unfair trade practices, and the continued existence of intolerance, discrimination, and racism threaten the human rights to which we are all entitled. In Austria, the recent expansion of the European Union, the opening of borders, and increased immigration have created the need for increased intercultural understanding and unity.

Inspired by the considerable progress that has already been made, we can and must do more and with your support we can continue to build “Cultures Of Peace” throughout the world.

For more information on IFOR's educational programs and offerings and more detailed historical information, please visit our website at [www.ifor.at /English](http://www.ifor.at/English).

"The Fellowship Of Reconciliation has been in the forefront of the nonviolent struggle for peace with justice. What is important about the FOR is what it stands for. And that is a courageous dedication to the liberation of humanity from the triple evils of poverty, racism and violence."

--Coretta Scott King, Martin Luther King Jr. Center for Nonviolent Social Change

"Your goal is, in my opinion, the only reasonable one and to make it prevail is of vital importance."

--Albert Einstein, in a letter to the Fellowship Of Reconciliation

"I joined the Fellowship Of Reconciliation because of the people who represented the Fellowship. They were really for nonviolent action and were penetrated deeply with the sense of humanism with which Buddhists are familiar. What makes the FOR meaningful to me is the presence of open-minded, deeply humanistic and creative people."

--Thich Nhat Hanh, Vietnamese Buddhist monk, author, poet