

## Religious leaders call on G7 for vaccine equity

Faith leaders remind wealthy nations of “moral obligation” to end vaccine nationalism



*The World Health Organization’s international certificate of vaccination. Photo: Markus Winkler/Unsplash*

### **The Lutheran World Federation, Geneva, Switzerland, 28 April 2021**

The Lutheran World Federation (LWF) General Secretary Rev. Dr Martin Junge has joined almost one hundred and fifty faith leaders from around the globe in calling on the world’s richest nations to ensure more equitable access to life-saving COVID-19 vaccines. Failure to do so, the religious leaders say, would undermine the dignity “not only of those left behind, but also of those who have left them behind.”

The urgent appeal comes in a letter to heads of the G7 nations, who are due to meet in the UK in June, urging them “to reject vaccine nationalism and embrace a commitment to global vaccine equity.” The letter notes that the unprecedented COVID-19 crisis “has reminded us all of our interdependence and of our responsibilities to care for one another.”

The religious leaders insist that “if one part of the world is left to suffer the pandemic, all parts of the world will be put at ever-increasing risk.” Access to COVID-19 vaccines “cannot be dependent on people’s wealth, status or nationality,” they say. The letter continues: “We cannot abdicate our responsibilities to our sisters and brothers by imagining that the market can be left to resolve the crisis or pretend to ourselves that we have no obligation to others in our shared humanity. Every person is precious. We have a moral obligation to reach everyone, in every country.”

The appeal from Christian, Muslim, Jewish, Buddhist and other faith leaders comes as the number of COVID-19 cases in India continues to rise. The official death toll from a second wave of the pandemic has already surpassed 200,000 and the country’s health system has been pushed to the brink of collapse. Though India is one of the vaccine producing countries, less than 10 percent of the population has received a first dose.

The letter to leaders of the G7 countries notes that at the current pace of vaccine production and distribution, “people in much of the world may not be vaccinated until at least 2024.” It adds that the consequences for the poorest individuals, families and communities “will be devastating.” The only way to successfully end the pandemic, it says, is to ensure that vaccines are made available to all people as “a global common good.”

The letter follows on from many individual efforts of religious leaders appealing for a more equitable distribution of the COVID-19 vaccines. The latest initiative is being led by the People’s Vaccine Alliance, a growing network of health and humanitarian organizations

supported by politicians, economists and faith leaders. The group is calling for an end to monopolies on vaccine research and development, alongside free and fair distribution in all parts of the globe. It insists that allocation between and within countries should be based on need and not on ability to pay.