

Lifespark's Mission Statement

Approved in April 2016

Lifespark's mission statement explains our main idea and core values, who we are and why we do what we do. It shall give orientation, guide our internal actions and decisions and enhance our profile to the outside world.

Who we are...

Lifespark is a non-profit organization, founded in 1993, with no religious or political affiliation. We are based in Switzerland, have members worldwide and pursue the vision of a world with human dignity being the fundamental and unconditional basis of societal systems.

As organization, we want to take a stand against the death penalty which we consider a cruel form of punishment violating human rights, mainly by arranging penpalships with death row prisoners in the USA. Within the framework of democratic structures, our organizational work is done on a voluntary basis and financed by membership dues and donations. The organizational language is English; offers in other languages are based on members' initiatives. All members are welcome to contribute their individual skills and interests in various tasks and projects.

... and why we do...

Humanity, equality, openness, respect as well as trustful dialogue and transparency are the values which define our attitude towards prisoners, members and our internal and external communication.

In our stand against the death penalty and our attempt to contribute to its worldwide abolishment, we are guided by

- the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948, not legally binding),
- the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (1976, legally binding)
- the EU-Protocol No. 13 to the Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms, concerning the abolition of the death penalty in all circumstances (2002, legally binding).

Universal Declaration of Human Rights

Article 3: *Everyone has the right to life, liberty and security of person.*

Article 5: *No one shall be subjected to torture or to cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment.*

International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights

Article 6: *Every human being has the inherent right to life. This right shall be protected by law. No one shall be arbitrarily deprived of his life. In countries which have not abolished the death penalty, sentence of death may be imposed only for the most serious crimes (...). This penalty can only be carried out pursuant to a final judgement rendered by a competent court. (...) Anyone sentenced to death shall have the right to seek pardon or commutation of the sentence. Amnesty, pardon or commutation of the sentence of death may be granted in all cases.*

Article 7: *No one shall be subjected to torture or to cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment.*

In particular, no one shall be subjected without his free consent to medical or scientific experimentation.

EU-Protocol No. 13 to the Convention for the Protection of Human Rights

Article 1: *The death penalty shall be abolished. No one shall be condemned to such penalty or executed.*

Death row inmates in the USA are a marginalized group, mostly living under circumstances beneath human dignity. We want to offer them companionship as well as means for exchange with the outside world, and contribute to an understanding and dialogue between prisoners and “free” people without classifying or advantaging particular individuals. This does not mean that we accept the crimes, nor do we expect our members to support inmates in addition to the correspondence – it is rather our emphasis to respect and appreciate prisoners in the first place as human beings.

Our efforts are focused on the USA for practical reasons; contacts are easier due to the English language and the transparent judicial proceedings.

... what we do.

Setting up and supporting penpalships

Our main efforts encompass correspondences between our members and death row prisoners in the USA. We provide addresses of prisoners on a first come-first served basis; the course of each pen palship is in the responsibility of the people holding it. For our members, we offer personal help and support, thorough information and means for exchange about their experiences. So we are always looking for people who have a sincere encounter with prisoners on their heart.

Being part of the movement against the death penalty

As a member and supporter of several organizations that fight the death penalty, such as the World Coalition against the Death Penalty, we want to raise public awareness and provide general information about the death penalty. We also financially support other related organizations. We may forward petitions and campaigns related to executions, but it is not our expertise to create our own petitions or support campaigns (i.e. websites or quests for financial or legal support) for the benefit of individual inmates.