

**APPEAL TO THE PARLIAMENTS OF HIGH-INCOME COUNTRIES:
INTRODUCE BY LAW A LEGAL DUTY TO HELP PEOPLE AROUND THE WORLD AT REAL RISK OF
AVOIDABLE DEATH**

With this appeal we aim to have high-income democratic states recognize their own legal duty to help the marginalized and voiceless around the world who are in serious danger of death from malnutrition, easily curable disease, or political, ethnic, religious, sexual, or social persecution.

By introducing a modest progressive annual levy, each of these countries could save several million people each year, making a crucial contribution to defeating hunger and easily curable diseases and protecting victims of tyranny.

The United Nations has calculated that, according to data through the end of 2021, it would take \$7 billion to provide an entire year's worth of food, including transportation and distribution costs, for a daily meal of sufficient nutritional value to save the lives of approximately 45 million people at risk of starvation annually <https://www.wfp.org/news/wfp-warns-countdown-catastrophe-acute-hunger-reaches-new-peak>.

Certainly, if the world's approximately 2,668 owners of fortunes in excess of \$1 billion (<https://www.forbes.com/billionaires/>) were to donate annually a percentage -- say, in a progressive order, from \$500,000 up to \$10,000,000 each -- of their wealth, they would, without a great deal of financial effort, save the lives of the 45 million people at risk of death.

However, even if the approximately one billion residents of high-income democratic countries (the countries of the Eurozone, the United Kingdom, Switzerland, Norway, Sweden, Denmark, the U.S., Japan, Australia, Canada, Israel, Iceland, and New Zealand are home to about 978.9 million people in all) each donated the equivalent of the cost of a beverage in a bar - \$7, or about €6.64 -, the entire goal would be met, i.e., 45 million people would live an extra year.

Even if residents of just one of these countries donated the set amount per year, they could prevent the deaths of millions of people. For example, Italy, with its 59 million inhabitants would raise \$413,000,000, saving the lives of about 2,656,000 people each year (at \$155.50 cost for one year of food per person). Two million six hundred thousand people is roughly equivalent to the population of a European capital city.

These figures show that, although faced with the problem of world poverty most of the time we feel powerless, as residents of high-income countries we can instead have a real impact on the survival of millions of people by foregoing an amount – \$7 a year - that for the vast majority of us would in no way result in a significant lowering of the standard of living.

There are other areas in which stronger support of a permanent kind - funded by the tax system from high-income democratic countries - could have a disruptive effect, saving the lives of millions more. One is that of medicine. According to data from the World Health Organization, there is a large discrepancy in favor of high-income countries in disease deaths worldwide: for example, in 2019, communicable diseases accounted for 18.4 percent of deaths on a global scale but as many as 52.9 percent of those in Africa (<https://www.who.int/data/gho/data/themes/mortality-and-global-health-estimates/ghe-leading-causes-of-death>).

Although there are no known accurate United Nations estimates of the costs required to bring down deaths from communicable diseases in low-income states, it is reasonable to think that if, as taxpayers in high income countries, we decided to take action (for example, through the promotion of more widespread treatment for diseases such as tuberculosis, which still caused more than a million deaths worldwide in 2019) we could save the lives of millions of people.

Another necessary area for action is international protection for refugees. Here the distinction between high- and low-income countries does not matter, since people may have to flee even from a high-income country with a bloody dictatorship. Currently, a person who is at real risk of violent death in a dictatorial country or death by starvation in a low-income country and who seeks asylum in another country must first obtain an entry visa. If this, as is often the case, is denied, the refugee in question is forced to travel abroad by makeshift means at the risk of their own life. With this appeal, we urge high-income countries to provide by law periodic humanitarian corridors for people at real risk of death in foreign countries and accept applications for asylum even if they are submitted from abroad.

The support to be provided on the medical emergency and international protection front calls for an additional, small renunciation, the extent of which, in the absence of reliable estimates, is difficult to quantify. It is, however, no less necessary on the humanitarian front than that related to the fight against hunger. We propose then a set compulsory contribution from every taxpayer in high-income states of \$10 per year in total.

We appeal to high-income democratic parliaments to decide to profoundly raise the life prospects of millions of people without affecting that of their residents by arranging for a specific levy to be introduced in their respective tax systems, for example, a levy of a progressive nature (taxpayers with a high annual income would then have to pay more than \$10 a year, while those with low or no income would be exempt) or a permanent excise tax (which would also have the advantage of hitting assets not declared to the tax authorities), the proceeds of which would be earmarked to save as many lives globally as possible.

The funds collected should be used either through national or international organizations to be identified on the basis of independent studies conducted on an ad hoc basis and/or even by providing for the establishment of humanitarian corridors reserved for categories of people at imminent risk of death from malnutrition, easily curable diseases or violent political, ethnic, sexual, religious or social persecution.

For some countries, such as Italy and Germany, whose constitutions have an explicit solidarity or human rights-oriented approach, the introduction of the proposed measure has even a constitutional basis. As far as Italy's Constitution is concerned, its Article 2 recognizes the inviolable rights of man and which, to that end requires all citizens to fulfill "mandatory duties of economic, political and social solidarity". Germany's "fundamental law" acknowledges in its Article 1, paragraph 2 "inviolable and inalienable human rights as the basis of every community, of peace and of justice in the world" and as binding "the legislature, the executive and the judiciary as directly applicable law."

I endorse the appeal to the Parliaments of high-income democratic countries to allocate by Law a portion of the proceeds of taxation to save the lives of people outside their national borders who are at imminent risk of death from malnutrition, easily curable diseases or violent political, ethnic, sexual, religious or social persecution, for example through national or international organizations to be identified on the basis of independent studies and/or humanitarian corridors reserved for such categories of people.

Signers:

1. Associazione "Valerio De Simoni", Rome (Italy) and Association "Valerio De Simoni", Sydney (Australia), promoters.
2. Michael Walzer, philosopher and a member of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences, *Professor emeritus at the Institute for Advanced Study, Princeton (USA)*.
3. Precious Okoyomon, artist and poet (USA).
4. Peter Singer, philosopher, *Ira W. DeCamp Professor of Bioethics, University Center for Human Values, Princeton University (Australia-USA)*.
5. Nadia Urbinati, political theorist, *Kyriakos Tsakopoulos Professor of Political Theory, Columbia University (Italy - USA)*.
6. Jean-Pierre Dardenne, film director (Belgium).
7. Luc Dardenne, film director (Belgium).
8. Franco Gallo, jurist and a member of the Lincean Academy, *former President of Italy's Constitutional Court, Professor emeritus at Libera Università Internazionale degli Studi Sociali (LUISS), former full professor of Tax Law (Italy)*.
9. Martha Shelley, activist and writer, *co-founder of the Gay Liberation Front (USA)*.
10. Gianfranco Pasquino, political theorist and a member of the Lincean Academy, *Senior Adjunct Professor at the School of Advanced International Studies, Johns Hopkins University, Professor emeritus at the University of Bologna, former full professor of Political Theory (Italy - USA)*.
11. Camille Henrot, artist, recipient of the Silver Lion at the Venice Biennale 2013 (France).
12. Salvatore Settis, archaeologist, art historian and a member of the Lincean Academy, *Professor emeritus at, and former Director of, the Scuola Normale Superiore di Pisa (Italy)*.
13. Sabina Guzzanti, actress (Italy).
14. Giulio Cossu, medical doctor and a member of the Lincean Academy, *"Constance Thornley Professor" of Regenerative Medicine, University of Manchester (Italy - United Kingdom)*.
15. Mario Primicerio, mathematician and a member of the Lincean Academy, *Professor emeritus at the University of Florence, former full professor of Rational Mechanics (Italy)*.

16. Luisa Passerini, historian and writer, *Professor emeritus at the European University Institute, Florence, former full professor of Contemporary History at the University of Turin* (Italy).
17. Carlo Alberto Redi, biologist and a member of the Lincean Academy, *full professor of Zoology at the University of Pavia* (Italy).
18. Gian Maria Tosatti, artist, *curator of La Quadriennale, Rome* (Italy).
19. Angelo Pezzana, activist, *founder of Fuori!, the first Italian LGBT movement* (Italy).
20. Wilma Labate, film director (Italy).
21. Benno Gammerl, historian, *full professor of History of Gender and Sexuality at the European University Institute* (Germany).
22. Adrian Paci, artist (Albania - Italy).
23. Giulio Paolini, artist, *recipient of the Praemium Imperiale, section Painting, 2022* (Italy).
24. Emanuele Trevi, writer, *recipient of the Strega-Prize 2021* (Italy).
25. Pauline Curnier Jardin, artist (France - Germany - Italy).
26. Tommaso Salaroli, Editor-in-chief, *Scomodo magazine* (Italy).
27. Anuna De Wever, activist (Belgium).
28. Carlos Atoche, artist (Perù - Italy).
29. Francesco Stocchi, curator, *director of MAXXI Museum, Rome* (Italy).
30. Jonas Carpignano, film director, *recipient of the David di Donatello 2018 for best film* (USA - Italy).
31. MOTUS, theatre company (Italy), *recipient of four UBU Special Prizes*.
32. Sten Lex, artists (Italy).