

CHARTER OF THE RIGHTEOUS OF GARIWONETWORK

Gariwo network's Gardens of the Righteous aim at honouring women and men who take on a personal responsibility to defend human dignity and rescue victims in mass atrocities. The Gardens have the task of raising public awareness on exemplary individuals who **risked their life, their career, their friendships** to challenge the system and preserve human values before unfair laws or the indifference of society.

The Righteous act because they listen to their conscience, they love the others, the beauty of life, but *they always pay some price* in their life due to their love and therefore we have to publicly express our gratitude to their role.

An exhaustive class of Righteous will never exist, because throughout history and in different contexts, new individuals constantly appear, who can anticipate the course of events with their conscience and their judgement. We must however strive to establish a timeframe that can become for the Gardens a stimulus for research and appreciation of yesterday and today's Righteous. The responsibility of bodies in charge of the Gardens is to remind and promote individuals of great morality, not to trivialize the exemplary value of those who deserve to be honoured. When selecting the Righteous, it is always useful to consider personal risks they have taken, something that becomes even more important when one thinks of the Righteous of our time.

In full respect of independent choices made by the Gardens, to stimulate this path of research, *GariwoNetwork* will provide a **Committee of experts and guarantors** to jointly evaluate candidates and examine even the most controversial cases. The promoters of the Gardens can therefore refer to such guidelines.

Righteous men and women are individuals who bravely report crimes against society or rescue victims and work to save their lives **in genocides**. The class of Righteous established by Yad Vashem in Israel is a concept that universally applies to every form of extermination.

Righteous men and women are individuals who defend freedom, human plurality and the values of democracy **in a totalitarian system** or in a dictatorship. In the Soviet system, the Righteous did not accept lies, tipping off, the culture of the enemy and fought for the value of human beings. Moral resistance in everyday life, also involving small gestures - as dissidents in Eastern Europe have taught us - is always the first step to erode a totalitarian system.

Righteous men and women are individuals who defend women's rights to self-determination and fight for religious freedom and freedom of opinion **in fundamentalist** and theocratic **systems**.

Righteous men and women are individuals who **oppose terrorism**, trying to prevent it, or strive to save lives during attacks. Terrorism aiming at annihilating the largest number of people is not only perpetrated by Islamic fanatics, it has also been revived by white supremacist groups. Such extreme violence aims at disseminating, in different contexts, not only fear, but also the contrast between *them* and *us*.

Righteous men and women are individuals who fight **against all forms of denial** and urge their countries to take public responsibility for crimes committed in the past. The maturity of a country is not measured based on artificial defence of past innocence, but on unbiased recognition of guilt - as it happened for example in Germany for the Holocaust after the Second World War.

Righteous men and women are individuals who, like Nelson Mandela, block the spirit of revenge at its onset to fight **for reconciliation and justice** after ethnic and political conflicts. They weave a new cohabitation and shoulder the burden of repairing failures caused by mass atrocities by fostering forgiveness and recognition of responsibilities.

Righteous men and women of our time are individuals who **take on a responsibility in climate change**, fostering exemplary conduct and actively working in society to raise awareness on the risks facing our planet: mass migrations, conflicts, rising sea levels, melting of glaciers, desertification. Those who want to take care of the planet and warn us about our uncertain future remind us of unheard messengers of genocides who tried to break the wall of disbelief and indifference.

Righteous men and women of our time are individuals who challenge prejudice and indifference also in democracies **to prevent hatred**, racism against any forms of

contempt in public language, on social media, in sport, in political debates. Intolerances, up to the worst cases of mass discrimination, never stem from nothing, always stem from sick use of words, as it happened before the war in former Yugoslavia. There are perhaps no better human beings than individuals who anticipate good by preventing the possibility of mass crimes or genocides through their actions.

Righteous men and women of our time are individuals who **foster dialogue and cooperation** between people of different backgrounds, cultures and religions before closures, nationalisms, religious fundamentalism. Welcoming the others does not only mean saving them at sea, but also creating solutions for integration and sharing in a distorted climate where ethnic, cultural and religious separation is often referred to as a sort of self-defence. Listening to and speaking with the others, beyond boundaries and their origins, as philosopher Levinas argues, is instead the highest and most universal value of the European ethical reflection after the suicide of the two world wars.

Righteous men and women of our time are individuals who **foster peace in areas of crisis**, from Africa, to the Middle East, to Latin America. Those who work to solve political, ethnic and national conflicts often carry out the hardest task, because they do not act as partisans, but rather for a universal purpose that can jeopardize their lives, as it occurs to many volunteers.

Eventually, Righteous men and women of our time are individuals who **do not give in to blackmailing of mafias** and drug trafficking and help and rescue those who are persecuted by organized crime.