

# WORLD HEALTH ORGANIZATION FALTERS

*Bill Donohue recently wrote to Craig Lissner, Acting Director for Sexual and Reproductive Health and Research at the World Health Organization Department of Reproductive Health and Research.*

*The following is an excerpt.*

The recently released document, "Abortion Care Guideline," is contemptible. The disrespect shown for medical personnel who invoke conscientious objection status to performing an abortion is outrageous. This would certainly include Catholic doctors and hospitals.

The document says that "conscientious objection continues to operate as a barrier to access to quality abortion care." It instructs governments around the world to ensure that this does not happen, and then concludes that this basic right may be violated. "If it proves impossible to regulate conscientious objection in a way that respects, protects and fulfills abortion seekers' rights, conscientious objection in abortion provision may become indefensible."

What is really indefensible is the attack on conscientious objections to killing the innocent. It is not only morally offensive, it flouts international law.

Freedom of conscience and religion are assured by the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the International Convention on Human Rights, the European Convention on Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms, the American Declaration on the Rights and Duties of Man, and the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights.

The United Nations Charter also guarantees the right to self-

determination. Indeed, the General Assembly provides that every nation "has the duty to refrain from any forcible action which deprives peoples referred to in the elaboration of the principle of equal rights and self-determination...."

The plain language of these renowned declarations ensures the freedom to conscientiously object to mandates that would violate them.

WHO may not have any international enforcement power, but the fact that it would promote a frontal assault on such a fundamental right as freedom of conscience shows how thoroughly irresponsible it has become. Not only does it devalue innocent human life, it wants to punish those who reject its morally debased ethics.

Catholic medical personnel who are victimized by WHO's agenda, or who resist sanctions against them, may need legal assistance. We will be happy to see they get it.