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GLOBAL

1 January 2014: 24 Hours for World Peace

Pax Christi International took part in the online vigil "24 Hours for World Peace" marking the World Day of Peace, on 1 January 2014. International co-President Marie Dennis reiterated Pax Christi International's call for a just, negotiated, political solution to the war in Syria. To access the video message, [click here](#). For an overview of the "24 Hours for World Peace" online vigil, [click here](#). ■

AFRICA

Message of prayers and solidarity with the people of South Sudan

On 27 December, Pax Christi International issued a message of prayers and solidarity with the people of South Sudan affected by the ongoing violence which has already caused hundreds of deaths and the displacement of tens of thousands of people in the country. Pax Christi members worldwide pray and stand in solidarity with all the victims of the violence in South Sudan, calling for political leaders to settle their differences peacefully. Read the message in full length [here](#). ■

Congo Day: What future for Congo?

On 8 December, two Brussels-based NGOs, Intal and Geneeskunde voor de Derde Wereld, organised a debate on the future of Congo. Guest speakers including His Excellency Mova Sakanyi (Ambassador of DR Congo in Belgium), Tony Busselen

(author), Thijs van Laer (11:11:11) and Nadia Nsayi (Pax Christi Flanders) took part in this discussion and addressed key questions regarding the future of Congo. More details can be found [here](#). ■

Pax Christi France calls for peace in the Central African Republic

The National Council of Pax Christi France met on 7 December to voice out its deep concern on the conflict of Central African Republic and to discuss the role played by France in the conflict. Pax Christi France asks for the immediate implementation of the UN peacekeeping mission mandate and calls on a fruitful collaboration between all the counterparts to come to a solution for the conflict. Read the press release [here](#) (in French). ■

IKV Pax Christi's Jan Gruiters on Nelson Mandela

On Nelson Mandela's passing, in early December, Jan Gruiters, CEO of IKV Pax Christi Netherlands wrote a reflection entitled "Nelson Mandela: Humanity and compassion". Read it [here](#). ■

Pax Christi USA Ambassador of Peace Fr. John Dear talks about Nelson Mandela

On Mandela's passing in early December, Pax Christi USA Ambassador of Peace Fr. John Dear wrote an article honouring Mandela for his commitment to peace and justice. To read the full article, click [here](#). ■

South African Church Leaders' Statement on e-tolls

South African Church leaders, members of the Southern African Catholic Bishops

Conference, a Pax Christi International member organisation, have issued a statement in early December to encourage peaceful and non-violent public support for the rejection of the South African Government's decision to levy e-tolls in Gauteng, South Africa. Read their statement in full length [here](#). ■

AMERICAS AND CARIBBEAN

[Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns calls for an end to the Israeli occupation in Palestine](#)

US-based Pax Christi Member Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns calls on all people of good will to ask senators and government representatives to support the US policy working for the end of the Israeli occupation in Palestine.

The Maryknoll Office draws attention on various events organised by churches in the US and in Palestine to end the long-term violence infringed on the Palestinian people. Read more [here](#). To sign Maryknoll's petition "Support freedom, not occupation", click [here](#). ■

[Serpaj Chile to support Valparaíso fire victims](#)

Pax Christi Member Organisation Serpaj Chile started the year with a collecting campaign intended to assist people affected by the fires which ravaged Cerro de San Roque Valparaíso, in early January. To learn more about this initiative and to get involved, click [here](#). ■

[Serpaj Chile holds Christmas Peace Campaign for kindergarten children](#)

During Advent 2013, Pax Christi Member Serpaj Chile held a Peace Campaign called "Por un mundo en paz y sin juguetes bélicos: #YoRegaloUngestoDePaz". The campaign gathered children from the kindergarten Porteños por la Paz and, together with their families, walked the city of Valparaíso calling for a peaceful Christmas far from the consumerism, the individualism and the violence. To read more click [here](#) (Spanish).

[Pax Christi member speaks against arbitrary detentions in Chiapas, Mexico](#)

The Centre of Human Rights Fray Bartolomé de las Casas, a Pax Christi International Member Organisation in Mexico, denounces the arbitrary detentions of four innocent people, three of whom are still under arrest. These people were arrested for being part of social organisations working against the interest of the Government, such as the Organización Para la Defensa de los Derechos Indígenas y Campesinos, a group which acts against the reclaimed lands of the Zapatista National Force and the slaughter of Viejo Velasco. Read the complete article in Spanish [here](#). ■

[CPT Brazil denounces violence against camp workers](#)

Comissão Pastoral da Terra (CPT), a Pax Christi International Member Organisation in Brazil, has denounced military police attacks against families camped on farms in the region of Pará.

On the Human Rights Day, on 10 December, the police destroyed the families' camps and arrested five workers on charges of illegal possession of rifles and other crimes. These actions were taken without a court order of eviction and it is presumed that he military police was in place with the clear objective to intimidate, create fear and make families leaving the area of the property. Read more [here](#) (Portuguese). ■

CPT Maranhão on conflicts and land reality

In a recent reflection, Diogo Cabral, legal advisor of Comissão Pastoral da Terra in Maranhão, offers his perspective on conflicts and land reality of the Brazilian region in 2013.

The balance of the disputes and conflicts, Cabral argues, shows that Maranhão has remained an important spot for agricultural conflicts, as illustrated by the significant number of murders, death threats, unlawful arrests of rural workers and strong presence of armed militias in the area. Cabral further denounces the impunity of these actions and calls for peace to be restored in the area of Maranhão. Read more about this article in Portuguese [here](#). ■

Pax Christi USA signs onto human trafficking statement

Pax Christi USA has signed onto and endorsed a [Statement of Principles and Recommended Practices for Confronting Human Trafficking and Modern Slavery](#), issued by the Interfaith Center for Corporate Responsibility (ICCR).

The statement was made public on the International Human Rights Day, on 10 December. The ICCR will be reaching out to

a list of companies in the food/agricultural sector and hospitality sector in January. ■

ASIA - PACIFIC

Thailand: marginalisation in the metropolis

Jesuit Refugee Service (JRS) Asia Pacific – a Pax Christi member organisation based in Thailand – issued an article regarding the status of urban refugees. Living in small, marginalised communities, 'urban refugees' are often ignored by local and international media. While much effort has been made to help millions escape poverty, many people are still overlooked. Read the full article [here](#). ■

Human Rights in India

On the occasion of the International Human Rights Day, celebrated every year on 10 December, the CBCI Office for Justice, Peace and Development, a Pax Christi member organisation in India, has issued a statement on the state of human rights in India and the role of the Church in "lending voice to the voiceless" and promoting the human rights of the poor and of other vulnerable groups. Read the full statement [here](#). ■

MIDDLE EAST

Message of prayers and solidarity with the people of Iraq

On 31 December, Pax Christi International issued a message of solidarity with the

people of Iraq. Concerned about ongoing sectarian violence in the country, Pax Christi International calls for peaceful coexistence so that Iraqi people may find the way of reconciliation, peace, unity and stability. Read the message [here](#). ■

Peace Wishes and Prayers for Bethlehem

During Advent and Christmas 2013, Pax Christi International members and people of good will were invited to write a message of hope and encouragement to our friends in Bethlehem. The campaign was coordinated by the Arab Educational Institute (AEI), a Pax Christi International member organisation based in Palestine. An overview of messages received can be found [here](#). AEI will distribute them to citizens of Bethlehem, members and friends.

IKV Pax Christi Netherlands on refugee camps for the victims of the Syrian war

IKV Pax Christi Netherlands is working to voice out the situation of many Syrian refugees who have fled the country to live in neighbouring countries. According to recent reports, the existing camps in Turkey, Jordan and Iraq are already full and it is becoming increasingly difficult to find a place to accommodate all the refugees. Due to the ongoing violence, it is estimated that more than 100.000 people have died in the conflict and nearly half a million will fled the country next winter seeking for security, food and shelter. Read the article [here](#) (Dutch). ■

What remains of the civic activism in Syria and Egypt?

Brigitte Herremans, Middle East expert of Broederlijk Delen and Pax Christi Flanders

wrote an article entitled "What remains of the civic activism in Syria and Egypt?" With the peaceful civil protests in 2011, many hoped that the Arab world would change forever. More than two years later, many of those hopes vanished. The enduring legacy of the Egyptian revolution is sad and the ancient regime seems alive again. Meanwhile, in Syria, five million people are on the run. The peaceful protest of the early days got snowed under in a more radical and more militarised strike. Yet reformist groups remained active and revolutionary forces recently played an important role. Read the full article [here](#). ■

Reflection on agreement with Iran

Nicke Mele of Pax Christi USA in the Pacific Northwest wrote a reflection on the recently-announced [short-term agreement](#) with Iran on its nuclear development programme. The reflection entitled "Talking about the agreement with Iran" discusses several key aspects that have not been addressed so far, such as historical and geopolitical considerations. Read the full article [here](#). ■

Association Justice et Miséricorde organises action Metlna Metlak

During Advent 2013, Association Justice et Miséricorde (AJM), a Pax Christi Member Organisation in Lebanon, held its annual Christmas charity campaign, known as Metlna Metlak, to offer children and families of prisoners a beautiful Christmas and happy holiday season.

AJM invited everyone to share the joy, love and generosity of the Christmas period by helping at gift distribution to kids who have family in prison. Learn more [here](#) (French). ■

EUROPE

Pax Christi Germany calls for support of the Geneva II Conference

Pax Christi Germany's Peace Conference Commission has addressed a letter to the newly appointed German Foreign Minister Frank Walter Steinmeier asking him to prioritise the Geneva II conference on Syria in Germany's foreign affairs agenda. To read more about this initiative in German, click [here](#). ■

Pax Christi Portugal on Pope Francis' World Peace Day Message

Pax Christi Portugal has published a brochure entitled "Living like brothers and sisters, foundations and ways to the peace - Contributions to the celebration of the 47th World Peace Day". This publication aims to help understand Pope Francis' World Peace Day message and includes a series of proposals for campaigns to build a more fraternal world. To read more in Portuguese click [here](#). ■

Pax Christi Flanders' Annemarie Gielen on Volgograd attacks

On 29 and 30 December two terrorist attacks in the Russian city of Volgograd left dozens of victims. Pax Christi Flanders' Secretary-General Annemarie Gielen was invited on the Flemish Radio 1 to discuss these events and the human rights situation in Russia, in general. The audio interview in Flemish is available [here](#). ■

Pax Christi UK holds annual Advent Peace Service

Pax Christi UK gathered hundreds of people in London to hold its Annual Peace Service. This year, the service focused on themes of refugees, women, Palestine/Israel and peacemaking. The event brought together Pax Christi members and supporters from all around the UK. Read more [here](#). ■

IKV Pax Christi's disarmament campaign in South Sudan

IKV Pax Christi Netherlands in cooperation with the South Sudan Network on Small Arms started a disarmament campaign in South Sudan in March 2013.

The aim is to foster an end to the brutal violence in the country, by providing mechanisms to reach disarmament in a peaceful way, far from the human rights abuses that usually accompany the maneuver. To read more in Dutch, click [here](#). ■

Pax Christi Italy concerned about violence against women and children in South Sudan

Pax Christi Italy calls on all people of good will to pray for the ongoing violence that people in South Sudan are going through. Pax Christi Italy urges all parties involved in the conflict to stop the violence and human rights infringements that have marked the country's history since the war with the North started 20 years ago. To read more in Italian, click [here](#). ■

EU's Common Foreign and Security Policy

The European Council of the European Union held a Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP) summit in Brussels, 19–20 December 2013 to address "the state of defence in Europe". The European Council made a strong commitment to the further development of a credible and effective CSDP, in accordance with the Lisbon Treaty and the opportunities it offers. Fr. Paul Lansu of the International Secretariat wrote a reflection on the summit's outcome, which can be accessed [here](#). ■

Pax Christi Flanders chooses Ambassadors for Peace 2013

On 11 December, Pax Christi Flanders held its annual Peace Ambassador Award Ceremony. The event took place in Antwerp with 120 people, and honoured William Vermandere and Jaklin Laporte. Read more [here](#) (Flemish). ■

Soldiers' Mothers of Saint Petersburg takes part in Human Rights Day celebrations

Soldiers' Mothers of Saint Petersburg, Pax Christi International Member Organisation in Russia, took part on 11 December in the celebrations organised for the Human Rights Day under the motto "20 years struggling for your rights". The ceremonies were held in the house of Matilda Kshesinskaia, Museum of Political History with the presence of the Commissioner for Human Rights in St. Petersburg Alexander Şişli, Senior Human Rights Adviser with the UN in Russia. Read more on these events [here](#) (Russian). ■

DISARMAMENT/ DEMILITARISATION

Pax Christi International Statement to BTWC Meeting of States

On 9 December, Pax Christi International presented a statement at the Meeting of States Parties during the Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention, which takes place in Geneva, 9-13 December 2013. Trevor Griffiths, delegate of Pax Christi International at the United Nations in Geneva, presented the statement pleading for a broader dialogue, including non-expert civil society, on the main purpose of the Convention which is to contribute to protecting civilians across the globe and the natural environment. Read the statement [here](#). ■

Disarmament for Sustainable Development

Pax Christi International is joining the Disarmament for Sustainable Development Campaign initiated by the International Peace Bureau (IPB). The aim of this initiative is to press for an end to the over-funding of military establishments and for the creation of new funds to tackle human insecurity and common threats to the planet. In addition, the campaign supports all efforts to limit or eliminate weapons that impact negatively on communities in conflict zones.

Fr. Paul Lansu of the Pax Christi International Secretariat is member of this initiative's Steering Committee. Read more [here](#). ■

[IKV Pax Christi Netherlands on cluster munition investment](#)

IKV Pax Christi Netherlands has released a research called [Worldwide Investments in Cluster Munitions research: a Shared Responsibility](#) to denounce financial institutions investing in cluster munition production. Read more [here](#) (Dutch). ■

[UNGA adopts resolution on the Arms Trade Treaty](#)

On 9 December, the UN General Assembly adopted a new resolution welcoming the Arms Trade Treaty and encouraging states to sign and ratify it as soon as possible. This is the same text that was adopted by the First Committee in November but after the December vote, it has become a General Assembly resolution. It was adopted with a vote of 152-0-29 which means that none of the countries who blocked the Treaty voted against it, and that there were more “yes” votes than in November. ■

HUMAN RIGHTS

[Starvation as a Weapon of War in Syria](#)

Starvation of civilians in besieged areas of Syria is being used as a method of warfare, which is explicitly prohibited in Article 54 of the Fourth Geneva Convention. On 3 December, the Dutch Parliament recognised this point and ordered the Dutch Government to take action to get this case investigated by the International Criminal Court. In this context, IKV Pax Christi Netherlands issued a policy brief on Syria entitled “Starvation as a weapon”, putting forward recommendations for the

international community to act on this matter. Read more [here](#). ■

HUMAN SECURITY

[2014 Conflict Trends](#)

On 12 December, Pax Christi International attended a briefing on early warning conflict trends for 2014, organised by the Brussels-based European Peacebuilding Liaison Office (EPLO) and the International Crisis Group. Meeting participants identified and discussed nine countries/conflicts which are particularly vulnerable to an outbreak or intensification of violent conflict or crisis in the following six to twelve months, e.g.: Afghanistan, Bangladesh, the Central African Republic, Egypt, Iraq, Libya, Somalia, South Sudan, and Syria.

The meeting laid out opportunities for action for national, regional and international actors, particularly the European Union and its Member States. ■

[New study on Nuclear Famine: Two Billion People at Risk](#)

The International Physicians for the Prevention of Nuclear War (IPPNW), partner of IKV Pax Christi Netherlands and Pax Christi Flanders in the [International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons \(ICAN\)](#), released a study called [Nuclear Famine: Two Billion People at Risk](#) based on publications of climate scientists who have studied the impact of nuclear explosive materials in the atmosphere and other ecosystems. IPPNW calls on all countries in the world to address and eradicate the threat and consequences of a nuclear war. ■

JUST WORLD

[Pax Christi Austria on some of today's challenges](#)

In a recent article, Pax Christi Austria addresses some of the biggest challenges of today's world. The humanity has come a long way with progress in many fields and with achievements that contribute to the well-being of people, for example in the field of health, education and communication. However, most of the men and women of our time are living in daily uncertainty, with disastrous consequences. Pax Christi Austria calls for action against today's economy of exclusion and disparity of income. Read the full article [here](#). ■

[The UN declares 2014 the international Year of Family Farming](#)

The year 2014 has been declared by the United Nations (UN) as the International Year of Family Farming. According to the UN Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), the goal of the International Year of Family Farming is to reposition the sector at the center of agricultural, environmental and social policies on national agendas, identifying gaps and opportunities to promote a shift towards a more equitable and balanced development of production food. Moreover, it is also intended that the world's focus will be placed on eradicating hunger and poverty, the provision of food and nutrition security, improved livelihoods, natural resource management, environmental protection and sustainable development, particularly in rural areas. Read more in [English](#), [Spanish](#), [French](#), [Portuguese](#), [Russian](#), [Chinese](#) and [Arabic](#). ■

PEACE SPIRITUALITY

[Pax Christi Austria lights a candle for Peace in Bethlehem](#)

Groups of Pax Christi Austria have distributed candles for peace in meetings, Sunday service and mass, vigils or just among friends during advent time 2013, in order to make aware of the situation in occupied Palestinian areas, especially in Bethlehem. The activity was combined with wishes for a merry Christmas to befriended groups in Palestine. Read more [here](#) (German). ■

[Pax Christi Wallonie Bruxelles on Christian faith as a brake or incitement to violence](#)

Pax Christi Wallonie Bruxelles issued a reflection on the relationship between Christian faith and violence. Is faith or belief a source of violence or, on the contrary, a way for peace between humans? This reflection deepens into the various forms of religion related to peace building strategies and customs adopted by various religious communities, focusing on Christianity. Read more in French [here](#). ■

ADVOCACY

[Holy Land Coordination 2014](#)

The Holy Land Coordination brings the Assembly of Catholic Ordinaries of the Holy Land together with bishops from North America, Europe and elsewhere at an annual pilgrimage in the Holy Land. Delegates of International Catholic Organisations, such as Pax Christi

International, also participate in the programme. The objectives of the HLC is (1) to understand the social, political and ecclesial realities of the Holy Land and to advocate more effectively for justice and peace; (2) to support the efforts of the local Church especially through the work of Catholic Agencies; and (3) to support the mission of the Apostolic Nuncio especially regarding the fundamental and basic agreements. "Empowering young people" is the theme of the Programme taking place from 11 till 16 January 2014. A visit to the Gaza is scheduled as well. Fr. Paul Lansu of the International Pax Christi Secretariat will attend. ■

WCC Christian-Muslim meeting on Syria

The World Council of Churches is planning a high level Christian-Muslim meeting for religious leaders on Syria just before the Geneva II Conference scheduled for 22 January. It is a way for religious leaders to accompany the political track and to push for a political solution to the conflict. Pax Christi International will be represented at this meeting by co-President Marie Dennis. ■

Migration: Global Processes and Challenges

On 13 December, Fr. Paul Lansu of the International Secretariat took part in a conference entitled "Migration: Global Processes and Challenges" organised by the Center for Catholic Studies in Geneva in collaboration with the Catholic-Inspired NGOs Forum. The debate was conducted by Johan Ketelers, Secretary General of the International Catholic Migration Commission. ■

CHRISTMAS MESSAGES

Pax Christi International Christmas Message: [English](#), [French](#), [Spanish](#).

Arab Educational Institute: [click here](#)

Diocese of Kerry: [click here](#)

Pax Christi Germany: [click here](#)

Pax Christi France: [click here](#)

Pax Christi USA: [click here](#)

Serpaj Chile: [click here](#)

Bishop Paride Taban: [click here](#)

Office for Justice, Peace and Development: [click here](#)

Centre for Peace, Non-Violence and Human Rights: [click here](#). ■

INTERNATIONAL CALENDAR

Click [here](#) to view the International Calendar of upcoming events.

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