



Towards sustainable peace policies

Highlights of Pax Christi International's political achievements

Then an act of righteousness will bring about peace

Pax Christi International's political action follows the tradition of reconciliation. It aims to bring people together. It seeks to align individuals, groups, parties and countries to work together towards disarmament, conflict resolution, and to promote human rights. Our peace policy will be based on righteousness: "Then an act of righteousness will bring about peace". (Isaiah, 32:17)

Pax Christi International's activities are in line with key goals of the United Nations, including peace and security, respect for human rights and development. Both the United Nations (24 October) and Pax Christi International (13 March) celebrate their 70th anniversary this year.

Network and presence

The network of Pax Christi International consists of more than 115 member organisations with a presence on each continent. Many of our member organisations work in conflict situations. Both the International Board and International Secretariat of Pax Christi International ensure that policies and choices strengthening our movements' political goals are implemented. On an international level, the movement lobbies on behalf of the entire network. Since 1979, Pax Christi International has had special consultative status at the United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC). The movement is also an official partner of UNESCO, the Council of Europe and the African Union, and has established close contacts in the European Union and its institutions. Member organisations primarily work at a national level and lobby around intergovernmental agencies. The movement also works in close contact with church organisations, including the Holy See – the Secretariat of State and Permanent Missions to the UN in Geneva and New York; the Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace; the World Council of Churches; Religions for Peace and more.

Political activities of Pax Christi International are based on a fundamental ethical conviction. On the one hand, the movement leans on moral principles, such as the right to peace, solidarity, and social and economic justice. On the other hand, it builds on legal standards, including international (humanitarian) law and humanitarian criteria.

Choice for the vulnerable in a globalised solidarity

The spirituality of Pax Christi International's political activities is based on the fundamental choice and respect for the dignity of each and every individual, especially the most vulnerable. We will meet victims of injustices, listen and learn from them. This means that Pax Christi International will be an ally and spokesperson for those who cannot reach their full potential or whose fundamental human rights are violated.

Catholic Social Teaching as well as International Conventions (such as the Convention on the Rights of the Child) will support this effort. It is essential to show solidarity with those who are hurt. When listening to victims and analysing their situation, and when working with partners in conflict situations, the network can be mobilised for lobby and advocacy efforts in a “globalised solidarity”. Given the transnational nature of peace policies, the movement will engage in international campaigns and actions. Indeed, the current situation needs a global approach: pressing issues are ongoing financial, environmental and energy crises, global warming, increasing migration flows, uncontrolled arms trade, regional conflicts, etc.

United we stand

Pax Christi International is one out of more than 3,400 accredited NGOs at the UN. More than 400 NGOs are active at the Council of Europe, creating an opportunity for NGOs to join forces and coordinate lobby activities. These NGOs cluster around certain themes. Pax Christi International prefers to collaborate with “friendly” organisations, including but not limited to Caritas Internationalis, CIDSE and ACT Alliance EU (formerly APRODEV), Catholic Peace Building Network, European Peace Building Liaison Office (EPLO), Justice and Peace Commissions, Franciscans International, International Peace Bureau, International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons, and Jesuit Refugee Service. Each NGO has a certain speciality enabling them to take the lead in developing related campaigns and actions. This way, NGOs can strengthen each other and increase their impact on political decision-making processes. In general, diplomats prefer the collaboration with NGO groupings on certain issues, unless they have a shared goal, as is the case with Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch and the International Crisis Group.

Towards new diplomacy

In the past, foreign policy was exclusive to diplomats and political authorities. Over the last decades, new actors have become involved, such as civil society initiatives, lobby groups, humanitarian aid organisations and NGOs. This “new diplomacy” is based on norms and values, and social conventions and principles practiced in public and social situations. We think about values such as truthfulness and active nonviolence. New diplomacy will further materialise through (international) coalitions and networks. Pax Christi International's political mission is confident that global peace and security can be achieved by tackling the root causes of violence and by creating conditions for peace. This could mean that we foster dialogue with politicians, the military, academics and others who are involved in (political) decision-making processes.

Lobbying is one of the core activities of Pax Christi International's political involvement. The movement will continue to increase its expertise in thematic areas. It will do so in dialogue and consultation with experts, both in terms of expertise of countries, conflicts and themes, including human rights, disarmament and development. In some cases, Pax Christi will put together a “lobby tools kit”, e.g. on “nuclear disarmament”, “arms trade treaty”, “missile defence systems”, “disarmament for development”, “advocacy at the UN Human Rights Council”, etc.

Strong political, social and societal analysis is essential to inform and mobilise people. This way, lobby activities can support efforts to align decision-making processes with the goals of

the movement. We will present our advice in our dialogues with national governments and international bodies.

Examples of political activities relating to countries and themes

Over the years, Pax Christi International has worked on a wide range of themes, including human rights violations in Central America, tensions between the global East and West resulting from the arms race, the missile crisis and nuclear arms race, nuclear testing, contacts with churches and peace groups in Central and Eastern Europe, small arms and light weapons, child soldiers, the Balkan Wars, the Gulf War, the African Great Lakes Region, the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, the Arab Spring and civil wars in many countries. The movement has taken or continues to take action for Syria and Iraq, Israel and the Palestinian Territories, Sri Lanka, (South) Sudan, Nigeria, the Philippines, Iran, Colombia, Peru, Haiti, Honduras, Northern Ireland, Kosovo, Afghanistan, Pakistan, India, Lebanon, Russia and Caucasia.

For a large number of these countries, Pax Christi International presented oral or written interventions to the Human Rights Council in Geneva, and the Committees on Sustainable Development and on the Status of Women in New York. Previously, many fact finding visits were deployed to investigate and report on human rights violations, including in Central America, Haiti, Colombia, Honduras, Israel/Palestine, Iraq, Sudan and more.

Disarmament: some priorities

Disarmament is one of the main focus areas of Pax Christi International. In the past, the international movement in conjunction with national member organisations, NGOs and diplomats lobbied for demilitarisation and disarmament. A milestone in the history of the movement is the adoption of the Mine Ban Treaty in 1997 in Ottawa. All European member states have signed this treaty. With the exception of the United States, also all NATO member states have signed the treaty. Unfortunately, land mines are still commonly used in armed conflicts, such as in the recent Syria conflict. Mainly children fall victim to anti-personnel mines in Eastern Ukraine. In close coordination with the International Campaign to Ban Landmines, Pax Christi International continues to take action for the full application of the treaty.

In 2003, Pax Christi International was one of the founding members of the Cluster Munition Coalition (CMC). We advocate for the total ban on cluster bombs. In 2008 in Oslo, the Convention on Cluster Munitions was signed. Cluster munition takes the lives of innocent victims both during and after ending armed conflict. Currently, 115 countries ratified the Convention.

After years of continuous lobbying, the Arms Trade Treaty (ATT) was adopted by the UN General Assembly in 2013. The treaty mainly focuses on the responsibility of countries involved in arms trade. The treaty entered into force on 24 December 2014.

Closely related to Pax Christi's work on arms trade and production, the movement has long been involved in the international campaign "Disarm to Develop". In 2014, the global military expenditure amounted to USD 1.8 trillion (compared to USD 1.75 trillion in 2013). The United States and Russia are the main arms producing countries. Countries in unstable regions such as the Middle East and the former Soviet Union have increased their military expenditure. Pax Christi International is taking action to lower the budget for military expenditure as much as

possible, and invest the newly available money in programmes for sustainable development, emergency crises and the global climate change programme of the United Nations. To make this possible, the international community needs to undertake peacebuilding activities at all levels of society and preventative diplomacy to prevent future armed conflict.

To establish a total ban on nuclear weapons remains one of Pax Christi International's top priorities. Having weapons of mass destruction as defence mechanisms is inherently contradictory. Pax Christi International has been involved in the 9th Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) that will take place from 27 April to 22 May 2015 at the United Nations in New York. Nuclear disarmament is one of the first objectives established after the creation of the United Nations. The peace movement reminds super powers about their obligation under Article VI of the NPT to disarm through negotiations.

Pax Christi International, the Holy See and other religious organisations have played an important role in uplifting the morality regarding nuclear weapons. The push for these higher moral standards was given during the third international Conference on the Humanitarian Impact of Nuclear Weapons held in Vienna on 8 and 9 December 2014. At the conference, the principle of nuclear deterrence was abolished by the Holy See, marking a milestone for years of hard work by Pax Christi International and the Holy See to achieve this. The Holy See emphasises the immorality of maintaining nuclear weapons as the destructive force of these weapons doesn't hold any legal grounds. The Holy See completely abandoned its previous conditional support for nuclear deterrence. "Nuclear deterrence and the threat of mutually assured destruction cannot be the basis for ethics of fraternity and peaceful coexistence among peoples and States."

Episcopal Conferences, particularly in countries with nuclear weapons, should follow Pope Francis in his unequivocal rejection of nuclear weapons. "The time has come to denounce both the use and possession of nuclear weapons."

In December 2014, the Pope expressed that disarmament is an opportunity for development: "To prioritise such spending is a mistake and a misallocation of resources which would be far better invested in the areas of integral human development, education, health and the fight against extreme poverty. When these resources are squandered, the poor and the weak living on the margins of society pay the price."

Washington, DC and New York

Pax Christi International is a member of the Working Group of NGOs at the UN Security Council that meets every week in New York. By taking part in these meetings, inside information is gathered about the ongoing conflicts in the world and on the main issues of the Security Council. At the same time diplomatic missions present their positions and strategies. Most of the participative NGOs have activities on the ground and present to the working group up to date information, analysis and recommendations to the diplomatic missions.

In Washington, DC, national members of Pax Christi International in the USA work closely together in a working group on advocacy strategies towards the USA administration and towards the inter-governmental organisations based in the USA capital. Most of the issues discussed in the working group have an international dimension: Syria, Iraq, Israel & Palestine,

Sudan, extractive industries, nuclear disarmament. For that reason the International Secretariat is in close connection with this working group.

A major initiative taken by this working group was a statement on "Catholic morality and nuclear abolition", April 2015. Pax Christi International sent a statement to Catholic members of Congress signed by more than 1,200 Catholic moral theologians and ethicists, Catholic religious communities, leadership of Catholic organisations, and Catholic individuals calling attention to the Catholic Church's stance on nuclear disarmament and on nuclear deterrence in particular. The Catholic Church affirms not only the immorality of the use of nuclear weapons, but the immorality of their possession. The statement urges also members of Congress to oppose funding the modernisation of nuclear forces and to remind the Obama administration that, in the words of the Holy See, "the commitment to disarm embedded in the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) and other international documents is more than a legal-political detail, it is a moral commitment on which the future of the world depends."

Critical and constructive

Lobbying is inherently critical. It involves more than providing comments. It is directed towards meaningful change. Lobby activities are intended to seek justice and function as mechanisms against grave human rights violations.

Lobbying should also be constructive in nature. In addition to mobilising large population groups, constructive dialogue should take place. Lobbyists will never burn the bridge of dialogue! The media are essential for lobby activities. The media play an important role in both informing and mobilising people, while voicing criticism. A peace worker does not hold the one and only truth. Deliberation will be sought after. It is important to listen to the convictions of other stakeholders.

Prophetic and pragmatic

The nature of Pax Christi International's political engagement is two-fold: it is both prophetic and pragmatic. Lobby activities will be prophetic: to tell the truth, denounce injustices and aspire to a more just and peaceful society and world. In other words, the prophetic aspect provides spiritual and moral guidance in political peace activities. The pragmatic aspect of lobbying focuses on what can be achieved and aims for consensus reached in dialogue. Prophetic lobbying could be seen as naïve, unpractical or unfeasible. The pragmatic aspect could be rejected for focusing on short term solutions only. Sometimes, lobbying will take place "behind the scenes", privately. Under these circumstances we will say "We will do what is within our power".

Independent and autonomous

Pax Christi International is an autonomous Christian peace movement. Its relationship with the Catholic Church and other Christian churches and religions is twofold, meaning that Pax Christi International approaches churches and religions for guidance in certain themes both from the inside (as an engaged companion) as well as the outside (as an outsider).

This strategy is possible through the versatile nature of the movement's memberships. There are at least four types of individual members of Pax Christi International: "Catholics",

"Christians from other churches", "followers of other religions", and "people of good faith" (Pacem in Terris) who look beyond belief and religion to achieve the objectives of Pax Christi International.

With an ambitious passion

What is needed for successful reconciliatory politics is a clear "passion". We need both individual and shared passion to reach our objectives. Politicians and diplomats should be able to feel that we are serious. We are all in this together! We will believe in what we aim for and work for it. You need to be able to convince. You need to be able to say something meaningful.

Around most themes or conflict situations the movement works on, Pax Christi International established coalitions (mostly formal but also occasional or de facto) with other international organisations and initiatives. These coalitions undertake joint campaigns and take action to mobilise public opinion. Over the last decades, these activities resulted among others in conventions banning anti-personnel mines and cluster munition, promoting children's rights, regulating arms trade and many more. A total ban on nuclear weapons remains one of our core objectives.

Testify for peace

Since 1988, Pax Christi International gives an annual peace award to a contemporary figure who is working against violence and injustice, usually at the grassroots level. The first award went posthumously to the chair of a local farmer's initiative in Brazil. She was active in promoting dignity and basic rights for local farmers. She was killed in 1983. In 2015, the peace award is given to Women, Peace and Security Collective for Reflection and Action, a Colombian women's organisation promoting the important role of women in peacebuilding processes. Sometimes, the award goes to a leading figure, as was the case in 2005, when the award went to Jacques Delors, the former president of the European Commission. The award was handed to him by the Latin Patriarch of Jerusalem, Michel Sabbah, who at the time was the incumbent president of Pax Christi International and by Cardinal Danneels, former president of the movement. Jacques Delors received the peace award for giving a "soul" to the European Union. He paid attention to the role of churches, religion and conviction in deepening and building a stronger European Union. This bears witness of political peace engagement. These award winners are concrete examples of "promoters for justice and peace".

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