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## GLOBAL

### Creating Signs of Hope for Syria

On 16 February 2016, Pax Christi International launched a global campaign for creating signs of hope for Syria. The global Pax Christi network and people of good will are encouraged to organise actions of solidarity, and days of prayer and fasting for peace in Syria between 15 and 20 March, 2016.

- To launch your own action, get inspired by the provided resources, including statements, prayer cards, [previous events and campaigns](#) on the website: <https://hopeforsyria.wordpress.com/> and tell us about your actions (#HopeforSyria)
- Send a message of hope (photo or text) to the people in Syria to [communications@paxchristi.net](mailto:communications@paxchristi.net). It will be published on the website and passed on to our contacts in Syria.
- To check out messages of Pax Christi International board members, click [here](#).
- Share personal stories of Syrians, refugees, internally displaced persons and people, who are left behind in Syria, with us via [communications@paxchristi.net](mailto:communications@paxchristi.net) ■

### Margaretha Vanaerschot: Pax Christi International's Secretary General

We are very happy to announce that Margaretha (Greet) Vanaerschot has been appointed Secretary General of Pax Christi International, effective immediately. Greet has worked for Pax Christi International since 1981, serving as Deputy Secretary General

since 2009. Her long experience and deep appreciation for Pax Christi's mission and values make Greet an exceptional choice for leadership of our international Catholic movement for peace and reconciliation. We look forward to working closely with Greet in her new position and believe that with her able guidance Pax Christi will continue its respected work for a more just and peaceful world. ■

### Pax Christi International Board Member meeting

Last week, on 24-26 February 2016, the Pax Christi International Board met with representatives from several Pax Christi sections. There was a rich exchange about the implementation of the Bethlehem Commitment, looking at our strategies for the next 5 years and about a global campaign for Pax Christi International. The creation of a global online exchange platform and the strengthening of capacity building of our network to work on peace were major focus areas. ■

## AFRICA

### South Africa: 25th anniversary of Kevin Dowling's ordination as bishop

On 6-7 February 2016, Kevin Dowling, co-president of Pax Christi International, celebrated the 25th anniversary of his ordination as bishop. His community in Rustenburg, South Africa, honoured him with a special celebration. At the event, Marie Dennis, the other co-president of Pax Christi International, said: "Our members everywhere this day thank God for the gift of Bishop Dowling's commitment to peace on earth - in

South Sudan and Bosnia Herzegovina, in Zimbabwe and Colombia, in Syria and El Salvador, in Iraq and Nigeria and in so many other places. He brings the deep experience of the struggle for reconciliation from your communities in South Africa over and over again to nourish a world hungry for peace." Read more [here](#). ■

### South Sudan: PAX response to decreasing UN mission personnel

The Netherlands, which has assisted the UN peace mission in South Sudan (UNMISS) since 2011 with 30 soldiers and police officers, has decided to decrease that number to seven. PAX Netherlands indicates that the change is inconsistent with previous government statements and believes that more can be done to ensure civil protection and prevent conflicts in the region. During a debate within the Dutch government, several parties were disappointed with the reduction in personnel, and in general, all of the present parties agreed on the necessity of maintaining a Dutch presence in UNMISS. Read more in Dutch [here](#). ■

### South Africa: "Moral renewal in our communities start with me and you"

On 1-4 February 2016, the Justice and Peace Commission of the Southern African Catholic Bishops' Conference – a member organisation of Pax Christi International – held its annual general conference in Benoni (South Africa). Over 35 justice and peace chaplains and coordinators from 22 dioceses made plans for upcoming years and called on everyone to get involved on a parish level, in one's community, or even at one's work place to start moral

renewal. Read more at these two links in English: [here](#) and [here](#). ■

## AMERICAS AND CARIBBEAN

### USA: Statement to build the beloved community

The Pax Christi USA National Council issued a statement entitled, "We are called to build the Beloved Community" at their meeting on 29-31 January 2016. "In reading the signs of our times, we recognized the destructive political discourse currently gripping our society and call on all Pax Christi USA members and all people of good will to reject the language of violence and disrespect against women, Muslims, immigrants, communities of colour and people living in poverty." This will also be a theme of the Pax Christi USA National Assembly, which will be held from 12-14 August in Baltimore, Maryland. Read more in English [here](#). ■

### Guatemala: Demand to investigate the forced disappearances

Grupo de Apoyo Mutuo – GAM, a member organisation of Pax Christi International - convened "outside of Congress to demand the approval of the Bill 3590 into law, which would create the National Commission for the Victims of Forced Disappearances." This demand for a National Commission is a result of the 45,000 Guatemalans who were forcibly disappeared during the internal armed conflict from 1960 to 1996. To draw attention to the situation, GAM has published on its Facebook page the profiles of some of the victims such as Carlos Guillermo Ramirez Galvez and

Manuel Ismael Salanic Chiguil who have been missing since 1984. Read more about the situation in Spanish [here](#). ■

### [Mexico: Stand with Pope Francis on migration](#)

The Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns (MOGC), a member organisation of Pax Christi, encourages President Obama and Congress to support Pope Francis' stance on migration, "to commit to humane policies that respond to the realities of migration." On 17 February 2016, Pope Francis celebrated Mass on the Mexico-U.S. border in Ciudad Juarez, in front of a crowd that was expected to surpass 450,000. Maryknoll recognizes that Pope Francis' visit to the Mexico-U.S. border presented an opportunity to bring to light and discuss the "global conversation on migration and borders." Read more in English [here](#). ■

### [Mexican government fails to respect the rights of the indigenous population](#)

Frayba, a member organisation of Pax Christi, states that although Mexico's federal government signed the San Andrés Accords on Indigenous Rights and Culture 20 years ago, the Mexican government has yet to comply with the Accord's stipulations. In fact, Frayba contends that the Mexican government has not only failed but also has abused its "obligation to respect, guarantee, and promote the rights of the native people." Read more in Spanish [here](#). ■

## ASIA - PACIFIC

### [Pax Christi Australia on Defence White Paper](#)

On 26 February 2016, Pax Christi Australia released a statement criticising the proposed military spending in the Defence White Paper of Australia, which was published the day before. Father Claude Mostowik, president of the Pax Christi section highlights that rather than making Australia safer, the proposed spending will negatively impact the environment as well as their relationship with other countries, and will rob Australians of much needed social services. "Pax Christi Australia calls for a united voice from peace organisations and groups in Australia to call on the media to question the path the country is taking." Read the statement [here](#) in English. ■

### [Aotearoa/New Zealand: "Pilgrims on the way to peace"](#)

Pax Christi Aotearoa New Zealand is sponsoring a series of Lent meditation sessions at the Peace Place focusing on "working for peace in our world." Future meditations will be held on 29 February as well as 7, 14, and 21 March 2016. Each meditation session focuses on different discussion topics: the Spirituality of Pax Christi; West Papua; Israel and Palestine; disarmament; the environment; and nonviolence. Read more in English [here](#). ■

### [Australia: Statement on sanctuary for refugees](#)

On 4 February 2016, Pax Christi Australia released a statement expressing that it is "heartened and encouraged by the actions of some [Australian] churches [...] in their

response to the recent High Court 6-1 decision to support the deportation of people back to Nauruan island in the South Pacific].” These churches are offering sanctuary to refugees facing deportation. Pax Christi Australia explains: “This solidarity is not about politics but very much related to humanity and morality.” Additionally, the Pax Christi section “is calling on the wider church in Australia to join together in this movement.” Read the full statement in English [here](#). ■

### Sri Lanka: Human rights suggestions to the government

On 24 February 2016, the Human Rights Office Kandy (Sri Lanka) – a member organisation of Pax Christi International – received an official visit from the Senior Human Rights Advisor of United Nations Office in Sri Lanka, Juan Fernandez, and other UN officers, who explained the *comprehensive report of the office of the UN high commissioner for human rights on Sri Lanka* as well as the suggestions made to the Sri Lankan government. Read the report in English [here](#) and see photos [here](#). ■

## EUROPE

### Austria: Youth camp with Roma

On 10-24 July 2016, Pax Christi Austria and Service Civil International are organising a project camp for young people at Waldhüttl (Innsbruck), a community where dozens of Roma have been settling since 2012. Participants will help to improve the access to the Waldhüttl building and garden for wheelchairs as well as other simple construction work. They can also benefit from

the exchange with the occupants of Waldhüttl and the local youth. Registration and more details [here](#) in German. ■

### Transnationalism of migrants

On 8 February 2016, Pax Christi Wallonie-Bruxelles hosted a lecture on transnational activities of migrants. Migrants cannot be considered as disconnected from their past and history; they bring their culture of origin into the new country – this is called a transnational process. Jean-Michel Lafleur, Associate Director of the [Centre for Ethnicity and Migration Studies](#), spoke on this issue at the lecture which is part of a general reflection on what are referred to as “imported conflicts”. Read more in French [here](#). ■

### Germany: 83% say “No” to arms exports

Pax Christi Germany is supporting the campaign “Action outcry – Stop arms trade”, which highlights a survey on the question of whether Germany should sell arms to other countries. A resounding 83 percent of the survey participants answered “no”. The campaign urges that, due to the population’s strong resistance, the German constitution must make it clear that arms and other military equipment should not be exported. Read more in German [here](#). ■

### France: Airport project according to *Laudato Si’*

Pax Christi France supports an initiative to review the airport project “Aéroport du Grand Ouest”, which started in 2014. Groups from the regional dioceses published a draft in 2012 and recently reviewed it as a result of Pope Francis’ encyclical *Laudato Si’* and the COP21

negotiations. The updated version was published on 1 January 2016; it calls for an immediate halt in the resettlement of inhabitants and a transparent, democratic process. Read more in French [here](#). ■

## MIDDLE EAST

### Syria: Inside the sieges

On 16 February 2016, Pax Christi International and Pax Christi Flanders attended an event on the scope and implications of the besieged Syria, which was organised by Siege Watch, a joint project of PAX Netherlands and The Syria Institute. Husam Rajab Fawar, who lived under siege himself, Valerie Szybala (The Syria Institute), and Marjolein Wijninckx (PAX) spoke about the ongoing crisis. Read more in English [here](#). ■

### Saudi Arabia: PAX calls for arms embargo

On 15 February 2016, PAX Netherlands, along with other organisations, proposed an [initiative](#) to the European Parliament to promote an arms embargo against Saudi Arabia. In addition, PAX is lobbying both the Dutch government and the EU for the arms embargo, citing the human rights violations as well as the overwhelming evidence of international humanitarian law violations against the Yemeni people. PAX explains that a UN Panel of Experts for Yemen determined that Saudi Arabia has been systematically “targeting civilians, medical facilities and schools.” A large amount of the Saudi weapons have been exported from Europe, and in particular from the United Kingdom. Read more in Dutch [here](#). ■

### Syria: Monitoring of increased assistance required

Pax Christi International signed a document to increase the support for resolving the Syria conflict, “calling for the robust and transparent monitoring of the conferences’ pledges to ensure its implementation.” The Supporting Syria and the Region donor conference on 2 February 2016, which was attended by over 30 NGOs, condemned the violations of international humanitarian law, and stated, “that increased assistance must be accompanied by efforts to promote a comprehensive solution to the root causes of the conflict, and provide safe and legal routes for refugees to resettle beyond the region.” Read more in English [here](#). ■

### To be with those who have been forgotten

On 2 February 2016, Fr. Paul Lansu, Pax Christi International policy advisor, reported on his participation in the Holy Land Coordination from 6-14, January 2016. He reflected on the state of the Gaza Strip and an end to the economic blockade of Gaza to improve its political and social infrastructure, the halt of the Cremisan Valley land expropriation, which is dividing Palestinian neighbourhoods, and an end to the Israeli occupation and the acceptance of a two state negotiated agreement. Lastly he reflects on the Syrian and Iraqi refugee crisis and the efforts to improve the situation in the region. Read more in English [here](#). ■

## ADVOCACY & CAMPAIGNING

### Pax Christi UK joins protest against British nuclear weapon's system

On 27 February 2016, Pax Christi UK was a partner in the 'Stop Trident rally' based in London and also encouraged other faith groups to participate. The demonstration was in protest of the renewal of 'Trident', Britain's nuclear weapons system. Pat Gaffney, Secretary General of Pax Christi UK, stated: "It is decision making season in the UK and the rally is a tool that is being used to help raise public awareness about 'Trident' in an attempt to effect change. Specifically, within Pax Christi, there is an effort to strengthen the Christian and other faith based groups and their viewpoints on this issue." At the end of the rally faith leaders made a multi-faith statement against nuclear weapons. Read more on the Trident rally in English [here](#). ■

### Pax Christi International and the Right to Peace

On 18 February 2016, Pax Christi International participated in a meeting of NGOs in Geneva on the Right to Peace, organised by the International Office of the Associazione Comunità Papa Giovanni XXIII. (Read more about the [third session of the open-ended UN working group](#) on a declaration on the right to peace, which was held 20-24 April, 2015.) The purpose of the 18 February meeting was to share information about the next working group and to develop a strategy to push the process and build a common advocacy to promote the right to peace. Read more on the right to peace in English [here](#). ■

### Pax Christi International on 'Peacebuilding in the EU Global Strategy'

On 23 February 2016, Pax Christi International along with other civil society peacebuilding organisations attended the policy meeting organised by EEAS and EPLO, entitled, 'Peacebuilding in the EU Global Strategy'. During the event, PAX Netherlands contributed to the discussion about how the EU can support peacebuilding in crisis situations. The event created a platform to advise the 'Peace/conflict prevention' section of the EU Global Strategy, on how to successfully resolve conflicts and improve the implementation of peacebuilding. Read more in English [here](#). ■

## HUMAN RIGHTS

### Human rights abuses by Swiss corporations

Pax Christi International was one of 35 organisations to endorse a report submitted for consideration during the UN Committee on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women during the 65<sup>th</sup> pre-sessional working group, which will be held 7-11 March 2016 in Geneva. The report includes recommendations for state efforts to prevent and remedy human rights abuses committed by Swiss corporations operating abroad. Pax Christi International members that endorsed the report include the Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns and the Sisters of Mercy, Mercy International Association. Read more [here](#) and download the submission in English [here](#). ■

## DISARMAMENT

### PrepCom for IPB conference

On 18 April 2016, Pax Christi International and Pax Christi Flanders among others, will co-organise the Brussels PrepCom conference, a preparatory event for the International Peace Bureau World Congress on military and social spending, which will take place from 30 September to 3 October, 2016. The meeting will attempt to raise awareness and engage civil society groups in the discussion centred on how military spending could be re-directed to peacebuilding, climate, sustainable development, social justice and migration.” Read more in English [here](#). ■

### Pax Christi Italy’s presidents call to take action against war

On 18 February 2016, Bishop Giovanni Ricchiuti, president of Pax Christi Italy, released a statement signed by all the former presidents of Pax Christi Italy, expressing opposition to all forms of war. The statement strongly condemns military action to resolve conflicts and insists on respecting human lives and the use of political and diplomatic tools. Bishop Ricchiuti underlines the word of Pope Francis: “We urge the international community to seek an end to the violence and terrorism and, at the same time, to contribute through dialogue to a swift return to civil peace.” He urges Pax Christi sections to take action by praying and fasting as well as in demonstrating against and denouncing war. Read the statement in English [here](#). ■

### Formation of NGO coalition on Biological Weapon Convention

Pax Christi International participates twice annually in the Biological Weapon Convention (BWC) in Geneva. Recently – with Pax Christi International’s support – a BWC NGO coalition on biosecurity has been formed, with Kathryn Millett, director of [Biosecure](#), as its leader. One of Pax Christi International’s documents has already been shared: “[Through Biosecurity to Peace: Pax Christi International’s Contribution to an Ethical Approach of Life Sciences.](#)” ■

### Pax Christi International present at OEWG on nuclear disarmament

During the week of 22 February 2016, Pax Christi International attended the Open Ended Working Group (OEWG) meeting on nuclear weapons in Geneva. 82 states showed up at the opening session – none of which was a ‘nuclear weapons state’ (NWS). Jonathan Frerichs, Pax Christi International representative at the UN in Geneva, says, “The OEWG’s mandate is not about preserving a dysfunctional status quo, it is about moving forward. Its focus is to debate effective legal measures that will be needed to prohibit and eliminate nuclear weapons, including new treaties and norms. Civil society has a key role to play if the mandate is to make a difference.” Read more about OEWG in English [here](#). ■

### PAX Netherlands on armed drones

On 26 February 2016, Pax Christi International attended a meeting of the European Forum on Armed Drones (EFAD), organised by the Quaker Council for European Affairs in

Brussels. The EFAD – established in 2015 – “is an informal interest group [...] for NGO professionals concerned about issues relating to armed drones.” During the event, PAX Netherlands presented the first draft of a document calling on European national governments and EU institutions to change their policies on armed drones. This draft was discussed among the participants as well as EFAD’s advocacy at the European Parliament and the future coordination of the forum. Read more [here](#). ■

## PEACE EDUCATION & PEACE SPIRITUALITY

### Ash Wednesday: Witness and resistance to nuclear war preparations

On Ash Wednesday, 10 February 2016, Pax Christi UK invited everyone to join them for the 34<sup>th</sup> year of Christian witness and resistance to nuclear war preparation at the Ministry of Defence in London or to join them in prayer. The procession started with an opening prayer involving song and actions using Ash Wednesday symbols. Other events with Pax Christi members and partners took place in Glasgow and Liverpool. Read more in English [here](#). ■

- Pax Christi International’s board member meeting: [Prayers and Reflections – 24 February 2016, Year of Mercy – Lent 2016](#)

## PAX CHRISTI INTERNATIONAL IN THE MEDIA

[Pax Christi makes global call for prayer and fasting for Syria](#),  
Independent catholic news, 16 February

[Pax Christi International statement after Holy Land Coordination visit](#),  
independent catholic news, 1 February

[Marie Dennis, coprésidente de Pax Christi et globe-trotteuse de la paix](#),  
La Croix, 31 January

[Father Lapsley gets international award](#),  
IOL, 22 February

[Friends Committee Welcomes Bill to Prevent Genocide and Atrocities](#),  
PR Newswire, 11 February

■

## RESOURCES FROM MEMBER ORGANISATIONS

- Pax Christi USA Reflection: [Listen deeply to God’s word, follow that Word](#), by Bishop Thomas Gumbleton (Pax Christi USA Teacher of Peace)
- Pax Christi USA Reflection: [Called to transform our world](#), by Bishop Thomas Gumbleton (Pax Christi USA Teacher of Peace)
- Pax Christi USA prayer card: [Features the words and message of Pope Francis](#), February 2016

- Pax Christi USA Reflection: [Renew your commitment during Lent](#), by Bishop Thomas Gumbleton (Pax Christi USA Teacher of Peace)
- Pax Christi USA: [Reflection for the Third Sunday of Lent](#), 28 February by Eric LeCompte (Pax Christi USA Ambassador of Peace)
- Pax Christi USA: [REFLECTION: We become righteous by listening to God](#), 26 February by Bishop Thomas Gumbleton (Pax Christi USA Teacher of Peace)
- Siege Watch (PAX Netherlands and The Syria Institute): [First Quarterly Report on Besieged Areas in Syria](#), February 2016
- PAX and ARES: [Unmanned Threats: The use of commercially-available UAVs by armed non-state actors](#), February 2016
- Pax Christi Wallonie-Bruxelles: [UBER, AIRBNB, ... quand le racisme s'invite dans l'économie de partage](#) (Analysis), February 2016
- Pax Christi Wallonie-Bruxelles: [Banalisation des stéréotypes négrophobes, symbole d'un profond malaise](#) (Analysis), February 2016



## VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES

### Online Volunteer Translators

Pax Christi International is looking for online volunteers to translate and/or proofread its monthly newsletter as well as occasional advocacy documents and statements pertaining to human rights, human security, disarmament, demilitarization, just world order, religion and violent conflict, from/into: English, French, German, Spanish, Italian, Portuguese, Dutch, Russian, Arabic, etc. For details, click [here](#). ■

## INTERNATIONAL CALENDAR

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

To unsubscribe from this list, contact: [hello@paxchristi.net](mailto:hello@paxchristi.net).

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