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GLOBAL

Rome: Nonviolence and Just Peace conference

From 11-13 April, 2016, Pax Christi International, the Holy See's Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace and other major Catholic organisations gathered in Rome for an unprecedented conference, "Nonviolence and Just Peace: Contributing to the Catholic Understanding of and Commitment to Nonviolence". More than 80 participants – members of the clergy, women religious and laity who have experience in peacebuilding and active nonviolence in the face of violence and war -- contributed concrete ways in which the Catholic Church can deepen its understanding of nonviolence, including an explicit rejection of "just war" thinking. Cardinal Peter Turkson, president of the Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace, presented [Pope Francis' greeting message](#) as the opening address for the conference, and also celebrated at the conference's closing Mass. The outcome of the conference can be read [English](#), [Dutch](#), [French](#), and [Spanish](#). Also see the [photos](#) and access the [media coverage](#).



GDAM: Global Days of Action on Military Spending 2016 in Brussels

Pax Christi International attended the closing event of the 2016 Global Days of Action on Military Spending (GDAM) on 18 April in Brussels. Pax Christi International and the other participants signed a [statement](#) calling upon the EU and its member states to "find a better balance between military expenditures

on the one hand and investments in peacebuilding and conflict prevention, the Green Climate Fund and the implementation of the sustainable development goals (SDGs) on the other." Read about Pax Christi UK's GDAM event in London [here](#). All of these events are in preparation for the World Congress on Military and Social Spending in October. ■

AFRICA

Congo for beginners

On 12, 19, 26 April and 3 May 2016, Pax Christi Flanders hosted a series of discussions on the Democratic Republic of the Congo entitled, "Congo Voor Beginners." During each session, speakers discussed the following themes pertaining to the DR Congo: Society and politics: Can the voice of the voter change anything?; Economy and development: Who determines the future- the big industrialist or the small farmer?; War and peace: No peace agreement brought peace. How did that happen?; Arts and culture: How do Belgian and Congolese artists inspire each other? Read more in Dutch [here](#). ■

Congo: Lecture on "Métis children"

On 27 April 2016, Pax Christi Wallonie-Bruxelles invited author Assumani Budagwa to discuss the history of "Métis children", which continues to be a taboo topic in the Belgium society. The "Métis children", who were born during Belgian colonisation to African and European parents, did not fit into the societal categorisation of either black or white. The Belgian colonial authorities took drastic

measures against them because they were seen as a threat to the interests of Belgium. The talk provided a platform for Budagwa to elaborate on those measures, the present day consequences of their mistreatment, as well as why this topic continues to be sensitive more than 50 years after colonisation ended. Read more [here](#) in French. ■

South Africa: Men as peacemakers workshop

From 15-17 April 2016, the South African Catholic Bishops' Conference (SACBC) Justice and Peace – a member organisation of Pax Christi International – supported the organisation of a three-day training for male peacemakers in Durban (South Africa). Thirty participants learned skills to peacefully address gender based and other related violence in their own communities. In his address, Cardinal Napier encouraged the trainees to pass their knowledge on to other men. Despite the training he highlighted his concerns about the increase in violence in the Archdiocese of Durban. Read more and see photos [here](#). ■

AMERICAS AND CARIBBEAN

Latin America and Caribbean: Ratification of Paris Agreement

Pax Christi International is a signatory of a statement written by Latin American and Caribbean civil society organisations, which was presented 22 April 2016 at the headquarters of the UN, demanding that governments sign and advance their commitment to the Paris Agreement. The statement urges governments to foster the

processes of the ratification of the Paris Agreement for its application in their public policy, to put an end to the criminalisation of defenders of the environment, and to abandon the use of nuclear energy and fracking. Read the statement [here](#) in Spanish. ■

Colombia: Contribution of women in peace process

From 22 February to 10 March 2016, Pax Christi Montreal organised a tour of visits and public lectures in Canada, focusing on the participation of women in the Colombian peace process. The keynote speaker, Rosa Emilia Salamanca Gonzalez, is the founder of Colectivo de Pensamiento y Acción Mujeres, Paz y Seguridad (Colombia), which won the 2015 Pax Christi International Peace Award. The tour established a platform to discuss the contributions women have made in Colombia since the implementation of UN Resolution 1325 in 2000, which requires states to include women in the prevention and resolution of conflicts. Read more in French [here](#). ■

Honduras: Safe return home for Gustavo Castro Soto

The Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns (MOGC), a Pax Christi International member organisation, was relieved to say that on 1 April 2016, “Gustavo Castro Soto, coordinator of [Friends of the Earth Mexico](#), returned home to Mexico from Honduras, after the Honduran government lifted a month-long ban on his freedom of travel.” On 3 March, Gustavo was wounded during the same attack in which Berta Cáceres was murdered. Read the [statement](#) from Berta Cáceres' family, on the

one month anniversary of her murder. MOGC also reported that the three founders of the Agua Zarca Dam, a project that Berta worked tirelessly to prevent, suspended their financial activities in Honduras. Read more [here](#). ■

Haiti: Report on 2015 election

On 31 March 2016, the Commission Episcopale Nationale Justice et Paix d’Haiti, a Pax Christi International member organisation, published an observation report on the 2015 Haitian election. They concluded that little had been done since the last elections five years ago to improve the election process. For example, the National Office of Identification did not substantially improve nor update their database on Haitian citizens, which prevented many from voting, as their names were not registered with their local government. Although the second round of voting in October was peaceful, the first round in August was marred by violence and intimidation. Read more in French [here](#). ■

ASIA - PACIFIC

Australia: Peace vigil in support of Jasmine Pilbrow and refugees

On 7 April 2016, Pax Christi Australia held a nonviolent vigil in support of Jasmine Pilbrow. On 2 February 2015, “Jasmine calmly and peacefully refused to take her seat on a Qantas flight in an effort to prevent the forced removal of a vulnerable asylum seeker from Australia to Sri Lanka.” As a result of her action, she was charged with “interference with a crew member of an aircraft” under the Civil Aviation Act and faces a maximum of

\$10,500 fine or two years imprisonment. The decision to charge Jasmine is an attempt to intimidate the increasing number of Australians who disagree with the government’s treatment of refugees. Read more [here](#). ■

Sri Lanka: “Human rights workshop for religious and priests”

From 1-4 February 2016, the Human Rights Office-Kandy, a Pax Christi International member organisation in Sri Lanka, attended the “Human rights workshop for religious and priests”. Prior to the workshop, so as to better grasp the human rights situation in Sri Lanka, the participants visited Keppapaulu, a village in Sri Lanka that is occupied by the navy, preventing villagers’ access to their own lands. Later, women-headed families that were victims of war, expulsion, and riots in the south of the country met with the participants. At the end of the workshop, participants discussed proposals for a new constitution to be submitted to the Constitutional Council before the end of March. The next meeting will take place from 25-28 July 2016. See their website [here](#). ■

EUROPE

Italy: Monsignor Luigi Bettazzi awarded honorary citizenship of Bologna

On 4 April 2016, Monsignor Luigi Bettazzi, former president of Pax Christi Italy and Pax Christi International (1978-85), was awarded honorary citizenship of the city of Bologna (Italy), for his commitment to the affirmation of a culture of peace and solidarity in the

world, and for the promotion of human rights. During his tenure as president of Pax Christi International, he implemented peace initiatives in Latin America and the southern hemisphere. Read Pax Christi International's congratulatory letter [here](#). ■

Denmark: Energy company suspends blood coal imports

On 11 April 2016, PAX Netherlands welcomed a [letter](#) from DONG, the largest energy company in Denmark, stating that it will not renew its coal imports from the Colombian mining company Prodeco/Glencore. According to perpetrators and former contractors, between 1996 and 2006, the mining company supported paramilitary violence which resulted in the deaths of 3,100 people in Cesar, and the displacement of 55,000. Despite the news from DONG, the campaign leader of PAX, Wouter Kolk, "urges Danish politicians and consumers to ask for full transparency and to make sure that these municipalities will start acting as responsibly as DONG." Read more [here](#). ■

MIDDLE EAST

Letter to Obama, Putin: Hope for Syria is crumbling

On 29 April 2016, Pax Christi International co-signed a letter addressed to President Barack Obama and President Vladimir Putin, demanding the immediate use of their personal diplomatic engagement, to save what remains of the February Cessation of Hostilities (CoH) agreement. During the first month of the CoH, there were less deaths than

during any other time, since the beginning of the war. However, recently the violence has escalated alarmingly, which resulted in a death every 25 minutes over a 48-hour span. The letter urges President Obama and President Putin to heed the call of the UN Special Envoy to Syria, to take steps to rescue Syria's cessation of hostilities and end attacks on civilians. Read the letter [here](#). ■

Syria: Call for immediate lifting of sieges

In the 12 April 2016 [Syria Alert XIX](#), PAX Netherlands called for the prioritisation of the immediate lifting of sieges in Syria, during the Syria talks in Geneva, which began on 13 April. Although bombings have decreased, communities continue to be besieged and the use of starvation as a weapon -- a war crime -- continues to be imposed on the Syrian population. PAX also called on parties to the conflict "to stop attacking civilians and civilian infrastructure, and to end the use of indiscriminate and banned weapons, as well as the use in populated areas of explosive weapons." Read the [open letter](#) written by the Women of Daraya, who are living in one of the blockaded cities on the verge of starvation. Read more [here](#). ■

ADVOCACY & CAMPAIGNING

Letter for OEWG on nuclear disarmament

From 2-13 May 2016, Pax Christi International is present at the UN Open-Ended Working Group on taking forward nuclear disarmament in Geneva – the main working session, following up on the short opening session in February. Pax Christi International shared a

template letter for joint advocacy on this issue within their network. It addresses concerns common to ecumenical groups and civil society organisations in different parts of the world. The letter approaches the topic by looking at basic obligations, meagre recent results, the need for good-faith negotiations, and legal remedies consistent with the working group's mandate. Read the letter [here](#). ■

[PAX nuclear weapons ban proposal to be debated in Parliament](#)

On 28 April 2016, PAX Netherland's proposal for a national ban on nuclear weapons was debated amongst the members of the Dutch Parliament. This discussion is the result of a national campaign, initiated by PAX to put the proposal on the political agenda, which received over 45.000 signatures. If the Dutch government votes to ban nuclear weapons, the Netherlands would join 113 other countries which have indicated a similar position. Read the "Sign Against Nuclear Arms" citizens' [initiative](#). Read more [here](#). ■

[Letter to United Nations expresses concern about new "high-level" panel](#)

Pax Christi International signed a [letter](#) that was sent to Ban Ki-Moon, Secretary General of the United Nations (UN), on 22 April 2016, on the occasion of International Earth Day. The letter welcomes the initiative "to mobilize urgent action towards the sustainable development goal for water and sanitation (SDG 6) and related targets"; however, it expresses concern over the primary mandate and governance of the panel. The letter calls on the "UN to maintain its leadership over the

implementation of SDG 6 and draw from human rights and development experts, [...] rather than corporate lobby groups like the World Water Council." Read more [here](#). ■

HUMAN RIGHTS

[Mexico: Pax Christi training on empowerment](#)

The Latin America and Caribbean network of Pax Christi continues to train communities in Colombia, Guatemala, Peru, Mexico, Chile and Paraguay experiencing conflict in areas where extractive projects are developed. The program empowers communities in transformational local advocacy, as they learn about the implications of those projects, about the national legislation under which they operate, but most importantly, about their rights as individuals and communities. The most recent training took place in Mexico. Read the booklets, which are used for the trainings [here](#) and [here](#) in Spanish. ■

[Canada: PM Trudeau urged to better regulate mining companies](#)

Pax Christi International is one of over 190 organisations that signed a letter sent on 25 April 2016, to Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau pertaining to the human rights violations committed by Canadian mining companies operating in Latin America. The organisations recommend an immediate change in existing policies in order to: "Ensure Canadian mining companies operating in Latin America do so in conformity with the international human rights standards established in treaties; respect the decisions of

numerous communities, Indigenous and non-Indigenous, who have said no to large-scale mining because of its severe damaging impacts on the environment and social wellbeing.” Read the letter here in [English](#) and [Spanish](#). ■

Haiti: Universal periodic review on human rights situation

Pax Christi International and several member organisations were consulted during the writing of the “First-hand Assessment of the Human-rights Situation in Haiti,” which was submitted in March 2016 for consideration to the Universal Periodic Review of the Human Rights Council. Haiti, one of the poorest countries in the world, suffers from very high unemployment, high rates of violence disproportionately affecting the poorest segments of society, and a lack of universal access to education. The document provides the Haitian government with recommendations that can contribute to a constructive review of the human-rights situation in Haiti, prioritising the reality of the most marginalised. Read the document in [English](#) and in [French](#). ■

USA: Letter concerning “Operation Border Guardian”

Pax Christi USA signed a [letter](#) that was sent on 30 March 2016, to the White House and the Department of Homeland Security (DHS), concerning the ongoing raids of Central American families and children occurring under the program “Operation Border Guardian.” The letter, which came in response to a 9 March DHS [press release](#) declaring an increase in raids, focuses on the ineffectiveness of the raids as well as the lack

of due process afforded to targeted families and unaccompanied children, and the negative impact on immigrant communities. It requests a cease in the raids and arrests, and the assurance that legal representation is afforded to those impacted by the program. Read more [here](#). ■

DISARMAMENT

Pax Christi International calls for engaging citizens in biosecurity

From 7-25 November 2016, the Eighth Review Conference of the Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention (BTWC), which is the main international treaty prohibiting handling biological substances for hostile purposes, will be held in Geneva. The review conferences, held once every five years, are the only opportunity to make changes in the text of the treaty. Pax Christi International wants to contribute to the deliberations, suggesting practical routes to lower the threshold for citizens to learn about the challenge to protect their biosecurity. There is no one size fits all solution, but the right balance must be agreed on in broad public dialogue. Read the text and find out what you can do yourself – [download here](#). Read more about the Preparatory Committee meeting in Geneva on 26-27 April [here](#). ■

The European Forum on Armed Drones Call to Action

Pax Christi International supports the European Forum on Armed Drones (EFAD) [Call to Action](#), which was adopted during a meeting on 7 April 2016. “The growing

proliferation and use of armed drones, including among European states, is a real danger to global peace, security and international law. We urge that the legal and ethical issues raised by their use, as well as the security consequences, be fully, publicly and democratically debated.” EFAD calls upon all European governments to articulate clear policies, prevent complicity, ensure transparency, establish accountability, and control proliferation. It was decided during the meeting that PAX Netherlands’ Jessica Dorsey will be taking over as the new coordinator of EFAD. ■

[Pax Christi Flanders: Peace conference warplanes](#)

On 15 April 2016, Pax Christi Flanders held its annual conference of the Belgian peace movement. Its theme revolved around the Belgian government’s announcement on 22 December 2015 to purchase 34 fighter planes for 15 billion euros. Pax Christi Flanders strongly opposes the purchase as the planes are unjustifiably costly and rarely contribute to a lasting solution. Read more [here](#). On 24 April, Pax Christi Flanders also organised a [national demonstration](#) against the fighters. ■

PEACE SPIRITUALITY

[Pax Christi Germany: Peace mediation on Dietrich Bonhoeffer](#)

From 15-17 April 2016 Pax Christi Germany’s office in Limburg co-organised a peace meditation on Dietrich Bonhoeffer entitled “... stop the spin of the wheel”. His life became a symbol of Christian resistance in Germany

against the Nazi regime, and his words deeply influenced Christian spirituality and theology. During this weekend, his ideas and life pertaining to mysticism and engagement were explored through meditation, moments of silence and discussions. It was connected to ways to encounter social division and fundamentalism today. The meditation days took place in Hofheim (Germany). Read more in German [here](#). ■

PEACE EDUCATION

[France: Conference on interreligious dialogue](#)

From 17-19 May 2016, an international conference entitled “The search for peace: interreligious dialogue?” will take place at the Catholic University of the West in Angers (France). Pax Christi France is among the organisers of the event. The conference, which was convened as a result of the attacks in Paris last year, will discuss interreligious dialogue and its theoretical and practical influence today – also in reference to the conflicts in the Middle East. The conference will focus on religions calling themselves ‘religions of peace’ despite instances of violence in their history. Read more and register [here](#). ■

[Belgium: Peer mediation for students](#)

On 27 April 2016, Pax Christi Flanders in cooperation with the Netwerk Onderwijs Mediation, offered a free information session on peer mediation, thanks to Flemish minister Crevits’ announcement to invest in peer mediation at schools. Pax Christi Flanders held these mediations as a method to teach students how to act as mediators in conflicts.

Moreover, the session provided a platform for participants to reflect on their own conflicts, gain more self-confidence, and a positive self-image. Read more in Dutch [here](#). ■

Belgium: Training intercultural approaches at school

On 14 and 15 April, 2016 Pax Christi Wallonie-Bruxelles co-organised a training session to resolve intercultural conflicts and promote dialogue in class for secondary school teachers. The intercultural approach as well as the “cultural shock” method, which was developed by social psychologist Margalit Cohen-Emerique, were explained and utilised during the training session. After the theoretical approaches, the necessary tools for the implementation of intercultural dialogue in the classroom were discussed. Read more [here](#) in French. ■

PAX CHRISTI INTERNATIONAL IN THE MEDIA

[Pope Francis’s message to the conference](#), Vatican Radio, 12 April 2016

[Pax Christi promotes 'Just Peace' rather than 'Just War'](#), Vatican Radio interview of Marie Dennis, Co-President of Pax Christi, 12 April 2016

[Pax Christi et Justice et Paix: trois objectifs du pape François](#), Zenit, 12 April 2016

[Jean-Marie Muller: Faire prévaloir l’Évangile de la non-violence dans la pensée et l’action de l’Église](#), Église catholique en Alsace – Diocèse de Strasbourg, 29 April 2016

Read more about the media coverage of the international conference [here](#).

See photos of the international conference [here](#).

[Global Day of Action on Military Spending](#), independent catholic news, 19 April 2016 ■

RESOURCES FROM MEMBER ORGANISATIONS

- St. Columbans Mission Society Reflection: [The Lord is Risen](#), 30 March 2016
- Pax Christi USA Reflection: [The way to peace is through love](#), 3 April 2016, by Bishop Thomas Gumbleton (Pax Christi USA Teacher of Peace)
- Pax Christi USA Reflection: [Jesus is alive forever and draws us into his risen life](#), 9 April 2016, by Bishop Thomas Gumbleton (Pax Christi USA Teacher of Peace)
- Pax Christi USA Reflection: [We can’t forget our suffering brothers and sisters](#), 24 April 2016, by Bishop Thomas Gumbleton (Pax Christi USA Teacher of Peace)
- Grupo de Apoyo Mutuo: [Informe Monitoreo de Violencia Homicida en Guatemala](#), 6 April 2016
- Pax Netherlands: [Syria Alert XIX - Immediate lifting of sieges in Syria must be prioritized](#), 14 April 2016
- Pax Christi Wallonie-Bruxelles: [Financement des associations](#)

[émanant des minorités
ethnoculturelles : reconnaître pour
partager](#), (Analysis) 21 April 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.

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