

# Justpeace

## PAX CHRISTI

International Catholic Movement for Peace

Justpeace No 306 December 2015

ISSN0287-7647

*The articles in this issue of Justpeace remind us of the necessity of our work: to speak out against the arms trade, the use of armed drones and military intervention and to attempt to identify the root causes of injustice and violence in our world. Paul Rogers tells us that ISIS is being strengthened by the air war being used against it - causing the death of countless civilians. Chris Cole writes of an increase in the use of British armed drones in military operations and now too in targeted killings. As Christian peacemakers we have an opportunity to bring these and other concerns to our parishes and communities when we celebrate Peace Sunday in January. Overcome indifference and win peace is the theme Pope Francis has chosen. Challenging the causes of war and the tools of war should be part of our message on Peace Sunday.*

### The Paris atrocity, and after by Prof Paul Rogers

The ISIS assaults in Paris on the evening of November 13 were carefully planned by a large team of three groups with at least eight men prepared to die. Some internal French involvement, perhaps limited, is possible.

The operation had three components, each with a distinct target. The Stade de France attack was small-scale but large impact - its ingredients a modern national sporting icon, the occasion of a match with Germany, and the French president's presence among the fans. The Bataclan theatre was hosting a popular American rock band, thus ensuring a very international audience. The café and bar attacks would result in persistent fear across a popular district of Paris and well beyond.

Indeed the global impact is already huge, probably more than London's bombs in July 2005, Madrid's Atocha rail terminal bombs in March 2004, and even the Sari nightclub attack in Bali in October 2002. Paris is on a similar scale to the even more complex and long-lasting Mumbai operation in November 2008, which had a profound impact in India (but less so outside). Among western states, the effect is the biggest since 9/11, which was of course much greater still.

#### A blowback war

It has three purposes. The first is to demonstrate that in the wake of the destruction of Russia's Metrojet over Sinai and the bombing in Beirut on November 12, ISIS has now gone truly international. Thus its modus operandi has reached the level of the loose al-Qaida affiliates in the post-9/11 years: Islamabad, Bali, Madrid, London, Jakarta, Istanbul, Mombasa, Amman, Sinai, Casablanca, Djerba in Tunisia - and many more. This is potentially a very major change since ISIS has so far concentrated primarily on its territorial base, in contrast to the old al-Qaida movement.

The second is to further damage intercommunal relations, not just in Paris but across western Europe and further afield. An accelerating Islamophobia suits ISIS in its quest to attract more recruits from recent diasporas and more established migrant communities, many members of whom



Paul Rogers with Fausta Valentine, Pax Christi at the 'Things That Make For Peace' NJPN Conference, July 2015

now feel thoroughly insecure and greatly worried and even fearful of the hardening of attitudes towards them.

The third is to provoke and incite France and other states to intensify the war against ISIS - in Syria, Iraq, and anywhere else that it, or its affiliates, make progress.

ISIS wants war. It presents itself as the true guardian of Islam under attack from the 'crusader west'. This message, though pernicious and dangerous, is currently being encouraged by the progressive withdrawal of all Middle Eastern states from active involvement in the airstrikes against ISIS in Syria.

The air war in Syria was in early 2015 led by the United States with the participation of France, Australia, Canada, Bahrain, Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates (UAE) and Jordan. In recent months, however, the four Arab states have ceased bombing. In addition, Justin Trudeau's new government in Canada is withdrawing all CF-18 strike-aircraft from Syria and Iraq, and Australia is reported to have paused its operations in Syria since the Russians started separate air attacks (almost all against non-ISIS anti-Assad rebels). That leaves just the US and France. So in Syria at least, ISIS can easily claim that a 'crusader onslaught' is taking place.

Furthermore, the sustained air assault of the last 15 months, with close to 10,000 targets hit, has not pushed ISIS into retreat. In the first 11 months of the air war, to July 2015, the US-led coalition killed 15,000 ISIS supporters. By October, that had risen to 20,000, yet a Pentagon source said that the total number of ISIS fighters was unchanged at 20,000-30,000. (*USA Today*, 12 October 2015).

In an extraordinary admission, US intelligence sources say there has been a surge in recruits to ISIS in spite of the air

war and the losses. In September 2014, 15,000 recruits were reported to have joined from 80 countries; a year later the figure had risen to 30,000 from 100 countries.

### A turning-point?

In blunt terms, ISIS is actually being strengthened by the air war, and it can be assumed that it wants more. The movement vigorously and insistently peddles the message of 'Islam under attack'; and though it is disliked and hated by the great majority of Muslims worldwide, the message strikes enough of a chord with a small minority to serve ISIS's aim of creating this purist if brutal caliphate.

It is possible that French and British political leaders and others will respond with care and forethought, rather than rushing into a more intensive war. But it is unlikely. The appetite to face up to the problems of the 14 years since 9/11 is absent, notwithstanding the efforts of a minority of analysts to point to the realities of this period.

Afghanistan now faces a growing Taliban presence involving widespread control of many rural areas; Libya is a chaotic mess of competing militias and a growing Islamist

presence; Iraq has seen over 30,000 civilians killed since the beginning of 2014 alone, and substantial parts of the country are now under ISIS control.

Across the Middle East and north Africa, close to 300,000 people have been killed and hundreds of thousands injured, while many millions more have been forced from their homes. Add the chaos and suffering in Syria and the spread of ISIS ideas in Afghanistan, the Caucasus and north and east Africa, and the terrible, large-scale failure - of western politicians, regional leaders and the wider world - is clear.

Will Paris lead to a rethink? No, that is highly unlikely. There is simply neither the wisdom nor the independent and able leadership anywhere across the western world for that to happen. Instead, and at least for now, further tragedies will unfold.

*Paul Rogers is professor in the Department of Peace Studies at the University of Bradford. This article originally appeared on 14 November on the Open Democracy website where Paul writes a weekly article on security [www.opendemocracy.net](http://www.opendemocracy.net)*

## Advent & Christmas action and solidarity for Palestine & Israel 2015

Christmas celebrations will take place in a very difficult climate for all peoples in the Holy Land but many individuals and groups refuse to give up hope and are searching for nonviolent ways to work for human rights and a just and peaceful future for both peoples. Please consider some of these ideas:

- Include prayers for justice, peace and security for Palestine and Israel in your Advent and Christmas services. Light a candle for peace in Palestine and Israel each day of Advent.
- Look for ways in which your Advent Services and Christmas crib can show how the people of Bethlehem are living now - perhaps build a wall around or through the crib and discuss who would be inside or outside. Pax Christi has a small walled crib which could provide a model.

*The Kairos Palestine Christmas Alert resource has testimonies and stories from Palestinian women. Find it here <http://www.kairopalestine.ps/>*

- A 'Palestinian Gift Basket' could include Palestinian olive oil, soap, almonds, dates, simple olive wood hangings. Pax Christi can provide hangings and soap, other items can be bought from Zaytoun or can often be found in OXFAM shops. [www.zaytoun.org](http://www.zaytoun.org) or tel 0781 4477188
- A life-long gift. Why not have olive trees planted in the name of a friend or family member as a life-long Christmas present? Zaytoun have a Plant a Tree project: £20 buys five three-year-old olive saplings - gift certificate provided. See more here [www.zaytoun.org/plant\\_a\\_tree.htmlbuy](http://www.zaytoun.org/plant_a_tree.htmlbuy)



*Pax Christi crib with wall, 11cm x 6cm, £7.50*

- Reflect on Palestinians today attempting to travel yet held at checkpoints and separated from friends and family by the separation wall. The people of Bethlehem, surrounded by the wall, cannot leave without a special permit. They are imprisoned by the wall. Christians living outside Bethlehem are usually denied permits to worship there at Christmas. Here you can see a link to the most recent Pax Christi statement on the violence in Palestine & Israel <http://bit.ly/1NUGa3h>
- Write to your MP and MEP setting out your concerns for peace in Palestine & Israel, urging them to challenge the Government to take more vigorous actions to end the illegal occupation. [www.writetothem.com](http://www.writetothem.com)

## Resources and articles

**Amidst the debris: a study on the environmental and public health impact of Syria's conflict.** This new report produced by our sister organisation PAX in the Netherlands addresses one of the biggest refugee crises in history and explores threats from environmental pollution and the hazards from munitions used in the conflict. Downloadable here [www.paxforpeace.nl/](http://www.paxforpeace.nl/)

**Planet Syria** is a website created by nonviolent Syrian activists. They aim to engage people around the world in solidarity to stop the violence and extremism. [www.planetsyria.org/en](http://www.planetsyria.org/en)  
A similar website, looking at nonviolent work/responses within and beyond Syria is **The Syria Campaign** <https://thesyriacampaign.org/#>

**Raising a generation for peace in Syria:** The guest speaker at our AGM this year was Fr Ziad Hilal from Syria. Ziad, who was working with JRS Syria, was interviewed by Thinking Faith website about the 'crisis of humanity' through which the Syrian people are living. [www.thinkingfaith.org/articles/raising-generation-peace-syria](http://www.thinkingfaith.org/articles/raising-generation-peace-syria)

When MPs voted to undertake air strikes against ISIS last autumn, they did so on the understanding that such action would be limited to Iraq. This was because as the Iraqi government had requested military assistance, air strikes would be legal under international law. In the absence of a similar request from Syria - or a UN resolution - MPs accepted that British military action would not be legal in Syria.

However within weeks of their deployment last October, armed British drones began to regularly cross the border from Iraq into Syria where they are undertaking surveillance missions and enabling US aircraft to undertake strikes. Asked by journalists how this can be, government spokespeople insist that such drone flights do not amount to military action. This is of course nonsense and in stark contrast to the reception given to Russian military flights when they come near (but not into) UK airspace.

One of the key issues about the growing use of armed drones is how they are lowering the threshold for the use of force and making military intervention and war more likely. This is because possible averse public reaction to the death of western military forces deployed overseas has been a real restraint on political leaders weighing up the option of military intervention. Take that potential political cost away by using unmanned systems and it becomes easier for political leaders to choose the military option.

This was even starkly illustrated by the PM's use of a British drone to undertake the targeted killing of British ISIS militant Reyaad Khan. David Cameron admitted that the strike was a significant departure for the UK telling parliament it was "...the first time we have used a British [drone] ...to conduct a strike in a country where we are not involved in a war". While the PM insisted that the strike was legal, international law scholars expressed grave doubts. Green Party MP Caroline Lucas alongside Human Rights group Reprieve have initiated a judicial review, and parliament's Joint Human Rights Committee as well as the Intelligence and Security Committee have launched inquiries.

More war inevitably means more civilian casualties. There has been little coverage in the press of the impact of air strikes in Iraq and Syria. Airwars.org which compiles reliable reports of civilian casualties in Iraq and Syria believes that



Chris and colleagues at RAF Waddington

between 650 and 900 civilians have been killed in Coalition airstrikes. The UK MoD insists however that there is no evidence that civilians have been killed in more than 400 British air and drone strikes.

All three countries that have used armed drones (US, Israel, UK) have now also used drones to undertake the targeted killing of individuals beyond the generally accepted provisions of international law (although unsurprisingly the countries themselves refute this). The reality seems to be that once drone technology is in the armoury, the temptation to target and kill individuals even beyond the confines of international law, becomes too great.

Chris Cole is a member of Pax Christi's Executive Committee and director of Drone Wars UK. [www.dronewars.net](http://www.dronewars.net)

In January 2015 Chris, with three other anti-drone protesters, Gary 'Eagle Spits' Eagling, Katha Karcher, Penny Walker entered RAF Waddington in order to disrupt ongoing British drone operation in Iraq and Syria. They were charged with criminal damage for cutting a hole in the fence. At their trial in October they were given a two-year conditional discharge, ordered to pay £22 each for the cost of the damaged fence and also pay £300 court costs each. Supporters have rallied around and helped to meet these costs and so share in the action.

## Diary

### 8 December (Tue) London

Pax Christi's Advent Peace Service. 7.30pm at St Aloysius Church, Phoenix Road MW1 1TA followed by alternative Christmas market at 8.20pm.

### 16 December (Wed) Stafford

'Blessed Oscar Romero, His life and legacy' Stafford Justice and Peace Group are hosting a talk by Julian Filochowski. At 7.30 pm in Saint Austin's Parish Hall, 82 Wolverhampton Road, Stafford ST17 AW. Info: [staffordjusticeandpeace@gmail.com](mailto:staffordjusticeandpeace@gmail.com)

### 8-10 January (Fri-Sun) Swanwick, Derbyshire

'The Middle East - Conflict Transformation'. Christians Aware Annual Conference at Hayes Conference Centre. Speakers include Jeff Halper of the Israeli Committee Against House Demolitions. Seminars on Syria, Iraq, Egypt, Turkey, How perceptions of the Middle East affect Jews in Britain, and Middle Eastern songs. Info: [barbarabutler@christiansaware.co.uk](mailto:barbarabutler@christiansaware.co.uk) or tel 0116 254 0770

### 17 January Peace Sunday

'Overcome indifference and win peace' is Pope Francis' theme. Look at the Pax Christi website for ideas and downloads of bidding

prayers, sermon notes and suggestions for activities. [www.paxchristi.org.uk](http://www.paxchristi.org.uk)

### 24 January Homeless Sunday

Materials for worship and children, posters and prayer cards downloadable at [www.homeless-sunday.uk](http://www.homeless-sunday.uk). Prayer cards by post (£5 for 50) from Housing Justice, 256 Bermondsey Street, London SE1 3UJ or call 020 3544 8094

### 7 February Church Action on Poverty Sunday

Bread broken for all - securing the right to food. Worship and fundraising pack from Church Action on Poverty [www.church-poverty.org.uk/sunday](http://www.church-poverty.org.uk/sunday) or CAP, 35 Dale Street, Manchester M1 2HF.

### 10 February Ash Wednesday (London)

Witness against Nuclear War Preparations - annual liturgy at the Ministry of Defence, London. Check Pax Christi website for details.

### 27 February (Sat) London

Stop Trident: Decision Time 2016 - National demonstration against Britain's nuclear weapons system. Organised by CND. If you'd like to join other Pax Christi members, check Pax Christi's website for details of when and where to meet up.

### 19 March (Sat) Leeds

Conscientious Objection and Resistance to the First World War. A community day with speakers, films, displays and stalls by local history and peace groups. 11am-5pm Leeds City Museum. Organised by Legacies of War, as part of a 3-day academic conference. Register online [www.leeds.ac.uk/arts/homepage/523/conference\\_resistance\\_to\\_war\\_1914-1924](http://www.leeds.ac.uk/arts/homepage/523/conference_resistance_to_war_1914-1924). Use the separate tab for the Saturday only event, priced at £5-£20 depending on lunch and concessions.

### Looking ahead to 2016

2016 is being called the 'Year of Conscience' because it marks the centenary of the introduction of conscription - and the first legal recognition of conscientious objection - in the Military Service Act. Plan an event in your area to honour those who said 'No' to war. Some groups are organising for 2 March (the date conscription came into force) and others working towards International Conscientious Objectors' Day on 15 May. Let's make 2016 significant in towns and villages across the country.

If you are organising a local event don't forget to let Pax Christi know in time to advertise it, and send a report/photo for the Members' News section of the website.

## Pax Christi - Peace Sunday 2016

In his letter to parishes for Peace Sunday our President Archbishop Malcolm McMahon writes: *In his World Peace Day message this year, Overcome indifference and win peace, Pope Francis invites us to reflect on how we can hope for peace without working to challenge the causes of violence and injustice in our world today. Time and again Pope Francis has spoken of our 'throw-away culture' that dehumanises and destroys the human person whether through war and conflict or economic injustice. On Peace Sunday, we have an opportunity to learn from this message and put our faith into action.*

With this mailing we include a copy of the Peace Sunday liturgy booklet and an order form. Your parish priest will have received this in November but YOU can make all the difference in ensuring that Peace Sunday is marked

in your parish. Everything in the booklet is also available on our website. You could:

- offer to print out the prayers of the faithful
- share a few words about Pax Christi at Mass, telling people why YOU are a member (you could use the article below to help frame your talk)
- share the enclosed booklet with those who look after children's liturgy
- order and hand out Pax Christi leaflets or prayer cards at Mass on Peace Sunday
- put a notice in your parish newsletter or magazine promoting Pax Christi and Peace Sunday

Please let us know what you did and how it went.

## Peace Sunday and Peacemaking in the Year of Mercy, article for newsletters by Fr Rob Esdaile

Pope Francis has asked the Catholic community to live 2016 as a 'Year of Mercy',<sup>1</sup> inviting us to 'contemplate the mystery' revealed in Jesus Christ. He reminds us that Jesus' parables of mercy show the nature of God to be 'that of a Father who never gives up until he has forgiven the wrong and overcome rejection with compassion and mercy';<sup>2</sup> and that Jesus personified that mercy in his dealings with all, friend and foe alike.

### Mercy, the power of new hope

Our task, therefore, is to make God's mercy visible in our world and to show the creative power of that mercy, as 'the force that reawakens us to new life and instils in us the courage to look to the future with hope.'<sup>3</sup>

As a first step, everyone who visits a Christian home, parish, school or community should find there 'an oasis of mercy'.<sup>4</sup> But then, says Pope Francis, we have to take that mercy out beyond the confines of Church life, by opening our eyes to see the misery of the world, the wounds of our brothers and sisters who are denied their dignity, and to recognise that we are compelled to help them. And we must extend the quality of God's mercy to the natural world as well, by the way we reverence creation in both its beauty and its fragility.<sup>5</sup> The way of mercy must be a seamless robe, affecting all of life.

### Overcome indifference to win the prize of peace

I hope you can hear the urgency in Pope Francis' appeal, his 'burning desire' that we re-engage with the need around us, 're-awakening our conscience' by practical actions and by prayer.<sup>6</sup> On Sunday, January 17, the Catholic Church in England and Wales celebrates Peace Sunday, our annual day of prayer for peace, using the theme chosen by Pope Francis, 'Overcome indifference and win peace'.

That title shows the same sense of urgency as the Pope's more general appeal that we become bearers of God's mercy to the world. For how can we hope for peace if we do not reject the 'destructive cynicism' which says that nothing can be done to change the world? Yet this is an urgency born of hope: Pope Francis sees Peace as a 'prize' that is there for the winning; and the way to gain the prize is to choose (individually and collectively) a way of life dedicated to doing justice, God's justice, a justice rooted in love.

### Working for peace every day of the year

Pax Christi, which facilitates the Peace Sunday celebrations each year, works with a similar urgency to secure the 'prize' of a peace which is both merciful and just. This it does locally by linking together people who are committed to the work of making peace, providing resources, and fostering prayer and reflection regarding the meaning of the Gospel of Peace. But it also works internationally to build trust in troubled areas of the world and to speak out on issues of war and peace on the basis of Catholic ethics. Please do all you can to help support Pax Christi - Peace Sunday on 17 January.

<sup>1</sup> Pope Francis, *Misericordiae Vultus*, Bull of Indiction of the Extraordinary Jubilee of Mercy (2015) n.2

<sup>2</sup> Ibid, n.9

<sup>3</sup> Ibid, n.10

<sup>4</sup> Ibid, n.12

<sup>5</sup> See Pope Francis, *Laudato Si'*, Encyclical Letter on Care for our Common Home (2015)

<sup>6</sup> *Misericordiae Vultus*, n.15



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<http://www.twitter.com/PaxChristiYouth>

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## Pax Christi – Our Values

Pax Christi members live by the biblically inspired values of  
**Peace, Reconciliation, Nonviolence.**

These values are supported by the witness of peacemakers down the ages and the experience of the Pax Christi community.

Pax Christi is rooted in Catholic Christianity but is open to all who are in sympathy with its values and work.

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