

Celebrating Women Peacemakers

This issue of Justpeace prepares for International Women's Day on 8 March. We read of strong links of friendship and solidarity forged with women in Palestine. Women from Pakistan, India, Bangladesh, Eritrea, Syria, Iran, Democratic Republic of Congo find some peace and support away from the violence of war through the Women Together project in Liverpool. The UN too has initiatives to acknowledge the impact of war on women and allow women to be change-makers in peacebuilding. We encourage you to celebrate women peacemakers on 8th March, using the enclosed card (you can order more) and the address list we provide.

Moving from encounter to solidarity in Palestine

I had a long interest in the region through studying and teaching Scripture but this developed into a major concern when I visited Palestine for the first time, with Pax Christi, for Christmas 2004. Staying with a wonderful family, hearing their story of trying to survive during the Intifada and of life under Israeli occupation made a deep impression on me. Everywhere we went, and every person we met, showed the daily violations of international law, denial of human rights and sheer inhumanity of the Israeli occupying forces and the illegal settlers.

Listening to women's stories showed me that women always pick up the pieces of life in conflict zones. In holding their families together, supporting husbands and children and rarely being in official positions of influence. In 'our' family the wife and mother was not only doing all that but was the breadwinner as her husband had been shot and badly injured by an Israeli soldier. During our time there, she and three other women stood as Independent candidates in the local election, and won. Unheard of! But she was unable to take her place because she was working.

Other women told us their stories of displacement, loss of land, intimidation, being unable to travel to work, violence from the Israeli occupation soldiers, being refused access to hospitals and losing babies as a result, seeing the daily fear of their children. I have seen these injustices increase drastically over the years and in particular the intimidation, violent attacks and imprisonment of their children has become part of the life of Palestinian mothers.

I have continued to visit Palestine every year, to offer solidarity and to listen. I was also privileged to be an



Ann Farr (right) with Palestinian friends

Ecumenical Accompanier, living for three months in the tiny farming village of Yanoun, near Nablus. Surrounded by illegal Israeli settlers the villagers are under threat all the time. Here, daily life for the women is incredibly hard as they attempt to feed and clothe their families with only 20% of their land left to them.

I think that the most important thing I can do is to tell the stories of those I meet, to raise awareness here in the UK. Advocacy is a major part of my work, both within church networks and in UK and EU political arenas. Being part of Pax Christi International, of Kairos Britain and the global Kairos movement helps the networking and bridge building between Palestine and the wider community. It is often possible to put individuals and groups in touch with each other and so ensure that people here are hearing the real story and, if visiting, meeting those who can show the reality of Christians and Muslims living under occupation.

Palestinian women teach us the importance of being in solidarity with each other and of DOING things together. Their story telling, their choirs, dancing, sharing meals, the struggle of maintaining families and sending children to school and university, despite the financial and personal struggles, are all part of their resistance. They teach us to be present and to keep on keeping on. They teach us the importance of nonviolent resilience and persistence - SUMUD.

Ann Farr is a Pax Christi member, currently a member of the board of Pax Christi International (PCI)

More like a family - Women Together, Liverpool

Women Together is a social group created for female asylum seekers and refugees in the Liverpool area. It was formed out of an existing women's group in a busy centre for asylum seekers and refugees. While I was working with groups that provide services I noticed that although there was an excellent provision of services, open to both females and males, many women were not fully accessing all the services available. In this country the asylum seekers and refugees population is 70% male to 30% female. It became apparent that many of the women felt excluded from the services available to them, as a result they simply do not attend. With organisations underfunded and overstretched it is nearly impossible to provide separate services for men and women. This led me to look for funding that could be dedicated solely to women, not their children, not their families, just the women. Women Together functions as a social group and an access point for information about resources that are available to them in Liverpool. Women Together will deal with any and all questions and use the networks and organisations that work with asylum seekers and refugees. It will seek out any resources requested by the women who attend the group.

Women Together, however, is primarily a social space. The group currently meets every Thursday. We start the sessions by sitting down to eat. We set the table together, eat together, and catch up with one another. Then we set about various activities, at present we mainly do sewing activities. We have just created a banner with our logo and we display this in the room where we meet. The women come and share their knowledge and skills with one another. We have many talented women in the group, some teach crochet, knitting, how to make and mend clothes, and many other craft activities. Although it is important to have a shared activity in each session it is becoming clear that what the women value about the group is one another. I told the women about this article and asked them to share some of



Making the Women Together banner

their thoughts about the group. They said that the project brings them together, no matter where they are from or what religion they are. "We sit around a table and share with one another. We sing, we dance, we have fun together." One of the women said "It's not like other groups. Here it is like a family, (in) other groups people sit separately, we sit together and we help each other." The project is dedicated to female asylum seekers and refugees and is designed by the women who also make the decisions about the direction of the project. The hope for the future is to expand, adding more hours and days for the group. Increasingly the women will be in charge of the group themselves, nothing happens unless they agree. In order to do this it is necessary to spend time building the group's identity and really making it theirs to have fun with.

Emma Atherton is project coordinator of Women Together and member of Pax Christi Executive Committee

Peacemaking Resources

Women's International League for Peace and Freedom UK (www.wilpf.org.uk/) have a range of useful resources on their website, including a history of women's peacemaking from the First World War to the present time and useful infographics relating to the UN Resolution 1325. Their film *These Dangerous Women*, about the women peace campaigners of the First World War can be viewed at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0a2xYvXwGiw>. They also have exhibition materials and members willing to speak at meetings.

Women, War and Peace, an 11-minute film featuring stories from Bosnia, Colombia, Afghanistan and Liberia. <http://itvs.org/films/women-war-and-peace>

Pray the devil back to hell, a 9-minute trailer of a powerful film of the women of Liberia who took nonviolent actions to force their government to the negotiating table. <http://www.imdb.com/title/tt1202203/>

Living Along the Fenceline is a film telling the stories of seven women

living near US military bases - in Texas, Puerto Rico, Hawai'i, Guam, The Philippines, South Korea, Okinawa, Japan. It shows how military operations have affected life in their communities and environment, and describes the ways in which they are challenging the assumption that military bases make us safer. More information: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6g5RojBLym0>

The United Nations advocacy on women peace and security was launched by the Security Council after a debate leading to Resolution 1325 of 31 October 2000. Albeit its importance as the first international instrument on the subject and its contribution to a reflection on the particular impact and irrefutable role of women in the approach to violent conflict and the construction of peace, this is not the only Resolution adopted by the Security Council on the matter.

Resolution 1325 was followed by many others developing further, for instance, sexual violence in conflict as a war crime. The study of the whole set of Resolutions exceeds the scope of this contribution.

There is a widespread satisfaction around Resolution 1325, although, often, its complex contents and recommendations are not fully understood and neither is the need to read the Resolution in the framework of broader commitments dealing with human rights (civil, political, economic, social and cultural), social justice and the situation of children and youth, among others.

There has been a tendency to isolate the question of women and conflict from the analysis of how its deep root causes affect women and children, how the efforts to eradicate poverty and consolidate human rights must be part of the process towards the meaningful implementation of the Resolution as a real participatory approach in the design of the national plans for its implementation.

The notion of peace in the United Nations involves a series of stages which demand different analysis and actions, such as what is called early warning and preventive measures when the basis for a conflict may be identified; the establishment and maintenance of peace, what is known as peacekeeping and the stages following the peace agreements, that is, post conflict reconstruction and peace building which are crucial moments to eradicate the deep root causes of conflict, consolidate human rights, justice and democracy.

All these stages require the consideration of the special needs of women and children and the participation of women in the consultations and decisions affecting their lives.

The Resolution has an important focus on the participation of women in the higher echelons of the United Nations; in the leadership of peacekeeping operations; in the governments and in the military.

These aspects are important but what imposes a real challenge are some other paragraphs such as the request to the international community to take into account:

(a) The special needs of women and girls during repatriation and resettlement and for rehabilitation, reintegration and post-conflict reconstruction; (b) measures that support local women's peace initiatives and indigenous processes for conflict resolution, and that involve women in all of the implementation mechanisms of the peace agreements; (c) measures that ensure the protection of and respect for the human rights of women and girls, particularly as they relate to the constitution, the electoral system, the police and the judiciary.

Amidst the violent conflicts, massive violations of human rights, massacres of unimaginable cruelty suffered by women and children in so many parts of the world, the above challenges are a starting point for a global commitment on the part of the international community as a whole and faith based organizations in particular.

Carmen Artigas, is a member of the board of PCI and Legal Officer for the UN Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean.

For updates and accessible resources on the progress of Resolution 1325 visit www.peacewomen.org/



Carmen (front) with Wiltrud Roesch Metzler, both PCI board members

Diary

27 February (Sat) London

Stop Trident: Decision Time 2016 - National demonstration against Britain's nuclear weapons system. Organised by CND. At 11am there will be an interfaith prayer service at Hinde Street Methodist Church, W1U 2QJ and participants will join the march from there. Check Pax Christi's website for details of where we'll be on the march if you want to try and meet up.

29 February and 1 March London

Oh What a Lovely War-Resistance! A musical evening of historic opposition to war. Clive Barrett, Chair of the Peace Museum, will tell the story of the conscientious objectors of the First World War interspersed with the songs that inspired them. Come and sing along to songs of courage and conscience. Monday 29 February, 7pm at St Augustine's Church, (London Catholic Worker) Mattison Road N4 1BG (event put on by Haringey First World War Peace Forum) and Tuesday 1 March 7pm at Hinde Street Methodist Church, W1U 2QJ (sponsored by Pax Christi, Methodist Peace Fellowship, Anglican Pacifist Fellowship and Hinde St Methodist Church).

8 March International Women's Day

Send messages of solidarity and support to women round the world who are working for peace. Cards available from Pax Christi.

15-19 March National

Archbishop Romero Week, series of talks. 15 Edinburgh, 16 Leeds, 17 Manchester, 19 London. The speaker is Pacho de Roux sj. His talk is on *The Violence of Peacemaking: Archbishop Romero's search for peace*. The first three talks are in the evening. The London event is at St Martin-in-the Fields at 11.00am. More details from Romero Trust www.romerotrust.org.uk/. Pax Christi is a supporter of the week.

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. Use the separate tab for the Saturday only event, priced at £5-£20 depending on lunch and concessions.

18 April (Mon) National

Global Campaign on Military Spending. An opportunity to talk about, show, discuss the choices we have: military spending or human needs and the protection of the environment. On-line resources available here <http://demilitarize.org.uk/>

21 May (Sat) Leeds

Pax Christi Annual General Meeting will be held at Oxford Place Methodist Centre, Leeds, West Yorkshire LS1. Put the date in our diary, more information on our website.

Opportunities in 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.

Celebrating Women Peacemakers

At our September conference *Women and Peacemaking 1915-2015* we asked women to complete this phrase: To make peace we need to... Among the responses were, 'Believe that it is possible'; 'Education! Tell stories'; 'Make politics more collaborative, less confrontational'. We photographed many of the women and some of these are used on our postcard to mark International Women's Day on 8th March.

The format we used could easily be repeated. Women and men sharing visions of what peacemaking involves; listening to women reflect on peacemaking and family, politics, solidarity and militarism (or similar issues that reflect the experiences of those involved); taking a simple solidarity action with a local or international women's project such as sending simple messages of support. Why not try something similar in your own community, church or group network around the 8th March? You could use the *Celebrating Women* postcards to email or write to women - including some of those listed below, known to Pax Christi and the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom who co-sponsored the conference.

Some addresses for your messages of solidarity and support marking International Women's Day:

Dr Nurit Peled-Elhanan of Hebrew University is an academic whose child was killed by a suicide bomber but who challenges the way Israeli children are taught about Palestinians. More info: <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2011/aug/07/israeli-school-racism-claim>

Email: nuritpeled@gmail.com. Address: Department of Education, The Hebrew University, Mt. Scopus, Jerusalem 919050, Israel.

Zarghuna of Afghan Peace Volunteers in Kabul (Zarghuna teaches English). NB - don't include any religious references or language in your messages to these two addresses. Email: zarghunafarali@gmail.com and copy in (cc) the other women and girls members of the Borderfree Nonviolence Community Centre on this email: journeysmile@gmail.com

Victoire Ingabire Umuhoza. Nicknamed 'the female Mandela' she has achieved international recognition for her work for democracy in Rwanda. She is currently serving a 15-year prison sentence for her opposition to the government. Email: info@friendsofvictoire.org

Mama Khadiga Hussein, Sudanese Mothers for Peace (Sudan and London). She has initiated many peace projects and has been imprisoned in Sudan for her work in the past. She collected two million signatures (including hand-prints) for a women's peace petition and has tried to bring all political and belligerent parties in Sudan to a peace conference. Email: mothersforpeacelondon@hotmail.com Address: Flat 16, Johnson House, Camden Hill, London, W8 7EX.

Women in Black Jerusalem - witnessing each week for 25 years against the occupation. Email: womeninblackjerusalem@yahoo.com



Zarghuna of Afghan Peace Volunteers

Kathy Kelly of Voices for Creative Nonviolence. US peace activist and writer who has made many journeys to Afghanistan, and been to prison frequently for campaigns against US military and economic warfare. More info: www.vcnv.org. Address: Voices for Creative Nonviolence, 249 W Argyle Street #2, Chicago, IL 60640, USA.

Marie Dennis, international co-president of Pax Christi. More info: <http://www.paxchristi.net/about-us/who-we-are/international-board-members>. Email: marie.dennis@paxchristi.net. Address: Assisi Community, 708 Rock Creek Church Road, NW, Washington DC 20010, USA.

Rania Murra, Director of the Arab Education Institute, Pax Christi partner in Bethlehem. Email: rania_jm@hotmail.com

Office news

Peace Sunday. Thanks to all of you who organised events for Peace Sunday. At this stage it is difficult to know how well we will do with donations. However, Peace Sunday 2015 raised £119,767 and in 2015 we recruited 73 new members. If your parish was unable to take a collection you might ask if a notice could be put in your parish newsletter to say that donations to Pax Christi can be made via the website at any time.

Pax Christi ICON of peace. There has been a new surge of interest in the ICON and we are delighted. During Advent it was in St Joseph's Parish, Bromley and as a special feature of their Advent service of reconciliation and also for the children's reconciliation preparation. In January the ICON spent a week in the Anglican parish of St Stephen's, Lewisham. Parish priest Fr Philip Corbett invited people to make a pilgrimage to the parish during the week. This included visits from the Anglican Bishop of Woolwich, the local primary school and the local police team! The Anglican parish of St Andrew, Hertford was the next stop. They ran a week-long programme of prayer and meditation and a workshop on

nonviolence led by Pax Christi's Pat Gaffney. At the end of February it will travel to the RC Cathedral of St John the Baptist in Norwich. The ICON is now booked until late spring. More on the ICON at: <http://paxchristi.org.uk/resources/pax-christi-icon-of-peace/>

Our peace education worker Matt Jeziorski has started the year with a host of school visits: **January:** St Bede's, Cambridge, Christ the King, Lewisham, St Dominic's, Harrow, Thamesmead School, Loreto College, Manchester, Bellerive, Liverpool, Our Lady's, Hackney, Notre Dame, Southwark; **February:** All Saints, Dagenham, St Benedict, Ealing, All Hallows, Penwortham; **March:** St Mary, Shaftsbury, St John Payne, Chelmsford.



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

Keep peace alive. Remember Pax Christi when making or updating your will

Please send me information on

Membership Publications Legacy

I enclose a donation of £ to support your work

Name:

Address:

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Tel:

Return to Pax Christi, St Joseph's, Watford Way, Hendon, London, NW4 4TY
Tel: 020 8203 4884 email: info@paxchristi.org.uk www.paxchristi.org.uk

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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