

# Pax Christi Australia (NSW)

Convenor's Report  
Meeting September 2, 2019

## August 4 Pax Christi Australia Statement

### It is time to support the people of Hong Kong in their hour of need

The courageous people of Hong Kong are showing us what it means to be engaged in the struggle for freedom, democracy and human dignity. Yet, our government, always eager to advertise its credentials as upholders of these values, has been shamefully silent and inactive.

Over the last two months millions of people have thronged the streets of Hong Kong to express their deep concern that the liberties they still enjoy will be steadily curtailed by Beijing. Such a prospect is unacceptable to them, as it is to us.

After weeks of determined protest, which shows no sign of abating, the police forces have become increasingly heavy handed. Over the weekend we have seen persistent use of tear gas, pepper spray, a growing number of arrests, increasing restrictions on rallies, stern warnings by the authorities, and now ominous threats by the Chinese Government.

The question we need to ask is simple: Is this a prelude to the brutal use of force reminiscent of the tragic events at Tiananmen Square in June 1989? Pax Christi believes the time has come for the world and for Australia to respond before it is too late.

With such large protests, it is always possible that a few hotheads will resort to unfortunate conduct. But the Chinese authorities would be well advised to concentrate less on these relatively minor misdemeanours, and focus instead on the legitimate demands of the peaceful citizens of Hong Kong. Their demands are simple but profound:

- the complete withdrawal of the extradition bill;
- waiving charges against those arrested;
- an end to descriptions of protests as "rioting";
- an independent inquiry into the unrest;
- and the resumption of political reforms.

It is high time for Australia to call on China to act without further delay and give effect to Hong Kong's mini-constitution, the Basic Law, which says that both the leader and the Legislative Council, should be elected in a democratic way. The failure to act in line with this promise is the core of the problem to which China and the international community must give immediate and sustained attention.

The Morrison Government should, together with other governments, use all available diplomatic levers to impress on China the need for dialogue and respect for human rights. The situation should as a matter of urgency be brought before the UN Human Rights Council, and, if need be, before the UN Security Council.

In this there is much that the wider community can and should do. Universities, Christian churches and other faith groups, trade unions, professional associations, community organisations, and the media all have an important role to play. Pax Christi calls on them to disseminate information about

the situation, to speak out in public, and to communicate their concern to the Chinese Embassy in Canberra as well as to the Australian government

There will be no point lamenting after the event. It will be of no use for our Government to point the finger at China's misdeeds when it is all too late. And the outcome could be even bleaker if the United States and its faithful ally Australia were to use China's repressive policies at home as hypocritical justification for expanding the US and Australian military presence in the South China Sea and the Asia Pacific region more generally. If our concern is defence of human rights and peaceful relations in the region, the time to act is now!

*Claude Mostowik msc*

Fr. Claude Mostowik msc  
National President  
Pax Christi Australia  
August 4, 2019

**August 6 Speech at McKillop Centre** on Catholic Social Teaching and how it is implemented in Christian action for peace and justice for 20+ people from various health and education establishments from around Australia doing a graduate course at Australian Catholic University.

**August 8 Speech at rally outside the Electro Optic Systems Head Office, Elizabeth Street, Sydney** in opposition to their support for Saudi Arabia and United Arab Emirates in the war on Yemen. This rally takes place every second Thursday of the month.



Members of WILPF



Dr Hannah Middleton and singers



**Former Senator Lee Rhiannon**



**Warwick from MUA Union**

***Notes for speech outside Electro Optic Systems (EOS) August 8, 2019***

In the eyes of some war making is sacrosanct. Pope Francis: Countries that sell arms have no right to talk about peace. In April he said that nations that actively engage in arms dealing and help foment war in other countries cannot find peace in their own lands. Those that sell arms 'have no right to talk about peace. Pope Francis: It is hypocritical and contradictory to speak of peace, to negotiate peace, whilst fueling an arms trade that only serves the 'merchants of death,' exacerbates wars to benefit the weapons industry. What we have before our eyes is the misery and death that weapons bring. The United Nations calls Yemen the world's worst humanitarian crisis with more than 10 million Yemenis risk imminent starvation. The Pope said, 'There is no alternative: we will either build the future together or there will not be a future,' said Francis.

Tomorrow (The August 9) one year ago an attack against children where a US-supplied bomb killed 40 boys on a bus in Yemen. Since then, on average, at least one child has been killed every day- not to mention the struggle against hunger and disease. Australia is deeply implicated in the appalling carnage in Yemen. We have to do what we can to demand an end to this complicity with the UYS. Australia must halt arms sales to countries involved in the Yemen war. As we support arms dealers, more than 10 million people are facing famine.

Oxfam Australia has called on the Australian Government to provide more humanitarian aid for the response. 70 years after the creation of the Geneva Convention, which seeks to protect civilians in and around war zones, children in Yemen are still in the firing line. Our task should be to focus on the protection of the lives of Yemeni civilians, ending the war, and certainly not profiting from it through arms sales.

The Department of Defence said all applications to export military goods are subject to a rigorous risk assessment process that takes into account Australia's international obligations.

'This includes the Arms Trade Treaty, and the impact the export could have on foreign policy, human rights, national security and regional security.' Assessment within the Arms Trade Treaty

considers whether there is an overriding risk that the exported items could be used to commit or facilitate a serious violation of international humanitarian law or human rights law.

***EOS is an evil corporation as it shamelessly attempts to camouflage its*** profiting from human slaughter in response to reports and investigations that expose its attempt to sell weapons systems in the Middle East – almost certainly to UAE and /or Saudi Arabia – countries presently involved in terrible war crimes in Yemen. Its one ***point of denial is that does not make weapons.*** Are we supposed to laugh or cry? Its own website proudly displays an armoured vehicle with a large machine gun on top. The system to operate this machine gun, is EOS's biggest seller, a RWS (Remote Weapons System) generated by EOS.

In 2018, our Federal government announced a staggering \$3.8Billion loan fund to increase our share of the international arms trade. Let's not delude ourselves and think that ALP does not also support this trade in death. We have seen retiring ALP government ministers receiving a cushy position as a Defence **Industry Advocate, joined the EOS board in March 2018 and holding shares in EOS** valued today at just under half a million dollars. A cushy job at tax payers' expense on retiring from parliament? Corporations like EOS do not have to disclose who they are selling their weapons to.

In Yemen, one child dies every 10 minutes due to malnutrition and preventable illnesses, with an estimated 85,000 children dying since the start of the conflict nearly four years ago. How much more can the children of Yemen endure? The hardships that children face are a direct consequence of an avoidable and unnecessary conflict that has engulfed this largely forgotten country.

Before the war, Yemen was a bucket-list destination for adventurous travellers. Now it's one of the most dangerous places on Earth for children. And the casualties of this senseless conflict go far beyond the physical injuries that children sustain during the fighting and airstrikes, and the emergence of preventable communicable diseases such as cholera and diphtheria, which are made worse by a health system under extraordinary stress.

A generation of children have had their childhoods ripped out from under them with the loss of access to education. Their future and the future of Yemen is in peril. And what about the distress, trauma and mental health of children who have witnessed extreme violence and bloodshed? How will children recover once the weapons are finally downed?

Australian funds have been used to provide children and families with access to clean water and food, and to help prevent the spread of cholera. What is more than concerning is that our government has been unwilling to disclose details of its military exports to parties to the conflict like Saudi Arabia, who have been accused of committing serious violations of international human rights and humanitarian law against civilians, including children.

The supply of weapons, from some of the richest countries, has helped fuel the war these past four years, elevating the conflict to an even greater level of horror for children.

It is unacceptable to provide humanitarian funding with one hand and issuing defence export licenses. Australia must follow the example of countries such as Belgium, Norway, Germany and the Netherlands, and cease military export licenses to Saudi Arabia – or any country. Australian doctors and other health professionals have expressed outrage at our complicity with humanitarian suffering in Yemen. 'Our government has abandoned any sense of ethical responsibility. The failure to acknowledge the role of Australian weapons sales in perpetuating the human catastrophe in Yemen is unsustainable.' Trading in arms with the actors in Yemen must stop now.



**August 12 Missionaries of the Sacred Heart Justice and Peace Committee, Kensington  
Vision Statement for MSC JPIC**

*We exist to be on earth the heart of God so that the Sacred Heart may be everywhere loved. This comes out of a commitment to justice, peace and integrity of creation which is integral to the spirituality of the heart which lives out the way of Jesus who identified with all people who are suffering in any way. "Our involvement in issues of justice and peace and of inter-religious dialogue underlines our prophetic mission as religious". (Formation document of Valladolid 1992) Our very existence and identity, is to be the presence of God's goodness and love in concrete situations in need of transforming. This active presence is not an option or added extra but at the heart of our charism, our vocation and our mission. It is our way of life.*

*Spirituality of the heart begins by listening to the cries of the earth and our sisters and brothers and recognising in their voices the voice of God, who in Jesus, identifies with them. Listening leads to seeing and being aware so that we can speak truth to power and advocate on behalf of all who are unjustly treated (racism, bigotry, corruption, human trafficking, fair trade, displacement of indigenous peoples, mining, protection of people on the move, the rights of workers, proliferation of nuclear weapons, land mines, foreign military bases, domestic violence, etc.). This listening leads to seeing and being aware in order to speak out against injustice that leads to violence.*

*As part of this awareness raising is the call to move more and more to a sense of solidarity with people who are poor and marginalised and collaboratively learn from them how to be alongside them.*

*To witness to justice and peace, our communities must work with lay people on issues of peace, justice and integrity of creation, encourage conscientisation of members in all these areas, identify the causes and discern appropriate responses to oppression, violence and injustice, and, collaborate and network with other religious and non-religious in this work.*

*Compiled by Claude Mostowik msc*

**August 13 Pax Christi Asia Pacific Facilitation Team Meeting Skype**

Attendance: Jasmin, Fr. Claude, Sr. Filo, Kevin, Caesar

**On the AGM (Brussels)**

Kevin shared disappointment over the results of the meeting in Brussels positing that time was too structured giving little time to talk about issues that mattered to the work of Pax Christi members. Jasmin said that she and Kevin had the chance to articulate a few times in the meeting the request of PC-AP to give Asia-Pacific greater attention and priority considering the current threats to peace in the region. She also reported her and Kevin's effort to request that the Pax Christi World Assembly include sessions focused on: a) stories of nonviolence as known or experienced by members on the ground, and b) on issues that face Asia-Pacific as a region. She shared that no commitment was made during the meeting, hence, she again verbalized this request in a Skype meeting with the Planning Committee for the World Assembly.

#### **On the World Assembly**

Sr. Filo briefly shared the agenda on the Hiroshima meeting. Caesar suggested that Jasmin assert more strongly our suggestions in relation to the agenda. Jasmin responded that she could only do her best.

Fr. Claude shared disappointment that agenda was set by the Secretariat. Sr Filo responded that the agenda was initially crafted in Hiroshima and tweaked later by the Planning Committee (which included Jasmin, Sr Filo, Sr Bridget, Johnny and Judy) and later on by Greet and the Board. PC-AP hopes for a more substantive agenda that will discuss issues beyond nuclear disarmament.

#### **On Pax Christi-Korea**

Jasmin shared that Pax Christi-Korea is starting to make its presence felt. It will soon have a General Assembly. PC-AP was happy to know of such a development.

#### **On PC-AP**

Jasmin reminded the group that the PC-AP egroup is meant to be a conversation space. Conversations are not happening, though. Fr Claude suggested that Jasmin emails the group to remind them of such. All other members of the Facilitation Team will respond echoing the request.

#### **On the Persecution of Bishops and Priests in the Philippines**

Jasmin requested PC-AP to write a statement of support for the Bishops. She thanked Caesar for the statements he wrote on various issues, including the contribution to Pax Christi-UK's press release against the arms fair. Fr Claude volunteered to draft the statement after requesting Jasmin to send him relevant documents that could be the basis of the statement.

Jasmin shared that Pax Christi Pilipinas is drafting a statement on Hongkong as suggested by Fr Claude. The statement will be sent to the Facilitation Group for comments and then to the PC-AP group to solicit further suggestions for improvement.

#### **All Other Business**

1. Caesar asked why the statement after the second meeting in Vatican was extraordinarily delayed. Jasmin explained that CNI waited for the green light from the Vatican to publish it and getting the green light took awhile. Caesar also asked how participants to the meeting were selected. Sr Filo said that the Vatican selected the participants based on a list submitted by CNI.

2. Jasmin informed the group that she is no longer the President of Pax Christi Pilipinas and, hence, didn't feel that she was still in a position to be Coordinator of the Facilitation Group. Jasmin was appointed to a post in Miriam College that is more academic-focused. Members thanked her for her leadership but did not think that a Coordinator needed to be a section President. Jasmin suggested that the role be done on a rotation basis. No decision has been made in relation to this as of yet.

**August 14** [NSW Ecumenical Council Justice and Peace Commission, Flemington.](#)

**August 14** [Australian Catholic Religious Against Trafficking in Humans](#)

**August 15** [To the Rural Missionaries of the Philippines on occasion of their 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary](#)

Dear friends,

I am writing to you to express solidarity and congratulations as you celebrate 50 years in solidarity with the struggle of the rural poor. Your work with the people as religious and lay

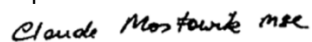
persons has been truly inspirational as you have made spaces for the rural poor and indigenous people of the Philippines to raise their voices at oppression by those in power whether political, financial or economic.

As an Australian I have been aware of the presence of Australian mining companies that have led to the dispossession of poor farmers, indigenous people and other vulnerable people I was privileged to see a little of your work a few years ago when I participated at the International Peoples' Mining Conference a few years ago and able to visit the damage done to the environment and peoples lives by Oceanagold at Didipio and the British company at Runrunno.

As a Missionary of the Sacred Heart, I am aware of that some of my Filipino confreres have been with you in the past.

Please accept my warmest congratulations for the 50 years of service and blessings on your ongoing work amongst God's special people. You truly make the gospel of Jesus concrete in your lives.

In peace



Fr Claude Mostowik msc

President, Pax Christi Australia

National Director, Missionaries of the Sacred Heart Justice and Peace Centre

Feast of the Assumption

August 15, 2019

### **August 15** Depart for Melbourne for Pax Christi Australia National Conference

### **August 16-19** Pax Christi Australia National Conference, Killara Brigidine Centre, Malvern

Theme: Why are we violent?

Tuesday 20 August 2019

*Caesar D'Mello, Pax Christi Australia*

'Why are we violent?' needs to be asked repeatedly to make sense of our times marked as they are by ubiquitous human violence. On the weekend of 16 – 18 August, 2019, Pax Christi organised a conference at Killara Centre in Malvern that explored this concern with the assistance of Josephite Sister Susan Connelly, whose doctorate at the ACU probed the relationship between Australia and Timor Leste between 1941 – 1999 in light of Rene Girard's Mimetic Theory.



*Above: Josephite Sr Susan Connelly addressing the Pax Christi group at the conference*

Her keynote presentation on 'Exposing Violence: Steps on the Road to Peace' set the tone for our discussions.

Girard's "Christian Anthropology" became so much more accessible to us as Sr Susan explained the role of mimetic behaviour (imitating the other and desiring what the other has) in eventual violence. As seen in so many situations, as a crisis emerges that involves a crime, scapegoating of someone or a group, is often the result. The way we treat refugees and asylum seekers, for instance, is a good example of such a pattern. Scapegoating becomes dangerous when its victim is free of guilt. The most striking example of this is Jesus, an innocent victim in a troubled society seeking to "explain it all" by pointing to a "culprit".



*Above: Sr Susan and Brigidine Sister Sr Catriona Devlin*



'Identifying features of scapegoating in current world situations assists in interpreting events as they happen', said Sr Susan. This was very appropriate for Pax Christi, an international peace movement, one of whose focal areas is the Pope Francis-inspired 'Catholic Nonviolence Initiative'. Faced with militarism and ecological destruction, our unjust response to Indigenous Australians and 'the stranger at the gate', family violence and inequality, for instance, Sr Susan convinced us that 'Girard provides a valuable tool to challenge us to deeper reflection on how to respond as Christians'.



### **August 22 Pacific Climate Watch Inter-congregational Voice on Climate Change**

**THE CLIMATE CHANGE IS NOT A JOKE PHOTO CAMPAIGN:** *Sue Martin and Jill Shirvington* will be using the display at Santa Sabina on 30 August for the Youth Eco Summit.

**Request to Bishops re declaring a CLIMATE EMERGENCY:** The Bishops have still not replied to the letter. A copy of the letter to members was sent to members so that it could be forwarded to congregational leaders. **Action:** *Claude* will ring the secretary to the Bishops again.

### **PLANNING FOR DELEGATION TO MEET WITH POLITICIANS**

Forty five letters/emails have been sent out to politicians so far. About ten have said they are already booked up. Meetings have been arranged so far with seven politicians. Senator Sinodinos gave us a list of people that it would be good to speak with but so far none of them have agreed to meet.. Richard Marles has offered to help in any way he can. Replies are still coming in. If necessary we will follow up with phone calls.

Delegation members:

The meeting decided to ask Vincent Sicari if he would join the delegation because of his long experience with the Pacific, the Church and the media. (*NB he is happy to go*) There is only one Pacifican in the delegation so far despite several congregational members exploring some good possibilities. **All** are welcome to the training day even if you are not able to join the delegation

### **Conservatives for Conservation**

Sue attended their relaunch event. She suggested PCP try again to reconnect with them.

**Catholic Earthcare** has launched a new resource, which could be good to include in the Parliamentary Brief and hand out in other ways.

- **Action** Sue will send more pamphlets to ERC.

### **August 28 Statement of Solidarity with Human Rights Defenders, Religious People and Other Leaders Accused of Sedition in the Philippines.**

#### **Statement of Solidarity with Human Rights Defenders, Religious People and Other Leaders Accused of Sedition in the Philippines.**

Pax Christi Australia expresses deep concern and outrage at the condemnation of leaders in the Philippines such as lawyers, human rights defenders and bishops, priests and other religious leaders who have been charged with sedition and accused of terrorist links for speaking truth to power. We object strongly to framing any kind of activism or holding a contrary opinion as an attempt to overthrow the government. There are grave implications of red tagging or labelling individuals and groups as subversive, left leaning or as terrorists because they express dissent. Association with any organisation and belief in the principles it espouses is an exercise of the right to freedom of thought, assembly, and association. Curtailing this and may affect all other rights such as the right to free speech, expression, and movement among others.

With other organisation in Australia and the Philippines, Pax Christi Australia condemns the false charges against people who stand with people who are oppressed, disenfranchised, and have their human rights and right to life disregarded by the military and paramilitaries. We understand that some of the charges against bishops, priests and religious as well as the vice-president and other opposition members are linked to the release of a video that has linked the President and his family to the illegal drug trade.

Pax Christi Australia joins with Pax Christi Asia Pacific (Philippines, Japan, New Zealand, Australia, Sri Lanka and South Korea), to stand in solidarity with our sisters and brothers in the Philippines who have been accused of sedition and face imprisonment. The ongoing persecution of lawyers, human rights defenders, people protecting their lands, and religious and political leaders who stand with them must cease. The Philippines cannot be seen as a democratic nation if human rights are disregarded especially when people call out criminal actions. The best response to dissent in a community is to address legitimate grievances. >This would show a commitment by the government to work in the best interests of all its citizens.

Pax Christi believes that healthy dissent is a mark of a truly democratic and self-confident society. It points to better ways of serving the people, as no government can claim to have all the wisdom. Dissent should be enshrined in law, not criminalised and punished.

Father Claude Mostowik msc  
Pax Christi Australia  
National President  
August 28, 2019

### **August 29 Cana Community Mass, Darlinghurst**