

# DISARMING Pax Christi TIMES

*The Journal of Pax Christi Australia*

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## STATEMENT BY PAX CHRISTI ASIA-PACIFIC ON THE “STATE OF EMERGENCY” IN MYANMAR

The members of Pax Christi Asia-Pacific are deeply troubled by the tragic developments in Myanmar.

On 1 February 2021, the Myanmar military, also known as Tatmadaw, declared a “State of emergency” to remove a legitimately elected government, led by Aung San Suu Kyi and her National League for Democracy (NLD). She has been charged with possession of a handful of imported walkie-talkies, and with her colleagues could face a jail term of three years. Detained, too, are civil society activists and several Buddhist monks, tearing down a decade of democratic reform in the process.

As members and partners of Pax Christi International in the Asia-Pacific region, we are deeply troubled by these developments in Myanmar. It is bewildering to note that Chinese state media, representative of a leading power in Asia-Pacific, has described the takeover by the Commander-in-Chief Min Aung Hlaing and the armed forces as “a major cabinet reshuffle.” This “alternative fact” description does not serve the people of Myanmar.

The world knows that what occurred on Monday this week was a coup – not just against a popularly elected government, but even more significantly against the people of Myanmar, their hopes and aspirations, their pride in democratic participation, however



flawed, after military rule of several decades. It is tragic that this limited “experiment” was snuffed after a challenging ten-year journey to democracy since 2012.

We deplore that the Tatmadaw resorted to wielding such a hammer blow to democracy, when the Constitution under which the government operated was approved by them in the first place, entrenched their place in the legislature, and gave them control over key ministries. That their preferred party, the Union Solidarity and Development Party (USDP), performed poorly in the recent elections provides no basis for their action.

People in Myanmar are banging pots and pans to vent their disappointment and frustration, including young people who have high hopes for their country to follow the democratic path. This practice has cultural significance in that it is normally used to ward off evil spirits. That it is widespread now signifies the depth of the people’s ire over the coup.

We are deeply concerned that this

coup will further reinforce ethno-religious nationalism in Myanmar. The global community has been pained to witness the atrocities committed against the Rohingya, more than 700,000 of whom had to flee to Bangladesh, and more than

another 600,000 remain in Rakhine state. The attitude of the Myanmar armed forces towards this ethnic group is well reported.

The well-being of the people of Myanmar was the focus of Pope Francis’ visit in 2017. In his latest encyclical, *Fratelli Tutti* (2020), he writes “peace is not merely absence of war, but a tireless commitment to recognise, protect and concretely restore the dignity . . . of our brothers and sisters.” We also support the recent statement of the UN Secretary General on the situation in Myanmar urging the military leadership to “respect

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# DISARMING TIMES

A quarterly journal of Pax Christi Australia. It aims to provide members and interested peacemakers with peace news and views both local and international. We endeavour in each edition to reflect the three-fold emphasis of Pax Christi which engages members in study, Non-violent action and prayer for peace, justice, human rights, development and inter-faith and inter-civilisation dialogue.

## PAX CHRISTI AUSTRALIA

*is an Australia-wide*

*Christian Peace Movement, affiliated with Pax Christi International.*

*Human rights, justice and integrity of creation are central to its work.*

*We take a stand against militarism, nuclear weapons and the arms race.*

*As an ecumenical Christian movement*

*Pax Christi fosters the spiritual and scriptural dimensions of peace-making.*

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the will of the people of Myanmar and adhere to democratic norms, with any differences to be resolved through peaceful dialogue." He also stated that "all leaders must act in the greater interest of Myanmar's democratic

reform, engaging in meaningful dialogue, refraining from violence and fully respecting human rights and fundamental freedoms."

Coming from different parts of the Asia Pacific region, we ask for attention for the worrying situation in Myanmar and support for its people by:

- Standing in solidarity with and support of the people of Myanmar in a spirit of "vigilance and prayer," as urged by Auxiliary Bishop of Yangon, John Saw Yaw Han; and ask others to join us

- Calling on the Tatmadaw to restrain from using their forces to punish those who disagree with their action that way violating human rights of those who are standing up for democracy and the rule of law;

- Urging the Tatmadaw to immediately release Aung San Suu Kyi and her colleagues, and enter into meaningful dialogue on constructive and democratic ways forward for Myanmar, including the restoration of democracy;

- Asking relevant governments and powers in Asia Pacific not to



exploit the unfolding situation in Myanmar to advance their own political and economic interests;

- Calling on the governments in Asia-Pacific and beyond to stand against the military takeover and press the Tatmadaw to immediately relinquish the power they have illegally seized and release those they have put in prison.

- Calling on the Tatmadaw to heed the words of Cardinal Charles Maung Bo, SVD, Archbishop of Yangon, and President of the Federation of Asian Bishops' Conferences: *I write with prayers and hope that this great nation, this golden land of a graceful people will enter into a global stage as a reconciled community of hope and peace. Let us solve all disputes through dialogue. Peace is possible.*

*Peace is the only way. Democracy is the only light to that path.*

Signed by the Pax Christi Asia Pacific Facilitation Group  
4 February 2021

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**Many thanks**

# SUSTAINABLE PEACE OR A MILITARISED ASIA PACIFIC? AUSTRALIA'S CHOICE

*Last November Pax Christi Australia convened an International Zoom Forum under this heading. We are pleased to bring you four of the presentations*

## 1. SCRUTINISING THE QUAD Caesar D'Mello

As with politics generally, *realpolitik* governs much of the international relations arena. National economic, political and cultural interests, interlinking aspirations and loyalties, ideological competition, historical memory and bias, power and domination intersect and collide. Is this the route to sustainable peace?

Transparency is often a casualty of *realpolitik*, especially during times of conflict and tension. The QUAD, indeed, is a case in point of how much more we are entitled to know.

The Quadrilateral Security Dialogue, or QUAD, a significant tool of Australian Foreign and Defence policies, first began in 2007. Initiated with Australia, India, and the US by former Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe as an "Asian arc of democracy", it was endorsed as a forum for dialogue by former US Vice President Dick Cheney, former Australian Prime Minister John Howard, and former Indian Prime Minister Dr Manmohan Singh. The four countries were also involved in joint Malabar exercises. A grouping with linked diplomatic and military dimensions was already then being widely regarded in the context of China, who expressed its displeasure via diplomatic protests issued to the QUAD members. It was further incensed with the participation of Singapore in Malabar. In 2008 the QUAD ceased to function when Australia under Prime Minister Kevin Rudd, Japan under Prime Minister Yasuo Fukuda, and India under Prime Minister Dr Manmohan Singh withdrew, but Australia-US military cooperation continued, as did the US, Japan and India joint naval exercises.

The hand of the US can be seen in the later revival of QUAD. In 2017, on the sidelines of an ASEAN Summit in Manila, US President Donald

Trump urged a new security strategy for the democracies of the region he called Indo-Pacific. The change in nomenclature from the generally used Asia Pacific prompted the East Asia forum of the ANU, for instance, to ask "Is the Indo-Pacific a geographic definition or strategy?". If the latter, we need to know what its proponents have in mind.

However, the doublespeak is revealing. India's current Prime Minister Narendra Modi said in 2018 "India does not see the Indo-Pacific as a strategy or as a club of limited members...as a grouping seeking to dominate...as directed against any country. A geographical definition, as such, cannot be." Pious words, they turned out to be. As the border wars have deteriorated and the military parity has collapsed with China, a supporter of Pakistan, the US has become a most welcome partner for India. Despite its traditional wariness with alliances, it values the QUAD, inviting Australia to rejoin the Malabar exercises, which it did this year. Japanese Prime Minister, Shinjo Abe, in his second stint declared "the QUAD does not mean necessarily engaging in any military activities", calling the Indo-Pacific "a zone of peace and prosperity", a sentiment endorsed by his successor, PM Suga. Former US Defence Secretary, Jim Mattis' position, reinforced by the present Secretary of State, Mike Pompeo, associated the QUAD with the US Trump Administration's National Security and Defence Strategies that regard China as a "strategic competitor". The US would reinvigorate American investment, work to strengthen the rule of law, increase attention to the maritime space, and deepen alliances. The Australian Foreign Policy White Paper has adopted the idea of an Indo-Pacific as a geographic space without much elabora-

tion. Bilateral agreements, too, such as the secret 10-year Australia-US Defence Cooperation Treaty and the defence alliance with Japan that PM Scott Morrison will sign with Japan on his visit there this week, strengthen the QUAD. We should also recall the \$270 billion and more Australia has committed to upgrade its military technology and hardware over the next decade.

How do some of our regional neighbours, who also have issues with China, view QUAD? Foreign Minister Kang Kyunghwa of South Korea has indicated strongly that his country will not join QUAD Plus and jeopardise its tricky balance with US and China. Indonesia. Vietnam and Singapore, too, keep a distance from QUAD, as does New Zealand.

Despite the obfuscations, it is well realised that the elephant in the room is China. QUAD insists its concerns are with cyber security, COVID, etc., and Indo-Pacific just renames a geographic space, which China doesn't buy. The reference to the two oceans which lap the shores of the four countries, each in conflict with China, serves to put pressure on China who sees an Indo-Pacific so conceptualised as a strategy for its encirclement, or 'containment', that the QUAD denies. It considers the QUAD, with its interchangeable military and diplomatic objectives, as an Asian NATO, structured against its rise. It markedly notes Australia's membership of such an alliance, a country it considers as often a US proxy.

Diplomacy begins with understanding. A deft nuanced foreign policy towards China requires a serious and credible appreciation of what it believes is its more than century long "Age of Humiliation" at the hands ,

Western powers, especially Anglo-Saxon powers. China has been impelled by what it considers its 'historical obligation' to recover its standing in the world. Deng Xiaoping's reinstatement in 1978, and his interpretation of Chinese Marxism provided an impetus to China to progress to its present day economic pre-eminence. Vexed by policies and actions that come across as reminiscent of its Age of Humiliation, it responds in a variety of ways, including militarisation that entrenches a regime of tit for tat responses with QUAD, thereby unfortunately ensuring serious regional tension. Kowtowing to China and not holding it accountable for its Human Rights, territorial and other violations is not what is suggested, but more sophistication in

how we deal with a complex power is.

We have to question whether Foreign and Defence policies as conducted are the way to go for securing sustainable peace, when the militarist mindset is so dominant. This is at the core of the Pax Christi Nonviolence Initiative, inspired by Pope Francis, he of *Laudato si'*, "our common home, Fratelli Tutti. Can leaderships that place their trust in weapons, in military strategy experts, in arms developers and merchants, and urged by segments of the community, media and the commentariat but without acknowledging that investment in weaponry and military preparedness has not made

the world safer, without meaningfully incorporating the soft diplomacy of mutual trust and confidence building, good people to people relations, and communication to foster understanding, while ignoring the concerned voices of those advocating nonviolent ways of transforming conflict deliver on genuine peace? Who are the dreamers? The peace makers, or those who believe that they will achieve true peace by preparing for one more war? *Caesar D'Mello a member of Pax Christi Australia, was formerly national director of Christian World Service, the aid and development agency of the National Council of Churches in Australia.*

## 2 HUMAN RIGHTS IN THE PHILIPPINES

Sister Patricia Fox

**First of all, a brief Human Rights situationer based on a report of the UN Commissioner for Human Rights, a joint report from Special Rapporteurs and other high-profile UN figures, and civil society groups such as Amnesty International**

*Drug war:* Based on the most conservative assessment on government figures, since July 2016, 8,663 people have been killed in the war on drugs and 223,780 "drug personalities" arrested. Estimates of those killed by independent sources triple that number, with 29,000 recorded as "Under Investigation" in 2019 according to police records with at least 63 of victims being children. Recently, a 27-year-old man was shot and left to die in the gutter with a message written on cardboard accusing him of being a drug pusher. He was eventually taken to hospital by a passer-by and revived by doctors. However not long after being taken there, police came in and looked around emergency. Not long after they left, a masked man entered and shot the victim, killing him in front of the medicos who had revived

him.

President Duterte ordered the country's withdrawal from the International Criminal court after the Tribunal launched a preliminary examination of crimes against humanity committed in the context of the "war on drugs" in 2018.

- At least 208 human rights defenders, farmers, indigenous peoples, journalists and trade unionists, including 30 women, plus at least 40 legal professionals have been killed since 2016, many of whom were working on politically sensitive cases or advocating for land and environmental rights of farmers and indigenous peoples and housing rights of the urban poor.

The Philippines is rated by Human Rights bodies as one of the most dangerous place for journalists and environmental defenders,

**There are 609 political prisoners**

**The license of a prominent news website Rappler was revoked** and its CEO, Maria Ressa, has been arrested multiple times on various charges and found guilty of cyber libel, even though the case involved a republication of an article written by someone else before

the cyber law was enacted.

- On 5 May 2020, President Duterte's government ordered the shut-down of ABS-CBN, the country's largest TV and radio network, after years of explicit threats from the President in part because of its critical reporting on the "war on drugs". The ABS/CBN, and particularly it's radio station, was the only one whose signal reached some of the remotest parts of the country, and people who have been badly affected by the recent typhoons complained that that used to be their only means of knowing when the storm was coming.

**Use of police and military for Covid**

The experts mentioned above, also warned the COVID-19 has "further accelerated the downward spiral of the human rights situation in the Philippines." They cited reports that police and the military have used violence and lethal force to enforce a quarantine imposed without due consideration for the situation of the poorest and most vulnerable communities. Taking a militarist rather than health approach to the pandemic.

### **Anti-Terrorism Law (ATL)**

The experts also warned that the Philippine Government's new Anti-Terrorism Bill will further dilute human rights safeguards, by justifying the arrests of human rights defenders and government's critics, authorizing lengthy detention based on warrantless arrests, wiretapping and other surveillance for extended periods of time.

This ATL is particularly dangerous with the growing red-tagging of opposition including human rights organizations, lawyers, political and judicial actors, journalists, trade unionists, church groups and others, which could well lead to massive arrests. I have friends, including a Dutch national who has been in the Philippines for 35 years, who have found their faces on public banners accusing them of being terrorists or terrorist supporters so can no longer return to their homes out of fear of arrest or worse being killed

### **Where is Australia in all this?**

I give this context to situate Australia's involvement with the Philippines. Despite being aware of the increasing human rights situation, Australia helped write the ATL based on our own security laws. In response to a letter from a Philippine solidarity group, the department of Foreign Affairs claimed it was one of the best ATL's in the world complying with international standards. This has not been the UN HR Commissioners view, or of a number of special Rapporteurs or groups like Amnesty International. It also exposes our own draconian security laws which were held out as the model.

And despite knowing that the Philippine Military have been involved in these massive and increasing human rights abuses, Australia entered into an Enhanced Defence Cooperation Program in December 2019, allowing for the permanent basing of Australian soldiers on Philippine soil. Recently in the Philippines on October 2020, Linda Reynolds Secretary of the Department of Defence stated that Australia had trained over 10,000 members of the Armed Forces of the Philippine between 2017 and

2020 as well as there being 100 each year trained in Australia. She outlined the activities under this agreement included "land-based activities focused on urban combat and joint coordination skills, together with enhanced intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance in the south, and enhanced maritime training activities". This as well as equipment and finance. And the Philippine military, shortly after this training, and in response to an Executive order declaring virtual martial law in the Visayas, went house to house one early morning in negros, taking peasant leaders, progressive politicians and worker from their homes and killing 14 in one day in front of their families.

### **Why is Australia involved?**

If you look at the statements of the Department of Defence there are 2 obvious reasons that Australia continues to support the Duterte regime despite the total disregard of human rights:

#### **Counter terrorism**

The Government sees the prospect of the influence of al-Qaeda and Jemaah Islamiyah operatives in Mindanao so the Philippines was seen by Washington and Australia as part of the global terrorist threat. This was the story which led to the bombing of Marawi and Australia sending dispatching 2 AP-3C Orion aircraft to provide surveillance support for the Philippine Air Force in this bombing. Over 1000 people are still missing, known to be civilians and despite Australia supposedly contributing to Task Force Bangon Marawi, a supposedly rehabilitation body for the area, the people there are still displaced and question where the money has gone. They were told that the bombed area, ground zero, was too dangerous to return to at present, yet they saw Chinese businessmen being shown around the area. This is their ancestral land.

#### **China**

Which brings us to the other main reason for Australia's deeper military cooperation, that of China. In the same media release mentioned before, Reynolds reiterated

that the Philippines is an important security partner where we continue to work closely together in a shared commitment to an open, inclusive, and prosperous INDO-Pacific. During the discussions, Reynolds stated, we affirmed our shared interest in upholding maritime security in the region, including the South China Sea, and our support for the rights of all states to exercise freedom of navigation and overflight in accordance with the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea.

Philippines is important for its geo-strategic location. The rising strength of China looms large in the security calculus of Australia more than ever. Concerned about the vast economic benefits and security concerns that China's rise presents in the region, Australia has chosen to respond to the risk of increased regional instability by pursuing closer ties with many of its neighbours in the region such as Japan and India, together with the USA forming the QUAD.

Australia then is actively trying to boost the Philippine's Military capacity for both counter terrorism and maritime security because of its strategic location, ignoring the blatant disregard for human rights of the Philippine Government and it's use of military and police to sow terror among the people.

#### **Problems for Australia**

Australia is currently a member of the UNCHR. As a representative of the Council, Australia endorsed report of Michelle Bachelet, the High Commissioner, condemning the HR violations in the Philippines. The DFAT statement says Australia is committed to advancing human rights globally. Men, women and children have the right to fundamental freedoms and to live their lives with dignity. Human rights underpin peace and prosperity. Australia's commitment to human rights reflects our national values and is an underlying principle of Australia's engagement with the international community.

Yet this is clearly not the case in the approach of the department of Foreign Affairs and the Department of Defence to the Philippines.

And while military support has been increased, funding for diplomats in the Philippines has been recently reduced and staff pulled out.

While Reynolds claims to have given money for Covid, this went to military hospitals and was from aid funds unspent.

There were Peace talks between the Government of the Philippines and the National Democratic Front. These were at a point of talking basic issues of poverty and

violence in the Philippines through addressing issues such as landlessness, insecure jobs, homelessness, when, after a visit by Trump in 2017, they were abruptly called off by President Duterte. Shortly after over 600 individuals, including a Special Rapporteur were listed as "terrorists".

We have to raise our voices here against human rights abuses, against draconian security legislation both here and in the Philippines, and call for a return to the

peace talks in the Philippines. To place diplomacy over military might.

*Sr Pat belongs to the Sisters of Our Lady of Sion. In 1990 she went to the Philippines where she worked mainly with farmers, agricultural workers, fisher folk and Indigenous peoples. In November 2018 she was deported on President Duterte's orders for her work in human Rights.*

## NONVIOLENCE AT THE HEART OF THE GOSPEL

Fr. Claude Mostowik msc

In April 2016, 85 people from 35 countries gathered in Rome – many from places of extreme violence and oppression such as Latin America, Africa, the Philippines and Croatia. All these came to this gathering committed to gospel nonviolence even after having paid the price over and over in imprisonment, torture, seeing friends, colleagues and family members murdered. These people showed themselves to be the experts on gospel nonviolence and active resistance to injustice. Jose Henriquez, former secretary general of Pax Christi International said: *'We need to go back to the sources of our faith and rediscover the non-violence which is at the heart of the Gospel.'* The important goal of non-violent resistance to injustice was and continues to awaken the humanity in every person. This conference was convened by the Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace and Pax Christi International on the topic of **Nonviolence and Just Peace**. The conference finished with **'An appeal to the Catholic Church to re-commit to the Centrality of Gospel Nonviolence'**. Though referred to as the Catholic Nonviolence Initiative it is not a confessional call but about the centrality of gospel nonviolence. It was a call for the Church, and beyond, to move to a Just Peace based on Gospel nonviolence.

In his recent Encyclical **Fratelli tutti**, Pope Francis lamented how the world had learned a lesson from

its many wars and disasters, and was moving towards various forms of integration' and now 'Our world is trapped in a strange contradiction: we believe that we can ensure stability and peace through a false sense of security sustained by a mentality of fear and mistrust'. (#26). He concludes, 'In many parts of the world, there is a need for paths of peace to heal open wounds. (#225).

It is important that nonviolence is cultivated in peoples' everyday lives as well as institutions. This is what Pope Francis calls the politics of nonviolence - a culture that includes personal lives and institutions. All are necessary to achieve global peace.

When we consider violence, conflict and war we cannot ignore violence closer to home within our institutions and social and cultural structures, e.g., as in the treatment of Indigenous Australians since colonial times; the forced removal of children; the Indigenous overrepresentation in prison and deaths in custody; the conditions that refugees and asylum seekers endure; LGBTIQ+.

The **'appeal to the Catholic Church to re-commit to the Centrality of Gospel Nonviolence'** was a call to recognise the centrality of active nonviolence to Jesus' message in which we have not often been consistent. We have often been silent about violence, injustice or war which was a betrayal of the gospel's central mes-

sage. It is necessary to remember silence itself can be violence. To live this gospel of nonviolence and just peace requires an integration explicitly into all areas of life.

The conference summoned the church to walk **in the path of Jesus' nonviolence and turn to just peace by** reaffirming:

- *the centrality of active nonviolence to the life of the Church,*
- *to prophetically proclaim another way,*
- *to commit to the long-term vocation of healing and reconciling both people and the planet – according to the vision and message of Jesus.*

The call for a Just Peace reflects how we relate to ourselves, each other, the Earth and our God. It is not new. If there is no Just Peace, peace is not possible. It cultivates justice and peace in ourselves, our relationships, our social and political structures, and our culture, whilst also resisting injustice and violence. It is necessary to recognise and acknowledge suffering, violence and harm done. **Our task** is to find ways to build a better, more resilient peace which includes a participatory process, right relationships, restoration, reconciliation and sustainability. We can no longer justify cases where armed force may be legitimised. **The key goal** is to **outlaw war, not to legitimise or refine the criteria of war by using or teaching just war theory**. The focus is to apply the vast amounts of peacemaking research,

civil resistance tactics, and just peace principles with the church's deep, pervasive peace theology.

Just peace is not merely the absence of violence but the presence of social, economic, and political conditions that sustain peace and human flourishing and prevent conflicts from turning violent or returning to violence.

The papal Encyclical, *Laudato Si'* (2015), has become a manifesto for Just peace. ***An integral ecology contributes to an integral just peace.*** It recognises that ***violence done to human communities is often accompanied by devastating environmental destruction.*** This comes together in the 'cry of the earth and the cry of the poor' (LS 49). The ***lack of connection with the environment is a form of violence and contributes to the activity of war.***

In any peace plan, it is dialogue, dialogue, dialogue—within society, among states, with other faiths—to build a people of peace through reconciliation. Peace-building is people-building. Dialogue is not enhanced by vilification and provocative language or forming pacts against others as has been occurring in the current 'conflict' with China.

The just peace approach means that we cannot settle for an end justifies the means approach. It is not easy or quick. It includes restorative justice, diplomacy, building community

relationships and integral development, prevention of violent conflict, challenging the systems that profit from war, acknowledging our interconnection with and caring for the environment, [conflict transformation](#), cultivating cultures of peace, and much more.

A 2005 United Nations report, '*The Inequality Predicament*,' stressed: ***Ignoring inequality in the pursuit of development is perilous. Sustainable Development Goal 16: 'Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels.'*** It recognises that conflict and fragility have destructive impacts on the journey out of poverty for countries as essential infrastructure such as hospitals and schools are destroyed including the increased risk of sexual and gender-based violence, that force families to seek safety or asylum elsewhere. Diplomacy between nation states is critical to preventing armed conflict and war as is strengthening the capacity of nation states to prevent and manage violence within their borders is increasingly important. Peacebuilding is very much underfunded despite the cost effectiveness of investing earlier to prevent disputes from escalating rather than intervening after violence erupts. There has been a progressive de-

cline in foreign aid and development assistance in recent decades. Australia contributes little as part of the global peacebuilding budget and given the number of fragile and conflict-affected states in the Asia-Pacific we can and should invest more in peacebuilding. It is in our national interest too.

Australia is in a powerful position in the Asia Pacific region but we need to ask what kind of global neighbour or global citizen will we be? It is not always seen as good neighbour. In 2007, the Australian Bishops challenged us to consider our role through the lens of globalisation and interdependence and base our judgements largely on the question of ***'whether the least amongst us are doing well?'*** ***This has implications for our foreign aid as well how we respond to people in our communities.*** To conclude, investing wisely in other countries across all areas of development is important to building peace as healthy ecosystems that include improved education, health care and living conditions.

*Fr. Claude Mostowik msc Fr Claude Mostowik, a member of the Missionaries of the Sacred Heart Congregation. His Congregation's Promoter of justice and peace in Australia, he is also National President of Pax Christi Australia and convenes Christi NSW.*

## 4. THE GOAL OF NON-VIOLENT RESISTANCE TO INJUSTICE IS TO AWAKEN HUMANITY IN EVERY PERSON.

Maggie Galley

**G**reat words but just how do we put such a bold and courageous statement into action. I think this statement is really at the heart of what we need to do to move along in creating a better world.

Claude has highlighted the importance of creating justice for all – Just Peace. Caesar has provided insights to the difficulties within our region its complexity and the movement to militarism.

I like you thirst for justice for all, right and respectful relationships

that can I do to assist in making justice a reality.

The issues we face now cannot be solved by an individual, or group or nation we need to work together globally to solve the huge challenges we face that we know exist Climate Change, Nuclear Weapons Violence and Poverty to name a few. We must learn to work together.

I recall reading Pacem in Terris in the early days of participating in Pax Christi. I was struck by the good sense of this document talking about right relationships in all

spheres of our life. Of course written in an era where women were identified as man....

I was recently introduced by Gill Burrows to a different version of a similar message in Pacem in Terris called The Difficult Conversation Project developed by Kern Beare, an American psychologist. It came into being because of concern for the divide that had sprung up in the US following the election of Donald Trump in 2016.

Kern was so shocked and realised that he had been living in a bubble.

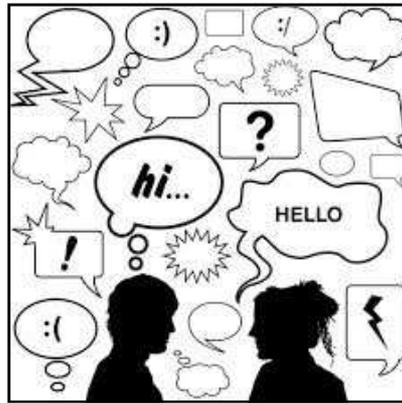
He went with his son on a road trip across US to understand better the national psyche and ran workshops. He did make the point that he originally wanted to provide support to liberal minded people, but his workshops attracted both liberals and conservatives.

Kern uses science describing how our primal responses kick in when we feel threatened. Fight Flee Freeze. The dominant threats in my experience of my culture are not physical they are ideas and values that do not necessarily match mine.

Kern's workshops recommend three principles and areas of attention

- Prioritize the relationship against always being right...
- See beyond your own story
- Transform resistance into response.

These principles are a helpful guide for me. Kern states that transformation happens from hate to love, from rejection to acceptance, from alienation to connection. That is the shift that has to happen, it only happens individual by individual by individual. This project has application here in Australia too as conversations and positions are becoming more and



more polarised.

Megan Phelps (Ex Westboro Church member) gives a wonderful ted talk about how when she engaged with others who thought differently to her.

Some of Megan's tips for change

- Do not assume bad intent - this allows our minds to be more open to dialogue
- Ask questions – helps to map the disconnect - it signals that we are listening....
- Stay calm – this takes practice and patience refuse to escalate the subject
- Make the argument –the value of our position can seem so obvious

right and good to us - however we are all a product of our upbringing and our beliefs reflect our experiences we cannot expect others to spontaneously change their minds

Megan says that she was approached as a human being. Her friends on twitter pointed out with gentleness and patience the inconsistencies between her beliefs and practice... that approach was far more transformative than two full decades of outrage and disdain.

I came across an article yesterday in the The Correspondent by Rutger Bregman who writes Good behaviour is contagious. It can also influence structural change, and vice versa. So look to the system, yes, but remember you are a part of it – and look in the mirror for change, too.

*Maggie Galley has been an active participant in Pax Christi Australia since prior to the 2003 Iraq War. Maggie strongly opposed Australia's participation in the 'Coalition of the Willing' along with thousands of other Australians. Maggie continues to work as Secretary/Treasurer Pax Christi Australia and as Treasurer of Pax Christi NSW.*

## 5 PEACE MOVEMENTS IN AUSTRALIA

Rita Camilleri

Australia is preparing for war! No, there is no immediate threat. We wish to be onside with our (once) great and powerful nuclear-armed ally. Our 2019-2020 military budget is \$38.7billion and growing, and not including almost another \$3 billion for ASIO, AFP and ASIS to share. We have committed our submarine fleet to "help" the US conduct surveillance in the South China Sea. Our economy needs a bit of help too, we are told. What better way than to manufacture and sell arms as one of the top ten in the world. We welcome scientists to do research in our universities to develop "improve" weapons some of which have been labelled "ethical".

**Question:** *Is anyone doing anything against all this militarism in Australia?*

Fortunately, yes there are many groups, large, small, old, not so old, working tirelessly, trying to make a

difference.

This is good news. Here is a list of names which come to mind, it is by no means an exhaustive list

**The Medical Association for the Prevention of War**

**(MAPW)** – a relatively old organisation – whose latest campaign is helping Australian superannuation funds divest from nuclear weapons companies. MAPW is a founding member of the national Australian Arms Control Coalition, working for greater transparency and accountability in the arms trade. It produced original research



on weapons company incursions into Australian education. MAPW took action on the climate crisis (war is the greatest polluter), and in support of whistleblowers, refugees and asylum seekers, and indigenous communities resisting nuclear waste dumps. It has been a vocal and persistent voice for non-violent resolutions to current conflicts in Yemen, West Papua, and Iran.

**IPAN (An Independent and Peaceful Australia Network)** – a relatively new coalition of groups around Australia – is about to launch *A People's Inquiry into the political, economic, social, environmental and mental health effects of war on the Australian people*. What are the costs and consequences of Australia's involvement in US-led wars and the US Alliance?

The aim of this Inquiry is two-fold: to facilitate a deep conversation and engagement with the broader Australian community in order to determine a path forwards towards a genuinely non-aligned, independent and peaceful foreign policy for Australia; to ensure a more just allocation of Australian government resources. and to produce and promote a public report which outlines the views of those Australians who hold concerns about the US Alliance and which details the steps to be taken to ensure a genuinely independent and peaceful foreign policy for Australia. The inquiry will be a way for organisations and individuals across Australia to contribute to a national conversation.

**Campaign to Stop Killer Robots** – a relatively recent development – is about totally autonomous weapons system with no human control. Such weapons pose technological issues (the performance of algorithms), legal issues of accountability and of course ethical issues. So far forty countries approve a ban on such weapons. Thousands of technicians have pledged not to participate in such projects, 160 NGOs in 65 countries are working towards the ban.

**Campaign for International Cooperation and Disarmament (CICD)** is supporting a call to end to the Australian government's military support to the Duterte government whose relentless murders, illegal arrests and other violations in the Philippines are to be condemned outright.

**CICD**, one of the oldest established peace groups still functioning in Victoria, has a weekly program on community radio and like most other peace organisations produces a regular newsletter.

There are, of course groups with a specific focus:

**APAN (Australia Palestine Advocacy Network), PIEN (Palestine Israel Interfaith Network), ANTaR (Australians for Native Title and Reconciliation)** the names say it all.

Now a word or two about successes. **SAFE GROUND** actively participated in the inter-national legal treaty processes that culminated in the adoption of the Mine Ban Treaty and Convention on Cluster Munitions. They are now looking at adequate compensation for the victims of war which would include refugees.

**International Campaign for the Abolition of Nuclear weapons (ICAN)** As you probably know the fiftieth state to sign and ratify the Nuclear Ban Treaty was Honduras. This means that the Treaty will become International Law on January 2021, making it illegal "under any circumstance develop test, produce, manufacture, otherwise acquire, possess or stockpile nuclear weapons". MAPW played a central role in generating support for the UN Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons amongst politicians, health professionals and organisations, cities and towns, and Australian and international civil society. Peace groups seek one another's support and strengthen one another.

other's support and strengthen one another.

**Pax Christi** – Finally our small group is part of an International peace movement. In Australia we organize fora, lobby, and in many ways try to "educate" the community we live in on the importance of peace, justice and non-violence. At the time of the centenary of ANZAC (2015) we argued against the legitimization of war. This gave rise to AND (Australians for Nuclear Disarmament). A much earlier campaign gave birth to the "People for Nuclear Disarmament" coalition against nuclear issues at the height of the Cold War in the 1980s.

Clearly outreach by individuals or collectively is the key to moving out into the mainstream. However, although we have had some successes there is so much more to be done. The mainstream is barely touched, despite all our efforts, singular and combined. Perhaps one day in the future we shall see all anti-war, anti-violence groups come together to share ideas until there is a critical mass from which true peace has a chance to emerge.

For information on any of the above (and others) contact me on [camri-ta44@gmail.com](mailto:camri-ta44@gmail.com)

*Rita has been Secretary and Treasurer of Pax Christi in Australia since it began in the 1970s. She has long been involved with a range of educational and advocacy organisations around the issues of international cooperation and understanding, nuclear disarmament, multiculturalism and social justice.*

## IN THE NAME OF JESUS? (AFTER JANUARY 6)

Nathan LeRud

**This statement comes from the USA post January 6. It is equally challenging for Australians**

A Statement from Trinity Episcopal Cathedral, Portland Oregon

*"We are Trump's army.*

*We are God's army."*

In the context of the last four years, Wednesday's events – an attempt at an armed takeover of one of the core institutions of American democracy – shouldn't come as a surprise. In one sense, and particularly for

many Americans who don't happen to be of European descent, the events that occurred this week are simply the latest example of a litany of horrors that began in 1619 when the first slave ship landed on North American shores. Because let's be clear: this is white supremacy at work.

Let me speak directly to my fellow Christians: it's not enough for well-meaning Christian people of either (or neither!) political party to cluck their tongues, long for a more

peaceful day, wonder "why we can't all just get along" as Jesus intended, and go about our business. And to my colleagues in the clergy (and to myself): it's not enough for Christian preachers and pastors to get up into our pulpits on Sunday, preach a barn-burning fire-and-brimstone sermon denouncing the evils of white supremacy and white nationalism (or let's call it what it is: Christian nationalism) and then sit down

while our progressive members shout "Amen!" and feel like finally the Church is saying something. "Saying something" has gotten us nowhere.

So let me be as clear as I can, for members of this congregation who are wondering where the Church stands on issues of terrorism, fear, and racially-motivated abuses of power, and for members of the larger public who may be listening in to hear what we have to say right now about Jesus (you know, that guy whose name was invoked on Wednesday on the signs, tattoos, and lips of many of the so-called "revolutionaries"): Christian Nationalism is a perversion, an infection, and an illegitimate hijacking of the Christian faith, the Holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testament, and the life, ministry and ongoing witness of Jesus Christ in the world.

I made a sacred promise at my ordination to the priesthood to uphold all these things, and it would be dereliction of duty and of my vows not to denounce Christian Nationalism in the strongest possible terms, not to stand against it with every fibre of my being. The very fact that the name of my Saviour is being invoked by those who pledge allegiance to a reality TV star who refuses to let go of his office is a desecration of that Holy Name.

That desecration has been going on for a long time in this nation. President Trump is a symptom, not a cause: focusing this moment on him and his manoeuvres is precisely what he wants, and risks dulling

each of us to the real danger we are in, and blinding us to its true source. Many Christians (I count myself among them) have tended to try to get along with our "right-wing" siblings of varying stripes. They are not our enemies, easily dismissed as "crazy people" out there who take to the streets and wield the signs—they are our fathers and mothers, our grandparents, our crazy Uncle Bills, our police officers, our Sunday School teachers and our friends.

Many of us grew up in homes that taught some soft—and often unwitting—version of this form of popular Christianity: the belief that Christianity is the "one true religion" of America, that God has a plan for this nation, and that that plan involves the policies and politics of the so-called religious right: whether that's abortion, same-sex marriage, or an unshakable faith in American capitalism. Ex-Right Wingers like me know that this belief system lies at the heart of much of what we were taught about what it means to be a Christian, and in many ways, an American. Many of us are working to disentangle what it means to be white with what it means to follow Jesus – and we know that what happened on Wednesday in the Capitol Building is not an aberration or the actions of a few rotten apples from an ultimately healthy bushel. These so-called "Bible-believing Christians" are doing exactly what their churches have trained them to do. We know this because many of us were trained the same way. I certainly was.

I intend to repent and to make amends to those whom Christianity has hurt as a result of these toxic beliefs. Some of those individuals harmed by toxic Christianity are the very ones who invaded the Capitol Building on Wednesday. But all of us have been damaged by these pernicious teachings – perpetrators and victims of violence alike. And I want to go on record: people of faith—whether that's faith in God, faith in Jesus Christ, or simply faith in American Democracy—should be alarmed, unsettled, angry, and vigilant in the months (and probably years) to come as this newest version of American heresy raises its head and gains traction. Our resistance cannot be passive, it must be active - and compassionate.

Our tradition is being stolen from us and handed to a lynch mob. Christian Nationalism is a cancer on the American soul, and if those who gathered at the President's rally are to be believed, "this is the beginning of the second American Revolution." I do not believe that to be the case – but I take the threat seriously, because I recognize where it comes from. I know that the only thing that will prevent further violence, insurrection, and chaos is if individuals and communities of faith stand up and refuse to let our traditions, our scriptures, our beliefs, and our families be further desecrated by the evil being practiced and preached in the name of Jesus Christ.

*Nathan Rudd is Dean of Trinity Episcopal (Anglican) cathedral, Portland Oregon*

## WE NEED A RADICAL PROPHETIC POSITION ON ISRAEL/PALESTINE

Jonathan Kuttab

The Trump administration was an utter catastrophe for those who care about justice and peace in Israel/Palestine. U.S. policy was entrusted to right-wing settlement supporters such as Ambassador David Friedman and Jared Kushner and Christian Zionists such as Secretary of State Mike Pompeo. The administration applauded—and legalized—settlement expansion, showing utter disdain for international law. They displayed blatant antagonism to Palestinians by mov-

ing the U.S. embassy to Jerusalem, cutting off financial aid to Palestinian hospitals and the U.N. Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees, and closing the Palestinian Liberation Organization office in Washington. They capped it all by promoting fake "peace" alternatives, such as Trump's disastrous "Peace to Prosperity" plan and the normalization agreements with Gulf countries. These policies aimed to appease the most hard-right policies of Israel and the eschatological fanta-

sies of evangelical Christian Zionists, rather than seeking genuine peace or justice. The Biden administration is likely to reverse some of these extreme steps. Biden has already signalled, however, that he would not reverse the embassy move, nor support any measures for conditioning aid to Israel based on its behaviour. Biden's policy will likely be marked by a return to the traditional policies of the Obama era, which included anemic objections to

to the traditional policies of the Obama era, which included anemic objections to renewed settlement expansion, verbal support for a two-state solution, and vague references to international law, while resisting any pressure on Israel to actually comply with international law or create a sovereign Palestinian state. But even if Biden reversed *all* of Trump's actions and returned to Obama's positions, that would hardly advance peace and justice in that part of the world. New and bold initiatives are needed. They might not solve the problem entirely, but they can constitute real progress toward a just solution for Israel/Palestine and the region.

What are the courageous next steps? Biden can lay down the criteria for bringing Hamas into the peace process (as was done with the PLO). He can cease providing the diplomatic umbrella that protects Israel's most blatant actions from the requirements of international



law. He can use the considerable leverage of the U.S. to achieve concrete changes in the lives of people by demanding an end to the siege of Gaza, administrative detentions, midnight arrests of children, trials for children in military courts, house demolitions, and the use of torture and collective punishments against the Palestinian population. All these steps can be achieved without jeopardizing Israel's security or prejudicing the ultimate outcome of any peace negotiations between the parties.

Ultimately, the Biden administration must either insist on respect for international law and genuine movement toward Palestinian statehood, or the U.S. must face the reality that a two-state solution is no longer possible and begin the process of addressing equality and genuine democracy in all of historic Palestine.

While it may be too much to expect any U.S. administration to act with fairness in this area, Christians who

are concerned with justice, human rights, and the interests of both Israelis and Palestinians must start thinking in new terms.

It is time to envision a new reality beyond the two-state solution. With more than 700,000 Jewish settlers living as lords and masters in segregated communities in the West Bank and East Jerusalem, a Palestinian Arab state in those areas may be impossible to implement. Perhaps the true interests of both Palestinians and Israeli Jews can be met in a unitary state in all of Palestine if both sides are willing or forced to abandon exclusivist terms that deny and demonize the other. Without claiming any symmetry between the two parties, theirs has been a zero-sum conflict. Both Zionism (calling for an exclusively Jewish state) and Palestinian Nationalism (calling for an Arab state) have failed to eliminate the other group or to meet the needs of their own people. To end the conflict, both movements must be called into question; both must be required to address the interests of the other.

This requires a radical prophetic position that may be too difficult for any administration, but certainly one that Christians attuned to justice can strive toward. Meanwhile, we can work for specific interim steps to alleviate suffering, avoid demonization, and end the practice of one-sided support to *either* party in this conflict.

## SOME PLACES SOME RITUALS

Ian Higgins

*There are some so called  
sacred places  
I have never been.  
The National War  
Memorial,  
Canberra, is one.*

*Somewhere there  
my father's name inscribed.  
That I will never see.*

*I do not worship Mars.  
Do not believe in war.*



*Nor am I a pilgrim  
to his sacred shrines.*

*Anzac Day is for me,  
another Sorry Day.*

*I will not go to  
the Dawn Service:  
Wear my Dad's medals:  
Walk in the big parade.  
Only recall those,  
who went to die:*

# NOTICE BOARD

## Anzac Day 2021 Sunday 25th April.

Pax Christi is co sponsoring the 10 am service at St Paul's Cathedral Melbourne.

The preacher will be Dr. John Langmore Professorial fellow in the Department of Political Science at the [University of Melbourne](http://www.unimelb.edu.au), ICAN Board member

## A PLAGUE ON BOTH THEIR HOUSES

RECLAIMING THE POWER OF COMMUNICATION FROM BIG TECH & GOVERNMENT

TUES 23RD MARCH 7:30 PM  
VIA ZOOM

**Guest Speaker Lizzie O'Shea** lawyer and writer and commentator on law, technology and human rights. Her writing has appeared in the New York Times, the Guardian, and the Sydney Morning Herald.

**Big tech and governments are twin sources of authority over our digital lives,  
How do we reclaim power over the development of technology?**

*Presented by Conversation at the Crossroads, a growing community with a local and global mission to connect people from all walks of life to address the most pressing issues of our time. See [www.crossroadsconversation.com.au](http://www.crossroadsconversation.com.au)*

## Palm Sunday Walk for Justice for Refugees 2021



Sunday 28th  
March 2021

**RELEASE ALL  
REFUGEES FROM DETENTION**

Join the Walk for Justice for Refugees on Palm Sunday to help end the cruelty offshore and onshore.

Melbourne (Corner Swanston & La Trobe Streets) at 2.00pm.  
Sydney 2 pm Belmore Park

## Pax Christi Australia National Conference

Brisbane  
6th to 8th August 2021

**Spirituality for Peace Building:  
Learning from  
First Nations peoples**

### Keynote Speaker Dr Anne Pattel-Grey

a recognised Aboriginal leader in Australia -nationally and internationally. Dr Anne has dedicated her life to the struggle of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people

Further information from Pam Nair  
[pamnair@hotmail.com](mailto:pamnair@hotmail.com)

## Pax Christi Australia WEBINAR FOR PARISHES

WHEN: 2.00 – 3.30 PM (AEST),  
Sunday 18 April 2021.

### *Presentations*

*The vision of Fratelli Tutti -*  
Fr Kevin Lenehan,  
Master, Catholic Theological College,  
University of Divinity

*Collaboration, not Confrontation among  
faiths*

Sr Jan Barnett, RSJ,  
Josephite Justice Network

*Reflecting on Australia's Relations in  
Southeast Asia*

Rev. Andy Tiver, Uniting Church  
Co-Chair Philippine-Australia Solidarity  
Association (PASA)

### FURTHER INFORMATION:

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**INVITE PEOPLE  
FROM YOUR CHURCH !!**

**I/We wish to apply for or renew membership of the International Christian Peace Movement - Pax Christi Australia.**

(Membership is from January to December)

(Please tick box if you wish to receive your copy of **Disarming Times** by e-mail)

**New South Wales Members** please return your membership application/renewal to  PO Box A 681 Sydney South 1235 NSW

**All others:** please return your membership application/ renewal to P.O Box 31, Carlton South, Vic 3053 . Direct transfer to Pax Christi Victoria Inc **BSB 063-161 Account number 00900935**

**Please Advise Terry Byrne** [t.byrne15@optusnet.com.au](mailto:t.byrne15@optusnet.com.au)

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**ENCLOSED \$..... (Single \$35; Low income \$20; Family \$45)**