



## International Christian Peace Movement

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### *Statement by Pax Christi Australia for Peace in Ukraine*

Pax Christi Australia absolutely condemns the recent invasion of Ukraine by Russia, as we do the invasion of any country. We believe that war is always a defeat for humanity and breaks the connections we have with one another on this planet.

We wish to send a message to the people of Ukraine that we stand with them in their suffering and are opposed to those who are creating violence and hate and this strange need for war. We wish to send a strong message of solidarity with the thousands of people in Russia, and beyond, who are calling for peace and nonviolence. We applaud the unprecedented action of Pope Francis in going to the Russian embassy in Rome to condemn the invasion. We still await to see the Russian Orthodox Patriarch break his silence and deplore the invasion.

Our hearts are with all those in Ukraine who tremble in fear at the violence which has overturned their lives. Our hearts break for the losses already experienced, the suffering, displacement and death that cannot be erased. We stand with the people of Ukraine and all who are crying out for peace, and we join with Pope Francis as he says: 'War is madness.' 'Put down your weapons!' 'Those who wage war forget humanity'. 'Let us all together cry out from our hearts never again war, never again a clash of arms, never again so much suffering. As the Dalai Lama recently said 'war is outdated' and called on us to develop a sense of oneness where we consider every person a sister and brother.

As we unequivocally condemn the behaviour of Vladimir Putin and his minions, we must equally acknowledge and condemn US and Western foreign policy that has pursued a provocative agenda of destabilisation and threatened Russia's national security through NATO's expansion up to its borders. Without in any way condoning the Russian invasion of Ukraine, we must never forget that no country on Earth has invaded more countries, overthrown more democratically elected world leaders than the USA.

Pax Christi Australia is deeply disturbed by Russian insinuations of a possible use of its nuclear weapons in the conflict. Pope Francis has repeatedly condemned such threats as well as the possession of nuclear weapons. Such threats are also prohibited by the ***Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons***.

Pax Christi condemns the popular but dangerous assumption that violence keeps us safe. Pope Francis has identified several things that we place our trust in but do not cultivate peace:

- The accumulation of material goods
- Control over scarce resources
- A balance of power
- The possession of weapons, especially nuclear weapons
- Closed borders and keeping 'strangers' out.

We believe that there is no such thing as a just or legal war and that there is no sanity left in the preparation for war. *Rather than the grotesque idiocy of the global military budget* - not to mention the maintenance and upgrading

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It regards justice and human rights as central to peacebuilding  
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of those nuclear weapons mostly in Russian and American (USA) hands - *we need to begin consciously creating the future of oneness and a future in which war is not inevitable*. Peace, security and the flourishing of people and the planet are grounded in right relationships with God, each other, and the whole of creation. Each of these relationships is wounded and in need of reconciliation. *'Everyone is connected'*. Security and peace are global questions in which the whole human family must be engaged. A recent Pax Christi Australia Conference on Peace and Security reinforced this very insight.

In Australia, this means that we must spend more on diplomacy and peace making; it means rejecting AUKUS and our dangerous military alliance with the US; it means we must question the nature of Australia's defense expenditure and the ambition to become a major player in the arms trade; it means hospitality towards all people, their experiences and perspectives; it means seeing dialogue as essential to developing of encounter where seeks points of contact, building bridges and inclusivity; it means that the major political parties must be persuaded to relinquish the politics of fear and exclusion which will happen when enough people stop responding to the dog whistle; and, it means creating spaces where we can listen to one another, accept differences, and seek the truth together. We need to 'hear the true stories' of victims of violence and people pushed to the edges, to 'look at reality through their eyes' and to 'listen with an open heart to the stories that they tell' (***Fratelli tutti**, # 261*). The use of slogans such as 'an arc of autocracy' does not help nurture a climate of peace and peace building. We need to do much better.

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March 8, 2022

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