

# Justpeace

## PAX CHRISTI

International Catholic Movement for Peace

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### Remembering Gaza one year on

Listening to the radio recently I heard the phrase, 'water is the new oil', by a journalist talking about the rise of water conflicts. He was talking about drought in China but he could have been talking about northern Kenya where scorching drought exacerbates tensions between nomadic tribes over land and water. These highlight one side of the war/environment connection. Another is the direct devastation to the environment created by war and unjust policies. Gaza is a case in point. Water and sanitation services were destroyed in the 22 days of war and the ongoing blockade prevents building materials for emergency repairs from entering. As a result, the ICRC say that every day 69 million litres of partially or untreated sewage are pumped directly into the Mediterranean. This week Amnesty International issued a report saying that Israel must end its discriminatory policies, and immediately lift all the restrictions it imposes on Palestinians' access to water.

December marks the anniversary of Operation Cast Lead when 1,387 Palestinians and 9 Israelis were killed during the course of the three-week operation against Gaza. December is also a time when we are challenged to remember the plight of the people of the Holy Land in our Advent and Christmas preparations and celebrations.

In June Pax Christi hosted a six city speaking tour with two representatives of Israeli Physicians for Human Rights, who presented the findings of the PHR report on the war in Gaza. Miri Weingarten, international advocacy director for PHR and Sr Alicia Vacas, a Comboni Missionary Sister and member of the delegation to Gaza spoke of their belief that the people of Gaza had been sacrificed in those 22 days and that the ultimate purpose of the attacks seemed to be to create 'terror without mercy'. Their report focused on attacks on medical facilities and medical personnel, and on the type of weaponry used. The delegation gave evidence to the UN Fact Finding Mission on the Gaza Conflict, better known as the Goldstone report, whose mandate was to look at all parties, Israel, the Palestinian Authority, Hamas (which governs Gaza) and armed Palestinian groups.



artwork by Sr Sheila Gosney

However, the Government of Israel decided not to cooperate with the Mission and refused to give access to Gaza, the West Bank and to southern Israel. The Mission eventually gained access to Gaza via Egypt at the Rafah Crossing.

In his statement to the Commission Judge Goldstone said "The lack of accountability for war crimes and possible crimes against humanity has reached a crisis point; the ongoing lack of justice is undermining any hope for a successful peace process and reinforcing an environment that fosters violence. Time and again, experience has taught us that overlooking justice only leads to increased conflict and violence."

Fr Rob Esdaile's article reminds us of the intimate connection between injustice, warfare and the destruction of the environment and the clear injunction to see the gaping wounds of the planet as well as those of humanity. It prepares the way for Peace Sunday, 17 January 2010 with the theme chosen by Pope Benedict, *If you want to cultivate peace, protect creation*. We urge Pax Christi members to seek out ways of celebrating Peace Sunday drawing on the experiences and resources of Pax Christi.

Pat Gaffney

### Solidarity with the people of Gaza and Bethlehem

Send messages and prayers for peace to Pax Christi partners in Bethlehem - develop this as an Advent project in parishes or schools. Provide people with paper (star shaped gift tags make good message cards) and ask them to include their name and country in the message. When you have a good number, copy them and email them to our partners at [aei@p-ol.com](mailto:aei@p-ol.com) before 24 December. All messages can be read via the Pax Christi International website [www.paxchristi.net](http://www.paxchristi.net). Ask for or download our Bethlehem Advent Project leaflet which has more ideas for Advent.

Arrange to have prayers for Bethlehem and Gaza in your church in Advent/Christmas or on the feast of the Holy Innocents. Write to your local MP and ask him/her to keep pressure on our Government to do all it can to help end the blockade on Gaza.

## Longing for peace in Gaza and the West Bank

### Absurdity Is the norm in the Gaza Strip

Upon returning home from Gaza, a friend commented, "It must have been horrifying seeing all the destruction." And it was. The 22-day Israeli assault on the Gaza Strip laid waste to an already ravaged territory. The landscape is dotted with piles of rubble of bombed out buildings, the twisted iron and aluminium of destroyed factories, once green fields reduced to sand and dirt by Israeli tanks, apartments with 2 meter holes in the walls and toppled minarets of mosques turned to ruins.

But devastating though witness to the destruction was, it was the absurdities of the siege, the total blockade of Gaza imposed by Israel and Egypt, that really affected me. Gaza itself remains frozen in time; for nearly five months after the ceasefire, aside from a few rare cases in which cinder blocks have been used to fill gaping holes in the sides of buildings, no reconstruction whatsoever has begun. The blockade keeps the necessary building materials out of Gaza.

At Al Shifa Hospital, the largest in Gaza, we saw state of the art isotope scan and radio therapy machines in the oncology department that cannot operate because the radioactive material as well as a calibration tool have been refused entry by Israel. A row of dialysis machines sat unused, lacking the required fluids.

As medical conditions in Gaza deteriorate due to the siege, many look for medical care abroad. However, the sealed borders prevent them from travelling. We met the director of an orphanage who had already lost the vision in one eye, was losing it in the other, but had been unable to obtain permission to travel to Egypt for eye care.

Power outages are regular occurrences. The Gaza power plant simply cannot keep up with the demand due to a lack of fuel, which is blocked by Israel, as is supplemental electricity produced in Israel. There are scheduled blackouts of 8-10 hours, as well as spontaneous outages.



Photograph by John Harkin  
drawing of Gaza from child in Bethlehem

While touring the Al Shifa Hospital, the Minister of Health apologized for the heat in the room, saying their generator must be reserved for higher priority uses than air conditioning. Families are forced to carry their loved ones up the stairs, the elevators shutdown during blackouts.

The siege has also taken its toll on the father figure. According to Dr. Zeyada of the Gaza Community Mental Health Program, with well over 50% unemployment due to the siege, children see their fathers as unable to provide for them. And during the war, they saw that their fathers were also unable to protect them. Children have started looking to other role models, and make easy targets for those who, unfortunately, have no desire for peace.

### Resources for peacemaking

**Bethlehem: Hidden from View**, a film about the strangling and imprisonment of the little town of Bethlehem and its impact on the local Christian community. Available as a DVD. Ideal for churches and groups. Available from [www.amostrust.org](http://www.amostrust.org)

**Gaza: Dignity Under Siege** - Voices from behind the blockade. An excellent 36 page booklet with photographs produced by CIDSE, network of six European catholic development agencies, including CAFOD. Voices from Gazan's, Israeli's and international workers. Available on CAFOD's website [www.cafod.org.uk](http://www.cafod.org.uk)

**Pax Christi's Bethlehem Advent Prayer Project** with Holy Family set and powerpoint. Available from the office for £12.00

Websites of organisations supporting rebuilding, development and human rights work

[www.islamic-relief.com](http://www.islamic-relief.com) - Islamic Relief a partner of CAFOD.  
[www.cafod.org.uk](http://www.cafod.org.uk) - Catholic Agency for Overseas Development.  
[www.christianaid.org.uk](http://www.christianaid.org.uk)  
[www.icrc.org/eng](http://www.icrc.org/eng) - International Committee of the Red Cross  
[www.btselem.org/English](http://www.btselem.org/English) - Israeli Human Rights Group, B'Tselem  
[www2.ohchr.org](http://www2.ohchr.org) - Office of the High Commission for Human rights  
[www.phr.org.il](http://www.phr.org.il) - Physicians for Human Rights, Israel  
[www.paxchristi.org.uk/Wall.HTML](http://www.paxchristi.org.uk/Wall.HTML): Report UN fact finding mission on Gaza conflict

**Prayer resources**  
There will not always be darkness or pain for those who wait in sadness.  
*We have waited long for your peace.*

*Come, O Lord!*

There are promises of hope and joy for those who long for a new age.

*We have waited long for peace to be born.*

**Christmas Prayer**

Child of Bethlehem house of bread;  
Man of Jerusalem city of peace;  
you have loved us without limit or condition;  
in our greatness and in our misery,  
in our folly and in our virtue:  
may your hand be always upon us  
and may your heart be within us  
so that we too may become bread and peace for one another  
*John Hammond OSB, Weston Priory, Vermont*

Education suffers under the siege. At a UN vocational training center in Khan Younis the library consists of roughly 12 bookcases, but only two had any books at all, with half being photocopied manuals. The textbooks destined for the center have been held up in a storage facility in Jerusalem; the Israelis simply refused to allow them in. The center is also unable to get the raw materials for their metal and woodworking courses.

Sharif, a university student studying business administration in his second year, is understandably proud of having top marks in his faculty. His friends have nicknamed him 'The Genius.' Sharif has been awarded a scholarship at Portland University in Oregon starting this fall. Unfortunately, the irrationality of the siege is likely to prevent him from being allowed to go. "If I can't get authorization by August, there goes my scholarship."

Numerous projects for which funding has already been approved are currently suspended for the simple fact that the materials to complete them are not allowed in. Turkey has donated funds for a new university library and PalTel, the Palestinian telecommunications company, has allocated funds for an Information Technology Center. Both projects remain in limbo, victims of the siege.

### Visit to the Holy Land with Pax Christi 1 - 8 November 2010

An opportunity to bring the Bible alive, to strengthen our faith and to bring hope to our Christian brothers and sisters. Come with us as we walk in the footsteps of Jesus and join the thousands of people who have made this great pilgrimage of faith. We will also have the opportunity to meet and talk with those who continue to live in the Holy Land and to be inspired as we share with our brothers and sisters in Christ.

For over 60 years the situation in the Middle East has been one of conflict and occupation and suffering. The aim of this trip is to visit the places associated with the life of Jesus and to meet with those who live in the Holy Land in order to understand their situation, and to offer support and solidarity to the dwindling number of Christians who need our encouragement.

Not only are Palestinians restricted in their movement in and out of Gaza, but also within. In late May, Israel began dropping thousands of leaflets near the border areas warning the people of Gaza not to come within 300 meters of the border or they would be fired upon. Farmers are forced to risk their lives in order to work the fields that fate has placed too close to the border. The same restrictions are imposed on Palestinian fishermen. The sound of shots pierce the silence nightly, as Israeli gunboats fire on fishing boats that dare to venture far enough away from the shore to catch fish to sell and provide a living for their families.

These are the absurdities that have become the norm in Gaza. But perhaps most absurd of all is how anyone can believe that Israel's severity in the closures, the destruction of the economy and social fabric of the Gaza Strip, will serve to convince Palestinians to place their trust in international law. What we in the international community must do is to heed the call we heard repeatedly from the people of Gaza: work to break the siege so that they can take care of themselves.

*Stephanie Westbrook was in Gaza in June with a US delegation organised by Code Pink. Read more at [www.peaceandjustice.it](http://www.peaceandjustice.it)*

Our visit will be assisted by Israeli and Palestinian justice and peace organisations, along with the opportunity of meeting with Pax Christi's partners. Whilst the pilgrimage will not be a traditional tour of the holy sites, we will have several occasions to meet with Christians, Muslims and Jews in order to learn more about this complex part of the world.

Accommodation will be in Bethlehem on a half-board basis. Flights will be with British Airways from London Heathrow. The cost will be £900 (based on two persons sharing a double room). The Pax Christi group will be accompanied by Rev Paul Maddison KHS who has had many years experience of bringing groups to the Holy Land.

*Contact the office for a booking/deposit form*

### Diary

**5 December (Sat) London**

The Wave: Stop climate chaos. Gather for service at 11.00 am Westminster Central Hall, London SW1H 9NH, followed by march. Look out for Pax Christi.

**3, 10 and 17 December (Thurs) Aldermaston**

Advent Vigils from 1 - 2 pm at Tadley Gate Aldermaston AWE, between Reading and Newbury. Organised by Christian CND. Details: Caroline 01865 241 290 or [maasgilbert@hotmail.com](mailto:maasgilbert@hotmail.com)

**7 December (Mon) London**

Pax Christi Advent Service 7.30 at St Aloysius Church, Phoenix Road, Euston NW1. Music led by Bernadette Farrell. Advent market and mulled wine and mince-pies.

**17 January 2010 Peace Sunday**

Theme: 'If you want to cultivate peace protect creation'. Materials from Pax Christi.

**15 February (Mon) Aldermaston**

Blockade of the Atomic Weapons Establishment where new nuclear weapons are being developed. CCND are coordinating the Faith Gate. Interested in bringing a group? Contact Chris Wood on 020 7700 2357 or at [chris@cnduk.org](mailto:chris@cnduk.org)

**17 February (Wed) London**

Ash Wednesday annual witness at the Ministry of Defence in Whitehall. Time and further details to be confirmed: [www.paxchristi.org.uk](http://www.paxchristi.org.uk)

**1 March (Mon) London**

Christian CND walk to embassies of the nuclear weapons states asking about progress in disarmament. Details 020 7700 4200 or [christians@cnduk.org](mailto:christians@cnduk.org)

**4 March (Thurs) South Coast**

Flame of Hope relay walk from Dungeness to Hastings. This is Christian CND's leg of the march from Dover to Southampton. The flame is being taken from Hiroshima to New York for the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty review conference at the UN. More details: [www.abolitionflame.org/?p=138](http://www.abolitionflame.org/?p=138)

**16-17 April (Fri-Sat) London**

Peace History conference at the Imperial War Museum will include presentation by young entrants to Pax Christi's schools' competition on peace heroes and heroines. Details later from [www.abolishwar.org.uk](http://www.abolishwar.org.uk)

## Reflection - If you want to cultivate peace, protect creation

The theme chosen by Pope Benedict for this year's World Peace Message is a striking one: *"If You Want To Cultivate Peace, Protect Creation"*. Twenty years ago, when the Berlin wall came down, hardly anyone would have made the connection between work for peace and the struggle to protect the environment. There was general acceptance that the Church should be involved in peace-making and conflict resolution, but Christian environmentalists were generally regarded as a bit cranky. Today we are much more aware of how essential it is that Christians work to safeguard the natural world and re-make our own lifestyles, so that we might "tread lightly on the earth".

Most of us, however, haven't yet caught up with Pope Benedict's insight that there is an intimate connection between environmental damage and warfare, so let us probe that link a little. There are clearly political connections to be made. Many of the wars of the last generation have been "resource wars" (fought over oil, diamonds, narcotics and the like).

And with increasing pressure on drinking-water supplies, grazing land, grain harvests and other basic resources, we can expect more such conflicts in the future. Desertification and environmental degradation yield not only a harvest of human suffering but also refugee-flows and economic disruption. So protecting creation is a crucial tool for peace-making.

But there is also a spiritual connection to be made between environmental health and peace; and perhaps this will prove even more important in the long term. Whatever the justifications which can be offered in any particular case, warfare always represents a gross failure on the part of the human family. Differences which should have been resolved through dialogue and friendship are tackled through violence. Our neighbour is viewed from a distance, with suspicion, as a potential enemy, rather than approached as a possible friend. So, too, in the modern era we came to look at the natural world from a distance and with hostility.

It was there to be subjugated, mined, exploited, even trashed. It belonged to us and we could do whatever we wanted with it. We cut ourselves off from its natural rhythms. We thought we owed it nothing. And so we left gaping wounds across our planet and gaping wounds in our own alienated hearts.

Now we are having to learn again that we belong to nature, and not the other way round. We live here for a while, as tenants and stewards, not owners. But we are also learning that nature gives us the means for healing the wounds we have made, both in the living world and in our own spirits. And we are discovering in our own Christian tradition a forgotten wisdom, voices such as that of St Francis of Assisi, who praised God for Brother Sun and Sister Moon and every other aspect of creation, including Sister Death. These voices, together with Pope Benedict, call us now to live in harmony with each other and with our wonderful planet.

Fr Rob Esdaile

## Office Report

### Introducing Matt Jeziorski

I'm Matt and I have come to this role after a number of years working in a variety of Christian youth settings including schools, parishes and youth centres. I hope that my experience and skills may prove a valuable resource to Pax Christi as I embark on this new set of challenges and seek to build on the good work done by Hilary before me.

Aside from my work I am an avid sports fan with an inexplicable passion for Port Vale football club. I also enjoy cooking and I have a deep appreciation for steam trains and seaside piers.

I look forward to meeting and working alongside many of you in the coming weeks and months as I get stuck into this job.

### Kathy Wicks RIP June 1930- October 2009

Kathy was a devoted supporter of Pax Christi, organising the annual Hiroshima/Nagasaki vigil in August, volunteering in the Manor House office and engaging with peace groups in Haringay on behalf of Pax Christi. It was Kathy's idea to produce the popular Pax Christi book, 'A Taste for Peace' in 1996. She spent many hours editing and trying out most of the recipes herself.

Bruce Kent described her as a loyal member of the Catholic Church who believed strongly in its Justice and Peace mission, even if it meant challenging clergy!

Kathy was a founder member of the North London Justice and Peace Network in the mid 1980s, and for several years was network coordinator. Her years as a social worker clearly sensitised her to problems facing the poor and vulnerable. After being involved in planning and setting up so many Justice and Peace days throughout the 80s and 90s it was fitting that she was prayed for at the Westminster Diocesan Justice and Peace Day on Saturday 24 October with many of her friends present.

## Keep peace alive. Remember Pax Christi when making or up-dating your will

Please send me information on

Membership  Publications  Legacy

I enclose a donation of £\_\_\_\_\_ to support your work

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Tel: \_\_\_\_\_

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

Pax Christi, St Joseph's, Watford Way, Hendon, London, NW4 4TY  
Tel: 020 8203 4884 email: [info@paxchristi.org.uk](mailto:info@paxchristi.org.uk) [www.paxchristi.org.uk](http://www.paxchristi.org.uk)