

Ref.: ME.27.E.04

Proposals for Action Plan

For Member Organisations Pax Christi International

A Co-ordinated Awareness-Raising and Campaigning Programme for Israel/Palestine

Additions by the Middle East working group:

- *This is an action plan, not a resolution, so it should be adopted as a proposal for action and not on the basis of wording*
- *International law should provide the framework for a just solution to the conflict in the Middle East*
- *Pax Christi calls on all its member organisations to participate in an international day of action against the separation wall*

Background

No community is protected from violence in Israel and Palestine. For those in the region and for us as members of the international community - the challenge is to find ways of exposing and confronting injustice and fear, in order to break the cycle of violence. Several member organisations have a history of experience and engagement in Israel/Palestine. Pax Christi International has made several visits and has published reports which also resulted in many interventions at the UN Commission for Human Rights on the impact of occupation on the Palestinian community, on the impact of suicide bombings on the Israeli society and on the state of Palestinian citizens in Israel. Most recently a Pax Christi International delegation with representatives from the USA, UK, Netherlands, Belgium and France visited Israel and Palestine. A plea from all of the groups and communities they met was that the reality and impact of the Occupation be communicated to the wider world community, especially the religious communities, including the Catholic Christian community, in order to bring about non-violent change.

How can we take this forward - a three-fold approach?

Focus on the new symbol of occupation - The Israeli Separation Wall.

The Israeli Government claim that the 'anti-terrorist fence (begun in 2003) is being established for the sole purpose of protecting Israelis against Palestinian terrorism'. To date it has failed to do so. Instead it has become a symbol occupation and the inability to secure security through other means. For the Palestinians, the wall will eat into their land - unlawful annexation, create enclaves that will separate them from their farm land and isolate as many as 210,000 from social services, schools, places of work and worship. The wall is another feature of the collective punishment of the Palestinian people and will create greater injustice and humiliation rather than the security it purports to bring.

Response: *Pax Christi International urges all of its member organisations to join a common campaign - addressed to their own and the Israeli Government - to dismantle the wall. To support this, a briefing sheet on the wall will be offered to members for their own use and a common post-card campaign will be co-ordinated between member organisations and the International Secretariat. Member organisations can then develop/enhance their campaigning according to their own resources and reality*

Focus on those who reject the use of military support for occupation

The Israeli Defence Force is used to impose the occupation. Their role at checkpoints, in military incursions, in 'policing' the wall and the demolition of houses etc... makes them a key player in the occupation. There are however, brave signs of hope from within the military, on the part of those who refuse to serve the occupation - many claiming that the missions of occupation and oppression do not serve the purpose of Israel's defence. These conscientious objectors or refusniks are often criminalized by harsh punishment. In January 2004 five young men were sentenced to one-year in prison because of their refusal to serve.

Response: *Pax Christi International has always worked to up-hold the right to conscientious objection to military service. Now, Pax Christi urges its member organisations to engage in solidarity actions with CO's in Israel. This might take the form of publicising the cases of CO's within their own country, giving practical support to 'Refuser' organisations; letter-writing to*

refusers and their families, advocacy work with the Israeli Government to urge them to recognise the right to conscientious objection.

Focus on non-violent accompaniment of Palestinian and Israeli communities

The protection of people through non-military means is an important challenge to peacemakers and one that is developing in Israel/Palestine -whether it be to act as witnesses to the treatment of people at checkpoints; to accompany Palestinians to school, hospital etc; to support Israeli CO's and Israeli peace groups. Pax Christi International was involved in the WCC call to accompany Palestinians and Israelis in their non-violent action and concerted advocacy efforts to end the occupation. As result of this was the setting up of the Ecumenical Accompaniment Programme in Palestine & Israel which recruits and trains volunteers to work in I/P for periods of 3 months and encourages volunteers to become advocacy persons in their own church network when they return home.

Response: *Pax Christi International urges member organisations to become supporters of EAPPI in their own country; to promote the programme within the Catholic Church community and to consider identifying and sending Pax Christi members and supporters as volunteers on the programme as a witness to Pax Christi's desire to offer non-violent solidarity to the peoples of Israel and Palestine.*