



Church and Peace International Office

Church and Peace is an European ecumenical network of peace churches, and peace church-oriented congregations, communities and service agencies

Schöffengrund, 29 June 2015

Press Release

A prophetic voice - on the arms trade and environmental destruction - which should be heeded!

Church and Peace welcomes Pope Francis' witness to peace.

Unambiguous statements by Pope Francis on the arms trade and the arms industry have been welcomed by the Administrative Committee of the European ecumenical network "Church and Peace" during a meeting held at the HafenCity Ecumenical Forum in Hamburg, 24-26 June 2015.

On 21 June, during a visit to the north Italian city of Turin, the Pope strongly criticised the arms industry, according to press reports, and declared that anyone involved in it is hypocritical and should not call themselves Christian.

The members of Church and Peace are convinced that peace witness and non-violence are central to the Gospel and, therefore, to the life of the Church.

In a letter to the Pope when he was elected in 2013, Church and Peace wrote: "Helping the poor cannot be separated from working against the design, production, trade and use of weapons. Military expenditure robs children, women, and men of their daily bread in many parts of the world and deprives them of access to essential health care, education and participation in society." Referring to his namesake, Francis of Assisi, the letter continues: "We hope that you will be a prophetic voice for our time, calling for conversion to the nonviolence of the Gospel - opposing poverty in all its forms."

In this context, the encyclical « *Laudato Si'* » also met with great acclaim from the Administrative Committee of Church and Peace. The neoliberal ideology of economic growth comes in for sharp criticism in the encyclical, which also names with harsh clarity the limitless greed of Western societies as the cause of environmental destruction, climate change, and poverty. At the same time the encyclical points out ways towards a solution which require a radical change of consciousness. « *Laudato Si'* » is a document which is of great importance across all confessional boundaries. Antje Heider-Rottwilm, chairwoman of Church and Peace, said: "The Pope's prophetic voice encourages all people of goodwill to face up to the urgent issues of our time. And it is a challenge to the churches to make a radical and irreversible commitment to the way of 'just peace'."

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More about Church and Peace: www.church-and-peace.org

Church and Peace is a European Ecumenical peace church network made up of communities, training centres, peace organizations and peace service agencies. Their common conviction is that the peace witness and nonviolence of the Gospel are essential characteristics of the Church and lead to nonviolent service for peace and reconciliation. Church and Peace works together with national and international networks: Action Committee Service for Peace (AGDF, Germany), Conference of European Churches (CEC), World Council of Churches, Network of Christian Peace Organizations (NCPO, UK), International Network for a Culture of Nonviolence and Peace.

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