



Church and Peace

International Office

Church and Peace is an ecumenical network of Christian communities, churches and organisations in Europe committed to the peace church vision.

Message of the European Conference of Church and Peace to the Ecumenical Peace Convocation in Kingston, Jamaica

To our sisters and brothers assembled in Kingston,

Parallel to the International Convocation in Kingston, we are meeting in the French community of L'Arche of Lanza del Vasto. We, the European conference of peace churches and peace communities from 16 countries in Europe - from Serbia to the Netherlands, from the Czech Republic to Italy - belong together with you to the community of faith in Jesus Christ seeking to be guided into the way of peace (Lk 1:79).

We are encouraged by the process of the Decade to Overcome Violence and believe that the Ecumenical Call to Just Peace witnesses to the transformation of our churches.

We wish to challenge the ecumenical community to continue along the path toward peace. In 2001 in Strasbourg the European churches confessed: "We commit ourselves to work for structures of peace, based on the nonviolent resolution of conflicts. We condemn any form of violence against the human person, particularly against women and children."¹

We reaffirm this statement of nonviolence and plead as a consequence for a reconsideration of the concept of Responsibility to Protect. We are troubled by the call to use military or police force to ensure the protection of threatened peoples.² Even if violent means are held only in reserve for use as a last resort, this influences the planning of civil action during the earlier phases of conflict. We reject the idea that Just Peace forces us into a dilemma between the call to nonviolence and the lawful use of force to protect endangered peoples.

The use of violent means to create good outcomes fails inevitably, even under the guise of policing. Weapons kill and wound without distinguishing between the guilty and the guiltless. Even in situations where no solution seems possible and where violence is so endemic that a call to counter it with further violence rises amongst victims and within us too, we persist in recommending the use of nonviolent means towards every human being, means which we as disciples of Christ have in abundance.

This implies that the churches must reorient their political strategies: pleading for strengthened commitment to nonviolent intervention organised by the international community, inspired by models like Christian Peacemaker Teams and Peace Brigades International. We call on the churches to increase their own involvement in peace services wherever there is conflict and social disruption.

Violence in any form can never serve to bring about lasting peace with justice. We invite you to resist together with us the temptation of justifying the use of deadly weapons even as a last resort. Let us walk together on the path to peace.

We pray with you today: "O God, replenish your peace in the midst of all your people."

¹ Charta Oecumenica: Guidelines for the Growing Cooperation among the Churches in Europe, §8

² Ecumenical Call to Just Peace, §§22-24

