



Church and Peace

International Office

Church and Peace - the ecumenical peace church network of communities, training centres, peace organisations and peace service agencies in Europe

Church and Peace joins ICAN and United4Rescue

Berlin, 11 February 2020. At its meeting in Berlin on 7-9 February 2020, the board of the European peace church network Church and Peace decided to participate in two coalitions. First, Church and Peace joined the **International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons (ICAN)**, thereby becoming part of a global network of over 450 organisations in 100 countries. Second, Church and Peace became a member of **United4Rescue - Gemeinsam Retten**, a coalition of organisations supporting civil search and rescue operations to save refugees from drowning in the Mediterranean.

Antje Heider-Rottwilm, chair of Church and Peace, explains: 'Church and Peace stands for (nuclear) disarmament and opposes Europe's closing its borders to migrants and refugees. Joining these coalitions is consistent with the commitment of our members in their various countries and our common positions vis-à-vis the EU, governments and churches.'

About ICAN

After terminating the Intermediate-range Nuclear Forces (INF) Treaty, which from 1987 provided for the elimination of nuclear missiles with a range of between 500 and 5500 km, the United States and Russia want - and are able - to develop new nuclear-powered medium-range missiles again. The doomsday clock, which symbolically assesses the level of political threat, stands at 100 seconds to 12 noon.¹

In July 2017 a UN conference was held to negotiate a legally binding instrument to prohibit nuclear weapons, which 122 member states approved - thanks to the work of ICAN. The treaty was then submitted to the UN General Assembly for signature, but it will only take effect when at least 50 states have not only signed but also ratified it. ICAN continues to campaign for a general ban on nuclear weapons for all states. The aim of the campaign is ultimately to outlaw nuclear weapons, along with biological and chemical weapons.

74 years ago, on 6 and 9 August 1945, atomic bombs were dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki. To mark this anniversary in August 2019, Church and Peace called on the Christian churches and communities in Europe to support people of good will from all religions and denominations who are committed to global nuclear disarmament for humanitarian reasons. Furthermore, it encouraged churches and communities in Europe to urge their governments to work (within the European Union) for a new multilateral agreement involving the United States and Russia, to ban the deployment of short- and medium-range missiles in Europe.²

It is against this background that Church and Peace has now also become a member of **ICAN**.

1 www.thebulletin.org/doomsday-clock

2 www.church-and-peace.org/en/2019/08/appeal-world-without-nuclear-weapons

About United4Rescue - Gemeinsam Retten

This action alliance represents a broad social spectrum, united by the conviction that the thousands of deaths at the European external borders must be stopped and that a human rights-based migration and refugee policy is possible.

Church and Peace endorses the demands of United4Rescue:

1. Rescuing people in distress at sea is an obligation: Maritime search and rescue (SAR) is an obligation under international law and the right to life is non-negotiable. The EU and its Member States must guarantee this on the Mediterranean.
2. No criminalisation: Civil SAR operations must no longer be obstructed or treated as a criminal offence.
3. Fair asylum procedures: Refugees arriving by boat must be taken to a safe place where they have access to a fair asylum procedure. The EU Member States have made this commitment. The non-refoulement principle is binding under international law. Accordingly, people must not be turned away and returned to countries where they are in danger and have no rights.
4. Enable safe havens: Cities and communities wishing to accommodate additional refugees must be allowed to do so.³

The former research vessel Poseidon was acquired at the end of January. After the necessary modifications, the ship will be handed over to the Sea Watch organisation, which will rescue people from the Mediterranean on behalf of United4Rescue, starting from Easter 2020.

Church and Peace has repeatedly spoken out against the use of EU budget funds for the 'military enhancement' of third countries and the militarisation of the EU's external borders. Prior to the European elections in 2019, Church and Peace, together with more than a hundred organisations and church groups, called on the future European Parliament (EP) to hold to the European peace project. They also urged the newly elected MEPs to oppose EU arms deliveries to states that wage war or violate human rights in order to deter refugees and migrants.⁴

Together with seven other organisations, Church and Peace devised and used a position checklist⁵ for the European elections to advocate, among other things, for the development and expansion of safe and legal pathways for refugees and migrants, rapid and more generous family reunification, and humanitarian visas - as called for by the EP in December 2018. It also pressed for legal migration for employment, study and training purposes, and the implementation of existing EU asylum law standards.

It is against this background that Church and Peace is joining the **action alliance United4Rescue - Gemeinsam Retten**.

³ www.united4rescue.com/mitmachen: U4R Coalition Statement

⁴ www.church-and-peace.org/en/2019/02/save-the-european-peace-project

⁵ www.church-and-peace.org/en/2019/02/position-checklist-for-the-election-to-the-european-parliament-23-26-may-2019/