

PRESS RELEASE

Pax Christi Member Organisations call to protect the life of all vulnerable populations in Northern Iraq

On Thursday 14 August, Pax Christi Member Organisations in Austria, Belgium, Canada, France, Germany, India, Italy, New Zealand, the United Kingdom, and the United States have sent letters to their Ministers of Foreign Affairs calling for an immediate action to safeguard the right of life of all vulnerable populations in Northern Iraq.

Pax Christi members are extremely concerned with shocking reports of displacement of peoples and mass slaughter threatened by the self-proclaimed Islamic State against numerous minority groups in Iraq. The news coming from the country is horrendous: thousands of people, mostly minority groups including Christians, Yazidis, Shabak and Turkmen have been brutally driven from their homes; innocent children, women and men are suffering violence of every kind. The ongoing conflict has already displaced some 1.2 million people, mostly minority communities who have fled the northwest of Iraq.

Pax Christi Member Organisations made an appeal on three counts to safeguard the right of life of all vulnerable populations in Northern Iraq:

- to act to protect people by moving them to places of safety – either within Iraq or outside its borders. This should include the possibility of accepting Iraqi refugees in their own countries.
- to provide emergency humanitarian assistance to those who are displaced, either within Iraq or outside its borders.
- to actively support a solution which can only be legitimated by the United Nations and not by individual states.

The letters also asked that international leaders should remain alert to events taking place in Iraq and should commit to supporting the Iraqi efforts to end this cycle of violence. The international community, working through the United Nations, should support Iraq on guaranteeing a framework in which the life and dignity of all Iraqis are respected.

Pax Christi members regret that religion is being misused in this crisis. Faith should not be used to demonize people of other faiths. Religious beliefs should nurture justice, human dignity, compassion and solidarity. Pax Christi supports urgent recent appeals from Patriarch Louis Sako I in Iraq and echo the call made by Pope Francis: “War is not to be waged in the name of God!”

Member Organizations: Pax Christi Austria • Pax Christi France • Pax Christi Germany • Pax Christi Italy • Pax Christi Montréal • Pax Christi New Zealand • Pax Christi Toronto • Pax Christi United Kingdom • Pax Christi United States • Pax Christi Vlaanderen • Pax Christi Wallonie-Bruxelles • Justice and Peace Commission of the Bishops Conference of India • Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns • Sisters of Mercy of the Americas – Institute Justice Team.