



# Pax Scotia

## Issue 26

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## Working for a more equal Colombia

**P**ax Christi Scotland has been in dialogue with Police Scotland over their training of officers in Colombia. There has been a history of extreme police violence, & with Justice For Colombia we have sought caution while the Colombian police remained under the control of the military.



*The UN has flagged Colombia as a 'hunger hotspot'*

Now there is a new government in Colombia. We will continue to dialogue with Police Scotland - and together with **Mark Camburn**, SCIAF's Programme Manager with expertise in Colombia, we pray for peace & equality

**S**CIAF has been working in Colombia since the 1980s, and Colombia remains one of our priority countries. From the outside, it may not seem immediately obvious why SCIAF would continue to work in Colombia - an Upper Middle-Income Country which signed a peace accord in 2016, ending the world's longest running civil war. However, if we scratch the surface a little, these reasons become very clear.

Whilst Colombia reached the historic peace accords with the former FARC guerrilla group in 2016, internal armed conflict remains a constant for much of the country, in particular in rural areas. Guerrilla groups, paramilitary groups, and state forces battle for territorial dominance and the control of strategic geographical areas, such as border regions, trafficking routes, drug production areas, and mining zones. Rural communities are caught in the crossfire, and conflict related displacement and confinement remains high in Colombia. The use of landmines is common, as is the practice of forced recruitment of young girls and boys into their ranks.

Those that speak-out are targeted and threatened, and Colombia remains the world's most dangerous country to be a Human Rights Defender (or social leader), accounting for around 50% of all HRD killings annually.

At the same time, Colombia is one of the world's most unequal countries, with the gap between the "haves" and the "have nots" growing ever wider. This is particularly stark in regions such as the Chocó department, where SCIAF works. Despite an incredible wealth in biodiversity, an abundance of freshwater, fertile land and significant mineral resources, Chocó remains one of Colombia's poorest departments. Over 63% of the population of Chocó remain poor, and 33% live in extreme poverty. Over 65% lack access to basic needs, such as clean drinking water and sanitation. The region has been largely abandoned by the State, and the predominantly Afro-Colombian and Indigenous population left to fend for themselves.

We also continue to work in Colombia because of the huge opportunities that exist for rapid, significant change, and as a result of our strong track record of positive results. The starting point for this are our local partner organisations (and in particular our church-based partners who are often the first port of call for communities affected by conflict), and their ability to work in close coordination with community-based organisations, responding to needs identified by the communities themselves.

Added to this, is the ability of our partners to work in larger national and international networks, pooling resources to bring about changes that benefit many more people. Through this, we have supported ground-breaking, locally-led work that has resulted in significant land-titling of indigenous and afro-Colombian communities, and a world-leading court ruling granting bio-cultural rights to the mighty River Atrato.

***The recent elections in Colombia, and the resulting changing political direction, offer a new opportunity to push the peace process forward, and work towards a more equal country.***

The participation of the marginalised and most vulnerable groups in Colombia, such as the rural communities in Chocó, will be key to any future success. SCIAF will continue to work with these communities, empowering them to make their voices heard and to be the leaders of their own development processes.

*Mark Camburn*

*To see more about SCIAF's work in Colombia & to donate to help, see <https://www.sciaf.org.uk/what-we-do/countries/49-colombia>*

**P**ax Christi Scotland is part of the Don't Bank On The Bomb alliance, which seeks divestment from weapons of mass destructions. Together, we work with the International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons that in 2017 won the Nobel Peace Prize in recognition of its work to bring about the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons. Is divestment from nuclear weapons realistic? Ethical finance expert Quintin Rayer says 'yes'.



## Yes! ICAN avoid investing in nuclear arms firms...

*Dr Quintin Rayer DPhil, FInstP, Chartered FCSI, SIPC, is Head of Research and Ethical Investing at P1 Investment Management. An association with Pax Christi Scotland has led him to explore how realistic divestment from weapons of mass destructions might be. Here he explores the moral map of investment and the possibilities of maintaining a profitable portfolio without investing in nuclear weapons.*

### The Moral Challenge

In its 2021 "Perilous Profiteering" report, ICAN highlighted the UN's 2017 treaty banning nuclear weapons, which came into force in January 2021, and questioned the wisdom of seeking profits from companies involved in their manufacture.

The moral argument is strong. In 1963, Pope John XXIII called for nuclear weapons to be banned. In 1982 the Scottish Bishops' Conference stated that it was also immoral to threaten their use. At Hiroshima, in 2019, Pope Francis described possession of nuclear weapons as immoral, a message he re-iterated in 2020 and 2022.

Harming others through business activities should be avoided according to the founder of Methodism, John Wesley, in his 1872 sermon, "The use of money."

Like any activity, investment has a moral aspect. It can be wrong to buy stocks in a company as investments, which, if made by many, would enable others to do wrong.

*Some may feel that avoiding investment in nuclear arms-related firms is challenging. Might it undermine financial returns? Say the arms firms are avoided: would it still be possible to find balanced portfolios meeting the desired level of risk?*

Investment managers may argue that exclusions can cause underperformance. But this conclusion is not obvious. Studies suggest that ethical investment approaches can outperform – although much will depend on the manager's skill.

Is it possible to find investment portfolios that avoid nuclear arms firms while being managed to meet the desired level of risk? Our experience suggests this may not be nearly as difficult as suggested.

The challenge for investors is to select companies based on ethical and sustainability considerations. Some funds seek to jump onto the bandwagon and appeal to the ethical market. They may have slender ethical credentials, potentially including holdings unacceptable to ethically minded clients.

At P1, we seek funds with robust ethical policies, guided by input from our external ethical oversight committee. As well as managing investment performance, we dig beneath managers' claims, reviewing their ethical and sustainable investment policies and challenging non-compliance.

Members of Pax Christi Scotland drew our attention to ICAN's 2021 "Perilous Profiteering" report, which lists 25 companies heavily involved in producing, manufacturing, and developing nuclear weapons.

All the funds on our panel either have exclusions policies relating to arms or cannot invest in those areas. We contacted all our managers with arms exclusion policies. They have confirmed that they cannot hold any of the 25 nuclear arms firms on ICAN's list. Despite the difficulties suggested above, our ethical and sustainable portfolios and fund (the TM P1 Sustainable World fund) have no investments in the ICAN 25 list while also being diversified and covering different risk levels to meet our clients' needs. So – yes, you can avoid investing in nuclear arms firms!

*Quintin Rayer*

**ICAN 'Perilous Profiteering report:**

[https://www.icanw.org/perilous\\_profiteering\\_companies\\_building\\_nuclear\\_weapons\\_and\\_financial\\_backers](https://www.icanw.org/perilous_profiteering_companies_building_nuclear_weapons_and_financial_backers)

**P1, "Ethical Oversight Committee," P1 Investment Management Ltd:**

<https://p1-im.co.uk/ethical-investment/ethical-oversight-committee/>

**DON'T BANK ON THE BOMB Scotland:**

<https://nukedivestmentscotland.org/>



# When policies are a provocation

## Today's attack on society's poorest

*Hugh Foy is a member of the Pax Christi Executive Committee and Vice Convenor of the Board of the Poverty Alliance in Scotland. Here he explores the Catholic Peace tradition's understanding of the connections between violence and poverty...*



Hugh Foy

There are times when we write or communicate with broken hearts. As we gaze toward this autumn, too many in our country are frightened - and my heart is broken by their fears and the impact that can be seen already in too many lives fractured by this current cost of living crisis.

People are frightened they might not be able to afford the basics required for a decent life, and a late autumn rise in energy prices will increase the numbers in our country living in poverty. A country where the latest statistic tells us that 55% of children with a mother under the age of 25 live in relative poverty.

The policies that contribute to this scenario, or the absence of action to confront the challenges they bring, are an attack on the poorest in society at a time when the gap between rich and poor has never been greater. We face inflation not caused by wage demands, as Mick Lynch of the RMT union has so eloquently explained before a hostile media, but by profit.

### **A profit born of an ever-increasing systemic greed.**

A greed born of forgetting, a forgetting that civilization is a thin veneer so easily pierced, but protected by ordinary workers. Ordinary people who bore our fears by working through a pandemic. Workers we clapped from our homes. Workers worthy of applause but not - in the eyes of those who control our economy - worthy of a decent wage that allows them to cover the necessities of life.

Often peace activists are misrepresented as being deaf to wider economic and political issues and having a myopic focus on the damage caused to individuals and society by violence.

As always, generalisations are dangerous, and of course there are those who plough a very particular furrow. However, the Catholic Peace tradition is imbued with a deeply holistic understanding of the intricate connections between violence and poverty. As early in his pontificate as 2015, Pope Francis spoke of violence and terrorism in Kenya being "fuelled by fear, mistrust and despair, born by poverty and frustration".

### **Vision of Common Good**

October 3-9 is the annual **Challenge Poverty Week** event in Scotland. An opportunity for everyone in our society to remember not only the victims of poverty, but to reconnect with a vision of the common good that demands solutions to the evils of poverty and want NOW!

Many in Pax Christi Scotland are deeply involved in anti-poverty work, and we encourage all our members to continue to seek opportunities to bring our commitment to active gospel nonviolence to local and national campaigns challenging poverty in all its forms.

We are called as peacemakers to have a prophetic voice, a voice that names oppression and confronts its existence. The Reverend Dr Martin Luther King Jr spoke so eloquently of the symbiotic link between the pursuit of peace and economic justice when he said, "*I have the audacity to believe that people everywhere can have three meals a day for their bodies, education and culture for their minds, and dignity, equality and freedom for their spirits.*"

There is no dichotomy between peace and justice!

*Hugh Foy*

Information and resources for Challenge Poverty Week are on the Poverty Alliance website:

<https://www.povertyalliance.org>



## Our website

Blogs, podcasts, past and future events – these are all on our Pax Christi Scotland website. All newsletters are archived there. You can pay your annual membership fee on the Membership page and make donations. Please explore and share:

<https://www.paxchristiscotland.org/>

Continued thanks to webmaster Chris Boles of Caledonian Websites:

<https://www.caledonianwebsites.com/>

## Membership Reminder

**Easiest method? Pay on the membership page of our website.**

If you pay by online banking, please give your name to identify your payment.

If you wish to pay by cheque, send to the address below, cheques payable to Pax Christi Scotland.

You can also make regular donations on our 'donate' page - thank you.

Membership fees are £10 for waged, £5 for unwaged.

Explore the website for all our activities:

<https://www.paxchristiscotland.org>

## Where to find Pax Christi Scotland:

<http://www.paxchristiscotland.org>

[@PaxScotland](https://www.facebook.com/PaxChristiScotland)

[@PaxScotland](https://www.facebook.com/PaxChristiScotland)

[@PaxScotland](https://www.facebook.com/PaxChristiScotland)

Snail mail:

Pax Christi Scotland

c/o Xaverian Missionaries

Calder Avenue

Coatbridge ML5 4JS

## YouTube Channel

You can find recordings of all our events at:

[https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCCcmLpQv27Py\\_ul14szip95g](https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCCcmLpQv27Py_ul14szip95g)

[UCCcmLpQv27Py\\_ul14szip95g](https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCCcmLpQv27Py_ul14szip95g)

Click on the word 'Subscribed' and you will be informed whenever a new recording is posted.

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# Poverty and the Bomb

**P**rime Minister Liz Truss has big ideas for military spending. She intends to increase it from 2% to 3%, which experts suggest will amount to an extra £157bn.

Asked about the use of nuclear weapons, about “pressing the red button”, she told the media during her campaign to become leader “I’m ready to do that”.

Which clearly means she is also ready to continue the renewal of the Trident programme contracted by her predecessors. That, according to CND calculations, will amount to £205 billion (<https://cnduk.org/resources/205-billion-cost-trident/>)

While Quintin Rayer tells us on P2 that divesting from nuclear weapons can still leave our banks, pension funds & local authorities (main investors in weapons of mass destruction) in a healthy financial place, Hugh Foy reminds us on P3 that poverty is heartbreakingly on the rise in the UK.

With billions being spent on nuclear and conventional weapons, how can we fail to link poverty with that obscene cost?

**Delia Chatoor**, one of the speakers for our October 17 online event, says “The diversion of millions of dollars on the evolving arms race would be better spent on addressing this emergency.”

**Michaela Sorensen** of the Youth Fusion Team (see their website at <https://www.youth-fusion.org/>), is the second speaker at our October event and works to raise awareness of the links between nuclear weapons, poverty and climate.

Please join us on the **UN International Day for the Eradication of Poverty** to hear these two international speakers making the case for divesting from nuclear and conventional weapons and diverting the billions spent to humanitarian needs.

As always, there will be the opportunity to have your say and to ask questions. Register at:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/meeting/register/tZYsd-mrrTovHtcPRFChrESTBiC4wxaPvB6i>

After registering, you will receive a confirmation email containing information about joining the meeting at 7pm/19h UK time on October 17.



Michaela Sorensen

Delia Chatoor

