



Pax Scotia

Issue 21



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NOT IN MY NAME

Pax Christi Scotland member Anne Dobbing made a personal protest against the Nationality & Borders Bill. See her account on Page 2.

Sowing Seeds of Peace: Our choice is either to attend to peace... or tend to the dead

By **Mary T. Yelenick**
Pax Christi International's
main representative to the
United Nations

We sow. They reap.

Each of us has a daily opportunity, and challenge, to live in such a way that those around us, and succeeding generations, will live – due to our efforts – better than they might otherwise have lived.

Springtime is a reminder that, like seeds, the tiniest of actions or inactions – if planted in fertile soil and carefully tended – can transform our environment.

Nations, too, sow seeds – through their priorities, policies, pronouncements, and actions. Those seeds also bear fruit.

What is happening in Ukraine is agonising. I despair when I read about the intense fear and suffering the people are experiencing, and when I see gruesome photographs testifying to the depravity of the violence. There has been remarkably little media attention paid to the seeds underlying the current violent conflict. Those seeds were sown over many years, by multiple nations. Just as World War I led to deep humiliation and isolation among the “losers” and precipitated the rise of Hitler, so, too did World War II – the aftermath of which included the studied isolation of Russia by the United States; the expansion of NATO and an escalating nuclear-arms race; and the failure by the US and NATO to respond to Russia’s repeated public pronouncements and protests against what it viewed as NATO aggression and provocation – engendered an increasing feeling of insecurity and marginalisation of Russia. For many years prior to Russia’s recent invasion of Ukraine, Vladimir Putin had repeatedly complained publicly and bitterly about the steady eastern advance of NATO toward Russia’s borders. Yet those cries of anger and frustration seem to have been deliberately ignored.

We know what can happen when we exclude, marginalise, and frighten others: they may erupt in rage. And when our own response to that rage is to reach for weapons, the result is carnage.

Weapons lead to more weapons. Deaths lead to more deaths.

Our failure to plant seeds of peace have come back to haunt us, in the form of a spectral grim reaper.

And now, the people of Ukraine weep what we have sown.

Mary T. Yelenick

Ukraine, Refugees - &that Bill

The UK government's legislation & plans for refugees and asylum seekers have become more discriminatory by the day (witness the 'Rwanda Plan', about which Archbishop of Canterbury Justin Welby said there were 'serious ethical questions', adding 'The principle must stand the judgment of God and it cannot.'). Pax Christi Scotland is heartened when its members act against such discrimination.

My Personal Protest

By Anne Dobbing, Pax Christi Scotland.

I live in Shetland, 200+ miles away from the Scottish mainland; and like so many others, I have joined local efforts to support people fleeing from the war in Ukraine. One event – a book and bakes sale at our local church - raised £1900. But while we support refugees from Ukraine, the UK government is pursuing a policy of hostility to people from other countries, also fleeing war, violence, abuse and starvation, in the Nationality and Borders Bill, described by the Scottish Refugee Council as

“The biggest threat to refugee rights we’ve seen for decades.”

This bill will criminalise refugees arriving in the UK by ‘unofficial’ means. It removes rights of family reunion from some refugees. It also proposes to transport refugees to offshore processing centres far away from the UK mainland. And this bill could also potentially criminalise organisations like the RNLI that rescue shipwrecked refugees.

As a Catholic, I cannot hear of the cruelty and injustice of this bill and its potential impact on desperate people escaping from war without taking action. I am unable to join mass protests that are organised in cities all over Scotland against this unjust law endangering people facing persecution, but I wanted to give a clear message to anyone who would listen that this is NOT BEING DONE IN MY NAME. So I decided to make a weekly, silent, personal protest outside the Town Hall in Lerwick, the local government centre in Shetland.

I am not an extrovert person and I prefer to live an unobtrusive life whenever I can, but I decided to make a large poster and to sit outside the Town Hall on a little camping stool every Thursday morning for about two hours. (The cold defeats me after 90 minutes!)

My protest the first week was probably the hardest. I felt really embarrassed and quite ridiculous opening up my display board and sitting down on the stool. But that morning I was heartened by a motorist in a big white car, pulling up in the road next to me, reading my messages and giving me a big ‘thumbs up’. Then a little later a lovely young woman called Eva came from BBC Radio Shetland, just round the corner, and asked if she could talk with me. Also that day there was a really kind-hearted teenage boy who walked past and asked, “Are you OK?” Walking past again later he gave me a friendly smile. Decent people live in Shetland.

Since then I have continued the protest and had some really interesting conversations with young and old, including the older gentleman who got out of his car and struggled across the road with his walking stick to talk about my protest. God bless him; he finished by asking me if I could also fix up a hip replacement operation any time soon!

I hope if nothing else my protest has raised awareness of this dreadful piece of legislation. I know that in many places and in many different ways people are holding their own effective protests against the Nationality and Borders Bill; and I am proud of our own MP, Alistair Carmichael, who has spoken unequivocally against it in Westminster.

We have only one world and when we support people in distress we make our society stronger, safer and more peaceful for the future.

Anne Dobbing

Peace & the Planet Threatened by Greed for Oil

Pascal Mirindi is a 22-year-old law student at the University of Goma in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC). He is the founder of Extinction Rebellion (XR) there and in his troubled country has become an effective environmental campaigner.

What has the environment to do with peace? As Pascal explained to Pax Scotia, when the environment is threatened, which is happening right now as oil companies seek exploration rights in DRC's Virunga National Park, peace and peace of mind are also threatened. In the recent past, WWF staff received death threats for opposing oil exploration in Virunga.

Virunga is recognized globally as a uniquely rich site for wildlife, but it is much more than that. Virunga is also a vital resource to local residents living in and around Africa's oldest national park (See https://awsassets.panda.org/downloads/the_economic_value_of_virunga_national_park_lr_2.pdf). The proposed exploitation threatens the fragile peace of DRC - but Pascal is determined to follow nonviolent means to resolve the situation. As he has said: 'We are battling for humanity & humanity should be battling for us.'



Fossil Free Virunga

Pascal and other activists made this short film to explain the situation in Virunga – described as one of the planet's lungs. In French, there are good subtitles: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=X1KW0z42dXU>

There are banks involved in funding the oil exploration that would be so damaging to people, flora and fauna in the Park and to DRC itself. See Pascal's plea for divestment on Facebook:

(<https://fb.watch/cuCN81DFar/>)

As these young activists explain, 'It's our job to fight back and dismantle the fossil fuel economy, hold accountable those who profit from corporate greed, and build a world that puts a liveable planet and public interest first.'

Or there can be no peace...

Seeking future peace for DRC: Nonviolence Plus International Pressure

The situation in Virunga Park affects my peace of mind, especially as one day my children will ask me how it is that the gorillas and all the other species found today in Virunga have disappeared; what did I do to avoid their disappearance.

The political, economic and social plan also touches me because knowledge of our authorities, which are so corrupt, and a population that is not awake, which has not yet reached the point of demanding even for their rights, I fear that we may destroy the world so that the corrupt may benefit.

A great number of Congolese people are passive. They don't understand the challenges. Only those touched by the effects – those neighbouring the Virunga National Park – understand a little of the problem and that is why we have launched the Fossil Free Virunga campaign to mobilise the population, demanding the accountability of the authorities but also demanding the cancellation of the bid by the oil companies that weigh at present on Virunga Park.

But either way, the whole of the Democratic Republic of Congo will lose once oil in the Park is exploited, because the Park greatly helps the pharmaceutical firms with medicinal plants, and the population living on the riverbanks are nourished by the fish which come from Lake Edward.

It isn't only exploitation by oil companies that affects the people of DRC. Mining is for the most part controlled by armed groups. The State is totally absent and so you must understand that the law of the jungle prevails. Everyone tries to live, and so human rights are not followed. Children are working in the mines, for example in Walikale [A town in the North Kivu Province of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, home to the largest tin deposits in the Congo and to some very large gold mines.].

We are afraid, knowing that enterprises such as Total, Pharos Energy [SOCO International, an oil and gas exploitation and production company, headquartered in London, which changed its name to Pharos Energy Plc in October 2019 after coming under fire for illegal activity in Virunga.] can come to exploit the oil in Virunga and there is real evidence that our state is incapable of ensuring reliable security in the face of these injustices.

It is only by reclaiming good management that we can change things. We must use nonviolence as a weapon of battle, knowing our rights and then claiming them. But also, international opinion will help us to put pressure - if we manage to synchronise our efforts!

Pascal Mirindi

Pax Christi Scotland

Engaging with the world, seeking peace

The Journey to Peace: Bringing Women In From the Margins

One of Pax Christi Scotland's main aims is to address discrimination in all its forms, and the marginalisation within the Church of women who are separated or divorced is a cruel discrimination against our very vulnerable sisters.

The Archdiocese of Glasgow has a group that sets out to support such women. Pax Christi Scotland believes the work of that group could help to change attitudes across Scotland, and so on Thursday, May 19 we will hold an online event that will explore women's experiences and the destructive myths surrounding separation, divorce and annulment.

Tricia Imrie, who founded a peer support ministry for women who have experienced separation or divorce across the Archdiocese of Glasgow in 2021, is one of our speakers on May 19. She says 'We hope to bust some of the myths as well as offer a blueprint for the kind of support every diocese could offer women marginalised in the way.'

**The Journey to Peace:
Bringing Women In From the Margins – May 19 at 18.30 UK time.** Please share the registration link in your parishes.
<https://us02web.zoom.us/meeting/register/tZAvcu-grzooH9c1BzpM85QhKAABEf5lvLYr>

Membership Reminder

Most membership fees were due in November at the time of the AGM.

You can pay on the membership page of our website. If you pay by online banking, please give your name to identify your payment.

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

Membership fees are £10 for waged, £5 for unwaged. Explore the website for all our activities:
www.paxchristiscotland.org

Where to find Pax Christi Scotland:

www.paxchristiscotland.org
<https://www.facebook.com/PaxChristiScotland>
[@PaxScotland](#) (Twitter)

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The Peace of Christ

Gender violence is perpetrated in many forms, not always in the clichéd image of a partner striking a vulnerable woman, although the statistics for physical, sexual and emotional violence rose by 25 per cent in a number of countries during the pandemic.

Coercive and controlling behaviour is included in the 2019 Domestic Abuse (Scotland) Act. This is when one partner controls the other through continuous degrading treatment or loss of liberty on a daily basis.

Some gender violence is perpetrated in plain sight, and not by a partner – we saw this earlier in April when a newspaper ran a misogynistic article about a member of parliament, allegedly informed by male MPs.

And some gender violence is committed – most often unthinkingly and unconsciously – by clergy, family and friends against women who are separated or divorced. The marginalisation of such women, already vulnerable because of the emotional turmoil they are experiencing, may not be done with malice but it is deeply wounding.

It is this marginalisation that Pax Christi Scotland will address in our next online event (see details opposite). Tricia Imrie, one of our speakers, says that while many parish priests and families are supportive of women going through a separation or divorce, the myths about the standing of women in such circumstances can lead to them leaving the Church. The remnants of the Church's patriarchal attitude are experienced as gender violence.

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 Computers -

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

Pax Christi Scotland now has a Youtube Channel where you can find recordings of past events. Find us at:
https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCCcmLpQv27Py_ul14szp95g

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