

Resolving the Dispute with Iran Statement of Pax Christi International

Pax Christi International clearly and unequivocally rejects the possibility of military action against Iran as immoral, highly dangerous and counter-productive. Rather, we support continued diplomatic efforts based on mutual respect and dignity. We encourage discussions to bring all states into compliance with their Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) obligations and we support including the Additional Protocol as the non-proliferation verification standard. All countries have a responsibility to encourage definitive movement toward a Weapons of Mass Destruction Free Zone in the Middle East, as well as a treaty banning nuclear weapons.

Catholic social teaching clearly rejects preventive war. Military action against Iran to preclude further development of its nuclear program would fail the very restrictive conditions set by Catholic moral theology for the use of military force for at least three reasons:

- military action would clearly not be a last resort, as negotiations continue with ample room for success;
- the probability of successful military action is not high in a region that is as volatile as the Middle East; and
- imposing sanctions and threatening military action is a disproportional response to a situation wherein neither US nor Israeli intelligence has produced evidence of an Iranian nuclear weapons program, and enrichment for peaceful purposes is legal under the NPT.

Pax Christi International insists that the military option be taken off the table and strongly supports continued diplomacy. The goal of negotiations, however, should not be an end to Iran's enrichment program, which is legal within the NPT. Rather, the goal should be strict adherence to the NPT on all sides and Iran's ratification and implementation of the Additional Protocol to the NPT. This would allow for more intrusive inspections by the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) and verification that there is no diversion of enriched fuel to nuclear weapons.

The extraordinary sanctions imposed on Iran are likely to be devastating in the lives of ordinary people. For that reason, they should be lifted as promptly as possible - in exchange, for example, for greater transparency. The ratification and full implementation of the Additional Protocol should result in a complete lifting of all nuclear program related sanctions on Iran.

NPT obligations regarding nuclear disarmament by nuclear weapons states parties must also be fulfilled in return for compliance with non-proliferation obligations. Every effort must be made to bring Israel, India and Pakistan into the NPT or into other discussions about nuclear disarmament, including negotiating a nuclear weapons convention. Pax Christi International strongly supports creation of a Weapons of Mass Destruction Free

Zone in the Middle East, which will be advanced at a conference in Finland toward the end of 2012, and prompt negotiation of a Nuclear Weapons Convention.

A decree by Iran's religious leader, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, makes clear his condemnation of nuclear weapons: "the production, possession, use or threat of use of nuclear weapons is illegitimate, futile, harmful, dangerous and prohibited as a great sin." Our own Catholic tradition and most other major religious traditions have been similarly emphatic.

Pax Christi International urges religious leaders, including Catholic religious leaders around the world, to reject resoundingly the possibility of military action in response to Iran's nuclear program and to make clear our collective, urgent responsibility to rid the world of nuclear weapons, which are at the root of the current crisis. Pax Christi International likewise urges people of faith and conscience to withdraw personal and financial support from these weapons and to encourage the immediate negotiation of a binding international treaty that would definitively abolish them from the face of the earth.

Brussels, 22 March 2012
2012-0106-en-gl-SD