

## **Pax Christi International Senior Official and Indian Activists Discuss the Impact of Arab Spring on Palestine Liberation**

New Delhi

20 February 2013

At a meeting organised today by the Indian Solidarity Ecumenical Network (ISEN) – Kairos Palestine, Fr Paul Lansu, a senior official from Pax Christi International, addressed a group of Indian activists on the topic: Arab Spring and its Implication on Palestine Liberation. He said the Arab Spring, which is known also as the Arab Awakening, started as a movement for democracy, human rights, freedom of expression, and for jobs. However, it has created an atmosphere of humanitarian crisis for the Arabs, which is a matter of concern for the international community. The immediate impact of the crisis is on the Palestinian refugees in the Middle East.

Fr Paul Lansu, Pax Christi International's Senior Policy Advisor for Advocacy on Security and Human Rights, is visiting India to give lectures and present papers on middle-east. Pax Christian International is a global movement committed to promotion of peace and reconciliation.

Fr. Paul stressed on the importance of networking, advocacy work for policy change, and the constant need to lobby with our governments on human rights violations in Palestine. He spoke at length on the current situation and the realities in Palestine, the increasing number of settlements and walls, the growing east Jerusalem corridor, diminishing water supplies to Palestinians. He called for action and interventions that will move towards a just and peaceful solution. He called on greater participation of the civil society and churches to visit and have a personal encounter with the Palestinian reality through programmes like the Ecumenical accompaniment programme organised by the World Council of Churches, which allows people to see, experience and monitor the daily violations and restrictions faced by Palestinians under illegal occupation and the daily humiliation that they have to face, which is unacceptable. The international community needs to see this and report back and act as advocates to their respective governments/ embassies to take action against such injustices.

Fr. Paul also shared the latest intervention of Pax Christi International, a document being submitted to the 22<sup>nd</sup> Session of the Human Rights Council – Item 7 which will be heard next week. It highlights the human rights situation in Palestine and other occupied Arab territories, and it states that the structural violence is the military occupation by Israel over Palestinian territories, which is marked by violations of International Humanitarian Law and Human Rights Law. It calls for action on water resources being misused, the separation wall which continues to be constructed violating UN resolutions, issue of Palestinian prisoners and Israel increasing detentions in the West Bank, and freedom of expression and association being denied to civil resistance movements.

Fr. Paul's sharing of relevant information, knowledge and ground work experiences inspired all the participants representing varied organisations from CBCI Office for Justice Peace and Development, YWCA, NCCI, Gandhi Peace foundation, Joint Women's Programme, and All India Christian Council. And as a civil society and churches in India, we have a huge challenge, to do our bit of increasing the awareness of the plight of the Palestinians within our own institutions and churches and be in true solidarity with the Palestinians. Fr. Paul was also encouraged to hear that the Indian Ecumenical Solidarity Network is addressing issues of Justice and Peace in Palestine and working on advocacy initiatives, awareness training and developing BDS strategies that would have an impact in working towards liberation of Palestine.