



PAX CHRISTI INTERNATIONAL PEACE AWARD 2015

Address delivered by Marie Dennis, International Co-President, during the Pax Christi International Peace Award Ceremony, Bethlehem, 16 May 2015

Dear Palestinian Friends, representatives of the Cardinal Alfrink Peace Fund, guests from peace and human rights organizations serving in Palestine, Pax Christi members and participants in our 70th anniversary celebrations,

Welcome and thank you so much for joining us this evening.

We are gathered in this symbolic place to present the 2015 Pax Christi International Peace Award. Established in 1988, the Award is funded by the Cardinal Bernardus Alfrink Peace Fund and honours contemporary individuals and organisations who make a stand for peace, justice and non-violence in different parts of the world. This year we are presenting the award to an organization of diverse and creative women peacemakers from Colombia.

Women share a significant part of the burden during violent conflicts. Yet when it comes to building peace, they are systematically excluded. They are targets of war, but they are largely absent in the official processes that aim to build peace. Two UN surveys of peace agreements over the last few decades demonstrate that only 2.5% of signatories of peace agreements were women between 1992 and 2008, and only 4% were women between 1992 and 2011.

It is more and more commonly agreed that a greater involvement of women in peacebuilding increases the possibility of more sustainable peace. Gender-specific experiences in conflict should be reflected in conflict prevention, reconstruction and peacebuilding. Women know the links between war-time violence and post-conflict violence. Their full participation in peace processes and in rebuilding their societies is essential.

Pax Christi International's history has been marked by the presence of courageous women who have led ordinary but significant peace initiatives at the local level. Our experience has helped us understand the important contribution of women to peace dynamics in every society. In accordance with UN Security Council Resolution 1325 and related resolutions, Pax Christi International stresses the need for all parties in armed conflicts, actors involved in the negotiations and implementation of peace agreements, as well as the international community to respect fully the rights of women.

Pax Christi International is pleased to grant the Peace Award 2015 to the *Women, Peace and Security Collective for Reflection and Action* of Colombia for making visible and encouraging

the essential contribution of women to peacebuilding in their country and for their work to promote an ethical transformation of Colombian society as the path towards sustainable peace.

Founded in October 2011, the *Collective* is a women's network that currently brings together women from different social and professional backgrounds (religious, ex-combatants, indigenous, afro-descendants, journalists, academics, human rights defenders, union leaders, etc.), as well as organisations committed to a revolution in ethics as the basis for sustainable and lasting peace in Colombia. With a mission to foster conditions for a permanent and re-humanising dialogue among various sectors – including those traditionally opposed to each other - in different regions of the country, the *Collective* is in itself an example of how diversity can be embraced and used for positive change in a highly polarized society.

The *Collective's* flagship initiative is the "Ethical Pact for a Country in Peace," a civil society framework agreement for the ethical transformation of Colombia. This initiative points out that in order to achieve lasting peace, efforts beyond official peace talks between the Government and the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) will be necessary. The Pact is a 15-point plan promoting a series of value-based steps that Colombian society must undergo for sustainable peace. One highlight is the importance of an inclusive dialogue for peace where women's participation is actively sought and encouraged.

Through this award, Pax Christi International acknowledges the *Women, Peace and Security Collective's* pivotal work in challenging women's traditionally limited assigned role in the building of peace in Colombia. The *Collective* has identified many diverse spaces for women's participation in public dialogue and political debate, including across inter-generational and inter-ethnic divides. At the same time, the Pax Christi International award honours symbolically the important role that women play worldwide in conflict transformation and peacebuilding at the local, national and international level.

Bethlehem, 16 May 2015