

Justice, Peace and Life

Special Edition

“War never again! Never again war!”

“War never again! Never again war! ... There are so many conflicts in this world which cause me great suffering and worry, but in these days my heart is deeply wounded in particular by what is happening in Syria and anguished by the dramatic developments which are looming.....I repeat forcefully: it is neither a culture of confrontation nor a culture of conflict which builds harmony within and between peoples, but rather a culture of encounter and a culture of dialogue; this is the only way to peace.” -Pope Francis



Civilians react as they search for survivors amid the rubble of collapsed buildings in Syria. (CNS photo/Aref Hretani/Reuters)

“We have heard the urgent calls of our Holy Father, Pope Francis, and our suffering brother bishops of the venerable and ancient Christian Churches of the Middle East. As one, **they beg the international community not to resort to military intervention in Syria.** They have made it clear that **a military attack will be counterproductive,** will exacerbate an already deadly situation, and will have unintended negative consequences.

Instead of employing armed force, our nation should work with the international community and direct all of its considerable diplomatic capabilities to initiate dialogue and negotiation.”

-Administrative Committee of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops

“First, I would like to say that we welcome the President’s decision to postpone Congressional consideration of a resolution to authorized military action. It is critical that recent international proposals to secure and destroy Syria’s chemical weapons get serious attention, evaluation and encouragement. As Pope Francis has said repeatedly, **dialogue** and **negotiation** are the paths to peace, **not military attacks and arms shipments.**”

Despite this positive development our [U.S. Catholic Bishops] Conference, in union with the whole Church, remains deeply concerned that the possibility of military action remains on the table. [In his speech] the President said he sees “modest effort and risk” in a limited U.S. led attack. Instead, the Church sees a grave range of “unintended negative consequences.”

With Pope Francis we believe pursuit of a military solution is “futile” and will distract from serious diplomatic and political solutions. Our bottom line is that we call upon our nation and the international community to press not just for a resolution of the question of chemical weapons, but to work for serious dialogue to end the conflict, to refrain from fueling further violence with military attacks or arms transfers, and to offer more humanitarian assistance.

-Bishop Richard E. Pates, Bishop of Des Moines, Chairman,
Committee on International Justice and Peace, U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops

See full statements from USCCB here <http://www.usccb.org/issues-and-action/human-life-and-dignity/global-issues/middle-east/syria/index.cfm>

Be a Peacemaker!

Pray for peace, Fast for peace, Advocate for peace
Urge Congress to Pursue a Political Solution in Syria, Not a Military Option

Click here to send a message to Sen. Charles Schumer, Sen. Kirsten Gillebrand and your Congressional representative:

<http://www.usccb.org/issues-and-action/take-action-now/capwiz/capwiz-alerts-syria.cfm>

Or call the Capitol switchboard to be connected to their offices: (202) 224-3121

A Prayer for the People of Syria

Almighty eternal God, source of all compassion,
the promise of your mercy and saving help
fills our hearts with hope.

Hear the cries of the people of Syria;
bring healing to those suffering from the violence,
and comfort to those mourning the dead.

Empower and encourage Syria's neighbors
in their care and welcome for refugees.

Convert the hearts of those
who have taken up arms,
and strengthen the resolve of those
committed to peace.

O God of hope and Father of mercy,
your Holy Spirit inspires us to look beyond ourselves and our own needs.
Inspire leaders to choose peace over violence and to seek reconciliation with enemies.
Inspire the Church around the world with compassion for the people of Syria,
and fill us with hope for a future of peace built on justice for all.
We ask this through Jesus Christ, Prince of Peace and Light of the World,
who lives and reigns for ever and ever.
Amen.

[This prayer is adapted from Catholics Confront Global poverty, a collaborative effort of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops and Catholic Relief Services.]



Syrian Muslim girl stands at the top of Mount Qassioun which overlooks Damascus.
(CNS/Khaled al-Hariri/Reuters)

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