

Mass killing in the name of God

Geneva, January 13, 2015. IPB shares the worldwide outrage at the hideous murders of journalists and artists working at *Charlie Hebdo*, and the other victims of last week's violence. We mourn with their families, friends, colleagues and French society as a whole, as well as with individuals and organisations everywhere who reject the idea of killing in the name of a religion or indeed any other ideology or cause. Equally, we extend our solidarity to those in Nigeria [who have lost up to 2000 civilians](#) during these same days, massacred by Boko Haram.

It is time to forcefully confront violent extremism and fundamentalism wherever it manifests itself. It is also time to stop pointing at "the others" and to confront the extremism in our own backyard, whether it stems from our own beliefs or attitudes or is manifested by other groups in our neighbourhood. In this context it is important to find a way to set aside religious or para-religious texts that make 'infidels' or 'blasphemers' a justified target.

An even deeper challenge is to strengthen our work to overcome the division in the world between the 'haves' and the 'have-nots'. Analyses show that social injustice and inequality are not only ills in themselves, but also hamper development and give rise to violence and armed conflict.

The present confrontation between radical elements in the Muslim world and the more secular West plays into the hands of militant minorities on both sides. Furthermore, it benefits those who seize the opportunity to call for more spending on the military and more aggressive and interventionist policies. There is also a serious danger that states will use current events to [increase their surveillance](#) of all activists and citizens, not only those who present a terrorist risk. Acknowledging the equality and interdependence of all people in our globalized world should help open the eyes to the need for dialogue, mutual respect and understanding.

There is another dimension that is receiving much less coverage in mainstream media. The major western powers are in many ways themselves responsible for the growth in Islamist militancy, on account of:

- the long history of colonial domination of the Middle East and the Muslim world generally, including support for the Israeli occupation of Palestinian lands;

- the role of the US in arming and funding the Afghan mujahideen against the USSR - who then became key figures in the Taliban and Al Qaeda, and are now operating in Syria and elsewhere.
- the devastating 'war on terror' which has caused enormous death and suffering in Iraq, Afghanistan, Libya and around the Islamic world; and which is at the same time imposing draconian restrictions on human rights and freedoms, notably in the area of international migration.
- the persistent tendency – especially in sections of the mass media - to demonise the whole Islamic world, to suggest that all Muslims are a threat to democratic values.

These factors have drastically polarised relations between Muslims and the West, and the Paris attacks are only the latest in a long line of killings on all sides. They can be seen as part of the unequal struggle of the poor against the rich, a reaction to drones and discrimination, arrogance and poverty. With every NATO war or hate-filled outburst from the far right, and with even deeper social crises to come, there will be more attacks. This is the brutal reality of capitalism, racism and war.

Peace and justice movements have said all this many times since 9-11 and the big powers do not want to hear it. Now they feel it, and they suffer it. We can overcome these challenges only with the politics of peacemaking: disarmament, reconciliation, education for peace, and genuine moves towards a just and sustainable world. This is the vision for which we must, and will, continue to work.

From:

Colin Archer

Secretary-General

International Peace Bureau

41 rue de Zürich

1201 Geneva

Switzerland

Tel: +41-22-731-6429

secgen@ipb.org

<http://www.ipb.org>

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