

## INTERNATIONAL PEACE BUREAU STATEMENT : TACKLING TERROR

Mon, 23 Nov 2015

Along with civil society organisations across the globe, IPB expresses its deep solidarity with the victims of the recent terrorist attacks, their families and friends; not only in Paris but also in Lebanon, Sinai, Nigeria, Mali and elsewhere.

At the same time we disagree deeply with those leaders (and mass media) who have immediately decided - with little public consultation - to 'wage war'. As if they were not already at war!

To ramp up military rhetoric and launch more missiles at ISIS targets risks falling into the trap carefully set by the jihadis, and which the USA and its allies have already fallen into at least three times since 9-11: notably in Afghanistan, in Iraq and in Libya. It should be evident that no military solution is possible. How is that politicians cannot draw the lessons from the last 15 years: after so many fruitless interventions, massacres of civilians, torture campaigns, political chaos, violations of civil liberties, radicalisation and increasing terrorist blowback? The stage is now set for a serious increase in casualties in the region and beyond; more refugees; very probable retaliation against civilians; and further polarisation on all sides.

When President Hollande uses the phrase 'without pity' he betrays some of the thinking in military/elite circles. A society that has no pity is one where force is the only language. Such language passes without criticism when the official discourse is given approval by vested interests, and when macho posturing is seen as 'protecting society' and women's voices are marginalised.

IPB's choice is the path of non-violence. Concretely, what does this amount to? Let us first consider some measures in relation to Syria and Iraq.

### **In the short term:**

The urgent need is to achieve a ceasefire with a view to a political transition, probably based on the political process outlined in the outcome of the Vienna talks.

<<http://www.russianembassy.org/article/joint-statement-on-the-outcome-of-the-multilateral-talks-on-syria-vienna>>

Immediately end all bombing, bring foreign ground troops home and cancel plans for more military trainers to be deployed to the area.

Ensure strict implementation of the Arms Trade Treaty

<<http://www.theguardian.com/global-development/poverty-matters/2014/sep/25/un-arms-trade-treaty-exports-sales>>, recently entered into force; and in addition, a comprehensive arms and ammunition embargo to be enforced on all states in relation to both countries (where not already in force). It will not solve the problem of illegal smuggling but it is an important first step. Pressure should be brought to bear especially on Western states still authorising arms transfers; on their allies such as Saudi Arabia, Turkey, and Qatar, who have been arming ISIS; and on Russia and Iran, who support Assad.

Far more serious efforts must be made to cut off external funding for ISIS, including stopping its smuggling of oil and other commodities and foreign remittances. \*Police, secret services and trade partners almost certainly possess the crucial data but for diverse reasons seem incapable of halting the flow. There might be a role for a coordinated civil society system of monitoring and name-and-shame campaigns. The initial focus of this work could well be Saudi Arabia and Gulf states.\*

Intensify border controls in Turkey and other countries from which fighters are travelling to Syria and Iraq.

As well as refugees, let us not forget the plight of those left behind in the war zones - notably the old, the poor, the disabled, and minorities. They too desperately need assistance.

### **In the longer term:**

Since the various conflicts are interconnected, progress is urgently needed on other crises in the region, notably Israel-Palestine and the position of the Kurds. This points to the need for moves towards a regional security and cooperation framework, akin to the OSCE.

A key element in these processes is finding appropriate forms of Truth and Reconciliation <[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Truth\\_and\\_reconciliation\\_commission](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Truth_and_reconciliation_commission)>; they will be required in order to heal the enormously deep psychological wounds all over the area. These are not problems that can be 'fixed' only at the top, by cutting Oslo-style deals; societal processes are vital. Dignity and social justice will in all cases be important keynotes.

Governments, international agencies, the private sector, should all make a high priority of creating employment and quality education opportunities (including peace education), so young people of both sexes can participate in rebuilding Syria and Iraq. This is the best cure for extremism.

At the global level, all governments should reduce their military budgets and transfer the funds released to social and environmental need. This includes intensified peace efforts, and urgent humanitarian programmes. As a minimum, we call for a 10% annual reduction in military expenditures

<<https://csoforffd.files.wordpress.com/2015/06/peaceful-and-just-societies-key-factor-in-ffd-2.pdf>>

over the period 2016-30, specifically to provide resources for achieving the UN's new Sustainable Development Goals. In a nutshell: Disarmament for Development. No region needs this more than the Middle East.

### **As for Western countries:**

While IPB understands the rationale for the state of emergency in France, we share the concerns of many regarding the extension of the emergency period and the ways in which such measures undermine civic freedoms. Not least of these is the cancellation of public events around the upcoming COP 21 conference.

<<http://coalitionclimat21.org/en/mobilizations-november-29-and-december-12-not-allowed-paris>>\_

Fundamentalist religious expressions are scary to many people (and not only in the West) and may lead them to accept unthinking militaristic short-cuts. It is therefore important to counter extremist discourse, be it discrimination against women or disregard for the dignity of "infidels"

-- yet without stigmatising a whole religion. Resistance to distorted theological interpretations, and especially incitations to violence, needs to be encouraged within Islam by religious leaders and followers. In general terms we support legislation designed to set limits on hate speech. But closures of mosques could be counter-productive. More helpful will be active support for their leaderships, who are faced with multiple pressures within their communities.

It is very important to reassure and protect Muslim communities in the face of renewed forms of backlash. Racist attacks and harassment will create exactly the type of division that ISIS is seeking to deepen, and will only accelerate the spirals of war and terror.

Similarly, we oppose all attempts to portray refugees - most of whom are themselves victims of terrorism and violence - as likely assassins. These tragic events must not be used as an excuse to create yet more barriers (physical, legal or other) to those who desperately seek refuge.

Instead of further inflating military budgets, public money should be employed to support a massive range of projects, especially in deprived urban areas: people-to-people/exchange programmes, initiatives to engage with and employ alienated youth, providing spaces for dialogue, sports, creative expression and more. Through sharing our cultures we resist the stupidity of the violent!

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The International Peace Bureau is a global network dedicated to the vision of a World Without War. We are a Nobel Peace Laureate (1910), and 13 of our officers have also been recipients of the Prize. Our 300 member organisations in 70 countries, and individual members, form a global network bringing together expertise and campaigning experience in a common cause. IPB has UN Consultative Status and is the Secretariat for the NGO Committee for Disarmament (Geneva). Our main programme centres on \*Disarmament for Sustainable Development\*, of which the \*Global Campaign on Military Spending\* (GCOMS) is a key part. // \*Coming events in 2016: Global Day of Action on Military Spending - April.\* and \*Disarm! For a Climate of Peace\*\* - world conference, Berlin,\* \*Sept 30-Oct 3\*.