

# Declaration on the Events of September 11th and their Consequences

1. We, the Conference of European Justice and Peace Commissions, gathered at our General Assembly in Budapest, strongly condemn the horrifying terrorist attacks in the United States on September 11th. We express our deep sympathy for the families of the dead, and our admiration for those who risked or lost their lives in the rescue operation. We have prayed for these victims at our meeting and shall do so in the future, as also for the people of the United States who must now come to terms with the catastrophe in their midst.

2. These crimes were probably committed by small though highly organised groups. We reject any attribution of collective blame to Muslims, to the Arab peoples in general or to the peoples of the Middle East, and any claim that the attacks demonstrate the existence of some inherent enmity between religions or civilisations. We lament the exploitation of religious loyalties to defend exclusive communal and political interests, or to promote violence, and we affirm the profound role that religion can play in inspiring renewal of heart, and in promoting the individual and collective reconciliation that alone can open us to the gift of peace. It is especially urgent to find just solutions to the crisis in the Holy Land, a crucial region for the encounter of faith communities.

3. Terrorism embodies a total contempt for the dignity of human beings and for the structures of international law and governance. Every effort must be made to eliminate it within the framework of international law. Whereas international law recognises the inherent right to self-defence against attack, we, as Christians, also insist that any unrestrained military operation would utterly deny our beliefs and our morality. Nor must any response to the attacks begin a new and possibly even greater cycle of violence. Indeed we believe that the decisive test at this time is to prevent our own human values from being diminished in reaction to the inhumanity of others.

4. Nothing can justify such attacks as those committed on September 11th. We also believe that these events call us to reflection. Just as peace is the fruit of justice, sustained injustice can lie at the root of violence, since it creates the conditions of despair which some forms of terrorism then exploit. We therefore declare that one essential response to these attacks is for rich countries to review and radically change their relationship with peoples who lack the means to live in human dignity. As a European Conference, we particularly call on the countries of Europe, and the European Union as such, to commit ourselves again to the achievement of an equitable international economic order. We stand in solidarity with the many people in the United States who are similarly calling for a re-examination of their country's place in a globalised world.

5. In many parts of the world, entire sections of the people are deprived of all means of democratically debating their national policies, choosing their political leaders, and exercising their human rights. We call on governments to promote full political participation. This is no less important in order to help deflect violence than supporting economic development.

6. The search for a just world order will require far-reaching changes to international juridical and political instruments: we believe that to strengthen the authority and resources of the United Nations, and to establish and develop the International Criminal Court, will be invaluable means to the struggle of the international community and the United States itself with terrorism.

7. We all need to commit ourselves to personal reflection, continuous conversion, and to a renewed dialogue between cultures and civilisations. In praying for the victims of the September attacks, for those entrusted with the immense responsibilities of political leadership in the present crisis, and for victims of violence everywhere, we commit ourselves to sharing in the creation of a world order in which all people may experience justice, peace and true freedom.

Source: Justice and Peace Europe, 30.09.2001