



**WEA Peace and Reconciliation Network**



## The Ploughshare

**E-Newsletter of the WEA Peace and Reconciliation Network**

December – January 2011

**MERRY CHRISTMAS**

### Evangelicals and Nuclear Weapons



*If you thought the end of the cold war brought an end to the dangers of nuclear weapons you need to revise your thinking. A nuclear armed North Korea, tensions brewing in Pakistan, Iran close to nuclear weaponry, Israel's arsenal and then there are the thousands held by developed nations. Now, Evangelicals are being invited to join a process of discerning together what the Christian faith has to say about nuclear weapons.*

New Zealand Christian Network National Director Glyn Carpenter and WEAPRI Director Steve Tollestrup spent time at the recent Lausanne Congress with Tyler Wigg-Stevenson, who has just been appointed to lead the World Evangelical Alliance's new task force on nuclear arms. In this capacity he joined Glyn, Steve and around 30 others for a day-long WEA ILT (International Leadership Team) meeting on the Lausanne free day.

The intention of the task force is not to begin with a position, says Tyler.

'We're going to take this issue and think together as an international body. We want to get a perspective

from each of the WEA regions and figure out what the best response to this issue is right now.

'For example, the abolition of nuclear weapons is one position that is biblical and enjoys support across the political spectrum, but we need to leave that door open.'

So, why should evangelicals look at nuclear weapons? Why not war? Why not all arms? For Tyler, the answer to these questions is clear. The invention of nuclear weapons has put the life of the whole world and everything in it in the hands of man in a way that has never happened before in history.



Tyler explains: 'Previously only God had reach over the whole world. But the invention of nuclear weapons in the last century has required us to take responsibility for the global impact of our actions in a way we have never had to do before. There is not a single person on this Earth who would not be affected if a nuclear weapon were to be used tomorrow and that has profound theological ramifications. We are living in a time that really requires us to take responsibility for how we live together on this planet.'

With the Roman Catholic Church and the World Council of Churches already having clear positions on nuclear weapons, Tyler believes a thoroughly evangelical perspective will not only help the WEA's churches better understand the issue, but also open up new areas for collaboration with other church traditions.

He says: 'Some evangelicals have been faithful and steadfast on this issue for a very long time but, mostly, we're starting with a deficit.'

'What the task force will be looking at is what the WEA can do for its churches. Evangelicals need to stop ignoring this issue because it matters and it touches upon so many of the other issues that evangelicals care about - the sanctity of life, the stewardship of creation, care for the poor, justice and the rule of law.'

'I'm particularly excited by what unanimity on this issue could look like because, although the WEA, the WCC and the Roman Catholic Church will each have their own positions; I think there's going to be significant overlap and that could be an exciting witness to Christ.'

In particular, Tyler sees Christians across the board acting as the vanguards of an historical shift to a post-atomic age - literally a world without nuclear weapons. But the long-term vision has to be guided by short steps that are effective and faithful, he says.

With that in mind, the taskforce has three core functions: to discern a position on nuclear weapons; disseminate that position to WEA churches and help them to engage with the issue; represent that position in the public square.

Whether the Church engages with this issue in the political arena or through 'track-two diplomacy', it is really important that churches take policy positions - and be very thoughtful about what the Church's role can be.

Tyler is optimistic that the churches can play a crucial role in bringing about a world free of nuclear weapons.

He says: 'Churches can be stakeholders in public discourse in a way that upholds the moral and theological bottom line as opposed to any political interest. They can exercise pastoral care over those in power and speak prophetically regardless of the political consequences. They can help to make peace between the nations and they can pray.'

## **Peace-Builders Community engages AFP in Human Rights Dialogue**

***Rev Dann Pantoja Founder and Chief Executive of Peace Builders Community in the Philippines and WEAPRI supporter took part in a recent dialogue with the Armed Forces of Philippines on human rights and abuse. Putting some well founded skepticism to one side he let his Faith convictions on courageous reconciliation and peace-building be evident.***



There seems to be a transformation happening in the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) .

I say this while fighting my own skepticism and as I determine to be volitionally hopeful. I have no single folder in the filing system within my heart and mind about these two categories — “Human Rights” and “AFP”. The two categories would not naturally fit. My past experiences with the

military (many were traumatic) during the Martial Law Regime, when I was a student political activist, make me uncomfortable every time I am around uniformed personnel, and especially when I visit the AFP General Headquarters.

But my faith-conviction as a Christian peace and reconciliation missionary compels me to open my mind and my heart, beyond my psycho-social comfort zone. I guess this is a part of my psycho-social transformation.

In the past two years a non-government organization called Alternative Law Groups facilitated Community-Based Dialogue Sessions on Human Rights with the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP)

and the Philippine National Police (PNP). The goal of the two-year dialogue series throughout the Philippines was “to contribute to the improvement of Human Rights situation in the Philippines primarily through the enhancement of the relationship between the AFP and the PNP, on one hand, and the local communities and civil society organizations, on the other hand, in the common effort to promote human rights.” The dialogue participants in each session included 10 representatives of the AFP, 10 representatives of the PNP, and 30 representatives from civil society organizations. The regional officers of the Commission on Human Rights attended the sessions and helped discuss the human rights situation in their respective regions.

The issues raised were the ones we used to write on our placards as we shouted on the streets some 30+ years ago. Now, the same issues are being raised, paid for by the AFP, within the AFP General Headquarters. This is mind-boggling for a person who grew up in the 70s!

Here are the issues raised:

Military Harassments — threat to organizing groups; name-tagging on non-government organization workers; harassments during rallies; harassments of support groups; harassments of fact-finding teams, harassments of Indigenous Peoples (IP) communities and Moro communities.

Surveillance of HR advocates or activists

Military Encampment — operations within the area include indiscriminate bombing and firing; presence of military detachments in civilian areas endangering communities; entry of the military in Ancestral Domain areas

Use of military and Police personnel to protect private interests — like corporate interests, mining operations, plantations, politicians’ business interests

Lack of Sensitivity and Improper Implementation of Certain Human Rights Laws and Social Legislation

Curtailed of the Right to Association and Freedom of Speech

Other Issues — like, arbitrary arrest and detention, “Hamletting,” Food blockade, massacre, recruitment of IPs, Redress Mechanisms of AFP and PNP

This First AFP Conference on HR and IHL is described by my friend, Col. Domingo J. Tutaan, Chief of the AFP Human Rights Office (AFP HRO), as a “paradigm shift on how AFP views its mandate of protecting the people and the state, a shift from predominantly militaristic solution to a people-centered security strategy.” He loves to call the new “AFP Strategic Intent” as “WINNING THE PEACE” (that’s how he wrote it, in capital letters).

I feel honored to be invited by Col. Tutaan to this conference. His official designation as Chief of AFP HRO is a Special Staff of the AFP Chief of Staff, functioning under the supervision of the Deputy Chief of Staff for Civil Military Operations, J7. He will assist the AFP Chief of Staff on matters related to Human

Rights and International Humanitarian Law. His specific functions include:

Planning, implementing, and supervising programs to uphold, protect, and respect HR and adherence to IHL.

Developing and pursuing advocacy activities and other education and information dissemination programs on HR and IHL;

Integrating and synthesizing all AFP policies, regulations, and data gathered that have bearing on HR and IHL.

Receiving complaints of alleged HR violations against AFP members.

Monitoring incidents of alleged HR and IHL violations as reported in open sources and initiating immediate investigation.

Monitoring the litigation of Human Right Violations involving members of the AFP.

Monitoring HR and IHL violations of threat groups and initiate immediate filing of cases/complaints and assisting the victims and/or their families

Working with the Commission on Human Rights (CHR), other human rights organizations, NGOs, civil society organizations, and public officials for the promotion and protection of HR and abidance to IHL.

Human Rights Desks and Officers are to be established and designated respectively in all tactical units of the AFP—i.e., Philippine Army Divisions, Brigades and Battalions, and its equivalent units in the Philippine Air Force and the Philippine Navy

I promised Col. Tutaan, in front of Bishop Tendero, National Director of the Philippine Council of Evangelical Churches (PCEC), that the PeaceBuilders Community, Inc. (PBCI) and the PCEC Peace and Reconciliation Commission (PARC) will actively watch the implementation of this new initiative of the AFP in institutionalizing Human Rights in its structures, culture, and value system.

As a spiritual segment of Philippine society, the PCEC-PARC will watch and monitor AFP Human Rights dynamics among the top military leadership, while we at PBCI will help watch and monitor, along with other CSOs like Amnesty International, this apparent initial implementation of a Security Sector Reform in our country.

May God help our people and our land truly experience the genuine adherence and abidance of Human Rights, and genuine implementation of the International Humanitarian Law in this beautiful land.

## Sudan Referendum January 9<sup>th</sup>

Please remember the Church and People of Southern Sudan and pray for the coming January 9<sup>th</sup> referendum.



- That the referendum will take place as scheduled.
  - For a transparent and fair referendum.
  - That there would be no internal violence or disruption
  - Both the North and South abide by the results
  - That peace is restored to the region.
- That the Church and Christian community of Southern Sudan demonstrates the way of Peace and reconciliation.



**Want to contact us about something?**

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Grace and Peace

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