



Apostolat Militaire International



Declaration of London 2020



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15 September 2021

Living our Hope for Peace as Military

*“Those too who devote themselves
to the military service of their country
should regard themselves
as the agents of security and freedom of peoples.
As long as they fulfill this role properly,
they are making a genuine contribution to the establishment of peace.”*

(Vatican II Gaudium et Spes, No. 79)



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“With joy I welcome the representatives of the armed forces and police, here from all over the world, on pilgrimage to Rome for the Extraordinary Jubilee of Mercy. Law enforcement — military and police — have the mission of ensuring a safe environment, so that each and every citizen can live in peace and serenity. In your families, in the various areas in which you operate, may you be instruments of reconciliation, builders of bridges and sowers of peace. Indeed, you are called not only to prevent, manage and put an end to conflicts, but also to contribute to the building of an order founded on truth, on justice, on love and on freedom, according to St John XXIII’s definition of peace in his Encyclical Pacem in Terris (nn. 18 ff.).

The affirmation of peace is not an easy task, especially because of war, which uproots hearts and augments violence and hatred. I urge you not to be discouraged. Continue on your journey of faith and open your hearts to God the merciful Father who never tires of forgiving us. Faced with the challenges of every day, be shining examples of Christian hope, which is the certitude of the victory of love over hate and of peace over war.

Pope Francis, General audience, April 30th, 2016.

Preamble

The times we live in are filled with change: constant, rapid and fundamental change in all areas of life. This unrelenting change affects individuals and societies, cultures and states, and state associations and organizations. It is no surprise, then, that international relations also are changing rapidly and fundamentally, with armed conflicts between states, regions, population groups or terrorist organizations repeatedly breaking out—with devastating effects on people and their living conditions.

As a result, the regulations, agreements and conventions adopted to maintain peace and security have also been put under severe pressure. Moreover, many of the basic ethical and moral convictions underlying these agreements are being questioned or even completely ignored.

Such changing circumstances are a challenge to all of us, but particularly to diplomats and the military. Though they give rise to great risks, they also offer many opportunities. As the umbrella organization of Catholic soldiers from various armies around the world and as an NGO with the Vatican, AMI is particularly committed to addressing these challenges associated with maintaining and strengthening peace and security for all people.

The deep foundation for our work for true peace is our faith in the eternal, loving God, (1) who created all human beings as brothers and sisters with an inherent, equal dignity, (2) who entrusted them with the earth as their common living space and (3) who wants to lead every human being to true fulfillment (perfection in heaven).

In addition to this deep faith, we base our concrete actions on the standards elaborated in Catholic Social Teaching. These scientific and very reliable applications of our faith



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provide a framework for analyzing the various social and political conflicts, and they offer clear guidelines for dealing with these conflicts in practice.

Members of the military play a critical role both in national defense and in promoting a true world peace, based on international security and cooperation between the people and states of the international community. In the process, these soldiers repeatedly find themselves in violent situations where they may have to use powerful weapons and risk killing and being killed. To do this, they need to have not only quality military training, but reliable ethical standards in order to conduct themselves as agents of true peace rather than as an armed mob. But the politicians who commission them also need these clear, binding and transparent ethical standards for their own actions, especially when this involves the use of military force. Soldiers must be able to trust that the missions to which they are sent comply with proper ethical standards.

During the last decades there have been many developments in the field of international relations, as well as in available weapons technology or acceptable enforcement actions within military conflicts. Therefore, AMI is updating and sharpening its positions in this Declaration of London. These adjusted positions are derived directly from the manifold experiences of soldiers from many different armies who are AMI members; and this “Declaration of London” is based on our mutual Christian faith and the ethical guidelines stemming from our moral convictions.

1. Military Experiences

Soldiers are servants of true peace. In the sense of the Catholic doctrine of true peace, we soldiers see ourselves "as servants of security and freedom of the peoples". By fulfilling this task properly, we “truly contribute to the consolidation of peace (Gaudium et Spes 79, Second Vatican Council)” We measure our mission against this and our self-image is based on this! For us, peace means more than the absence of war. A life lived in just peace, non-violent and with dignity, is our highest goal.

Where people are denied the chance for a safe and dignified life, their lived experiences are often quite violent even without war. For this reason, AMI argues for a comprehensive concept of true peace and is committed to protecting human dignity, enforcing international law and promoting social justice.

The use of military force requires adherence to the ethical criteria laid down in the church's doctrine of peace. Therefore, AMI expects from the Community of Nations:

- Peace is a commandment from God. In principle, all use of force must be avoided. In any case, it must serve real justice that will produce peace.
- Every decision about combat operations must be carefully prepared based on a conflict and risk analysis and carefully thought out to its full end.
- Any armed deployment should always be considered within the framework of a coherent overall concept—including post-conflict healing.

- Civil society expertise must be taken into account.
- Realistic expectations have to be formulated, and sustainable conflict follow-up has to be provided. Causing destruction and leaving a political vacuum breeds danger.ⁱ

In the peace dialogue, it is necessary for governments to always seek alternatives to military use of force. If a decision for military deployment is made, it must be justified to the public and to the soldiers—and be...

- Politically necessary,
- Ethically justified,
- Legally permissible,
- Make military sense.ⁱⁱ

Only then may military force be ordered. If these prerequisites are met, the soldier can and must take responsibility within conscientious obedience and act in a morally correct manner.

2. The Catholic approach to peace

The above stated approach is grounded in a broader Catholic approach to Justice, from which peace emerges as a result. Peace is not solely a result of human efforts. Christianity understands peace first of all as a gift of God. Indeed, Christ is our Peace (Eph. 2:14). At the same time, due to the contingencies of human history, peace must be understood both as a process of change and as a result of the renewal that change produces. We all have a moral duty to rise to the challenge of promoting peace as much as possible.

Four key valuesⁱⁱⁱ A Catholic approach of peace builds upon at least four key values, One is the prophetic ethics of peace as a fruit of justice (Is. 32:17), for justice is necessary both for development and for conflict prevention. The second basic value underpinning peace includes reconciliation, reconstruction and forgiveness, which are especially needed in post-conflict peace building. A third value underpinning peace is compassion, elaborated below, which is a strong motive for Catholics, Christians from other denominations and other people of good will to provide humanitarian aid for people in need. The fourth value underpinning peace is security, which builds upon the concept of St. *Augustine* 'pax ordo tranquillitatis', peace based on tranquility. Tranquility means that peace is also based on security, stability and the rule of [just] law (also mentioned in the World Day Declaration of Peace 2002).^{iv}

The corona crisis also made clear that any global crisis with an impact on the life of so many people also challenges religions to provide religious and moral guidance in private and public life. ^v Political systems should allow such a role, since it may help their population in finding a way to live amidst and beyond the crisis.



3. Positions taken: Applying that Catholic concept of peace to military experience

1. Military practice nowadays is becoming increasingly complex. International relations are rapidly developing, security issues are becoming more and more complex due to globalization and national responses to the consequences of globalization. The military is asked to assist in responding properly to these developments. The tasks of military personnel are manifold: they range from classical warfare through peace keeping and humanitarian tasks, while at the same time the military has to anticipate any emerging and future threats to international security.
2. During the commemoration of the 75th Anniversary of the Geneva-Hague conventions in the Vatican, The President of AMI Vice -Admiral M. Borsboom described the effect of continual change—increasing complexity: *“The military are there to protect. So whom are we the military, protecting: our own people: within the confinements of our own borders--but it goes further. The military are asked also to protect the international order. And on peacekeeping missions it's not just protecting international order; it's also delivering conditions where peace can be retained, restored and or maintained. Moreover, more and more the military are asked to support Civil Authorities: think of disaster relief or large fires or floods; but also in assisting fighting crime, because organized international crime is becoming more and more of a problem at the state level and even interstate level. So we will see various types of protection. Therefore, there will be many different types of missions for the military, increasingly in combination with foreign affairs officials but also civil authorities and NGO's. That brings me to what I said earlier: the increasing complexity.”*
3. History has demonstrated time and again that ethical behavior is hollow—and easily compromised—unless it is based on a concrete reality that includes an objective moral value to all humans as coming from a higher power than the state itself. Every military member searches for that solid ground; and Catholic soldiers look to their clergy (often available as Catholic Chaplains) for the moral and ethical foundations of their military tasks. AMI aims to support Catholic soldiers in finding this solid moral ground. Such efforts include, where appropriate, not only assisting chaplains in understanding the Catholic faith and its moral principles, but—**whenever possible**--also assisting nations in incorporating sound moral and ethical principles in their military education: using our collective experience to demonstrate integrating solid ethical considerations within specific contexts.
4. Therefore, As Catholics, we first express the belief that Christ is our peace (Eph.2:14). In Christ, humankind is unified and redeemed. Our redemption in Christ motivates us to work toward the realization of this unity of humankind through social inclusion on a world wide scale, and to work for true security for all, including the most marginalized.
In this world, however, no ultimate and definite peace can be established. Therefore, although it is important to express our deepest conviction and our hope that peace is possible, we realize that military aggression cannot be banned by declarations alone. Nevertheless, we live and work hoping that circumstances can be changed in a direction far more fitting to the prophetic ethics in the Scriptures.

5. Catholics do have the task of affirming that the gospel is a gospel of peace (Eph. 6:15). Catholics are not involved in forcefully imposing their faith on others.
6. Catholics must stimulate peaceful practices working with other Christian denominations and all world religions, including taking part in interreligious dialogues about world peace—even amidst conflicts. The military who are deployed in different cultural and religious contexts, need to be well prepared to respect and even dignify the religions they meet during their work. This particularly requires appropriate education.
7. Pope Francis has repeatedly expressed his deep concern regarding the crises caused by climate change and the risks humankind put to nature and the environment, especially in His Encyclical ‘Laudato Si’. Even now many military are confronted with these new threats to the security of humankind. Creativity is needed to search for appropriate ways of responding to these crises and their impact on international relations and every culture and society. Additionally, armed forces will need a great deal of creativity when faced with these challenges.
8. The concept of ‘Just War’ as it is defined in the World Catechism and the Compendium of the Social Doctrine has been only a moral tradition for promoting virtuous military practice in a very broken world. It has developed over time, and now may well have changed into the methods of promoting a Just Peace (AMI, Declaration of Berlin 2010). Though an ethics of peace does not look for options to escalate a conflict, it is important that the role of the military in response to an imminent threat or breach of national or international security still allow for the controlled use of force to counter that threat. Indeed, the international diplomatic and political community’s focus should be (1) how to prevent the need for conflict escalation, (2) how to build, sustain and keep peace, and (3) how to reconcile after an armed conflict. Thus, AMI truly understands why so many in the Catholic church tend to declare the Just War tradition as obsolete under the present circumstances. At the same time, AMI asks that a prudent model of resistance to threat or aggression be developed to deal with conflict escalation similar to the way it is understood in chapters V, VI and VII of the UN Charter.
9. Some of the Just War criteria still apply to the diplomatic and political community: Just Cause, Legitimate Authority, Reasonable Hope for success and Last Resort. Other criteria, Right Intention, Discrimination and Proportionality, still apply to the virtuous conduct of war. So even though the expression ‘just war’ might provoke moral resistance in some circles, its criteria continue to add insight and direction to those searching for a comprehensive strategy for just peace with a solid ethical basis in international and humanitarian law. ^{vi}
10. The following requirements must be fulfilled at the same time if military force is used:
 - 10.1 Peace in the world is seriously disturbed. This can be caused by war, massive violation of human rights, military, other armed or state aggression.
 - 10.2 According to the rules of international law, the use of military force may only be undertaken in a framework provided by the United Nations, regardless of the right to self-defense or emergency aid. In doing so, the honest intention must always be in the foreground to end serious violations of international law in order to

enable and ensure the peaceful development of the community of states. This demand is often in conflict with the voting behavior of the veto states in the United Nations Security Council who are more oriented towards national interests. A reform of the decision-making powers in the Security Council might be considered.

- 10.3 Military force appears to be the most appropriate means of avoiding or ending a conflict if other means have proven ineffective or are obviously hopeless. Such means can be, for example, diplomatic efforts, political pressure or economic sanctions. The least violent is to be chosen from among all those considered effective.
- 10.4 Finally, there has to be a prospect of success in averting the threat or ending a conflict and initiating lasting peaceful development. If there is no sufficiently high probability of a successful use of force, it is not justifiable to sacrifice further human lives and cause additional destruction and annihilation. Success is a condition that is less violent in the long run, less threatening peace than before, and in which people can find their way back to a life in dignity.
- 10.5 If there is a combat operation, the principles of international humanitarian law apply in armed conflicts, even if the opponent does not comply. The principle of proportionality, which requires the appropriate use of military force, and discrimination, the protection of the civilian population, are also essential.
- 10.6 Ending a mission is also a major challenge. The use of military force brings responsibility for the area of operation. This responsibility does not end with the withdrawal of troops, for leaving the vanquished in ruins without leadership is a recipe for the rise of revengeful violence.
- 10.7 The position and roles of the military might be understood as built upon a dynamic mixture of practices based upon all four elements of peace.
When these criteria are met, Catholic military will be enabled to integrate their lives as faithful members of their church with their military practice.
11. The denuclearization and reduction of other weapons of mass destruction as has been recently urged by Pope Francis is a good development, insofar as it would lead to a nuclear free world. However, such a process would need to include multilateral, gradual and balanced steps that can be verified and show substantial progress.
12. The Nuclear Test Ban Treaty can be understood as moral support for the poorest in this world, who mostly live in states that do not possess nuclear weapons. This includes an urgent appeal to actively fulfill the requirements implied in the Non-Proliferation Treaty.
13. Beyond nuclear warfare and deterrence, other weapons of mass destruction, like biological and chemical weapons, should be reduced as well. As demonstrated by the devastation of the corona virus, public awareness of and clarity about these issues needs to be increased.
14. Hybrid warfare can be understood as a type of warfare typical of late modernity which 'plays with' the truth. Its true proponents use non-state entities, as well as lies and hypocrisy, to conceal both the true intentions and behavior of those conducting hybrid warfare. Pope John XXIII has called truth a key element in an order of peace; so

hybrid warfare should be countered by truthful negotiations offering inclusive and mutually respectful solutions.

15. The human dimension of military combat must be safeguarded and strengthened against a blind robotization of warfare. Due to the rapidly increasing role of artificial intelligence in general, and in warfare in particular, the option for autonomous weapons should be considered as dangerously risky. Because ethical considerations are uniquely human, and because some very complex ethical decisions are taken by military, often in a logic which requires complex human insight, continuous human control of weapon systems is critical. Also, because soldiers can be expected to have to deal with crises resulting from climate change and the enduring lack of global social justice and compassion, they need a *global* type of ethics. Moreover, because of the omnipresence of social media, even one soldier's actions can have catastrophic consequences. They therefore need ethical guidance regarding the moral ambiguities in the entire contemporary peace processes—lest one mistaken action undercut years of painstaking peacemaking.
16. The human dimension of military combat should be a major concern of all military who fulfill a role as leaders. True military leadership always as a very important moral dimension. We argue for sufficient attention for ethical leadership in all military education and training.^{vii}
17. It is AMI's strong conviction that the Catholic faith can make a difference in the understanding of the cultural and religious dimensions of the complexities in which the armed forces operate. Therefore, amidst these complex circumstances and tasks for the military, AMI aims both to provide support for all military who try to understand the 'signs of times', and to especially support Catholic military as they each try to develop an appropriate synthesis of their Catholic faith and their life and work as military.
18. Because of so much change, it is our hope that the educational material that AMI develops will also be useful for those military who are developing a new or revitalized interest in the Catholic faith. Through its method of expanding circles as defined in its vision paper 2018-2021, AMI tries to reach each individual soldier searching to connect military life and work with Catholic faith. Both for Catholic military leaders as exemplary role models, as well as for any other Catholic military, it is essential they develop an informed attitude towards Catholic contributions to peace, justice and security.
19. AMI expresses as its strong conviction that all military can be fruitfully supplied with pastoral guidance by the Catholic military chaplaincies, which often are embedded in the armed forces. These Catholic chaplains provide necessary guidance in the spiritual and moral domain. Also, they are helpful in the deploying of the activities of AMI as a lay apostolate to open up the Catholic faith for all soldiers whenever they show interest in it.^{viii}
20. In conformity with its statutes, AMI expresses the wish for ecumenical cooperation in accordance with the ecumenical guidelines for Catholics.^{ix} In doing so, AMI hopes to contribute to an appropriate approach to security as a key element of peace.



4. Conclusion

Because changes will continue to accompany our lives, and complexities in international relations will keep on accompanying the life and work of all military. AMI pledges to remain solidly faithful to our Lord and God who has accompanied us with wisdom and grace throughout the centuries. But AMI pledges as well to strive, individually and collectively, to be instruments of our Savior, Jesus Christ, who entered into this continually changing world. We pledge to use this London Declaration to help us be a respectful listener and a faithful cooperator (partner and advisor) to our fellow NGOs and to the Vatican who inspires such efforts. We pledge to be an equally helpful source of Catholic military experience for organizations—inside and outside of various national militaries—as they struggle to implement sound moral and ethical principles within their schools, chaplaincies and activities as they respond to many needs, including even the use of lethal force. Most of all, we pledge to all our military, especially our newest members of the armed forces worldwide, to be an understanding and friendly companion on their honorable journey through dangerous circumstances as we together seek to follow our Lord and Savior and cooperate with his grace to renew the face of the earth. The International President of AMI, Vice Admiral Borsboom stated in his letter to AMI, published in April 2020, quoted Pope Francis who stated: “Hope is not an illusion, it’s hope” and “we can prepare in these days for a better time”. United in this hope we try to live our God-given hope for peace.^x

ⁱ The previous part has been proposed by a national delegation and taken over by the working group. I propose it will not be abbreviated in the official version of the AMI declaration.

ⁱⁱ In the AMI app. Reference to Compendium of the Social Doctrine and the World Catechism should be added.

ⁱⁱⁱ In this paragraph the word ‘Elements’ has been changed into values.

^{iv} See Appendix 2 for an elaboration of the concept of security.

^v In the AMI app reference may be made to a paper by prof. Fred’s students about religious leadership in the corona crisis

^{vi} In the AMI app A link to course books published by the Pontifical Council for the Promotion of Integral Human Development and its predecessor, the Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace, can be made.

^{vii} In the AMI app, A link to the paper of prof. Fred’s students about moral leadership in the military may be included.

^{viii} This number has been added after wishes expressed by national delegates who would like to see more text about military chaplains and their link to AMI.

^{ix} In the AMI app add a link to the following quote: “A preliminary issue is whether we start from a Catholic point of view or a Christian point of view? The Preamble of the AMI statutes is clear about this: The Apostolat Militaire International has been active since 1965, uniting Christians from many different countries and examining how the profound message of peace and universal human kinship that the Church offers might best be advanced by Christians serving in the armed forces of the world.’ From that perspective we are faithfully Catholic, but continue to welcome a respectful exchange of views with other Christians.” (Thus the AMI vision paper 2018-2021)

^{xxxx} In the AMI app, National delegates may add a link to national program containing practical elaborations in the AMI app.