Peace and réconciliation

Development and Peace
CARITAS CANADA

"Peace is not merely the absence of war... Rather it is founded on a correct understanding of the human person and requires the establishment of an order based on justice and charity."
— Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church, 494

The Geneva Academy of International Humanitarian Law and Human Rights reports more than 95 active conflicts across five continents, involving a mix of state and non-state actors, including national armies, rebel groups, terrorist organizations and criminal gangs. This widespread violence has had serious consequences for civilian populations, who are always the first victims conflict.

Main causes of the current situation

Several factors are at the root of these conflicts. Among the main ones are:

- Competition for **access to and control over natural resources** such as oil, gas, minerals and precious metals
- The **struggle for control over geographical areas that are crucial for the transit** of goods and minerals to the global market
- The **growing influence of private companies in government affairs**, particularly neoliberal policies advocating the privatization of state assets and market deregulation
- **Social inequalities** exacerbated by the deepening of neoliberal policies, leading to **social fragmentation** and the rise of **insurrectionary movements** seeking to challenge the status quo and address their grievances through violent means
- **The erosion of democratic** values and overt political exclusion
- **Disinformation** that can spread rapidly, shape public opinion and stoke tensions

Civilians, the main victims of conflict

Armed conflicts around the world have a disproportionate impact on the lives of civilians, who bear the brunt of the violence, displacement and deprivation.

The adoption of attacking civilians as a strategy of war has resulted in:

- Approximately 90% of the victims of conflicts being civilians
- Forced displacement within and outside conflict-affected countries
- Widespread human rights violations, including war crimes, genocide and ethnic cleansing
- Violations of international law, including the destruction of civilian infrastructure, illegal detention, torture and other forms of abuse

Civilans suffer lasting physical and psychological trauma, which impedes them from rebuilding their lives and communities long after conflicts have ended.

The majority of civilian casualties are:



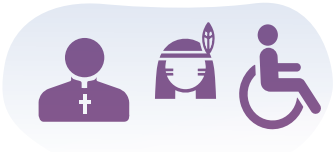
WOMEN,

who face gender-based violence which is systematically used as a weapon of war



CHILDREN,

who face violence and exploitation and are sometimes forcibly recruited into armed groups



MINORITY GROUPS,

including Indigenous peoples, religious and ethnic minorities, and people with disabilities



PEASANT FARMING COMMUNITIES,

that lose out when warring parties fight over control of fertile lands

Working for social change

The work of Development and Peace — Caritas Canada (DPCC) is anchored in a deep commitment to addressing the root causes of conflict and fostering environments where peace and life can flourish.

To effectively meet the needs of conflict-affected populations, it is essential to understand their vulnerabilities and realities. With our local partners, we support programs that aim to:

- → **Promote peaceful conflict resolution** by equipping communities with the resources, skills and power they need to take action
- → **Prevent and mitigate the effects of conflict** on the most vulnerable populations by strengthening communities' resilience against immediate and long-term impacts
- → **Foster sustainable peace and reconciliation** by promoting human rights and supporting transitional justice processes (truth and reconciliation commissions, reparation mechanisms, legal reforms, etc.)
- → **Prevent escalation to violence** by supporting local peace initiatives and facilitating dialogue and mediation
- → **Transform conflicts through education and social cohesion** to foster critical thinking, tolerance and a culture of peace
- → **Support reconstruction and the livelihoods** of affected populations by combating gender-based violence and addressing the impacts of climate change

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