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### **Pope's message: peace is possible in Syria**

Vatican City, 5 July 2016 – Today Pope Francis issued a message urging governments to find a political solution to the war in Syria as part of the Caritas campaign, "Peace is possible".

Since March 2011, Syria has been gripped by a brutal civil war that represents for Caritas the greatest humanitarian crisis it is currently engaged with. Almost seven million people in Syria are in need of assistance and four million, forced to flee from the conflict, are now internally displaced. More than 1,700,000 people have migrated to neighbouring countries. The war has claimed more than 100,000 victims, although the data do not fully reflect the losses caused. Caritas provides food, healthcare, basic needs, education, shelter, counselling, protection and livelihoods in Syria and to refugees in host countries. National Caritas organisations reached 1.3 million people last year alone.

Caritas is also urging its supporters around the world to put pressure on their governments to ensure all sides of the conflict come together to find a peaceful solution, support the millions of people affected by the war, and give Syrians inside and outside the country dignity and hope. It has also launched a new website to support the campaign – [syria.caritas.org](http://syria.caritas.org) – which includes specially commissioned artwork from Syrian artist Tammam Azzam, an animated film on the war, an award-winning photo series and testimony from Syrians living both inside the country and as refugees in bordering nations and beyond.

Cardinal Luis Antonio Tagle, president of Caritas Internationalis, has met with Syrians in Lebanon and Greece. He said, "These are not just numbers, these are human beings. We need to give them hope, dignity and peace. In the name of all the people touched by this conflict, we are appealing to everyone: we can work for peace in Syria" #peacepossible4syria @iamCaritas

The following is the full text of the Holy Father's message, sent this morning:

"Today I want to speak to you about something that saddens my heart a lot: the war in Syria, now in its fifth year. It is a situation of unspeakable suffering that the Syrian people are victims of, forced to survive under bombs or to find escape routes to other countries or areas of Syria that are less war-torn: to leave their own home, everything... I also think about the Christian communities, which I give my full support to for the discrimination

they have to bear.

So I want to turn to all the faithful and those that are committed, with Caritas, to the construction of a more just society. While the people suffer, incredible quantities of money are being spent to supply weapons to fighters. And some of the countries supplying these arms are also among those that talk of peace. How can you believe in someone who caresses you with the right hand and strikes you with the left hand?

I encourage all, adults and young people, to live the Holy Year of Mercy enthusiastically to overcome indifference and proclaim with strength that peace in Syria is possible! Peace in Syria is possible!

For this, we are called to embody this Word of God: 'I know the plans that I have for you', declares the Lord. 'They are plans for peace and not disaster, plans to give you a future filled with hope'. (Jeremiah, 29,11)

The invitation is to pray for peace in Syria and for its people at prayer vigils, at awareness-raising initiatives in groups, parishes and in communities, to spread the message of peace, a message of unity and hope.

Works of peace then follow prayer. I invite you to call on those who are involved in peace negotiations to take these agreements seriously and to make every effort to facilitate access to humanitarian aid.

Everyone has to recognise that there is no military solution for Syria, but only a political solution. The international community must therefore support the peace talks heading towards the construction of a government of national unity.

Let's join forces, at all levels, to ensure that peace in beloved Syria is possible. Now that really will be a great example of mercy and love lived for the good of all the international community!

May the Lord bless you and may Mary Most Holy protect you.

Thank you".

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