



ANTILLES EPISCOPAL CONFERENCE

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October 25th, 2025

PRESS RELEASE FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

From the Bishops of the Antilles Episcopal Conference (AEC) To the People of God in the Caribbean

The Bishops of the Antilles Episcopal Conference view with grave concern the recent build-up of naval and other military assets in the Southern Caribbean, and the potential implications this poses for the socio-economic, political, and humanitarian well-being of our region and its people.

In a few weeks, the world will commemorate the 59th World Day of Peace. As we reflect on the words of Pope Paul VI, who in 1966, at the institution of this observance, urged humanity to pursue negotiation rather than war, we recognise that once again we stand at a crossroads. Dialogue and cooperation are urgently needed to ease mounting geopolitical tensions and to foster lasting peace.

At the same time, we must speak clearly to the moral challenges facing our region. The narcotics trade continues to devastate Caribbean societies — eroding lives, futures, and the very moral fabric of our communities. This is a grave crisis for the Church and for families everywhere, and one we are duty-bound to confront. Yet, the arbitrary and unwarranted taking of life cannot be justified as a means of resolution. Such acts violate the sacredness of human life.

Likewise, the disregard for the sovereignty of independent nations cannot be accepted as a reasonable measure in the name of border security. War or the threat of war is never the right solution. To quote Pope Leo at a recent General Audience, “We must never become

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accustomed to war”. His appeal echoes that of Pope Saint John XXIII, who proclaimed that “true peace can be born only from a heart disarmed of anxiety and the fear of war.”

The presence of warships and the disruption of marine livelihoods within our Caribbean waters represent real and immediate threats to regional stability and to the welfare of our nations. As peoples united by a shared heritage and collective identity, we must continue to reject aggression and intimidation as means of resolving conflict or ideological differences. Our history has shown that discourse and negotiation have served us well as independent nations united in community and cooperation.

We are attentive to the voices and expressed concerns of our people and urge that we be guided by the teachings of Scripture. We are commanded to love one another — even our enemies. The world may be at war, but we are called to pray for peace and to act in peace. In this *Jubilee Year of Hope*, as the Church continues the ancient tradition of pardon and restoration, we reaffirm our common goal and shared brotherhood that transcend borders and national interests.

The Church remains steadfast in the need to protect all in society - especially those who are most vulnerable and economically marginalised. The objectives of securing our borders and the elimination of the narcotics trade must be pursued with the respect for law, the dignity of human life and with a tacit understanding of our region’s deep commitment to peace.

To those entrusted with leadership, we appeal for a de-escalation of militarisation and a renewed commitment to dialogue and regional unity. To the faithful, we call for renewed focus on faith and trust in the Lord, resisting the discouragement and cynicism that threaten to overwhelm us. Acts of reconciliation, the faithful observance of the sacraments, and the family rosary remain powerful expressions of hope — expressions that move heaven and can change the hearts of humankind.

We stand in solidarity with all the peoples of the Caribbean, especially those most directly affected by this situation. Together, we place our hope, trust, and prayers in the pursuit of a peaceful and just resolution that upholds human dignity, national sovereignty, and the common good of all.

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