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CAPSA calls for peace in Ukraine and elsewhere, and a generous response to all refugees

The Catholic Alliance for People Seeking Asylum (CAPSA) joins Pope Francis, Australian Catholic Bishops Conference (ACBC), and other Catholic organisations such as Caritas Australia, in not only calling for an end to the escalating violence and conflict occurring in Ukraine, but also in Afghanistan, Myanmar, Ethiopia, Syria, Iraq, Democratic Republic of Congo, Eritrea, Yemen and Venezuela.

CAPSA, co-convened by Jesuit Social Services and Jesuit Refugee Service (JRS) Australia, supports individuals, schools, parishes and Catholic organisations across education, health, refugee and social services in their advocacy for fair and humane treatment for people seeking asylum in Australia.

CAPSA Co-Chairs Julie Edwards, CEO of Jesuit Social Services, and Tamara Domicelj, Country Director of Jesuit Refugee Service (JRS) Australia, re-emphasise CAPSA's commitment to, and solidarity with, people facing persecution and displacement globally.

“The United Nations estimates that more than 10 million people have been displaced from the conflict in Ukraine. Clearly, a generous humanitarian response from Australia is critical at this time. Not only to those fleeing Ukraine, but those fleeing conflict across the globe,” stressed Ms Edwards.

President of ACBC, Archbishop Mark Coleridge, further emphasised the need for peace in a recent media release, stating that “we express our deep compassion for the people of Ukraine and our solidarity with all people of Ukrainian heritage here in Australia.”

Referencing a statement recently made by JRS Australia, Ms Domicelj invoked Pope Francis' condemnation of conflict.

“We continue to witness the ongoing destruction and displacement that conflict, violence and war causes in our world. We stand alongside Pope Francis and the broader Catholic church in lamenting the ‘diabolical senselessness of violence’, not only in Ukraine and Afghanistan, but in Myanmar, Ethiopia, Yemen and beyond.”

As the humanitarian crises escalate, CAPSA reiterates the ongoing calls made by organisations such as the Refugee Council of Australia (RCOA) for Australia to expand and increase its Refugee and Humanitarian Program as an immediate priority. In response to the growing number of people displaced around the world, the Government should increase its Humanitarian Program to 30,000 within the next three years.

CAPSA welcomes the Federal Government's announcement that it has issued close to 4,500 visas to people fleeing the conflict in Ukraine. While it is positive that temporary humanitarian visas will allow people to work, study and access Medicare, CAPSA also urges provision of access to welfare support for those who are unable to obtain or maintain employment, along with other specialist support services.

Ms Edwards and Ms Domicelj, along with CAPSA Advisory Group members consisting of peak national Catholic body representatives, call on Minister Alex Hawke, Prime Minister Scott Morrison and the broader Federal Government to act urgently and equitably to scale-up Australia's support for those seeking safety from the impacts of violence, conflict and persecution.

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