



CHURCH OF ENGLAND ACCUSED OF PROFITING FROM ARMS DEALERS

Christians have expressed their dismay that the Church of England is continuing to profit from arms dealers.

The annual Land Warfare Conference takes place at Church House Westminster today and tomorrow. The venue is owned by the CofE and houses many of the Church's offices, as well as a conference centre.

"We think that taking money from weapons manufacturers is the opposite of Jesus' message of peace and nonviolence", said Oliver Robertson from the Fellowship of Reconciliation. "While we recognise the humanity of each and every arms dealer, their profession has no place in a house of prayer."

The conference, run by the Royal United Services Institute (RUSI) and sponsored by several arms companies, has been the subject of protests since 2012. Staff at Church House Westminster have disputed that they are taking money from arms dealers, and insisting that RUSI is an independent think-tank. They have also denied that they support arms sales by permitting the conference.

However, campaigners have rejected the assertions of independence. "These conferences are reliant on sponsorship. Sponsorship is not neutral", said Christian author Symon Hill. "Furthermore, the idea that Church House Westminster is separate from the Church of England is a legal technicality. It is a wholly owned subsidiary business of the Church House Corporation, whose President is the Archbishop of Canterbury."

This year the conference is sponsored by DXC and L3, which make military software, and the military manufacturing wing of Airbus. The Church of England's ethical investment policy prohibits investment in companies whose profits from arms are £3bn or 8% of their annual income, whichever is lower. Campaigners say that hosting events sponsored by arms companies is a breach of this policy.

"Church House Westminster, and by extension the Church of England, must not profit from weapons sales", said Emma Anthony from the Fellowship of Reconciliation. "In addition, by hosting an event sponsored by arms dealers, the Church gives its blessing to an industry which exists to destroy life. St Paul's Cathedral have publicly said they will not host arms-sponsored events; Church House Westminster should do the same."

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Notes for editors

1. Church House Westminster is owned by the Corporation of Church House and donates all taxable profits to the Corporation. The Corporation's charitable aims are 'to own and maintain Church House for the use of the national institutions of the Church of England'.
2. The Fellowship of Reconciliation is an ecumenical Christian peace charity, founded in 1914.
3. This year's Land Warfare Conference, taking place on 27-28 June, is run by the Royal United Services Institute and is sponsored by DXC, L3 and Airbus Defence & Space. In previous years, sponsors of RUSI conferences held at Church House Westminster have included BAE Systems, Lockheed Martin, Raytheon and General Atomics.
4. For further information or interviews, please contact Emma Anthony 07533 541525 or visit www.for.org.uk/churchhouse