



Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns

NewsNotes

A bi-monthly newsletter of information on international justice and peace issues

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Take action to end child marriage

Earlier this year, when the 113th Congress passed the Violence Against Women Reauthorization Act of 2013, they included important language (PL 113-4, Sec. 1207) that requires the Secretary of State to establish and implement a multi-year, multi-sectoral strategy that includes both diplomatic and programmatic initiatives to prevent child marriage and empower girls globally. The following account about child marriage is the kind of story that is repeated around the world.

Herlinda was a brilliant young woman from the village of Naranjal, in the Petén region of Guatemala. At age 14 Herlinda could read and write because her older sister Rosa demanded that Herlinda go to school after Rosa was married off at age 14 without any formal education. Herlinda was active in the church choir where she became close friends with Carlos – he was sweet on Herlinda and wanted to marry her. But Herlinda's family had other plans; they had made an agreement with another man for her to enter into an arranged marriage. Out of obedience to her father, Herlinda married. From the day she moved into her husband's family's house, Herlinda seemed to lose her enthusiasm for life.

A year after she was married she gave birth to her son in her in-laws' house. Immediately after the birth, Herlinda became extremely anemic. Unfortunately for her it was the muddiest season of the year and the roads leading to Naranjal were so treacherous that no vehicles could enter. At the time, her husband and father-in-law did not opt to use their horse to transport her three miles to get to a point in the road where a car could take her to the hospital; Herlinda died at home.

Although Herlinda's death occurred more than 15 years ago, the quality of life for women in the Petén and for rural women globally has not significantly improved. This story highlights the gaps in infrastructure: Roads and health care – especially for women – are deficient in rural areas around the world. It also points to how child marriages deprive women of education and personal development while creating even more high-risk pregnancy situations.

Child marriage underlies many of the enormous development challenges that both the U.S. government and many Maryknoll missionaries work to address globally.

Photo of Guatemalan mother and child by Eric Wheater

Every year, 14 million girls in poorer countries are deprived of their human rights through child marriage. It curtails their education and employment opportunities, increases the risk of maternal and infant death, and dramatically increases their risk of suffering from gender-based violence. Child marriage harms not only girls but all of us. By denying girls their basic rights, child marriage holds back entire countries – and by extension the whole world – from reaching our shared goals of ending poverty, hunger and disease.

The Bible teaches us to care for the orphan, the widow and the stranger. Our traditions tell us we have a moral obligation to protect the most vulnerable in society. As long as the practice of child marriage continues to exist, we have failed in this duty.

While Congress must be thanked and congratulated for taking action on this important issue, as the FY2014 State and Foreign Operations appropriations process continues, it is important to remind Congress to appropriate the funds necessary to establish and implement the programs that will make a difference in girls' lives.

The United States has both a responsibility, and a vested interest, in supporting countries and communities in their efforts to end child marriage. Girls everywhere deserve the opportunity to be empowered, educated, healthy and safe.

Faith in action:

Write to your representative and senators and ask that they take another important step toward realizing a world free from child marriage by providing full and robust funding to support implementation of the U.S. strategy to end child marriage authorized in VAWA. §



Guatemala: Indigenous people's human rights

Earlier this year, as the trial of former president and army general José Efraín Ríos Montt spun into chaos, Armstrong Wiggins, the director of the Washington, D.C. Indian Law Resource Center (ILRC) and a Miskito Indian leader, wrote to newly appointed Secretary of State John Kerry. On behalf of the ILRC, Wiggins urged Kerry to raise awareness and to hold the state of Guatemala accountable for unjust actions against indigenous nations with a focus on the tremendous struggles indigenous Maya, Xinka, and Garifuna people in Guatemala currently face.

Secretary Kerry's awareness of the situation of indigenous peoples dates back to the 1980s when, as a senator, he worked to gain bipartisan support for the human rights of indigenous peoples at a time of extreme conflict in Central America. As was true then, the Maya people represent a majority of the population in Guatemala, consisting of 22 different indigenous nations; but the political, economic and social landscape of the country continues to be governed by a minority. Wiggins refers to this as "a de facto apartheid in our own hemisphere."

The fact that a majority of people living in Guatemala are not politically represented by their government has led to grave human rights violations, especially with respect to natural resources, most of which are located in indigenous peoples' lands and territories. Wiggins reminds Kerry of his own words: "Values are not just words, values are what we live by. They're about the causes that we champion and the people we fight for." He petitions the U.S. to "demonstrate once again that it is an international human rights leader and to make clear, through bipartisan action, that it will not tolerate any state's continued human rights violations. These violations are not only affecting whole communities, but they are threats to regional stability, democracy, and the rule of law."

Due to a controversial decision to throw out the case in May, the fate of Ríos Montt remains on hold until April 2014. With the hopes for justice for millions of indigenous peoples in Guatemala ripped away and in response to this social and political instability, the administration of President Otto Pérez Molina has systematically increased militarization. Throughout Guatemala mostly indigenous human rights defenders who raise concerns about development projects and unjust legislative reforms are being killed, criminalized, and persistently threatened. Wiggins puts names and faces

on these occurrences, identifying five prominent leaders killed this year, as well as four kidnapped, three threatened, and others who were wrongfully jailed, and illegally detained after peaceful protests.

Evictions from indigenous lands are common throughout Guatemala – most of these are linked to oil and mining concessions, palm oil plantations, and other energy development projects. As of April 2013 22 evictions were approved from the area of Livingston alone, potentially impacting both Q'eqchi' and Garifuna peoples. "Communities across Guatemala such as San Rafael Las Flores, Santa Rosa; Santa Cruz Barillas, Huehuetenango; Nebaj, Quiche; Santa María Xelapan, Jutiapa; El Estor, Izabal; San Miguel Ixtahuacan, San Marcos; San Juan Sacatepéquez, Guatemala; Livingston, Izabal and others have requested that the State comply with its domestic and international human rights obligations as it relates to their rights to land, territory, a clean environment, and natural resources."

Many of these evictions stem from the lack of recognition and protection of indigenous peoples' collective rights to hold land while the government pursues an expansion of natural resource extraction and development projects. Ignoring indigenous land rights, the Ministry of Energy and Mines (MEM) granted 276 exploitation licenses, 111 exploration licenses, 734 pending licenses, and most recently seven exploration licenses without consulting the affected indigenous peoples. What is deeply disturbing from a human rights perspective is that all of this expansion resulted in further violence and the criminalization of indigenous and other leaders when they raise their voices in protest.

In their letter, the ILRC makes clear to Secretary Kerry that indigenous peoples are not against development, but are opposed to the continued "disregard of their self-determination in decision making processes over their lands, territories and natural resources. Even though much of the remaining natural resources are on their lands, they are not consulted on processes specific to development projects in their lands and territories, not considered rights holders or development partners."

The ILRC makes several recommendations for existing policy objectives to guide U.S. State Department policy and actions. First, to encourage respect for human rights and the rule of law through continued support of the International Commission Against Impunity (CICIG). This commission prosecutes war criminals, organized crime, drug traffickers, and works to ensure respect for the rule of law in Guatemala.

Secondly, the State Department should continue to support the institutionalization of democracy and implementation of the peace accords. Next, though business is important, it should not be conducted at the expense of human rights. In all of its trade relations and development programs, the U.S. should respect indigenous peoples' self-determination and self-government, including their rights to their ancestral lands, territories, and natural resources. Companies must abide by Guatemala's domestic and international human rights obligations, including those found within the ILO Convention 169 and the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.

Finally, regarding international security, the region of Central America is seen as politically unstable due in large part to the presence of narcotics traffickers, gangs,

organized crime, transnational crime and other factors. "Though there is growing instability—especially in border departments like San Marcos and Petén—this cannot and should not be the basis and/or pretext for increasing military presence." Among other recommendations, the Center highlights that Department of Defense military assistance for counternarcotic programs require the imposition of human rights; and that the U.S. support Guatemala in its effort for sustained democratic reform, including the promotion of exchanges with Indian tribes and nations in the U.S. who can facilitate through their own institutions and practices a real alternative for democratic and economic development.

Read the entire letter at: <http://indianlaw.org/content/center-calls-us-secretary-state-help#economic>. §

Brazil: Rousseff avoids media-led coup

The following is written by Dave Kane, who works for the Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns from his home in João Pessoa, Brazil.

Every year around this time, students across Brazil hold marches against announced bus fare increases. Usually it is hundreds or even a few thousand students closing down major streets for a few hours and then going home with no other real effect. But this year, for a variety of reasons, the marches "caught on" and grew in size and number in every state. While it was progressive organizations like the Free Pass Movement (MPL) that organized the marches, this year, with complaints about public services, as the protests grew in size, conservative forces tried to take control of the marches to make them appear to be a generalized clamor against President Dilma Rousseff. By reacting quickly to the protestors, the president was able to regain control of the political agenda.

The first protests were on June 6 in São Paulo, Rio de Janeiro and a few other major cities and followed the usual routine with about 5,000 protestors in São Paulo, the largest Brazilian city. But follow up marches found more and more people adhering. As is also traditional, the major TV stations covered the marches minimally, portraying them as acts of vandalism and encouraging the police to repress the marchers to help keep traffic flowing. They focused exclusively on the handful of protestors throwing rocks, while ignoring the masses of peaceful demonstrators.

Many point to the excessively violent response from the police during the fourth march in São Paulo

(with an estimated 20,000 people) on June 13 as the act that gave the protestors added legitimacy and incensed enough people so that the fifth march on June 17 included more than 200,000 people and parallel marches proliferated in hundreds of other cities. But there were other reasons for the sudden increase in numbers, as we explain below.

Many Brazilians are increasingly frustrated with the poor quality of their public services. In large cities like São Paulo, workers spend 3-4 hours every day in overcrowded buses and subways, go to public health clinics that have neither doctors nor medicine, and send their children to schools with overwhelmed teachers and scarce resources. At the same time, they hear announcements about the billions of dollars the government is spending to prepare the country to host the World Cup in 2014 and Olympics in 2016 – money that the same government has always said is simply not available to improve health or education. During the first protests, in fact, the mayor of São Paulo and governor of the state of the same name were in Paris competing to become the host for the 2020 World's Fair.

All of these issues and more helped spark the protests. But another less known reality is also behind them: Much evidence exists to suggest that conservative forces are trying to use the protests to weaken President Rousseff and push a conservative agenda.

In many cities, activists have reported similar occurrences. While the initial protests, organized by the MPL, were centered on issues important to low income families (bus fares, public hospitals and schools) and contained many youth in red shirts with flags carrying

emblems from various progressive social movements and political parties, suddenly, beginning around June 17, the marches began to have a different “feel.”

Rather than the hand-written posters used by protestors until then, many of the new demonstrators appeared in the marches with industrially produced posters (paid for by whom?) with demands very different from those of the MPL, such as “no taxes,” “no corruption,” “impeach Dilma.” Some even called for a return to military rule. The chants became more nationalistic, less progressive, the national hymn now regularly sung during the marches.

Members of progressive movements and parties were intimidated. Groups shouting, “The people don’t need political parties” accosted those carrying flags of political parties, and demanded that they take them down, ripping up or burning the flags if they refused. In some cities, new marchers physically attacked activists wearing red shirts for no apparent reason. Vandalism increased while the police began to take a more hands-off attitude; in some instances, they watched while people burned buses, looted stores and destroyed public buildings. In São Paulo and elsewhere, neo-Nazi youth, who many believe were paid to be violent, were some of the most aggressive rioters.

Also beginning on June 17, mainstream TV news stations, especially the dominant *Globo* network, radically reversed their posture toward the protests. Suddenly, instead of being comprised principally of vandals and rioters, the marches were portrayed as predominately peaceful citizens exercising their right to protest with a few bad apples trying to ruin things. Coverage of the marches began to completely dominate *Globo*’s national news hour and other programs, even though the Brazilian soccer team was hosting an international tournament, the Confederations Cup, at the same time, perhaps the first time the national team has been so upstaged.

TV news and opinion announcers expressed their delight at seeing that “The Giant Awoke” (“O Gigante Acordou”), a phrase they repeated frequently. Throughout the day, TV programs were interrupted to show scenes from another city’s protest, making it seem that the government was losing control. Instead of being protests of a handful of rabble-rousers, suddenly the marches were portrayed as clear signs of the public’s growing distaste for President Dilma and her Workers’ Party government. Corruption became the dominant issue for the media instead of public transportation and other services.

Older Brazilians were already familiar with the slogan, “O Gigante Acordou,” for this was the same catchphrase used during the famous “March of the Fam-

ily with God for Liberty” on March 19, 1964 in which demonstrators complained about progressive President João Goulart “communistic programs” and asked the military to take control. The military happily obliged on March 31 with a late night coup, initiating a dictatorship that would last until 1984.

As in 1964, the right in Brazil today is unhappy with a progressive president in office. Despite the fact that both Rousseff and her predecessor Luis Inácio da Silva have high levels of approval and neither has proposed anything nearly as radical as the land reform and expropriation of oil refineries that Goulart planned, conservative forces still struggle to remove her from office. The marches appeared to be a good opportunity to advance their causes.

Yet by responding quickly, Rousseff was able to define what the marches were really about – public services, not impeachment. After an emergency meeting with her ministers on June 21, the president made a public address in which she said she had heard the protestors and would respond quickly to their demands regarding transportation, education and health care as well as have a meeting with leaders of the protests, specifically mentioning students, unions and other progressive organizations.

On June 24, she held a meeting with mayors and governors from all 27 states, at which she announced a number of initiatives to improve public services. For transportation she pledged to lower taxes for buses and trains so as to lower prices and to spend an additional \$50 billion nationally on transportation. To improve access to health care, she announced increased investments and a surge in the number of medical residencies.

More controversially, she announced that Brazil would import thousands of doctors willing to work in rural areas and underprivileged neighborhoods, areas where Brazilian doctors traditionally avoid working. “We will first offer positions to Brazilian doctors. Only after that will we call foreign doctors. But it needs to be clear that the health of our citizens should prevail over whatever other interests,” said the president. For education, she proposed that 100 percent of the royalties and 50 percent of the resources produced by the pre-salt oil fields off the shores of Rio and São Paulo to be applied to education.

In addition to these “wins” on a national level, dozens of cities have reversed bus fare increases or even reduced fares, showing that the marches have been successful from the point of view of the original organizers.

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Latin America: Combating investment tribunals

In response to the dramatically increasing number of lawsuits and claims in international tribunals by European and U.S. multinational companies, ministers and ambassadors from 12 Latin American countries met in Ecuador on April 22 at the “First Ministerial Conference of Latin American States affected by the interests of transnationals” in order to create mechanisms to better defend themselves.

In the final declaration, the countries pledge to support the creation of a regional alternative for settling investor disputes; to develop an International Observatory to investigate the functioning of international arbitration courts; and to create an executive committee to coordinate joint legal actions with international legal teams and design a communications strategy to counter corporate media campaigns by telling the governments’ side of these cases. Ministers from seven attending countries (Ecuador, Bolivia, Cuba, Nicaragua, Dominican Republic, St. Vincent & the Grenadines and Venezuela) signed the final document, while five others (Argentina, Guatemala, El Salvador, Honduras and Mexico, represented only by ambassadors without the mandate to sign) are considering joining the pact. They will also work to bring in other countries to the agreement, specifically mentioning India and South Africa.

The ministers noted that, “The most negative consequences of [our] commitments [to international investment agreements] become evident now, precisely when a number of nations of the South are exploring new ways for development. It is not a coincidence that the need to overcome the obsolete normative trade schemes between the States of the South and the North becomes more urgent now, at a time when most Latin American institutions have reoriented their priorities towards attending the needs of their own peoples, instead of the impositions of the foreign capital.”

In a parallel meeting, dozens of social movements from the 12 countries and beyond met producing their own document in support of the initiative. Parts of that letter follow:

“As social movements and civil society organisations, we consider International Investment Agreements (IIAs) – such as the Bilateral Investment Treaties (BITs) and investment chapters in the Free Trade Agreements (FTAs) and other similar, so called, Association Agreements – to be part of an architecture of impunity [for] transnational corporations (TNCs). As such they undermine peoples’ and nature’s rights, as well as the sover-

ignty and constitutions of nations, democracy and the public interest. These agreements further consolidate the asymmetry of laws that propagate that the rights and power of corporations are protected by ‘hard law’ and are above the rights of peoples and communities. We believe that Nation-states should have not only the obligation but also the full freedom to implement laws and policies in favour of the people and the environment, without the threat of being sued by transnational capital...

“... [W]e propose advancing an alternative legal framework for international economic relations that is based on democratic principles of solidarity and justice, and prioritises the rights of humans and nature over private interests and profits. This framework should include binding obligations for private and public transnational corporations on issues of human rights, as well as economic, labour, social rights, and respect for Mother Nature. It should also guarantee governments’ possibility to enact public policy for the realisation of these rights. In this context, any investment agreement should also include a mechanism for public participation and democratic discussion with representatives of the relevant social sectors. Therefore, we, the undersigned organisations:

“1) Express our solidarity with the people who suffer daily the impacts and consequences of the actions of corporations, either private or public...

“2) Reject the demands of investors and transnational corporations in international tribunals, and particularly the multimillionaire arbitration awards against States; these tribunals that overwhelmingly represent the interests of transnational capital over the interests of people in sued countries. We reiterate our solidarity with the people and countries affected, along with our demand that States annul, denounce and stop signing the various agreements and treaties that unlawfully subjected them to foreign jurisdictions and violate rights.

“3) In the same spirit, we welcome the organisation of the First Ministerial Conference of Latin American States affected by transnational interests... We remain hopeful that this initiative flourishes, especially because of the urgent need to put an end to transnational investments from private or public capital that do not contribute to the well being of people and of nature.

“4) Taking note of the various proposals included in the final declaration of the Conference, we support the creation of an International Observatory on investment disputes, the establishment of the Permanent Conference of Latin American States affected by the interests

of transnational corporations; and the search for global agreements between countries of the South that reinforce the defenses of our people and countries against the actions of transnational corporations. We are committed to contribute timely to these processes with our experience, observations and recommendations...

"5) Taking note that the Declaration refers to the need to create mechanisms for ongoing dialogue with so-

cial movements and organisations. We believe that such mechanisms could be a step conducive to the creation and consolidation of a process of direct participation of the people and movements. We offer the knowledge and experience of our organizations and movements, accumulated over decades of work, to contribute to the task at hand..." §

North Korea: TB patients receive assistance

From April 18-May 4, Maryknoll Society Superior General Fr. Ed Dougherty and Maryknoll Fr. Jerry Hammond joined a small delegation that delivered medical supplies to people in North Korea who suffer from multi-drug resistant tuberculosis. The following article is excerpted from Fr. Hammond's report on their visit.

... With the advent of jet travel, visiting the mission field has become much easier and more common. Even in this regard, North Korea is an exception. While we travel[ed] to the capital city of Pyongyang by air, we had to detour through Beijing to pick up our visas, meaning total travel time to [reach] North Korea was two days. Once you arrive in North Korea, moreover, it takes an entire day to visit each one of our eight treatment centers supported through the Eugene Bell Foundation, where I serve on the executive board. ...

North Korean hospitality also reminds one of the "good old days" before international travel became routine. We are always treated with the greatest courtesy by Ministry of Public Health officials ... Once we have arrived at a treatment center, however, the visit really gets down to business.

The 700 tuberculosis patients who are treated in our program are all suffering from multi-drug resistant TB, and require at least two years of inpatient care. Every day a patient has to take six kinds of medications, including some that cause severe side-effects.

In most circumstances, foreigners are not permitted to reside in North Korea on a permanent basis but are allowed to make visits of two to three weeks. Eugene Bell delegations make two visits per year, one in the spring and one in the fall. As you might imagine, we have to accomplish a lot in a short period of time. Our delegation personally tests

each new patient to confirm his or her diagnosis. Diagnosing new patients has been greatly simplified, thanks to special diagnostic equipment called GeneXperts. Of the four we now have, three were donated by Maryknoll, the Seoul Archdiocese and the Daejeon Diocese. On every trip we also provide each patient a six-month supply of expensive medications for multi-drug resistant TB. On the average, a patient will receive four medication boxes over a two-year period. These boxes, costing about \$1,000 apiece, give a multi-drug resistant TB patient one last chance at recovering from this deadly disease. Treatment also helps prevent the disease from spreading to the patient's family.

The part of the trip I like best is our "graduation ceremonies" for patients who have completed treatment. Usually members on the delegation are asked to place a necklace of cranes (a symbol of long life) around the necks of patients who have completed the program. I am often asked to say a few words of congratulations and encouragement. I get a big smile when I promise to pray for them. I hope you too will remember our patients in your prayers.

So much more ought to be done as the needs are so great. Visiting North Korea reminds one of the passages in the Bible where the sick crowded around Jesus begging to be cured. We do our best to enroll as many as possible, giving priority to those who are most sick. But sadly, due to a chronic shortage of medications, we have to turn many away. Not everyone who receives treatment recovers, despite our best efforts. On each trip my emotions move from sheer joy at seeing some patients improve to deep sadness when I hear of the death of someone I have gotten to know personally. Though sometimes heartbreaking, to be with these dear people in life and death reminds me of what being a Maryknoll missioner is all about. §

Obama's second African safari

President Barack Obama's second safari ("travel" in Swahili) to Africa as head of state – scheduled June 27-July 2 – raises several interesting questions: Who will accompany him and his family to Senegal, Tanzania and South Africa? With whom will Obama meet while in Africa? What issues will be discussed in public and in private? These questions may be a guide to what to look for in the Obama visit. The following piece is written by Maryknoll Fr. Dave Schwinghamer, who served in East Africa; he will join the Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns team in July.

Since his last trip in 2009, the president has articulated a comprehensive policy strategy towards Africa based on a philosophy of mutual partnership. This new strategy can be reduced to a political and economic logarithm that reads: good political institutions + commitment to rule of law = prosperity + stability + less conflict + enduring security. Hardly anyone would be against such bland goals but global partnerships also require respect, mutual understanding and honest dialog based on sensitive listening. Will the presidential travel list contain not only politicians and business men but experts who have knowledge of the cultures of Africa, wide ranging local contacts in African society, and linguistic abilities that will insure Obama hears from a diverse cross-section of the societies with whom he will interact? French, Wolof, Afrikaans and Ki-Swahili speakers could help make this trip more than a political junket. Experts in Islamic affairs who understand the complex nature of the religious tension between Christianity and Islam in Africa would also be good additions to the trip.

As head of state, President Obama will naturally be given the due diplomatic respect he deserves. He will be the guest of various African governments and unavoidably be "captured" by the hospitality of their leaders. Will the charismatic U.S. president with African ancestry be able to break through the normal celebrity bubble that insulates famous "wageni" (visitors) from ever getting in touch with the ordinary people, or will he be limited to the usual official receptions with government leaders at air-conditioned hotels? Who he rubs shoulders with says as much about U.S. "partnership" with Africans as the grand policy statements that the ordinary people, let alone most of the political leaders, will never read.

Unlike the Chinese leader Xi Jinping, who follows a more practical, less idealistic conception of how to relate to Africa, Obama faces a critical challenge. In voicing his support for an authentic, sustainable form

of human development, the United States must learn how to combine a knowledge of the traditional ways of governance that have sustained many African nations during decades of political turmoil and economic downturn with a technological worldview that is essential for success in the globalizing world order of the 21st century. The logarithm posting that development through strong, accountable and democratic political institutions equals social security and political stability must somehow come into dialogue with the grassroots strategies of creative, non-governmental peoples' organizations that have emerged all across the African continent in response to the failure of western-style governments to promote institutions that deliver real benefits to ordinary citizens. To come into contact with these people Obama will have to break through the celebrity bubble that often surrounds visiting heads of state.

The final question to ask about Obama's trip to Africa is what issues will be discussed during his brief stay. No doubt, he will be pressured by business leaders who accompany him to promote the expansion of economic opportunity for U.S. companies and to counter the effects of Chinese investors. Sen. Chris Coons (D-DE), chair of the Senate Foreign Relations Subcommittee on African Affairs, made that clear in March in the report *Embracing Africa's Economic Potential*. The military and national security institutions will want him to stress the importance of Africa's role in helping the U.S. combat terrorism through the expansion of AFRICOM. Will Tanzania be asked to host bases for AFRICOM's activities in the Indian Ocean? Mainland Tanzania is the only land mass which connects the Indian Ocean with Central Africa, one of the richest regions in the world.

But what are the issues that African nations want to discuss? Will the stricter regulation of global financial transactions be on the agenda? Will the devastating effects of the demand for hard drugs and the consequent flow of these drugs through African countries to markets in Europe and the U.S. be up for discussion? And what about the effects of global warming on tropical agriculture? And the push to "invest" in Africa's agricultural land by outside interest? And limits on African immigration?

Let's hope Obama's efforts to build a partnership with Africa is based on sound knowledge about the reality that exists in this continent of one billion people.

See the Advocacy Network for Africa's statement on the president's trip at the Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns' website. §

Recommendations for peace in Great Lakes Region

On June 18, Secretary of State John Kerry appointed former Wisconsin senator Russ Feingold as the U.S. Special Envoy to the Great Lakes region of Africa. The Africa Faith and Justice Network (AFJN) joined other organizations in writing to Feingold soon after his appointment outlining some of the most critical issues he will face as envoy. Excerpts from the letter's recommendations on a regional peace process follow.

Building on the current Kampala-based peace process, which is far too narrow to achieve peace and stability in the east, your appointment and robust support for UN envoy Mary Robinson increase the chances for the establishment of a credible and comprehensive peace process between Congo, Rwanda, and Uganda that addresses the core regional drivers of violence and tension that rebound so negatively on the people of the Congo. Within such a peace process, ... the U.S. can provide carrots and sticks to leverage cooperation among the three neighbors on key issues such as security, natural resources, and refugees.

First, it is important for the U.S. ... to make clear to Rwanda and Uganda that there will be serious consequences for any continuation of past support to armed groups in the DRC, including diplomatic condemnation, budget support or military aid reductions, and/or targeted sanctions. ... [T]he U.S. should help Mrs. Robinson to establish meaningful benchmarks for progress in the peace process, close monitoring of progress and necessary follow-up measures. Additionally, the U.S. should work with regional partners to facilitate the arrest of indicted commanders such as indicted FDLR military commander Sylvestre Mudacumura and LRA leader Joseph Kony. Regional diplomacy will also be important to maintain progress against the LRA.

Second, the U.S. should help create economic incentives for all three countries to seek regional peace and development. An important source of regional tension is the struggle for control of the Congo's natural resources, especially its mineral wealth. Congo's eastern neighbors, particularly Rwanda and Uganda, as well as elites in Congo, have spent years constructing and supporting systems to illegally exploit the Congo's resources. The situation is starting to change for the better as reforms such as the Dodd-Frank legislation on conflict minerals and company initiatives such as Philips' Conflict-Free Tin Initiative make it more difficult and costly for armed groups and criminal networks to profit from the illicit trade, with untraceable conflict minerals tin,

tantalum, and tungsten now selling at one-third the price of traced, tagged minerals. As a result, economic incentives are shifting away from smuggling and the extreme violence that surrounds the resulting mafia economy, though smuggling continues today from eastern Congo into Uganda, Rwanda, and Burundi. More work must be done on gold to sanction smugglers, help build a more formalized trade, and improve governance in the sector. Additional steps should also be taken to aid livelihoods in mining communities. ... [The U.S.] should encourage finalization of a regional agreement for spot checks on mines and trading routes to combat smuggling, the Independent Mineral Chain Auditor. This monitoring will help multinational companies verify that minerals are conflict-free, which will help reopen international markets ... and provide new opportunities for international investment in mineral production.

If there is progress on the benchmarks for the peace process, the U.S. and other donors should also provide, in cooperation with the World Bank and existing regional organizations, assistance in planning for needed regional infrastructure, such as roads and electricity projects.

Third, mutually beneficial regional economic development is severely hampered by the serious governance issues in the eastern DRC. As the peace process advances, the U.S. should strongly support the revised UN Stabilization Program which emphasizes consultation with civil society and strict performance standards for the DRC.

Fourth, the U.S. should seek ways to demonstrate to the regional actors the potential benefits of regional economic integration through a responsible investment initiative. The U.S. should work with the private sector – in particular socially responsible high-tech, metals, and mining companies – as well as the World Bank, the European Union, local and international civil society, and other donors to enable regional actors to begin to jointly examine potential investment opportunities in natural resources, infrastructure, and financial services; to identify policy incentives to investment; and to find solutions to obstacles to responsible investment, including governance issues in Congo. The U.S. should emphasize to Congo's neighbors that the large-scale benefits of regional economic integration depend vitally on an eastern Congo that is secure, stable, peaceful, and effectively governed.

Effective coordination and appropriate aid leveraging are also [key] for progress in the Great Lakes. ...

See the letter in its entirety at AFJN's website. §

Syria: Encountering determined hope

Marie Dennis, co-president of Pax Christi International, wrote the following article.

During a late May visit to the Shatila refugee camp in Beirut, Lebanon, a small Pax Christi International delegation delivered solidarity messages sent to the people of Syria from around the world. The messages represented many hundreds of people who participated in Pax Christi's Bread Is Life: Solidarity Fast for Syria.

The small community center where the Syrian women gathered was opened only a few days before we visited. Staffed mainly by young Syrians forced by threats and unmitigated violence to leave their country, but who still have hope in Syria's future, the community center fills gaps left by humanitarian aid agencies. Called Basmeh & Zeitooneh (Smile & Olive), the center helps newly arriving families find a place to live and provides them with basic necessities, psychological support for children, and connections to essential medical care.

Because the Lebanese government has refused to allow the United Nations to establish and run collective hosting facilities or refugees camps on its soil, thousands of Syrian families have been forced to rent whatever place they can find to shelter their families: apartments, rooms, and, in many cases, garages or makeshift rooms with cardboard walls. We visited many who were living in impossibly crowded conditions.

Syrians are enduring horrific suffering, both inside Syria and in most locations outside the country. According to the United Nations, Lebanon, Jordan, Turkey and Iraq are now hosting over 1.5 million Syrian refugees; 8,000 more are leaving Iraq on a daily basis; and an additional 4.25 million Syrians are displaced internally. The real numbers are probably much higher.

According to the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), some Syrian cities have been almost entirely reduced to rubble, and widespread power disruptions have left countless communities without access to water. Almost a third of all houses across the country have been damaged or destroyed.

OCHA Operations Director John Ging, after a prolonged visit to Syria, repeated a call for the international community to find an urgent political solution to the crisis. It is extremely difficult, for example, for aid agencies to reach Aleppo. Although it is only a short drive from Syria's border with Turkey, aid organizations are forced to travel to Aleppo from Damascus on a road dotted with over 50 government and opposition checkpoints.

According to the OCHA chief Valerie Amos, hu-

manitarian convoys are regularly attacked or shot at, and staff are intimidated or kidnapped. For example, in late March a convoy carrying medical assistance for 80,000 people was hijacked by an armed group on its way from Tartous to Aleppo, and all of the supplies were stolen. And yet, in spite of the threats, humanitarian workers continue their critical work. "I want to pay particular tribute to the work of the Syrian Arab Red Crescent (SARC) volunteers," she said at an April briefing. "They have shown incredible dedication, impartiality and courage since the beginning of the conflict. Many of them do not hesitate to risk their lives every day to bring assistance to people in need, whether they live in government or opposition-controlled areas.... Given its network across the country and its capacity to negotiate access to almost all areas affected, SARC is an invaluable partner for the UN and other humanitarian organizations in Syria."

Syria's government, responsible for protecting the people, is not only failing to do so, but is accused of viciously attacking civilian communities, including with its substantial air force. Between the Assad government, the Free Syrian Army and the many extremist elements increasingly involved in the conflict, few people we met in Lebanon thought that a negotiated solution in the near future was possible. Instead they were predicting a long, bloody war. We heard strong voices speak against any kind of a military intervention, but for consistent, diplomatic, relief and solidarity support from other countries without self-interested geopolitical maneuvering.

At the April briefing, Valerie Amos also said: "As a matter of priority, the Security Council must find ways to reduce the level of violence and stop the bloodshed. Parties must be reminded of their obligation to protect civilians and abide by international humanitarian law. The consequences of violating those rules must be made clear to all. Protection of medical facilities, staff and patients in particular must be ensured at all times. Parties must demilitarize hospitals and ... they must take all precautionary measures to avoid hitting medical facilities or staff." She urged the Security Council to "request the parties to ensure the safe and unimpeded access of aid organizations to those in need in all areas of Syria."

Faith in action:

Urge Secretary of State John Kerry to actively encourage UN Security Council action in support of safe, cross-border corridors into Syria for humanitarian relief and to ensure that all promised U.S. aid for displaced and refugee communities is promptly delivered. §

TTIP: NAFTA takes European holiday

On June 19, the Senate confirmed Michael Froman as the U.S. Trade Representative (USTR). One of Froman's first responsibilities will be the continuation of negotiations between the U.S. and the European Union (EU) on the Trans-Atlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (TTIP) which would include the three countries included in the North American Free Trade Agreement (the U.S., Canada and Mexico) as well as all the countries of the EU, and which would have widespread implications for the global food system. Members of civil society from both regions are raising concerns around food and agricultural provisions in the proposed TTIP that could threaten the safety of our food, our farmers and our planet.

In a letter addressed to both USTR Froman and to EU Trade Commissioner Karel De Gucht, 34 organizations from the EU and United States representing family farmers, consumers, faith, public health, development and environment organizations expressed distress that the proposed TTIP undermines the use of the precautionary principle in setting food safety and public health standards, gives investors power over nations, and has been negotiated almost entirely in secret.

Because the United States signed and ratified the Rio Declaration, it is bound to use the precautionary principle. The U.S.'s application of the law suffers from a lack of political will. The most enthusiastic momentum for the law in the U.S. was displayed in California, where in 2005 the city of San Francisco passed a Precautionary Principle Purchasing ordinance, which requires the city to weigh the environmental and health costs of its \$600 million in annual purchases for everything from cleaning supplies to computers. Though the U.S. has been slow to enact federal laws to enforce the precautionary principle, it is enshrined in EU legislation and the Lisbon Treaty. Organizations in the EU reject any weakening of the use of the precautionary principle, while those in the United States demand that U.S. negotiators not make any proposals that would preclude its use in the future versions of it into U.S. environmental and occupational safety laws.

With regard to food and farming safety, it is believed that negotiators are working on an acceptance of U.S. food safety standards as "equivalent" to EU standards under the TTIP. Such an understanding would ef-

fectively cut off public debate on the prospective move by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) to approve the production and sale of genetically modified salmon in the U.S., despite nearly two million public comments in objection and retailers' stated refusal to sell it in stores. Other than the possible health risks, there are serious concerns about the potential ecological impact if the altered fish should escape in the wild. In spite of public outcry, the new TTIP safety standards would end the debate on other new GMO foods, and compel Europe to sell GMO products.

The writers of the letter raise several other food safety concerns involving meat production, involving the use of drugs and inputs that can cause mad cow disease and erode even more stringent U.S. meat safety requirements.

"There is a growing body of evidence of the harm caused by these and similar food technologies to public health and the environment, as well as their pernicious contributions to corporate concentration in agriculture and the consequent weakening of rural farm economies."

As with other trade agreement negotiations several concerns exist about the inclusion of provisions in the TTIP that would empower investors to sue sovereign nations over rules or conditions that may reduce their expected profits. "We have observed the results of these investor-state disputes resulting from other agreements, many of which are direct challenges to state and national laws designed to protect the environment or public health." Over the past 20 years, these kinds of provisions have whittled away at environmental and labor laws and have hampered countries' abilities to protect vulnerable sectors of their economies.

An uncanny similarity shared with other trade agreements is that the TTIP negotiations are being carried out in secrecy. The mandates of its negotiation do not require the publication of draft negotiating texts and therefore fail to guarantee an informed public debate on the nature of the commitments under the agreement.

Another concern is that the rules of the TTIP could eventually extend to other bilateral and multilateral trade agreements. The letter states: "We will oppose any trade agreement that undermines that process of rebuilding local food systems, whether in our communities or abroad."

See the entire letter and its signatories on the Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns website. §



Peace, human security key to post-2015 agenda

On May 30, the United Nations High-Level Panel on the Post-2015 Development Agenda presented its final report, “A New Global Partnership: Eradicate Poverty and Transform Economies through Sustainable Development.” The report proposes a new global partnership that is universal rather than North/South in orientation and targets inequality and poverty wherever it exists. It emphasizes the importance of achieving gender equity as well as the negative role of conflict and violence on sustainable development. The following piece was prepared by Marie Dennis.

In presenting the report, panel members described the need for linkages among the goals, for data driven monitoring and networks of accountability, for a human development index to replace the gross national product statistic as a measure of a nation’s “health,” and for economic transformation resulting in inclusive growth.

The report states that “freedom from fear, conflict and violence is the most fundamental human right, and the essential foundation for building peaceful and prosperous societies.”

As the High-Level Panel was working on the draft document, civil society organizations – including the Alliance for Peacebuilding, the Global Partnership for the Prevention of Armed Conflict and Saferworld – wrote to the panel:

Supporting change in conflict-affected and fragile states is now the central challenge in international development. Given the need to link conflict prevention and peacebuilding with development in conflict-affected areas – and to prevent violent conflict in all societies – the endorsing organizations jointly urge UN member states, the High-Level Panel, System Task Team on the Post-2015 UN Development Agenda and all other stakeholders involved to include conflict prevention and peacebuilding commitments in the post-2015 development framework.

In welcoming the inclusion of “ensuring stable and peaceful societies” as one of 12 universal goals and national targets proposed by the panel, IKV Pax Christi Netherlands and the Global Partnership for the Prevention of Armed Conflict noted the report’s statement that “conflict must be tackled head-on, even within a universal agenda” and the inclusion of targets to reduce violent deaths and stem external stressors that lead to conflict.

Saferworld also welcomed the report: “This is a monumental step forward for global development thinking, as is the affirmation that such issues are not only

pertinent to a subset of ‘crisis’ contexts – but instead constitute a universal agenda, for all countries.

“The breadth of the framing around these issues amounts to an agenda not only for the absence of violence but also for progress on the range of issues related to inclusive, fair, responsive and accountable state-society relations: *Freedom from fear, conflict and violence is the most fundamental human right, and the essential foundation for building peaceful and prosperous societies. [...] We are calling for a fundamental shift – to recognize peace and good governance as core elements of wellbeing, not optional extras.*”

The two proposed goals that specifically relate to conflict, violence, rule of law and good governance are

Goal 10: Ensure good governance and effective institutions

- 10a. Provide free and universal legal identity, such as birth registrations
- 10b. Ensure people enjoy freedom of speech, association, peaceful protest and access to independent media and information
- 10c. Increase public participation in political processes and civic engagement at all levels
- 10d. Guarantee the public’s right to information and access to government data
- 10e. Reduce bribery and corruption and ensure officials can be held accountable

Goal 11: Ensure peaceful and stable societies

- 11a. Reduce violent deaths by 100,000 by [year] and eliminate all forms of violence against children
- 11b. Ensure justice institutions are accessible, independent, well-resourced and respect due-process rights
- 11c. Stem the external stressors that lead to conflict, including those related to organized crime
- 11d. Enhance the capacity, professionalism and accountability of the security forces, police and judiciary

In addition, according to Saferworld, there are relevant targets proposed to address: violence against women (under Goal 2); issues of equitable access to services including water, sanitation, healthcare, education, and decent jobs (under a number of other goals); issues of environmental degradation (under Goal 9); and illicit financial flows and tax evasion (under Goal 12).

The report highlights different lists of “external stressors” (see 11c. above) at different points, including “the illicit trade in drugs and arms” and “volatile com-

modity prices, international corruption, organized crime and the illicit trade in persons, precious minerals and arms.”

“Crucially,” Saferworld continues, “this is underpinned by a call for indicators of progress to be *disaggregated to ensure no one is left behind and targets should only be considered ‘achieved’ if they are met for*

all relevant income and social groups. In this way ... the post-2015 framework can encourage a focus on the horizontal inequalities between social groups that drive and perpetuate violence in many contexts.”

A special UN General Assembly meeting to discuss and hopefully to find consensus on a post-2015 development agenda will take place in September 2013. §

Arms Trade Treaty: Hope for vulnerable peoples

On June 3 representatives of more than 60 countries signed the historic Arms Trade Treaty (ATT) at the United Nations in New York. At this occasion, UN Secretary General Ban Ki Moon said that the ATT “has opened a door of hope to millions of women, men and children who live in deprivation and fear because of the poorly controlled international arms trade and the proliferation of deadly weapons.”

Every day people are killed by arms that proceed from the uncontrolled market, but on June 3, Secretary General Ban Ki Moon encouraged the arms trading countries to be the first movers of the ATT: “The eyes of the world are watching arms traders, manufacturers and governments, as never before. I call on all governments to bring national legislation and procedures in line with the requirements of the treaty so that it becomes a strong force of security and development for all.”

The overwhelming violence around the world motivated civil society to come together 10 years ago to launch the Control Arms campaign, whose massive education and advocacy led to the successful passage of the ATT. Oxfam’s Anna MacDonald, one of Control Arms’ founders, stated at the signing ceremony that the campaign was created because “the arms trade is out of control and ordinary people around the world are suffering at the rate of one death every minute, with millions more forced from their homes, suffering abuse and impoverishment.” In order to end this violence, civil society and government representatives worked together to negotiate a treaty that could end atrocities perpetrated through illegal arms trade.

As he signed, Alistair Burt, Parliamentary Under Secretary of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office of the United Kingdom, said: “With the cooperation of all countries, the ATT will change and save lives. It will promote sustainable development by enabling resources to reach schools, healthcare services, and critical infrastructure rather than being wasted on conflict. It will

reduce human suffering by preventing arms being used in serious violations of human rights and international humanitarian law. The treaty will help combat terrorism and crime by steadily reducing the unfettered proliferation of weapons which threaten the security of countries, their neighbors and the rest of the world.”

In order for change to happen, countries must comply with the stipulations of the treaty and not allow loopholes that will permit smuggled arms to enter or pass through the borders of their countries. Whether bound by the treaty or not, neighboring countries have the moral imperative to prohibit passage of illegal arms because they have the obligation to protect the lives of innocent civilians within and outside their borders. In order to stop violence from propagating, countries need to cooperate with one another in the limiting of arms influx into their regions or countries. Together they will effectively stop the trans-border illegal arms trade.

Hopefully international dialogue will continue after this first phase. Civil society needs to be included in feasible aspects of that dialogue as they are the representatives of those caught in the dilemma. The United Nations has been the undaunted facilitator of actions for peace and in fact has taken the first step to facilitate the implementation phase by launching a multi-donor United Nations Trust Facility Supporting Cooperation on Arms Regulation (UNSCAR).

As people of faith, we are called to work for peace and to care for life. When Cain killed Abel, God asked him, “Cain, where is your brother Abel?” Indeed there was no peace in Cain’s heart. The missing, the injured, raped women and girls, among other victims, all need our voice. We must take a stand with our vulnerable brothers and sisters knowing that we too are vulnerable. Defending our brothers and sisters implies speaking against actions that put their lives in danger. We need to lobby our leaders to stop supplying arms that are destined to kill innocent civilians and by doing so, we will be fulfilling the Gospel mandate. §

Global network for right to food, nutrition

At the June 27-28 Vienna+20 High-Level Conference on Human Rights, the Global Network for the Right to Food and Nutrition (RTFN) was launched with the intent to hold governments accountable for the realization of one of the most violated human rights worldwide: the right to adequate food and nutrition. As a member of the Ecumenical Advocacy Alliance (EAA) and through participation with the U.S. Food Sovereignty Alliance, the Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns (MOGC) is a founding member of RTFN.

The network is a flexible instrument that can bring together human rights activists on food, to link them in their lobby work, to bring their messages forward in a coordinated manner. Strengthening advocacy efforts around food justice has never been more important. Civil society must hold governments accountable for the policies and programs that they put in place, especially those done through public private partnerships. Malcolm Damon, executive director of the Economic Justice Network of the Fellowship of Christian Councils in Southern Africa (FOCCISA), says that governments “need to serve the most vulnerable.”

The new global network has the potential to strengthen work on the ground for the right to food undertaken by so many people around the world. The RTFN’s call to action states: “All human beings, without discrimination, are entitled to enjoy the full realization of the human right to adequate food and nutrition.

This right guarantees people’s informed participation in the decision making and elaboration of public policies assuring an economically, politically, socially, and ecologically sustainable supply of adequate and nutritious food within the frameworks of food and of people’s sovereignty.”

As Olivier De Schutter, the UN Special Rapporteur on the right to adequate food, has stated: “The right to food is not a symbol: it’s a tool.” It is important that those most affected by hunger and malnutrition shape food polices. The network is all about creating avenues to allow those living in poverty to find ways to hold governments accountable.

The MOGC believes along with others in the EAA that food justice advocacy must be based on the right to food to effectively address the causes of hunger and enable and empower those most vulnerable to have access to the resources they need – from natural resources such as land, water and seeds to access to markets – to feed themselves rather than rely on aid.

From a U.S. advocacy perspective it is extremely important to be linked with others around the world so that we can work together to promote economically and ecologically sustainable ways of producing food globally. The RTFN enables us to join with others in ensuring that decision makers put the needs of the most resource poor people first when launching food, agricultural and nutrition programs.

The MOGC participated on the editorial board for this year’s Right to Food and Nutrition Watch which will focus on how international policy, at times, has stalled the realization of the right to food, with a special emphasis on public private partnerships, and the negative ecological impact of agricultural development.

Human rights based advocacy is critical to the Catholic call to promote and protect the God-given human dignity of all people. Food and nutrition are fundamental human needs that are quite impossible to fulfill without utter respect for the earth that sustains us.

For more information see:
<http://www.rtn-watch.org/>. §

Photo of Bolivian food vendor by Judy Coode



Faith-based principles on extractive industries

The Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns is a member of the Extractive Industries Working Group, a coalition of faith, human rights, and environmental organizations concerned about the negative impact of extractive industries on the human and natural world. In June the group published the following principles related to extractive industries. The statement is open for organizational sign-on; contact Susan Thompson, susanstarrthompson@juno.com, to endorse.

As people of faith, working in the United States and abroad, we witness and support communities devastated by the irregularities of extractive ventures such as oil extraction, mining, and logging. We have seen that ill-conceived and poorly managed projects can bring conflict, damage human health, displace people from their homes and lands, pollute the environment, and feed corruption. Expanded exploration by extractive companies has weakened local economies, hindered development and curbed human rights, in the United States but even more so in Latin America, Africa, and Asia.

Our shared faith traditions call us to respect and defend all God's Creation and to stand in solidarity with communities and workers who face possible displacement, loss of livelihoods and threats to their safety. These faithful efforts ensure the wellbeing of all, but especially the protection of society's most vulnerable.

Some extractive corporations adopt policies that promote greater consultation with communities or consider more careful practices that do the least harm. Some companies have also joined and implemented a few positive initiatives such as: The United Nations Global Compact, Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative (EITI), Global Reporting Initiative (GRI), and Voluntary Principles on Security and Human Rights. However, much more must be done.

All governments, corporations, and financial institutions must consult impacted communities, including faith and civil society leaders, to reach joint agreement among all parties. Governments, international financial institutions, and corporations must also uphold standards of transparency and public accountability and governments must have environmental, financial, and judicial mechanisms to protect communities from harmful extractive projects.

We are committed to a reduction of the exploitation of God's Creation but when these practices occur natural resource wealth should be used to improve the lives of those living in the local communities where the

project takes place.

We encourage governments, international financial institutions, and corporations to stand firm in commitment with the following principles that will provide a better relationship with workers, citizens, and communities as well as ensure that the environment, human life and rights are respected.

We recommend those involved in the extractive industries adhere to the following principles:

1. Commitment to human rights and environmental justice

In compliance with the UN Declaration of Human Rights, extractive industries should respect and support the dignity of the human person, including the right to safeguard the global commons and sustainably develop natural resources.

Extractive industries should respect the rights of dissenting individuals and organizations to express their dissent through the use of protest, negotiation, and other nonviolent means.

2. Transparency and accountability

Policies and decisions about extractive industries should be transparent and should involve the meaningful participation of the most vulnerable stakeholders.

Extractive industries must advance the common good and be evaluated in the light of their impact on the environment as well as those who are most vulnerable such as: women, indigenous persons, and people who are impoverished.

Extractive industries should employ workers from the local community and help fund its social, education, and development projects to enhance the local and national economies and to ensure sustained growth.

Extractive industries should respect the role of legitimate governments, in collaboration with civil society, working together to set policies regarding the development and welfare of people and the natural world. In order to ensure restorative justice for affected families and communities, an independent third party must help resolve the grievances.

3. Conclusion

Local communities have a right to be consulted and heard in all natural resource exploration and development in their region. Therefore, extractive industries must adopt policies that mandate that they obtain comprehensive local community consent, Free Prior and Informed Consent (FPIC), before beginning any industry projects. This consultation includes communities' rights to reject projects. §

Immigration: Senate passes flawed bill

On June 27, the U.S. Senate passed S. 744, the Border Security, Economic Opportunity, and Immigration Modernization Act. In this highly polarized Congress, it is worth acknowledging that a bill that provides assistance for undocumented immigrants has progressed at all; however, S. 744 was crafted with tremendously painful compromises, particularly in regards to the militarization of the U.S.-Mexico border.

According to the Interfaith Immigration Coalition, S. 744 “includes provisions that would create a 13-year path to citizenship for undocumented individuals who entered the U.S. before January 1, 2012 and meet other eligibility criteria. The bill would put in place a stay-of-removal so that qualified individuals are not deported before implementation begins. Individuals who qualify for the pathway to citizenship could include their spouse and children (under 21) in their application, so that families can go through this process together. ... DREAMers – in this bill, individuals of any age who entered the U.S. before they turned 16 – and agricultural workers would also have a shortened pathway to citizenship.

“However, ... citizenship would be contingent upon border and interior enforcement ‘triggers.’ Within six months of enactment, the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) would have to submit border security plans to achieve 90 percent effectiveness in apprehensions and returns through additional fencing, surveillance, technology and personnel. ... DHS must then certify that these plans have been implemented, additional border fencing is constructed, 20,000 additional border patrol officers are hired, an employment verification system is being used by all employers, and an electronic entry/exit system is fully operational ...”

“This bill would improve the lives of refugees and asylum seekers and make much needed improvements to the asylum and refugee systems. It would also reunite many immigrant families by clearing visa backlogs, recapturing unused visas, and categorizing spouses and children of green card holders as ‘immediate relatives.’ However, the bill would eliminate, 18 months after enactment, the ability for U.S. citizens to sponsor their brothers, sisters, and children who are married and over the age of 31. The bill would also militarize the border with officers, fencing, technological machinery, and the National Guard, and spend additional billions on border and interior enforcement.”

The American Friends Service Committee (AFSC, the Quakers) released a statement on June 27 in response

to the bill: “While the bill creates a narrow path to citizenship for some and makes modest progress on some worker rights issues, it not only reproduces but dramatically expands upon many of the current failed immigration policies, making it a far cry from the just and humane reforms that immigrant communities, faith, labor, and advocacy groups have been calling for.

“The Senate bill ... would not end the current cruel, costly, and inefficient system of detention and deportation, and it provides for astounding investments in the border militarization industrial complex—meaning billions for defense contractors and continuing crises for people on both sides of the border,’ said Adriana Jasso of AFSC’s San Diego program.

“The path to legalization is much narrower than people are making it out to be. It is indeed a precarious path to legalization that will leave many people behind,’ said Pedro Sosa of AFSC’s Portland, OR, immigrant rights program. ‘In fact, many commonplace situations—such as a period greater than 60 days of unemployment during the 10-year provisional period—will make an immigrant ineligible for legal permanent residency.

“Making the highly flawed E-Verify system a requirement for all employers is only a recipe for further exploitation and marginalization of immigrant workers and people of color,’ he said.

“Jasso noted that the bill’s original provisions for border militarization and other enforcement programs were ‘already excessive. And despite hearing directly from these communities about the impacts of living in an area dominated by militarization, the Senate doubled down on these measures, failing to consider the humane, meaningful, and effective reforms that are so desperately needed.’”

The House of Representatives is expected to pick up the bill after the early July recess. The Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns agrees with AFSC’s principles for compassionate, effective immigration reform:

- Develop humane economic policies to reduce forced migration.
- Protect the labor rights of all workers.
- Develop a quick path to legal permanent residency and a clear path to citizenship.
- Respect the civil and human rights of immigrants.
- Demilitarize the U.S.-Mexico border.
- Make family reunification a top priority.
- Ensure that immigrants and refugees have access to services. §

Investors call for reforms in apparel supply chains

In light of a series of calamities in Bangladeshi apparel manufacturing plants that resulted in an overwhelming loss of life, over 200 institutional investors (including the Maryknoll Sisters and the Maryknoll Fathers and Brothers), representing over \$2 trillion in assets under management, issued a statement on May 16, calling on apparel industry leaders to implement systemic reforms that will ensure worker safety and welfare, and to adopt “zero tolerance” policies on global supply chain issues.

The statement was drafted by the Interfaith Center on Corporate Responsibility (ICCR) along with Boston Common Asset Management, Domini Social Investments, the Oblates of Mary Immaculate and Trillium Asset Management. It was sent to U.S. apparel manufacturers and retailers that ICCR has engaged on supply chain issues for many years.

The statement notes that the current model of apparel manufacturing “which assures global customers will have a ready supply of inexpensive and up-to-the-minute fashion, incentivizes corruption and lax oversight as low-cost producing nations compete in a race to the bottom for garment manufacturing contracts. Local governments can turn a blind eye to audit irregularities in an attempt to attract investment to their struggling economies. Global companies have seen their valuable brands put at risk by a shell game that makes oversight near-impossible, as local suppliers move manufacturing to unsafe factories without their clients’ knowledge. Caught in the middle are poor and largely unskilled factory workers with no recourse but to risk their lives by continuing to report for work every day in factories they know to be hazardous, only to earn a wage considered indecent by any international standard. Clearly, the current model is broken.

“We call on brands and retailers to collectively pledge to implement the internationally recognized core labor standards of the International Labor Organization. Further, we expect companies to acknowledge their human rights responsibilities as delineated in the ‘protect, respect and remedy’ framework of the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights. These principles affirm the duty of governments to protect the human rights of their citizenry and the responsibility of companies to respect human rights regardless of where they do business, and further, to provide remedy in the case of human rights abuse.”



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In response to the Bangladesh tragedies, five U.S. and Canadian apparel and retail trade associations announced a “Safer Factories Initiative” that would not require a legal standard but would take a flexible approach “to address a broad array of worker safety issues” and that would enable “brands and retailers to respond swiftly and effectively to an ever-changing environment.”

This approach is not satisfactory to ICCR or to the other organizations that signed the May 16 statement. On June 6, the same organizations publicly called on apparel brands and retailers to endorse the Accord on Fire and Building Safety in Bangladesh.

The Accord, which was developed in 2012, focuses on expanding workers’ rights and building safety standards. It represents a multi-stakeholder approach to

resolving worker safety issues and includes the participation of both unions and civil society organizations advocating on behalf of workers. Over 40 global

brands and retailers, such as PVH (parent company of Calvin Klein and Tommy Hilfiger), H&M and Abercrombie & Fitch have already adopted and begun work on the Accord.

Acknowledging the urgent need to implement legally binding and internationally accepted protocols to protect apparel workers in Bangladesh, the investor coalition believes the Accord offers the best path forward. They are concerned that the Safer Factory Initiative: “1) Could divide the industry and dilute the impact of a systemic solution that puts worker safety first; 2) Appears to be voluntary and may not be legally enforceable; 3) Lacks adequate representation by unions and civil society that is necessary to ensure worker safety and worker rights; 4) Does not compel companies to fully disclose all suppliers throughout their supply chains.”

The investor coalition calls on “all apparel brands and retailers to join together quickly to find solutions that will prevent catastrophes … from recurring. This new North American initiative will take time to develop while the Accord is already in place. The onus rests with the members of this new initiative to provide compelling justification for not signing the Accord, which commands strong international support from global companies, civil society and the International Labor Organization. We urge all companies to adopt the Accord and work towards a common framework for the industry.” §

Resources

- 1) **All Creation Reveals the Glory of God:** This 36-page photo-reflection book is designed to encourage meditation on our relationship to creation, and the nourishment offered by its beauty and simplicity. It features stunning photographs taken mostly at the novitiate of the Missionary Oblates of Mary Immaculate (OMI) in Godfrey IL. It also includes quotes from Catholic tradition as well as from well-known ecologists. To purchase, contact the OMI Justice-Peace-Integrity of Creation for \$10, plus \$2 to cover shipping: 202-529-4505. Or send payment to La Vista Ecological Learning Center, 4300 Levis Lane, Godfrey IL, 62035.
- 2) **Good News People:** This new program from Just-Faith Ministries is an engaging small group, parish-based program inviting people to new ways of understanding their faith, themselves and the needs of the world around them. The intent is to familiarize participants with the Biblical witness of Jesus, awaken the call to discipleship that resounds within each participant and explore the richness of the Catholic faith in the ultimate hope of inspiring new passion for and engagement in the Church's mission. GoodNewsPeople is a 14-session program (seven sessions in the fall and seven sessions in the spring) designed for small groups (10 groups of 10 participants). Learn more at www.goodnewspeople-jfm.org or call 502-429-0865.
- 3) **Resources Magazine:** Published by Resources for the Future (RFF), a nonprofit organization that conducts independent research on environmental, energy, natural resource and environmental health issues. The magazine highlights feature stories by RFF experts on a variety of environmental, energy, and natural resource issues, and news about ongoing research and public outreach efforts; it is available to individuals and institutions for free. To request a print subscription, please complete the online form (www.rff.org) or contact RFF at 202-328-5000. A subscription for the Resources app is available for \$0.99 per year; it allows users to access the latest research, analysis, and insight on the environment and the economy, as well as special digital features.
- 4) **The New Materialism - How our relationship with the material world can change for the better:** In this 36-page PDF pamphlet, Andrew Simms and Ruth Potts write about "the new materialism" which has been quietly developing for decades. Instead of a "throwaway" society, we know we should move to one in which value is created with more of a "closed-loop" of material use in which we repair, reduce, reuse, and recycle. The New Materialism can advance the transition to an economy that supports, rather than undermines, meaningful and healthy lives for all. Downloadable or ordered from www.thenewmaterialism.org.
- 5) **Melting ice, mending creation: A Catholic approach to climate change:** The 2013 Feast of St. Francis (Oct. 4) program from the Catholic Coalition on Climate Change will highlight the statement of the Pontifical Academy of Science's (PAS) Working Group, *Fate of Mountain Glaciers in the Anthropocene*, and includes an educational kit with discussion guide (in parish, college, and youth editions) along with promotional resources. The program's goals are to understand more fully the reality of climate change; be inspired by Catholic teaching about climate change and the call to respond; deepen awareness that this call is to BOTH care of God's gift of Creation AND care of those most impacted by environmental neglect, including climate change—namely, people who are poor and vulnerable; engage both personally and as a community in concrete ways that respond to the Catholic call to care for Creation; and build leadership for future efforts to integrate Catholic values of environmental stewardship and outreach to people who are poor. Learn more at www.catholicclimatecovenant.org; Catholic Coalition on Climate Change, P.O. Box 60205, Washington, D.C. 20039; (301)920-1442; info@catholicsandclimatechange.org.
- 6) **Delegation to Honduras:** The Marin Interfaith Task Force on the Americas (MITF) is organizing an election monitoring and human rights accompaniment delegation to Honduras in November. Two options: 10 days, Nov. 17-26, \$850 (countryside + elections) or five days, Nov. 22-26, \$450 (elections only). Contact MITF for more information: 415-924-3227, mitf@igc.org, or find the flyer on the MITF website, <http://www.mitfamericas.org/Trips.htm>.