



Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns

NewsNotes

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

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Laudato Si' and the new economy.....3

Nonviolence & Just Peace: Lessons from local level.....4

U.S. elections 2016 and the global common good.....5

Zimbabwe: Possible tipping point.....6

South Sudan: Peacemaking efforts by the Church.....8

Cambodia: Assassination of Kem Ley.....9

Cambodia: The World Bank and human rights.....10

Philippines: Extrajudicial killings.....11

Philippines: Environment and Human Rights.....12

Peru: Indigenous peoples assert land, resource rights.....13

Peru: New president, more mining concerns.....14

Israel/Palestine: Water crisis.....15

Israel/Palestine: Economics and peacemaking.....16

UN: Children and armed conflict.....17

Human Rights: World Bank safeguards fall short.....18

Resources.....19

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Laudato Si' and the new economy

More than 900 people from 42 states and 22 countries met at the CommonBound conference in Buffalo, New York in July. Chloe Schwabe and Dave Kane of the Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns attended.

The CommonBound conference brought together hundreds of forward thinkers to strategize how to build a new economy that is more inclusive, equitable and sustainable. As members of the New Economy Coalition, we all share an understanding that the current global economic system, which produces vast inequalities while destroying Earth's bounty, must change. Many participants are already active in helping to birth a new economy through cooperatives, community-owned energy companies, benefit corporations, non-governmental organizations, churches and much more. We can look to Pope Benedict XVI and Pope Francis to help us understand why such initiatives matter.

Pope Benedict XVI, in his encyclical *Caritas In Veritate*, describes how our current system allows profit-oriented corporations to create inequalities which governments are left to manage. Mammoth corporations, with budgets larger than some small and even medium-sized countries, often exert undue influence on governmental policies and weaken or avoid regulations.

"Space also needs to be created within the market for economic activity carried out by subjects who freely choose to act according to principles other than those of pure profit, without sacrificing the production of economic value in the process," Benedict says. (*Caritas In Veritate*, 37) He is referring to business models like those present in Buffalo: Cooperatives, where workers are the decision-makers of the enterprise; benefit corporations, in which social and environmental objectives are written into the charter; community-owned energy companies that provide sustainable energy in equitable ways; affordable housing and community development organizations, and more.

Churches are especially apt at helping in the construction of a new economy. Perhaps the best known example is the Mondragon experience. Started by Father José María Arizmendiarieta in the Basque region of Spain, a single cooperative established in 1956 has flourished into an impressive collective of cooperatives with 75,000 workers around the world.

At the CommonBound conference, we discussed the role churches can play in the new economy as providers of "co-work spaces" where people working in separate businesses use common office space and materials. By leveraging the assets they have – buildings and office spaces that may sit unused or under-used dur-

ing weekday work hours – churches can support people who work autonomously from home as part of the "gig economy" and may lack community and camaraderie. St. Lydia's Church in Brooklyn, New York, which is affiliated with the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, opened its space for such an endeavor and, besides making the congregation financially viable, has helped form a new supportive community. You can learn more on their website: <http://stlydias.org/co-working/>.

In *Laudato Si'*, Pope Francis highlights communities that are developing locally-controlled, self-sufficient, renewable energy systems. "This simple example shows that, while the existing world order proves powerless to assume its responsibilities, local individuals and groups can make a real difference." (*Laudato Si'*, 179) A report by the Institute for Local Self-Reliance shows that locally-owned renewable energy companies provide almost three times as many jobs as with absentee-owned companies. They also keep money in the local economy, and provide economic benefits more than three times greater than absentee firms. In the U.S. some communities mobilizing to take control of their local energy production and distribution have formed an alliance called "Our Power Communities" to support efforts for locally-owned renewable energy systems.

An area of increasing importance in the new economy is the financing of alternative initiatives. "New forms of cooperation and community organization can be encouraged in order to defend the interests of small producers and preserve local ecosystems from destruction," Pope Francis says. "Truly, much can be done!" (*Laudato Si'*, 180)

To that end, the Vatican recently held its second conference on "impact investing" which uses private, profit-seeking capital to address social justice challenges. The conference explored how charity-based church organizations doing aid and development work can open to investment capital and function more like social enterprises. You can watch videos from the conference at <http://www.viiconference.org/multimedia/>.

Faith in action: Join an email listserv for discussion and action with the Faith, Economy, Ecology, Transformation working group. Go to <http://bit.ly/2cn9mEW> and click "subscribe."

Nonviolence & Just Peace: Lessons from local level

Gerry Lee, director of the Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns, wrote the following reflection for the Nonviolence and Justice Peace Conference in Rome in April.

Serving as a Maryknoll Lay Missioner with my wife and three daughters in a slum on the edge of Caracas, Venezuela, I learned about the power of nonviolent action from the women leaders of the *comunidades de base* of the church of the poor. In our ten years in the *barrios* accompanying these liberation-theology-formed base communities, we witnessed the creativity, courage and resilience of women who are marginalized by the church as well as by society.

Building their tin-and-cardboard shacks as squatters on empty land on the edge of the city, these women laid down in front of the bulldozers and bayonets of the National Guard to defend their poor community when the government tried to dislocate them. They were catechists and spiritual leaders of the community who at the same time were denied the Eucharist by the official church because they were not married in the church, and often single moms abandoned by their husbands.

Our years in Venezuela witnessed the collapse of the ‘safety net’ for the poor and the doubling of extreme poverty in the urban slums as a consequence of neoliberal ‘structural adjustment’ policies. When people rose up in protests in 1989 at the imposition of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) austerity plan, the government sent the military to the slums to kill thousands of civilians who were ‘disappeared’ and buried in secret mass graves.

The base Christian communities then accompanied the families of the disappeared as they sought to find what had become of their husbands, sons and daughters. A conscience-stricken gravedigger led us to one mass grave site on the edge of a pauper’s cemetery called “*La Peste*” where centuries before victims of the Plague were buried. There the communities camped out for months with the families of the disappeared, guarding the site from the government, as we exhumed over 100 victims from the mass grave. While the government and some of the church even denied the existence of the mass grave, over those months we prayed together, laughed, and then cried together as the mothers among us failed to identify their loved one among the 108 bodies in black plastic bags that we pulled out of the earth.

Best estimates are that over 2,000 residents of the *barrios* of Caracas were ‘disappeared’ in March 1989. When the government repression worsened in an effort to stifle protest to the IMF’s austerity measures, the women leaders of our base Christian communities

formed church human rights groups, organized cooperatives and “women’s circles” to counter the impact of “free trade” economics on the poor, and organized politically to eventually democratically elect one of their own, Hugo Chavez, to the presidency.

What did I learn about nonviolent action from these women church leaders of the slums?

First, even without training in nonviolence or an organized political movement, there was among these marginalized and oppressed communities a creativity, courage, and solidarity that became powerful tools for building a nonviolent response to systemic violence.

Second, the Catholic faith can be a powerful source of strength and solidarity even when it is largely unsupported by the institutional church. These women of the *barrios* grew as leaders in their small Christian communities with the accompaniment and support of foreign missionaries such as Maryknoll and the Jesuits, but got almost no recognition or support from the hierarchy.

Third, the strength of the communities waned over time as spontaneous solidarity gave way to changing political currents and division; the lack of institutional support eventually discouraged long term growth.

Fourth, there are opportunities to build Gandhian ‘constructive’ nonviolence efforts taking advantage of the solidarity and strong relational traditions of marginalized communities. At the same time, these communities often make use of ‘obstructive’ nonviolent tactics.

We should invest our energy in building effective educational programs and solidarity efforts with lay leaders of the local church around the world. We also should encourage the Church to teach about just peace and the power of nonviolence.

While an encyclical on just peace would have tremendous teaching value to the faithful, I believe Pope Francis would also have us look away from Rome to many places where lay leaders of the local church, along with religious and clergy, are using effective nonviolence in the face of extreme violence. §

Faith in action: Read and endorse the Nonviolence and Just Peace conference’s final statement, “An appeal to the Catholic church to re-commit to the centrality of nonviolence.” <http://bit.ly/NVJustPeace2016>.

Join the Catholic Nonviolence Initiative webinars starting September 13: <http://bit.ly/CNIwebinar1>.

U.S. elections 2016 and the global common good

The following article raises our concerns for the global common good in the U.S. presidential and congressional elections in 2016.

As the United States approaches the 2016 presidential and congressional elections, Maryknoll missionaries recognize that people around the world are growing more and more interconnected each year. While Maryknoll is based in the U.S., Maryknoll Sisters, Fathers and Brothers and Lay Missioners work in over 30 countries, in Asia, Africa and Latin America. Maryknoll missionaries know that the people we serve embrace the same desires for peace, security, economic prosperity and human dignity that people in the U.S. hold.

Yet in this election season we see our beloved country torn by rhetoric of extremism and partisanship, hatred and division, with political discourse appealing to our basest instincts. In stark contrast to ‘shock politics’ that demonizes opponents and fears the other, Pope Francis reminded Americans in his address to Congress last September: “You are called to defend and preserve the dignity of your fellow citizens in the tireless and demanding pursuit of the common good, for this is the chief aim of all politics.”

Our bishops and many Catholic leaders have called for more civility in our public discourse to promote genuine democracy as we approach the November elections. As the Leadership Conference of Women Religious eloquently reflected: “We cannot let the voices of hatred and fear carry the day. We call for a return to civility in our discourse and decency in our political interaction that promotes the common good, reaches out to others, engages in constructive dialogue, and seeks together the way forward.”

It is our hope that presidential and congressional candidates will clarify their commitment to the global common good, and that voters will scrutinize candidates’ policy proposals through the lens of those who, both in the U.S. and overseas, are affected by poverty, violence, human rights violations, trade policies and ecological destruction.

In upcoming debates and campaign messaging we call on candidates to address the concrete ways they hope to promote sustainable pathways to true security and peace – through cooperative engagement and support for intrinsic human needs: housing, access to healthy food, access to clean water, medical care. We look to our

political leaders to advance U.S. policies that will promote a new economic model that embodies social and ecological values bound by Earth’s limits, a sufficiency-based economy where all people, regardless of gender, race or other characteristics, equitably share access to the gifts of the land that nourish and sustain them.

Pope Francis urges us in his encyclical *Laudato Si’* to respond to “the cry of the earth [and] the cry of the poor” to “protect our common home”. We face today a climate crisis of unprecedented proportions that is contributing to global migration levels never before seen, with over 60 million refugees and displaced persons on the move in a life and death struggle.

At the same time we see a world beset by terrorism and violent conflicts, “a kind of Third World War being fought piecemeal” as Pope Francis has called it. On the other hand, “within this atmosphere of war, like a ray of sunshine piercing the clouds, resound the words of Jesus in the Gospel: ‘Blessed are the peacemakers.’” The Vatican conference on nonviolence in April that Maryknoll, Pax Christi International and other Catholic organizations convened was part of this ‘sunshine.’ It has sparked a new dialogue on nonviolence in the Catholic Church with the aim of transforming a world engulfed by war and challenging the mindset that sees violence as justified or even redemptive.

As if he’s speaking to U.S. voters in this election, Pope Francis reminds us in *Laudato Si’*: “We must regain the conviction that we need one another, that we have a shared responsibility for one another and the world, and that being good and decent are worth it. We have had enough of immorality and the mockery of ethics, goodness, faith and honesty.” (229)

We urge U.S. citizens to exercise the right to vote and help our country advance the common worldwide desire for peace, genuine security and human dignity. Let us leave behind the acrimony and language of fear and violence. Let us make these elections a positive contribution to the better world we all believe is possible. §

Faith in action: Learn more at:

<https://nonviolencejustpeace.net/>.

Follow Catholic Nonviolence Initiative:

<https://www.facebook.com/nonviolencejustpeace/>.



Zimbabwe: Possible tipping point

The following reflection on the growing protest demonstrations in Zimbabwe was written by Maryknoll Sister Janice McLaughlin, former president of the Maryknoll Sisters and longtime missionary in Zimbabwe. You can read more about Sister Janice at <https://maryknollsisters.org/mk-sister/sister-janice-mclaughlin/>.

I returned to Zimbabwe in 2015, after an absence of almost seven years. My initial impression was that much had improved while I was away. I left in 2008, one of the most horrendous years for Zimbabwe. Inflation was the highest in the world. We had one hundred trillion dollar notes that were worthless. There was no fuel and no food in the shops – everything was traded through the black market. One became an expert at finding where to get what one needed and to know how to pay for it, either with U.S. dollars or in a barter deal.

Worst of all in 2008 was the terrifying violence that was carried out after the elections that year when the opposition party made big gains and President Robert Mugabe's ZANU-PF party lost in most parts of the country. Many in the ruling party appeared furious. They retaliated against voters by ordering police to beat, maim, and kill citizens in the hundreds if not thousands. I chaired a group that provided medical aid to the victims of violence and saw with my own eyes the bruised, broken and bloody bodies. It was heart-breaking and terrifying.

When I returned seven years later, the city of Harare seemed quite peaceful and almost as beautiful as I remembered it from years past. The jacaranda trees lining the main streets were in full bloom and people were friendly and welcoming. The shops were full of food and electronic goods. The internet worked smoothly and the youth sported expensive sneakers and cell phones. It was a far cry from the Harare that I left seven years previously.

As time went on, however, I began to see the poverty hidden beneath the outward prosperity. I met former students who had married and were struggling to feed their families because they were without jobs. Unemployment was over 80 percent and many youth left the country in search of work in South Africa, Botswana, or further afield. In fact, the children of most of my friends were living and working abroad – in Australia, Canada, or South Africa. While food in the shops was plentiful, it was imported from South Africa and was very expensive. Local services such as provision of water and electricity were erratic and also expensive. Most of all, I began to sense people's lack of hope for the future.

President Mugabe and most of his senior staff had been in office since Independence, 36 years ago. They showed little sign of willingness to hand over leader-

ship to a younger generation with new ideas. Corruption was endemic. I dreaded running into police road blocks, for instance, since the police inevitably found something wrong and demanded \$20, whether one was guilty of a traffic offense or not. Failure to pay could result in a smashed windscreen or a visit to the local police station.

The next crisis was a lack of currency in the banks. The country had run out of cash and banks were not allowing customers to withdraw more than one hundred dollars from their accounts at a time. Soon the government did not have the funds to pay the salaries of teachers, nurses, and doctors. Even the police and army were being paid a week late. I attended a meeting held by churches with the Governor of the Reserve Bank who tried to explain why the country was bankrupt. "We know and trust you," one of the pastors said in response to the Governor's sincere attempt to explain. "We don't trust your bosses. We know you have no power to end the corruption, restore jobs, and create food security." Another pastor wanted to know if the country would recover any of the \$15 billion that the president has recently announced was missing from the diamond mine revenue. His question was met by laughter and applause.

This meeting reflected the new mood of self-confidence and courage that was emerging across communities. To explain this change, in April, a friend showed me a video on social media by a 39-year old Zimbabwean pastor wearing a Zimbabwean flag draped around his neck. He spoke of the need to overcome fear and to speak out against corruption, unemployment, and economic mismanagement. "This is our country. Only we can save it," he announced. His name was Evan Mawawire and he used the hashtag #ThisFlag. My friend went out that afternoon to buy a flag. I followed her example a day or two later. It was a sign of solidarity with the pastor and others like him who were speaking out against the problems besetting the country.

Very soon, flags were on sale on every street corner. Motorists placed them on their dashboards; people waved them in the streets and wrapped them around their bodies. One of the first protests that was organized was a national shutdown in July. Posts promoting the shutdown on social media read: "No-one should go to work or to vending. No one should go to school. No shop should open. No vehicle should move. No office

should open – It’s our Salvation Day. Let’s shut down everything for a day to save ourselves forever! No one can save us – let us unite and save ourselves peacefully NOW!”

An estimated 90 percent of the population heeded the call. The shutdown coincided with a strike by doctors and nurses who had not been paid and was a huge success. Bus and taxi drivers also organized a protest about the bribes they were forced to pay to the police. Inspired by the success of the “This Flag” movement, other protest movements sprang up. “This Gown” was led by unemployed graduates who wore their caps and gowns while marching to Parliament to draw attention to the lack of jobs for college graduates. Some of them continue to wear their academic gowns daily while selling fruit and vegetables on the streets since vending is the only avenue left to make a living. An activist group of women, Women of Zimbabwe Arise (WOZA), took to the streets with pots and pans to highlight the lack of food to give their children. Catholics, Protestants and Evangelical churches issued a joint statement that echoed the demands of the protestors, calling attention to corruption, unemployment and economic mismanagement. The church leaders continue to meet and plan together how to respond to new developments.

One of the most serious threats to the 92-year old president and his ruling ZANU-PF party, was a statement signed by a large number of veterans of the liberation war. The statement accused President Mugabe of being autocratic and out of touch with the needs of the people. “We note, with concern, shock and dismay,” they stated, “the systematic entrenchment of dictatorial tendencies, personified by the President and his cohorts, which have slowly devoured the values of the liberation struggle in utter disregard of the Constitution....” In a final blow to the President, the war veterans said that they would not campaign for him in the 2018 elections.

Has the country reached a tipping point?

A major difference between protests of the past and the current protests is the fact that they are not being led by political parties. The current protests are coming from ordinary people and a younger generation who are weary of the hardships of daily life and are discovering a new urgency, courage, and strength. This may be a nationwide political awakening.

Pastor Mawawire was arrested in July and charged with inciting public violence. In a rare show of solidarity, thousands gathered outside the courthouse to sing hymns and pray for his release. Nearly one hundred lawyers came to the court and volunteered to defend him. The judge threw out the charges and Mawawire emerged to a sea of candles and cheering supporters.

A few weeks later, several leaders of the veterans group faced the same treatment and also received a show of support from lawyers and the public. After their release, the ruling ZANU-PF party expelled the veterans from the party and from the Association of War Veterans. Unrepentant, they have formed a new political party, vowing to expose the lies that have been told over the years.

Although Pastor Mawawire has left the country after receiving threats against his life, the protest movement he helped to start shows no sign of abating, despite increasing violence by police toward demonstrators and a government ban on protests in the capital, Harare, for the first two weeks of September. New voices are rising up and new actions are being taken to confront the serious economic and political problems facing the country. The calls for President Mugabe to step down are growing louder and are coming from different groups. The most recent is from “The Elders,” a group of prominent African leaders that includes Archbishop Desmond Tutu, former UN Secretary General Kofi Annan, and Graca Machal, widow of South African Presidents Nelson Mandela and



Maryknoll Sister Janice McLaughlin, left, visits a family in Zimbabwe. Photo courtesy of the Maryknoll Sisters.

Samora Machel. The Elders have delivered a petition to SADC, the Southern African Development Community, which will hold its annual assembly in Swaziland in September. A similar petition is to be delivered to the African Union, and other prominent organizations.

Within Zimbabwe, a coalition of opposition parties, now numbering 18, has been holding weekly demonstrations, calling for electoral reform. It is too soon to tell whether the government will succeed in wearing down the voices of dissent and scaring them back into submission. We can only hope and pray that a new beginning is near that will end the suffering and give birth to a renewed hope and the fulfillment of dreams, long deferred. §

South Sudan: Peacemaking efforts by the Church

The following article examines the root causes of the civil war in South Sudan and what is needed to make peace, according to the South Sudan Council of Churches.

A snapshot view of South Sudan would reveal a rather chaotic and hopeless situation. However, according to John Ashworth, an advisor to the South Sudan Council of Churches (SSCC), it is possible to see some progress in the efforts by churches to bring peace to Africa's newest nation. During a recent visit to Washington, D.C. the veteran peace activist related how the Church is responding to the present conflict between warring factions that have driven the country to the brink of dissolution.

In 2013, when fighting broke out in the capitol of Juba, all sides in the conflict turned to "the Church" – meaning the Catholic Church and all of South Sudan's Christian denominations – for help. According to Ashworth, no other institutions have the influence and moral authority that the South Sudanese churches possess. The Church has historically played a significant role in peace making in South Sudan. This includes the People to People Peace Process, the Entebbe Process which shadowed the Intergovernmental Authority on Development negotiations in Naivasha, the paper "Let My People Choose" which puts the right to self-determination at the center of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement, and the advocacy to bring about the referendum which eventually led to the creation of South Sudan.

By June 2015, after nearly a year and half of preparatory meetings, the SSCC met in Rwanda and issued a "Statement of Intent" that contains an examination of conscience over the Church's own role in the conflict and a commitment to follow the path of forgiveness through restorative justice. The 25 religious leaders of SSCC considered their prophetic role as denouncers of wickedness and evil and proclaimers of peace and reconciliation. They denounced war as senseless and argued that peace must have priority over pride, power and politics and went so far as to condemn negotiations for positions of power while people were being killed.

In clear and blunt language, the religious leaders laid out a searing analysis of the root causes of the current civil war. They include a power struggle between leaders and their hangers-on which has swept youth and ethnic communities into cycles of revenge killing; economic collapse; the destruction of national assets; human rights abuses that go unpunished; and the increasing militarization of society

The Statement of Intent names four pillars for the path to peace:

Advocacy: "Starting in South Sudan and reaching out to the region, the rest of Africa and beyond, we will embark on a process of advocacy." In addition to reaching out to key regional leaders, members will also engage with the international community. Locally, they will advocate for a change in the narrative about violence as well as the narrative around tribal identity and tribalism, the historical narrative, and the issue of hate speech.

Neutral forum: "We will find ways to bring stakeholders together in a less politically-charged atmosphere and to build bridges between them to overcome mistrust and disagreements." They propose a series of forums for South Sudanese governmental and religious leaders

to meet without outside interference. The goal would be to build trust and find solutions to the conflicts. These forums would take place on three levels: senior politicians, Sudanese women, and among military leaders.

Reconciliation: "We will spearhead reconciliation, where necessary incorporating existing mechanisms so as not to lose what has already begun on the ground." This process will be based on the principle that reconciliation cannot be imposed. Local groups will be asked whether they want reconciliation and justice and what justice means in their context. Similar processes will then take place at the county and national level.

Hope and forgiveness: "We ask forgiveness for anything we may have done to divide our nation, and for all the times we have failed to speak and act in love to heal our nation." During his Washington visit Ashworth indicated that the crisis in South Sudan may be mentioned in the forthcoming World Day of Peace message by Pope Francis. He suggested that Catholics in the U.S. ask Church leadership to reach out to the South Sudanese diaspora and urge them to promote the peace agenda. Citizens could lobby the U.S. government to use its influence with the Ukraine to stop providing weapons to South Sudan. §

Faith in action: Read and share the "Statement of Intent" by the South Sudan Council of Churches at <http://bit.ly/SSCCStatementofIntent>.



Cambodia: Assassination of Kem Ley

The following reflection on the assassination of Kem Ley in Phnom Penh on July 10 was written by Charles McCarthy, a Maryknoll Lay Missioner in Cambodia.

Cambodians continue to grieve the death of Kem Ley, one of the country's most prominent political commentators and an outspoken critic of the government. Kem Ley was shot dead while drinking coffee outside of a gas station in Phnom Penh on July 10. The assassination of this 46-year-old father of four and popular pro-democracy voice is the latest and by far most shocking in a string of crackdowns on critics of Prime Minister Hun Sen in the lead-up to the country's 2018 elections.

A few days before his death, Kem Ley spoke on Radio Free Asia about a report by Global Witness which describes how the prime minister and his family control a range of businesses worth more than \$200 million for their own interests and put the country in an "economic stranglehold." Some Cambodians have described Ley as a "national hero."

Kem Ley was a champion of free speech in a country where that right, at times, seems to exist only on paper as an article in the Constitution. Indeed, the same week of Ley's funeral, I read in a Cambodian newspaper that a court in Cambodia rejected the appeal of a University student who was sentenced to one and a half years in prison for asking on his Facebook page if anyone would dare to engage in a nonviolent revolution with him and for calling the King "stupid."

It is hard to articulate the importance of Kem Ley's death to the Cambodian people. The closest analogue I can think of may be for African Americans, the assassination of Dr. Martin Luther King. One Khmer friend of mine told me she couldn't sleep for two nights in a row because of her sadness and fear of what looms ahead for Cambodia. She told me that Kem Ley was the "last hope for my country."

Currently I am working as a psychologist with Maryknoll Associate Priest Kevin Conroy, a fellow trained psychologist with the Maryknoll Mental Health Team in Phnom Penh. I have heard that several local NGOs let their employees go home after Ley's assassination because they were too despondent to work.

Father Kevin held a group bereavement session at the International Organization for Migration to help employees process their grief. He also opened the doors of his treatment center to activists and all those who may be suffering from traumatic symptoms because of the murder.

An article in the July-August 2016 issue of *NewsNotes* described how the ruling party in Cambodia, the Cambodian People's Party, has made aggressive moves in recent months that international groups describe as a campaign to intimidate political opponents before the 2018 election. In March, the UN Special Rapporteur

on the Situation of Human Rights in Cambodia, Rhona Smith, said the contentious and at times violent political situation has pushed Cambodia "close to a dangerous tipping point." The situation continued to deteriorate in April and May, with the police attempting to arrest opposing political party leaders and blocking demonstrations, prompting Maryknoll missionaries in Cambodia to join 40 other international NGOs in signing a public appeal to the government of Cambodia to stop human rights abuses. You can read the article and public appeal at <http://bit.ly/2al64zc>.

The assassination of Kem Ley in July takes the crackdown to a new, shocking low.

Nonetheless, one could not but be inspired by the courage of the tens of thousands of Cambodians who attended Kem Ley's funeral procession on July 24. People lined the streets of Phnom Penh, many holding portraits of Kem Ley. Estimates of the number of people vary widely from 300 people (Cambodian government) to 2 million (Radio Free Asia). Having attended the funeral procession with some friends, I believe Radio Free Asia's estimate is more accurate. Indeed, so many people showed up for the funeral procession that the government in a panic called the news stations and ordered them to "stop reporting on murders." I feel the unprecedented turnout helped re-ignite in people the hope that seemed to be extinguished on the day of his death. §



Kem Ley in Phnom Penh, Cambodia, on July 13, 2016. Photo by Hengthona and licensed in the creative commons 4.0 via wikimedia.

Cambodia: The World Bank and human rights

The following article examines the controversial decision by the World Bank to resume loans to Cambodia after a five-year moratorium despite a dramatic increase in human rights abuses in recent months.

In June, the World Bank approved \$130 million in new loans to Cambodia. Matthew McGuire, the Bank's U.S. executive director and former director of the Office of Business Liaison at the U.S. Department of Commerce, abstained. The U.S. Treasury Department, the Bank's largest shareholder, in a statement about its decision to abstain, said: "Unfortunately, the government of Cambodia appears to be reducing its openness to feedback from its citizens and civil society groups. The United States hears consistent complaints that the Cambodian government, at all levels, is growing less responsive to citizen feedback."

The government has repeatedly blocked a peaceful "Black Monday" campaign that calls for the release of the five detained human rights defenders. As demonstrators dress in black to mourn the state of human rights, police have repeatedly blocked from gathering and detained them for hours. Around the country, groups collecting petition signatures have been subjected to questioning and arrest.

The World Bank's decision reversed a lending freeze that had been in place since August 2011, when the Cambodian government forcefully evicted 3,000 families living next to the Boeng Kak Lake, which raised concerns of human rights abuses. At that time, a real estate development company with close ties to Prime Minister Hun Sen and major donors to the Cambodian People's Party filled in a lake with sand in order to build a high-end residential complex. This caused serious flooding in the surrounding villages. Thousands of families had to flee their homes. Neither the company nor the government properly compensated those affected.

The new loans approved by the World Bank include \$25 million for a second phase of the controversial Land Allocation for Social and Economic Development (LASED) project. In the previous phase of LASED, the World Bank had set up eight social land concessions to help thousands of impoverished families access land and secure tenure. However, a study published by the Cambodian League for the Promotion and Defense of Human Rights found that many families had abandoned their sites because of infertile soil, conflicts over land ownership, and promised infrastructure that never materialized.

The World Bank, in a statement about the approval of the new loans, said the decision to restart funding to Cambodia was made after "extensive consultations with stakeholders across Cambodia, including government officials, local and international civil society, private and business sector, academia, development partners and UN agencies."

However, as reported in the July-August 2016 issue of *NewsNotes*, Maryknoll Missioners in Cambodia and nearly 40 other international organizations there issued a public appeal to the government to stop the repression and human rights abuses, which have dramatically increased this year.

The timing of the World Bank's decision concerning Cambodia is surprising, though, unfortunately, the action itself is not shocking. Once again, the World Bank seems to turn a blind eye to human rights concerns. §

Faith in action: Come and see the Maryknoll mission in Cambodia. Join an immersion trip with Friends Across Borders in August, 2017. Deadline for sign ups is February 11, 2017. Learn more at: <http://bit.ly/2chdFOJ>.



Maryknoll Associate Priest Kevin Conroy, left, is a trained psychologist working with the Maryknoll Mental Health Team in Cambodia. In this photo, Father Kevin visits a home where a family member is chained to a bed because there are no mental health services to help care for the man. Read this story in the July/August 2016 issue of Maryknoll Magazine, at www.maryknollmagazine.org. Photo by Sean Sprague.

Philippines: Extrajudicial killings

The following article reports on the response by Catholic religious leaders in the Philippines to the approximately 2,000 suspected drug dealers and users who have been killed by police and vigilantes since President Rodrigo Duterte took office in the Philippines on June 30.

As Catholics around the world observed the World Day of Prayer for the Care of Creation on September 1, Catholic activists in the Philippines lit candles and offered prayers for the souls of the nearly two thousand Filipinos who have died in the past two months as newly-elected President Rodrigo Duterte waged his promised "war on drugs."

With wide popular support for a clampdown on a rampant drug trade, President Duterte has used inflammatory rhetoric to encourage extrajudicial killings of drug users and dealers by vigilantes as well as police. Last month in a speech at a Manila slum, he encouraged citizens who knew any drug addicts to "go ahead and kill them yourself as getting their parents to do it would be too painful."

As of the end of August, the National Police report 1,900 deaths associated with the anti-drug campaign since President Rodrigo Duterte came to power on June 30, over 700 of them suspected "drug pushers and users" killed by police and the rest by unknown vigilantes. One of the latest deaths was a 5-year-old kindergarten student, Danica May, shot along with her grandfather on August 25 by unidentified assailants.

"Pain and terror reign over families of those killed," said the "Stop the Killings Network," a newly formed group of church activists and students who launched a #LightforLife campaign of candle-lighting and street vigils in Manila. Though it supports the campaign against illegal drugs, the Network issued a statement calling for an "end to the killings in the name of war on drugs. Justice and due process must be upheld. Human rights must by no means be violated."

Other church and civic groups in the Philippines have begun to condemn the killings. On August 17 the Association of Major Religious Superiors in the Philippines expressed grave concern over signs that the government and general public in the Philippines condone the killings:

"We are alarmed at the silence of the government, groups, and majority of the people in the face of these killings...Is it fear that prevents people from speaking out? Whatever the reason, this problem, if it remains unchecked, leads to a culture of impunity.

"As religious and consecrated persons, we believe that the wheels of justice should take their course following the proper procedure and operate within the bounds of the law.

"We demand that the concerned government agencies continue apprehending those involved in drug trafficking but avoiding extrajudicial killings, and pursue and apprehend vigilantes who carry out such illegal actions."

Archbishop Socrates Villegas, president of the Philippine Bishops' Conference, has asked parishes to put up "Thou Shall Not Kill" posters in communi-

ties and has called for a "Day of Prayer for Life" on September 14.

Human Rights Watch described the hundreds of killings in the government's war on drugs as a "human rights calamity." "This is nothing less than an absolute human rights disaster," said Phelim Kine, deputy director for Asia, "The numbers are absolutely shocking."§



Students from Colegio de San Juan de Letran, a Dominican college in Manila, join the #LightforLife candle-light vigil in Manila on August 31, 2016. Photo shared on the Letran Student Council twitter page (@LetranSCManila).

Philippines: Environment and Human Rights

Amid the violence surrounding President Duterte's "war on drugs," Maryknoll Sister Marvie L. Misolas continues to work in the Philippines with the Maryknoll Sisters' Environment and Climate Change ministry. The following article was written by Sister Marvie on recent developments to securing a healthy environment in which human rights can flourish in the Philippines.

To be able to enjoy the right to life, we must have a healthy and safe environment. Our existence depends on the health of the ecosystem that supports various services needed for life to flourish. For example, our environment provides the air we breathe, the water we drink and use to raise food, the forests which promotes and protect biodiversity, and regulates the climate and weather. These ecosystem services are vital in the sustenance of life in the planet.

The Philippine environment is for Filipino people, not for corporations.

Gina Lopez, the newly appointed Secretary of the Department of Environment and Natural Resources is making waves in the news because of her swift and decisive actions to suspend mining operations of at least six mining companies because of unsustainable practices. Demolition of large fish pens along the coast of Laguna Lake is under way to reclaim and rehabilitate coastal ecosystems and give way for small fisher-folks chance to fish near shores sustainably. Secretary Lopez was also meeting with Indigenous Filipino groups in order to help enforce the law on ancestral domain lands which are affected by mining operations.

Recently, Secretary Lopez called for the creation of a National Anti-Environmental Crime Task Force. The agreement is signed by the Department of Environment and Natural Resources, Department of the Interior and Local Government, Department of National Defense, Department of Transportation, Philippine National Police, Philippine Coast Guard and the Armed Forces of the Philippines. The agreement includes a Declaration of Cooperation in which the agencies agree to immediately respond to verified reports of large-scale environmental violations referred by the task force.

Enough food for the Filipinos: "Good mountain, good water, good life," is a Chinese proverb borrowed by the new Department of Agriculture Secretary Emmanuel Pinol. This, Secretary Pinol said, is the principle on which the mission of providing "enough and affordable food the Filipino people" will depend. He agrees that a healthy Philippine ecosystem is the foundation of

food security and sustainability. He vowed to help small farmers by expanding and providing free irrigation systems and to provide training for climate smart and adaptive agriculture. The Philippines has a double challenge experiencing 1.9 percent population increase annually and a limited area suitable for agriculture. Research is now underway to study the eating habits of Filipinos to make projections in a climate change-impacted future.

Path to Renewable Energy: According to Ruebin Muni of Greenpeace, the Philippines has a 200,000 megawatt potential for renewable energy yet less than 10 percent is developed. At present, the country has a



Wind farm at Bangui, the Philippines. Photo in the public domain via pixabay.com.

total of 19 coal fired power plants (30 boiler units), with 29 more (59 boiler units) approved by the Department of Energy and projected to be in operation by 2020. In 2015, the Aquino administration awarded an additional 39 coal operating contracts. Renewable energy in the Philippines decreased from 33.92 percent of the total electricity generated in 2008 to 28.69 percent in 2011. This fall in renewable energy share was caused by the rise in coal production.

The Philippines has some of the most expensive electricity prices in Asia. The new government is currently reviewing its energy policies. Coal is dangerous and a threat to health, emitting high levels of fine particle pollution, which is a serious health concern. The small particles can travel deeply into the lungs and cause harmful effects. Every year, 2,400 Filipinos die from pollution from coal emissions.

Greenpeace supports a "no new coal" policy and efforts to stop and prevent new coal power plants from operating. They call for the Philippine government to adopt a plan to retire the existing 19 coal fired plants.

To mitigate and adapt to the impacts of climate change, the Philippines must "go green," and embrace renewable energy projects. The Philippines can become a leader in reducing emissions if the government empowers communities, draws a master plan for climate resilience and invests in community-based renewable energy programs. §

Peru: Indigenous peoples assert land, resource rights

The following article on the effects of trade agreements on an indigenous community in Peru was written by Alfonso Buzzo, Peace Fellow with the Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns.

Maryknoll missionaries around the world have witnessed the negative impacts of certain trade agreements that challenge national laws and regulations protecting public health, the environment, and human rights. One of the most controversial elements of a number of bilateral and multilateral treaties is “investor-state dispute settlement” which grants corporations the right to sue nations in the International Center for Settlement of Investment Disputes (ICSID), a private court housed in the World Bank Group in Washington, D.C.

Companies have been increasingly using the investor-state dispute settlement structure to dispute the right of nations to regulate public concerns, particularly, environmental and labor conditions. These lawsuits are extremely costly, forcing developing countries to divert funds away from critical infrastructure projects and the social safety net for its citizens.

Peru is currently facing two such lawsuits. First, in 2014, Canadian mining company Bear Creek lodged a claim against Peru for \$522 million in damages at the ICSID. They argued that the Peruvian government’s decision to cancel the Santa Ana mining project in the southern Puno region in 2011 violated obligations under the Canada-Peru Free Trade Agreement.

The government of Peru canceled the Santa Ana mining project after police killed six members of an indigenous community and injured dozens more during protests against the mine. The Aymara and Quechua indigenous people feared that the mine would pollute their water supply and push them off their land. Maryknoll Sister Patricia ‘Pat’ Ryan is there, working with the Center for Human Rights and the Environment, a local NGO which offers educational services, information, and legal advice to indigenous people who are nonviolently addressing irresponsible mining activities that violate their rights, threaten the environment, and pollute their water supply. You can read more about Sister Pat at <http://bit.ly/2cn8r7h>.

The case will be heard in Washington, D.C from September 7-14. Sister Pat and other members of the lo-

cal NGO in Peru plan to be there to represent the rights of the indigenous communities.

A second investor-state dispute case has been filed against Peru – this one claiming \$800 million in damages. The Renco Group, an American investment consortium that purchased a huge smelting plant in La Oroya, a small city situated 110 miles northeast of Lima, filed arbitration in 2011. Once again, this case was permitted by a free trade agreement.

The Renco Group claims that Peru’s enforcement of environmental regulations is both too costly for the company and surpasses the company’s expectations, thus allegedly violating its rights as an investor. It is worth noting that La Oroya continues to be one of the

most contaminated cities in the world, according to a 2007 report by the Blacksmith Institute, an environmental organization.

Even though the tribunal dismissed Renco’s case on technicalities in August, the dispute is not over. The company reserves the right to file additional arbitration in ICSID, and according to Rev. Jed Kobb, facilitator of the Presbyterian Hunger Program’s Joining Hands in Peru, this is probably what they will do.

The newly inaugurated Peruvian president Pedro Kuczynski, a former investor banker, has stated that re-initiating mining operations in La Oroya will be a priority for his administration. To do so, environmental standards set in 2001 would need to be relaxed.

This is why we support the work of Sister Pat and the people of Santa Ana, and we meet with staff of congressional offices and the State Department, and we advocate for trade reform, so foreign investors do not have rights that surpass the rights of men, women, and children to good health and wellbeing. §

Faith in action: Tell Congress to reject the Trans Pacific Partnership trade agreement: <http://bit.ly/2c8VAVG>.



Maryknoll Sister Pat Ryan, left, pictured here with an indigenous woman of the Altiplano. Photo courtesy of the Maryknoll Sisters.

Peru: New president, more mining concerns

The following article examines newly-elected President Pedro Pablo Kuczynski's plan to fulfill promises to reduce income inequality and ensure all Peruvians have access to running water, health care and free primary education by increasing profits from mining and mineral exports.

In July Pedro Pablo Kuczynski was sworn in as president of Peru for a five-year term. The 77-year old son of Polish immigrants and Ivy league-educated economist defeated Keiko Fujimori by a razor-thin margin of only 50,000 of the 18 million votes cast. The race was so close that the electoral court made an intentional effort to include votes from outside Peru. Keiko Fujimori is the daughter of former president Alberto Fujimori, who is serving a 25-year sentence in jail for corruption and human rights crimes.

Before the election, most political analysts believed Keiko Fujimori would win. But just a week before the election, The Associated Press reported new allegations tying her to drug trafficking. With the congressional elections decided earlier, Fujimori's party has the majority. As president, Kuczynski will face an adversarial Congress still licking its wounds from the presidential elections.

While Fujimori's economic plan might not have differed much from Kuczynski's plan, her style of governance and use of presidential power, if based on the strongman tactics her father used as president from 1990 to 2000, could have severely undermined democracy in Peru. Many suspected that Keiko would have pardoned her father, and that he may have wielded power behind the scenes, bringing back the authoritarian reign of Fujimorismo. With a high majority in Congress, Fujimori would have had power unlike most recent presidents who have had to build support across party lines. Also, if both the executive and congressional power were in the hands of Fujimori's party, she could have appointed judges in her party's favor.

Kuczynski has indicated that, as president, he will continue the neo-liberal policies of his successor. The vast majority of his cabinet is male and come from the private sector. Kuczynski served as the finance minister under former neo-liberal President Alejandro Toledo and has also served as a World Bank executive. Part of his economic plan is to focus on the mining sector, which is essentially a continuation of the previous president's economic plan that was highly dependent on extractive industries.

Kuczynski is a proponent of free trade and has expressed hopes of bringing China into the recently signed Trans-Pacific Partnership trade agreement negotiated between Peru, the U.S. and ten other nations. The articles for ratification were introduced in the Peruvian congress at the end of July. Kuczynski plans to travel to China for his first trip abroad as president to seek investments in metal refineries and smelters that would help Peru wring more from its exports of copper, zinc, gold and silver.

In his inaugural speech, Kuczynski announced his objective to reduce the poverty rate in the country to 10 percent of the population by 2021. According to the World Bank, Kuczynski's former employer, the poverty rate in Peru for 2014 was 23 percent of the population. Peru's economy, already highly dependent on resource extraction, started a downturn in 2012 when the international prices of raw materials crashed. According to

Latinamerica Press, the average economic growth for Peru fell from 5.9 percent in 2013 to 2.4 percent in 2014 and 3.3 percent in 2015, and for 2016 the World Bank predicts that the economy will grow at a similar rate as last year.

Mining has devastated communities throughout Peru, as noted in the article in this issue of *NewsNotes* entitled "Peru: Indigenous people assert land, resource rights." The article includes details of the work of Maryknoll Sister Pat Ryan and the Center for Human Rights and the Environment. They are working with indigenous communities who are defending the rights to their land and livelihood and who are facing the devastating impacts of mining: land grabs, violence, polluted air and water, and a deterioration of overall human health.

Kuczynski's plan to unblock investment in the mining industry may not revive the economy as he hopes. "The drop in mining investment is global," said José de Echave, an economist and co-founder of CooperAcción, an NGO that works with communities affected by mining, in an interview with Latinamerica Press. "There has been a decline in mining concessions in Peru since 2014 and mining investments will keep falling for the next few years. Currently there are only expansions of old projects taking place."§



Israel/Palestine: Water crisis

The following article examines the root causes of the devastating water crisis affecting Palestinians in Gaza and the West Bank.

Once again there are reports of water shortages in the West Bank, with international media suggesting a range of causes: some blame the Israeli water company for intentionally cutting the water supply, others blame the Palestinian Authority for refusing to approve new water infrastructure. Headlines announcing that Israel is now “overflowing with water” due to remarkable advancements in desalination efforts further confuse the situation – so what is really happening?

It is useful to know that the 1995 Oslo II Interim Agreement, meant to be a temporary guideline for cooperation between Israel and Palestine until a final settlement could be reached, allowed Israel to continue its inequitable control of between 70 and 80 percent of water from the Mountain Aquifer – a water source that lies mainly under the West Bank. Oslo II also established the Israeli and Palestinian joint water committee to cooperatively manage water needs in the West Bank. Twenty years later Oslo II remains the guideline on water-sharing and the disproportionate allocation continues – called a “hydro-apartheid” by some. Today, Palestinians are only able to utilize 11 percent of the Mountain Aquifer and are forced to purchase 30 percent of their municipal water supply from Israel rather than tapping into the water beneath their feet.

Israel admits to cutting the water supply to some West Bank villages this summer, leaving many without running water for over two weeks. The Israeli water company reports a water shortage and states that they are doing what is necessary to preserve local reservoirs in the (illegal) West Bank settlements. They say the shortage could have been alleviated if the Palestinian Water Authority had not vetoed their new water infrastructure proposal before the joint water committee.

This is a common refrain: the Palestinians are refusing to cooperate – but what are they being asked to cooperate with? According to the Palestine Water Authority the new plans would increase water supply to Israeli settlements in the West Bank, further entrenching the ever-expanding settlements which make a viable Palestinian state increasingly unlikely by the day.

It is well-known that Palestinians face incredible difficulty in obtaining building permits from the Israeli government: A UN report of activity in the Occupied Territories notes that building permits are “near impos-

sible to obtain.” When Palestinians are then forced to build without permits, Israel responds by demolishing houses (another situation where Israel can claim that Palestinians are “not cooperating”). The same is true of permits for fixing and building wells and other water sources. Israeli organization B’tselem relays the story of Abd A-Rahman Khalil, resident of a Palestinian village in the West Bank suffering from lack of adequate access to water:

“About six years ago, the [Palestinian] local council restored two springs here, in the al-Malih area. They cleaned them and fenced them in to keep away animals that contaminate the water. We were overjoyed. Suddenly we had a little bit of water, which reduced the need to buy water at high prices. We used the water from the springs for our household needs and for our flocks. On

Tuesday, 14 June 2016, [Israeli] Civil Administration people came and left notices that they plan to demolish the two water reservoirs at the springs. If they do, it will be a disaster, because most people in the area rely on this water for the flocks and for their family consumption.... We have no running water and no other water sources in the area. Our living conditions are hard and we have to buy the water at

high prices....I don’t know what will become of people here. Some of them have nothing to eat.”

A short distance away, in Israel, scientists have developed the largest desalination facility in the world, turning ocean water in potable drinking water. According to Global Voices, Israel now has “more water than it needs” and is faced with what to do with a surplus. A “Water Knows No Boundaries” conference in 2018 has water scientists from Egypt, Turkey, Israel, Jordan and Palestine excited at the prospects of “water diplomacy”, yet if the reality on the ground today is any indication of the dynamics for future cooperation, serious shifts in the power imbalance need to occur before the Palestinians will be in a position to be equal partners with Israelis. There is a lesson to be learned here about the potential ramifications of peace agreements – the international community should take note.§

Faith in action: Tell Congress to support equal water rights for Palestinians and Israelis. <http://bit.ly/Water4IsraelPalestine>



Israel/Palestine: Economics and peacemaking

In August, twelve religious and faith-based organizations signed the statement “Employing Economic Measures as Nonviolent Tools for Justice in the Israeli-Palestinian Context.” The following is an excerpt.

“The U.S. Congress and 22 states across the U.S. are considering, or have passed, laws that penalize or criminalize the use of economic measures to oppose Israeli policies towards Palestinians that many find unjust and discriminatory. The targets of these proposed laws are organizations and agencies that endorse, in full or in part, the Palestinian call for the use of boycott, divestment, and sanctions (BDS). Such actions are anti-democratic, suppress legitimate criticism, and restrict our freedom to determine our own investment and selective purchasing practices. We affirm and defend the right of churches and organizations to witness using economic measures in the specific case of Israel-Palestine.

“The BDS call, issued in 2005 by over 100 Palestinian civil society organizations, seeks to promote a nonviolent response to end Israel’s 50-year military occupation of Palestinian territories and dismantle the separation barrier, much of which is built on Palestinian land; to recognize the full equality of Palestinian citizens of Israel; and to respect, protect, and promote the rights of Palestinian refugees to return to their homes and properties, according to UN resolution 194. U.S. churches, among many others, are clear in seeking an end to the occupation.

“Churches and church-related organizations have employed such nonviolent tactics in many instances of injustice, both domestically and globally, over the decades. The Montgomery Bus Boycott and the boycott of products made by slave labor are some historical precedents.” . . .

“Through the use of such nonviolent but impactful measures at the intersection of faith and finance, the churches have participated in making a difference, promoting justice, and effecting change. Indeed, when corporate social responsibility standards do not lead businesses to change their practices, then it is often only through the concerted economic pressure of civil society and public interest groups that positive political and social reforms occur.

“The current effort to penalize or criminalize such use of economic leverage in the specific case of Israel-Palestine is therefore offensive and disturbing. It strikes us as an attempt to remove a responsible, powerful, and legal method of public witness as an option. To target economic measures in any way on one specific policy issue – Israel-Palestine – is selective and inconsistent.

In fact, the U.S. Supreme Court upheld, without dissent, the right to boycott (1982).

“As churches and church-related organizations, we may not endorse all aspects of the Palestinian civil society BDS movement; nor do we all have similar policies on the use of economic leverage in the context of Israel-Palestine. However, we all share a hope and desire for an end to occupation, and we continue to advocate for that. If we choose, through debate and reflection, to employ our economic leverage to advance that policy objective, as we do many others, we understand it as our right to do so. It is an assertion of our right as stewards of our financial resources to spend and invest as we choose, and to do so responsibly, according to our theological and moral conviction, expressed in our denominational or organizational policies.

“We must be clear: such an assertion of this right is an effort to change unjust Israeli policy toward Palestinians, not to delegitimize the State of Israel, nor to marginalize or isolate our Jewish neighbors, or their enterprises. Our choices to purchase and invest responsibly, and to advocate with corporations or governments, including our own, are motivated by our firm commitments to justice and peace for all people, without discrimination or exclusion.

“As churches and church-related organizations, we reject any efforts by the State to curtail these rights, and will continue to exercise them, as appropriate and in accordance with our faith and policies.”§

Signatories:

American Friends Service Committee
 Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)
 Church of the Brethren, Office of Public Witness
 Conference of Major Superiors of Men
 Global Ministries of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) and United Church of Christ
 Justice and Witness Ministries, United Church of Christ
 Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns
 Pax Christi International
 Pax Christi USA
 Presbyterian Church (USA)
 United Church of Christ
 United Methodist Church, General Board of Church and Society

Faith in Action: Read and share the statement at <http://bit.ly/EmployingEconomicMeasures>

UN: Children and armed conflict

The following article examines the response by the United Nations to the increasing number and growing intensity of armed conflicts that have rendered parts of the world unsafe for children.

In August, at the United Nations in New York, Ban Ki Moon, the United Nations Secretary General presented a report to the UN Security Council on the situation of children in armed conflict. His Special Representative on Children and Armed Conflict, Leila Zerrougui, also presented a statement that strongly condemned the use of children as fighters; as well as the atrocities committed against children who suffer injury, maiming, raping, starving and are forced to flee from conflict.

As witness to the bombardments in Aleppo and other parts of the world where violent conflicts continue to inflict harm upon children, the picture of Omran Dagneesh, a five-year-old Syrian boy, dominated news reports in August. His bleeding and wounded face spoke of the suffering that many children around the world continue to endure as the result of wars waged by government forces as well as by insurgents. It is the duty of the Security Council to stop the violent confrontations of government and armed groups who in their pursuit for political power are trampling upon the human rights of children.

In her 1996 groundbreaking report, "Impact of armed conflict on children," Gracia Machel, an expert of the Secretary-General and former Minister of Education of Mozambique, described the devastating impact of war on girls and boys. "More and more of the world is being sucked into a desolate moral vacuum," Ms. Machel wrote. "This is a space devoid of the most basic human values, a space in which children are slaughtered, raped, and maimed; a space in which children are starved and exposed to extreme brutality."

Twenty years later children are suffering even more than before because changes in tactics that do not distinguish between civilians and combatants. It is inhuman to target residential areas, schools and hospitals that used to be safe havens for civilians especially for children. As an example of such unscrupulous practices, thousands of Syrian children like Omran Dagneesh have

been wounded and others have lost their lives in a war that has been going on for the last five years.

Since the UN started systematically documenting civilian casualties in 2009, violent confrontations have resulted in the highest number of child deaths and injuries in Afghanistan. In Somalia, violence against children has risen by 50 percent; and in South Sudan abominable human rights violations have been committed during military offensives against opposition forces. In 2015 alone six times as many children have been killed in Yemen compared to the number killed in 2009, while five times as many were recruited into joining security forces. The conflicts between Israel and Palestine continue to end the lives of innocent children. Under such conditions people are forced to flee their homes and their countries in search of the basic need of safety, but where will they find safety? Who will welcome them?

Heads of governments who will gather at the UN Summit on Refugees and Migrants in September need to find ways to stop conflicts if people are to remain in their countries of origin and not flee from violence and conflict. This requires that they engage in an honest dialogue and find effective solutions to the problem of violent conflicts. Responding to violence with violence will only exacerbate the problem.

Hopefully President Obama's Leaders' Summit scheduled for the following day will generate the political will needed to end the crises and end the violence against children who, as the Machel report states, have no part in warfare but can be as the report states "a unifying force capable of bringing people to a common ethical grounds. [They] are the reason for the struggle to eliminate the worst aspects of warfare."§

Faith in action: Sign a petition by UNHCR asking UN member states to do their fair share for refugees at the UN Refugee and Migrants Summit on September 19: <http://www.unhcr.org/refugeeday/us/petition/>



Bedu children in Aleppo, Syria. Photo by James Gordon from Los Angeles, California and licensed in the creative commons 2.0 via wikimedia.

Human Rights: World Bank safeguards fall short

The World Bank approved a new policy framework in August that is void of language that would require the Bank to respect human rights throughout its operations and weakens core environmental and social protections for affected communities and the environment.

In August, the World Bank approved a new “environmental and social framework” to replace its existing safeguard policies. The Bank’s safeguards are designed to ensure that its investments “do no harm” to people and the environment and to build institutional capacity in the Bank and among borrowing governments.

The World Bank invested more money and time into consultations on their safeguards policy than ever before. While the safeguards made some incremental improvements, they fell short of what many affected people and civil society sought.

Even though the new framework includes in its vision statement some aspirational references to human rights, there are no binding requirements. Additionally, in the main text there are no guidelines for human rights. Considering the Bank is often viewed as the standard bearer for financial lending institutions, this absence is particularly troubling. One positive outcome is that respecting human rights is now a conversation topic within the Bank.

The new safeguards do not include meaningful standards on gender or sexuality. In Uganda for instance, a \$265 million road construction project that was funded by the World Bank was canceled in December after the Bigodi community complained repeatedly that workers had sexually abused local girls and employed children. In order to get the project canceled, the local community had to file two grievances with the World Bank. “When we first raised concerns, everyone at all levels at the World Bank denied that there was a problem,” said Elana Berger, the child-rights program manager at the Bank Information Center.

World Bank President Jim Kim responded to a report about the abuse in Uganda by announcing a new task force on gender violence. But groups are criticizing this move given the weak language in the new safeguards.

In a Scripture reflection for the Feast of the Assumption shared at www.maryknollgc.org, Bob Short, a returned Maryknoll Lay Missioner and current Coordinator of the Maryknoll Affiliates paraphrases the Protestant theologian Walter Brueggemann when he suggests that the fundamental question for all Christians is: “Do

you hear your sister crying?” “For, in whatever corner of the world there is suffering, Bob writes, “it will likely be worse for women.”

Safeguards on indigenous people also fall short. The word “indigenous” comes with internationally recognized rights and protections. African nations, especially in East Africa, refused to support language requiring consultation with indigenous communities because many East African countries do not recognize indigenous people as distinct from the rest of the population. African civil society groups did push for the inclusion of the phrase “indigenous peoples.” The governments and World Bank agreed to add the term “Sub-Saharan African Historically Underserved Traditional Local Communities” which has no legally recognized standing.

“The bank should understand that there are no international protocols or treaties that speak of ‘Sub-Saharan African Historically Underserved Traditional Local Communities’ and this retrograde terminology should not be introduced in the 21st century where indigenous people know and understand their rights,” said Jackson Shaa with the Narasha Community Development Group in Kenya. “The suffering we are experiencing due to World Bank projects is enormous and the Bank should understand that we are human beings and we need our rights to be respected.”

The safeguards do, for the first time, include the need for free prior and informed consent of indigenous peoples but it is narrowly focused and does not cover all projects or even all phases of a project. The safeguards give a vague definition of “consent,” equating it with “collective support” which is not clearly defined.

The safeguards also for the first time include some basic labor rights associated with projects, but they fail to include core labor standards and don’t require that all countries allow workers the freedom of association. The safeguards also do not guarantee that people who lose their livelihoods from a project will be better off or fully compensated by the Bank.

While the safeguards are a small step forward in some critical ways, it is clear that they still have a long way to go to embrace a rights-based approach to development and to meet their own mission of ending poverty. §



Resources

- 1) **“Nothing Here But Kiad”**: Watch this series of ten short (2-3 minute) videos to learn about the residents of Kiad and the homes they are fighting to keep – homes on land “that is not inhabited” and where “no people reside” according to the Environmental and Social Summary Report prepared by GENISA, the hydroelectric power company that built Barro Blanco, a gravity dam on the Tabasara River. The dam has already inundated two homes with more to come in September if the project is not stopped. As a final fighting effort to prove their right to live on their ancestral land, each of the 10 families in Kiad gives a tour of their home, reflecting on a lifetime on the land they are fighting for, and what they have to lose. <http://www.soclosetothesky.com/kiad>.
- 2) **Catholic Nonviolence Initiative webinars**: Join the first of four webinar starting **September 13** to learn about the initiative started at the Nonviolence and Just Peace conference in Rome in April. Speakers are organizers and participants of the conference. <http://bit.ly/CNIwebinar1>.
- 3) **International Day of Peace**: Celebrate this special day on **September 21**. Find ideas of things you can do personally or as a small group at <http://bit.ly/2cnc25n>.
- 4) **Global Day of Action/Prayer for Syria**: Stand in solidarity with people of all faiths and join the call for end to the war in Syria. Join the National Interfaith Prayer Service on **September 21** at Community Church of New York in New York City. Download a toolkit for learning more and organizing an interfaith prayer service in your area. <http://bit.ly/2c1KfFP>.
- 5) **Campaign Nonviolence Action Week**: Take non-violent action locally at one of the many events happening across the United States, September 18-25. Learn more at <http://www.paceebene.org/>.
- 6) **“The Island of All Together”**: Watch this 23 minute video of conversations between tourists and Syrian refugees on the island of Lesbos to see how powerful individuals’ stories can be in developing an inclusive global community. <http://www.theislandofalltogether.com/>.
- 7) **“A Deadly Shade of Green”**: Read the new report by CIEL, Article 19, and Vermont Law School on the pervasive threats facing environmental defenders in Latin America, the role of local governments and private corporations, and how a new regional agreement on access rights could stem the tide of violence and abuses. Read the full report: <http://bit.ly/2b0lA2e>.
- 8) **“On Dangerous Ground”**: Read this striking report by Global Witness about the unprecedented number of killings of environmentalists in 2015. <http://bit.ly/OnDangerousGround>.
- 9) **“Sustainable lifestyles and alternatives, we have the solutions!”**: Click through this online map of eight alternative economic, food, and energy systems from around the world to remind us that another world is possible, if we imagine it and work together. <http://bit.ly/CIDSEmap>.
- 10) **Season of Creation**: Celebrate creation in this special season from **September 1 –October 4**. Find prayer resources for the month of September at <https://seasonofcreation.info/>.
- 11) **“Towards a Shared Prosperity, Rethinking the Corporate Social Contract for Greater Economic Justice”**: Join the Interfaith Center for Corporate Responsibility on **September 29** at Riverside Church in New York City for a conversation to explore these themes with thought leaders from the fields of faith, justice and corporate responsibility. Register at <http://www.iccr.org/>.
- 12) **World Food Day and Food Week of Action**: Celebrate World Food Day on **October 16** and Food Week of Action, **October 9-17**. The global Food Week of Action is an opportunity to act for food justice and food sovereignty. Download the six-page customizable **Food Week Guide** and worship materials, and find solidarity events near you. <http://pcusa.org/foodweek>.
- 13) **Refugees Welcome Toolkit**: Learn how to advocate for welcoming refugees. Find sample action alerts, media resources, tips on how to write Op-Ed, manage social media: <http://bit.ly/2cc8XD3>