



Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns

NewsNotes

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

January-February 2018

Vol. 43, No. 1

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Published by the Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns: Peace, Social Justice & Integrity of Creation

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Take action - Email, call, fax or write U.S. decision makers

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Nonviolence: A commitment to a way of life

The Catholic Nonviolence Initiative (CNI) is focused on promoting a renewed commitment to Gospel nonviolence at the heart of the Church, including the possibility of a new official teaching on nonviolence. The following article is an update from one of the CNI's five "roundtables" made up of practitioners of nonviolence from around the world.

On December 19, at a roundtable of the Catholic Nonviolence Initiative (CNI), sat ten unassuming artisans of peace. This was not the fabled roundtable of King Arthur where warrior knights sat as equals with the King defending Christendom by the sword. These ten activists' strength is found in the practice of active nonviolence, not swords or guns; and their commitment not to a patriarch, a mythic King, or one nation's flag, but to the global common good, to care for creation and to a vision articulated by Pope Francis in last year's World Day of Peace message:

"May we dedicate ourselves prayerfully and actively to banishing violence from our hearts, words and deeds, and to becoming nonviolent people and to build nonviolent communities that care for our common home. Nothing is impossible if we turn to God in prayer. Everyone can be an artisan of peace."

Reflecting together on the situations of extreme violence which they confront in their work, the ten members of CNI's "roundtable number four" meet virtually via Zoom and Skype from their homes in Palestine, Pakistan, the Philippines, Ecuador, Zambia, Belgium, Holland, Guatemala and the U.S. Their task for 2018 is to make recommendations to the Vatican on how to integrate active nonviolence into all levels of the Church.

In "Pilgrimage to Nonviolence" Dr. Martin Luther King said, "Living through the actual experience of the protest, nonviolence became more than a method to which I gave intellectual assent; it became a commitment to a way of life. Many issues I had not cleared up intellectually concerning nonviolence were now solved in the sphere of practical action."

The roundtable meeting in December began with a guided meditation on cultivating a personal commitment to nonviolence as a way of life, led by Kevin Carroll from the Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns. Some members of the roundtable who prefer not to be fully identified in this article due to concerns for their safety, responded by sharing updates from the conflict zones in which they live and work.

From Guatemala, Nate reported on the violent repression and uncertainty in neighboring Honduras after the disputed presidential election. From Jerusalem, Nora reported that Palestinians in the occupied city are

remaining nonviolent and steadfast in the face of anger and outrage at the Trump administration's decision to move the U.S. embassy to Jerusalem. At the same time Nora expressed solidarity and prayerful support to Father Bonnie in Pakistan as he deals with the aftermath of the suicide bombing of a Methodist church in the western Pakistani city of Quetta on December 17 that left 9 dead and 57 injured.

Father Bonnie asked Loreta in the Philippines to share her view of the Church's response to Philippine government's extrajudicial killing of thousands of suspected drug users and dealers. From Manila, Loreta replied that many Catholics have participated in nonviolent demonstrations, marches, and social media campaigns as well as proactive campaigns such as drug rehab programs.

In the light of these and other distressing situations the roundtable participants discussed that morning – including South Sudan, Zimbabwe, the DRC and the United States – Nora from Jerusalem asked: "Who is going to ensure that humanity remains human?" The world is in such a state, she explained, we are left wondering where do we go from here?"

After a pause, she responded softly to her own question: "We must keep following the Star of Bethlehem."

These are a few of the nearly one hundred voices of veteran practitioners of active nonviolence that are sharing their spirituality as well as their practices with the Catholic Nonviolence Initiative through a structure of five roundtables meeting around the globe. By the end of Summer 2018, they will each produce a set of recommendations to be offered to the Vatican on aspects of Gospel nonviolence that they hope Pope Francis will address in an encyclical on nonviolence and just peace. Their dedication and deep sense of prayer inspire us to persist with hope in spite of discouraging world events, to "keep following the Star of Bethlehem."§

Faith in action:

All are invited to endorse "An appeal to the Catholic church to re-commit to the centrality of Gospel nonviolence," the document which launched the Catholic Nonviolence Initiative. Add your name and share with others. <http://bit.ly/PaxChristiGospelNonviolence>.

Just War Theory – Moving toward peace

Pope Francis, San Diego Bishop Robert W. McElroy, and Jesuit Father Drew Christiansen have each offered new understandings of the role nonviolence plays in the pursuit of peace.

At the international symposium on disarmament, “Perspectives for a World Free from Nuclear Weapons and for Integral Disarmament,” promoted by the Dicastery for Promoting Integral Human Development this November, Pope Francis applauded the humanitarian and moral argument made by the UN Nuclear Ban Treaty and warned that modernizing stockpiles and developing new nuclear weapons effectively removes nations’ capabilities to focus on “real” priorities: “the fight against poverty, the promotion of peace, the undertaking of educational, ecological and healthcare projects, and the development of human rights.”

He implored leaders “to reject the culture of waste and to care for individuals and peoples laboring under painful disparities through patient efforts to favor processes of solidarity over selfish and contingent interests.” He also lifted up the witness of the hibakusha: “May their prophetic voice serve as a warning, above all for coming generations!” In his introduction of Pope Francis, Cardinal Peter Turkson, lamented that, “We live in a moment of human history when fear about potential global catastrophe has intensified to a point rarely experienced, since the days of the Cuban Missile Crisis.”

In his remarks at the conference, Fr. Drew Christiansen, SJ, Distinguished Professor of Ethics and Global Human Development in the School of Foreign Service and Senior Research Fellow at the Berkley Center for Religion Ethics and World Affairs, stated that “In this new moment, the first responsibility for just-war analysts, I would argue, is to treat the legitimate use of limited force within the larger context of an ethic of peace. For Catholic just-war thinkers that would embrace not just the Church’s developing teaching on nonviolence and just peace, but also the fuller teaching on positive peace, including human rights, integral development and care for creation.”

Christiansen seemed to echo Francis when he said, “We should cease to imagine nuclear weapons as tools for us to manage, but rather as a curse we must banish.” He continued, Today’s just-war analysts, especially but not exclusively Catholics, have a responsibility to integrate into their scholarship the rejection of nuclear weapons by the Treaty to Prohibit Nuclear Weapons passed at the UN this summer.... Analysts must take into account a shift in the law of nations...and reject the legitimization of defense strategies based on nuclear weapons as sup-

posed legacy rights under the Non-Proliferation Treaty.”

This represents a significant step forward, moving away from the doctrine of deterrence, toward “an interim ethic of disarmament,” as Stephen Colecchi, director of the U.S. bishops’ office of international justice and peace, framed it. Christiansen went further still, “Catholic moral theologians who are also just-war analysts have the responsibility with respect to global moral problems like climate change and nuclear abolition to make the Church’s teaching ‘church-wide and parish deep....[Analysts] share responsibility in a larger network of scholars and professionals who together build up the conditions of peace and defend it against the destructive effects of violent conflict.” Strong and poignant words from someone as respected in the field as Christiansen.

Bishop Robert W. McElroy of San Diego addressed the symposium after Francis: “In approaching the issues posed by nuclear weapons in the present moment, the Church must foster three dimensions of conversion in the world: a conversion from the prison of isolated national interests to the perspective of an integrated international common good; a conversion from the illusion of safety in nuclear strength to the reality of nuclear instability and proliferation; and a conversion from the reliance on weapons of war to the construction of weapons of peace.”

He continued, “The power of nonviolence, once relegated to the category of romantic idealism, has emerged as a potent force for social transformation and the building of lasting peace. The Church must be a voice in the world constantly pointing humanity toward the path of nonviolence and the logic of peace.” He called for “a radical dedication by the Church to bring the poor and marginalized into the very heart of the international debate on war and peace. For it is the poor and the marginalized who suffer most greatly from the theft which the arms trade constitutes, it is they who endure the greatest cruelty in the midst of war, and it is they, because of their radical dependence, who may have a unique capacity to convey to us who live in comfort that on the issue of nuclear weapons, we all stand in radical dependence and vulnerability.” This groundbreaking conference, full of statements like those above, represents a major departure from the church’s prior condoning of nuclear deterrence. §

Maria Stephan: The power of active nonviolence

Dr. Maria Stephan delivered a speech in October in which she named key factors proven to make nonviolent resistance twice as successful as armed insurgencies and the important role the Church and civil society plays.

At the University of San Diego in October, the Frances G. Harpst Center for Catholic Thought and Culture hosted a conference entitled, “The Catholic Church Moves Towards Nonviolence? Just Peace Just War In Dialogue.” The keynote address was delivered by Dr. Maria J. Stephan, director of the Program on Nonviolent Action at the U.S. Institute of Peace. Dr. Stephan focused her speech, “The Nonviolent Option: The Power of Active Nonviolence,” on the “power and potential of nonviolent options to prevent, mitigate, and transform violent conflict and advance sustainable peace.”

Stephan described in detail her work with Dr. Erica Chenoweth researching the effectiveness of nonviolent resistance. They collected data from all known major violent and nonviolent campaigns from 1900-2006 resulting in their book, “Why Civil Resistance Works: The Strategic Logic of Nonviolent Conflict.” They found that nonviolent campaigns were twice as successful as armed insurgencies, achieving their goals 53 percent of the time compared to 26 percent for violent campaigns. Stephan said, “We found that the most important variable determining the outcome was the size and diversity of participation. Nonviolent campaigns attract on average 11 times the level of participants as the average violent campaign...(drawing) women and men, youth and elderly, able-bodied and disabled, rich and poor.”

They also found that nonviolent campaigns contribute to more democratic and peaceful societies, concluding that “the skills associated with nonviolent organizing, negotiating differences, building coalitions, and collective action reinforce democratic norms and behaviors.”

Stephan went on to cite the Catholic Church’s involvement in some of the most significant nonviolent struggles in history: Filipino religious and laity in the 1986 “people power” revolution, Pope John Paul II and local priests and nuns in the worker-led Polish Solidarity movement, Archbishop Oscar Romero martyred for his solidarity with campesinos and other victims of junta brutality in his native El Salvador, and the Nuns on the Bus anti-poverty campaign in the United States.

She also cited examples from recent history of successful nonviolent civil resistance amid violence and named unarmed civilian protection (the use of unarmed civilians as ‘peacekeepers’) as a way to deter violence and human rights abuses in conflict zones. She high-

lighted prevention or “supporting inclusive and participatory economic and political processes...fostering dialogue and trust between communities and police... using diplomatic, military, and trade levers to challenge crackdowns on civic space and human rights violations” as an area where the United States military could make a significant contribution.

“Military advocacy on Capitol Hill and in the private sector for massively increased investment in violence prevention and peacebuilding is a concrete way to advance just peace around the world.” She continued, “Transforming violent conflict and dissolving its root causes requires a combination of people power and peacebuilding.” She cited Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King in his Letter from a Birmingham Jail on the power of nonviolent direct action to shift power imbalances, to lift up the oppressed and bring the oppressor to the table.

Stephan also pointed to the essential importance of the involvement of civil society, e.g., religious groups, women’s groups, and human rights organizations, in creating a sustainable and just peace. “A core tenet of just peacemaking is addressing and overcoming legacies of gross human rights violations and other historical injustices. Faith groups have historically contributed in significant ways to transitional justice and reconciliation.”

Among the nonviolent techniques Stephan suggested are: civil resistance, dialogue, mediation, negotiation, unarmed civilian protection, trauma healing, and transitional justice. The Church can “build strategic and tactical bridges between the techniques of grass-roots nonviolent action and peacebuilding and invest in them,” Stephan said, through education and training, diplomacy and policy-making, interreligious efforts, and work with conflict-affected communities.

She called on the military to advocate for greater investment in nonviolent alternatives and peacebuilding, and cited Lithuania with its civilian-based defense program, as an example. “Building up the nonviolent resistance and peacebuilding skills and capacities of citizens, in schools and communities, is a great investment in national and international security.”

Stephan urged, “A papal encyclical on nonviolent action and just peace, building on Pope Francis’ Peace Day address, would help focus the Catholic Church’s energy and resources on all these options.”§

Integral Disarmament

In November the Dicastery for Promoting Integral Human Development hosted a special symposium on nuclear disarmament at the Vatican.

The Vatican hosted in November the first international gathering of substance involving leaders in nuclear disarmament since the historic nuclear ban treaty was signed in July. The Holy See is one of 56 signatories and one of three parties to ratify the treaty so far. In order to enter into force, it must be signed and ratified by a minimum of 50 nations. At this time, none of the nuclear powers, including the United States, have signed the treaty. The Vatican was instrumental throughout the negotiating process and played a principle role in support of the International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons (ICAN) to get the ban treaty passed.

Entitled, “Perspectives for a World Free from Nuclear Weapons and for Integral Disarmament,” the conference was not only special in the collection of individuals and groups it brought together but more so in the language Pope Francis used in his condemnation of nuclear weapons. He condemned the possession of these weapons of mass destruction, saying that they “create nothing but a false sense of security.” He declared, “International relations cannot be held captive to military force, mutual intimidation, and the parading of stockpiles of arms.”

“Francis himself definitively brought the Catholic Church into full agreement with the ban treaty when he said about nuclear weapons: ‘The threat of their use, as well as their very possession, is to be fully condemned,’” said Marie Dennis, co-president of Pax Christi International.

In a recent article for the National Catholic Reporter, longtime peace activist Art Laffin of the Dorothy Day Catholic Worker in Washington, DC, wrote, “The Catholic Church and all churches have a crucial role to play in implementing Francis’ declaration to bring about a dis-

armed world. What if the church could take the lead in calling for the conversion of arms industries to non-military production while advocating for full and just protection of workers’ rights during the transition process? What if the church would provide material resources for those who quit their jobs for reasons of conscience? What if the pope’s statement was proclaimed in every diocese, at every parish, and in every Catholic school, college and seminary? And what if the U.S. bishops and all Catholics in this country demanded that the U.S. government sign the historic U.N. Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons that has deemed nuclear weapons

to be illegal? These efforts would go a long way to help create the climate necessary to bring about real disarmament.”

In their joint statement, “Nuclear Disarmament: Seeking Human Security,” the Conference of European Justice and Peace Commissions (Justice & Peace Europe) and the Committee on International Justice and Peace of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops wrote, “The indiscriminate and disproportionate nature of nuclear weapons, compel the world to move beyond nuclear deterrence. We call upon the United States and European nations to work with other nations to map out a credible, verifi-

able and enforceable strategy for the total elimination of nuclear weapons.”

Earlier this month ICAN was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in Oslo. Beatrice Finh, the executive director of ICAN, shared the stage with Setsuko Thurlow, a survivor of the atomic bombing of Hiroshima. Finh also attended the Vatican conference on nuclear disarmament where she said, humans “harnessed the power of science to build these weapons; we have harnessed the power of faith to stop them.”§



ICAN (International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons) campaigner and Hiroshima survivor, Setsuko Thurlow was presented with the Nobel Peace Prize by the Norwegian Nobel Committee, in Oslo, Norway, on December 10. “Heed our warning and know that your actions are consequential. You are each an integral part of the system of violence that threatens humankind,” said Thurlow in her remarks.

World Day of Peace message for 2018

Pope Francis' message for the World Day of Peace on January 1 calls on the world to view global migration not as a threat but as an opportunity to build peace.

Pope Francis began his papacy five years ago, on March 13. No one knew what to expect when Cardinal Jorge Mario Bergoglio of Argentina announced that he would take the papal name Francis. Saint Francis of Assisi, preacher of brotherly love and peace, best known for his love of nature and animals, is most commonly quoted for having said "Preach the Gospel at all times. When necessary, use words."

True to his name, Pope Francis has been known to use his actions to preach the Gospel. Possibly his best known act has been his washing the feet of those typically considered outcasts as part of the Maundy Thursday Lenten ritual. The pope has poured water on the feet of refugees, migrants, and prisoners, and kissed them to recall Jesus' washing the feet of his apostles at the Last Supper.

Now, Pope Francis is using his annual message for the Church-sponsored World Day of Peace, held on January 1, to further teach the Church that migrants and refugees are our brothers and sisters rather than a force to be feared. He says that those who foment fear of refugees and migrants are sowing violence, racial discrimination and xenophobia, while they could be building peace instead.

In the message entitled "Migrants and refugees: men and women in search of peace," Francis, the son of immigrants, says, "All indicators available to the international community suggest that global migration will continue for the future. Some consider this a threat. For my part, I ask you to view it with confidence as an opportunity to build peace."

The pope notes that there are currently 250 million migrants around the world, of whom 22.5 million are refugees. He identified several causes for these unprecedented numbers: protracted violent conflicts and wars, a desire for a better life, and "poverty caused by environmental degradation."

In order to find peace, the pope says, asylum seekers, refugees, migrants and victims of human trafficking are willing to "risk their lives" on long and dangerous trips, only to "encounter fences and walls built to keep them far from their goal."

Pope Francis names four actions, rooted in Scripture, for a strategy to offer refugees and migrants an opportunity to find the peace they seek.

First, welcome them by expanding legal paths for safe migration and ending deportation back to coun-

tries where they would face persecution and violence. Pope Francis says Scripture reminds us: "Do not forget to show hospitality to strangers, for by so doing some people have shown hospitality to angels without knowing it." (Hebrews 13:2)

Second, protect the dignity of vulnerable populations, in particular women and children, from danger and exploitation. Pope Francis quotes the psalm, "The Lord watches over the foreigner and sustains the orphan and the widow" to demonstrate that "God does not discriminate." (Psalm 149:9)

Third, promote integral human development of migrants and refugees by ensuring their access to education to "better equip them to encounter others and to foster a spirit of dialogue rather than rejection or confrontation." The pope says God "loves the foreigner residing among you, giving them food and clothing. And you are to love those who are foreigners, for you yourselves were foreigners in Egypt." (Deuteronomy 10:18-19)

Fourth, integrate them in the daily life of the society that welcomes them, as part of "a process of mutual enrichment and fruitful cooperation." The pope quotes the apostle Paul: "You are no longer foreigners and strangers, but fellow citizens with God's people." (Ephesians 2:19)

Pope Francis also names two pending agreements, known as Global Compacts, one for safe, orderly migration and the other for refugees, that the United Nations is scheduled to draft and approve in 2018 as the structure in which nations can respond to this crisis. He says the compacts need to be "inspired by compassion, foresight and courage" so as to advance peace. "Only in this way can the realism required of international politics avoid surrendering to cynicism and to the globalization of indifference."§

Faith an action:

Read and share the World Day of Peace message of Pope Francis. <http://bit.ly/WDP2018>

Share our two-pager about the message with your faith community and consider ways to take action. <http://bit.ly/2BqavUL>

Send a letter to President Trump. The Trump administration announced on December 2 that the U.S. government is withdrawing from the process at the UN to develop a Global Compact on Migration. Ask the president to reconsider this decision. <http://bit.ly/USCompact>

Life and death along the U.S.-Mexico border

Darrin Mortenson, migration fellow for the Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns, attended the Border Encuentro organized by SOA Watch in Tucson, Arizona, in November. From there, he visited a migrant shelter on the Mexico-side of the border and volunteered with a group maintaining water stations along migrant trails on the U.S.-side of the border.

ELOY, ARIZONA – People gather slowly around a makeshift truck-bed stage as the sinking sun paints the sky in swishes of purple and pink behind the distant ranges that ring the scene. By nightfall they are a mass. After shouting their outrage and singing of solidarity, the 500-strong crowd assembled for the School of the Americas Watch “Border Encuentro” turns to face the behemoth behind, the Eloy Detention Center, a private prison where the Immigration and Customs Enforcement army sends undocumented migrants for months or years.

They chant, timid at first, but roaring by the time they reach the phalanx of armed ICE agents at the barbed-wire fence. “No estan solos! No estan solos!” You are not alone. You are not alone, they shout together, candles and light sticks glowing, hands high, outstretched or in pounding fists. They could be mistaken for a dangerous angry mob if it weren’t for their smiles and for the number of clergy, aged, and youth among them.

The wall of sound crashes right through the police and penetrates the fence rolls and across the long, flood-lit prison yard, shaking the four-story cellblock with “No estan solos! No estan solos!”

Slowly, by ones and twos, lonely-looking silhouettes appear in the lit cell windows, dark figures who press hands on the glass above their heads or mimic those across the yard chanting for their freedom, raising their arms and shaking their fists and waving their outstretched hands. They may be prisoners of place, silenced by walls of concrete and glass – and of hatred and fear – but they must know they are not forgotten or alone. The echo lifts their voices higher than any one of them could dream. But who, besides these strangers standing in the border’s mirror, will hear them?

NOGALES, SONORA, MEXICO – Vilcia peers across tables full of tired-looking men and teens hunched over plates full of eggs and beans to smile shyly at a volunteer. She and three companions have just made the perilous journey north from Honduras aboard “La Bestia,” hanging onto life and each other atop the notorious freight train through Mexico.

A half-dozen Samaritans from Green Valley, Arizona, about a forty minute drive north in that other, dis-

tant world for which these migrants yearn, have formed a fire-bucket line that stretches from a tiny kitchen to the head of each table to hand out breakfast to men, women and children whom they’ve never met before and will likely never see again. They say their weekly trip into Nogales to serve food and donate clothes to strangers at the Jesuit-run soup-kitchen and aid station, El Comedor, has become the high of their week, for some, the center of their lives. Most of the volunteers don’t speak Spanish, but communicate their welcome with their eyes, a smile, a hand placed softly on a shoulder or back.

On the sidewalk outside, along a busy street, Vilcia explains how she’s desperate to rejoin her 10-year old son, who is still in Phoenix living with a friend while she struggles to return. He wants to be a soldier in the U.S. Army when he grows up, she says. Tears fill her eyes as she tries to explain her purgatory tangle of asylum claims, immigration attorneys, deportation, and a family in Honduras who rejects her because she fled north. She shows me the scars on her arms and legs from burns and broken bones that tore through her skin – the final straw, a last brutal beating with a board by her husband, a ranking gang member, the reason she says they had to flee for their lives.

As she speaks, her teenaged male companions stand behind a truck parked in front of the Comedor, continuously peeing over the shoulders to a spot up the hill across the street where several dark figures stand halfway behind a mesquite tree. “Sicarios” – killers – I am told, young men hired by cartels to enforce a border-crossing tax on migrants, force them to carry drugs in lieu of payment, or snatch them up and extort a ransom from their loved ones back home.

The sicarios, the boys say, watch over the Comedor like hawks, preying on the migrants who leave in search of place to sleep, often the sprawling cemetery a few dusty blocks away. They say they’re not sure where they’ll go tonight. Nowhere is safe. Not the home they fled. Not here in sight of the U.S.-Mexico border. Not even ‘over there,’ in the promised land of the United States, where most have loved ones awaiting their arrival or jobs or even just a little hope. No, even there, they are hunted, preyed upon and on the run, looking for home.

BUENOS AIRES NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE, ARIZONA – Stephen, retired attorney and graduate of Harvard, pries back the branches of a creosote bush with a dusty boot to show me the bones. “There’s more over there,” he says, conceding that the scattered white shards are most likely the remains of deer, but how he can’t stop thinking about how this one in particular looks like the upper arm bone of a child. He’s done this too long not to wonder, he says.

‘This,’ for Stephen and the others volunteering with Humane Borders, means hauling a 300-gallon-tank-load of water to some 60 water barrels strategically placed throughout the desert for migrants to find. They, the migrants, are nowhere in sight, and never are, Stephen says. But the travelers’ signs are everywhere: discarded water bottles and clothes, foot trails that follow washes and ridges and down toward the highway and valley below. The only proof he says he needs to see, though, is how much water has disappeared from the barrels since the week before. “I don’t have know who it is,” he says.

I agree with Stephen and his companion Frank that the bones are probably deer, but while we’re here and while Frank refills the barrel, let’s have a look around. He cautions me about vigilantes who sabotage the barrels

and their trucks and to be careful as set out through the desert scrub. Agreeing to keep within sight of the 20-foot flag that marks the barrel, we set out in different directions through the desert around. Dipping into a wash and weaving up through scrub and sage, I’m only about 150 meters away when I find yellow tape marked “crime scene” flapping from a tree. I walk further I find another tree with more tape. Then more. I finally stop at a tree almost completely encircled with tape and spot there below two soiled latex gloves, black and dried. “Crime scene.” Someone’s story of migration ended right here.

I walk back to the truck, with the Tohono O’odham native Americans’ sacred peak Baboquivara lined up with the water-station flag in the distance, remembering what an old ‘Odham woman had told us in Tucson: “In my time this has become normalized,” she said. “But it’s not a normal thing to find dead people on your land.”

Days later I hear from Stephen. A migrant’s body was recovered from the site the previous summer. I’m haunted by how close he or she was to the flag, to the water, to the road, to sanctuary. So close yet so far. Always so far, though, from safety, from family, from home. Stephen invites me back on another water run. “Anytime,” he says. “We’ll be here.”§

Honduras: People and democracy are dying

The disputed presidential election on November 26 has led to ongoing violent demonstrations throughout Honduras. The future of the government of Juan Orlando Hernandez and democracy itself is in question.

Over the Christmas week mass protests still raged across Honduras and state forces escalated violent repression of the popular uprising a full month after the contested Nov. 26 presidential election that left U.S.-backed strongman Juan Orlando Hernandez in power for a second term. As military police attacked demonstrators with tear gas and live rounds at barricades and in the streets, powerful international forces – most notably the United States, the European Union and Mexico – have lined up behind the Honduran electoral commission’s Dec. 17 confirmation of Hernandez as the winner. Their endorsements come despite calls for new elections by the secretary general of the Organization of American States, whose election observers documented evidence of widespread fraud.

While the U.S. failed to officially recognize state repression and called for calm, officials from the UN and the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights denounced the Honduran state’s violent repression of popular uprising in the election’s chaotic aftermath that has left nearly 1,000 detained and XX dead.

International human rights and religious groups and more than 60 members of the U.S. Congress have called for a suspension of U.S. military and police assistance and freezing funds contingent of compliance with the human rights conditions certified by the State Department. But every day that Hernandez acts as president with the blessing of the United States is another day lost to hopes for a new poll, social stability, and legitimate democratic rule.

“By averting it’s eyes from what happened in Honduras, the Trump administration is signaling to the region that it is willing to overlook threats to the democratic process when dealing with an ally,” Adriana Beltran from the Washington Office on Latin America wrote in a statement on Dec. 22. “This was an opportunity for the United States to send a strong message that deeply flawed elections and the repression of peaceful protests are not acceptable. Instead, Washington has chosen to ignore human rights and democracy.”

For months before the recent vote and ongoing turmoil, broad-based opposition coalition, Alliance Against

the Dictatorship, had warned that Hernandez would try to steal the election. Election night irregularities proved them right. Opposition leaders quickly urged people into the streets to decry ballot stuffing, military intimidation at the polls and a suspicious crash of the computerized tally when it showed opposition candidate Salvador Nasralla leading Hernandez by an insurmountable five-percentage points. The night was followed days of rage. The government declared a martial law with dusk-to-dawn curfews enforced by Hernandez' handpicked national Military Police who killed, wounded and rounded up more protesters each night.

A partial recount and the Dec. 17 announcement of a Hernandez win failed to settle the streets. On Dec. 20, election observers from the UN and the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (CIDH) denounced abuses by the Honduran armed forces, citing the "illegal and excessive use of force to break up protests, which have resulted in the deaths of at least 12 demonstrators, dozens of injuries and hundreds of prisoners, many of whom were taken to military installations, where they have been brutally beaten, insulted and subjected to torture and other cruel and inhumane treatments and degradations." The UN observers also reported of attacks on the media, including the sabotage of Radio Progreso towers in Tegucigalpa on Dec. 9., which temporarily silenced the Jesuit-run station that has provided a voice for poor and oppressed communities since 1980 and has become a vital voice the popular resistance since the 2009 military coup.

As military police fired live ammunition into crowds furious over a stolen election, one well-known Radio Progreso voice made a desperate plea for help. "Help us please, for God's sake and for the love of this anguished people!" wrote Jesuit Father Ismael "Melo" Moreno by communiqué after Hernandez loyalists sabotaged the station's transmission gear. "Help us to free ourselves from this man and this group. They are a real threat to our lives!!!" he said. "Today is still time, once again in power it will be too late for us!!" In the days since Padre Melo's plea, hope for such deliverance has dimmed.

The current crisis – and weak U.S. response – is familiar to most Hondurans who survived the tumultuous aftermath of the military coup that forced popular president Jose Zelaya from power in 2009. Many draw a clear line between that coup and now. Then, the Obama Administration dragged its feet before condemning the coup, which was supported by leftover Cold Warriors and determined Drug War zealots in the government and U.S. Southern Command. By the time Obama's team

tepidly sought Zelaya's return to power, the post-coup government was already deeply entrenched and busy stacking the deck. Then Secretary of State Hillary Clinton later admitted the U.S. made sure that Zelaya would not return to office. Clinton wrote in her memoir "Hard Choices" that, "We strategized on a plan to restore order in Honduras and ensure that free and fair elections could be held quickly and legitimately, which would render the question of Zelaya moot." Many in and out outside of Honduras see that same cynical strategy at work today and harken back to the aftermath of the 2009 coup for clues for what happens next.

Empowered by U.S. tacit support, the coup's successors further militarized the country to blunt popular resistance. Subsequent post-coup administrations willingly satisfied U.S. national security goals in return for a flood of fresh funding and political cover for their domestic power and resource grab. Since his election in 2013, Hernandez has purged state institutions and courts of opposition and stacked them with friends, including five Supreme Court justices who in 2015 struck down an article in the Honduran constitution prohibiting a sitting president from seeking another term – setting the stage for the current crisis. Some of the same coup-plotting generals, who had justified their actions as necessary to prevent then-President Manuel Zelaya from seeking re-election, are now carrying out Hernandez' commands to bring order to the streets.

Why has Washington again "turned a blind eye" to the shift away from democracy in Honduras, asked journalist Silvio Carrillo in a Dec. 19 editorial in the New York Times. Carrillo, a nephew of slain indigenous activist Berta Caceres, whose 2016 killing has been linked to Honduran security forces, answered the question himself: "Perhaps the Trump Administration, like the Obama administration before it, believes Mr. Hernandez to be good for Honduras and American interests there," he said. Carrillo and other Honduras observers cite the Soto Cano military base just outside the capitol, Tegucigalpa, a key hub of the U.S. drug war operations and only major US base left in the region. Other interests include huge mining, energy and agro-industrial operations and efforts to stem US-bound migration, all priorities that have increasingly come before the needs and desires of the people of Honduras.

Despite the bloodshed, despite the possible long-term damage to democracy in Honduras, and despite the dangerous message it sends to other Latin American leaders who seek to hang onto power, those interests keep Honduras in turmoil and the U.S. standing firmly by Hernandez' side. §

Peru to pay Bear Creek Mining Company

A Maryknoll-supported legal collective in Peru brought an amicus brief as part of trade tribunal case which was decided on November 30.

On November 30, the three-judge panel at the International Court for State Investment Disputes, housed in the World Bank, released its decision in the case of Bear Creek Mining v. Peru. Bear Creek originally sued the government for \$522 million in 2011 — the expected profits of the Santa Ana silver mine and profit loss from their unrelated Corani mine. The suit was brought under the Canada-Peru free trade agreement.

Maryknoll missionaries have a particular interest in this case as a Maryknoll-supported organization works with affected communities around the mining area.

The Human Rights and Environment Association (Asociación Derechos Humanos y Medioambiente -DHUMA) was founded after the Diocese of Puno closed its human rights office. DHUMA was cofounded and is still supported by Maryknoll Sisters and Maryknoll Fathers and Brothers. Sister Patricia “Pat” Ryan remains part of the DHUMA team as an advisor.

Communities living near the Santa Ana Mine accused Bear Creek Mining Company of orchestrating an inadequate consultation process and making their portable water and sacred mountain vulnerable to contamination by mining chemicals. The government canceled the permit for the silver mine following mass demonstrations by Aymara and Quechua communities that paralyzed Puno City for weeks in 2011.

When Bear Creek launched the complaint in arbitration court over the suspension of the mine, DHUMA submitted an amicus brief to bring the community perspective to the tribunal. DHUMA argued that the company had not secured “social license,” or an agreement with the community. Representatives of DHUMA and Sister Pat Ryan attended the oral arguments in Washington, D.C. Their presence was precedent-setting.

DHUMA faults the company for their failure to obtain social license and for the nontransparent way they obtained the rights to the land - using a Peruvian citizen to get around a law (Decree 83) that says corporations cannot acquire land near the Bolivia-Peru border.

But DHUMA also faults the state for their rapacious support for extractive projects and their willingness to put corporate profits above the human rights of the Peruvian people. The government ultimately gave Bear Creek a waiver for Decree 83 reasoning that the mine was a public necessity. The government also did not ensure that the company complete a thorough and adequate consultation process of the Aymara communities

which is a legal obligation under both the International Labor Organization’s Convention 169 (Peru is a signatory) and Peruvian national law. They in fact supported the company’s project up until the social conflict came to a head.

The case received international attention from the UN Special Rapporteur on Indigenous Peoples, Vicki Tauli Corpuz, who visited Puno last year. DHUMA staff Cristobal Yugra (director) and Rodrigo Lauracio attended forums in New York and Geneva focused on business and human rights to present this case to demonstrate the importance of legally binding mechanisms to hold corporations accountable for human rights violations, such as the UN Binding Treaty on Transnational Corporations currently being negotiated in Geneva.

According to IAREporter, the three arbitrators ordered Peru to pay \$18.2 million and 75 percent of Bear Creek’s legal fees. This is only 3 percent of the original petition. The judges tossed out Bear Creek’s claim that they should receive damages for the financial impacts on the unrelated Corani mine. They also decided that given the very early stage of the project that it was fair for them to receive compensation for their initial investments. DHUMA saw this as an overall positive outcome given it was a small amount that ultimately is paid by Peruvian citizens.

One arbitrator wrote a dissent based on DHUMA’s amicus brief that suggested the company should be equally at fault as the government and that the government should pay only about half of the final settlement.

Nearly 100 people were originally charged with obstructing public services, disturbing the peace, and committing aggravated extortion against the state as part of the demonstrations in Puno that have become known as the “Aymarazo.” While the state dropped charges against 82 people, 18 people remained accused. DHUMA was part of the legal team defending the 18. Ultimately, only the movement leader, Walter Aduviri, was sentenced in July 2017 to seven years in prison and ordered to pay a \$600,000 fine. His lawyers are appealing the decision.

Criminalization of protest is a problem in Peru and globally. DHUMA had hoped the outcome of the trial could send a message that the right to peaceful protest is a valid means to have legitimate political and social demands heard and attended by the State and therefore should not be criminalized. §

Brazil: Protests against pension reform

The Brazilian small-scale farmers movement led a hunger strike in the first week of December as part of the massive protests against what some have called the most socially regressive austerity package in the world.

Members of two small-scale farmers' movements recently suspended their hunger strike after ten days when Congress decided to delay its vote on social security reform until February 2018. The reforms would raise the retirement age and lower the amount received. This reform follows a series of unpopular actions by President Michel Temer, which some say are aimed at reducing the federal deficit. Yet a number of other actions taken by Temer seem to contradict the rhetoric about lowering the deficit.

Temer's first act after assuming the presidency in 2016 following the controversial impeachment of Dilma Rousseff was to reorganize the cabinet of ministers. This drew much criticism. He appointed only men - 1979 was the last time there were no female ministers. He also weakened the General Controller of the Union, an agency designed to root out governmental corruption, by removing its autonomy, an act criticized by the United Nations and other international partners.

With a strong emphasis on reducing the federal deficit, Temer has advocated for severe spending cuts. He pushed for a Constitutional amendment establishing a 20-year ceiling on government spending, limiting annual increases up to the rate of inflation; basically a freeze on real government spending, though public debt payments to large banks are not included in the limit.

In addition to establishing this strong ceiling on overall spending, Temer shut down the "Popular Pharmacy" program that provided lower cost medicines for low income families and the "Science Without Frontiers" program that had sent 93,000 students to study science in other countries. He has also enacted severe cuts in the "My House My Life" program for low income housing and "Light for All" aimed at extending electricity to all Brazilians. He increased the minimum wage less than the rate of inflation for the first time in 14 years.

These types of cuts are especially onerous as the economy slowly pulls out of a three-year recession that has driven many into poverty. At the end of 2016 Brazil

had 24,8 million people living on less than one-fourth of the minimum wage or R\$220 (US\$67.90) - 53 percent more people than in 2014. Considering the World Bank's definition of extreme poverty, US\$5.50 per day there were 52.2 million living in extreme poverty.

And Temer's rhetoric about needing to reduce the federal deficit ring hollow for, while drastically cutting programs needed by the increasing number of families in need, he is spending lavish amounts on corporations. He granted tax amnesty to corporations totaling more than R\$2 trillion (US\$617.3 billion), an amount that alone would pay for the education budget for more than 22 years.

Temer has also maintained a number of financial subsidies and tax rebates for businesses, nicknamed the "Businessman Basket," a reference to the "Family Basket" an income supplement program for poor families. These bonuses for businesses will total an estimated R\$224 billion (US\$69 billion), seven times the Bolsa Family program. In addition to benefits for domestic firms, Temer recently voided taxes for foreign petroleum companies working in the offshore oil fields that he recently sold in a controversial move. The loss in taxes will total R\$1 trillion (US\$308.6 billion) over 25 years.

Finally, Temer has also greatly increased federal spending on media. While president Rousseff cut publicity spending by 34 percent in 2015, Temer increased such spending by 65 percent in his first six months. More recently, on December 18, attorney general Raquel Dodge questioned Temer's spending almost R\$100 million (US\$ 30.9 million) to "convince the population that the social security reform is not a regress," asking the Supreme Court to suspend the payments.

Despite this spending on propaganda, the social security reforms continue to be unpopular. While the delay of the vote in Congress has temporarily calmed protests, the farmers who led the hunger strike continue to organize against the measure and other unions plan to increase protests as the vote draws closer. §



A protest against the policies of President Michel Temer, April 25, 2017. Photo by Flickr/ Pedro Ribeiro Simões.

Zimbabwe's "electric moment"

Maryknoll Sister Elizabeth "Clariss" Zwareva writes about her homeland of Zimbabwe. Sr. Clariss serves as Maryknoll's representative at the United Nations where the Maryknoll Sisters and the Maryknoll Fathers & Brothers have consultative status with the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC).

On November 18 tens of thousands of Zimbabweans rallied in the streets of the capital city alongside soldiers mounted on tanks, calling for Robert Mugabe, the only president they had known since independence in 1980, to step down. Just as people danced in 1980 to embrace him as their liberator from white rule, in the same way, they danced now for liberation from his nearly forty-year rule after the military had placed him under house arrest.

Those of us for whom memories of fear, uncertainty, and the pain of living with violence, bloodshed, and death are still fresh, do not wish to see those events repeated in our time. The outcry for a "New Zimbabwe" and the subsequent resignation of Robert Mugabe on November 21 captured an electric moment that will be forever etched in the minds and hearts of the Zimbabwean people.

On the day the people of Zimbabwe took to the streets of Harare to demand that Mugabe resign, they stood under their multicolored flag, a symbol of national unity. It was a Kairos moment that erased political divisions as people's aspirations and hopes united them as one.

They danced to move the one man whose departure they hoped would end the long lines at the banks where a shortage of currency sometimes forces people to return home empty-handed. University graduates whose diplomas so far only serve to decorate walls joined the rallies in the hope for jobs that would empower life-long careers.

People, in general, cried out in hope that Zimbabwe will participate in and benefit from the development agenda offered by the United Nations. Stemming the brain drain that curtails the country's development is the first step. This can only happen if the electric moment of November 18 leads to free and fair elections that

guarantee peace and unity within the nation. For peace to come, no one must be left behind; absolutely no one.

The pictures of the massive crowds on the streets of Harare, with their voices and dances giving life to their hopes for freedom and prosperity, must become the images that guide the 2018 elections. For the country to move forward, every Zimbabwean man, woman, and child must be valued as contributing citizens.

Hopefully, the new president, Emmerson Mnangagwa, and those who will be at the helm of new presidential elections will remember the cheers that welcomed Mnangagwa back from his brief exile. Emmerson Mnangagwa served as the first vice president of Zimbabwe from 2014 until his dismissal in early November, which prompted the military to take action against Mugabe.

The cheers of the people that spread through the streets of Harare where buried frustrations only weeks ago. Their joy over the possibility of change erupted like a volcano on November 18 and people spontaneously danced together in jubilation.

Like Dr. Martin Luther King, the people of Zimbabwe are crying out "I have a dream." May no one erase that dream from the depths of their being! As thousands of Zimbabweans demonstrated peacefully on that day, may the elections remain peaceful as citizens throng to the polls in 2018 to make their voices heard. §

Read more about the end of Robert Mugabe's 37-year presidency in Zimbabwe in two articles by Maryknoll Sister Janice McLaughlin, in *The Tablet* at <http://bit.ly/2BRjNKs> and in the *Global Sisters Report* at <http://bit.ly/2kIbGIS>.



Evan Mawarire, a Baptist minister in Zimbabwe, unwittingly launched the country's "This Flag" protest movement in April 2016 when he posted a video of himself on social media, wearing the Zimbabwean flag draped around his neck and speaking about the need to overcome fear and to speak out against corruption, unemployment, and economic mismanagement. "This is our country. Only we can save it," Mawarire announced, and the #ThisFlag hashtag and movement was born.

Hope in Pakistan: An interview with Fr. Bonnie Mendes

Father Boniface "Bonnie" Mendes lives and works in the Diocese of Faisalabad in the eastern province of Punjab, Pakistan. Born and bred in Karachi, the 80-year-old priest is former executive secretary of the Pakistani bishops' National Commission for Justice and Peace and former head of CARITAS Asia. The following is an interview with Fr. Mendes, conducted via email by Gerry Lee, Director of the Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns, just days after the Dec. 17 suicide bombing attack on a church in Quetta in which nine people were killed and 57 injured.

Q: How have the Christians in Pakistan responded to the extremist violence, especially the church bombing?

Fr. Mendes: As Christians we are people of hope. These incidents only strengthen us to believe that Jesus is with us and will bless the Pakistani Church even more. In the midst of such tragedies we are firm in our faith. All the Christians I know are determined to live Christianity despite the challenges.

An elderly woman from a village said, "Great seeing so many young people in Church, never before were there so many people for the Novena prayers during Advent, from Monday the Chapel in our village is full. My cousins told me on the phone that in their villages the reaction is the same. The danger of being attacked is there, but people are not afraid. They are coming to Church. What is beautiful is that all of them are in their teens or early twenties, maybe early thirties, but they are young."

Q: What is the cause of the violence?

Fr. Mendes: It is hard to identify any one cause of violence, but in general, people put the blame on the United States and its allies. It is a long history. Pakistanis were singled out to go Afghanistan and drive out the Russians but once the Pakistanis and their friends succeeded, the U.S. and its allies forgot about us. All the sweet promises were over. We were left to struggle on our own.

Now the United States has decided to recognize Jerusalem as the capital of Israel. There is a strong sentiment here against that decision. But Trump and his government has forgotten the sacrifices Pakistan has made in the war against terror. We lost thousands and thousands of lives after the U.S. attacked Afghanistan within a month of 9/11. Who has paid the price? People from Afghanistan and Pakistan. Bush proudly said after the attack on Afghanistan that there is no resistance, after he bombed and bombed Afghanistan. Refugees poured into Pakistan. We played host to millions. When the refugees were here and the Zia government was all for Islam, seeds of intolerance were planted. People who hated the U.S. planted the seeds of violence in our country and we are still paying the price.

Q: Where is your hope?

Fr. Mendes: Packed Churches are a sign of hope, for sure. Different places had candle light services during Advent to remember the martyrs of Quetta.

Another sign is nobody is talking of denomination. All Christians are flocking together. The questions of denomination and giving the Eucharist only to Catholics are something for the Canonical and Liturgical people. The people in the street know that we are all Christians.

Another sign of hope is enlightened moderate Muslims are sympathizing with Christians. Some do not dare to speak out in case they are singled out for attack by some extremists, but in private conversation, they open up and sympathize with us.

Q: What are the challenges for the Church?

Fr. Mendes: The government is tightening security. We have to pay for CCTV cameras for our institutions; we have to employ armed guards; we have to raise the boundary wall of each building to ten feet and on top of that we have to put razor sharp wires. This is expensive and we do not know how to pay for it.

We have other challenges. Christians want priests in every Church for Mass. Rules say we are allowed to offer only three Masses a day but people expect Masses in villages. In each parish we have about 50 to 100 villages. We normally have at most 2 priests in a parish. After the attack, the people want Masses in the day and at night. We have midnight services on Christmas despite all the threats.

We are not armed and we are Church-going. Some youth only think of arms. The government wants our youth to be trained in shooting. Church guards have to get a license and own a gun. These are challenges for us. Expenses aside, we are against guns and we are being forced by the government to have armed guards at our churches. We cannot say no. §

Israel/Palestine: The question of Jerusalem

The Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns released a statement on opposing the Trump administration's decision to recognize Jerusalem as the capital of Israel and to move the U.S. embassy to Jerusalem.

Just as Pope Francis said “I cannot remain silent” about his deep concern about the United States’ decision, we, too cannot remain silent. The Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns repeats the pope’s appeal to those in power to respect “the status quo of the city, in accordance with the relevant resolutions of the United Nations.”

“The United States’ decision will further entrench Israel’s illegal occupation of East Jerusalem and the human rights violations that the Palestinian people suffer daily,” said Gerry Lee, director of the Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns. “This decision will only foster more hatred, conflict, violence and suffering in Jerusalem and throughout the Middle East.”

Fifteen U.S. churches and Christian organizations, including the Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns, reiterated their call for peace, justice, and equality in Israel/Palestine in a letter to Members of Congress that included a paper they sent Congress and to President Trump and his Administration earlier this year in which state: “The Administration’s decision upends nearly 70 years of U.S. policy of neutrality on the issue of sovereignty over Jerusalem, putting the U.S. squarely on one side and disregarding the rights, needs, and aspirations of the Palestinian people.” The letter concludes with an invitation to President Trump to “walk with us in hope as we build a just, inclusive peace for all the peoples of this unique and Holy City.”

Jerusalem is a place of pilgrimage for Christians from all around the world, yet Christians who live just next door to the city must get permits to worship there and may be denied entry altogether. Jerusalem is home to over 800,000 residents, 62 percent of whom are Jewish, 35 percent Muslim, and about two percent Christian. Israel claims all of Jerusalem as its capital, having unilaterally annexed the eastern portions of the city following the 1967 war in a move not recognized by the international community, which included the United States — until now.



Housing is one of the key areas in which Palestinians in Jerusalem face discrimination. It is nearly impossible for Palestinians to get building permits from the Israeli authorities, and when they build without a permit, their homes and other structures face the very real threat of demolition. Even as Palestinian homes are destroyed and their residents displaced, building continues in the illegal Jewish settlements in East Jerusalem. Palestinians are also subject to having their residency rights in East Jerusalem revoked, due to discriminatory laws and practices of the Israeli government.

Palestinians’ right to education in Jerusalem is also compromised by the Israeli occupation. The Separation Wall delays or prevents students from getting to school and the permit system can result in West Bank teachers not being able to reach Jerusalem schools.

The restrictions on movement which affect education also affect Palestinians’ access to sites of worship. For Palestinians living in the occupied territories, getting to and from Jerusalem means navigating an obstacle course of checkpoints, permits, intermittent closures, and the separation barrier. Even for Palestinian residents of Jerusalem, celebrating religious holidays can be a challenge.

To achieve lasting peace, the occupation of East Jerusalem must end and the status of Jerusalem and its boundaries must be determined by a peace agreement between Israeli and Palestinians. The United States’ decision to turn a blind eye to these serious concerns and recognize Jerusalem as the capital of Israel can only foment violence and endanger lives.

The Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns urges the U.S. Congress to denounce the Trump administration’s decision and to deny funding the move of the U.S. embassy from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem. §

Faith in action:

Send this message to your members of the U.S. Congress by using our action alert. <http://bit.ly/2BmZu6C>

Receive our latest updates on this issue by subscribing to Middle East Notes. <http://bit.ly/2kFTCz7>

U.S. action to protect Palestinian children

For the first time, Congress is considering a bill that bars the United States from financially supporting human rights abuses of Palestinian children by the Israeli military.

On November 14, U.S. Congresswoman Betty McCollum (D-MN) introduced a bill to prevent U.S. tax dollars from paying for human rights violations against Palestinian children in Israeli military detention.

The Promoting Human Rights by Ending Israeli Military Detention of Palestinian Children Act (H.R. 4391) requires the Secretary of State to certify annually that no funds obligated or expended in the previous year by the United States for assistance to Israel have been used to support prohibited practices under international law. If the Secretary cannot make this certification, a detailed report is required outlining the amount of money spent in violation of the bill and how it was spent.

In the 1967 War, Israel occupied the Palestinian lands of the West Bank and Gaza and has since implemented a two-tiered legal system in these territories: civil law for Israeli settlers (whose settlements are ille-

gal according to international law); and military law for Palestinians, denying them their basic and fundamental rights. Palestinian children and youth are, therefore, subject to military arrest and prosecution by Israel, the only country that systematically does so in military courts.

Numerous human rights organizations have documented cases of Palestinian children subject to physical and verbal abuse, strip searches, solitary confinement, coerced confessions, and separation from their parents and legal counsel. All of which are violations of international humanitarian law. §

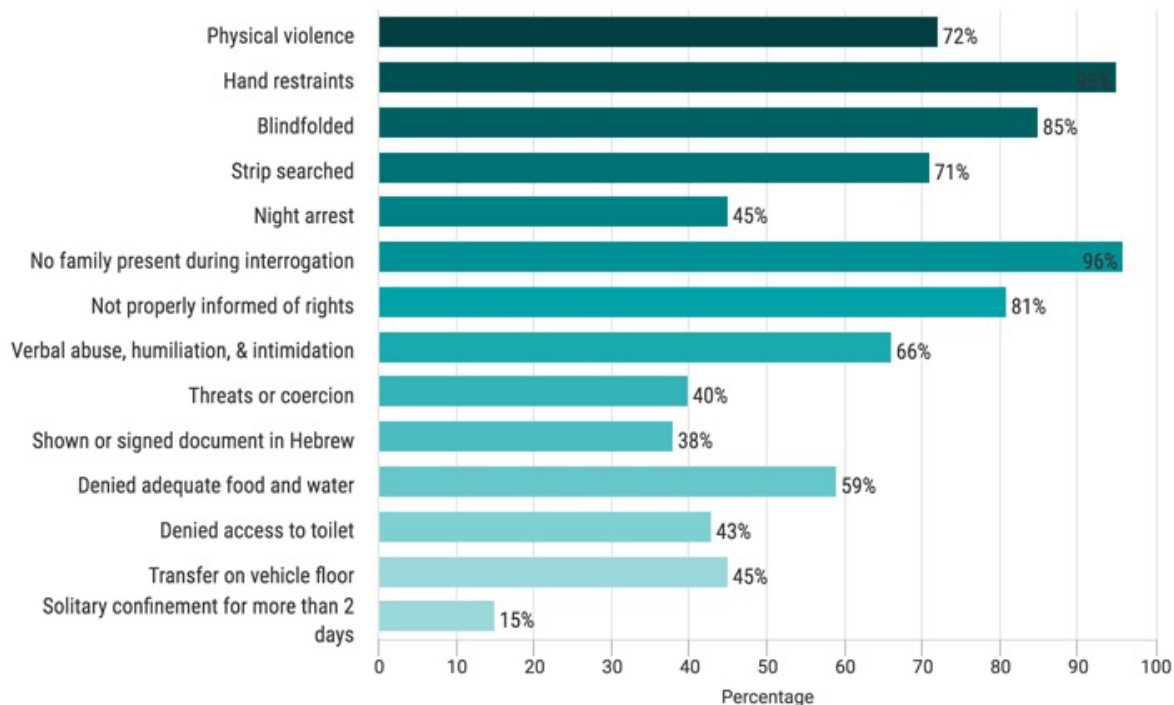
Faith in action:

For more information about the issue, visit the “No Way to Treat a Child” campaign. <http://bit.ly/2kVvo3c>

Ask your U.S. Representatives to support the bill <http://bit.ly/2pcsD2K>

Ill-treatment of Palestinian child detainees by Israeli forces

Israel prosecutes between 500 and 700 Palestinian children in a military court system each year that lacks basic fair trial guarantees and is notorious for widespread, systematic, and institutionalized ill-treatment of Palestinian child detainees. Defense for Children International - Palestine (DCIP) collected 590 sworn affidavits from Palestinian children detained by Israeli forces from the occupied West Bank between 2012 and 2016. The data below shows the types of ill-treatment reported by these children.



Source: Defense for Children International - Palestine (DCIP)

Trade: Faith leaders raise concerns on NAFTA

Renegotiations of the North America Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) will continue in 2018. Faith leaders across Canada, Mexico and the United States are calling for a trade agreement centered on right relationship.

Talks between Canada, the United States, and Mexico about changes to the trade deal which governs more than \$1 trillion in annual commerce between the three countries have been happening largely out of the spotlight and at breakneck speed, with repeated threats from President Donald Trump of quitting the deal altogether.

Over the past 25 years, the North America Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) has enabled corporations to outsource jobs from the U.S. to Mexico to take advantage of weak and unenforced labor and environmental standards. According to Bloomberg News, Mexicans are worse off today because of it – low wages, higher income inequality, unchecked threats to organized labor, as well as limited access to clean drinking water, healthy air, and proper sewage and waste disposal.

In November, Catholic Bishops in Mexico, the United States, and Canada released a joint pastoral letter entitled “Renegotiating NAFTA: Rebuilding our Economic Relationship in Solidarity, Mutual Trust, and Justice.” The statement opens with calling on the countries to work together. “Regardless of whether a successful renegotiation of NAFTA takes place, the three governments should steadfastly pursue a commercial relationship that is mutually respectful, just, and solidary, especially for the poorest in our countries,” the bishops said.

The statement provides a moral marker of what trade should do and what the consequences are of conducting business as usual. “We believe that treaties, like all commercial and economic policies, are means of achieving the welfare and integral development of all,” said the bishops. “As such, they must respond to peoples’ most basic needs. This means that they must be crafted and evaluated in such a way that they respect human, civil, political, economic, social, cultural, and environmental rights at the individual, family and community levels, as well as the rights of nations and peoples.”

“Otherwise, and if adequate compensatory economic, political, and social policies are not adopted that mitigate and counteract the previously mentioned adverse effects, as has been the case thus far, inequalities between regions, sectors, and various groups will deepen, as well as forced displacement and disordered, involuntary and unsafe migration, as well as violence, will continue to predominate.”

The guiding themes the bishops name as key con-

siderations are: migration, work and labor protections, sustainable development and care for creation, indigenous peoples, food and agriculture, and intellectual property rights.

The statement ends with a call for greater public participation in the process: “Human dignity demands that people have a voice in decisions that touch their lives.”

The Washington-based Interfaith Working Group on Trade and Investment released a separate but resonant letter ahead of the December NAFTA negotiations in Washington, D.C. Their letter reflected the experience of people serving in mission globally.

“Based on the experiences and witness of our mission partners, we see how these agreements disproportionately benefit a small number of individuals, governments, and corporations while leaving the majority of people on the margins. Such agreements favor the interests of transnational corporations above the quality of life of working people and other vulnerable populations, such as women, children and indigenous communities throughout North America. We believe that this economic model does not reflect the shared values held by our traditions of solidarity, justice, dignity and respect for all.”

The working group’s letter calls for an end to the controversial investor-state dispute settlement mechanism (the legal instrument Bear Creek Mining Co. used to sue the government of Peru), inclusion of just labor and environmental protections, access to life-saving medicines, and promotion of sustainable agriculture..

In the working group’s vision of reform, trade policy must address “issues of inequality, the alleviation of poverty, and the protection of the planet. At its core, the goal of U.S. trade policy should be to promote sustainable development and livelihoods through environmental, economic and social well-being that mutually benefits all members of society.”

Given the upcoming elections in both Mexico and the United States, NAFTA negotiations need to be completed by March. It is widely believed that if negotiations continue beyond then, President Trump may announce the six-month notice to withdraw from the deal to force the issue. However, Congress may take up legislation preventing a president from withdrawing from trade agreements. §

Slave-free seafood label campaign

Catholic organizations press for positive change in the lives of those who work in the international fishing industry.

An estimated 45 million people worldwide are victims of sex or labor trafficking, which uses force or other forms of coercion, abduction, or deception for the purposes of exploitation. Two-thirds of the world's human trafficking occurs in the Asia-Pacific region, according to the Global Slavery Index for 2016.

On November 27, the UN Security Council responded to recent reports of the slave trade of African migrants in Libya by approving a resolution which calls on countries to adopt anti-trafficking laws, ramp up efforts to investigate and dismantle criminal networks and provide greater support for survivors of slavery.

The seafood supply chain, in particular, is known to be rife with trafficking, from catching fish to processing and shipping it for export. Coupled with global demand for cheap seafood, lawless conditions at sea enable this modern slavery to flourish.

Thailand is the world's third-largest seafood exporter. A Pulitzer Prize-winning investigative report by The Associated Press in 2016 found that some seafood caught and processed by trapped and enslaved workers on Thai boats—mostly migrants from Myanmar and Cambodia—was shipped to the United States for sale at supermarkets and pet food stores.

The AP report includes details of what workers endure at sea: 18 to 20-hour workdays, seven days a week; hazardous and life-threatening conditions; inadequate food and blatant disregard for their basic medical needs and injuries. Employers routinely beat and torture workers to force compliance. Some workers are held at sea for years on large fishing vessels because of a lack of regulation. On land, women and even children working in the seafood processing and canning facilities are subjected to long hours, unsafe conditions, physical abuse and neglect of injuries.

As the largest importer in the world, the United States is in a unique position to demand information on the production of goods we use every day. As Catholics, we believe in the dignity of every human life and vehemently oppose human trafficking and modern-day slavery as it contravenes basic human dignity.

To commemorate the International Day for the Abolition of Slavery on December 2, the Coalition of Catholic Organizations Against Human Trafficking launched a letter campaign to ask seafood producers, distributors and seafood retailers, including Bumblebee Seafood

[PDF] and Chicken of the Sea, to make public, through packaged product labeling, their efforts to fight human trafficking in their product supply chains. A label on seafood packaging declaring the chain of production to be “slave-free” would provide consumers the information needed to make moral purchasing decisions. Read the letters at <http://www.usccb.org/news/2017/17-235.cfm>

The coalition is facilitated by the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops and consists of over 30 national and international Catholic agencies, including the Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns.

To support the request for slave-free seafood labels, the Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns and other members of the coalition distributed a “Labeling for Lent” survey in March 2017, asking consumers if slave-free labeling would affect purchases. Over 2,200 people responded and the results showed that 99 percent of consumers want companies to take steps to engage in ethical business practices, 98 percent want their packaged seafood to be labeled, and 97 percent said labels would influence their purchasing decisions.

"Catholics are becoming increasingly aware of the collective power they possess as consumers to press for positive change in the lives of those who catch our fish. As my coalition colleagues have remarked, 'we are asking the seafood industry to do better. The companies that do will be supported by consumers,'" said Hilary Chester, Director of Anti-Trafficking at the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops.

The consumer survey built upon a 2016 Lenten postcard campaign in which supporters of the Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns and other members of the coalition mailed a total 15,000 postcards to U.S. seafood retailers urging them to examine their supply chains and commit to a product free of slave labor. §

Faith in action:

January is Human Trafficking Awareness Month. The coalition offers a toolkit of educational resources as well as prayers for celebrating the feast day of St. Josephine Bakhita on February 8 at <http://bit.ly/2kZBFem>

Greenpeace has ranked 20 well-known canned tuna brands that can be found in grocery stores in the U.S. based on how sustainable, ethical, and fair their tuna products are for our oceans and for the workers that help get the products to store shelves. <http://www.greenpeace.org/usa/oceans/tuna-guide/>

Resources

- 1) **World Day of Peace is January 1.** Share our two-page flyer about Pope Francis' message for the day. <http://bit.ly/2BqavUL>
- 2) **Listen to "Among the People"** the new free podcast series produced by the Maryknoll Father and Brothers. The first episode features Maryknoll Father John Beeching in Thailand. Listen free online at iTunes, SoundCloud, and Google Play (<http://apple.co/2BvARox>)
- 3) **Join the National Week of Action to Close Guantanamo, January 6 – 14** in Washington, D.C. and various cities across the United States. Find a list of locations and resources at <http://bit.ly/CloseGITMO2018>
- 4) **Read "Climate Action for the Common Good: Reflecting the principles of Laudato Si"** a report by CIDSE presented at the UN Climate Talks (COP23) in Bonn, Germany. <http://bit.ly/2BswScd>
- 5) **Watch videos and read presentations from the conference "The Catholic Church Moves Towards Nonviolence? Just Peace Just War In Dialogue"** held at the University of San Diego, Oct. 6-7. Visit the link to see videos of Cardinal Peter Turkson and Maria J Stephan; read the presentations from Marie Adele Dennis, Ken Butigan, Gerald Schlabach, Terry Rynne, and Eli Sasaran McCarthy. <http://bit.ly/2BuVph3>
- 6) **Read "The Church and Peace in South Sudan,"** by John Ashworth published in the October 2017 issue of *Sudan Studies for South Sudan*. Ashworth traces the way the Catholic Church has been distinctively involved in peace efforts in all levels of Sudanese society since 1972 and argues for its unique potential to help resolve the current conflict in South Sudan. <http://bit.ly/2znSV1T>
- 7) **Use a resource sheet on Catholic views on drone warfare** produced by the Interfaith Network on Drone Warfare and the Office of International Justice and Peace of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops. <http://bit.ly/2C5dzjt>
- 8) **Use a new toolkit on fossil fuels divestment and investment specifically directed at Catholic institutions** created by Global Catholic Climate Movement and The "Ethical Investment in an era of climate change" toolkit is available online at <http://bit.ly/2D6psf1>
- 9) **Read "Temporary Protected Status: A Vital Piece of the Central American Protection and Prosperity Puzzle"** a new report by the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops' Office of Migration and Refugee Services recommending the U.S. government extend Temporary Protected Status (TPS) for El Salvador and Honduras. <http://bit.ly/2BW2UOO>
- 10) **Watch "Thank God it's Friday"** a documentary that provides an insight into the daily lives of Palestinians living in the occupied West Bank village of Nabi Saleh. <https://electronicintifada.net/blogs/ali-abunimah/watch-thank-god-its-friday>
- 11) **Read "The Rise of Big Meat: Brazil's Extractive Industry,"** a new report by IATP, the Heinrich Böll Foundation and FASE, examining the social and environmental impacts of transnational corporations present in Brazil and their role in shaping the global meat complex. <https://www.iatp.org/the-rise-of-big-meat>
- 12) **Plan now to attend Ecumenical Advocacy Days (EAD) in Washington, D.C., April 20 – 23.** The theme is "A World Uprooted: Responding to Migrants, Refugees and Displaced People." More information is available at www.advocacydays.org, or contact the Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns.
- 13) **Read "Haiti's Ongoing Road to Recovery: The Necessity of an Extension of Temporary Protected Status",** the new report by the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops' Office of Migration and Refugee Services recommending the U.S. government extend Temporary Protected Status (TPS) for Haiti. <http://bit.ly/2po5FG7>
- 14) **Plan now to attend the Churches for Middle East Peace (CMEP) Advocacy Summit** in Washington, D.C., **June 17-19.** The theme is "And Still We Rise: Transforming U.S. Policy Toward a Just Middle East." And Still We Rise seeks to elevate the voices, contributions, and leadership of women peacemakers. <http://cmep.org/werise2018/>