



Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns

NewsNotes

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Immigration: Ongoing family separation, asylum crisis

Since early May, Maryknoll missionaries along the U.S.-Mexico border and the Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns in Washington, D.C. have taken action to end family separation and protect the rights of asylum seekers.

When the Trump administration enacted a “zero tolerance” immigration policy on May 4, the Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns responded by issuing a statement that began:

“In the strongest possible terms, the Maryknoll Office of Global Concerns denounces the new ‘zero-tolerance’ immigration policies enacted by the United States on May 4, including the criminal prosecution of anyone who crosses the U.S.-Mexico border illegally and the unnecessary breaking apart of families as a means of deterrence. Placed in context these policies illustrate the next steps the United States has taken down an already dark path – a path clouded by fear and distorted ideologies that violate our core values and further diminish the United States’ role as a world leader.”

Our statement went on to say: “To criminalize those who come seeking asylum, to escalate their trauma in terms of detention and confinement, and to routinely separate children from their parents is extreme, inhumane and contrary to our core Christian values to welcome the stranger and safeguard the sanctity of the family. We call on the United States to eliminate these unjust policies immediately and to regulate its borders with justice and mercy.” ... Read the full statement at <http://bit.ly/ZeroToleranceStatement>

That same day, we created an action alert, “Take action to stop family separation,” to enable our supporters to contact their Members of Congress and urge them to use their oversight capabilities to stop the Department of Homeland Security from separating families.

As the days passed and news spread about the numbers of immigrant families being separated – more than 2,300 children separated from their parents since early May – and more families seeking asylum being turned away by U.S Border Patrol along the U.S.-Mexico border, we issued two more action alerts. First, we invited people to join “Families Belong Together” actions, including attending rallies on June 30 and calling and writing Congress to support the “Keep Families Together Act.”

Soon after that, we shared an action alert from the U.S. Catholic Bishops’ Justice for Immigrants Campaign which asked supporters to urge their Members of Congress to vote No on two harmful immigration bills. Both bills failed to pass in the House.

The U.S. Catholic Bishops have led the faith community in denouncing the “zero tolerance” policy and

the family separations it has caused as “immoral” and warning that it could signify the “hardening of the American heart.” Their strongly worded rejection of policies causing migrant families to be separated and tightening asylum criteria was quickly endorsed by Pope Francis who said in an interview with Reuters news agency that was published on June 20, “I am on the side of the bishops’ conference.”

Throughout the month of May and June we have also shared prayers: Prayer for Migrants and Refugees from Catholic Relief Services, and Prayer for Families at the Border from the Center of Concern.

We also have joined demonstrations and public prayer vigils at the White House, Department of Justice, Immigration and Customs Protection (ICE), and U.S. Capitol Building. One of particular note occurred on June 28: The “End Family Detention: Women Take Action” march and mass nonviolent civil disobedience at the U.S. Capitol. More than 600 women were arrested, including Susan Gunn, Communications Manager of the Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns. Read her account of the day at <http://bit.ly/WomenDisobey>

While Catholic voices reached the halls of power in Washington, D.C., and rose prophetically in the national discourse, Maryknoll Sisters along the U.S.-Mexico border were steadfastly bearing witness to and speaking out against the “zero-tolerance” system and serving migrants caught in its gears.

“Just too awful to believe ... and, yet, it’s happening,” wrote Sister Lil Mattingly in a breathless, emotional email from El Paso, Texas, one of the centers of the crisis. “The saddest is how the children are taken from the parents, of course!” Mattingly wrote. “Who could believe such cruelty?”

Public outcry forced President Trump to reverse course on June 20 and issue an executive order to detain families together – another problem altogether. The U.S. government still has not shared a clear plan for reuniting the thousands of children already separated from their parents.

“Thank God for the outcry, the outrage, the protests, and for the persons who are hearing, feeling the pain, even Congresspersons finally trying to reach Trump/Sessions,” Mattingly wrote. “There have been marches and rallies like 3-4 times or more a week here,” she said, describing a recent March to the “tent city” for children in Tornillo, an hour from El Paso. “Another

march yesterday downtown, seems like marches every day, to the courthouses, etc.”

The policies got personal, Sr. Mattingly said. She and Maryknoll Sr. Maggie Sierra have for months been visiting a 63-year-old Honduran grandmother in immigration detention in El Paso, serving an 18-month sentence for illegal entry. Mattingly said the woman was “snatched from her bed” by agents at 3 a.m. on June 22. “We don’t know how and when she will be returned to Honduras, her daughter and family crying in Houston,” Mattingly wrote. “ICE needs beds for others they are bringing in.”

Likewise, Sr. Sierra told stories of other women whose children had been taken away from them, including one who “lost her mind” and began hallucinating in her grief.

Often lost in the din of media coverage is a second

de facto policy created when Attorney General Jeff Sessions, overturned years of immigration case law and removed fear of domestic and gang violence as legitimate reasons for asylum. This single legal decision makes it extremely improbable that Central American asylum seekers can win or even have their cases heard.

Sr. Mattingly called for more attention to what drives migrants from their homes. “I think we need to keep returning to the roots of migration, reminding folks to tell Congress to stop supporting the dictator in Honduras, and to stop militarizing countries like El Salvador and Guatemala in the name of the ‘Drug War’, to stop sending guns to Central and Latin America ... to stop the mining companies and others robbing the land and resources, impoverishing, contaminating their lands ...”§

Faith in action: Read the online version of this article for links <http://bit.ly/2lQc5ck>

What are the root causes of migration from Central America?

Latin American Working Group documented the violence, corruption, and impunity that forces individuals to leave their homes in Central America in a new 48-page report, “Between a Wall and a Dangerous Place.” <http://bit.ly/LAWGReport>

Life under 'zero tolerance'

Maryknoll Sister Ann Hayden reports on the crisis of U.S. immigration policy from Peñitas, a small, rural border town in deep south Texas, fourteen miles west of the city of McAllen, site of the largest immigration processing center in the United States where currently thousands of undocumented adults and immigrant children separated from their parents by U.S. Border Patrol are detained.

Even before the president’s “zero tolerance” policy, and before the arrival of the news media and Congresswomen and men into the lower Rio Grande Valley to expose to the nation the situation of the immigrant children separated from their parents by U.S. Border Patrol, Maryknoll Sister Patricia “Pat” Edmiston and I were aware of growing issues related to what appeared to be deliberate, planned delays at U.S.-Mexico border crossings in both Brownsville/Matamoros and McAllen/Reynoso in the processing of immigrants seeking asylum in the United States.

Parents with children, and young adults, were waiting for days, even weeks, on the bridges, sleeping on their belongings or cardboard cartons spread out on the sidewalks. Various respite groups from both the U.S and Mexico have been bringing water and food to the people there during their unusually long waits to be processed.

Many of those seeking asylum are fleeing violence

in the northern triangle of Central America due to gangs that threaten their lives and livelihoods, and due to domestic abuse. The often corrupt governments of Guatemala, El Salvador and Honduras, long supported by the United States, ignore the alarming growth of violence against poor families, and especially women, in their countries.

With dwindling resources, and growing fear that they would not make it into the U.S., some have left the bridges in search of other ways to enter the United States, even as undocumented immigrants. Organizations who are aware of and involved with immigrant issues were already organizing protests over lack of protections for the legal right to seek asylum at these border entry points. Then, in the wake of the announcement of the “zero tolerance” policy and its immediate enforcement, resulting in the rapidly growing number of children detained separately from their parents, along with

the silence regarding the children's whereabouts, protest demonstrations were mounted to bring attention to this abuse of basic human rights of children and families.

As more and more families were separated, and the children were hidden in hastily constructed detention centers in Texas and then secretly sent around the country, the Catholic Bishops in the area like, Bishop Daniel Flores of Brownsville Diocese and Danial Cardinal DiNardo of Galveston/Houston, issued statements and representatives of various churches all over the area began to speak out about this situation of abuse. We heard about families that had spent all their resources on traveling for months from their home countries to the border, who came seeking asylum without knowing that their children would be taken from them. We heard about others so desperate to flee violence that they cling to the hope that they can cross successfully, only to be arrested and charged as "criminals."

The arrival of the media in McAllen and elsewhere in the Rio Grande Valley, the growing number of photos, audio recordings and video footage have revealed the tremendous suffering of the children and parents in this terrible situation. The chorus of protest has grown beyond the Rio Grand Valley to all around the country.

While Pat and I have been visiting and bringing others to visit and volunteer at the McAllen Respite Center run by Catholic Charities since our arrival in Peñitas in September 2016, our main ministry continues to be pastoral care in a large parish with many undocumented members. As we gather parishioners for formation classes, Basic Christian Community meetings, and youth retreats, there is a clear "don't ask, don't tell" approach to immigration status.

We try not to gather all the parishioners together in one place but in the mission church nearest to them or we visit them in their homes. We try to share in personal conversations and small gatherings the advice of immigration lawyers regarding immigrant rights in the U.S. and encourage families to make plans with their children and extended family members or neighbors regarding all the "What if" situations they face, given the uncertainties of life for undocumented immigrants and DACA recipients, the large presence of Border Patrol on the roads throughout our area, and the 2017 law in Texas that allows, but does not demand, that local police check for immigration documentation when making traffic stops.

We are also members of an interfaith group which organized a Catholic-led "Interfaith Vigil and Walk for Migrant Families" to the Federal Court House in McAllen on the evening of June 20. We began with more than 300 people gathered under a light rain in downtown

Archer Park. The news media (including local and national news channels like MSNBC) interviewed various people there, including Bishop Flores and Sr. Norma Pimentel (Executive Director of Catholic Charities of the Rio Grande Valley).

Faith leaders, including Catholic, Muslim, Jewish and other Christian Church leaders and Sr. Norma addressed the crowd and spoke about the need for an immediate plan and actual reunification of the separated families, openness regarding the care of the immigrant children, and an end to the secrecy that shrouds this whole process even today. After an opening prayer and speeches, we walked prayerfully, two by two, with candles to the Federal Court House in McAllen, where immigration cases are heard.

"God hears our prayers," said Miguel Santos of the Catholic Diocese of Brownsville in his opening remarks at the vigil. "We're gathered here tonight. We may come from different countries. We may come from different faith tradition. We may even come from a different place in a political or ideological spectrum. But we are here because something very special brings us together and that is Love of God and Love of neighbor."

"We thank God for this gathering, this moment of prayer," said Bishop Daniel Flores of Brownsville during the walk. "We put our trust in God's promise as we recognize that God puts us on the road that other people travel so that we might help them. That is the spirit of this walk. That God puts us really today on the road that helps us to be servants of those who walk. We thank God for the grace and the continued hope we have for a better way of life for all people, especially those who are most vulnerable."

We hope this act of solidarity demonstrates our support for the migrant community here and for all those who seek refuge and asylum, who are being treated with disdain and disregard for their human rights and dignity. The suffering is immense.

Yes, there are those, even in the Rio Grande Valley, who feel we must keep our borders 'safe' no matter the human cost. But we pray that grace may touch the hearts of all those involved to right this wrong and restore the heart of our immigrant nation to compassion and justice for the 'stranger' in need of refuge and welcome in our midst.

Thank you for all you do to champion the cause of refugees and migrants around the world.

In grateful peace,

Ann§

Faith in action: Read a poem by Sr. Ann Hayden, MM entitled "Zero Tolerance" <http://bit.ly/ZeroTole>

Crafting the Global Compact for Migration

UN member states are scheduled to hold their last round of negotiations for the Global Compact for Migration July 9-13 with the goal of producing a final draft document for adoption at the International Migration Conference in Morocco in December.

Since the United Nations General Assembly hosted the first-ever Summit for Refugees and Migrants in New York in 2016, where 193 UN member states adopted the New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants, there have been five rounds of negotiations for a final draft of a Global Compact on Safe, Regular and Orderly Migration. Member states are scheduled to adopt the compact at the UN's intergovernmental conference on migration in Morocco on December 10 and 11.

The summit in 2016 was a historic event, with countries and civil society cooperating at the highest level of governance to improve the conditions of the estimated 244 million migrants and 21 million refugees worldwide. The resulting declaration committed member states and civil society to a two-year process of negotiations to create and adopt two global compacts: a Global Compact on Refugees (GCR) and a Global Compact on Safe, Regular and Orderly Migration (GCM).

The purpose of both compacts is the establishment of a framework for more migration options, lower cost and greater security, respect for human rights, and access to justice when life and human rights are violated. Juan José Gómez Camacho, Permanent Representative of Mexico, and Jürg Lauber, Permanent Representative of Switzerland, have been leading the negotiations.

Negotiations have been challenging. Shadowing the momentum to implement the objectives of the New York Declaration are the growing political scape-goating of migrants and the growing racism and xenophobia worldwide. Also, some countries oppose the inclusion of the term 'human rights.' The United States pulled out completely in December, claiming the compact could undermine the enforcement of U.S. immigration laws.

The text of the compact highlights its "360-degree" vision of migration, emphasizing the need for a comprehensive approach that addresses benefits as well as risks and challenges, and covers countries of origin, transit, destination and return. Member states acknowledge their shared responsibilities "to address each other's needs and concerns over migration, and an overarching obligation to respect, protect and fulfill the human rights of all migrants, regardless of their migration status, while promoting the security and prosperity of all our communities."

The majority of the document consists of a coop-

erative framework made up of 23 objectives, each with an associated commitment and set of policy options and best practices. The 23rd and final objective, 'Strengthen international cooperation and global partnerships for safe, orderly and regular migration,' was included after the fourth round of negotiations, in May. This new, stand-alone objective was proposed by Comoros, an island nation off the coast of East Africa, for the African Group. The proposal was countered by Austria, representing 27 European Union states which prefer incorporating elements of the African Group proposal into Objective 2 ('minimize the adverse drivers and structural factors that compel people to leave their country of origin').

The fourth round of negotiations resulted in substantial revisions of all the objectives. It also included updates in the sections on implementation and follow-up and review to reflect the ongoing UN systems review.

NGOs have submitted statements and oral interventions on the text for both compacts at informal interactive multi-stakeholder hearings. One of the concerns civil society has raised for further discussion in the GCR is the possible omission of protection issues for children, women, and climate and environmental migrants.

Another concern is disagreement among states over the inclusion of the principle of "non-refoulement." This principle ensures individuals or groups the right not to be forcibly sent back to the country of origin. The majority of the countries insist on including the term "state sovereignty" to maintain a security approach on this issue. Likewise, some of these countries also insist on distinguishing between regular and irregular migrants, which conflicts with the principle of inherent human dignity and human rights of all migrants promoted by other states. Yet another concern is the need to address climate and environmental migrants in both compacts.

In one of her oral interventions Maryknoll Sister Marvie Misolas, a Maryknoll representative at the UN, addressed the need to highlight a value shared by every faith and culture: the practice of hospitality and welcoming others, to counteract the seemingly negative view of migration. The beautiful description of a French scholar, the Chevalier Louis de Jaucourt(1704-1779), that says, "Hospitality is the virtue of a great soul that cares for the whole universe through the ties of humanity," is a gentle reminder of our goodness beyond ourselves. §

Fossil fuel divestment: Ways to go about it

This is the second in a series of articles designed to educate Catholic organizations about ways to participate in the fastest growing divestment campaign in human history - the fossil fuel divestment movement.

Deciding to remove fossil fuels from your investment portfolio is only the beginning of an adventure of introspection and questioning. It provides a time for individuals and organizations to consider their guiding values and how their investments can best represent those values. There is a wide range of ways to participate in the fossil fuel divestment campaign.

The Global Catholic Climate Movement and Trocaire, the overseas development agency of the Irish Catholic Church, created a guide to help Catholic and other faith-based institutions work through the process of realigning their investments in light of climate change. The Divest-Invest website also provides guidance for individuals and organizations to do the same.

There are various levels of fossil fuel divestment, ranging from “full” divestment – removing all investments in fossil fuel corporations (direct ownership, shares, commingled mutual funds containing shares, corporate bonds) – to “partial” divestment – removing specific categories of fossil fuels (coal, oil, natural gas, etc.) and companies with the largest reserves of fossil fuels – to “specified” divestment – removing specific high polluting fuels (coal and tar sands or only coal).

Managers of large funds also need to decide to which asset class they will apply the divestment policy, for example, equities, international equities, property, fixed interest, alternatives, infrastructure, sovereign and corporate debt.

Catholics have long used their values to guide their investments and Scripture supports the ideas behind the divestment campaign. Traditionally, faith-based investors create both negative and positive screens: avoiding investments in companies producing weapons, addictive substances, or pornography, for example, while favoring companies with progressive employment practices, involved in community development or public goods like public transport or sustainable housing.

With the new reality of climate change, these negative screens would begin to include fossil fuel companies and infrastructure as well as fossil-fuel intensive products, while positive screens would incorporate investments like energy efficiency technologies, environmentally sustainable goods and services, and technology transfers to the Global South. Another positive screen is investments in businesses that are environmental leaders in their class in terms of environmental, social and

governance standards.

Some organizations such as Christian Brothers Investment Services have decided not to divest from fossil fuel companies, but rather, to continue to use their holdings to pressure corporations from within through engagement and shareholder resolutions, as they have done for many decades. Others maintain that while shareholder engagement has been marginally effective in compelling companies to change certain practices, it is unlikely such advocacy can move a company to change core business practices as climate change requires.

A possible compromise for larger investment funds is to maintain a \$2000 investment in fossil fuel companies, which is the minimum needed to propose shareholder resolutions. This would preserve the possibility of engagement while not profiting greatly.

The Christian Brothers are part of the Portfolio Decarbonisation Coalition, a group of investors that, rather than divesting from fossil fuel companies, are striving to lower the overall greenhouse gas content of their investments by measuring and publishing the carbon footprint of their investments each year while looking for opportunities to switch to more energy efficient companies and pressuring companies to decrease their footprint. More than 120 investors with over \$10 trillion in assets have signed on to the coalition’s Montreal Pledge committing to measure and publicly disclose the carbon footprint of their investment portfolios. The Global Investor Coalition on Climate Change created a helpful guide for investors wanting to decarbonize their investments.

Finally, as individuals and organizations divest from fossil fuel companies, they can look to invest in climate positive companies. Some say the fossil fuel divestment campaigns should be more accurately called a fossil fuel divest-invest campaign. Investors can choose from many companies working to ease climate change, environmental destruction, and social inequality. The growing field of “impact” investing helps match investors with such companies. The Catholic Impact Investing Collaborative provides support as well as the Fossil Free Funds site where you can see how your current investments stack up in terms of carbon footprint and investments in dirty and clean energy as well as links to numerous fossil free investment funds. §

Faith in action: Find links to the resources in the online version of this article <http://bit.ly/2IL8XaT>

Palm oil: A growing problem

This article is the first in a three-part series examining problems with palm oil production.

Palm oil is increasingly becoming a part of our everyday lives. Since it is resistant to spoilage, healthier than trans fats, and remains stable at high temperatures, palm oil is favored by many manufacturers of baked goods, confectionery items, shampoos, cosmetics, cleaning agents, washing detergents, toothpastes and more. Palm oil can also be used as a substitute for crude oil to make biofuels and as a fuel to be burned in power stations to produce electricity.

On the face of it, palm oil looks like a clean substitute for fossil fuels – but that’s far from the end of story.

Originally from West Africa, palm oil is now grown around the world, especially in Malaysia and Indonesia, where 84 percent of the world’s palm oil is produced. Unfortunately, while bringing in money and providing some jobs, palm oil plantations also produce many serious negative side effects.

Deforestation might be the biggest problem as hundreds of thousands of hectares of forest have been cleared around the world to open space for palm oil plantations. In a landmark 2007 report entitled *Cooking the Climate*, Greenpeace showed that deforestation in Indonesia alone was releasing 1.8 billion tons of greenhouse gases into the air every year, meaning that four percent of global emissions came from only 0.1 percent of Earth’s land. Ten years later, Greenpeace produced a follow-up report that concluded that, despite promises by companies to slow and stop the destruction, the palm oil industry continues to drive deforestation.

Deforestation represents a lethal threat to a number of endangered animals such as the Sumatran orangutan, rhinoceros, tiger and elephants. Roads built deep into dense forests to transport the oil for export destroys their habitats and opens new areas for poachers who kill these rare animals to sell their parts on international markets.

Palm oil production also poses a particular threat to indigenous peoples. In 2016, Maryknoll Sister Ann Braudis joined fellow Maryknoll Sister Eva Canales in Guatemala to investigate allegations of human and land rights violations perpetrated against poor and indigenous people by palm oil companies.

“Palm oil companies have cultivated more than 80 percent of the land surrounding and in the town of Sayaxche,” Sister Braudis wrote in the March-April 2016 issue of *NewsNotes*. “The production of edible palm oil is a large monoculture process that uses large quantities of water and toxic pesticides, and is destructive to the soil. Palm oil production has taken over and rendered

infertile land needed to cultivate corn, beans, and rice for local consumption.”

In interviews with the Sisters, local indigenous community members spoke about concerns such as social divisions caused by pay-offs to government officials and the hiring of non-local laborers, children who were ill due to the contaminated environment, and the murder of an elected official who took legal action against a palm oil company after a toxic spill contaminated the community’s water source.

Burning is also used to clear land to plant palm, which, in addition to releasing more greenhouse gases, produces significant air pollution. In Malaysia and Indonesia, these fires are nearly impossible to put out because of the thick peat underground. After removing the trees and their root systems that stabilize the soil, land erosion and river pollution also become serious concerns.

Since most palm plantations are in isolated, rural areas, labor conditions can be atrocious. Workers often face long hours, sub-minimum wages, and dangerous working conditions. They are sometimes given unrealistic production quotas that force workers to bring their spouses or children to work with them without compensation to meet demand. Child labor is also prominent. While men lift the heavy palm fruit bundles, women, often with no or minimal protective gear, are often responsible for spraying fertilizers, pesticides and herbicides for hours each day on row upon row of palm trees.

Global demand for palm oil could increase dramatically depending on decisions made by the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) at meetings in Montreal scheduled to held June 11-29. In order to reduce carbon emissions in the aviation sector, the ICAO may rule to allow airplanes to use any biofuel that meets two minimal requirements: “feedstock should not come from land deforested after 2009” and “biofuels should have 10 percent greenhouse gas emissions compared to conventional jet fuels.”

More than 90 civil society organizations sent a letter to the ICAO detailing concerns that the criteria are based on flawed methodology and are too weak. Carlos Calvo Ambel, analysis and climate manager at Transport & Environment, said “The EU and its member states in the ICAO Council were outmaneuvered by Brazil and the U.S. that successfully pushed to trash the robust safeguards that were initially proposed.”

In the next issue of *NewsNotes*, we will examine land grabbing and corruption in the palm oil industry. §

Israel accused of war crimes in Gaza

Since March 30, Israeli forces have killed 118 Palestinians, including 14 children, and wounded 3,895 with live gunfire as protesters engaged in weekly demonstrations at the border fences separating Gaza and Israel.

The “March of Return” protests at the Gaza border fence aimed to draw attention to the 11-year blockade of Gaza and to demand the right of return for Palestinian refugees, many of whom now living in the Gaza Strip. May 15 marked the 70th commemoration of the Nakba, the “catastrophe” resulting from the creation of the State of Israel which forced approximately 750,000 Palestinians to flee their homes.

The resulting injuries and deaths of residents of Gaza demonstrating near the fence in recent weeks by Israeli military forces have been called war crimes by some leading international human rights experts.

The culmination of the “March of Return” was moved up one day to May 14 to protest the celebration marking the opening of the the new U.S. embassy in Jerusalem, the fulfillment of a campaign promise made by President Trump which has been decried by the international community as an impediment to final negotiations between Israel and Palestine. While Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu’s military forces killed over 60 people in Gaza the day of the dedication of the new embassy, he inexplicably declared it “a great day for peace.”



On June 13, Human Rights Watch released a report titled, “Israel: Apparent War Crimes in Gaza,” detailing interviews with witnesses to Israeli forces’ killing of civilians. In the report, Human Rights Watch concluded “Israeli forces’ repeated use of lethal force in the Gaza Strip since March 30, 2018, against Palestinian demonstrators who posed no imminent threat to life may amount to war crimes.”

As a result, Human Rights Watch recommends three actions:

First, the UN General Assembly pass a resolution calling for the protection of Palestinians in Gaza and support for the UN Human Rights Council’s formation of an international commission to investigate abuses in occupied Palestinian territory, including which specific Israeli officials instructed soldiers to use live fire against protesters.

Second, the International Criminal Court initiate a formal investigation into crimes committed in Palestine.

Third, the international community impose sanctions targeting Israeli officials responsible for ongoing human rights violations.

International human rights standards, which govern the use of force outside of active conflict laid out in the UN Basic Principles on the Use of Force and Firearms by Law Enforcement Officials, prohibit the use of live gunfire except in cases where there is “the imminent threat of death or serious injury” and “only when less extreme means are insufficient to achieve these objectives.” Despite these international standards, the Human Rights Watch report notes that Israeli officials explicitly approved the use of live ammunition against protesters attempting to breach the fences which divide Gaza from Israel.

According to the report, “the use of live ammunition cannot be justified by automatically deeming every Palestinian who attempts to breach the fences to be an imminent threat to life, and in fact Israeli forces also shot medics, journalists, children, and others who were hundreds of meters away from the fences.”

The spokesman for the UN high commissioner for human rights, Rupert Colville, echoed this sentiment when he said: “The mere fact of approaching a fence is not a lethal, life-threatening act, so that does not warrant being shot.”

On June 13, the UN General Assembly passed a resolution calling for the protection of Palestinians in Gaza which “deplores the use of any excessive, disproportionate and indiscriminate force by the Israeli forces against Palestinian civilians...including the use of live ammunition against civilian protesters, including children,” and further “demands that Israel, the occupying Power, refrain from such actions and fully abide by its legal obligations and responsibilities.” It also asks the Secretary General to make recommendations for ensuring protection of the Palestinian civilian population under Israeli occupation within 60 days.

The resolution was first introduced by Kuwait before the UN Security Council on June 1 but failed to pass because of a veto by the United States. The U.S. attempted to amend the resolution before the General Assembly to include strong language condemning the actions of Hamas against Israel but the amendment failed to receive enough votes and was not adopted.

The resolution that did finally pass “deplores the firing of rockets from the Gaza Strip against Israeli civilian areas,” but does not name Hamas as the perpetrator of such actions. §

South Sudan: Possible peace agreement

Amid a humanitarian catastrophe the parties to the internecine conflict in South Sudan surprised many international observers when they signed a permanent ceasefire agreement in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia on June 27. Whether this ceasefire will hold is anyone's guess. What we do know is the humanitarian crisis continues.

The number of refugees from South Sudan's five-year civil war has now reached 2.5 million people, with another two million living in camps for the internally displaced, according to Fr. Michael Bassano, a Maryknoll missionary working in a camp for internally displaced persons (IDP) outside the city of Malakal in the northern part of South Sudan. Refugees from South Sudan have gone to the Gambela Region of Ethiopia, to Sudan (primarily to a city called Kosti, about 100 miles to the north along the Nile River), to Kenya and to northern Uganda, where a series of camps now accommodate 1.5 million South Sudanese. Two Maryknoll missionaries, Fathers John Barth and Dave Schwinghamer, are working with Salesian missionaries in camps in Uganda.

Fr. Bassano says that the two primary forces driving people to flee their homes are lack of food and insecurity. Of the 8.5 million people still living in South Sudan (out of a previous total of 11 million), 48 percent are food insecure, according to the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Human Affairs.

Father Bassano added that although there is no official fighting taking place right now there are constant skirmishes when opposition fighters chance upon government soldiers. People also fear crossing paths with government soldiers if they venture any distance from their homes or the IDP camps, as the soldiers have been known to be abusive, especially to women.

The United Nations World Food Program provides food to the people in the camps. This was supplemented in the camp in Malakal in January and February this year by relief aid from the Maryknoll Fathers and Brothers, which enabled Father Bassano to buy 2,000 bags of rice, which he distributed to 4,000 people. One South Sudanese woman told Father Bassano: "Please tell the American people how grateful I am; this is the first time in three years that I have been able to eat rice." The Maryknoll Fathers and Brothers also provided aid to the camps in northern Uganda where Fathers Barth and Schwinghamer work.

The two main ethnic groups involved in the civil war are Dinka, whose leader is President Salva Kiir, and Nuer, led by former Vice-President Riek Machar. In December 2017, a ceasefire was signed by both sides in Addis Ababa creating a lull in organized warfare, but skirmishes still broke out. Since then there have been intense negotiations, but both sides resisted a peace

agreement. Overseeing the peace negotiations are the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD), which comprises eight countries of eastern Africa, and three external countries (United States, United Kingdom, and Norway) called the TROIKA. One stipulation of the government was that Machar be removed as Vice-President and not be allowed back in the country. In his place, Taban Deng, a Nuer, was made Vice-President, but Machar rejects him, claiming he supports the Dinkaled government.

After a high-level meeting in late May again produced no agreement, the Troika gave both leaders until June 30 to come up with a ceasefire or face international sanctions. The international participants observed that top political and military officials of the government were sabotaging the peace negotiations and blocking humanitarian assistance to civilians.

On June 13 Machar accepted an invitation from Ethiopian Prime Minister Ably Ahmed to attend talks with President Kiir in Addis Ababa on June 20. This was the first time that Kiir and Machar had met since a peace deal between the government and Machar's rebel group fell apart in 2016. Unfortunately, these talks also proved unfruitful but Sudan's president, Omar al-Bashir, called them to Khartoum on June 27, where Kiir and Machar signed an ceasefire agreement. The Al Jazeera news network reported that the agreement will install a transitional period of 36 months and a ceasefire mechanism that will include troops from the European Union and IGAD. It also calls for opening corridors for humanitarian aid, release of prisoners and withdrawal of forces.

Sudan has also agreed to rehabilitate oil production facilities and export oil via Sudan, perhaps the crucial ingredient in forging a peace agreement. Production had declined by close to one-half and the government was using oil revenues to buy military equipment while basic needs were being ignored.

Meanwhile, the UN's Office of Civil Affairs is conducting workshops for as many people as possible, assisted by church staff, to create a over-arching South Sudanese nationality that subsumes ethnic identities. Bassano tells of one eleven-year-old boy of Nuer ethnicity who likes to sing a song he learned in church that ends with a crucial verse in English: "We are the one family of God." Bassano hopes that if Christians sing this song often enough they might come to believe it. §

Latin America: Call for ecological conversion

The following article was published by Development and Peace Caritas Canada on May 10, 2018 and entitled "Latin American bishops make urgent call for an ecological conversion in new pastoral exhortation."

The Bishops' conference of Latin America and the Caribbean (CELAM) has released a pastoral exhortation entitled "Missionary Disciples Custodians of the Common Home, Discernment in Light of Laudato Si'," [<http://bit.ly/CELAM>] that calls for care of creation in response to the damaging consequences of the over-exploitation of the Earth's natural resources:

"...as pastors of our peoples, we want to express our great concern about the reality that in several Latin American countries there are thousands of high-risk environmental liabilities that, in addition to polluting water, soil and air, affect the health of people living in the surrounding areas."

Development and Peace welcomes this pastoral letter, which recognizes the important work of land defenders and the urgent need to care for creation. Many of Development and Peace's partners in Latin America place their lives at risk on a daily basis as they walk alongside Indigenous and peasant communities who are threatened and criminalized for protecting their land and the Earth's gifts.

Latin America is blessed with an abundance of natural resources, yet, this has also made the continent a theatre of exploitation, often by foreign investors. The Church in Latin America has witnessed the impacts of this search for profits on communities: human rights violations, conflict, displacement, pollution and death.

For example, in November 2015 a dam containing mining waste broke in the municipality of Mariana, Brazil. Millions of cubic meters of iron ore waste formed a wave of mud that destroyed homes, schools and churches, killing 19 people and contaminating local water sources.

The Bishops express particular concern for the Amazon and its Indigenous peoples. The unique biodiversity of this ecosystem contributes significantly to purifying the very air we breathe, yet it is being destroyed at a rapid rate that directly threatens the lives of at least 30 million people.

"We would like to draw special attention to the fact that the Amazon has been affected by oil spills that have polluted river and underground water at alarming levels, with serious consequences for the health of the nearby population and the flora and fauna in the region. In the case of mining, water is often the cause of persistent disputes and conflicts because of the high amount

required for mining activities while at the same time the adjacent population suffers severe water shortages."

This attention to the destruction of the Amazon and recognition of its Indigenous communities as defenders of our common home harks to the Synod on the Amazon that will take place at the Vatican in October 2019. The Synod places the need to move towards an integral ecology to save the Amazon, and by extension the planet itself, at the heart of the Church's universal mission.

"With the Synod of the Amazon planned for 2019, a horizon of theological renewal and pastoral creativity is opening up, inviting an ecological conversion, a spirituality of communion and a commitment to Good Living (Buen Vivir), in harmony with the cycles of nature, with water as a fundamental right and intrinsic value for each and every creature."

The letter emphasizes that land, water and climate are common goods and denounces the privatization of the Earth's riches. It questions the actual benefits of extractivism, as it feeds into a consumerism that is destroying the planet and is at the expense of the poorest countries, which contribute the least to climate change yet are suffering its worst impacts.

From the perspective of our preferential option for the poor, we insist that States and businesses do everything in their power to protect the climate and, together with other civil society actors, we join those efforts.

Although the bishops place special responsibility on States and corporations in mitigating the impacts of climate change and making a just transition to economies that are not dependent on fossil fuels, it also calls for individuals to undergo an ecological conversion where we reconnect to the life that Mother Earth provides.

"We forget that we ourselves are earth (see Gen 2:7 and LS 2). Our very bodies are made up of her elements, we breathe her air and we receive life and refreshment from her waters."

As Christians, the bishops remind us, we have a mission to care for the Earth. We must be leaders in our own communities in rejecting the "throwaway culture" that places profit and materialism before the dignity of others, even that of Mother Earth. Furthermore, we must stand by side by side with those who defend the land and water, because their actions are for the benefit of all, most importantly for future generations who will walk the Earth after us. §

North Korea: Maryknoll missionaries on peace talks

On June 12, North Korean leader Kim Jong-Un and U.S. President Donald J. Trump met in Singapore with grandeur and fanfare to discuss the possible dismantling of North Korea's nuclear program.

Maryknoll missionaries with experience in North Korea welcome the joint statement by North Korean leader Kim Jong-Un and U.S. President Donald J. Trump in which they commit to pursue peaceful U.S.-North Korean relations and the “complete denuclearization of the Korean peninsula.”

Even without substantive commitments, their joint statement is a tremendous improvement over the mutual brinkmanship and all-too-real risk of war that escalated in 2017. President Trump, Chairman Kim, and South Korean President Moon Jae-in have taken the essential first steps toward negotiating a peace agreement. Reaching an agreement, implementing it, and ensuring that it lasts, however, requires further concerted efforts on all sides to move North Korea out of its isolation and into the international community, to ensure accountability for North Korea's well-documented human rights violations, and to ensure the United States' commitment to denuclearize its presence on the peninsula.

Maryknoll Father Gerald Hammond, who has lived and worked in South Korea since 1960 and makes frequent visits to patients at multidrug-resistant tuberculosis centers in North Korea, said in a recent interview with FOX 5 New York that “People [in North and South Korea] had an awful fear of war so the Summit meeting for them is just the beginning, they realize that it is going to be a long, arduous journey but at least hopefully there will be peace on the peninsula.”

“Both [North and South Koreans] have suffered a great deal,” Fr. Hammond said, “and so through their suffering I think they understand how to have some reconciliation between the countries.”

Maryknoll Father Larry Murphy got to know several high-level North Korean officials visiting the United States while serving as president of Seton Hall Univer-

sity in South Orange, New Jersey, and subsequently traveled to North Korea in the 1990s. When asked about the Singapore Summit, Fr. Murphy said, “It is good that they are talking, and the talks now are probably taking place among officials of the State Department and similarly ranked officials of North Korea. Maybe something good will happen without the two leaders knowing.”

Fr. Murphy touched on the motivations of the two men to come together. “It seems President Trump's main purpose is to promote his own image, to be able to cast himself as having done something no other president has done,” Fr. Murphy said, referring to the fact that Trump is the first sitting U.S. president to meet with a North Korean leader.

As for Chairman Kim's motivations, Fr. Murphy said “Kim also hopes the talks will lead to an opening up of North Korea's economy in order to improve the standard of living of the people of that country. He risks being removed from leadership in the not too distant future,” if he does not improve the standard of living there.

Fr. Murphy noted that South Korean President Moon Jae-in seeks a reduction in tension and hostility with North Korea followed by some kind of interlocking between the two countries; not reunification, but a much more collaborative, mutually beneficial relationship. Reunification could be a future hope but not now.

As for the credibility of the U.S. in seeking disarmament, Fr. Murphy said that its refusal to take part in disarmament talks at the UN and its already spending some of the planned \$1.7 trillion to modernize its nuclear arsenal has a negative impact.

In other words, there is hope as diplomacy and dialogue are ongoing but we must also wait and see, holding President Trump to account as negotiations proceed. §

Peru: Org. founded by Maryknoll Sr. Patricia Ryan wins human rights award

Congratulations to Maryknoll Sr. Patricia Ryan and Derechos Humanos y Medio Ambiente (DHUMA), on being named the 2018 recipients of the Letelier-Moffitt International Human Rights Award for their work with indigenous farmers in the Andes Mountains of Peru. Sister Pat and other members of DHUMA plan to attend the award ceremony on October 4 in Washington, D.C. For ticket info, go to <http://bit.ly/2KGypU8>

Read about Sister Pat and the work of DHUMA in Maryknoll Magazine: <http://bit.ly/2IJGyBW>

Resources

- 1) **Save the date!** Sister Patricia Ryan, MM and DHU-MA are scheduled to receive the prestigious 2018 Letelier-Moffitt International Human Rights Award in Washington, D.C. on **October 4**. For ticket info, go to <http://bit.ly/2KGypU8>
- 2) **Asylum:** Share a fact sheet by Washington Office for Latin America <http://bit.ly/2NnPRv1>
- 3) **Family separation:** Share a fact sheet by Justice for Immigrants Campaign <http://bit.ly/2Np4ka0>
- 4) **Iran nuclear deal:** Read and share a letter to Congress by 700+ Catholic organizations entitled “A Tragedy of Monumental Proportions” <http://bit.ly/2MGlu1u>
- 5) **Investor Alliance for Human Rights:** The Maryknoll Sisters and the Maryknoll Fathers and Brothers signed on to an investor statement of concern on the situation of human rights defenders. Investors are calling on companies and financial institutions to take broad, systemic action to protect human rights defenders globally, and immediate action to ensure the protection and physical safety of indigenous rights defenders in Philippines, including UN Special Rapporteur on Indigenous Rights, Victoria Tauli-Corpuz, and Joan Carling, co-convener of the Indigenous Peoples Major Group on the Sustainable Development Goals. Read the statement on the ICCR website <http://bit.ly/2tU1fqh>
- 6) **Nicaragua:** Updates and statements from the Nicaraguan bishops on peace talks can be found on their website: <http://bit.ly/2KMccRd> and on their Facebook page <http://bit.ly/2u70nOy>
- 7) **Nicaragua:** The Maryknoll Affiliates shared a letter from Julio Martinez, nephew of Robert Ellsberg, publisher of Orbis Books and resident of Nicaragua, on the political crisis. Julio is asking for help in contacting international progressive groups, especially those that have historical ties to the Sandinista party, to ask them “to denounce this government repression in Nicaragua, and where applicable, publicly cut ties with the party.” Email ogc@maryknoll.org for assistance in contacting Julio. Read the letter at <http://bit.ly/2INaI7v>
- 8) **Zimbabwe:** Read and share the new Pastoral Letter from the Zimbabwe Catholic Bishops Conference on the national elections scheduled to be held on July 30, 2018. <http://bit.ly/2tQAVxe>
- 9) **Climate Change:** Host a Summer Movie Series organized by Interfaith Power and Light for faith communities Order your movie and download discussion guides at <http://bit.ly/IPLMovies>
- 10) **Amazonia:** Read the Vatican’s preparatory document for the Synod on the Amazon to take place in 2019. It is organized in three parts, based on a “see-judge-act” approach to the Amazonia context, and includes a questionnaire asking pastors to engage with their people in preparation for the Synod. <http://bit.ly/2KLkc4T>
- 11) **“Catholics Are Still In” Campaign:** The Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns joined nearly 600 Catholic organizations in declaring our commitment to the Paris Climate Agreement. Please encourage the leader of your Catholic institution to sign the declaration. The Catholic Climate Covenant website welcomes signatures until September 12, 2018, the start of the Global Climate Action Summit. Learn more about the campaign at <http://bit.ly/2IPBkoq>
- 12) **Third Anniversary of Laudato Si’:** The Vatican to commemorate the third anniversary of Laudato Si’ with a conference entitled ‘Saving the Common Home and the Future of Life on Earth’ hosted by the Dicastery for Promoting Integral Human Development, **July 5-6**. The conference program, including the full list of speakers, is available at <http://bit.ly/2u4zGd0> The conference will be livestreamed at <http://laudato-si-conference.com/>



Photo: Vatican/CDF