



Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns

NewsNotes

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

November-December 2017

Vol. 42, No. 6

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

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In these times: “Nonviolence or nonexistence”

With ethnic cleansing and extreme violence in Africa, Asia, and the Middle East – and the threat of nuclear war looming on the Korean peninsula – we are looking more closely at the role of the Catholic Church in the work of active nonviolence.

The Catholic Nonviolence Initiative (CNI), which the Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns helped launch following the historic Nonviolence and Just Peace Conference held in Rome April 2016, is taking actions to promote the spirituality and practice of active nonviolence within the Catholic Church and throughout the world. This October, CNI engaged in a lively dialogue with U.S. military educators at the University of San Diego: “The Catholic Church Moves Towards Nonviolence? Just Peace Just War In Dialogue” with participation by Bishop Robert McElroy of San Diego, Dr. Stephen Colecchi of the USCCB, and officers from West Point, Annapolis and the Air Force Academy.

Cardinal Peter Turkson gave a major address to the conference highlighting Pope Francis’ advocacy on a culture of nonviolence:

“We live in a moment in human history when fear about potential global catastrophe has intensified to a point rarely experienced before,” Turkson said. “Our conversation is decisive for what it can bring and needs to bring to this experience. The decisions made by the global human family about peace and war in the coming months and years, particularly those with potential political responsibility, will have profound advances for the future of humanity and indeed, fate of our planet.”

Turkson quoted Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. from his “I’ve Been to the Mountaintop” speech: “The choice we face is no longer violence or nonviolence; the choice we face is nonviolence or nonexistence.”

“Today, sadly, we are still at this crossroad,” the cardinal said. “We’re tempted to respond to violence with violence. By attempting to do so, we shall never achieve what peacemakers actually look for. But to say we must always use a nonviolent response to conflict is easy to say, difficult to put into action. The temptation to use violence is strong in a world of fear, when people are desperate for safety and for security. That is the nature of our world now. Terrorist attacks the last few years have dramatically increased peoples’ fear of insecurity. When

fear gets into the driver’s seat, we cannot promote peace. However, if we want peace, as Pope Francis clearly puts it, we must encounter the logical fear with the ethic of responsibility. We must foster a climate of trust and sincere dialogue, meaning a nonviolent response to our fears and our quest for security.”

The Catholic Nonviolence Initiative has also launched an 18-month process to research and elaborate on the theological, scriptural, ecclesial and practical components of nonviolence that would inform new Catholic social teaching on nonviolence.

Organized into five “roundtables” of 10-25 teachers and practitioners of nonviolence from around the world, each group is addressing a particular topic and will produce a well-curated document that together, the CNI will offer to the Vatican at a second conference on nonviolence and just peace

in early 2019. The five key topics are:

- Foundational theology of nonviolence;
- Biblical foundations of nonviolence, including its centrality to the life and mission of Jesus;
- Nonviolence and Just Peace: A new moral framework for Catholic theology;
- Integrating Gospel nonviolence at every level of the Church;
- Power of nonviolence: Concrete experience, principles, methods, and effectiveness in the past, present, and envisioned future.

The CNI continues to build support for its “Appeal to the Catholic Church to Re-commit to the centrality of Gospel Nonviolence” among Catholics worldwide. On October 19 the Congregations of the Holy Cross issued a joint statement on nonviolence and just peace, endorsing the appeal and advocating for a “just peace” approach rather than “just war.”§

Faith in action: Sign the “Appeal to the Catholic Church to Re-Commit to the Centrality of Gospel Nonviolence” <https://nonviolencejustpeace.net/>.



A world without nuclear weapons IS possible

Under pressure from nuclear-armed nations that insist a world without nuclear weapons is not possible, a grassroots movement has achieved a UN nuclear ban treaty and a Nobel Peace Prize.

On July 7, a nuclear ban treaty was adopted by two-thirds, or 122 of the 193 UN member states, after months of negotiations. The negotiation process is noteworthy in both who joined (a majority of the countries in the world and the Vatican), and who did not (all nine of the nuclear-armed nations).

The nuclear powers – United States, Russia, United Kingdom, France, China, India, Pakistan, Israel, North Korea – boycotted the negotiations, erroneously citing the need to uphold the Treaty on the Non Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), even though Article VI of that treaty requires all parties to “pursue negotiations in good faith” for nuclear disarmament.

Behind this Herculean effort was the International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons (ICAN), a small non-governmental organization based in Geneva. ICAN coordinated with hundreds of NGOs in more than 100 countries, including Pax Christi International, to guide a global discussion and build international support for the ban.

“By harnessing the power of the people,” ICAN said in a statement celebrating the adoption of the treaty, “we have worked to bring an end to the most destructive weapon ever created – the only weapon that poses an existential threat to humanity.”

ICAN has broken the deadlock surrounding nuclear weapons by reframing the issue as a humanitarian concern rather than a national security one. The Nobel Committee recognized the importance and success of this grassroots effort and awarded ICAN the Nobel Peace Prize for 2017.

ICAN sees the prize as a tribute to “the tireless efforts of many millions of campaigners and concerned citizens worldwide who...have loudly protested nuclear weapons, insisting that they can serve no legitimate purpose and must be forever banished from the face of our earth... (as well as) the survivors of the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki – the *hibakusha* – and victims of nuclear test explosions around the world, whose searing testimonies and unstinting advocacy were instrumental in securing (the Nuclear Weapon Ban Treaty).”

The landmark international agreement – officially called the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons – bans all nuclear weapons as weapons of mass destruction, establishes a pathway to their elimination, and sets obligations to assist victims and remediate the environ-

ment harmed by the use or testing of the weapons.

“We are putting nuclear weapons in the same category as other unacceptable weapons,” said ICAN’s executive director, Beatrice Fihn. “Like the conventions prohibiting chemical and biological weapons, landmines and cluster munitions, this treaty bans an entire category of weapons. It strengthens the norm that weapons that cause unacceptable harm for civilians cannot remain legal—and that nuclear weapons are no longer an exception to these norms.”

Just days after the Nobel Committee announced that they had chosen ICAN to receive this year’s Peace Prize, the Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns joined ICAN, Pax Christi International, Amnesty International and other civil society organizations at the 2017 Humanitarian Disarmament Forum at the United Nations in New York to discuss ways to strengthen campaigns to protect civilians from armed violence.

The collective conscious at the forum was simultaneously empowered by ICAN’s recent Nobel recognition and subdued by the rise of authoritarian and nationalist movements, coupled with bellicose rhetoric, around the globe. Nevertheless, speakers repeatedly spoke of a sea change in the narrative around nuclear disarmament, focusing on ending civilian suffering over national security, disarmament on humanitarian terms.

Our focus now turns to working to ensure the nuclear ban treaty’s full implementation. More than 50 countries have signed the treaty but only a few have gone on to ratify it. The treaty will enter into force 90 days after at least 50 countries both sign and ratify it.

The challenge is to bring the nine nuclear-armed nations into the dialogue. This will include working at the legislative level of nuclear power states to build support for the treaty. §

Faith in action: Watch and share a two-minute video by ICAN explaining the nuclear ban treaty. <http://bit.ly/2xO7hIi>

Email your country’s foreign minister to say you want your country to sign the treaty. <http://nuclearban.org/#write-to-your-fm>

Organize an interfaith prayer service for a ban on nuclear weapons. Use this text, written by Pax Christi International for an interfaith prayer service at the Isaiah Wall at the United National in New York City. <http://bit.ly/NuclearbanPrayer> .

Nuclear disarmament: Diplomacy works

The Trump administration has taken actions in recent months that have raised tensions over nuclear weapons with both Iran and North Korea. In both cases, diplomacy can be used to build trust and avoid military confrontation.

On October 13, President Trump decided not to recertify the two-year-old nuclear deal with Iran, an important diplomatic agreement to curtail Iran's nuclear program. The president has called the deal "unacceptable" and "an embarrassment" despite assurances by the International Atomic Energy Agency that Iran is in compliance with the agreement.

Now it is up to Congress to decide if the United States should remain in the deal. Congress has 60 days to act on whether to restore economic sanctions, take other actions against Iran or do nothing.

The fact remains that the Iran nuclear deal makes all of us safer.

After years of tense and delicate negotiations, the signatories (the five permanent members of the United Nations Security Council – China, France, Russia, United Kingdom, United States – plus Germany, the European Union, and Iran) agreed that

- Iran's uranium stockpiles will be considerably reduced;
- Various uranium enrichment activities either will be stopped or greatly limited;
- The International Atomic Energy Agency will have regular access to its nuclear facilities.

In return, the crippling economic sanctions against Iran were lifted.

The Iran nuclear deal is a critical step toward nuclear non-proliferation and, ultimately, nuclear abolition. It strengthens the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty and stimulates development of a Nuclear Weapons-Free Zone in the Middle East, a goal repeatedly supported by the nations of the world at the United Nations since 1974.

The agreement is a concrete example of the value of international cooperation and skilled diplomacy in preventing war and stopping the spread of nuclear weap-

ons. It has the potential to reshape much of the Middle East by ending the international isolation of Iran and opening the door for Iran to play a more active role in regional politics.

More than 750 Catholic leaders signed a letter to President Trump and Congress in support of diplomatic efforts to defuse rising tensions over nuclear weapons not only with Iran but also North Korea. (Read the letter at <http://bit.ly/IranDealLetter>.) The leaders of dozens of religious congregations and officials at Catholic organi-

zations said they are concerned by the president's recent threats to "totally destroy" North Korea and to withdraw the U.S. from the Iran deal because both actions would bring the world "to the brink of nuclear catastrophe."

"Responsible, moral leadership would recognize the Iran deal as an important example of successful diplomacy and conflict transformation that engaged many nations in an arduous, nonviolent process to build trust and avoid military confrontation. Similar honest and respectful, if difficult, dip-

lomatic engagement should mark our approach to North Korea," the letter said.

Bishop Oscar Cantu of Las Cruces, New Mexico, chairman of the Committee on International Justice and Peace for the U.S. Bishops Conference, sent a similar letter to Secretary of State Rex Tillerson on October 3. Bishop Cantu urged that the U.S. recertify Iran nuclear deal based on assurances of Iran's compliance from the International Atomic Energy Agency. Not doing so would weaken any incentive for North Korea to negotiate about its nuclear weapons program, the bishop said. §

Faith in action: Tell Congress that the U.S. should remain in the Iran nuclear deal. <http://bit.ly/IranNuclearAccord> .



The ministers of foreign affairs from China, France, Germany, the European Union, Iran, Russia, United Kingdom, United States, Germany, and Iran while announcing the framework of a Comprehensive agreement on the Iranian nuclear program in Switzerland on April 2, 2015. Photo by U.S. Department of State.

Climate change: World Bank needs 'big shift'

The Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns joined the Global Catholic Climate Movement's Season of Creation prayer and action program for the month of September, which included supporting the Big Shift Campaign to call on the World Bank to move projects away from fossil fuels and toward renewable energy.

The “Big Shift” campaign, led by environmental, development, and faith communities, encourages publicly-funded multilateral development banks, such as the World Bank and Africa Development Bank, to shift all projects away from fossil fuels and invest in renewable energy. The campaign also calls on the banks to track and report their carbon footprint and create more energy access for economically marginalized communities.

According to two reports released during the World Bank's annual meeting in October, the World Bank Group (including both private and public investments) remains last in terms of the ratio of renewable to fossil fuel energy project investments.

The first report, by the British climate change think tank E3G, examines self-reporting by multilateral development banks. In some cases, banks misrepresented nonrenewable projects as renewable energy projects. The second report, by Oil Change International, a D.C.-based research and advocacy organization focused on exposing the true costs of fossil fuels, excludes biofuels, biomass, natural gas, and large scale dams from the data since these projects have been shown to actually contribute to climate change or to be otherwise socially and environmentally destructive. Oil Change International found that only five percent of renewable energy projects created energy access for low-income residents.

Neither study includes projects funded through “financial intermediaries” as it is difficult to track such financing back to the banks. This means that the number of fossil fuel projects is likely greater than reported.

One example of this is described in an official complaint against the International Finance Corporation (IFC), the private sector lending arm of the World Bank. Nineteen Filipino communities and 100 citizen groups filed the complaint on October 11, accusing a Filipino bank, Rizal Commercial Banking Corporation, of using a \$253 million loan from the IFC to finance construction of 19 coal-fired power plants. The IFC has provided this financing since 2013, the same year the World Bank announced it would stop funding coal-fired power plants.

Inclusive Development International, Bank Information Center, and the German environmental NGO Urgewald published a report in 2016 that documents the IFC financing coal-fired power plants numerous times through Rizal and other financial intermediaries. By following the trail of money, the report concluded that IFC-

supported financial institutions have funded at least 41 new coal projects – either by supporting the facilities directly or the companies that own them – since the World Bank's coal ban in 2013. The investigation tackled only a small portion of the IFC's sprawling financial-sector portfolio. There are doubtless many more projects yet to be uncovered.

All projects receiving IFC financing should follow the IFC's guidelines for environmental and social responsibility but the IFC conducts minimal oversight of financial intermediaries. According to Inclusive Development International, the IFC provided \$40 billion in funding to all types of projects managed by financial intermediaries between 2011 and 2015. These projects represent more than half of the IFC's lending portfolio, a proportion that has steadily increased over the past decade.

In 2016, Gloria Capitán, a 57-year-old grandmother in the Philippines, was murdered in her family's karaoke bar for her activism against two IFC-funded coal-fired power plants that were contributing to respiratory and other illnesses in the province of Bataan. Inclusive Development International estimates that as many as 2,410 Filipinos die prematurely each year due to emissions from coal plants, which pollute the air, sea, fisheries and coral reefs. The Philippines is also one of the most climate vulnerable countries in the world, with super typhoons bringing massive destruction in recent years.

“We place our lives in the line of fire for standing up and fighting for our right to a healthy environment and against the dangers posed by dirty coal projects. Every day, we face the double whammy of dying from exposure to pollution and risking our lives in resisting these projects. But we will not be intimidated,” said Fr. Warren Puno, parochial vicar of Our Lady of the Angels Parish and one of the community leaders against the proposed coal plant in Atimonan, Quezon Province.

The World Bank took a step toward the big shift during its annual meeting when its president, Jim Kim, announced that the bank will start reporting the net global greenhouse gas emissions from all of its projects. The new commitment means that, for the first time ever, the bank will measure, aggregate, and disclose data on the quantity of greenhouse gases emitted or avoided as a result of bank-funded projects. The bank still needs to go further and stop financing fossil fuel projects. §

Gambling with nature: A risky investment

The following article was published in the October issue of Encounters, a monthly e-newsletter publication of the Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns' Faith-Economy-Ecology Program.

In the last ten years, pension funds and other large investment funds have invested more and more in agricultural land as a part of their financial portfolios. Unfortunately, these investments are contributing to increasing human rights violations and environmental destruction in many countries as they often expel generations-old communities from their homelands and tend to invest in large single crop plantations that create numerous environmental problems. Citizen campaigns are responding at all levels to protect affected communities and help Earth recuperate.

Financialization of Nature

The collapse of traditional financial markets at the turn of the century, and again in 2008, prompted institutional investors to search desperately for new high-profit markets. Many turned their focus to the increasing scarcity of natural resources. As consumerism on the part of many grows more extreme, the world's natural resources are being pushed to their limits. Investors see enormous potential for profits through the "financialization of nature" - the increasing power and control financial markets have over increasingly scarce natural resources.

In 2004, portfolio managers began to invest heavily in commodity markets after Goldman Sachs created financial tools such as commodity index funds and exchange-traded funds. Large investors bought massive amounts of "futures"—financial contracts obligating the buyer to purchase an asset or the seller to sell an asset, such as oil, corn, soy, and wheat, at a predetermined future date and price—without needing to actually deliver or store the physical product. Essentially, investors bet that the price of a commodity will go up in the long run, an almost sure bet.

Buying agricultural land as a purely financial investment became popular among institutional investors after the 2008 financial crisis. As land suitable for development becomes more scarce, investors earn high profits in the long run with the rising price of land (in part driven by the entrance of these massive funds into land markets) and in the short run by renting the land to agribusinesses or selling agricultural production.

Pension funds in the U.S., like those managed by TIAA, formerly TIAA-CREF (Teachers Insurance and Annuity Association-College Retirement Equities Fund, the leading provider of financial services for retired teachers and public workers in the U.S.), and Harvard University's endowment fund, have steadily built

up their agricultural land holdings around the world over the last decade. TIAA alone controls almost one trillion dollars in total investments. Transferring even a small percentage of its funds into land holdings adds many billions of dollars to land markets. In 2016, TIAA became the world's largest investor in agriculture.

Beyond commodities and land, financial institutions such as the World Bank Group and private banks, together with some governmental and non-governmental organizations, are working to create new "nature markets." For example, carbon markets enable countries and companies to trade carbon emission allowances. They are becoming an increasingly popular way to theoretically decrease one's carbon footprint, yet are wracked with problems and can be easily gamed. Willem Buiter, a chief economist of Citigroup, predicted a "globally integrated commodity market for fresh water" by 2035 or 2040. Meanwhile, markets are being created for biodiversity, habitats, and more.

Pope Francis' warning about the danger of carbon markets holds true for other such nature markets: "The strategy of buying and selling 'carbon credits' can lead to a new form of speculation which would not help reduce the emission of polluting gases worldwide... Rather, it may simply become an expedient, which permits maintaining the excessive consumption of some countries and sectors." [*Laudato Si'* 171]

Social and environmental consequences

Flooding money into land markets results in higher land prices, increased conflicts over land rights, human rights abuses, environmental destruction, and land use decisions made by investors instead of long-established local communities.

Case Study 1: Soy and Palm Land Investments

In the Cerrado region near the center of Brazil, TIAA has bought hundreds of thousands of acres of land. A fact-finding mission made up of human rights and environmental experts from nine countries (including David Kane for the Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns) and organized by FIAN International in September documented instances of TIAA buying land from a well-known land grabber whom local residents say has used intimidation and violence to remove people from their land and political connections to create false ownership documents. TIAA uses the land for single-crop plantations, mostly soy, but also corn, sugar cane, and cotton. To clear land for the plantations, two tractors

pull a chain between them to tear down trees and bushes. Tractor drivers for the plantations described deer, armadillos, emus, snakes, and other native animals being killed by the chains.

The natural fauna in the Cerrado doesn't look like much – mostly small, crooked trees and bushes – but these plants have long, complicated root systems that allow rainwater to penetrate the buttes and flow to the aquifers and water tables below. By removing this fauna and planting crops with smaller root systems, the new plantations quickly drain local water sources. This is an especially worrisome change as the Cerrado is an important source for three large watersheds (Amazon, Sao Francisco, and Platina), and three aquifers (Guarani, Bambuí, Urucaia).

In addition to draining important water sources, the soy plantations pollute the remaining water with massive amounts of pesticides. In the rainy season, these chemicals are washed into rivers in the lowlands. Local residents told the fact-finding mission, that they are no longer able to use river water during the rains as the water turns different colors and stinks. In response, communities have dug numerous wells pulling water from the already shrinking aquifers.

Large pension fund investments are creating similar problems in water-intensive palm oil plantations. Indonesia and Malaysia, where more than 80 percent of the world's palm oil is produced, are most affected. Other tropical countries such as the Philippines and Peru also suffer negative effects such as loss of indigenous lands and increasingly violent land conflicts; deforestation and massive fires to clear land; loss of biodiversity and habitats for endangered species; water pollution and increasing water scarcity.

Case Study 2: Forest Carbon Markets

One emerging carbon credit market scheme is a program referred to as “Reduction in Emissions from Deforestation and Degradation” (REDD). Most commonly found in rainforests such as those in the South American Amazon and African Congo (which Pope Francis refers to as “the two lungs of the planet”), the program is designed to enable wealthy countries, who are responsible for the majority of the world's CO2 emissions, to offset those emissions by paying governments and forest dwelling people to prevent deforestation. The program does not necessarily stop extractive projects in other parts of the forest; in some cases, it encourages these projects. Additionally, REDD projects have also displaced traditional communities who lack formal land titles, and restrictions on traditional forest management efforts by these communities.

This year, the World Bank began funding the Mai Ndombe REDD+ project in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) despite opposition from local, national, and international groups who are concerned about guaranteeing the land rights and human rights of all 1.4 million people in the area. The DRC has been under scrutiny for human rights violations, a lack of transparency, and weak governance.

Brazil's Acre State in the Amazon rainforest is currently negotiating a REDD program with California. Many of the indigenous communities on the land in question do not have formal land titles and thus are not allowed a proper consultation. They won't receive benefits and could be displaced. According to the Indigenous Missionary Council (CIMI), a project of the Brazilian Catholic Bishops Conference, past REDD projects have caused social conflicts. The projects also violate Brazil's constitution which guarantees usufruct rights for indigenous communities and lists land management that may be culturally different from their traditional sustainable use of forests today. The Acre office of CIMI had two break-ins in 2014 and the staff has received continuous threats and face intimidation due to their defense of the rights of indigenous communities there.

Communities respond

At the local level, communities threatened by encroaching soy and palm oil plantations supported by large institutional investors are joining together to maintain their ancestral lands. They have called for solidarity from national and international communities and organizations to help improve laws, protect traditional lands, and more.

The 2017 winner of the Food Sovereignty Prize, the Zimbabwe Smallholder Organic Farmers Forum, supports local farmers working to create alternatives to the agro-industrial model brought to Zimbabwe by large corporations. The forum offers its 10,000 members technical assistance in growing and selling organic products, to enable them to stay on their families' lands.

How you can respond

- Learn about this year's Food Sovereignty Prize winners at <http://foodsovereigntyprize.org>.
- Avoid palm or soy products in the grocery store
- Ask TIAA to disclose information about farmland investments and commit to a deforestation and land grab-free investment policy. <http://bit.ly/2gZiIdH>
- Check your investments for links to tropical deforestation and land grabs by using this free online database at <https://www.deforestationfreefunds.org/> .§

Upholding human dignity of migrants, refugees

At each phase of what appears to be the Trump administration's plan to sever bridges for people forced to migrate, we look beyond the surface of conflict and see others in their deepest dignity.

After a violent attack by a terrorist in New York City on October 31, President Donald Trump ordered “extreme vetting” of immigrants and all visitors to the country. The administration appears to be moving through a multi-phased plan and we continue to respond to each phase.

Defending Dreamers

One of the largest immigrant groups to be targeted is the Dreamers – recipients of Delayed Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA). President Trump rescinded the Obama-era program on September 8, casting a shadow over the future of the nearly 800,000 recipients, all of whom were brought to the U.S. illegally as children and have gone on to attend school and college, work, or serve in the military. These young, talented people once again face the possibility of life with no path to citizenship. President Trump gave Congress till March to come up with an alternative program or the Dreamers could be subject to immediate deportation.

While some members of Congress have argued for a “clean” Dream Act without riders or strings attached, the majority of members who have spoken out have demanded that a replacement for DACA include tighter internal immigration enforcement, border security improvements, a massive increase in the budgets for Border Patrol and Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE), and even funding for a border wall. One bipartisan bill that seems suitable to immigrant rights advocates, a fair number of members of Congress, and the Dreamers themselves is the Dream Act of 2017, which has to pass with the budget by December 8 or it will expire. Read our letter to Congress in support of the Dream Act on page 10.

Protecting TPS

The Administration has hinted to stripping protections from another 300,000+ Central American and Haitian migrants, holders of Temporary Protected Status, or TPS. This status allows undocumented immigrants to live and work in the U.S. when natural disaster, armed conflict, or other “extraordinary conditions” in their native countries prevent their return.

The Center for Migration Studies, an educational institute in New York that was founded by the Scalabrinian Missionaries, released a report describing the estimated 200,000 Salvadorans, 57,000 Hondurans, and some 50,000 Haitians with TPS. The report includes ample evidence of hardworking people with

strong family and other ties to the United States. High percentages have lived in the United States for 20 years or more, participate in the labor force at a much higher rate than the total U.S. population, speak English well, arrived as children, and have children who were born in the U.S. and thus are U.S. citizens. Read the report at <http://bit.ly/TPSreport>.

The TPS recipients from El Salvador, Honduras, and Haiti make significant economic contributions by maintaining home mortgages, paying taxes, and working in industries crucial to the economy, such as construction, child care and health care. After many years of uncertainty, these vulnerable people should be afforded the right to stay where they are most safe, most able to maintain strong family ties, and where they are making the greatest contributions to society.

Even Haitians, whose TPS was extended for six months in May, have been told not to expect renewal though their impoverished native country continues to struggle to recover from the 2010 earthquake, a nationwide cholera outbreak, and a hurricane in 2016.

Welcoming Refugees

On October 1, Trump cut the number of refugees the U.S. would take a year from 110,000 (the cap was set by the Obama administration) to 45,000 – the lowest number since the current program began in 1980. Then, on October 25, Trump signed an order to institute new “extreme vetting” measures for refugees from Egypt, Iran, Iraq, Libya, Mali, North Korea, Somalia, Sudan, South Sudan, Syria, Yemen, and certain Palestinian males. The tighter screening requirements force refugees to provide officials with the phone numbers and addresses of every place they’ve lived for the last 10 years rather than the standard five years. Experts say these could be impossible hurdles for many refugees and amount to a Muslim ban.§

Faith in action:

1. Tell your members of Congress to support the Dream Act before December 8. <http://bit.ly/2vIpkzi>
2. Ask Congress to protect immigrants with Temporary Protected Status. <http://bit.ly/MaryknollSaveTPS>
3. Urge President Trump and Congress to admit at least 75,000 refugees in 2018. <http://bit.ly/2zZ7Lg4>

Maryknoll letter to Congress: Pass the Dream Act

On November 1, the Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns sent the following letter to all Members of Congress as part of a daily letter drive during the first week of November by more than 50 faith-based organizations in support of the Dream Act of 2017. House Democrats are threatening a government shutdown unless Congress adopts protections for Dreamers by December 8.

On behalf of Maryknoll missionaries – Catholic Sisters, Father and Brothers, and Lay people who, for over 100 years and in dozens of countries around the world, have looked to Jesus as a model of compassion as we work for peace and justice with those on the margins of society – we ask you to take action to resolve an injustice that is happening in the United States.

We urge you to pass the bipartisan Dream Act of 2017 (S.1615/H.R. 3440) to protect the very lives, livelihoods, and contributions of millions of Dreamers and their families, immigrants brought to the United States as children who only know life here, yet who are now being threatened with deportation, instability, or lives lived in the shadows.

President Donald Trump's termination of Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) threatens not only to cut off a path to citizenship for nearly 800,000 Dreamers, but also tear apart families, weaken communities and our economy, and discard the wealth of contributions made by these valuable members of our society. More than 90 percent of these children have gone on to graduate from U.S. high schools and nearly 90 percent are employed. They are our neighbors, coworkers, class-

mates, families, and friends. They are among the best of us.

We ask Congress to uphold the inherent human dignity of these Dreamers. Passing the Dream Act would permit them to work, educate themselves and others, and eventually become citizens. They would continue serving in our military, building our economy, and strengthening the fabric of the country.

Please do not punish the Dreamers for choices they did not make or saddle their dream with other imperatives of comprehensive immigration reform. We ask that you act humanely and not ransom them in their hour of need.

In this moment of great moral decision, we look to Pope Francis, who in his address to Congress said: "We need to avoid a common temptation nowadays: to discard whatever proves troublesome. Let us remember the Golden Rule: 'Do unto others as you would have them do unto you' (Matthew 7:12)." We pray that you uphold the United States as a moral and just nation, and have the courage to show mercy and compassion and pass the 2017 Dream Act. §



People march in the Defend DACA rally in Los Angeles, California, September 5, 2017. Photo by Molly Adams/Flickr.

Prayer for Encounters with Strangers

The following prayer was written by Dr. Ann Carr of the Maryknoll Affiliates for “Exploring Migration” Just-Faith Ministries’ in-depth course that invites Christians to study, prayer, and action in a small group setting. This eight-session module provides participants a chance to find common ground and to discover more about themselves, their values, our God, and the millions of people who are on the move in every part of the world. Learn more about this program and how to register at <https://justfaith.org/>.

“I was a stranger and you welcomed me.” (Matthew 25:35) In earlier times, perhaps we found it easier.

The brokenness of our modern world has released an unending tide of humans in migration. By land and by sea they come, from Sudan, Syria, through treacherous waters to Lampedusa, across parched deserts to the Mexican border.

From the rubble of Aleppo a seven-year-old girl tweets, “Can we build a country called Republic of Refugees? It will be the most peaceful country in the world.” Our brother Francis implores us to open our hearts wide to God and says:

RESPONSE: “Every stranger who knocks on our door brings an opportunity for encounter with Jesus.”

How to understand? How to welcome, when this migration touches our own exile? We the receivers; they the strangers. Their lives disrupted and now ours disrupted. But you, O God, call us to be a Eucharistic community in which all are WE and none are strangers.

From the rubble of Aleppo a seven-year-old girl tweets, “I take a mission to save as many lives as I can. It’s my duty.

RESPONSE: “Every stranger who knocks on our door brings an opportunity for encounter with Jesus.”

The numbing of UN statistics: 65.6 million persons in the world today are displaced. O God, we cannot hold

all of this. And how can we see so many as our brothers and sisters when cultures rub against cultures, communities transform overnight and fears constrict our hearts? Can we see the woman in her hijab as Mary fleeing with Joseph into the land of Egypt? “When an alien lives with

you in your land, do not mistreat him. The stranger who lives as a foreigner with you shall be to you as the native-born among you, and you shall love him as yourself; for you lived as foreigners in the land of Egypt.” (Leviticus 19:33-34)

From the rubble of Aleppo a seven-year-old girl tweets, “Dear world, can we stop killing each other and instead love each other? YES WE CAN.”

RESPONSE: “Every stranger who knocks on our door brings an opportunity for encounter with Jesus.”

Help us to remember, O God, that you call us to welcome, protect, promote and integrate. “Be not forgetful to entertain strangers: for thereby some have entertained angels unawares.” (Hebrews 13:2)

Touch our hearts with courage as you have provided our brothers and sisters in Turkey, Pakistan, Lebanon, Iran, Ethiopia and Uganda who have opened their doors widely to your searching and migrating people.

From the rubble of Aleppo a seven-year-old girl tweets, “Dear children, Never lose hope. You are future of this world, we suffer now but we shall overcome.”

RESPONSE: “Every stranger who knocks on our door brings an opportunity for encounter with Jesus.”§



Brazil: Case for UN treaty on business, human rights

It has been two years since Brazil was hit with the worst environmental disaster in the country's history when a dam burst at an iron-ore mine and toxic mud swept over villages and into rivers. Known as the Mariana Disaster, it is now the rallying cry for a UN treaty on transnational corporations and human rights. This article includes material produced by CIDSE, an international alliance of Catholic social justice organizations, based in Brussels.

“A disaster of truly epic proportions” is how David Kane, a researcher for the Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns who lives in Brazil, described the situation in an article for *NewsNotes* soon after a dam burst at a mine near Mariana in the southeastern part of the country on November 5, 2015. “A dam securing a large tailings pond (where undesired rocks, sediment, and chemicals from mining processes are stored) breached, releasing a wall of 62 million cubic meters of toxic mud and water,” Kane wrote. “The avalanche of toxic sludge buried a nearby town and poisoned hundreds of miles of the River Doce which provides water to hundreds of thousands of people. The disaster has exposed the inadequacies of government regulation of mining operations and is part of a global trend of worsening mining disasters.”

To mark the second anniversary of the Mariana Disaster, CIDSE, an international alliance of Catholic social justice organizations (which includes the Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns) has launched a multimedia, story-based website (<http://bit.ly/MarianaDisaster>). It offers video footage and photos from the disaster and interviews with the people affected. The concerns go even beyond the people and environment of Brazil to the Atlantic Ocean where the nutrient-rich mouth of the River Doce feeds one of the most important spawning points for fish around the world.

Two years on, affected communities still lack meaningful compensation and remedies for their lost livelihoods. This is not an isolated case. Other communities around the world suffer negative consequences from irresponsible mining and other profit-driven development projects.

Corporate accountability

According to CIDSE, the Mariana Disaster, which began at a mine operated by Samarco, a Vale-BHP Billiton joint venture, is a case study of why transnational corporations need to be held legally accountable. From October 23–27, UN member states met in Geneva to continue negotiations on a UN binding treaty on TNCs with respect to human rights. If successful, the treaty could hold TNCs legally responsible for the impacts of their operations worldwide and provide an avenue to justice for victims of business-related human rights abuses.

This forum was the third and largest to date, with about 100 countries participating. A growing number of

states across Latin America, Africa and Asia support the mandate led by Ecuador, while EU states have been reluctant to engage but have taken small steps in this direction. The United States is conspicuously absent, having voted against the resolution in the UN Human Rights Council, which established the mandate in 2014.

The United States reportedly attempted to derail the process on October 27. In an opening statement at an informal (not recorded) session with member states, the U.S. representative said that the UN Secretariat had informed the U.S. that the process could not continue because the current resolution undergirding the treaty was set to expire. Immediately after speaking, the U.S. representative left the room, avoiding questions and comments from other member states, which were many. The UN Secretariat took the floor later and said the very opposite, confirming that no new resolution would be needed to continue negotiations on the treaty.

The United States threatened to leave the UN Human Rights Council in June and has left the post of U.S. Ambassador to the Council vacant. Some interpret the United States' behavior as an effort to sabotage not only a treaty for corporate accountability but the entire UN human rights body.

Human rights over trade

One component of the treaty is to ensure that human rights obligations override trade and investment rules. Under current rules, the opposite occurs when corporations sue governments for perceived loss of profit and unfair treatment. Companies can use the “investor state dispute settlement mechanism” in private investment courts located in such places as the World Bank in Washington, D.C. The judges are corporate lawyers who, when not presiding, defend parties in front of the same courts. Only companies can bring suits and there is no appeals process.

Considering the harmful impacts of profit-driven development on communities, the treaty will be a critical tool to provide a way for communities to seek justice from transnational corporations.

To learn more about the treaty, read the statement by Archbishop Ivan Jurković on behalf of the Holy See (<http://bit.ly/2iMr60C>) and watch short videos by Justice et Paix (<http://bit.ly/2zRvnTC>) and of Bishop Alvaro Ramazzini of Guatemala (<http://bit.ly/2zSQWDE>). §

Guatemala: Seeking justice at Santa Rita dam

Three years after filing an official complaint, traumatized communities receive a response.

In the September 2014 *NewsNotes*, we reported on the displacement of 160 indigenous families by a police force of more than one thousand to construct the 23-megawatt Santa Rita dam in Alta Verapaz. Maryknoll Affiliates in Guatemala alerted us to the incident. New York-based Latin Renewables Investment Fund (LRIF), a partial owner of the dam, received financing from the International Finance Corporation (IFC) at that time. This is another example of the IFC using a “financial intermediary” to avoid scrutiny.

The communities filed an official complaint at that time with the Compliance Advisory Office (CAO), an independent grievance mechanism that rules on whether the IFC violates their lending policies. The CAO just released its findings on October 30.

The report found that the IFC failed to recognize the scope of risk of the project to human rights, biodiversity,

culture and livelihoods. The CAO also found that the IFC did not do enough to ensure that LRIF conducted a proper consultation with adequate access to information and freedom to speak without fear. The IFC also did not guarantee that the project met the World Bank dam construction safety standards or the indigenous peoples policy guidelines. The IFC also failed to work sufficiently with LRIF to address rising tensions and conflicts. The CAO raised questions as to whether the IFC could provide sufficient oversight of financial intermediaries. The office will continue to monitor the project until the IFC is in compliance.

The ruling does not mean that the project will be cancelled or that the communities receive a settlement but it could improve how the project is conducted and influence future projects of its kind. Read the full report at <http://bit.ly/2y11MFZ>



World AIDS Day Prayer Vigil

Join the 24-hour vigil on December 1 to pray for those living with HIV and AIDS and for those whose lives were cut short due to HIV or AIDS.

Add your name and the time when you wish to pray on December 1 to the list at <http://bit.ly/AIDSDayprayervigil>. Hours are posted according to Eastern Standard Time – for instance, if you are in Nairobi and wish to pray at 9 AM (Nairobi time), please choose 1 AM on the list.

We offer the Maryknoll AIDS Task Force Prayer:

God of all compassion,
Comfort your sons and daughters
Who live with HIV.
Spread over us all your quilt of mercy,
Love and peace.

Open our eyes to your presence
Reflected in their faces.
Open our ears to your truth
Echoing in their hearts.

Give us the strength
To weep with the grieving,
To walk with the lonely,
To stand with the depressed.

May our love mirror your love
For those who live in fear,
Who live under stress and
Who suffer rejection.

Mothering, fathering God
Grant rest to those who have died
And hope to all who live with HIV.

God of life, help us to find the cure now
And help us to build a world in which
No one dies alone and where
Everyone lives accepted
Wanted and loved.§

Israel-Palestine: Women march for peace

Frustrated with the stalled peace process, tens of thousands of Palestinian and Israeli women marched for miles through the desert calling for a viable peace agreement.

Thousands of Palestinian and Israeli women marched for peace over the course of two weeks starting in late September in what they called the “Journey to Peace.” They marched from Sderot, Israel, through the West Bank to the Dead Sea and on to Jerusalem, where they celebrated the conclusion by dressing in white and dancing arm-in-arm at a rally on October 10. The march was organized by Women Wage Peace (WWP), a group created in 2014 in the aftermath of the Gaza war and focused on the need for a solution to end the violence rather than holding one ideological line or another.

Women Wage Peace has a membership of more than 24,000 Israelis and Palestinians, all along the political spectrum, who share the common desire for “an honourable and bilaterally acceptable political agreement of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict which is to be reached by 2018.” This is the second march that the women have organized; they also hold monthly “parlor meetings,” and host weekly demonstrations at intersections in Israel, all aimed at moving the Israeli government back to the negotiating table with the Palestinian Authority.

As with other efforts meant to encourage a peaceful solution to this complex conflict, not everyone supports the message of the march. Some question what WWP means by “peace”: How can an event which includes Palestinian women from the besieged town of Hebron alongside Israeli women living in illegal settlements in the West Bank advance peace, when surely their visions of that solution are contradictory? How can the word “occupation” be entirely absent from their message?

The organization intentionally uses inclusive language to cast a wide net of support among Israeli and Palestinian women. Women Wage Peace proudly touts that among their members are right, center, and left-wing voters – even moderate settler women.

Some of the leading Palestinian groups that equate “normalizing” the relationship with Israel with accepting the status quo of an apartheid system spoke out strongly against the march. The Palestinian branch of

the Boycott, Divestment and Sanction (BDS) campaign called for a “peaceful sabotage” of the “feminist normalization march.” Hamas condemned the march in an official statement, challenging Palestinians to “confront” the march and “isolate” those who organized it.

However, Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas expressed support for the march, and his Committee for Interaction with Israeli Society even organized transportation. In a personal message to the marchers, Abbas called for the creation of “a Palestinian state living side-by-side in peace with Israel.”

On the other side of the political spectrum, critics criticized the critics, suggesting that for many Palestinians “the priority remains making peace with Hamas and not Israel,” because Palestinians “identify with Hamas’s dream of destroying Israel and killing Jews.” To such critics, not wanting to “normalize” relations indicates not accepting the existence of the State of Israel.

Shortly before the conclusion of the march, on October 12, the Palestinian Authority signed what could be a historic agreement with Hamas in which Hamas has reportedly agreed to cede control of the Gaza strip to the Palestinian Authority as of December 1. Hamas, considered a terrorist group by Israel and the U.S., has controlled Gaza since it evicted the Palestinian Authority ten years ago. In the years since, Hamas and Israel have engaged in three violent conflicts and hopes for a viable Palestinian state have dwindled considerably.

If, in fact, the Palestinian political groups of Fatah and Hamas reunite and Hamas ceases to fire rockets into Israel, there may be hope for a future peace agreement—though you cannot look to the Israeli government for that hope: “Reconciling with mass-murderers is part of the problem, not part of the solution,” Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said about the agreement.

It is significant to see thousands of women normally separated by walls, barbed wire, and soldiers, come together with a shared belief: that a peaceful solution is possible. §



Photo credit: Facebook/WomenWagePeace.

Women's role in peacemaking

Women are the largest group to be affected by violent conflict and yet often have the least participation in its resolution. At the same time, research shows that women are essential to the success of any peace process.

President Trump recently signed into law the Women, Peace, and Security Act of 2017, a bill with bipartisan support that aims to strengthen, support, and promote the role of women in peace talks and post-war stability. There is strong evidence to support this. A 2015 study of 156 peace agreements concluded when women are part of the discussions to end violent conflict, wars are more likely to stay ended and to bring a just peace that includes all the population.

Afghanistan's first lady, Rula Ghani, spoke at an event at the United States Institute for Peace (USIP) in Washington, D.C. on October 25 about the role of women in peacemaking in Afghanistan. Since her husband, Ashraf Ghani, became president in 2014, Rula Ghani has quickly gained a reputation as a strong advocate of both the peace process in Afghanistan and the inclusion of women on all levels of Afghan society.

Rula Ghani, who was raised in Lebanon to a Christian family and attended university in France and Lebanon, spoke about a conference for women in Kabul that she helped coordinate in 2016. The "Third Symposium on Afghan Women's Empowerment" brought more than 300 women from across the country to the presidential palace to discuss issues affecting Afghan women. Ghani described these women, who were of varying levels of education and experience, as ready and willing to share their struggles and lead in finding peaceful solutions.

Taliban control of certain areas of Afghanistan hinders access to health care, education, and economic activity, especially for and by women. While the government and the Taliban are at an impasse, many women are engaging in negotiations with the Taliban at the local level. Some individual women have successfully convinced Taliban members to abandon checkpoints that hinder movement and to allow their children to go to school. The conference in 2016 provided Afghan women the opportunity to examine their strengths in nonviolent peacebuilding and brainstorm ways to organize their efforts and increase their influence.

For Ghani, the key to peace in Afghanistan is a culture shift for a people who have lived with violence and uncertainty for over forty years. "Social peace" can come, Ghani said, when "mentality shifts from a mode of violence and open confrontation to that of peaceful interaction." Ghani said she will continue to highlight women already engaged peacebuilding and empower them to hone their skills for the benefit of society at

large, and promote the inclusion of more women in government, in peace talks, in education, and in business.

The Catholic Nonviolence Initiative (CNI) has similar aims – to lift up examples of nonviolence peacebuilding around the world, and to contend that it is these efforts which keep the world from experiencing even more violence. The initiative, led by Pax Christi International and actively supported by the Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns, is facilitating an 18-month long "roundtable" dialogue with peacemakers around the world about ways to expand the role the Catholic Church plays in promoting a culture of nonviolence. (See page 3 for more information about the roundtables.)

These are two women peacemakers involved in the roundtables:

Nora Carmi, a Palestinian Christian born just months before Israel was founded, is both a leading peacemaker and refugee in her own divided city of Jerusalem. She knows the urgent need for ending the injustice in Palestine and Israel nonviolently. In reflecting on the nonviolent struggle of the Catholic Church in Palestine, Carmi recounts demonstrations in opposition to the extension of the Separation Wall in the Cremisan Valley of the West Bank. "(Priests) held a weekly outdoor Mass under the trees of the targeted lands. Each Friday afternoon, families whose lands were threatened as well as civil society and human rights organizations, diplomats, journalists, and non-Christians joined together in prayer." She concludes that "whatever the future holds, nonviolence and ecumenical team work will win."

Loreta Castro is a member of the steering committee of the Catholic Nonviolent Initiative and the Program Director of the Center for Peace Education at Miriam College, in Quezon City, Philippines. Castro promotes peace education and nonviolent conflict resolution both nationally and internationally. At present, her attention is focused on Philippine President Rodrigo Duterte's 'war against drugs' that has resulted in many killings and his legislative priority to reintroduce the death penalty." Castro, with students and other members of the CPE, has organized vigils, rallies, silent marches, forums, and Masses, to speak out against the killings.

The collective hope of these and other women in CNI, is to promote nonviolence and peace where it is so urgently needed. §

Learn more about the Catholic Nonviolence Initiative at <https://nonviolencejustpeace.net/>.

Kenya: Electoral crisis

Ethnicity rather than ideology continues to be the dividing line in Kenyan politics.

On August 8, Kenya had its twelfth general election, for president, all members of the parliament, county governors and other local county officials. The election appeared to be won convincingly by the current President, Uhuru Kenyatta, of the Jubilee Party, and the voting returns were declared fair and accurate by international observers. However, several weeks later Kenya's High Court nullified the election results, ruling that the returns sent from regional voting stations were not properly sealed and certified. The Court stated that a new election would have to be held, on October 26.

The losing candidate on August 8, Raila Odinga of the NASA Party, announced he would not agree to be on the ballot unless all members of the Independent Electoral and Boundaries Commission (IEBC) were removed and replaced by non-partisan members. His announcement was accompanied by street protests by his supporters, mainly from the Luo ethnic group, in the cities of Nairobi, Mombasa and Kisumu. The police and other government forces confronted the opposition protesters, leading to violence and deaths. Amnesty International reported that seventy people had been killed during the demonstrations.

The election was held on Thursday, October 26, as scheduled, with all eight of the original candidates for president, including Odinga, on the ballot. Most parts of the country were calm and many people turned out to vote. In places where the majority are reported to be supporters of Odinga, few if any people showed up to vote and at some polling places even the polling officials did not show up out of fear of violence. There was violence in areas heavily populated by Luo, such as Kibera in Nairobi and the city of Kisumu.

The election officials were given a week to certify and announce the results, although it is all but certain that Kenyatta would be re-elected for his second term. Sadly, it is doubtful that this outcome will bring peace to the country, which is plagued at each election by inter-ethnic hostilities.

Susan Nagele, a Maryknoll Lay Missioner and medical doctor, works in the city of Mombasa and has been directly affected by the electoral tensions, which were exacerbated by a drought in northern Kenya that left over three million in food peril. A strike by government nurses since June has compounding the difficulties

of her medical work.

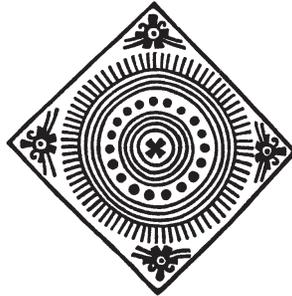
Nagele stated that, "In Marsabit, a semi-arid county, about twenty women die each day due to complications of childbirth. Maternal deaths nationally from January to June this year were 857, compared to 413 last year. No child has received an immunization since June. The big fear is that an outbreak of measles will occur and this virus kills. The nurses' strike will not be solved until we get a president and a government that is functioning." She appealed for mediated discussions between Kenyatta and Odinga, to resolve the electoral crisis.

Kenya's Conference of Catholic Bishops issued a pastoral message on October 12, stating, "We have chosen to convene, facilitate and mediate high level talks on resolving the political crisis so that we steer the country to stability and cohesion. Our only way forward is to dialogue."

Some expatriate missionaries questioned the impartiality of the bishops, however, citing the National Day of Prayer event in October at Subukia, in the Rift Valley of central Kenya, at which President Kenyatta was allowed to speak. According to the missionaries, the president turned the prayerful gathering into a political rally for the Jubilee Party. Even bishops and priests are susceptible to ethno-nationalist sentiments that can compromise their offers of mediation.

The sudden resignation of Dr. Roselyne Akombe, one of the members of the IEBC, cast the election into deeper shadow. Akombe fled to New York in fear for her life one week before the vote. She claims to have received death threats, made credible by the unsolved murder in August of Chris Msando, the head of the IEBC's digital security division. "There cannot be credible elections on October 26," Akombe said.

It is not inconceivable that Kenya will have to accept intervention by international mediators, such as happened in 2008, when Kofi Annan, the Secretary General of the United Nations, mediated an end to the horrific violence after the December, 2007, election. Whether the political outcome of this election is resolved peacefully or violently, it can be almost guaranteed that there will be inter-ethnic strife again in 2022, when the next Presidential election is scheduled to take place – unless Kenyans can find some way to overcome their convulsive ethnic hostilities. §



Myanmar: Investor advocacy for the Rohingya

The Maryknoll Sisters and the Maryknoll Fathers and Brothers have both sent letters to some of the world's largest oil and gas companies who are doing business in Myanmar, as a form of investor advocacy on behalf of the persecuted Rohingya Muslim minority.

The Maryknoll Fathers and Brothers joined a group of investors and stakeholders in sending letters to energy companies doing business in Myanmar on October 23, calling on them to reassess their dealings in light of that country's brutal military crackdown on its ethnic Rohingya minority. (Read the letter at <http://bit.ly/2yluer7>.)

Organized by the International Campaign for the Rohingya and Azzad Asset Management, letters signed by 31 investor organizations representing more than \$53 billion in assets under management were sent to executives at six oil and gas companies, emphasizing the serious risks of doing business with the Myanmar regime. Commodities make up a majority of Myanmar's exports and are often controlled in whole or part by the armed forces.

Simon Billenness, Executive Director of the International Campaign for the Rohingya said, "Corporations that do business in Burma are supporting a government engaged in ethnic cleansing and possibly even genocide against the Rohingya. The oil companies in Burma must take affirmative steps to avoid complicity in these crimes against humanity."

In addition to citing the moral obligation to address the humanitarian situation in Myanmar, the letters express concern about the potential risks to investments in the country as well as harm to corporate reputations stemming from doing business with a regime engaged in what the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights has characterized as "a textbook case of ethnic cleansing."

The letter to oil companies states in part:

"We believe that [your] operations and investment in Myanmar and relationships with both the government and the state-owned Myanma Oil and Gas Enterprise creates a special obligation for [your company] to both express its concern over recent events and to reassess its relationship with the government in light of the Burmese government's recent military actions against Rohingya communities. We cannot maintain 'business as usual' in a country where allegations of crimes against humanity and genocide persist."

Companies receiving the letter were China National Offshore Oil Corporation, Daewoo, PetroChina, Petronas, Total, and Woodside Petroleum.

In August, the Maryknoll Sisters were part of an investor coalition representing more than \$30 billion

in assets that sent a similar letter to Chevron Corp., which also operates in Burma. (Read the letter at <http://bit.ly/2zp07PJ>.)

For decades, the Rohingya ethnic minority in Myanmar have been subject to a government-sanctioned campaign of forced relocation, violence, and persecution. In 2012, Burmese military forces moved more than 120,000 Rohingya from their homes into detention camps. Human rights observers report that the Myanmar military has carried out campaigns of mass rape and killing of Rohingya civilians, including children.

The recent Burmese army crackdown on the Rohingya has caused an estimated 500,000 Rohingya refugees to flee to neighboring Bangladesh, triggering a humanitarian and refugee crisis. Read the letter 125 faith leaders sent to Congress in response in September at <http://bit.ly/2imkvpR>.§

Faith in action:

The Elijah Interfaith Institute in Australia offers a prayer for the Rohingya. May our prayer stir us to action for justice and humanity. <http://elijah-interfaith.org/news/prayer-for-rohingya>

Tell Congress to end U.S. military engagement with Myanmar. <http://bit.ly/2zcQJhi> A provision in the U.S. Senate's current draft of the National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) would increase U.S. military engagement with Myanmar. Urge your members of Congress to cosponsor a bipartisan amendment (SA 607) to strike this language and to suspend all U.S. financial aid to Myanmar's military. The UK government suspended its financial aid to Myanmar's military on September 19. Tell Congress that the United States should do the same.

Follow the plight of the Rohingya people who have been forced to flee to Bangladesh and join in advocacy for respect for their rights wherever they reside, at the International Campaign for the Rohingya <http://www.rohingyacampaign.org/>.

North Korea: Encounter, dialogue lead to peace

A Maryknoll missionary on the Korean peninsula demonstrates with his life a culture of encounter and dialogue as the way to dispel fears and build peaceful relationships.

The BBC reported on October 12 that Maryknoll Father Gerry Hammond will continue to bring life-saving medicine to tuberculosis patients in North Korea, as he has done for more than 20 years, despite President Donald Trump's order banning travel to North Korea by U.S. citizens.

Father Hammond, a U.S. citizen, is an 83-year-old Maryknoll priest who has lived and worked in South Korea since 1960. This past Summer, he received the Gaudium et Spes Award from the Knights of Columbus for his ministry in neighboring North Korea.

Father Hammond has made more than 50 trips to North Korea since 1995 as part of the Eugene Bell Foundation, a Christian organization which provides medication and care for patients with multi-drug-resistant tuberculosis, making him one of the very few Westerners with regular access to what's considered one of the world's most closed societies.

In Hammond's view, expressed in a recent interview

with Crux Magazine, whatever the geopolitical situation between North Korea and the United States, "People are the same all over the world, really," he said.

"They're just ordinary people trying to get better and to be in good health, so we should be there," Father Hammond said. "Where there's suffering, that's where Christ is, and where Christ is, why shouldn't we be there?" Read more about Father Hammond's ministry in Maryknoll Magazine.

The travel ban to North Korea came into effect on September 1 for all U.S. citizens except those with special permits. Father Hammond told the BBC that he has submitted a permit request for his next trip to North Korea, scheduled for November, but had not heard back at the time of publication. "If I don't hear from them, I am going to take that as a yes," he told the BBC.

Faith in action: Tell President Trump and Congress we need talks, not war with North Korea. <http://bit.ly/2eN3BQn>

Advent Reflection Guide

The new Advent reflection guide for 2017 offers us all a special opportunity to grow in our relationship with God and to deepen our commitment to Jesus' way of life, rooted in love and welcome.

The "2017 Advent Reflection Guide: A Season to Welcome the Stranger" from the Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns contains reflections, questions, prayers, and actions based on each week's Gospel reading and the experience of Maryknoll missionaries who have lived and worked with communities affected by forced migration in Africa, Asia, and Latin America.

As the number of people fleeing wars, violent conflict, and political persecution reaches new heights, countries around the world are struggling to meet the demands of receiving these vulnerable people. Maryknoll missionaries have the unique perspective of having been the stranger who has been welcomed, often by marginalized communities in some of the most isolated parts of the world. What a transformative experience it is! This lived experience of welcome has deepened our faith in the strength of God's compassion and mercy and challenges us to create a culture of welcome for all migrants and refugees. We believe, as Pope Francis says, "Welcoming others means welcoming God in person!"

We invite you to use this guide individually or in small groups to reflect upon your life patterns, to pray more deeply, and renew your spirit to face the realities of our world.

Find the guide at <http://bit.ly/AdventGuide2017>.



Resources

- 1) Join the **“Catholic Nonviolence Initiative: Accomplishments and Next Steps” webinar on November 7 at 9 a.m. EST.** If you aren't available at that time, RSVP anyway. They will send you the recording. In the months since the Nonviolence and Just Peace conference in Rome in 2016, the Catholic Nonviolence Initiative has celebrated a number of positive effects, such as Pope Francis' 2017 World Day of Peace message, "Nonviolence: A style of politics for peace." Other concrete actions, events, and dialogue have been ongoing, including dialogue with the Vatican. This webinar will provide an update on some particular accomplishments and concrete next steps to maintain energy around the CNI and to offer practical examples of action we can take to help move this forward in different social spheres. <http://bit.ly/2z9LQ9g>
- 2) Join the **World AIDS Day Prayer Vigil on December 1** to pray for those living with HIV and AIDS and for those whose lives were cut short due to HIV or AIDS. Add your name and the time when you wish to pray on December 1 to the list at <http://bit.ly/AIDSDayprayervigil>
- 3) Read and share Pax Christi International's new **“Position Paper on Extractives in Latin America.”** The paper was published to coincide with their panel discussion on extractives in Latin America in Brussels on October 31. <http://bit.ly/2zdfR7Q>
- 4) Read and share **“Issue Brief - Environmental Migrants: Considerations for the U.S. Government”** by the Environmental and Energy Study Institute. Climate change threatens to force population displacement on a scale never seen before. Although no one can be certain what the total number of people displaced will be, it will likely be in the tens of millions. Unfortunately, many governments, international organizations, and institutions are currently ill-prepared and unequipped to respond to this challenge. To buffer the United States from these potentially seismic shifts, it is advisable that the plight of environmental migrants receive serious consideration and advanced planning. <http://bit.ly/2z6MqVj>
- 5) Read and share **“Between a Wall and a Dangerous Place”** a new blog weekly series, by the Latin America Working Group. Each weekly blog discusses the intersection of human rights, migration, corruption, and public security in Honduras and El Salvador. The series shows how the dangers that propel children, teenagers, women, and men from those countries to seek refuge in the United States, Mexico, and elsewhere have not ended. The blogs are based on interviews with activists, government officials, journalists, humanitarian workers, diplomats, and academics, and aim to present a more nuanced understanding of the root causes of emigration. A new post will be released each week and the series will be later released in one report. <http://bit.ly/2A9U1zZ>
- 6) Download the free **“2017 Advent Reflection Guide: A Season to Welcome the Stranger”** from the Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns. This guide contains reflections, questions, prayers, and actions based on each week's Gospel reading and the experience of Maryknoll missionaries who have lived and worked with communities affected by forced migration in Africa, Asia, and Latin America. <http://bit.ly/AdventGuide2017>

