



Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns

NewsNotes

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

**September-October 2018
Vol. 43, No. 5**

Immigration: Families are still separated	3
Fossil fuel divestment: Learning from others.....	4
Palm oil: Thriving on collusion.....	5
United Nations: Review of the 2030 Agenda.....	6
Nicaragua: Speaking truth to power.....	7
Zimbabwe: Church can lead healing process.....	8
United States military presence in Africa.....	9
Greece: Dispatch from refugee camps.....	10
Israel/Palestine: Jewish nation-state bill.....	11
Cambodia: The election that was or wasn't.....	12
Resources.....	13

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

200 New York Avenue, N.W. Washington, D.C. 20001
Phone: (202)832-1780 Fax: (202)832-5195
ogc@maryknoll.org www.maryknollogc.org

Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns:
Peace, Social Justice and the Integrity of Creation

http://www.maryknollogc.org

Maryknoll Sisters Maryknoll Lay Missioners Maryknoll Fathers & Brothers

- Gerry Lee, director..... glee@maryknoll.org
Fr. Frank J. Breen, MMfjbreen@maryknoll.org
Anna Engelmann..... aengelmann@maryknoll.org
Susan Gunn..... sgunn@maryknoll.org
Dave Kane..... dglobalcitizenkane@gmail.com
Sr. Marvie Misolas, MMmmisolas@mksisters.org
Chloe Schwabe..... cschwabe@maryknoll.org
Sr. Veronica Schweyen, MM..... vschweyen@maryknoll.org

MOGC Washington
200 New York Ave., N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20001
(202)832-1780
ogc@maryknoll.org

MOGC Maryknoll NY
P.O. Box 311
Maryknoll, NY 10545-0311
(914)941-7575
ogc@maryknoll.org

MOGC UN Office
777 First Ave., 10th Fl.
New York, NY 10115
(212)973-9551

To contribute to NewsNotes, please contact Susan Gunn at sgunn@maryknoll.org.

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

President Donald Trump
The White House
Washington, D.C. 20500
www.whitehouse.gov

Secretary of Defense
The Pentagon
Washington, D.C. 20301
(703) 695-5261 phone
www.defenselink.mil

Jim Yong Kim
President
World Bank Group
1818 H Street, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20433
www.worldbank.org

Vice President Mike Pence
The White House
Washington, D.C. 20500
vice_president@whitehouse.gov

Attorney General
U.S. Department of Justice
Washington, D.C. 20530
(202)353-1555 phone
AskDOJ@usdoj.gov
www.justice.gov

Christine Lagarde
Managing Director
International Monetary Fund
700 19th Street, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20431
www.imf.org

White House Comment Desk
(202) 456-1111 phone
(202) 456-2461 fax

U.S. Representative to UN
799 United Nations Plaza
New York, NY 10017
(212) 415-4000 phone
www.usunnewyork.usmission.gov

Current status of bills:
(202) 225-1772
http://thomas.loc.gov

Secretary of State
2201 C Street, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20520
(202) 647-6575 phone
(202) 647-2283 fax
www.state.gov

Capitol switchboard:
(202) 224-3121

Immigration: Families are still separated

Yvonne Dilling, Mission Educator for the Maryknoll Fathers and Brothers in San Antonio, Texas, recently volunteered to provide hospitality for a mother and son from Honduras who were reunited after having been separately detained by the U.S. government as part of the “zero tolerance” immigration policy.

At the height of the family separation crisis on the Southern border this summer, before judges had forced the Trump administration to suspend the cruelest tactic of its ‘zero tolerance’ immigration policy, Border Patrol agents pulled an eight-year-old Honduran boy away from his mother so they could prosecute her as a criminal, sending the boy alone into a parallel detention system with no plan or method to reunite mother and son.

His mother had been caught crossing the border and deported six years earlier – potentially disqualifying her from the asylum status she so desperately sought. She would now be prosecuted as a felon under zero tolerance. Determined, however, she arrived this time laden with meticulous records of her abuse by the violent partner she was fleeing – police reports, photos, legal documents, as well as documentation of her identity and that of her son – which might sway a sympathetic judge.

While U.S. immigration officials kept mother and son at different facilities at opposite ends of Texas, denying them any opportunity to speak with one another by phone, those same officials also managed to ‘lose’ all of the family’s documentation, including both of their birth certificates and all of the evidence that might win her asylum.

Whether by negligence or malice, for two months the mother and son tried to call each other but were told by guards that no one on the other end would answer. For the mother, fear of never seeing her son again was magnified by the loss of her crucial documents – her lifeline to asylum and survival. The boy built up resentment against his mother, who, he was told, had not been trying to reach him as he was moved from facility to facility to satisfy the Flores agreement which prohibits holding children in the same detention facility for more than 21 days.

Then, through the lucky intervention of a journalist who had been digging into the devastation caused by zero tolerance, the Honduran mother and son were reunited and were detained together in the Dilly and Port Isabel facilities for nearly two months where officials who had lost their identifying paperwork conducted DNA tests to prove their relationship. Finally, they were released to a community shelter in the Rio Grande Valley run by the Interfaith Welcome Coalition, and, ultimately, to Maryknoll Mission Educator Yvonne Dilling,

who shared her home with them until they could locate family sponsors in South Carolina and travel there.

“They got caught in their own lies,” Dilling said of the immigration officials who botched the mother and son’s case from the beginning.

Dilling said it was devastating to see the damage that had been done to the bonds between the mother and child. “The obviously traumatized boy kept asking, ‘why didn’t you call me, Mommy. I was so scared.’” The mother could only promise him she had tried. Instead of legal documents and birth certificates, all that had survived were some 50 drawings the boy made of his experience in detention.

For all the hardships they’ve endured and that lay ahead, Dilling said the boy seems resilient and the mother, “has a lot of fight in her, a lot of wisdom. She’s very skilled and well prepared from the University of Life.”

The tragic story of this small Honduran family is one of thousands from the crisis of family separation that shocked the nation and dominated news over the summer. Under the policy rubric of ‘zero tolerance,’ the current administration cast immigrants as threats to national security without regard to criminal history or intent, demanding criminal prosecution of all who enter the country without permission. The immediate result was thousands of children were taken from their parents during the spring of 2018 and cast alone into a detention system with no plan or method to reunite families – which the government called “*deleted family units.*”

As summer fades into fall, the U.S. government has had to comply with a court order to reunite the children with their parents. No one has, of yet, been held responsible for inflicting the cruel and unusual punishment of zero tolerance. Families are still separated. Nearly 500 children had still not been reunited with their parents, including 22 children under the age of five, the government reported in court papers filed on August 30.

As Dilling says, it’s far from over: “This is why Catholic social teaching is so important. These traumatized children are going to be in our schools, affecting their playmates and teachers. They will act out. It’s all going to come back to haunt us,” she said. “We learn these things and try to respond with compassion.”

Faith in action: Find ways to respond to the family separation crisis at <http://bit.ly/FamilySepCrisis>

Fossil fuel divestment: Learning from others

This article is the third and final in a series designed to educate Catholic organizations about ways to participate in the fastest growing divestment campaign in human history - the fossil fuel divestment movement.

Looking at the experiences of other religious organizations can bring to light potential opportunities and pitfalls for those considering joining the fossil fuel divestment campaign. As our previous article showed, there are a variety of ways to participate with no single model that fits all. Each organization has gone about it according to its own values, history, and opportunities, often combining divestment from fossil fuel companies with new investments in alternative energy production, energy efficiencies and other “impact” investments.

Education and internal discussions are important parts of any divestment process. As one former president of a women’s religious congregation explained, “There often needs to be an education process, where the investment committee is deliberately indoctrinated to the idea that their job is not only to focus on financials but also to reflect the mission of the organization. Some committee members may not even know the mission and values of the organization!”

Education within the organization is also often needed, said Beth Collins, director of impact investing for Catholic Relief Services (CRS). “There is a perceived conflict between our mission and making investments in private enterprises,” Collins said about the mindset at the Catholic nonprofit organization. “In order to address this cultural dynamic, it was critical to begin our work with staff education activities. We developed and rolled out a series of webinars introducing impact investing, enterprise sourcing and due diligence while also engaging directly with CRS staff at select conferences/meetings...”

The United Church of Christ was the first Protestant denomination to divest from fossil fuels in 2013 and has since worked to simplify this process for other churches by producing educational materials as well as creating the first alternative fossil fuel free investment fund in 2014, the Beyond Fossil Fuel Fund.

The World Council of Churches, which represents more than half a billion Christians around the world, decided to rule out fossil fuel investments in mid-2014, but one of its larger members, the Church of England, took a little longer to make a similar decision. While deciding to divest from “any company that makes more than 10 percent of its revenues from thermal coal... [or] oil from the tar sands,” it chose to maintain investments in some oil and gas corporations in order to continue

internal discussions with management as long as those discussions lead to action. The director of responsible investment for the Church warned, “If engagement with companies isn’t productive, the policy does make clear divestment is there as a last resort.”

Debate over fossil fuel divestment in the Presbyterian Church U.S.A. has been open. There have been a number of articles in *The Presbyterian Outlook* and other Christian blogs and websites that demonstrate how contentious the issue of divestment is even when there is consensus about the need to address climate change.

The proposal to divest from fossil fuels has come to a vote in the last three General Assemblies and failed each time, most recently in June. Those opposed recognized the need to act on climate change, but also the need to stay invested to “hold fossil fuel companies’ feet to the fire.” They were in favor of other measures, such as placing a price on carbon and decreasing energy usage. They also expressed concern over the likelihood of losing churches and membership in areas where many members work in the fossil fuel industry, all for a campaign which they suspect may not be necessary.

The School Sisters of Notre Dame Central Pacific Province, with members in 21 U.S. states and four countries, provide an interesting example of how local opportunities influence decision making. For more than thirty years the organization has screened its investments in favor of positive corporate practices and against corporations producing weapons, nuclear power, stem cell research, or other practices at odds with the Sisters’ values. Most recently they added a screen against “energy companies which have an Environmental, Social and Governance [ESG] rating by MSCI [Morgan Stanley Capital International] ESG Research below BBB.” [MSCI ESG scores are mapped onto a rating grid from CCC to AAA, with BBB as the average.]

The Sisters are also increasing their “alternative” investments, most recently in three solar projects near one of their main locations in Minnesota. They are leasing land to the projects and will buy the energy once completed as well as beginning to support similar projects in other countries. The Catholic Impact Investing Collaborative [<http://www.catholicimpact.org>] has other stories of institutions moving their investments into projects aimed at better social and environmental impacts. §

Palm oil: Thriving on collusion

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

Beyond the health and environmental impacts described in our previous article, palm oil plantations have also had detrimental effects on democracy in a number of countries. Plantation owners have at times gained undue influence with local and even national-level politicians who often run roughshod over environmental laws and use intimidation and violence to remove traditional communities from coveted lands.

Indonesia, where more than half of the world's palm oil is produced, is a prime example of the incredible power that palm oil can wield. The investigative series "Indonesia for Sale," launched in October 2017 by the Gecko Project, an initiative established by UK-based non-profit Earthsight, documents the corruption driving land grabs and the destruction of tropical rainforests in Indonesia. The first installment describes how "unaccountable politicians carved up other people's land and sold it to the children of billionaires [and] farms that fed the rural poor were destroyed so that multinationals could produce food for export."

After the fall of Suharto's dictatorship in 1998, local politicians called *bupatis* filled the political vacuum and became powerful figures within their districts. They often used their new decision-making power over the use of land and forests to enrich themselves and family members while building unbeatable political dynasties. Palm oil plantation owners gave large donations to maintain friendly *bupatis* in power. In return, the *bupatis* granted the palm oil companies access to lands where traditional families had lived for generations.

The Gecko Project concluded that their findings, based on nine months of investigation, show that "the trade-off – of environmental and social harm for economic growth – isn't inevitable or necessary. It's a consequence of collusive relationships between plantation firms and district chiefs. Palm oil cash has led to the election of politicians who take [sic] decisions in the interests of the industry, increase the area of land ceded to companies and then fail to regulate them. The twin problems of money politics and unbridled oil palm expansion, our investigations show, are inextricably linked and mutually reinforcing."

Indonesia and Malaysia produce close to 85 percent of the world's palm oil, but as global demand rises and suitable land in both countries becomes scarcer, companies are on an aggressive global race to open new territories for palm oil production. Peru is one place of

interest, due to its large, almost untouched, forests and willing government, or governments, as Peru, like Indonesia years ago, is undergoing a process of decentralization of power. The Environmental Investigation Agency (EIA) released a study of palm oil projects in Peru in 2015 that said the Peruvian government "must ensure that decisions about land use are clear, consistent, and fully in line with all relevant laws and policies."

In the Philippines, palm oil plantations have denuded the forest in parts of the Palawan region despite its recognition as a UNESCO Man & Biosphere Reserve for its environmental importance. In 2014, John Mart Salunday from Ancestral Land/Domain Watch, a local NGO organizing resistance against palm oil expansion, said "We are witnessing in Palawan a new aggressive land grab, driven by growing global consumption of palm oil, with agribusiness enterprises taking over with the support of complicit government officials while local communities are deprived of critical resources and virgin forest is being felled down."

African countries are also being targeted for palm oil development. In Cameroon, thanks to documents obtained by the Oakland Institute through a Freedom of Information Act request, we are able to see the international influence of palm oil producers. Internal documents show that U.S. embassy officials pressured the Cameroon government to approve a palm oil project in 2013 for Herakles Farms, a U.S. company, even though they were fully aware of opposition from Cameroonian government representatives and NGOs over serious environmental and social concerns. In a 20-page report revealing the evidence, the Oakland Institute points out that the U.S. lobby for this project is in blatant contradiction with official U.S. policy and goals related to climate change and conservation, and undermines numerous U.S.-financed projects in Cameroon. Promisingly, a lease that was up for renewal in late 2016 has yet to be renewed, indicating that the pressure from the U.S. embassy may not be as influential as in the past.

A common characteristic of the companies that run palm oil projects around the world is an opaque corporate ownership structure that complicates implementing "zero forestation" pledges. Zero forestation pledges allow companies to clear forest provided they replant an equivalent area elsewhere. We will discuss this and other challenges and opportunities to decrease the destructiveness of palm oil in the next issue of NewsNotes. §

United Nations: Review of the 2030 Agenda

Sister Marvie L. Misolas, MM, NGO Representative to the UN for the Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns, writes about the recent review of six of the 17 sustainable development goals at the United Nations.

It has been three years since the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, with its 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and 169 targets, was adopted by 193 countries at the United Nations. In July, the High Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development met under the auspices of the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) to review progress made on six of the 17 SDGs and determine if member states are on track to realize the goals by 2030.

Forty-six countries submitted voluntary national reviews showcasing good practices, progress, and challenges in implementing the 169 targets. The two-week meeting highlighted the need to work harder and speed-up efforts to gain momentum and “leave no one behind.”

Liu Zhenmin, the UN Under-Secretary-General of ECOSOC, presented the UN Secretary General’s SDG progress report which noted that there is indeed a decline in the number of those living in extreme poverty. This gain could be lost, he warned, due to climate change, violent conflicts, lack of social protections, rising rates of hunger and gender inequality, pressures on Earth’s resources and its regeneration, decreasing overseas development assistance, and underfunded data collection on SDGs.

Keynote speaker Professor Jeffrey Sachs of Columbia University’s School of Sustainable Development said that greed and the vested interests of coal, oil and gas companies are the biggest obstacles to achieving the SDGs. He called on wealthy nations and individuals to be generous and close the financing gap of \$200 billion to make the global goals a reality.

The forum reviewed six of the 17 SDGs:

SDG 6, Clean Water and Sanitation: UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UNDESA) reported that 83 percent of people living in situations of conflict lack access to safe drinking water. The UN Security Council is committed to looking into links between water and peace. Some countries named the need for circular and sustainable water paradigms. Algeria reported that its water stress is compounded by climate change. Many cautioned against water privatization.

SDG 7, Affordable and Clean Energy: Austria, Indonesia and Morocco reported that they each have set a target of 100 percent renewable energy by 2030. Thailand reported that it has achieved universal access to energy. Guatemala cautioned that dependence on biogas

will destroy forests. Overall, least developed countries need overseas development assistance to enable technology transfer to renewables. There was also an urgent call for decarbonization and denuclearization.

SDG 11, Sustainable Cities and Communities: UN Habitat, the agency for human settlements and sustainable urban development, described urbanization as a “transformative force” and cities as the world’s economic platforms for production, innovation and trade. The United Arab Emirates reported that Dubai aims to make itself “the happiest city on Earth” with the fourth industrial revolution – digitization. Brazil reported plans to eliminate its housing deficit. Lebanon reported that it faces a challenge in hosting refugees from Syria. Palestine reported on urban destruction and human displacement by Israel. Algiers aims to be the first African capital without slums.

SDG 12, Responsible Consumption and Production: UNDESA looked at the relationship between extractive industries in developing nations and the unsustainable levels of production and consumption per capita in the developed world. Peter Thomson, the UN Special Envoy to the Ocean, said that SDG12 is the heart of 2030 Agenda while others described the transition to sustainable consumption and production as very slow. Finland encouraged moving to a circular economy while Poland recommended promoting traditional knowledge of indigenous people.

SDG 15, Life on Land: UNDESA acknowledged that forest and biodiversity protections are on the rise, but forests continue to decline, taking with them fauna, at an alarming rate. The UN’s Food and Agriculture Organization declared that the progress in both greenhouse gas reductions and biodiversity protection are insufficient.

SDG 17, Partnerships for the Goals: The Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development reported a global decline in overseas development assistance for the first time since 2012. There is a consensus for better debt management monitoring and a call for the countries to fulfill their commitments. South Africa warned that some innovative sources of finance will result in further indebtedness.

In summary, there is an urgent need for robust financing of the SDGs and for wealthy countries to deliver their aid commitments to meet the 2030 timeline. §

Nicaragua: Speaking truth to power

Catherine “Kitty” Madden reports on the crisis in Nicaragua. Madden has lived and worked in Nicaragua since 1986, some of that time as a Maryknoll Lay Missioner and many years as a Maryknoll Affiliate.

It was the time of the August new moon as I sat with those gathered outside of my neighbors’ home. We were there to mourn the death of Juan and to share our sympathies with his mother, wife, and children. Just 54 years old, Juan (not his real name) was killed by a sniper who fired on a peaceful protest earlier that day.

As I sat in the open air darkness, my mind traveled back to early April, when Nicaragua was still hailed as “the most peaceful country in Central America.” Multitudes of people entered the country each day, some to provide humanitarian aid and many others to enjoy the beauty of nature and the warm hospitality of the people as tourists. Still others came to invest in an economy that was thriving due to the amicable relationship between the government and business.

On the surface, things seemed quite perfect! However, just as with the majestic volcanoes that grace the countryside of Nicaragua, something very charged was growing beneath the surface. All was not as it appeared. No one could have imagined the catastrophic changes about to emerge.

Having had the privilege of living and working here for 32 years, I first experienced life under the revolutionary Sandinista government of the 1980s. The FSLN (Sandinista national liberation front) toppled the dictator Anastasio Somoza and his family dynasty in the long war of insurrection that claimed 50,000 lives. In the 1980s, I anguished at the U.S. backing (if not instigation) of the Contra War that ended in 1990, after taking another 30,000 lives and maiming thousands of others.

I have lived through three neo-liberal presidencies from 1990 to 2006 and for the past 12 years, I have observed with great sadness the development of yet another dictatorship and family dynasty headed by Daniel Ortega and Rosario Murillo and their FSLN party, a party no longer considered “revolutionary” by a large portion of the population. Most significant for me has been to observe the ways in which people began to carefully monitor their words or remain silent for fear of reprisals. Such a great contrast to the refreshing openness with which everyone spoke out in the 1980s!

Since his election in 2006, Daniel Ortega has moved to consolidate power, control and wealth for both his family and for the FSLN party. And, yes, there have been “gifts” given to the people such as food, housing, scholarship programs, and perks for business leaders.

These gifts were given at a price: silence, gratitude, loyalty. Any other entity desiring to serve the people, such as the Casa Materna Mary Ann Jackman clinic and obstetric center where I worked for 27 years, was treated as a potential rival and a threat. When university students launched a national protest on April 18 to demand not gifts but freedom of expression, the government responded with unexpected, unbridled ferocity.

What had seemed so “perfect” in early April changed dramatically when the Ortega government ordered police to fire real bullets to quell the student uprising on April 18-19. The students had gathered in support of pensioners, actually *their* grandparents, to protest changes in social security benefits. Previous protests against government policies had been quelled by police shooting rubber bullets or Sandinista youth gangs showing and beating demonstrators. For example, in the five years of constant protest against the government proposed oceanic canal, the police never used real bullets.

In April, twenty-five people were killed in five days, including a journalist and a 15-year-old boy bringing water to the student protesters. Dozens more were seriously wounded. As people found their voices, the “volcano of submerged feelings” began to erupt with unbridled energy. As one man expressed it: “People have lost their fear of speaking out. And Daniel has lost the people.”

By Mother’s Day, May 30th in Nicaragua, over 100 people had been killed. Most of the dead were young and many had been shot with one strategically directed bullet to the head, the eyes, the throat, or the heart. As a way of sharing the unspeakable grief of the mothers who had lost their children, over 600,000 people gathered in Managua to march with them. Who could have imagined that, on this most sacred of days, the police and snipers would attack the grieving marchers? Twenty were killed and close to a hundred wounded. To this day, the people lament, “Mother’s Day will never be the same. Nicaragua will never be the same.”

Each day, the counts continue to rise. As I write this in August there are over 350 dead, 3,000+ wounded, many with wounds they will carry all their lives; 1,200 people have been picked up and imprisoned without legal rights, many tortured; hundreds “disappeared” – perhaps hiding out if not already dead and thousands leaving the country every day. Most recently, 200 medical

personnel who had aided the wounded or dying have lost their jobs in public hospitals or universities.

“Ortega and Murillo have transformed Nicaragua into a battlefield where two forces are facing off in a conflict defined by total asymmetry,” Roberto Cajina, civilian consultant on security, defense, and democratic governance, wrote in an article in *Envio*, a magazine published by the Jesuit Central American University in Managua, in July. “On one side anti-riot police, snipers and paramilitary forces, all armed to the teeth. On the other, a populace armed, if at all, with rocks, slingshots and homemade mortars.”

In addition to the absence of tourists on city streets, it is not uncommon to see police-driven vehicles carrying hooded and masked “paramilitaries” armed with

high caliber weapons aimed at instilling fear in the people. Airlines that brought passengers twice a day now have flights only 3 times a week. Numerous hotels and restaurants have been closed and, of course, thousands have lost their jobs.

Yet, something vital and courageous is happening today in Nicaragua. People are regaining their voices and are, indeed, **speaking truth to power**. And, yes, they do so at great cost as is evidenced in the death of my neighbor and hundreds of others. The civic alliance that has been formed is strongly committed to walking a nonviolent path ... however, theirs is a pilgrimage of great pain and unspeakable grief. Please join in our journey of solidarity through the support of your prayers. §

For a detailed response to popular arguments in favor of the Ortega administration’s actions, read “A Massacre, Not a Coup: A Response to Misinformation on Nicaragua” by Dr. Mary Ellsberg, Professor of Global Health and International Studies, and Founding Director of the Global Women’s Institute of the George Washington University in Washington, DC. <http://bit.ly/MEllsberg>

Zimbabwe: Church can lead healing process

In the first election in Zimbabwe since long-time leader Robert Mugabe was ousted from power, the ruling ZANU-PF party has managed to hold onto control of the presidency and Parliament. But society remains fractured.

Zimbabwe's Constitutional Court upheld incumbent President Emmerson Mnangagwa’s narrow victory in the first election since long-time leader Robert Mugabe was ousted from power. The opposition Movement for Democratic Change (MDC) Alliance had brought the legal challenge claiming vote-rigging and seeking either a new election or a declaration that its candidate, Nelson Chamisa, won.

Although the election process was mostly peaceful, the credibility of the elections held on July 30 has been questioned by Zimbabwe citizens, the MDC Alliance, and the international community. Tensions rose over the three days after the vote that went by without the Zimbabwe Electoral Commission declaring a winner. At least six people were killed in clashes in the streets of Harare between the army and MDC Alliance supporters, who alleged that the commission rigged the vote count to rob their party leader of victory.

Suspensions continued to grow after the commission declared Mnangagwa the winner on August 3. The commission reported that Mnangagwa received 50.7% of the vote – narrowly avoiding a second-round run off – and Chamisa received 44.3% of the vote. After review, the Constitutional Court upheld this result, saying the MDC

Alliance failed to produce “sufficient and credible evidence” of alleged vote-rigging.

The accusations made by the MDC Alliance resonate broadly with many in Zimbabwe who live under the weight of the ruling ZANU-PF party’s economic mismanagement and political repression.

Jesuit Father Joe Arimoso, a leading educationist, says it is now left to the Church to pick up the pieces.

“The Church finds itself with the daunting task to unite its children and to re-emphasize the values of unity, forgiveness, tolerance, political maturity and peace,” Father Arimoso wrote in *Vatican News* on August 6, “We need an urgent response to encourage all parties to find a way of working together to forge unity. We cannot afford to sustain any grudges which will ground any meaningful development.”

The bigger task for the Church, according to Fr. Arimoso, will be “to go beyond these elections and find a way of healing an already fragile society.” He endorses the call for a “national peace and reconciliation process that goes beyond electoral disputes” issued by the Catholic Commission for Justice and Peace in Zimbabwe on August 4. “This is exactly what Zimbabwe needs and the Church can take the lead in the process.” §

United States military presence in Africa

Very few people, including U.S. Senators, were aware of the U.S. military presence in Africa when news came in October of the death of four U.S. soldiers in Niger. In response, African Faith and Justice Network (AFJN) published a four-part report in July examining U.S. military presence and activity in Africa by region. The following article is a summary of the report.

In March General Thomas Waldhauser, Commander of AFRICOM, the central command for U.S. military forces in Africa, testified before the House Armed Services Committee that there are 7,200 uniformed personnel, Department of Defense civilians and contractors stationed throughout the continent. He declared that “none of Africa’s challenges can be resolved through the use of military force as the primary agent of change.”

AFRICOM’s strategy is summarized as the “By, With, and Through” framework, which purportedly describes merely a supporting role for U.S. forces. Operations are to be carried out by partnered security forces, with partnered security forces based on their security needs, and through cooperative security relationships in which the U.S. plays a supporting role. The goal is to find “African solutions to African problems.”

The United States has a military presence in four regions of Africa: Sahel, West Africa, North Africa and East Africa. In the Sahel the U.S. collaborates with five countries – Burkina Faso, Mali, Chad, Mauritania, and Niger – called the G5 Sahel Organization, which Waldhauser characterized as “Africa-led, French-assisted, and U.S. supported.” In 2017 there were 1,000 U.S. troops in this region, according to Defense Secretary James Mattis, with the stated purpose of “combatting violent extremism.” These countries have one or several extremist groups present, such as Boko Haram, ISIS-West Africa, ISIS-Greater Sahara and Al-Qaeda. In theory U.S. soldiers are not to engage in combat but merely to advise, assist and train. Critical voices ask how they can avoid combat when they accompany African troops.

Niger has most of the troops, 800 in all, because in addition to poor governance and under-development, there are extremist groups operating in the country. The only U.S. drone base is located in Niger, currently being moved from the capital city of Niamey to Agadez, a location more central for surveillance over a larger area.

In West Africa there are two crucial areas; one being the area around Lake Chad, which is bordered by Chad, Cameroon and Nigeria. These countries, along with Niger and Benin, make up the Multinational Joint Task Force, which receives advice, assistance, training and equipment from the U.S. The U.S. military also “works closely with the UN and NGOs in providing hu-

manitarian development assistance and stability in the region.” Also of importance is Nigeria, which has the biggest economy in Africa and numerous oil deposits. Unsaid by General Waldhauser is how many troops are there, what their roles are, and what dangers they face.

In North Africa the country of most concern is Libya, where Al-Qaeda, ISIS-Libya, and other extremist groups are active. The U.S. objectives in Libya are: to degrade terrorist groups that threaten to destabilize the country and the region; and to avert civil war. The U.S. has good relations with other countries in North Africa, namely Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia and Egypt. Egypt and Algeria have the two most powerful militaries on the continent and Egypt is the fourth largest recipient of U.S. military assistance in the world, after Iraq, Afghanistan and Israel. The U.S. claims not to have any AFRICOM troops stationed in North Africa, but there were reports of U.S. troop deployment in Algeria after the deaths of four U.S. soldiers in Niger and recently 200 National Guardsmen were sent to the Sinai Peninsula of Egypt.

In East Africa the country of most concern is Somalia, where 500 AFRICOM troops are stationed. In neighboring Djibouti AFRICOM has its only military base, Camp Lemonnier, housing 2,000 U.S. troops. The U.S. is assisted by Ethiopia, Kenya and Uganda, all of which have troops in Somalia. The U.S. has also used drones in Somalia, only seven attacks according to the U.S. but over fifteen according to outside observers. Drone attacks are intended to eliminate leaders of Islamist militant group Al-Shabaab, but many civilians have been killed. Ethiopia is the largest recipient of U.S. aid in Africa, close to a billion dollars a year, and as a result of cooperation with the U.S. the militaries of both Kenya and Uganda are growing.

The countries creating security concerns in Africa are plagued by endemic poverty and disease, poor governance, persistent corruption, under-development, and growing climatic problems, raising the question whether military options deter diplomatic, social and economic alternatives that offer genuine long-term solutions. And given the interminable presence of the U.S. military in Afghanistan and Iraq, it seems justifiable to wonder if an interminable and ever-increasing military presence in Africa is what is in store. §

Greece: Dispatch from refugee camps

Maryknoll Sister Rosemarie Milazzo regularly volunteers with a Christian Peacemaker Team to Kurdistan in northeastern Iraq and at refugee camps on the island of Lesbos in Greece. The following is an excerpt from an email Sister Milazzo sent from Lesbos to her fellow Maryknoll Sisters at their center in New York on June 3, 2018.

Greetings from Lesbos. I pray that all is well there and that the Day of the African Child [celebrated on June 16 every year to commemorate the 1976 student uprising in Soweto, South Africa] was well celebrated. I would like to see a Day of the Refugee Child but I would also like to see the day when there are no more refugees, only citizens.

I am well but it has been very hectic these past days. On Friday night, May 25, there was a violent episode in Moria Camp [the largest refugee camp on the Greek island of Lesbos] where the overcrowding, lack of enough water, food, and lack of activity is such a problem. Refugees arrive from all over the troubled world. Frustration, anger, rage, impatience are all around the camp.

Unfortunately, the Kurds and Arabs, who have a history of misunderstanding, met in a violent fight that night and many were hurt. The Kurds ran for their lives and many, many arrived in Mitelene [the capital city of Lesbos] in a park there and settled for the night. The police came and told them they needed to leave and then contacted Pikpa Camp [a volunteer and refugee-run informal shelter] asking that we take the refugees into our camp. About 360 arrived during the night and with the help of other NGOs, tents were set up, blankets were distributed and tea was prepared. Many of the arrivals were wounded, head wounds, bandaged hands and necks, etc.

In the morning, Doctors Without Borders arrived and helped to minister to the hurt. More tents arrived and they were set up for the arrivals that kept coming during the day.

All the activities at the camp had to be put on hold until we could manage with such a large number. NGOs joined us, some with food, some with clothing, some

with other needed supplies.

My job was to visit each new tent, make sure all were well, make the people feel safe, and assure them they were welcome. I carried so many stories as I sat in these tents. The people are so frightened already and now, they fear more uprooting. I am so grateful that I spent all those years in Kurdistan with the Kurds. I have pulled up every single word, phrase that I know so that I can use it with the Kurdish community that is so traumatized.



Maryknoll Sr. Rosemarie Milazzo, (left) and a refugee in Kurdistan, Iraq, in 2015. Photo courtesy of the Maryknoll Sisters.

As of this morning, more refugees are arriving in our camp. Moria will not take them back, nor will they agree to return there. It is too dangerous for the Kurds as well as the Yazidi [Kurdish-speaking people, indigenous to a region of Iraq and the target of a genocide led by the so-called Islamic State in 2014]. I was in the Yazidi village in Kurdistan so many times and I know what they suffered when ISIS attacked their village. All of the women are wounded and they hold on tight.

This morning, I was able to get to the church in Mitelene that has a liturgy without a priest for refugees every Sunday. It is in French but I get a sheet and pretend that I am [a French-speaking Maryknoll Sister] and sing along. The refugees sing with such gusto, a few mispronounced words would never cause a stir.

After Mass, a small group wanted to meet to share. I sat with them for a bit and it was amazing. One young man refused the food that the church provides for them. He said "I am fasting." I asked him to tell me about his fast. He just said "I fast so that all THIS will be over." I just want to join my prayer to his.

Thank to so many of you who have written to me. It is always a delight to hear from home. Blessings of peace, love, Ro §

Israel/Palestine: Jewish nation-state bill

Churches for Middle East Peace, a coalition of Orthodox, Catholic, and Protestant churches which includes the Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns, issued the following statement about Israel's controversial new "Jewish nation-state" law that characterizes the country as principally a Jewish state and fails to mention equality or minority rights.

On Thursday, July 19, Israel's parliament, the Knesset, passed the "Israel as the Nation-State of the Jewish People" bill, one of many Basic Laws that collectively serve as Israel's constitution. Churches for Middle East Peace (CMEP), while reiterating its support for Israel as a democratic state, expresses its gravest concern over the harm that this new Basic Law will inflict upon Israel's cultural, ethnic, and religious minorities, which account for 20% of Israel's population. This law will have devastating effects on the rights of Palestinians with Israeli citizenship and Palestinians with resident status living in Jerusalem.

While affirming the historic ties of the Jewish people to the land of Israel and supporting the Jewish people's right of self-determination, CMEP denounces the following sections of the Nation-State Bill as discriminatory and detrimental to a comprehensive peace between Israelis and Palestinians. CMEP stresses the importance of maintaining a distinction between the State of Israel and the Land of Israel, as noted in Section 1, and ardently rejects any interpretations of these clauses that would allow for future revision of Israel's borders to reflect ancient geographic definitions. CMEP finds the demotion of Arabic from official language to a language of "special status" in Section 4 a grave insult to Israelis of Palestinian ancestry, in addition to Druze and other Arabic speaking minority groups. Furthermore, CMEP fears that the adoption of a national policy to promote the "establishment and consolidation" of Jewish settlement as called for in Section 7 will require the Israeli government to enact laws promoting the welfare of the Jewish community in Israel above all other citizens thus mandating a policy of cultural, ethnic, and religious discrimination.

"The passing of the Nation-State bill is a threat to the rights of all minorities living in Israel," says Rev. Dr. Mae Elise Cannon, CMEP's executive director. "We stand with the many groups and others who believe this law damages the legitimacy of Israel's democracy. In

addition, this law, with its emphasis on promoting Jewish 'communities,' stands to further embolden the expansion of Israeli only settlements both within East Jerusalem and the West Bank. At a time when Palestinian communities like Khan al Ahmar and Susya are living under the constant and imminent shadow of demolition, this law has the potential to hasten their displacement."

The passage of this legislation coincides with increased calls within far-right Israeli circles for the annexation of Area C of the West Bank, the implementation of loyalty tests for Jerusalemite Palestinians, as well as heightened tensions along the Gaza border, the worst since the 2014 war. Within such a context, CMEP views

this most recent Basic Law as a rejection of a two-state solution, opening the way to the annexation of the occupied Palestinian territories (oPt) and legal disenfranchisement of Israel's minorities.

CMEP asserts its conviction that only a comprehensive negotiated peace can achieve security for Israelis and sovereignty for Palestinians. CMEP urges both parties to abstain from further

violence in the Gaza Strip and calls for the resumption of peace talks to resolve outstanding Final Status Issues. CMEP also calls on the U.S. Department of State to investigate the Nation-State law in its next 2018 Human Rights Report and its 2018 report on International Religious Freedom. The U.S. must call on Israel to embrace human rights and democratic freedoms for all of its residents living in Israel and the occupied territories. §

Faith in action: Tell Congress the Trump administration's peace plan must address the needs of Palestinians and Israelis. Send a letter to Congress through the Churches for Middle East Peace website at <http://bit.ly/CMEPaction>



Cambodia: The election that was or wasn't

Maryknoll Sister Marie Leonor Montiel, director of a program that helps people affected by HIV/AIDS in Cambodia, writes about the recent general election in which the party of Cambodian Prime Minister Hun Sen, who has been in power since 1985, says it won a landslide victory.

Cambodia held a general election on July 29 to elect the members of its sixth National Assembly. The ruling Cambodia People's Party won all 125 seats, besting the 19 small opposition parties which fielded candidates in the controversial election.

This general election comes on the heels of the local or commune elections held in 2017 in which the main opposition, Cambodia National Rescue Party (CNRP), won 44 percent of the votes to the 51 percent of votes won by the Cambodia Peoples' Party, the ruling party of Prime Minister Hun Sen.

The opposition predicted winning a much higher percentage of votes in the 2017 elections. Nevertheless, the actual winning number of votes was more than what many people thought would be allowed by the ruling party and government. The 2017 election and its results ignited hope for real change in Cambodia, especially among the opposition and the youth. Many believed this result would force Prime Minister Hun Sen to introduce political reforms or face social unrest. The youth had been a driving force in the mobilization for the elections.

Cambodia has a young population. Fifty percent of its 16 million population is under 22 years old, and 64 percent is between 15-64 years old. The majority of them were first-time voters during the 2017 elections.

The immediate aftermath of the 2017 elections saw gatherings of the opposition supporters that at times turned violent at dispersal. The government limited the places where people could gather and issued fewer permits for public assembly.

Opposition party members who won their seats at the commune level in the 2017 election faced challenges in assuming office. Some found the locks on their commune office doors changed or the doors barred. Once the doors were opened, some found empty rooms – all the furniture had been taken away.

The major opposition leaders were sued and the Cambodia National Rescue Party was disbanded based on a one-sided trial purporting a color-revolution – a term used to describe movements to replace governments, mostly using nonviolent resistance. The disbandment of the country's major opposition party prevented all of its elected members from holding office and participating in elections for five years.

Some CNRP members were forced to go into exile, including party leaders Sam Rainsy and Mu Sochua. CNRP President Kem Sokha was arrested on charges of treason and remains jailed without bail one year later.

All of the seats held by the CNRP at the National Assembly were given to five smaller political parties. When preparations for the 2018 general elections started, the former leaders of the now outlawed CNRP called for a boycott of the elections, but 19 smaller parties fielded candidates.

There was a stark contrast between the 2017 and 2018 election campaign periods. In 2017, there was more verve and vigor; people, especially the youth,

where out in the streets. In 2018, the ambiance was that of tolerating the usual: the motorcade, the rally, and the disturbance it brings to traffic. In 2017 there were feelings of anticipation, of hope, of change. In 2018, there seemed to be a resigned acceptance of the inevitable, the usual results.

What does this mean to the majority of the Cambodian people? Among politically conscious people, especially the youth, there's quiet murmuring of efforts to stay hopeful, to remain free or alive under unpredictable and oppressive circumstances.

But the words of a deaf-mute youth living with HIV, in poverty, sum up the sentiments of many Cambodians: "Politics keep changing but our situation doesn't change, we keep on struggling just to try to live. Someday perhaps it will be better."§



Kem Sokha, jailed former President of the Cambodia National Rescue Party.

Resources

- 1) **Refugees:** As of June 30, 2018, the U.S. States had resettled roughly 16,200 refugees for fiscal year 2018, which is at a pace to admit less than half of the 45,000 refugees allowed by the end of the year under the Presidential Determination. Ask your members of Congress to urge President Trump to commit to the resettlement of 75,000 refugees in 2019 and robust overseas refugee protection, as well. <http://bit.ly/Refugees2019>
- 2) **Season of Creation:** From **September 1 - October 4**. We offer resources for you to pray with us, try lifestyle changes, and take action for the care of environment. <http://bit.ly/SeasonsofCreation2018>
- 3) **Nuclear disarmament:** International Day for the Total Elimination of Nuclear Weapons is **September 26**. Find background, messages, and resources at the United Nations website <http://bit.ly/UNSept26>
- 4) **2018 Letelier-Moffitt International Human Rights Award** will be awarded to Maryknoll Sr. Patricia Ryan and Derechos Humanos y Medio Ambiente (DHUMA) on **October 4** in Washington, D.C. for their work with indigenous farmers in the Andes Mountains of Peru. For ticket info, go to <http://bit.ly/2KGypU8>
- 5) **The Search for Peace & Justice in the Holy Land** is a five-week small-group course produced by Churches for Middle East Peace (<https://cmep.org/>) about topics such as the Christians of the Holy Land, the ties of Israelis and Palestinians to the Holy Land, and how to be an effective advocate for just peace in Israel and Palestine. Sign up to receive more info about the course at <http://bit.ly/2wy7hOA>
- 6) **Cuba: New Cuba Advocacy Toolkit** from the Latin America Working Group. This comprehensive resource contains everything you need to educate, advocate, and mobilize for a forward-looking U.S. Cuba policy <http://bit.ly/LAWGCuba>
- 7) **U.S.-Mexico border:** Hope Border Institute published a 52-page report “Sealing the Border: The criminalization of asylum seekers in the Trump Era.” <https://www.hopeborder.org/sealing-the-border>
- 8) **U.S.-Mexico border:** A 108-page report published by Detained Migrant Solidarity Committee and Freedom for Immigrants on conditions in the Otero detention camp in New Mexico, not far from El Paso--one of four camps in the region. <http://bit.ly/OteroReport>
- 9) **Human Rights Defenders:** New 72-page report by Global Witness entitled “At What Cost? Irresponsible business and the murder of land and environment defenders in 2017.” At least 207 environment defenders were brutally murdered in 2017 – the deadliest year on record, with the rising death toll linked to demand for consumer goods like coffee, bananas and palm oil. Download the report at <https://bit.ly/2O3Yond> Watch the 3-minute video at <http://bit.ly/GlobalWitness2017video>
- 10) **Agroecology:** CIDSE, an international network of Catholic social justice organizations (mostly based in Europe) developed principles on agroecology. They now have the principles and infographics available in 7 languages. Principles: <http://bit.ly/CIDSEprinciples> and Infographic: <http://bit.ly/CIDSEInfo>
- 11) **New documentary: “White Fright”** examines the treatment of a white terrorist and failed congressional candidate who was plotting to blow a mosque in Islamberg, New York, a community of African American Muslims. The film can be streamed online. Go to the film's website <http://www.whitefright.com/>
- 12) **Justice for Immigrations National Conference** will be held **December 5-7** in Washington, D.C. The last national conference was in 2015 and with the challenges and threats that immigrants and refugees and their families are facing, it is an important moment to convene again. For more information, visit <https://justiceforimmigrants.org/jfconference/>
- 13) **Botswana:** The Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns sent a letter to the Embassy of the Republic of Botswana in Washington, D.C. in response to international news reports of nearly 90 elephants found dead and their tusks hacked off, presumably for illegal ivory trade. Read our letter at <http://bit.ly/2LX9MPt> and learn more about the issue at <http://elephantswithoutborders.org/>