



Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns

NewsNotes

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

January - February 2024
Vol. 49, No. 1

| | |
|--|----|
| Wartime Christmas Messages from Churches in Holy Land.... | 1 |
| Voices from Gaza and the West Bank | 2 |
| Sudan: Peace Talks to Resume | 3 |
| Hope Away from Home in South Sudan | 4 |
| Tanzania: Maasai Land Rights Defended by EU | 5 |
| Guatemala: Struggle for a Peaceful Transition..... | 5 |
| Haiti: Distressing Report from Rural Community | 6 |
| UN: Climate Conference COP28 Confronts Fossil Fuels | 7 |
| UN: Plastic Elimination Treaty Stalled | 8 |
| Nuclear Ban Week: A Call for Global Disarmament | 9 |
| Violence in Philippines Threatens Peace and Human Rights.. | 10 |
| Church Leaders Defend Asylum | 11 |
| U.S. Refugee Resettlement Growing Stronger | 11 |
| Solidarity Economy: Serving the Common Good | 12 |
| Lenten Reflection Guide: Caring for Creation | 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 Integrity of Creation

Maryknoll Sisters Maryknoll Lay Missioners Maryknoll Fathers & Brothers

Washington Office
200 New York Ave., N.W.
Washington, DC 20001
(202) 832-1780

New York Office
PO Box 311
Maryknoll, NY 10545
(914) 941-7575

ogc@maryknollogc.org
www.maryknollogc.org

Susan Gunn, director sgunn@maryknollogc.org
Fr Francis J. Breen, MM fjbreen@maryknoll.org
Anna Engelmann aengelmann@maryknollogc.org
Thomas Gould thomas@maryknollogc.org
Sr Margaret Lacson, MM mlacson@mksisters.org
Dan Moriarty dmoriarty@maryknollogc.org
Sr Susan Nchubiri, MM schubiri@mksisters.org
Fr John Sivalon, MM jsivalon@maryknoll.org
Lisa Sullivan lsullivan@maryknollogc.org

To contribute to NewsNotes, please contact Thomas at thomas@maryknollogc.org

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Capitol switchboard:
(202) 224-3121
www.congress.gov

Current status of bills:
<http://thomas.loc.gov>

Wartime Christmas Messages from Churches in Holy Land

As war goes on, church leaders in occupied Palestinian territories share messages of hope for peace.

“We are angry. We are broken. This should have been a time of joy; instead, we are mourning. We are fearful.”

So begins the Christmas Eve Vigil sermon by pastor Rev. Dr. Munther Isaac at the Lutheran Christmas Church in Bethlehem, which has received international attention for a nativity scene depicting the baby Jesus wrapped in a keffiyeh and placed in a pile of rubble.

“If Jesus were to be born today, he would be born under the rubble in Gaza,” explained Rev. Dr. Isaac, who condemned using theology to justify Israel’s killing of innocent civilians. “If we, as Christians, are not outraged by the genocide, by the weaponization of the Bible to justify it, there is something wrong with our Christian witness, and we are compromising the credibility of our gospel message.”

“We look at the Holy Family and see them in every family displaced and wandering, now homeless in despair,” he said. “This is Christmas today in Palestine.”

Rev. Dr. Isaac was in Washington, DC in late November, hosted by Churches for Middle East Peace to meet with the White House and members of Congress. Reflecting on the Christmas decorations he saw on the city buildings, he said “I couldn’t help but think: They send us bombs, while celebrating Christmas in their lands. They sing about the prince of peace in their land, while playing the drum of war in our land.”

“Christmas in Bethlehem, the birthplace of Jesus, is this manger,” Rev. Dr. Isaac said, referring to the Christ figure in the rubble on the floor of the church. “This is our message to the world today. It is a gospel message. It is a true and authentic Christmas message about the God who did not stay silent but said his word, and his word was Jesus. Born among the occupied and marginalized, he is in solidarity with us in our pain and brokenness.”

The Patriarchs and Heads of the Churches in Jerusalem wrote a Christmas greeting to the faithful around the world, drawing comparisons between the time of the birth of Jesus and the current “dire circumstances” in the Holy Land, where “hope seems distant and beyond reach.”

“Yet it was into such a world that our Lord himself was born in order to give us hope,” the group said in statement released Dec. 21. The group includes

of the heads of the Latin Catholic, Greek and Syrian Orthodox, Lutheran, and Episcopal churches.

“It is in this spirit of Christmas that we, the Patriarchs and Heads of the Churches in Jerusalem, denounce all violent actions and call for their end. We likewise call upon the people of this land and around the globe to seek the graces of God so that we might learn to walk with each other in the paths of justice, mercy, and peace. Finally, we bid the faithful and all those of goodwill to work tirelessly for the relief of the afflicted and towards a just and lasting peace in this land that is equally sacred to the three Monotheistic Faiths.”

The Justice and Peace Commission Assembly of the Catholic Ordinaries of the Holy Land also released a Christmas message that began with disturbing news about indiscriminate killing by Israel in Gaza:

“As we prepared to enter the novena before Christmas, we received the horrific news of the attack on the Holy Family parish in Gaza. At midday on December 16, an Israeli sniper murdered Naheda and Samar, mother and daughter, in the church courtyard. Seven more were wounded as they tried to protect those in the church. That morning an Israeli missile slammed into the home of the Missionaries of Charity, wreaking destruction and putting the lives of the 54 disabled residents in even graver danger. Lord have mercy!”

[According to a Politico article on Dec. 21, Catholic Relief Services staff shared the coordinates of the church and convent with Senate staff who added them to a list of Christian facilities given to the Israeli military to be flagged for protection, back in October. The compound was later struck by Israeli rockets and snipers.]

The church leaders went on, recounting other incidents of killings, arrests, and destruction by the Israeli military in Gaza, Bethlehem, and the West Bank, and asked “what is [the] deeper meaning?”

“As people of hope,” the church leaders said, “we await the birth of the Prince of Peace. And we remember that we are never alone, for God chose this place in which to enter into the darkness as Emmanuel, God with us.” §

Faith in Action: Support a ceasefire in Israel-Hamas conflict here <https://mogc.info/CeasefireNOW>

Voices from Gaza and the West Bank

Read the moving words of people living in Gaza and the West Bank during the Israel-Hamas war.

Maryknoll Sr. Susan Nchubiri shares a collection of quotes from friends in Gaza and the West Bank who have written to her about their experiences since the Hamas attack in Israel that killed more than 1,000 people on Oct. 7 and Israel's subsequent bombardment and ground invasion of Gaza and tightened security in the West Bank.

"In the past few months, I have been shocked, horrified, bewildered, heartbroken, enraged, and helpless at the immensity of death, violence, and destruction of lives, infrastructure, and the environment in southern Israel and Gaza," said Sr. Nchubiri. "The brutality unleashed by Hamas on October 7 is incomprehensible. As is the destruction by bombs, white phosphorus, and other cluster munitions dropped by Israel on a tiny strip of land filled with people. Yes, breathing innocent men, women, and children, 2.3 million, living on a 139 square miles strip of land. Previously, it had been referred to as the world's largest open-air prison. Since 2007, Gaza has been under air, land, and maritime blockade by Israel and Egypt. Since November, it has been referred to as a 'graveyard for children,' by U.N. Secretary General Antonio Guterres and UNICEF officials."

Ms. Nasra, 36, in Gaza, wrote, "I am out of words and can't write anything. This feeling comes to me from time to time. I feel I don't have any energy or capability to do anything. What's going on is beyond words or imagination. ... Nothing is spared, not children, women, the elderly and infirm, people with disability, the sick, hospitals, schools, libraries, churches, mosques, and cemeteries. Imagine: they are bulldozing cemeteries! Are the long-dead also Hamas militants? No water, food, medical supplies, electricity, no humanity is left in Gaza. However, Palestinians only have their faith in God and love for our land. Palestine is not only a country and land! Palestine is heart, faith, home, and identity!"

Mr. Bisham, 38, in Jordan Valley, West Bank, wrote, "The world should know and understand, PLUS they should ACT to end the occupation. The unconditional support and protection from the United States must

be balanced. Americans can do a lot to bring a positive change for both peoples (Israelis and Palestinians)."

Mr. Ahmed, 56, Bethlehem, West Bank, wrote, "Today, I brought my daughter for chemotherapy at the hospital, which is only 7 kilometers / 4.3 miles away. We had waited for over 50 days for the drugs to arrive at the hospital. However, due to the road closures in Palestine, I had to drive 100km in both directions to get to the hospital. Imagine the suffering of travelers, the effects on the environment resulting from fuel consumption, and the wear and tear of tires. Businesses closed. Jobs lost and the psychological torture we have to go through as we wait for hours to pass through the Israeli checkpoints. On the other hand, the Israelis living in settlements and outposts around us whizz through good roads with no checkpoints or closures to their neighborhoods."

Ms. Nadiya in Beit Hanina, East Jerusalem, wrote, "Oh, Palestinian nights, how long you are! Long and slow, waiting for the morning to wake up to pain and sorrow... fear, anxiety and tension. Gaza's nights are like no other! The people of Gaza spend it running from death to death! The killing does not stop."

"We suffer and grieve as human beings, but we do not lose hope! Always, there is hope! Inshallah, it shall be well

for Palestine! For humankind," wrote Ms. Nahila, 32, in Jericho – West Bank.

A Palestinian friend in the West Bank wrote a poem:

"Do you see me? '
I am right here.
Do you care for me?
You don't need to care ...
I just need you to see me.
I deserve to live a normal life.
Why can't you see me?
Who said you are better than me?
Who said you have the right to safety and
protection, shelter and food, medicine and a hug
of a loving mother, and I don't?
Look at me... see me.
I am Gaza." §



Christ in the Rubble,
Nativity scene by Sister Jean Fallon, MM

Sudan: Peace Talks to Resume

Two generals in Sudan began warring for control of the government in 2023, killing tens of thousands and displacing millions.

Peace talks are set to resume between two Sudanese generals engaged in war over government control in January of 2024. The talks will include face-to-face negotiations between General Abdel Fattah al-Burhan of the Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF) and General Mohamed Hamdan Dagalo, better known as Hemedti, of the Rapid Sudanese Forces (RSF.)

The bloody conflict began in April of 2023 as a power struggle between the official Sudanese army and the independent, rival militia that was originally positioned to be the secret police for Sudan's long-time president Omar al-Bashir.

Generals of both forces had supported the massive nonviolent civilian protests against the authoritarian government in 2019. After the overthrow of the repressive president, the generals initially forming a civil society/military alliance. Then, in October 2021, the two generals reversed course and forcibly took control of the civil government in preference for a power sharing agreement between themselves. That tenuous arrangement collapsed in April of 2023 with civil war.

The two forces have been evenly matched, with the Sudanese army boasting an infantry twice as large and the RSF receiving foreign funding from Russia and some Arab countries that see the conflict as an opportunity for profit. This evenness would allow for an internecine struggle to last indefinitely. Peace talks have been complicated by personal dynamics and the diametric nature of the generals' objectives.

Nonetheless, peace is essential to the ordinary people of Sudan who bear the heavy costs of war. Tens of thousands of civilians have died so far, and 6.8 million are displaced, including nearly half a million refugees who have fled into neighboring countries.

Both the RSF and the SAF have committed war crimes and atrocities such as the torture of prisoners, according to the U.S. State Department.

Additionally, there is voluminous evidence that the RSF and associated militias have engaged in ethnically motivated killings, particularly against the Masalit tribe, indigenous subsistence agriculturalists in the western Darfur region, where militias now associated with the RSF carried out a genocide at the request of the Sudanese government two decades ago.

International attention has been crucial to the peace efforts. The United States and Saudi Arabia have worked as brokers and intermediaries to the warring generals and have been responsible for the few brief humanitarian truces that allowed aid into the beleaguered nation. Peace negotiations are taking place in partnership with the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) Eastern bloc of Africa, which provides the framework around which to negotiate. The UN has stepped up foreign aid in Sudan and to the camps where refugees have fled. The United States, European Union, and UN have imposed targeted sanctions against specific malefactors accused of war crimes.

Maryknoll Fr. Tom Tiscornia was living in Sudan until the end of 2023 and writes "Please keep Sudan and its people in your prayers that sometime in the future we will know the peace that the Lord offers." §

Faith in action: Ask Pres. Biden to support recommendations by Human Rights Watch to investigate war crimes in Sudan through the International Criminal Court and through the UN Fact-Finding Mechanism. <https://mogc.info/Sudan-Action>



Photo of children in Internally Displaced People camp in Darfur, Sudan by Chansey via Wikimedia Commons, 2018. CC BY-SA 4.0

Hope Away from Home in South Sudan

Three Maryknoll missionaries spoke about their experiences of mission while serving international displaced people and refugees from South Sudan.

The “Hope Away from Home in South Sudan” webinar served as a poignant reminder that, even in the face of adversity, hope can thrive.

The webinar in November featured the voices of three Maryknoll priests who worked with internally displaced and refugees. An inevitable take away was the sense of the collective determination of the South Sudanese people. As the virtual gathering concluded, the resonance of hope

Another moving story from the webinar was of a young boy who lost his lower leg due to a snake bite. From that personal connection, Fr. Bassano gained an insight into the nature of “mission.” Mission is accompanying people, he shared, being with people in all moments, in sickness, in good times and bad times and searching together and finding together healing and a way of moving forward together.



Hope Away from Home Webinar Flier, with Fr. Tom Tiscornia, MM.

lingered, inspiring a renewed commitment to building a brighter future for South Sudan, whether from afar or on its hallowed soil.

Hosted by Friends in Solidarity with Solidarity with South Sudan, the live webinar featured Sister Mumbi Kigutha interviewing Father Michael Bassano. Bassano is serving a community of faithful in the United Nations Protection of Civilians camp in Malakal, in northeastern South Sudan. For the last 10 years he has been living on this site, which hosts over 35,000 of the 2.3 million internally displaced people (IDP) in South Sudan. Most of them have fled the ethnic conflicts that have devastated South Sudan for years. Fr. Bassano shared moving stories and his own attempts at building unity among the South Sudanese by insisting that parish activities within the camp be open to all three ethnic groups represented there.

Fr. Dave Schwinghamer built on this point in his recorded message, relating how, after celebrating Mass in a refugee camp in Uganda filled with South Sudanese, several parishioners invited him to accompany them on a visit to a woman dying from AIDS. After crawling into a narrow little tent and seeing the face of that woman brighten over his visit, Fr. Schwinghamer described mission as “witnessing to the love of God for the most vulnerable and seeing refugees and displaced people not just as brothers and sisters but as Christ himself.”

Fr. Tom Tiscornia, also in a recorded message, described the chapel in a refugee camp that he was visiting. On the back wall of

the chapel, the refugees themselves had painted a picture of Jesus, Mary and Joseph fleeing to Egypt as refugees. He also reminded us that often in areas of conflict, church compounds are seen as places of refuge and safety. Often, though, they can become targets.

The narratives shared by these three Maryknoll priests were both heart-wrenching and inspiring. They shed light on the challenges faced by South Sudanese individuals living away from home, including the trauma of displacement, the struggle for integration, and the yearning for a peaceful homeland. Woven into these stories were tales of triumph, resilience, and an unwavering spirit. §

Faith in action: view the full recording of the webinar <https://mogc.info/HOPESSudan>

Tanzania: Maasai Land Rights Defended by EU

On Dec. 14, the European Parliament adopted a resolution urging Tanzania to immediately halt ongoing forcible evictions of Maasai pastoralists from their ancestral lands, a portion of which lies in the Serengeti's Ngorongoro conservation area.

A protected region in northern Tanzania, the Serengeti comprises several game reserves and the Serengeti National Park and is home to Indigenous Maasai people. In recent years, the Maasai have been protesting their forced removal by the Tanzanian government, which plans to lease 1,500 square kilometers of the Serengeti to a safari company based in the United Arab Emirates that operates trophy hunting tours.

Tanzanian government officials have said the conservation area is becoming overpopulated with Maasai and their livestock, leading to environmental degradation. They have named concerns for "conservation" to justify forcibly evicting Maasai from their homes, restricting their access to grazing lands and confiscating their livestock. For more than a year, the government has cut public services for the Maasai in the Ngorongoro Conservation Area in an ongoing attempt to force the Maasai off their land.

The EU resolution calls on the Tanzanian government to recognize and protect the rights of the Maasai in Ngorongoro, and to acknowledge the lands and resources that Maasai communities have managed for generations and their role in maintaining wildlife and biodiversity. It also calls for a review of EU's contributions to Tanzania in its budget.

Members of the European Parliament (MEPs) met with a Maasai delegation hosted by European Catholic Churches in Brussels in May 2023. The MEPs were scheduled to visit Tanzania to investigate the abuses against the Maasai in September, but the Tanzanian government denied them entry. A second attempt to visit in December was canceled due to the unexpected death of one of the MEPs. French politician Michèle Rivasi died of a heart attack in Brussels on Nov. 29.

The Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns is a member of the Maasai International Solidarity Alliance, a group of international Catholic Church actors and Maasai community organizers that is organizing the MEPs visit. §

Faith in action: Sign the petition to stop of the eviction of the Maasai <https://bit.ly/MaasaiLandPetition>

Guatemala: Struggle for a Peaceful Transition

It is safe to say that anti-corruption candidate Bernardo Arévalo's success came as a surprise to the political establishment of Guatemala last year. Before June 25, he was one of eight presidential candidates and polling well-below the front-runners. Had he presented more of a threat before the runoffs, his candidacy might have been disqualified from the outset, as the Supreme Electoral Tribunal had done to three other candidacies. Instead, he came in a strong second place showing, and finished the Aug. 20 runoff election in a landslide victory, with nearly a 20% margin.

Not to be outdone, Guatemalan Attorney General Consuelo Porras' office raided elections offices, seized ballots, and moved to outlaw President-Elect Bernardo Arévalo's Semilla party in an effort to prevent the Jan. 14 inauguration, sparking massive Indigenous-led protests throughout the fall. Protesters and international observers accuse Porras and the current government of belonging to a "Pact of the Corrupt" alongside military, corporate, and organized crime leaders.

On Dec. 8, the Attorney General's office called for election authorities to annul the election results. The international community responded swiftly, condemning what the European Parliament and others called an "attempted coup." Protests took place at several Guatemalan embassies around the world. Twenty-eight international organizations from 11

countries signed a letter urging the government to respect the election results. The United States announced new sanctions against hundreds of Guatemalan officials and corrupt allies, reportedly for seeking to undermine democracy. And the Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns, with the Latin America Working Group and the Guatemalan Human Rights Coalition USA, released a letter of solidarity with Guatemalan protesters signed by over 30 organizations and 500 individuals. The electoral court refused Porras' request.

At year's end, Guatemalan Maryknoll Affiliate and human rights leader Claudia Samayoa writes: "The battle hasn't been easy, but there will be a transition on 14 January, 2024. [We] know that on the 14th, a new, deeper struggle will begin to stop those forces who seek profit over the common good, and will attempt to stop the actions of the new government..."

"In Guatemala's journey over the past year, it has been instrumental that the international community has spoken with one voice, just as it had during the peace process. The governments of the USA, Latin America, and Europe were united: 'Respect the elections. Respect the will of the people.' ... The Guatemalan solidarity movement in the United States should feel it has played a part in what we have accomplished. We thank them, and we will continue to work together for democracy." §

Haiti: Distressing Report from Rural Community

A rural community in Haiti asks U.S. groups to work to stop the flow of illegal guns into their country as they deal with spiraling gang violence and hunger.

On Christmas Day, the U.S. Embassy in Haiti went into lockdown when the embassy buildings and residential compound were surrounded by heavy gunfire. “All Embassy personnel have been instructed to remain indoors and shelter-in-place until further notice. All others should avoid the area,” the security alert said.

The embassy issued a similar warning for residents of another area of the capital city of Port-au-Prince three weeks earlier, when heavy gunfire took over the streets there.

It has been six months since the U.S. Embassy issued a statement urging U.S. citizens to leave the country due to the “armed clashes between gangs and the police and the high threat of violent crime and kidnapping throughout Port-au-Prince.” And it has been two and half years since the assassination of Haitian president Jovenel Moïse. In all this time the United States has done very little to slowdown the flow of illegal weapons from the United States into Haiti, or rebuild a functioning government to uphold the rule of law.

A UN report released on Nov. 28 said gang violence has escalated and spread from the capital city of Port-au-Prince to the rural areas with a significant increase in kidnappings and killings.

Maryknoll lay missionaries live in the northern rural community of Gros Morne, home to about 7,000 people in Artibonite Department. The missionaries work with community groups that provide regular updates to the Quixote Center, a U.S.-based social justice advocacy organization. The following is an excerpt of Quixote Center’s report on their December meeting with the Gros Morne community.

The community representatives began by naming sources of hope, the Quixote Center said. “They are especially happy that in Artibonite the schools are open this year, and on time. Also, they are noticing small local markets popping up, because people can no longer travel long distances to buy and sell,” due to gang control of key roads.

“Gros Morne itself is in a kind of bubble with respect to the gangs,” the Quixote Center reported. “Although there is gang activity all around them, the gangs have not invaded Gros Morne proper. But people live with the fear that it could happen any time. Because the gangs control the roads, many fewer people travel into Gros Morne. Life is continuing, but with increased isolation.”

The community also named food security as a serious concern.

“Hunger has increased throughout the country as a result of the border closure with the Dominican Republic. The closure has led to inflation and food shortages. Many people simply do not have food.”

Representatives of a local agriculture center told the Quixote Center that they have less produce to sell or distribute in the community because of people illicitly harvesting the gardens.

The UN report names sending in a multinational security force as the only solution to Haiti’s gang violence. But the Quixote Center says the Gros Morne community has named “advocacy work in the U.S. to diminish the gangs’ power, funding, and access to weapons” as a source of their hope. Another UN report exposed a network of criminal actors who purchase weapons in U.S. states with weak gun laws and smuggle them out of Florida and into Haiti.

Six U.S. senators asked President Biden what he plans to do to stop the flow of weapons from the U.S. into Haiti in a letter sent to the White House on Dec. 19. Led by Ed Markey of Massachusetts and Rev. Raphael Warnock of Georgia, the senators, all Democrats, expressed serious concerns about illegal weapons entering the country, humanitarian needs, and the lack of progress made by Haiti in establishing a democratically elected government.

In their letter to President Biden, the lawmakers requested answers to four questions:

1. What is the U.S. government’s assessment of its efforts to rely on Prime Minister Ariel Henry to stabilize Haiti and organize elections? When does the U.S. expect elections to take place?
2. Will you commit to reengaging with the civil society-led process for creating a transitional government in Haiti, without granting Ariel Henry or [Haitian political party] PHTK a de facto veto over a new transitional government?
3. Will you commit to moving forward with targeted Global Magnitsky Act sanctions on Haitian elites and officials responsible for colluding with violent gangs and engaging in significant acts of corruption, including relevant leaders of PHTK?
4. What additional steps will you take to stop the flow of heavy weapons and ammunition into Haiti from the U.S. and through the Dominican Republic? §

Faith in action: Tell Congress to stop the flow of illegal guns to Haiti <https://mogc.info/Haiti-Day-of-Peace>

UN: Climate Conference COP28 Confronts Fossil Fuels

Nearly every nation in the world has agreed to transition away from fossil fuels, the main driver of climate change.

The world's nations came together at the 28th U.N. Climate Change Conference in Dubai – COP 28 – to forge a historic deal committing to transition away from fossil fuels. Although fossil fuels have long been acknowledged as the root cause of climate change, they had never been called out at previous summits. For some, this moment marked the beginning of the end of climate change. For others, the deal was far too tepid and a call for accelerated action rather than celebration.

The agreement was forged in the wee hours of the summit's final night and triumphantly announced by COP 28 President Sultan Al-Jaber, who also happens to be the chief executive of the UAE's state oil company. While many global voices denounced his appointment to lead the climate summit, others signaled that he was poised to have a unique voice among oil producing countries, who are also members of the UN Framework on Climate Change Convention (UNFCCC). History will determine if he did indeed captain the ship back onto course or not.

The crowning achievement of COP 28 was the Global Stocktake (GST) an inventory of how the world stands in regard to keeping global temperature rise to no more than 1.5 degrees Celsius (2.7F) above pre-industrial levels, a target set in the 2015 Paris Agreement. Actions taken by governments since 2015 have brought down the trajectory of climate warming, but not by enough.

Earlier in 2023, the UN Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change determined that the planet is on course for a 2.4C temperature rise that, if unchecked, will lead to catastrophic events. The concluding text of the GST calls on nations to forge new and bolder commitments to stay under the 1.5C threshold.

The overarching call to transition away from fossil fuels did not come easily. Although over 130 countries arrived in Dubai with a commitment to phaseout of fossil fuels, the block of OPEC oil-producing nations spent most of the two weeks blocking the deal. Whether it was the unflappable determination of climate activists, the leadership of small island states, the diplomatic maneuverings of middle ground countries like the United States or the inside gaming skills of Sultan Al-Jaber that achieved the final commitment might never be known. And while the term “transition from” (fossil fuels) was not as strong as the term “phaseout” desired by many, it was what carried the deal over the finish line.

While most took a pause to acknowledge the historic moment, some were quick to point out loopholes in the agreement. One loophole is the nod to the use of “transition fuels” such as liquified natural gas (LNG). When the extraction, refining and shipping of this fuel is factored in, LNG is actually just as destructive to the planet as other traditional fossil fuels.

Another vehement concern was the double speak of developed countries who simultaneously committed to transition away from fossil fuels while carrying out large new fossil fuel projects. One striking example is the U.S. plan to construct twenty new LNG export facilities that would add the equivalent emissions of 675 coal-fired power plants.

COP 28 began in upbeat fashion, when on the first day countries unanimously agreed to a plan to operationalize the new Loss and Damage Fund. This fund, directed at providing financial help to vulnerable communities pulverized by climate-change-caused catastrophes, was extremely controversial up until two years ago. But a decade of tireless advocacy from the Global South led to a decision at COP27 to explore the process. A Transitional Committee was named and met throughout 2023 to make a recommendation on the institutional arrangements for the fund. The result was perfect for no one, but agreeable to all, and thus COP got off to on a positive footing. Although commitments to fill the fund came pouring in from the time of its announcement, a gap still remains to reach what is truly needed.

The final agreement also contained important global commitments to triple renewable energy and double energy efficiency. In addition, the transportation sector, which makes up 30% of U.S. emissions, was addressed for the first time. Likewise, food systems, the source of another third of U.S. emissions, were named for the first time as an area to be addressed. Forests, biodiversity, and ecosystems were included in a much more integral way and the global 30x30 pledge to preserve 30 percent of land and water by the year 2030 was affirmed.

The work for climate action and justice will go on and nations agreed to meet again next year for COP29 in Azerbaijan. §

Faith in Action: Watch our webinar COP28 Outcomes and Next Steps <https://mogc.info/COP28webinar>

UN: Plastic Elimination Treaty Stalled

A UN conference aimed at creating an International Legally Binding Instrument for plastic waste reduction was hampered by divergent views on how to reach the destination.

The Third Session of the Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee (INC-3) on Plastic Pollution that met in Nairobi, Kenya, in November was unable to come to a consensus on a plan of action to drastically reduce and eliminate plastic waste in the environment.

With over 10 billion tons of plastic produced since the 1950s, studies show that over 8 billion tons are now waste, with between 10-15 million tons of plastic leaking into the marine environment each year. This number is expected to more than triple by 2050.

Studies have linked unsustainable production and subsequent consumption patterns to exponential growth in plastic pollution, which impacts human health as well as the health of terrestrial and marine ecosystems. In 2022, there were reports of plastic particles found in human lungs and in human blood; and a 2021 report found microplastics in human placenta.

In March 2022, the world took the historic decision to end plastic pollution by adopting UN Environment Assembly (UNEA) resolution 5/14, which established an Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee (INC) to develop an international legally binding instrument (ILBI) on plastic pollution, including in the marine environment, which could include both binding and voluntary approaches, based on a comprehensive approach that addresses the full lifecycle of plastics.

During the conference in Kenya, the varying interpretations of the resolution came to the fore as delegates shared their views on the “full life cycle of plastic,” with some favoring measures addressing plastic production, and others favoring downstream measures to eliminate plastic waste. Others focused on how best to ensure lasting design standards for plastic products.

The essential difference is whether the best solution is to eliminate production of plastic products completely or to seek means to recycle and reuse plastics after they have entered the waste stream. The group Beyond Plastics (www.beyondplastics.org) states bluntly that recycling is not the answer. They contend it was a ruse developed by plastic companies that put different numbered diagrams on types of plastic products but in fact most plastic waste cannot be recycled.

Graham Forbes of Greenpeace was quoted in the Boston Globe as saying: “The science is very clear, the data is very clear, and the moral imperative is very clear. You cannot solve the plastic pollution crisis if you do not

massively cut plastic production.”

In the closing hours of the meeting, delegates were able to agree on some revisions to their mandate, however disagreements on how to eliminate production of single-use plastics will need to be addressed at their next conference to be held in April 2024 in Ottawa.

Some countries wanted a phase-out in a specific time period while others wanted a more open timeline using nationally determined actions. The Gulf Cooperation Council, representing oil producing nations along the Persian Gulf, wanted plastic polymers to be excluded and others wanted to focus only on downstream issues, i.e. recycling of plastic waste.

To achieve the goal of adopting the international legally binding instrument on plastic pollution by the end of 2024, the envisioned five meetings may not be enough. It was hoped that intersessional work prior to the fourth conference in 2024 would bridge the divergent positions but in fact INC-3 closed without any decision on intersessional work.

So far, the conferences have illustrated two distinct sets of preferences from delegations: those who want to limit the binding instrument and those who want to add ambition. There are two important topics shaping ambition. One relates to defining the lifecycle of plastics, and if measures will begin far upstream, midstream, or downstream. The second relates to the type of obligations the treaty will have.

At this point there is no clarity on what the final outcome will be because the subject of plastics extends from fossil fuel extraction, through product design, consumption, and into transboundary waste management. Other factors that need to be discussed include finance for developing countries, the building of necessary professional and institutional capacities, and facilitating access and transfer to relevant technologies.

No one expected negotiating a plastics treaty to be an easy task. The next session will have a new Chair presiding over the Committee, who has to deal with many challenges. Incoming Chair Luis Vayas Valdivieso, Ambassador of Ecuador, shared a quote after his election, calling on participants to “never lose hope when working with environmental issues.” §

Faith in action: Sign [EarthDay.org's](https://mogc.info/GlobalPlasticsTreaty) petition to the UN <https://mogc.info/GlobalPlasticsTreaty>

Nuclear Ban Week: A Call for Global Disarmament

Archbishop John Wester amplified the call for nuclear disarmament in a sermon delivered on Nuclear Ban Week at Our Savior Church, New York City.

On November 29, 2023, Archbishop John Wester of Santa Fe, New Mexico, spoke with urgency for the cause of nuclear disarmament in his sermon at the Mass for the Abolition of Nuclear Weapons, sponsored by the Dorothy Day Guild, at Our Savior Church in New York City.

The timing was doubly significant: November 29 is the anniversary of Dorothy Day's death and will be her feast day should she become canonized. It was also the start of Nuclear Ban Week, when the State Parties to the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW) met for the second time since the treaty went into force in 2021. Archbishop Wester's sermon was delivered only a few blocks away from United Nations while those meetings were in progress.

The Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW) bans the use, possession, testing, and transfer of nuclear weapons under international law. Over sixty state parties have joined the treaty, none of which possess nuclear weapons, and have committed to the 50-point Vienna Action Plan, to deepen understanding of and strengthen commitments to disarmament.

Archbishop Wester cited Pope Francis's declaration that even the possession of nuclear weapons is immoral, highlighting the catastrophic risks associated with their use and the increasing likelihood of inadvertent use due to complex control systems. The Archbishop's journey to Hiroshima and Nagasaki, sites of atomic bomb devastation, underlines the church's commitment to confronting this issue. Notably, the Vatican was the first state to sign and ratify the TPNW, setting a moral benchmark for others.

Reflecting on the legacy of Dorothy Day, who opposed nuclear weapons as a crime against God and humanity, Archbishop Wester connected this historical stance to the present. He expressed concern over the modernized digital and AI systems governing nuclear arsenals, which could precipitate a catastrophic decision to use these weapons. He pointed to the Cuban Missile Crisis, where luck played a significant role in averting disaster, underscoring that luck is not a strategy.

Archbishop Wester recalled the United Nations' first resolution in 1946, which aimed to address the nuclear threat. Despite early efforts like Bernard Baruch's

proposal for nuclear disarmament, geopolitical tensions, notably with the Soviet Union, hindered progress. The failure of significant disarmament initiatives in the 1980s, despite efforts by leaders like Reagan and Gorbachev, demonstrates the complexity of this global issue.

The United States is currently engaged in a \$2 trillion modernization program of its nuclear arsenal, which Archbishop Wester views as a step toward permanent nuclear armament, capable of annihilating human civilization. He also touched upon Dorothy Day's vision of Distributism, advocating for a more equitable distribution of wealth, which is intrinsically linked to the pursuit of peace and disarmament.

The TPNW stands as a beacon of hope in this context. With 122 countries initially voting in favor, and increasing numbers signing and ratifying it, the treaty symbolizes a global aspiration for complete nuclear disarmament. The Archbishop views this as a move away from 'nuclear apartheid' to a more equitable and safe world.

Archbishop Wester proposed a multifaceted approach: Engaging various faiths in a united stand against nuclear weapons, emphasizing nuclear disarmament as a pre-eminent pro-life issue in the Catholic Church, and treating global nuclear disarmament as an urgent challenge. He underscored the need for significant progress by 2025, marking the 80th anniversary of the atomic bombings.

The Archbishop's sermon, drawing parallels between the biblical story of Daniel in the lion's den and the modern threat of nuclear annihilation, serves as a stark reminder of the perilous path humanity treads with nuclear weapons. His call to action is clear: trust in a higher moral compass and strive collectively for a world free of the nuclear threat. §

Faith in action: watch the full sermon at <https://mogc.info/ArchbishopWester-11-29-23>

Sign up for a webinar, "The Growing Danger of Nuclear War: An Urgent Conversation" featuring Archbishop John Wester of Santa Fe, Dr. Ira Helfand of Back from the Brink Campaign, and Marie Dennis of Pax Christi International. Jan. 27, 2pm-4pm ET. Register at <https://paxchristima.org/>

Violence in Philippines Threatens Peace and Human Rights

A bombing of a Catholic Mass jeopardizes plans for peace talks with the rebel groups in the region.

On December 3, a bomb exploded during a Catholic Mass in a gymnasium of the Mindanao State University in Marawi, Philippines, killing four and injuring fifty. A group affiliated with the Islamic State took credit for the attack. The attack raises a number of grave concerns for peace and human rights advocates and the Muslim community and other faith groups in Mindanao.

The city of Marawi was the site of a deadly five month clash between Islamic State-related militants and government forces in 2017 that left the city devastated, displacing hundreds of thousands and damaging 7,000 homes, 21 schools, 42 mosques, and one church. U.S. special forces participated in the siege. Government plans to rebuild have gone largely unfinished. In March, Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns (MOGC) director Susan Gunn met with women from among 1,000 residents of the city from 153 families who remain internally displaced, still living in temporary shelters six years after the siege. In December, President Ferdinand Marcos, Jr. ordered recovery efforts sped up and finished in the coming weeks, but it is unclear whether the displaced families will receive needed help in rebuilding their homes, or what will become of the camps.

The December 3 bombing raises fears of escalation that could derail newly restarted peace talks in Mindanao. In response to the attack, Bishop Pablo David of Kalookan, President of the Catholic Bishops Conference of the Philippines, said in a statement, “Such violence should not only be denounced; it should also be renounced as a way of seeking redress by every peace-loving Filipino.”

Returned Maryknoll Lay Missioner and former Executive Director of the Maryknoll Affiliates Fred Goddard sent MOGC a statement from the Mindanao Peacebuilding Institute, where he currently works: “MPI strongly condemns the act of terror that resulted in the loss of innocent lives as a result of the bomb explosion while a Catholic mass service was taking place in the MSU Marawi Gym. Such heinous acts starkly contradict the principles of peace, harmony, and respect for human life, causing profound pain and suffering to individuals and communities affected by this tragedy.”

Goddard notes that other partners have “expressed concern about the Philippine government intervention and possible increase in human rights violations in the wake of the bombing.” He cites a statement from the Freedom of Religion and Belief Consortium which says, “We condemn

any form of violence. We also condemn violence, physical or verbal, as a response to this terror. We are saddened by the pushback of this senseless violent act in the communities, especially after observing and witnessing the proliferation of hate speech and statements directed at Muslim communities... This will provide the spoilers and marketers of violence with more opportunities.”

International context: Gaza and China

The motivation behind the timing of the bombing is unclear. It takes place at a time when President Marcos has announced plans to restart peace talks with rebel groups in the region, but Vice President Sara Duterte has expressed opposition to the idea, the peace process having been halted by her father, former president Rodrigo Duterte. Goddard speculates that the motivation may have been internal issues in Mindanao, but notes that, “In general, there has been strong condemnation of what is happening in Gaza across Mindanao, especially in the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region of Muslim Mindanao (BARMM)... While this is very separate from what happened at MSU, it does indicate the heightened awareness in Mindanao.” The BARMM Parliament has called for an immediate ceasefire in Gaza.

MOGC and other faith groups have been advocating for the United States to pass the Philippines Human Rights Act (PHRA), which would stop U.S. aid to Philippine security forces responsible for abuses. Pushback from U.S. politicians has centered on the role of the Philippines as a key partner in countering China’s influence in the region. Tensions between the two countries regarding the South China Sea (a part of the sea referred to in the Philippines as the West Philippines Sea) have escalated in recent weeks. In December, Japan gave the Philippines an air surveillance radar system, the first time Japan has exported a full defense system since lifting its arms trade ban in 2014.

Between longstanding U.S. support for Philippine military activity in Mindanao as part of the global “War on Terror,” and for the Philippine military more broadly as a counterweight to China, it seems unlikely that the United States will increase pressure on the Philippine government to respect human rights in Mindanao unless Congress passes the PHRA this year. §

Faith in Action: Ask Congress to pass the Philippines Human Rights Act. <https://mogc.info/PH-HR-Act>

Church Leaders Defend Asylum

As part of negotiations over Pres. Biden's supplemental funding request, the Senate is considering proposals that would permanently gut asylum and compromise legal immigration pathways.

Pres. Joe Biden said in a press conference on Dec. 12 that he is willing to support policy changes that immigrant rights experts say would further dismantle the U.S. asylum system, have devastating consequences at the border, and put vulnerable people at heightened risk, in exchange for Republicans in Congress to back military aid to Ukraine and Israel.

Church leaders and faith-based organizations are urging Congress to reject these proposals and protect asylum.

On December 15, four Catholic bishops, chairs of committees of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, wrote to Congress, urging legislators to “reject these counterproductive proposals and instead pursue bold and forward-looking solutions,” which include “targeted enforcement measures, combined with actions to modernize and increase capacity at ports of entry, as well as increasing the number of, and access to, lawful immigration pathways.” Additionally, the bishops stressed that “no sustainable reduction in irregular migration can be achieved without a long-term

commitment to addressing its root causes in countries of origin.”

In a press release on Nov. 30, Susan Gunn, director of the Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns, said:

“Some of the proposals in the Senate that seem to narrow access to asylum as a political tradeoff for support for foreign aid are shocking. Let's be clear that this is a life issue. People who seek asylum do so because they fear for their lives. Our Catholic faith teaches that anyone whose life is threatened has the right to protection. Because we value the sanctity of life, seeking asylum is a human right protected under our laws. We know that the United States has the capacity and resources to manage migration in a humane, lawful, and life-affirming manner, and to ensure a just and orderly asylum process at the border. We need Congress to build up the U.S. asylum system, not tear it down.” §

Faith in action: Tell the U.S. Senate “Do not trade asylum for emergency funding.”

<https://mogc.info/DefendAsylum>

U.S. Refugee Resettlement Growing Stronger

The U.S. Department of State resettled 14,830 refugees from October 1, the beginning of Fiscal Year 2024, until December 1, its strongest showing in seven years. The Center for Migration Studies of New York said if the current pace of resettlement continues throughout the fiscal year, the United States is projected to resettle as many as 90,000 refugees in FY 2024.

The largest groups of refugees have been resettled from Afghanistan, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, and Syria.

President Joe Biden set the number of refugees to be resettled in the United States in 2024 at 125,000, the same goal he set for 2022 and 2023. Low refugee admissions under Biden (despite high ceilings) were becoming a trend, however. In FY 2022, a total of 25,465 refugees (20 percent of the 125,000 target) were resettled in the United States. In FY 2023, the United States reached about 50% of the target, resettling 60,214 refugees. The latest

numbers show that the U.S. government is continuing to make progress in restoring the program after years of cutbacks during the Trump administration. §



Migrants boarding the bus to processing center in Amman, Jordan.
© IOM/Muse Mohammed 2015

Solidarity Economy: Serving the Common Good

There is a global movement to build a just and sustainable economy that prioritizes people and planet over profit.

One of the highlights of 2023 was the UN resolution on the social and solidarity economy. The resolution, adopted at the UN in New York last April, encourages member states and financial institutions to promote and support the work of cooperatives, associations, mutual aid societies, and others social and economic initiatives to achieve sustainable development.

“This pioneering resolution offers the tools to confront the great challenges that humanity faces – the reduction of inequalities and the protection of the environment,” said Yolanda Diaz, Spain’s minister of work and the social economy, at the meeting.

“An economy that is more democratic, more rooted in its territory and strong in the face of crisis is possible,” Ms. Diaz said. “The social economy is our today and our tomorrow.”

In a social and solidarity economy, communities are resilient and thriving thanks to the promotion and protection of local economies. Communities have a voice in how investments are structured. Greater attention is given to developing cooperatives, local businesses, and food systems, and to ensuring access to a social safety net and other initiatives that serve the common good.

The New Economy Coalition, an alliance of over 100 organizations building the solidarity economy in the United States, and the NonProfit Quarterly co-produced in December a series of case studies of “solidarity economy ecosystems that are returning wealth and building grassroots power” in cities across the United States. Called “Solidarity Economies: Building Communities of Power,” the articles highlight cooperatives and collectives in New Orleans, Buffalo, Los Angeles, Oakland and the DC metro area that have made contributions to decent work, the

promotion of labor standards and rights, poverty alleviation, and social transformation and inclusion.

In the case study from Oakland, Black community organizers said they were inspired to think big by the experiences of cooperatives in Italy and Spain. They named Italy’s Marcora Law, passed in 1985, which allows laid-off and unemployed workers to pool their unemployment benefits to either take over a closing business or start a new one, as a way to rebuild a regional economy. They also named Spain’s Mondragón Corporation, which is the world’s largest worker cooperative network, with over 100 federated companies, a bank, and a university generating billions in revenue, as proof that a federation of cooperatives can compete in the global economy.

Inspired by these large-scale cooperative developments, the Oakland-based group decided in 2017 to create a regional association for Black cooperatives in California and beyond called Repaired Nations.

Thanks to grants from regional and national organizations, thirty members of the cooperatives that make up Repaired Nations traveled to Ghana in 2017 to learn more about their shared Pan-African vision and deepen their personal and business relationships. Since the trip, the regional association has birthed and welcomed more cooperatives.

One of the founders of Repaired Nations, Gregory Jackson, names the personal and professional growth, as well as the space to build sustainable careers, as the greatest benefits Repaired Nations has given the Black community. One cooperative leader said “We had a celebration on the 10 acres of land we co-purchased. Through cooperative values and belief in ourselves, we went from just throwing an idea out there to actually accomplishing a goal and knowing this way of being is possible.” §

Lenten Reflection Guide: Caring for Creation

Coming January 12, download the 14-page guide produced by the Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns. The guide offers reflections, small group questions, prayers, and actions based on each week’s Gospel reading and concerns raised by Maryknoll missionaries and affiliates with experience caring for creation.

Find the guide on our website at

<https://mogc.info/Lent2024>

“As we begin this Lenten season, let us consider ways in which we can share God’s goodness with others and with our world. And let’s heed the urgency we hear of today. As Saint Paul writes, *Behold, now is a very acceptable time; behold, now is the day of salvation.*”

- Marilyn Kott, Maryknoll Affiliate

Resources

1. **Lenten Reflection Guide: Caring for Creation**
Download the guide with reflections beginning on Ash Wednesday, **Feb. 14** through Palm Sunday, **Mar. 24** <https://mogc.info/Lent2024>
2. **Christmas letter** by Maryknoll Fr. Bob McCahill in Bangladesh, published in the National Catholic Reporter. <https://mogc.info/NCR-Bangladesh>
3. **Webinar “The Growing Danger of Nuclear War: An Urgent Conversation”** featuring Archbishop John Wester of Santa Fe, Dr. Ira Helfand of Back from the Brink Campaign, and Marie Dennis of Pax Christi International. **Jan. 27, 2pm-4pm ET**. Registration info at <https://paxchristima.org/>
4. **Article: The Nuclear Year in Review** by the Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists. <https://mogc.info/NuclearYear-2023>
5. **World Day of Peace message for Jan. 1, 2024** by Pope Francis focuses on artificial intelligence (AI). The full text, video, and infographics are available in numerous languages: <https://mogc.info/WDP-AI-2024>
<https://mogc.info/WDP-AI-2024-video>
<https://mogc.info/WDP-AI-2024-info>
6. **Article: God’s Trumpet: My Journey to Saint Hildegard’s Rhineland** by Maryknoll Lay Missioner Kathy Bond. Bond writes about her pilgrimage to St. Hildegard’s Abbey near Bingen in Germany in celebration of 30 years in mission <https://mogc.info/StHildegard>
7. **Report: Update on Human Rights and Rule of Law in Haiti** by the Institute for Justice and Democracy in Haiti covers recent developments relevant to human rights in Haiti from June through November 2023 <https://mogc.info/HR-Haiti-2023>
8. **Churches for Middle East Peace** offers weekly virtual prayer and actions for peace in the Israel-Hamas conflict. <https://cmep.org/>
9. **2023 Jubilee Report: Historic NY Leg, Puerto Rico, Billions Won, Gains and Challenges**, available online https://www.jubileeusa.org/2023_report
10. **Exposition of Laudate Deum**, by Rev. James H. Kroeger, MM for the World Mission magazine <https://mogc.info/LD-EcoUrgency>
11. **Video: Memories of martyred Maryknoll Sr. Ita Ford** by Columban Fr. Alo Connaughton who first met Sr. Ford in Santiago, Chile in the 1970s. <https://mogc.info/ItaFordMemories>
12. **Video: Webinar on the Middle East Conflict**. MOGC sponsors a talk with CMEP’s Lauren Draper to speak about the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. <https://mogc.info/Webinar-CMEP>
13. **Video: Webinar on COP28 Outcomes and Next Steps**. Lisa Sullivan and Sr. Susan Nchubiri, MM, from MOGC, and special guest Dr. Gina Castillo, Climate Policy and Research Advisor at Catholic Relief Services. <https://mogc.info/COP28webinar>
14. **Video: Pope Francis’ Video Message for Inauguration of COP28 Faith Pavilion** <https://mogc.info/PopeFrancis-FaithPavilion>
15. **Speech: Pope Francis’ Address to COP28** (read by the Secretariat of State at COP28) <https://mogc.info/PopeFrancis-COP28>
16. **Article: COP28: Key outcomes agreed at the UN climate talks in Dubai** by Carbon Brief <https://mogc.info/CarbonBrief>
17. **Article: COP28 Summary report 30 November - 13 December 2023** by Earth Negotiations Bulletin <https://mogc.info/COP28summary>
18. **Article: COP28 closing - a historically lukewarm outcome** by EcoJesuit <https://mogc.info/COP28EcoJesuit>
19. **El Salvador: Statement on Unconstitutionality of President’s Reelection Bid** by the Latin America Working Group (LAWG), Committee in Solidarity with the people of El Salvador (CISPES), and HOPE Border Institute <https://mogc.info/CISPES-Bukele>
20. **Philippines: Statement Condemning Bombing of Catholic Mass at Mindanao State University in Marawi** issued by the Catholic Bishops Conference of the Philippines <https://mogc.info/PhilippinesBombingCBCP>
21. **Honduras: Statement “The Supreme Court of Justice must confirm the sentences of the murderers of Berta Carceres”** by COPINH, Dec. 12, 2023 <https://mogc.info/COPINH-Berta>