

# NewsNotes

*a bi-monthly newsletter on international justice and peace issues*



Maryknoll Office  
for Global Concerns

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**50** years

# Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns

*Peace, Social Justice, and Integrity of Creation*

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

# Maryknoll Leaders Tell G20: Turn Debt Into Hope

More than 120 global faith leaders, including the leadership of the Maryknoll Sisters, Maryknoll Fathers and Brothers, and Maryknoll Lay Missioners, took the first step in the Jubilee 2025 Turn Debt into Hope campaign on Feb. 26 when they sent the following letter to the G20 finance ministers meeting in Cape Town, South Africa.

## DEAR G20 FINANCE MINISTERS,

In this Jubilee year 2025, a year of both material and spiritual liberation, Pope Francis has encouraged us all to be “Pilgrims of Hope” and in doing so address one of the most urgent issues which face us, that of the acute global debt crisis.

As faith leaders, we are deeply troubled at the impact this current debt crisis is having on the lives of the poorest and most vulnerable across the world. Today, the need for action is even greater than the last Jubilee in 2000, when the first campaign for debt relief was launched: 3.3 billion people – nearly half the global

*We must have a fair and functional global debt system.*

population – now live in countries that spend more on debt payments than on health, education, or life-saving climate measures.

We believe the G20 Common Framework is failing to produce the timely and adequate deals upon which millions of lives and livelihoods depend. Debt restructurings under the framework take three times longer than previous processes, while private creditors – now the largest creditor group globally – are able to delay negotiations and demand higher repayments than debtor countries

can afford. This inefficiency and inequity has deterred nations in urgent need of relief from engaging with the framework, leaving their citizens to endure hunger, lack of access to essential services, crumbling infrastructure and the worst impacts of the climate crisis.

We must have a fair and functional global debt system. The Jubilee tradition calls for debts to be forgiven, land restored, and slaves freed. This Biblical practice embodied justice, mercy, and reconciliation, offering a renewed covenant with God and harmony within the community. With these principles in mind, we call on you to:

- **Champion a debt cancellation framework** that brings debt payments down to a genuinely affordable level, suspends debt payments while debt cancellation is being negotiated, offers debtors assurances of sufficient debt cancellation before they apply, and compels all lenders to participate.
- **Pass legislation** in key jurisdictions to ensure private lenders participate in debt cancellation and suspend payments to private lenders during negotiations.
- **Reform International Financial Institutions**, ensuring that debtor countries are properly represented and that debt sustainability assessments and policy conditions center human and environmental rights.
- **Support the creation of a UN Debt Convention** to agree rules on resolving/settling debt crises, responsible lending and borrowing and the establishment of a public global debt registry so that all lenders and borrowing governments are held accountable.

Taking these steps will not only address the immediate debt crisis but also lay the foundation for a more just and resilient global financial system. As faith leaders, we urge you to be Pilgrims of Hope acting with courage, solidarity and compassion in this Jubilee year. ✝

**FAITH IN ACTION:** Sign the Turn Debt into Hope petition to world leaders asking for actions to stop the debt crisis. Download the campaign pack on the petition website for more prayer, study and actions. <https://turndebtintohope.caritas.org/>

Photo from South African President Cyril Ramaphosa's first meeting of the G20 Finance Ministers and Central Governors in Cape Town on February 26, 2025. [Photo:GCIS]



# African Migrant Laborers Need Jubilee

*Burdensome public debt in the continent has induced African youth to migrate for employment driving greater risks of exploitation and modern slavery.*

**Y**oung people from African countries are under intense pressure by the local economies to look aboard in their search for work that provides a living wage and dignified life for themselves and their families. For many young adults in Sub-Saharan Africa, the dream of securing what is considered a “decent job” is not possible in their home countries, where governments are forced to spend more on debt repayments to the IMF and other international lenders than on climate, health and education priorities

Stressed by the urgent need to find work, a growing number of young people from Africa are responding to advertisements to work abroad, joining the demographic of “migrant workers” around the world. While some elected officials in Europe say that African migrants are “overwhelming” society there, in fact, according to the International Organization for Migration, the total number of African migrants worldwide was 40.6 million. This is only 14.5% of the global migrant population, much less than Asia’s (41.0%) and Europe’s (22.5%) shares.

Much more significant is the growth in the number of remittances, which are the funds migrant workers send to their families in their home countries to be used to meet basic needs. Over the last decade, remittance flows to Africa doubled, reaching over \$100 billion in 2022, a sum which exceeded the total of all development assistance the continent received that year. Remittances provide a lifeline for many families, especially in rural areas where they can make the biggest difference.

But behind the increase in migrant laborers and their remittances is a troubling cycle of exploitation and abuse, especially in the Persian Gulf. Horrific stories of African migrant workers subjected to poor working conditions, exploitation, and inhumane treatment akin to modern-day slavery are widespread.

“I was desperate for a job,” said Joy Simiyu, one of a growing number of Kenyans who travel to the Gulf to seek work. Simiyu told an advocacy and aid organization called Human Trafficking Search that she faced a torrent of abuse while in Saudi Arabia—that she was forced to work in multiple homes, deprived of food and rest, her wages, and denied timely payment because she was “not doing enough work to demand pay” or because she “was not going nowhere.”

Ethiopian, Kenyan, and Ugandan workers migrate to Saudi Arabia and all Arab Gulf states but Iraq under

a legal framework called the kafala system that has for decades defined their relationship with their Arab employers. It was created to supply cheap, plentiful labor in an era of booming economic growth, and its defenders argue that it benefits local businesses and helps drive development. The kafala system has become increasingly controversial, the Council on Foreign Relations reported in 2022, as stories of exploitation are shared over social media and investigated by journalists covering international events. “The lack of regulations and protections for migrant workers’ rights often results in low wages, poor working conditions, and employee abuse. Racial discrimination and gender-based violence are endemic. Global anti-racism protests, the COVID-19 pandemic, and preparation for the 2022 FIFA World Cup in Qatar helped to expose the kafala system’s flaws, but the future of reform efforts remains unclear.”

The kafala system ties workers’ legal status to their employers, leaving migrants vulnerable to forced labor, wage theft, sexual and physical abuse, and even death. There have been incidences of employers confiscating workers’ passports, trapping them in conditions reminiscent of indentured servitude.

The Global Slavery Index reports that Arab states have the highest per capita prevalence of modern slavery, with more than 10 people per 1,000 trapped in forced labor, sex trafficking, or forced marriage. While Saudi Arabia’s 2021 Labor Reform Initiative introduced some changes, such as allowing workers to change jobs under certain conditions, these reforms largely exclude domestic workers—the most vulnerable group.

Despite documented widespread abuse, East African governments continue to normalize the export of labor. Kenya, for example, signed many agreements with Gulf states amid reports in Kenyan media of domestic workers dying under suspicious circumstances. Uganda processed thousands of migrant worker contracts in 2024 despite suspending its labor agreement with Saudi Arabia in 2023 due to abuse.

During this Jubilee Year of Hope, Pope Francis calls on wealthy nations to cancel the unjust and unsustainable debts of developing countries. The Turn Debt into Hope campaign for Jubilee 2025 is not only a significant movement for the economic wellbeing of development countries, but also an important response to the cries of African migrant laborers.✠

# Africa: 2025 Is a Critical Juncture

*The Brookings Institute's Foresight Africa report concludes that 2025 a critical year to address the urgent issues facing the fastest growing continent. The following is an excerpt from the report, which is available at <https://mogc.info/FA25>*

**W**e approach this year's Foresight Africa report with a great sense of responsibility, recognizing the continent's growing role in shaping inclusive global prosperity. By the year 2100, Africa will be home to nearly 40% of the world's population, up from 18.3% in 2025 and 25% in 2050. This demographic shift makes the continent's sustainable development a priority not just for Africans, but for the entire global community, since Africa's sustainable development has direct implications for global stability and prosperity.

2025 will serve as a critical juncture for Africa's trajectory, one shaped by a convergence of factors: new political leadership in both the African Union (AU) and the United States, the urgent imperative to meet the looming 2030 deadline for the SDGs, the need to modernize and renew the Africa Growth and Opportunity Acts (AGOA) set to expire in September 2025, the demand to accelerate the implementation of the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA), an escalating climate crisis, and the reverberations of conflict and global economic instability. These dynamics require bold and coordinated policy action to address Africa's unique challenges while leveraging its vast potential.

Africa's GDP is expected to grow at an annual rate of 4.2% in 2025—up from 3.1% in 2023. The continent is undergoing rapid transformation as its population grows and becomes more urban; meanwhile, its economies are digitalizing and becoming more service-oriented. By 2050, Africa will be home to about 25% of the global population and \$16.12 trillion in combined consumer and business spending. Africa is also undergoing the Fourth Industrial Revolution, with rapid adoption and effective deployment of technologies that can help solve some of its most complex economic and social challenges. Yet this overall positive economic outlook can mask regional and local discrepancies that present unique policy challenges. African debt has soared to its highest point in over a decade, with 20 African countries in or at risk of debt distress. Among the top 20 most fragile countries in the world, 14 are now located in Africa. The time is right to maximize impact to solidify and accelerate a positive trajectory for the continent, including with the implementation of the AfCFTA.

This year's report explores six critical themes, shedding light on the opportunities and obstacles that will define Africa's future and underlie the policies needed to propel its progress over the period the next five years and

beyond. First it needs to harness their internal strengths and reduce reliance on external forces in order to drive sustainable growth from within. Africa's diversity of strengths—from rising intra-African trade to rich deposits of critical minerals, human capital, and continental financial institutions—can drive its push to meet the SDGs and the Agenda 2063 goals.

Next Africa must accelerate progress toward meeting the Sustainable Development Goals. Reversing SDG stagnation in Africa will require a bold, new strategic approach, adequate and affordable financing, and renewed political commitment. Emphasizing key enablers like technology and energy can boost economic output, spur innovation, encourage value-addition in economic activity, protect the planet, create jobs, and enhance human capital.

Another requirement is to transform Africa's demographic advantage into greater economic and social prosperity by investing more in women and youth through education, skills training, and entrepreneurship and by dismantling structural biases and barriers that limit their participation in leadership and decision making roles. There are links between economic, social, and environmental prosperity. A brighter future for Africa means ensuring that its youth and women are at the center of its development story.

Effective governance has long been recognized as a cornerstone of sustainable development. This report dives into the state of governance across Africa, with particular focus on how, and to what extent, African governments are meeting the priorities and needs of African citizens.

Artificial intelligence and other emerging technologies are reshaping the world, and Africa is at the forefront, playing a leading global role in their development and deployment now and into the future. This report examines how emerging technologies can address some of the continent's most pressing challenges, including economic, environmental, social, and governance issues. Alongside opportunities, the chapter warns of risks, including the digital divide, and calls for strategic investments in digital infrastructure and skills development.

Finally, the report explores how African leaders can leverage their growing presence on the global stage, including the African Union's new membership in the G20, South Africa's G20 presidency, and relationships with partners such as the United States, China, and multilateral institutions to drive the continent's priorities.✦



# Letter from Pope Francis and Reply from U.S. Catholic Bishops

*Pope Francis took the unusual step of publishing an open letter to the Catholic Bishops of the United States to thank them for their work for migrants and refugees and urge their steadfastness in their defense of the dignity in the face of political pressure and initiation of a program of mass deportation. The letter and the response from the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops' President that came the day after, are below.*

## **DEAR BROTHERS IN THE EPISCOPATE,**

I am writing today to address a few words to you in these delicate moments that you are living as Pastors of the People of God who walk together in the United States of America.

The journey from slavery to freedom that the People of Israel traveled, as narrated in the Book of Exodus, invites us to look at the reality of our time, so clearly marked by the phenomenon of migration, as a decisive moment in history to reaffirm not only our faith in a God who is always close, incarnate, migrant and refugee, but also the infinite and transcendent dignity of every human person.

These words with which I begin are not an artificial construct. Even a cursory examination of the Church's social doctrine emphatically shows that Jesus Christ is the true Emmanuel (cf. Mt 1:23); he did not live apart from the difficult experience of being expelled from his own land because of an imminent risk to his life, and from the experience of having to take refuge in a society and a culture foreign to his own. The Son of God, in becoming man, also chose to live the drama of immigration. I like to recall, among other things, the words with which Pope Pius XII began his Apostolic Constitution on the Care of Migrants, which is considered the "Magna Carta" of the Church's thinking on migration:

"The family of Nazareth in exile, Jesus, Mary and Joseph, emigrants in Egypt and refugees there to escape the wrath of an ungodly king, are the model, the example and the consolation of emigrants and pilgrims of every age and country, of all refugees of every condition who, beset by persecution or necessity, are forced to leave their homeland, beloved family and dear friends for foreign lands."

Likewise, Jesus Christ, loving everyone with a universal love, educates us in the permanent recognition of the dignity of every human being, without exception. In fact, when we speak of "infinite and transcendent dignity," we wish to emphasize that the most decisive value possessed by the human person surpasses and sustains every other juridical consideration that can be

made to regulate life in society. Thus, all the Christian faithful and people of good will are called upon to consider the legitimacy of norms and public policies in the light of the dignity of the person and his or her fundamental rights, not vice versa.

I have followed closely the major crisis that is taking place in the United States with the initiation of a program of mass deportations. The rightly formed conscience cannot fail to make a critical judgment and express its disagreement with any measure that tacitly or explicitly identifies the illegal status of some migrants with criminality. At the same time, one must recognize the right of a nation to defend itself and keep communities safe from those who have committed violent or serious crimes while in the country or prior to arrival. That said, the act of deporting people who in many cases have left their own land for reasons of extreme poverty, insecurity, exploitation, persecution or serious deterioration of the environment, damages the dignity of many men and women, and of entire families, and places them in a state of particular vulnerability and defenselessness.

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This is not a minor issue: an authentic rule of law is verified precisely in the dignified treatment that all people deserve, especially the poorest and most marginalized. The true common good is promoted when society

and government, with creativity and strict respect for the rights of all — as I have affirmed on numerous occasions — welcomes, protects, promotes and integrates the most fragile, unprotected and vulnerable. This does not impede the development of a policy that regulates orderly and legal migration. However, this development cannot come about through the privilege of some and the sacrifice of others. What is built on the basis of force, and not on the truth about the equal dignity of every human being, begins badly and will end badly.

Christians know very well that it is only by affirming the infinite dignity of all that our own identity as persons and as communities reaches its maturity. Christian love is not a concentric expansion of interests that little by little extend to other persons and groups. In other words: the human person is not a mere individual, relatively expansive, with some philanthropic feelings! The human person is a subject with dignity who, through the constitutive relationship with all, especially with the poorest, can gradually mature in his identity and vocation. The true *ordo amoris* that must be promoted is that which we discover by meditating constantly on the parable of the “Good Samaritan” (cf. Lk 10:25-37), that is, by meditating on the love that builds a fraternity open to all, without exception.

But worrying about personal, community or national identity, apart from these considerations, easily introduces an ideological criterion that distorts social life

and imposes the will of the strongest as the criterion of truth.

I recognize your valuable efforts, dear brother bishops of the United States, as you work closely with migrants and refugees, proclaiming Jesus Christ and promoting fundamental human rights. God will richly reward all that you do for the protection and defense of those who are considered less valuable, less important or less human!

I exhort all the faithful of the Catholic Church, and all men and women of good will, not to give in to narratives that discriminate against and cause unnecessary suffering to our migrant and refugee brothers and sisters. With charity and clarity we are all called to live in solidarity and fraternity, to build bridges that bring us ever closer together, to avoid walls of ignominy and to learn to give our lives as Jesus Christ gave his for the salvation of all.

Let us ask Our Lady of Guadalupe to protect individuals and families who live in fear or pain due to migration and/or deportation. May the “Virgen morena”, who knew how to reconcile peoples when they were at enmity, grant us all to meet again as brothers and sisters, within her embrace, and thus take a step forward in the construction of a society that is more fraternal, inclusive and respectful of the dignity of all.

Fraternally,  
Francis

#### **MOST HOLY FATHER,**

On behalf of the bishops in the United States, I have the honor to acknowledge your February 11th letter and express deep gratitude for your prayerful support. As successor to Saint Peter, you call not only every Catholic, but every Christian to what unites us in faith – offering the hope of Jesus Christ to every person, citizen and immigrant alike. In these times of fear and confusion, we must be ready to answer our Savior’s question, “what have you done for the least of these?”

We all turn to the Lord in prayer that families suffering from the sudden withdrawal of aid may find the strength to endure. With you, we pray that the U.S. government keep its prior commitments to help those in desperate need. We also turn to the People of God to ask their mercy and generosity in supporting the Catholic Relief Services national collection this Lent as well as the “on the ground” work of local Catholic Charities organizations so that the void might be filled with the efforts of all.

As we struggle to continue our care for the needy in our midst and the desire to improve the situation in those places from which immigrants come to our shores, we are ever mindful that in them we see the Face of Christ. In this Jubilee Year, may we build bridges of reconciliation, inclusion, and fraternity. Boldly I ask for your continued prayers so that we may find the courage as a nation to build a more humane system of immigration, one that protects our communities while safeguarding the dignity of all.

Renewing the expression of the profound gratitude of the Episcopal College in the United States, I willingly avail myself of the opportunity to renew to Your Holiness sentiments of deep gratitude and remain

Sincerely in Christ,  
Timothy P. Broglio  
Archbishop for the Military Services, USA  
President, U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops

# United States Cuts Short Deportation Protections for Haitians

*Haitian advocates call on the Trump administration to reverse its decision to terminate protection from deportation for half a million Haitians in the United States.*

The United States will end temporary protected status (TPS) for 500,000 Haitians living in the country in August, the Department of Homeland Security announced on Feb. 20. This comes despite deteriorating conditions in the Caribbean country, with armed gangs controlling much of the capital and the country at large, and reports of large-scale mass killings, state sanctioned executions and child executions, according to the United Nations.

TPS is granted by the president to nationals of designated countries facing unsafe conditions if they were to return to their home countries, such as armed conflict or environmental disasters.

With over one million people displaced and a humanitarian catastrophe continuing to unfold, advocates working on behalf of Haitians in the United States spoke out strongly against the Trump administration's decision to end their protection from deportation in August 2025—six months earlier than the previously designated expiration date of February 2026.

"This decision threatens to uproot families, destabilize communities, undermine the American economy, and force deportations to a country in crisis," the Haitian Bridge Alliance said in a statement.

Describing conditions in Haiti as "one of its worst humanitarian and security crises in modern history," the advocacy group based in San Diego, California, not far from the border with Tijuana, Mexico, where Haitians make up the fourth largest migrant group after Central Americans, Venezuelans and Mexicans, referred to the Trump administration's decision as "reckless," "inhumane," and "a violation of international human rights obligations."

"The Trump Administration's decision to cut short TPS protection contradicts this reality and will place thousands of lives in jeopardy," the statement said.

Looking beyond the humanitarian impact, the Haitian Bridge Alliance describes ending TPS early for any of the 16 designated countries as an "economic disaster" for the United States. "Haitian TPS holders and other TPS holders from El Salvador, Honduras are integral to industries such as healthcare, construction, and hospitality, contributing over \$4.3 billion in GDP annually," the

Haitian Bridge Alliance said. They pointed to data collected by the Center for American Progress that shows Haitian TPS holders contribute over \$1.2 billion in taxes annually, supporting critical infrastructure, public services, and local economies.

"The Trump administration's decision is not only cruel but also economically shortsighted," the Haitian advocates said. Forcing over 500,000 Haitians out of the U.S. workforce will have impacts on U.S. businesses, especially amid ongoing labor shortages in the construction, manufacturing, and restaurant industries.

Guerline Jozef, Executive Director of Haitian Bridge Alliance, described the earlier deadline for deportation protections, and the end of any hopes for renewal, as "an outright attack on Haitian families who have built their lives in the United States."

He went on to say, "It is cruel, unnecessary, and ignores the dire reality in Haiti. The potential deportation of over 500,000 Haitians is act of violence on black immigrants to a country crippled by instability will result in a humanitarian catastrophe. The Trump Administration must reverse this decision immediately and uphold its moral and legal responsibility to protect vulnerable populations. This decision once again proves that the current administration doesn't have an 'immigration' issue or any desire to support 'legal' pathways but these decisions are deeply rooted in anti-black, anti-Haitian prejudices and white supremacist ideologies."✠

## FAITH IN ACTION:

- Share with Haitian Creole speakers the recording of legal experts discussing "US immigration policies impacting Haitians: Now what?" hosted by the Haitian Response Coalition on Feb. 26. <https://mogc.info/Haiti-2-26>
- Join the Lenten Prayer Vigils to Stand for Compassion on **Mar. 14**, **Mar. 28**, and **Apr. 11** at **2pm ET**, hosted by Church World Service, one of the faith-based organizations severely impacted by the U.S. government funding cuts to programs serving refugees and immigrants. <https://mogc.info/CWS-PrayerVigil>



# Foreign Aid Cuts Leave Afghan Refugees Adrift

*Two State Department programs that helped Afghans refugees were halted when the new administration froze foreign aid. Now they are terminated.*

The past few weeks have been full of uncertainty for refugees around the world who had been approved for relocation to the United States. On Jan. 20, President Trump signed an executive order that indefinitely suspended the U.S. refugee admissions program and he ordered what he said would be a 90-day program-by-program review of foreign assistance programs to see which should continue. This left refugees preparing to fly to the United States without a plan and newly arrived refugees without the funds and services promised them as they work to build new lives.

On Feb. 26, Peter Marocco, the State Department official who took over the remains of USAID, said in court filings, that the Trump administration had completed its review and was terminating more than 10,000 USAID and State Department contracts and grants, impacting critical programs that provide life-saving support to some of the world's most vulnerable populations. These cuts, amounting to only one percent of the U.S. national budget, threaten food security, healthcare, and essential services to millions of impoverished and vulnerable people around the world, exacerbating suffering in regions already facing extreme hardship.

The cuts impact the Reception and Placement (R&P) program at the U.S. Department of State, which equips resettlement agencies with resources to provide resettlement support to newly arriving refugees for their first several months in the United States. This includes Afghans arriving on Special Immigrant Visas, who worked for the U.S. military during the war against the Taliban in Afghanistan from 2001 to 2021.

Two State Department programs for Afghans with Special Immigrant Visas that were stopped during the foreign aid freeze now have been terminated, leaving those who remain in Afghanistan at risk of retaliation by the Taliban and those who have recently resettled in the United States without the support they need.

Formed by Congress after the chaotic withdrawal of U.S.-led forces from Afghanistan in 2021, the Coordinator for Afghan Relocation Efforts (CARE) oversees efforts across U.S. government agencies to evacuate at-risk Afghans, process them in third countries and resettle them in the United States under a program called "Enduring Welcome." AfghanEvac, a NGO formed during the U.S. military withdrawal from Afghanistan in 2021 to assist the coordination of government and

non-profit programs, has worked with CARE since its inception, providing feedback and coordination as part of an unprecedented public-private partnership.

"This is a national disgrace, a betrayal of our Afghan allies, of the veterans who fought for them and of America's word," said Shawn VanDiver, president of AfghanEvac. The Trump administration has cut these programs despite a legally binding requirement that CARE continue its work through 2027.

According to refugee advocates working at refugee resettlement agencies in Washington, DC, the closure of CARE strands more than 250,000 people in Afghanistan, including 128,000 who worked for the United States and have applied for Special Immigrant Visas along with their families, as well as several thousand Afghans who were fully vetted and are waiting in other countries.

The Afghans potentially affected also include family members of 200 active-duty Afghan American U.S. service members, unaccompanied minors waiting to be reunited with their parents and relatives of Afghans already settled in the United States.

"Afghan allies, veterans, and advocates deserve clarity and commitment," said VanDiver. "Right now, they have neither. We urge U.S. leadership to honor the law and the promises made to those who stood beside us."

Iqbal Ahmad, an Afghan peace studies student who completed a fellowship at the Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns in 2024 said, "Afghanistan has devolved into one of the most repressive regimes globally, characterized by a stark regression in human rights, particularly for women. The Taliban's complete ban on secondary education for girls stands as a chilling hallmark of their oppressive rule, effectively restraining the hopes and futures of an entire generation."

The violence of twenty years of war, the repression by the Taliban, and now the cuts to U.S. foreign aid programs attempt to break the ties that bind humanity but as another advocacy group, Women for Afghan Women, said in a statement on Feb. 27, "In our 24 years of service, we have learned to adapt and readapt to crisis after crisis. Your support has allowed us to meet these challenges both in the United States and Afghanistan." ✨

**FAITH IN ACTION:** Write and call Congress and the State Department to ask for a resumption of foreign aid. <https://mogc.info/USAID-ACT>

# United States Leaves Paris Agreement

*For the second time in eight years, President Trump submitted the notification for the United States to leave the international accord that aims to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and adapt to climate change.*

President Donald Trump took the oath of office for the second time on Jan. 20, only weeks after the planet closed out its hottest year on record. In fact, global surface temperatures have been breaking monthly records continuously since May 2023. Nevertheless, the new Trump administration took a series of actions which would not only impede the international effort to curtail global warming but would even accelerate it, including announcing the withdrawal of the United States from the Paris climate agreement on Day One.

The Paris agreement in 2015 was a landmark climate change agreement negotiated under an existing international treaty—the 1992 UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC). The United States is legally bound to the UNFCCC by a Senate-approved treaty, but the 2015 accord was treated as an “executive agreement” that did not require Senate approval. This is why Pres. Trump has the power to unilaterally withdraw the United States from the Paris agreement, as he did during his first term in 2017.

Over the past ten years of tedious international negotiations, the Paris agreement, for all its shortcomings, helped slow the trajectory of planetary warming. As the world’s largest historical greenhouse gas emitter, the United States has an outsized role in offering solutions. The Biden administration, for example, committed to a climate plan that aimed for a 61 to 66 percent reduction in carbon emissions by 2035, as compared to its emissions in 2005. The United States was the largest CO2 emitting country in 2005, meaning that reductions in CO2 from the United States will have an outsized effect on the percentage of global emissions reductions.

U.S. leadership in reducing greenhouse gases is jeopardized both because of the domestic policies implemented under the new administration and because of the abdication of its position on the world stage within the UNFCCC. Now, the United States will participate in the UNFCCC as a voting member that is sidelined from continued Paris agreement negotiations, which is where much of the progress is made. The United States will also have less leverage to hold other major economies accountable to their climate pledges.

The withdrawal from the Paris agreement and its obligations takes one year after notice is given, according to the agreement. This means that the United States will

still be a party to the Paris agreement at the upcoming UN Climate Change Conference (COP 30) in Brazil in November, even if its team of delegates will be greatly reduced.

Yet while the United States withdrawal will have an impact, no one country can derail the global progress towards sustainable energy. The movement toward renewable and clean energy is a groundswell that transcends political happenstance.

The United States took on an international leadership role under Pres. Biden. That will end. There is a call for other nations to step forward, and Europe and China are taking the lead. Over half of the renewable energy generated last year was in China and the electric car and bus market in China is the largest in the world. China sent nearly 1,000 delegates to the UN Climate Change Conference last year where its Vice Premier said the country has provided or mobilized \$24.5 billion in climate finance for developing countries since 2016, putting it at the same level as Great Britain. (China is the current largest greenhouse gas emitter; the United States is the largest historic emitter.)

Subnational actors in the United States are also taking on leadership. Local and state governments have announced their commitment to ambitious plans to reduce emissions. The U.S. Climate Alliance, for example, is a bipartisan coalition of 24 governors securing America’s net-zero future by advancing state-led, high-impact climate action. Together these states represent 54 percent of the country’s population and 57 percent of the country’s economy.

Seventeen cities, including Los Angeles, CA, Austin, TX, and Philadelphia, PA, as well as the states of Maine and California, have signed a “Fossil Fuel Non-Proliferation” treaty. The treaty, according to [www.fossilfuel treaty.org](http://www.fossilfuel treaty.org) which runs the initiative, “would complement the Paris Agreement by providing the global roadmap needed to halt the expansion of fossil fuel, manage an equitable phase-out of coal, oil and gas, and lay the foundations for a true just energy transition in which no worker, community or country is left behind.” Ultimately it is the voice of grassroots support that will bear the most influence. ✂

**FAITH IN ACTION:** Write to your state legislators to ask that your state join the Fossil Fuel Non-Proliferation treaty <https://mogc.info/FFNPT>

# Pilgrimages of Hope for Creation in Jubilee 2025

*Join a nationwide initiative to inspire community prayer walks for healing, faith, and creation care.*

**T**his Jubilee year, Catholic communities across the United States are planning to embark on a series of pilgrimages throughout the country as a call to cultivate a renewed commitment to caring for creation.

Coming on the heels of the planet's hottest year that also saw unprecedented devastation from wildfires and hurricanes, Catholic organizations throughout the country are coming together for Pilgrimages of Hope for Creation, an initiative that calls Catholics to reflect on the profound relationship between God, humanity, and creation and to take concrete steps toward healing the Earth and renewing their spiritual commitment to creation care.

Organized by the Catholic Climate Covenant (CCC), Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns and others, the pilgrimages will culminate during the Season of Creation (Sept. 1 - Oct. 4, 2025), a time for prayer, reflection, and action focused on the environmental crisis facing our world today.

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*"This year, as Catholics, we have a unique opportunity to reflect on our role in creation care. Pilgrimages of Hope for Creation are about healing — healing our connection to the Earth, to one another, and to God. It's about acknowledging our disconnection and choosing to take tangible steps toward reconciliation. This is not just a journey of the body; it's a pilgrimage of the soul."*

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*- Dan Misleh, Executive Director of the CCC*

This unique initiative invites participants to explore a variety of pilgrimage experiences—from short walks around parish grounds to longer treks through mountains or forests, to visits to places of natural beauty or ecological significance. Wherever these pilgrimages take place, they all share the same mission: to restore our relationship with God, with each other, and with the Earth, and to cultivate a renewed commitment to caring for creation.

This year is a special Jubilee year for the Catholic Church and a time of reconciliation and renewal. It also is the 10th anniversary of Pope Francis' landmark encyclical on the environment, *Laudato Si'*, which calls for an integral ecology that honors both the natural world and the dignity of every human person. In addition, the year 2025 also marks the 800th anniversary of the Canticle

of the Creatures, the timeless message of ecological stewardship written by St. Francis – the patron saint of ecology.

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*"The most important aspect of pilgrimage to me is the reminder that our time on earth is a pilgrimage towards God. And so the opportunity provided by these pilgrimages is a way to participate in the Jubilee of Hope without traveling to Rome. You can Jubilee where you are. Jubilee offers us an opportunity to renew our relationship with God and all of nature, and it is both a beautiful individual and communal experience."*

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*- Marilyn Kott Maryknoll Affiliate*

All are invited to join us in this sacred mission to live out the teachings of Jesus, St. Francis, and Pope Francis, taking practical steps to heal the planet and restore the balance between humanity and the natural world.

"As we take these steps toward healing, we are showing the world that each of us has a role to play in the health of God's Creation," said Anna Johnson, the Program Manager for *Laudato Si'* Movement – North America. "The Earth needs us, and we need each other. As Pope Francis says, 'The world sings of an infinite Love: how can we fail to care for it?' Let's take the time to listen to this song, and raise our voices alongside."

To get involved, pilgrims are encouraged to visit <http://catholicpilgrimsofhope.org>, where they can sign up for email updates, find or start a pilgrimage, and access resources to guide them through their journey.

Individuals, organizations and communities can learn more about by attending our monthly virtual meetings. There you can connect with Catholics across the country and learn how to use the resources, guides, and opportunities for spiritual reflection. ✧



**FAITH IN ACTION:** Sign up to learn more at [www.catholicpilgrimsofhope.org](http://www.catholicpilgrimsofhope.org) and register to attend the monthly virtual meetings at <https://mogc.info/CPH-training>

# Peru: Justice for Indigenous Protestors Killed by Police

*Human rights organizations in Peru win in court on behalf of the victims of a massacre at political protests more than two years ago.*

In the two months following the inauguration of Dina Boluarte as president of Peru on Dec. 7, 2022, as the nation was reeling from the controversial departure of President Pedro Castillo, 48 people were killed by Peruvian security forces. According to investigations by Amnesty International, 80 percent of the killings took place in Indigenous areas of the country, even though these regions represent only 13 percent of Peru's population and protests took place on a national level.

Maryknoll Sister Pat Ryan, a resident of Peru for 40 years and founder of the human rights group DHUMA, said of one incident of police violence in the city of Juliaca, where 17 people were shot and killed, including protesters, teenagers, and a doctor attending the wounded: "What happened in the city of Juliaca can only be described as one of the worst massacres that have occurred in our country in recent years."



Photo of mourner at memorial mass on July 8, 2023, for the victims of the Juliaca, Peru, massacre, courtesy of DHUMA via Facebook

In the two years since then, a group of eight human rights organizations, including DHUMA, have worked together to seek justice for the victims. They recently filed a legal action on behalf of the families of the deceased to demand that the laws that facilitated the police's disproportionate use of force (commonly known as the "easy trigger law"), and prevented judges from issuing detention measures against police officers who committed abuses, be repealed.

The eight human rights organizations are the National Coordinator of Human Rights, Legal Defense

Institute (IDL), Episcopal Commission for Social Action (CEAS), Training and Intervention Group for Sustainable Development (GRUFIDES), Ecumenical Foundation for Development and Peace (Fedepaz), Association for Life and Human Dignity (Aporvidha), Human Rights and Environment (DHUMA), and Human Rights Association Without Borders (DHSF).

On Feb. 18, Sister Ryan said "we have achieved a half-victory that is explained in our statement."

In their statement that day, the eight human rights groups explained that the Peruvian Constitutional Court ruled in their favor, agreeing with the plaintiffs that Law 31012, which eliminated the obligation of the National Police to act proportionally in the use of force and prohibited judges from issuing preliminary detention or preventive imprisonment against police officers investigated for crimes and abuse of authority, is unconstitutional. However, instead of repealing the law, the Constitutional Court issued an interpretative ruling, inviting legal uncertainty.

Regarding the prohibition of issuing preliminary detention or preventive detention, the Constitutional Court did not reach the minimum of five votes required to issue a resolution. This lack of consensus prevents a clear position from being adopted on this aspect of Law 31012, leaving in force a provision that limits the capacity of the judiciary to investigate and punish possible abuses, such as the excessive use of force, committed by members of the national police.

This ruling is crucial in the context of the criminalization of social protest. The police killings after the dismissal of former president in Juliaca and more than 400 miles away in Andahuaylas showed the disproportionate use of force with firearms against unarmed protesters, constituting a serious violation of human rights.

The human rights group said they remain steadfast in their commitment to the defense of fundamental rights of the victims and their families, and they will continue to pursue legal actions to guarantee protection, justice and reparation on their behalf. ✧

**FAITH IN ACTION:** Read and share the letter from 2023 signed by more than 400 representatives of Christian organizations expressing their solidarity with the Indigenous communities defending human rights and democracy in Peru.

<https://mogc.info/PeruSolidarityLetter>



# Hope for Nuclear Disarmament

*As the Doomsday Clock moves closer to midnight than ever before, nations meet in New York to work toward banning nuclear weapons, and arms control advocates urge Trump Administration to follow up on “denuclearization” comments.*

**M**arch 3-7 marks Nuclear Ban Week, as the third meetings of states parties to the UN Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons takes place in New York, and the risk of nuclear war is greater than ever before. Pope Francis was a prominent proponent of the treaty, and the Holy See was the first state to ratify it.

There are hopeful signs that the new Administration will pursue nuclear arms control agreements between the United States, Russia, and China. But other signs suggest increased risk.

The stakes could not be higher.

On January 28, the Doomsday Clock was moved ahead to 89 seconds to midnight, the closest it has ever been to global catastrophe. The symbolic clock is set by the Science and Security Board of the Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists, who moved the clock one second after two years at 90 seconds to midnight.

In a statement, the scientists called the move “a stark signal: Because the world is already perilously close to the precipice, a move of even a single second should be taken as an indication of extreme danger and an unmistakable warning that every second of delay in reversing course increases the probability of global disaster.”

The scientists’ statement outlined a number of factors threatening life on earth: the nuclear risk, along with climate change, biological threats, and disruptive technologies.

Regarding nuclear weapons, they point to several factors which have gone largely unchecked or worsened in the last year: “modernization and expansion of arsenals in all nuclear weapons countries, the build-up of new capabilities, the risks of inadvertent or deliberate nuclear use, the loss of arms control agreements, and the possibility of nuclear proliferation to new countries.”

They point in particular to Russian threats against Ukraine, China’s growing nuclear arsenal, advances in Iran’s nuclear program and tensions between Iran and Israel, increasingly aggressive nuclear posturing by North Korea, and an expensive U.S. modernization program. They also point to Russian suspension of compliance with the New Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty (New START) – the final bilateral nuclear arms control treaty between the United States and Russia, which is set to expire on February 5, 2026.

President Trump has made some hopeful statements

on nuclear weapons, while other signs from his administration are cause for alarm.

As the White House abandons traditional norms of U.S. foreign relations, nuclear disarmament advocates seek opportunities for progress, even in situations that are otherwise alarming. For example, Trump has been pursuing peace talks on the war in Ukraine directly with Russian President Putin, without including Ukraine. Excluding Ukraine from talks and rewarding Putin’s invasion of the country and nuclear threats by granting him territory risks an unstable peace, and European allies fear it would embolden Putin to invade more countries. However, Putin has cited eastern expansion of nuclear-armed NATO as part of the reason for invading Ukraine, and military support for Ukraine as reason for refusing to engage in nuclear negotiations with the United States. Even a bad deal on Ukraine could open the door to negotiating a replacement for New START.

Meanwhile, President Trump has mentioned several times that he is concerned about the terrible danger and cost of nuclear weapons and expressed an interest in “denuclearization” negotiations with Russia and China. At the same time, advisors in his administration have expressed an interest in resuming nuclear weapons testing – a move experts deem both unnecessary and a dangerous precedent for other nuclear powers.

Building on Trump’s expressed desire to negotiate on nuclear disarmament, Representative Bill Foster of Illinois and Senators Ed Markey of Massachusetts and Jack Reed of Rhode Island have introduced joint resolutions condemning nuclear threats from Russia and any other state, and calling for strong U.S. leadership in engaging with Russia and China on arms control talks, with an eye toward replacing New START and heading off a new, costly and dangerous arms race.

Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns is working with faith partners, legislators, and others throughout the next year urging the United States to pursue nuclear disarmament and negotiate a replacement for New START.✧

**FAITH IN ACTION:** Urge your members of Congress to co-sponsor the joint resolution calling on the administration to pursue a new nuclear arms control framework with Russia and avoid an unrestrained nuclear arms race. <https://mogc.info/Nuclear-Disarmament>

# Justice for Immigrants Says, “Protect the Persecuted!”

*Our friends at the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops prepared the following action to urging the protection of refugees.*

*“[I]t is the historic policy of the United States to respond to the urgent needs of persons subject to persecution in their homelands. . . . Congress further declares that it is the policy of the United States to encourage all nations to provide assistance and resettlement opportunities to refugees to the fullest extent possible.”*

These opening lines of the Refugee Act of 1980—the law creating the statutory authority for the U.S. Refugee Admissions Program (USRAP)—communicates the importance of responding to the needs of those forced to flee their homes because they are persecuted on the basis of race, religion, nationality, membership in a particular social group, or political opinion. Carrying out the Gospel’s mandate to care for the “least of these” (Mt. 25:31-46), the Catholic Church has served refugees in the United States since well before USRAP’s creation. Learn more about USRAP and the Catholic Church.

Today, no refugees are being resettled through USRAP. This ban impacts thousands of refugees who had already been fully processed, undergone extensive security checks, and approved for refugee status by the federal government while outside of the United States. This includes many persecuted Christians, as well as Afghans who had been approved for special immigrant visas because of the assistance they provided to the U.S. mission and U.S. servicemembers in Afghanistan.

The indefinite suspension of USRAP is the result of an executive order signed by President Donald Trump on January 20. The order requires the Secretary of Homeland Security, in consultation with the Secretary of State, to submit a report by April 20, 2025, regarding whether refugee resettlement is in the national interest. However, the order leaves the decision about whether to resume refugee resettlement to the President alone, without any timeline stated for that decision.

On January 24, the State Department issued suspension notices to domestic resettlement agencies, including the USCCB, impacting their ability to carry out services under the Reception and Placement (R&P) Program. The R&P Program provides crucial assistance to refugees and Afghan special immigrant visa holders during their first three months in the United States to support their successful integration and help them to achieve self-sufficiency as quickly as possible. Services provided through the R&P Program include help finding initial housing, securing employment, enrolling children in school, scheduling medical appointments, and English language classes. ✝

**FAITH IN ACTION:** Ask your members of Congress to lift up their voice in support of upholding our nation’s bipartisan legacy of refugee resettlement. <https://mogc.info/JFI>

## Lenten Reflection Guide: A Jubilee of Hope

*The guide, inspired by the 2025 Jubilee Year campaign for debt relief, offers reflections, small group questions, prayers, and actions based on each week’s Gospel reading. Lent begins this year on Ash Wednesday, March 5.*

*“In this Holy Year one communal action we are all called to participate in is restoration of the ecological balance of the planet, which has been rendered askew by the industrial practices of the last two centuries. To a certain extent these practices have resulted in tremendous material progress, not only in the developed countries but even in formerly very poor countries. Poverty and hunger have been greatly reduced, millions of children are being educated, maternal and infant mortality have seen huge improvements, and international norms, policies and structures exist to try to prevent war – although these are not always followed. However, this progress has a serious shadow side, such as the threat of run-away global warming and climate change, as well as the harmful effects of the extraction of essential metals and the labor to do the extraction. Restoration and restitution are needed.”*

*- Maryknoll Father Frank Breen*

**DOWNLOAD THE GUIDE** from the Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns website: <https://mogc.info/Lent2025>



# Resources

1. **LENTEN REFLECTION GUIDE – JUBILEE OF HOPE**  
by the Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns  
<https://mogc.info/Lent2025>
2. **VIRTUAL LENTEN PRAYER SERVICES MONDAYS**  
organized by Pax Christi USA beginning on **Mar. 10**  
and continuing until **Apr. 15, 8:30 - 9pm ET**  
<https://mogc.info/PC-USA-Lent>
3. **NATIONAL INTERFAITH VIGIL AND DAY OF ACTION: FAITH LEADERS SUPPORT MIGRANTS AND DEMAND HUMANE BUDGET**  
by the Interfaith Immigration Coalition. Join a prayer service at 1pm ET and meeting with Congressional offices at 3pm ET. In-person in Washington, DC and available online. Register at <https://mogc.info/NIVDA>
4. **STATEMENT: “IN SOLIDARITY: FAITH-BASED ORGANIZATIONS EXPRESS DEEP CONCERN OVER U.S. AID FREEZE”** by six EU faith-based organizations, including CIDSE, on Feb. 24  
<https://mogc.info/StatementAIDFreeze>
5. **STATEMENT: “LIFESAVING SERVICES TERMINATED FOR 10,000 CHILDREN AND 10,000 PREGNANT WOMEN”** by the Elizabeth Glaser Pediatric AIDS Foundation, a global nonprofit organization that works to end HIV and AIDS in children, youth, and families, on Feb. 26  
<https://mogc.info/PEDAIDS>
6. **LAWSUIT TRACKER: AVAC V. DEPT OF STATE**  
by AIDS Vaccine Advocacy Coalition (AVAC) and Journalism Development Network (JDN)  
<https://mogc.info/AVACvState>
7. **COMMENTARY: ‘IT COULD ACTUALLY CAUSE DEATH’** by Cardinal Blasé Cupich of Chicago, about the impacts of the foreign aid freeze, Feb. 19  
<https://mogc.info/Cardinal-Cupich>
8. **INTERNATIONAL PROTECTION FOR PEOPLE DISPLACED ACROSS BORDERS IN THE CONTEXT OF CLIMATE CHANGE AND DISASTERS** - a practical toolkit by the Center for Gender & Refugee Studies  
<https://mogc.info/IPPDABCCCD>
9. **WEBINAR: US-MEXICO MIGRATION POLICY IMPACTS ON MIGRANTS' HEALTH** by Hope Border Institute, **Mar. 6, 1pm ET**, register: <https://mogc.info/Hope3-6>
10. **WEBINAR RECORDING: RESPONDING TO THE FOREIGN AID FREEZE** by Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns recorded on Feb. 20  
<https://mogc.info/Webinar-USAID>
11. **KNOW YOUR RIGHTS HANDOUTS** by the Catholic Legal Immigration Network (CLINIC)  
<https://mogc.info/KYR>
12. **TWO-PAGER: THE JUBILEE YEAR EXPLAINED** by Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns  
<https://mogc.info/JubileeExplained>
13. **ANALYSIS: TARIFFS, FENTANYL, AND MIGRATION** - Updates on U.S.-Mexico Relations after Trump's First Month in Office by Washington Office on Latin America <https://mogc.info/TTFM>
14. **TWO-PAGER: QUESTIONS ON CHURCH TEACHING AND INTERNATIONAL ASSISTANCE** created by Catholic Relief Services  
<https://mogc.info/CST-ForeignAid>
15. **REPORT: “I’M A CHILD, WHY DID THIS HAPPEN TO ME?”** on gangs' assault on childhood in Haiti by Amnesty International  
<https://mogc.info/AI-Haiti-report>
16. **UN OCHA HAITI REPORT: “Humanitarian Needs and Response Plan Executive Summary”** published Feb. 2025 <https://mogc.info/UNOCHA-Haiti>
17. **REPORT: FORESIGHT AFRICA 2025-2030** by the Brookings Institute published Jan. 2025  
<https://mogc.info/FA25>
18. **CHAIR’S SUMMARY OF THE FINANCE MINISTERS AND CENTRAL BANK GOVERNORS MEETING** posted Feb. 26 published by the Japanese Ministry of Finance <https://mogc.info/G20-FM>
19. **MARYKNOLL SISTERS MISSION INSTITUTE** new programs available soon, email for details [missinst@mksisters.org](mailto:missinst@mksisters.org)
20. **MARYKNOLL LAY MISSIONERS IMMERSION TRIP** to El Paso, TX, on **Mar. 16-22**, and to Cambodia on **Jun. 3-13**, apply: <https://mogc.info/MKLM-Immersion>
21. **MARYKNOLL FATHERS & BROTHERS MISSION TRIPS** through the year 2025 to Yucatan, Jamaica, South Dakota and more  
<https://mogc.info/MM-immersion>