

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

# Rethinking Tariffs As a Tool For Fair Trade

*Two leading fair-trade experts, Lori Wallach and David Korten, look at what is broken in the global economy and what tariffs can and cannot do to help.*

Just hours after President Trump announced new, high, and sweeping tariffs on Apr. 2, nearly all global financial markets' indexes plummeted. The following week, the president announced that he would pause many of his new tariffs for 90 days. In their place he imposed a 10 percent blanket tariff on most U.S. trading partners and increased tariffs on Chinese imports to 40 times the 2018 tariff rates. These new tariffs would be in addition to the 25 percent tariffs that the president had already imposed on cars, steel and aluminum.

The Trump Administration argues these tariffs are necessary to rectify imbalanced trade relationships where U.S. market openness has not been reciprocated. The Administration also views tariffs as a revenue source for planned tax cuts.

David Korten, co-founder of YES! magazine and author of *When Corporations Rule the World*, describes Trump's use of tariffs as "swashbuckling" and imposed on "both friends and foe." But while many policymakers define all use of tariffs as bad for U.S. consumers, bracing themselves for rising prices and falling returns in markets, Korten argues that tariffs are not inherently bad "if they are about well-being of people, not corporations."

Another trade policy expert, Lori Wallach, founder of Citizens Trade Campaign, has a similar assessment of Trump's on-again, off-again tariffs, describing them as "incoherent" and "targeting the wrong countries and goals." Both Wallach and Korten say that Trump's erratic behavior should not discredit the use of tariffs paired with investment. And both trade policy experts agree that Trump is attempting to use tariffs to address damage done by decades of trade deficits that deindustrialized the United States and fueled income inequality.

"Donald Trump won the 2024 presidential election by playing to the anger of working-class Americans who have suffered from the effects of the global economy," Korten said — an economy organized in the 1990s around the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) and the World Trade Organization (WTO) that sought to "maximize corporate profits at the expense of people and planet."

Korten and Wallach point to the U.S. trade deficit with Mexico and Canada and the substantial U.S. job losses attributed to NAFTA outsourcing as reasons for

U.S. voters' anger. Long and fragile supply chains, trade deficits, desperate workers, and environmental degradation have become hallmarks of the unhealthy global economy.

Tariffs can help fix this mess, both Wallach and Korten say, but only if they are used strategically, on a case-by-case basis. For example, Wallach points to tariffs President Biden imposed on Chinese solar panels made by forced labor and tariffs against shrimpers in India and Vietnam, where shrimp is grown in unsanitary ponds with subsidies and horrific labor conditions. Tariffs can make the practices not worth the cost, and the United States should coordinate its tariffs alongside other countries to maximize pressure — something the go-it-alone Trump Administration has not done, Wallach says.

Wallach supports a strategy used by the Biden Administration to pair tariffs with other policy tools. For example, the Inflation Reduction Act created demand for U.S.-made products like electric vehicles and solar equipment through more government purchases and consumer tax credits.

Korten proposes shifting the goals of trade policy toward cooperation and a "global fair-trade agenda" that supports local resilience, worker wellbeing, and environmental health. That agenda would entail "abandoning both the free-trade agenda AND (use of) tariffs as a tool for competition and GDP growth."

Korten suggests strategically using tariffs to discourage environmentally damaging high-carbon-footprint products as well as those produced under exploitative conditions. He also believes tariffs can support local food networks, reducing dependency on fragile supply chains.

But as Wallach says, "even when properly targeted and enforced, tariffs only work if they are predictable and sustained. Trump's tariff roller coaster sends the opposite message."

This is why, when considering tariffs, it matters to ask "why?" and "for whom?" Korten says. "We need a much deeper and more nuanced debate. ✂"

**FAITH IN ACTION:** Learn more about tariffs and trade policy from David Korten at [www.davidkorten.org](http://www.davidkorten.org) and Lori Wallach at [www.rethinktrade.org](http://www.rethinktrade.org). Listen to Wallach's podcast "Rethinking Trade" on her website.

# U.S. Tariff Policy Neglects Africa

*Clumsy implementation of tariff policy subjects nations like Lesotho, Kenya, and South Africa to economic duress.*

**A** defining feature of President Trump's suspended tariff plan, rolled out as "Liberation Day," was the universality of its impact. Every world nation and territory was assigned a blanket tariff on imports to the United States of at least 10 percent, the only exceptions being countries already sanctioned by the United States or already recently tariffed. The percentage would be determined by the ratio of the country's trade imbalance with the United States without regard for what might be causing the imbalance in the first place.

Due to the sweeping nature of the policy, nations and territories that warranted special consideration were neglected, to absurd results.

The highest tariff Trump assigned to any country on "Liberation Day" was assigned to Lesotho. The small, landlocked country in Southern Africa is little larger than the state of Massachusetts and only a third as populous. In his March press conference, President Trump referred to Lesotho as a country "nobody has ever heard of." Its per capita domestic product is 80 times less than that of the United States, but it has become highly dependent on a growing textiles industry and its exports to the United States. Between textiles and diamonds, Lesotho's trade with the United States amounted to \$237 million, over 10 percent of the country's GDP.

Understandably, Lesotho, a country that the World Bank classifies as lower middle-income with nearly half its population living under the poverty line, has less use for U.S.-made goods.

While the U.S. textile import market (worth over \$100 billion) is unlikely to register the loss of Lesotho goods (no more than \$200 million), the loss of U.S. business could be devastating to Lesotho.

Maseru-based independent economic analyst Thabo Qhesi told Reuters about the effects of a Trump tariff: "The 50 percent reciprocal tariff introduced by the U.S. government is going to kill the textile and apparel sector in Lesotho." Three quarters of textiles in Lesotho are exported to the United States and removing that sector's source of income has cascading consequences. "Then you are having retailers who are selling food. And then you have residential property owners who are renting houses for the workers. So this means if the closure of factories were to happen, the industry is

going to die and there will be multiplier effects," Qhesi said. "So Lesotho will be dead, so to say."

The African bloc as a whole is likely to suffer from the blanket tariff approach by the Trump Administration. Several African nations have for decades been beneficiaries of the African Growth and Opportunity Act (AGOA), a U.S. trade initiative that has provided duty-free access to American markets. In September 2025, that act is set to expire, and African nations were depending on its renewal. The imposition of new tariffs now puts the renewal of AGOA into question.

South Africa, Africa's most industrialized economy, faces a 31 percent tariff, threatening its automotive and agricultural exports. Madagascar, known for its vanilla exports, is contending with a 47 percent tariff.

Even Kenya, which faces the minimum 10 percent tariff on its exports to the United States, is not likely to absorb the shock lightly. Countries across the Global South are in the midst of a debt crisis and Kenya is no exception. An attempt to increase taxes in Kenya was met with civil unrest from its disillusioned youth, and after a week of bloodshed, the Kenyan government backed down.

Compounding that, the United States' dismantling of USAID ended of billions of dollars of direct aid across the continent, and with the U.S. AIDS/HIV health initiative (known as PEPFAR) now in jeopardy, African governments are contending with the possibility of having to redirect more government spending to needed life-saving treatments.

As of this writing, the majority of President Trump's planned tariffs are on a ninety-day pause that began April 10. To avoid the tariffs, all nations seeking to negotiate exceptions will have until July 9 to reach an agreement. The smallest countries like Lesotho that most rely on their trading relationships with the United States are at a particular disadvantage, both in negotiating with the administration and in competing for its attention.

Those 90 days also give African nations time to build and strengthen trade ties with other global partners, notably China and the European Union.

When asked about the Trump Administration's tariffs, Lesotho's Trade Minister Mokhethi Shelile struck a defiant note: "We will diversify and explore other markets," he affirmed. "We are not going to die." ✂

# Africa: PEPFAR Cuts Could Kill Half-Million Children

*U.S. foreign aid cuts threaten to turn back global HIV/AIDS progress to the dark ages of the epidemic, researchers say in The Lancet.*

The reduction or elimination of funding from the US President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR) could lead to the deaths of nearly 500,000 children in sub-Saharan Africa from AIDS-related causes in the next five years, according to an expert policy analysis published in the medical journal *The Lancet* on April 8.

Models also predict that another 1 million children will become infected with HIV, and 2.8 million will be orphaned after their parents die of AIDS, the University of Oxford-led research team said. PEPFAR has distributed \$6.5 billion to fight HIV in 50 countries around the world each year and has been credited with saving more than 26 million lives since it began in 2003.

On Jan. 20, President Trump signed an executive order freezing all foreign aid for 90 days pending a review, disrupting HIV and AIDS care at more than 70,000 PEPFAR funded programs in 50 countries. In mid-February, many of these programs were advised to apply for a limited waiver of the freeze by submitting a reduced work plan limiting HIV prevention care to mothers and pregnant women only and confirming that they will not conduct any "gender ideology or diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI) programs." No definitions of these broad terms were provided.

On Feb. 13, about a third of PEPFAR-funded programs received surprising news — their funding was fully restored without the need for a waiver due to the fact that their funds are managed at the CDC, which sits in the Department of Health and Human Services, not USAID. Then, according to the *New York Times*, on or around Apr. 1, the Trump administration fired or reassigned to other projects the few remaining people authorized to use the payment system at the CDC. "Everyone is scrambling now to figure out how to pay country teams and partners," an anonymous CDC official told the *New York Times*. As of this writing, it is unclear if the CDC will issue payments in May.

In a news release about the policy analysis published by *The Lancet*, co-leading author Lucie Cluver, PhD, of the University of Oxford, said an abrupt withdrawal of funding for PEPFAR programs would turn back global HIV/AIDS progress to the "dark ages" of the epidemic.

"A sudden withdrawal of PEPFAR programmes, especially in the absence of a long term strategy to replace

them, could lead to a resurgence of HIV infections and preventable deaths, and a dramatic rise in the number of children orphaned by AIDS in the coming years — a setback that could erode two decades of progress," she said.

The benefits of PEPFAR aren't limited to African countries, the researchers concluded. PEPFAR improves health and national security around the world by reducing forced migration and increasing the odds of containing infectious diseases.

The authors of the paper noted that PEPFAR also benefits the U.S. economy, with a fourfold rise in U.S. export to Africa and \$71.6 billion in trade between the United States and Africa in 2024. In addition, African countries with PEPFAR-funded programs have committed to taking responsibility for HIV/AIDS services by 2030. The researchers called for the United States and African nations to work together on a five-year plan to transition funding responsibility from the United States to domestic public-private partnership in Africa while maintaining progress toward ending AIDS in the next decade.

Eleven senior African health officials signed a letter, published alongside the research paper in *The Lancet*, which described the feasibility of a five-year transition plan. Their letter highlights the World Bank Development Indicators that show African nations assuming responsibility for HIV/AIDS programs, with a 212 percent increase of in-country financial contributions to healthcare in nearly all PEPFAR supported countries, from \$13.7 billion in 2004 to \$42.6 billion in 2021.

At his swearing in on Jan. 21, Secretary of State Marco Rubio stated that every action taken by the State Department would be determined by the answers to three questions: "Does it make us stronger? Does it make us safer? And does it make us more prosperous?" In their letter, the African leaders responded to those questions: "Together, we can end this fight and finish well, making not just the USA and Africa, but indeed the world, safer, stronger, and more prosperous." ✂

**FAITH IN ACTION:** Tell Congress to urge the administration to reverse terminations of lifesaving aid, and maintain funding: <https://mogc.me/usaid>

# Sudan Marks Second Year of Civil War

**WEAPONS AND FIGHTERS FROM NEARBY** countries continue to flow into Sudan, allowing the conflict to persist and the world's largest humanitarian crisis to grow.

On April 15, Sudan marked the second year of its ongoing civil war between rival generals of the Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF), and the Rapid Support Forces (RSF) — a paramilitary group. After two years, there still is no clear end in sight. Four days before the anniversary of the war, on April 11, the RSF violently attacked and took control of Zam Zam camp for Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) in North Darfur. According to the UN, more than 400 civilians were killed, including nine medical staff employees of Relief International. More than 400,000 people fled Zam Zam.

Since early March, the UN had reported that civilians sheltering in the vast camp were “nearly impossible” to reach due to relentless attacks by militia forces opposing the government in Khartoum. At the end of February, the UN World Food Programme reported that children were already dying in the camp and that thousands could starve in the coming weeks, after it was forced to pause aid distribution amid heavy shelling.

Back in Washington, the Trump administration condemned attacks by the RSF on civilians in North Darfur but State Department spokesperson Tammy Bruce declined to say if the U.S. was conducting diplomacy toward a peace deal. Bruce also declined to say whether the Trump administration agreed with a finding by the State Department under former President Joe Biden that the RSF and allied militias have committed genocide in the conflict. Sudan brought a case against the United Arab Emirates (UAE) in the International Court of Justice on April 10, accusing the country of complicity in genocide for its alleged support of the RSF.

With no new peace efforts coming from the Trump administration, a former CIA analyst has suggested the U.S. “lean harder” on the UAE. “The UAE’s military and economic support for the RSF is meaningfully fueling and prolonging the conflict,” Holly Berkley Fletcher wrote in February for Lawfare Media. “The U.S. did up the ante in early January by including seven Emirati-based companies in the latest round of sanctions [on suppliers of weapons to the RSF]. But more could be done to put diplomatic and economic pressure on the UAE.” ✂

## South Sudan: End of Peace Deal

**WITH THE MAR. 27 ARREST** of First Vice President Riek Machar, long-time rival to President Salva Kiir, South Sudan now is at risk of plunging back into war.

The UN warned that a return to full-blown intrastate conflict could cause rates of sexual and gender-based violence to spike — a pattern observed in the country’s prior civil war — particularly if violence fractures along ethnic lines. The current transitional government has yet to implement mechanisms to investigate wartime atrocities, as specified in the 2018 peace agreement.

The Sudan and South Sudan Catholic Bishops’ Conference on Mar. 28 expressed alarm about escalating violence in a statement and called on leaders to honor peace agreements and resist a return to arms, repeating Pope Francis’s plea for peace when he visited Juba in 2023: “No more bloodshed, no more conflicts, no more violence. Let there be peace!”

The Catholic bishops warned against foreign military involvement, pointing to the deployment of the Ugandan military as a cause for heightened fears that South Sudan could become a “battleground for external interests and political manipulation.”

The escalating violence in the South Sudanese state of Western Equatoria, near the border with the DRC, has forced hundreds of families to seek refuge near the Catholic church in Riimenze. Solidarity with South Sudan, an international and intercongregational training organization formed in 2008, is providing vital aid and tools so families can cultivate small plots offered by the parish.

Meanwhile, on Apr. 6 in Washington, DC, Secretary of State Marco Rubio announced that the United States was immediately revoking visas issued to all South Sudanese passport holders due to a spat with South Sudan over its hesitancy to accept a deported man whose nationality was unclear. Less than 48 hours later, South Sudan agreed to accept the man.

While it remains unclear if the United States will lift the blanket visa ban, the State Department announced Apr. 15 that it will shut down seven of its embassies worldwide, with the South Sudan Embassy among them. According to Secretary Rubio, the South Sudan mission no longer serves U.S. interests in East Africa. ✂

**FAITH IN ACTION:** Follow Solidarity with South Sudan for the latest updates. <https://solidarityssudan.org/>

# El Salvador: Three Years Under the State of Exception

*Mass incarceration has expanded and democratic governance deteriorated in El Salvador since the state of exception began three years ago.*

On March 27, 2022, at the request of President Nayib Bukele, the Legislative Assembly in El Salvador passed a state of exception, which limited constitutional guarantees and granted unrestricted powers to El Salvador's security forces. Initially intended as a thirty-day measure, the state of exception has been renewed monthly by the legislative supermajority of President Bukele's New Ideas party.

Currently, over 80,000 people are imprisoned in El Salvador, the highest prisoner rate in the world. Amnesty International and other civil society organizations noted in their January submission to the UN Human Rights Council that thousands of prisoners are held arbitrarily.

For years, El Salvador was known as the "murder capital of the world" given its high homicide rate that reached 106 per 100,000 inhabitants in 2015. Prior to Bukele, governments had negotiated 'truces' between the two major, perennially clashing gangs: MS13 — now designated as a terrorist group by the United States — and Barrio 18. However, these agreements yielded limited success.

Since the declaration of the state of exception, the overall homicide rate has fallen by more than 80 percent, as reported by the National Civil Police. The government of El Salvador is promoting its hardline anti-gang strategy as the "Bukele Model" to other countries in the region. However, serious human rights violations and a worrying democratic backsliding persist.

Under the state of exception, Bukele's government suspended several constitutional guarantees related to due process. While the security situation has improved, democracy has deteriorated due to the absence of checks and balances among the branches of government.

Despite facing high food insecurity, a potable water crisis, and the need to repair thousands of schools and invest in education, the government is increasing its security budget. This includes funding for the armed forces and for the construction of the new prison, the Centro de Confinamiento Contra el Terrorismo (CECOT), where Venezuelans were recently transferred by the U.S. government. El Salvador has 25 detention centers. The CECOT has a capacity for 40,000 people, representing approximately 30 percent of the current prison population. The remainder are held in other facilities, such as the Mariona prison, where documented cases of torture and other human rights violations have occurred. The press and

human rights organizations are denied access to these other centers.

In contrast to what is shown in government-produced videos about CECOT, the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights has stated that prisoners have been subjected to torture and other cruel and inhuman treatment. An estimated 350 people have died in state custody since the declaration of the state of exception.

On March 15, the Trump Administration sent a plane to El Salvador carrying Venezuelan and Salvadoran nationals accused of gang membership without due process. The Trump Administration paid 6 million dollars to the Bukele government to house these people in the CECOT, allegedly for a year. The international community, particularly human rights bodies within the United Nations and the Inter-American System, as well as multilateral organizations like the Organization of American States, need to urge the government of El Salvador to end the state of exception. Furthermore, a review of the humanitarian situation of detainees is crucial, and those without gang affiliations, minors, and vulnerable individuals such as women and the elderly should be released on humanitarian grounds. The president himself stated that innocent people have been detained.

Conversely, it is crucial to highlight that the state of exception has evolved beyond a security policy into an authoritarian instrument used to repress, persecute, and silence critical voices, as documented in cases like that of human rights defender Fidel Zavala, spokesperson for the Unidad de Defensa de Derechos Humanos y Comunitarios (UNIDEHC) who was arrested in February of this year. A comprehensive reform of the prison and justice systems is overdue, particularly to provide judicial solutions for all those being prosecuted. Due to the vast number of cases, adequate criminal investigations are not being carried out and justice is not being served.

The United States should evaluate its security assistance. Measures such as the Leahy Law prohibit providing support to security agents involved in human rights violations. In the case of El Salvador, these kinds of violations have been sufficiently documented. Furthermore, the United States should support projects, from the government and civil society, that strengthen the justice system, improve criminal investigations, and prevent violence. ✂

## El Salvador: Yes to Life, No to Mining Campaign

**ON MARCH 18, CHURCH LEADERS** in El Salvador presented 150,000 signatures of citizens to the Legislative Assembly urging the restoration of the metal mining ban. The "Yes to Life, No to Mining" campaign opposes the recent law overturning the ban, primarily due to fears that mining will contaminate the country's largest water source, an area that begins in the northern part of the country and connects to the Lempa River.

In 2017, El Salvador became the first country in the world to ban metal mining. When the Legislative Assembly overturned the ban in 2024, the country's bishops stated: "It is an action that contravenes the will of the people and ignores the victory achieved in 2017, when a law banning mining was passed to protect the life and health of our nation."

Opposition to the law does not come solely from the Catholic Church. Environmentalists, students, local and national organizations, as well as various other Christian churches have joined their voices in calling on the authorities to reverse the 2024 decision. A December 2024 opinion poll conducted by the Jesuit University of Central America found that the majority of Salvadorans

say the country is "not suitable" for mining and oppose it. Archbishop José Luis Escobar Alas of San Salvador told reporters at the delivery of the petition signatures:

"We are not motivated by political or economic power, nor by the interests of large capitalists inside or outside the country. We do this for the common good, for the most vulnerable. We know that mining would bring irreparable harm to a country as small and populous as ours. That's why we act together with the people and with all those who have wanted to join us, regardless of religion. We have faith that we will be heard. We don't know what will happen, but we trust in God. That's why we have also held days of prayer and fasting, and we will continue forward."

Describing the demonstration and petition delivery as a "pastoral and moral act," the archbishop said they were there to offer a "peaceful and humble, but firm" call and warning about the harm that mining would cause to the country.

After the presentation of the signatures, the bishops visited the tomb of Saint Oscar Romero to ask for his intercession. ✠

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## Haiti Still Under Siege

**NEARLY A YEAR INTO THE** US-backed, international police mission in Haiti, the island nation is still mired in violence. Two Catholic sisters were killed by gang gunmen in Mirebalais, central Haiti, on March 31 as armed gangs overran the city in a wave of violence that also freed more than 500 inmates from a local prison. The chaos and violence in Mirebalais underscore the country's deepening security crisis and unchecked gang violence.

A new UN Human Rights report reveals mass killings, sexual violence, child recruitment, and attacks on schools and hospitals. "Human rights violations and abuses have reached a scale and intensity that I have never seen before in Haiti," said William O'Neill, the UN High Commissioner's Designated Expert on Haiti, during dialogue with the UN Human Rights Council in Geneva on Apr. 4. "The fear is palpable in people's eyes and in their voices. The capital is almost entirely controlled and surrounded by gangs, making Port-au-Prince a large open-air prison."

Despite the deployment of a UN-backed Multinational Security Support Mission last June, Haiti's security crisis continues to escalate. The United States bears a

significant responsibility for gang violence in Haiti due to the significant number of illegal weapons and ammunition smuggled into Haiti from U.S. states with less stringent gun control laws, according to a UN report in 2020.

For the more than 200,000 Haitians in the United States who were granted deportation protection and work permits by the Biden administration, the future is uncertain. A federal judge stopped the Trump administration on April 14 from rescinding their temporary protection status (TPS), along with TPS for Cubans, Nicaraguans and Venezuelans. For now, the judge's ruling signals a major victory for paroled immigrants from the four countries, who sued the Trump administration in the hope of remaining in the United States for a two-year period. ✠

**FAITH IN ACTION:** Watch the recording of Apr. 24 webinar on the problem of U.S. illegal weapons going to Haiti <https://mogc.me/HaitiWebinar>

Sign a petition to stop weapons trafficking to Haiti and keep TPS for Haitians. Deadline to sign is May 15. <https://quixote.org/action#/18>



# Korea Peace Advocacy in Uncertain Times

*People from around the United States are invited to participate in Korea Peace Advocacy Week June 9-13, during a fraught time on the Korean Peninsula.*

Advocacy Week organizers the Korea Peace Network — a coalition of faith-based and Korean-American peace groups including Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns — invite people from across the United States to register for the virtual event. Participants will receive training on how to lobby Congress, and background information on the prospects for and challenges to peace between North and South Korea, and the role of the United States in the conflict. The primary objective will be to urge lawmakers to co-sponsor and pass the Peace on the Korean Peninsula Act.

Peace between North Korea and South Korea is a longstanding unresolved issue, one in which the United States has an important role to play. Fighting was halted in the Korean War by way of an armistice agreement in 1953 between North Korea and the United States, but a peace treaty was never signed. Technically, the war continues, and the decades-long standoff has resulted in a dangerous militarization of the peninsula, now including the threat of U.S. and North Korean nuclear weapons. The United States has troops in South Korea, and carries out annual military exercises with the South Korean military, adding to tensions with North Korea.

During his first term, President Trump held historic talks with North Korean leader Kim Jong Un, culminating in a summit in Hanoi in 2019. Ultimately the talks failed, as the United States rejected North Korean demands to lift all economic sanctions on the country, and North Korea rejected U.S. demands that the nation unilaterally and entirely do away with its nuclear weapons program. Talks have not yet resumed.

President Trump has expressed an interest in re-opening negotiations with North Korea, and has even suggested that some form of communication between the two governments has begun. But there is no clear framework for such talks, with little change on the issues behind the impasse in Hanoi. Meanwhile, Kim changed North Korea's long-standing policy toward South Korea in 2023, abandoning his government's official goal of unification, declaring South Korea an "enemy" and describing the relationship between the two countries as one between "belligerent states."

The political future of South Korea will also impact the prospect of peace. Conservative President Yoon

Suk Yeol was removed from office on April 4 after being impeached for declaring martial law and trying to shut down the country's legislature in December. A snap election will be held on June 3, and polls currently favor opposition leader Lee Jae-myung, who advocates positive engagement with North Korea, saying in a recent debate, "Unification may sound like a far-off goal, but increasing inter-Korean exchanges is where we begin... At the end of the day, the government's job is to build peace."

Another tension between North Korea and the West has been North Korea's support for Russia's war in Ukraine. But President Trump's relatively friendly relationship with Russia, while troubling to Ukraine and many U.S. allies, could mean he would be less inclined to let the issue stymie negotiations between the United States and North Korea.

The challenges to peace are many, but it is precisely at this moment of change that peace advocates hope to drive home the need for politicians to seek an official end to the Korean War, increased diplomacy, and reduced tensions between North and South Korea. Denuclearization and reunification may not be possible in the short-term, but a peace treaty and increased engagement with North Korea would reduce the risk of nuclear war and could open the door to both nuclear disarmament and reunification in the future. The pursuit of a peace agreement would also ease humanitarian aid to North Korea and allow the reuniting of divided families, including those of many Korean Americans.

The Peace on the Korean Peninsula Act would call upon the Executive Branch to pursue a lasting peace agreement and the official end of the Korean War, and require the Secretary of State to report to Congress on steps taken to carry it out. The current approach of devastating economic sanctions, uncompromising insistence on immediate and total denuclearization, and insistence on military exercises keeps families divided, increases tensions, and puts the Korean Peninsula, the United States, and the world at risk of nuclear war. It is time to pursue peace. ✂

**FAITH IN ACTION:** Take part in Korea Peace Advocacy Week June 9-13. Registrants will join two to three half-hour virtual meetings with the staff of their Representative and Senators. <https://mogc.me/KPAW>

# United States Skirts Multilateralism on Seabed Mining

*With an executive order and broad interpretations of a 1980 law, the U.S. government now claims authority to issue mining permits in waters outside U.S. jurisdiction.*

The United States stunned delegates to the International Seabed Authority toward the end of their annual meeting in March with news signaling disregard for the regulatory body's authority.

The International Seabed Authority is an autonomous multilateral body charged with protecting and regulating the mining of the seabed in open ocean beyond national boundaries. In their annual meetings, this year held in Kingston, Jamaica, from March 17–28, the delegates discuss drafts of regulations for the mining of minerals in international seabed. A key goal of this year's meeting was to further develop the rules, regulations, and procedures that would govern commercial mining on the ocean floor, a fragile ecosystem.

In her opening remarks, the secretary-general of the ISA, Leticia Reis de Carvalho, emphasized the importance of transparency, inclusivity, and a shared commitment to the sustainable use of marine resources.

On day ten of an eleven-day session of the ISA, the U.S. Subsidiary of The Metal Corporation (TMC) shocked the world with an announcement that it had formally initiated an application under U.S. law with the U.S. National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) for permits for deep seabed mining — in international waters.

NOAA is overseen by the Department of Commerce, led by its secretary, Howard Lutnick. Secretary Lutnick, before his appointment by President Trump, was the CEO and chair of Cantor Fitzgerald, an investment firm with holdings in extractive industries. That firm had been engaged as financial advisors to TMC, and an analyst of the firm, Matthew O'Keefe, continues to participate in TMC's quarterly earnings calls.

The U.S. government's willingness to skirt multilateralism was made explicit on Apr. 24 with an executive order by President Trump: "Unleashing America's Offshore Critical Minerals and Resources." The executive order states that "it is the policy of the United States to advance United States leadership in seabed mineral development by ...establishing the United States as a global leader in responsible seabed mineral exploration on seabed mining encouraging the practice in both U.S. and international waters."

In defiance of the regulatory authority of the ISA and the countries that comprise the ISA, the executive

order directs NOAA to "expedite the process for reviewing and issuing seabed mineral exploration licenses and commercial recovery permits in areas beyond national jurisdiction."

Despite its mandate to work on ocean conservation, NOAA issued its own statement praising the executive order, describing deep seabed mining as "the next gold rush," and celebrating Trump's decision to "unlock access to critical deep seabed minerals."

The Trump Administration's legal justification for permitting mining beyond U.S. jurisdiction relies on, in addition to the recent executive order, the Deep Seabed Hard Mineral Resources Act. That U.S. law, passed by Congress in 1980, asserted jurisdiction over U.S. citizens to prevent them from participating in reckless deep-sea mining abroad, a law which was to be in force until a more comprehensive Law of the Sea Treaty could be negotiated. The Law of the Sea Treaty morphed into a United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS), which established the ISA, but the United States never ratified that treaty.

UNCLOS came into force in 1994, and as of 2024, had 169 signatory countries. The full implications for international law of this new U.S. posture remain to be seen.

The head of the ISA responded on April 30 in a 15-paragraph statement criticizing the U.S. executive order to fast-track deep-sea mining in the oceans outside of U.S. territorial waters. "No state has the right to unilaterally exploit the mineral resources of the area outside the legal framework established by the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea," said Carvalho. "It is common understanding that this prohibition is binding on all States, including those that have not ratified UNCLOS."

"It's worth noting that the US Executive Order refers to Unleashing America's Offshore Minerals and Resources," Carvalho said. "However, this can only refer to resources found on the U.S. seabed and ocean floor because everything beyond is the common heritage of humankind."

"This means we are all stakeholders to what happens in the deep sea. It also means that any unilateral action not only threatens this carefully negotiated treaty... but also sets a dangerous precedent that could destabilize the entire system of ocean governance."✂

# Many U.S. Leaders Still All In for Climate Action

*Despite the United States's withdrawal from the Paris climate agreement, non-federal U.S. institutions, communities, and economic sectors remain committed to reducing emissions as part of a nationwide, collaborative effort.*

Ten days after the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) declared 2024 to be the warmest year on record, President Trump signed an Executive Order withdrawing the United States — the country with the largest cumulative emissions of greenhouse gases — from the Paris Agreement, the global accord adopted by nearly every nation to combat climate change. Soon after the announcement, the Trump Administration fired 800 staff at NOAA and eliminated its research team responsible for annually reporting global surface temperatures.

Far from being silenced, however, individuals and groups from across the United States have stepped forward to assert that while the federal government is retreating, they themselves have not left the Paris Agreement. To the contrary, people are rolling up their sleeves for concrete actions to accelerate the unstoppable roll-out of clean energy.

One of the most expansive coalitions in support of climate action in the United States is America Is All In. Growing out of the “We are still in” declaration signed by more than 4,000 U.S. leaders after the Trump Administration pulled the U.S. out of the Paris Agreement in 2017, the coalition’s members include a diverse array of state and local governments, businesses, schools, tribal nations, faith groups, and community-based organizations. They represent nearly two-thirds of the U.S. population and three-quarters of U.S. GDP.

The coalition released a statement on the ninth anniversary of the Paris Agreement in December 2024, just weeks before President Trump announced the U.S. withdrawal, reaffirming their commitment to ambitious, non-federal climate action. In the sign-on statement, hundreds of members pledged to continue accelerating climate progress in order to meet the obligations of the Paris Agreement, namely cutting U.S. emissions in half by 2030 from 2005 levels, and reaching net zero emissions by mid-century, all while building climate resilience.

Managing co-chair of America Is All In and former EPA Administrator Gina McCarthy said: “We stand committed to the goals of the Paris Agreement. Climate action looks different for each of us, for every sector and every community, but the future it will build is one we will all benefit from.”

The declaration from other sectors of U.S. society

has garnered international attention. At a talk at the Wilson Center, a Washington, D.C.-based think tank, the president designate of this year’s UN Climate Change Conference COP30, Ambassador André Aranha Corrêa do Lago of Brazil, said, “the U.S. absence will change many things. But local governments are fully committed. If you think in GDP terms, this is big. A very strong majority of the American GDP is going to continue to follow the decision of the COP that are voluntary.... There is an openness for all the other stake holders to follow what is decided at COP as if their country were still in.”

At a recent interview during a UN event in Bridgetown, Barbados, Corrêa do Lago again emphasized, “The United States has not only institutions, entities, subnational governments that can progress independently of the central government, but they also have very important businesses, very important technology companies. There are other movements that have not been interrupted and that are driven towards combating climate change.”

In step with his proactive climate approach, President Joe Biden oversaw the release of the U.S. climate target only weeks before leaving office. This pledge committed to a 61–66 percent reduction in greenhouse gas emissions by 2035 from 2005 levels. With President Biden gone, many non-federal actors have made the pledge their own.

The climate action leadership of sub-national actors is not unique to the United States. A global network called C40 represents some 100 mayors in the world’s leading cities, with each taking bold actions. London, for example, set a target of net zero carbon emissions by 2030. New York City now mandates that large buildings cut their carbon footprint. Rio de Janeiro requires municipal buildings to switch to renewables. Nairobi is planting millions of trees to cool streets and combat extreme weather.

In his first letter as UN Climate Change Conference president designate, Corrêa do Lago wrote, “The Brazilian culture inherited from Brazilian native Indigenous peoples the concept of *mutirão*. It refers to a community coming together to work on a shared task, whether harvesting, building, or supporting one another. ... The presidency [of this year’s UN Climate Change Conference] is determined to serve as ... a vessel in a global *mutirão* against climate change.” The people of the United States have indicated their willingness to be part of this *mutirão*. ✦

# World's First Global Tax on Shipping Emissions

**AFTER THREE DECADES OF NEGOTIATIONS** over the climate impact of shipping, nations reached a landmark deal to make ship owners pay for their emissions and transition to cleaner fuels.

This decision, made at the April meeting of the International Maritime Organization, is expected to cut greenhouse gas emissions from global shipping by setting mandatory fuel standards and create an industry-wide carbon pricing mechanism.

According to the World Bank, the shipping industry's 3 percent of global greenhouse gas emissions in 2022 made it "the sixth largest greenhouse gas emitter worldwide."

Pacific island nations, whose very existences are threatened by climate change, led the push for a universal shipping levy to raise money for climate action. Unsurprisingly, opposition came primarily from petro-states, as well as from the United States which withdrew its delegation midway through negotiations. Talks reached a tense moment when Saudi Arabia called for a vote, leading to a compromise deal that carried a majority.

The framework, aimed at achieving net-zero

emissions from the shipping sector by 2050, will apply to large ocean-going vessels over 5,000 gross tonnage, vessels that account for 85 percent of carbon dioxide emissions from the marine shipping fleet.

Under the new framework, ships that do not reduce emissions intensity in line with set goals by switching to cleaner fuels must buy credits. These funds will go toward "rewards" for ships that are using "zero and near-zero emission fuels," known as ZNZ's.

Many celebrated this "first ever" global tax on greenhouse gas emissions as a historic moment in the climate change fight. International aviation has touted a voluntary carbon-offsetting scheme, the Carbon Offsetting and Reduction Scheme for International Aviation (CORSA), which has been criticized for relying on illusory, and cheap, carbon offsets.

In a 2023 report by the Guardian, the largest seller was found to have sold voluntary carbon credits for more than ten times what its rainforest protection scheme was actually worth. This led to an average price of \$3.36 per ton of "carbon offsets" in 2022. For comparison, the newly passed shipping deal sets a minimum fee of \$100 per ton of carbon emissions. ✧

## Relay of Hope

**IN A WORLD OFTEN OVERSHADOWED** by economic disparities and mounting debts, a luminous initiative is set to shine a beacon of hope. Development and Peace, Caritas Canada, in collaboration with Caritas Internationalis, is launching the "Relay of Hope," a global candle-lighting campaign aimed at illuminating the path towards debt justice and economic transformation.

Scheduled to coincide with the 10th anniversary of *Laudato Si'*, the Relay of Hope will take place from May 24 to 28. Communities worldwide are invited to participate in an act of solidarity, reflecting the shared mission to spread light, life, and hope. The relay embodies the essence of the Jubilee theme, "Pilgrims of Hope," connecting diverse communities in a unified call for economic justice.

Participants are encouraged to organize local events, whether in person or virtually. In-person gatherings may involve communal candle-lighting ceremonies

in meaningful locations such as churches, community centers, or outdoor spaces. Each lit candle symbolizes a commitment to turning debt into hope, with attendees invited to sign petitions advocating for the cancellation of unjust debts burdening countries in the Global South. For those unable to attend physical events, individuals can record themselves passing a lit candle from right to left, accompanied by the phrase "Turn Debt into Hope," and share their videos on social media.

To amplify the impact of the Relay of Hope, participants are encouraged to share photos, videos, and testimonials of their events. These contributions will be featured on the social media pages of Development and Peace, Caritas Canada, KAIROS Canada, and Caritas Internationalis, culminating in a world map showcasing the widespread participation in this global movement. For more information on organizing or participating in the Relay of Hope, visit [devp.org/en/relay-of-light](https://devp.org/en/relay-of-light). ✧



# UN: 69<sup>th</sup> Session of Commission on Status of Women

*The global policy-making body dedicated to promoting gender equality and empowering women and girls met at UN headquarters in New York in March.*

The UN Commission on the Status of Women gathered at the UN Headquarters in New York City, March 10 through 21, in a session that celebrated the thirty-year anniversary of the Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing. It was at that conference that then-First Lady Hillary Clinton declared, “women’s rights are human rights.” The task of the 69<sup>th</sup> Session of the UN Commission on the Status of Women (CSW69) was to evaluate the strides made — and setbacks — in achieving gender equality.

CSW69, also known as Beijing +30, brought together 13,000 participants from 186 member states, including ministers, NGO representatives, faith leaders, and Indigenous women, to reflect on the enduring promise of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (BPFA). Adopted by 189 countries in 1995, the BPFA set strategic objectives and actions for the empowerment of women and girls and the achievement of gender equality across 12 areas of concern, addressing issues ranging from political participation and economic justice to health and education, gender-based violence, and the environment.

The BPFA is not legally binding but it implies a moral obligation for countries to comply. The implementation of the BPFA is evaluated by the CSW every five years to help sustain momentum and keep the urgency of gender equality at the forefront.

The influence of Maryknoll at the Beijing conference in 1994 was strong. The Secretary General of the Beijing Conference, Gertrude Mongella of Tanzania, and the Chair of the Commission on the Status of Women, Dr. Patricia Licuanan of the Philippines, were both alumni of Maryknoll schools. Thirty years later, the Maryknoll presence remains strong at the UN, with Gertrude Mongella rejoining the sessions alongside Maryknoll Sisters Margaret Lacson, Susan Nchubiri, Felista Wanzagi, and Esther Warioba. Representing the Maryknoll Fathers and Brothers was Fr. John Sivalon, MM.

Maryknoll Sisters co-sponsored a parallel event titled Beijing Platform for Action: Women and Church Action for Gender Equality. The virtual event, organized by the Justice Coalition of Religious, was an intergenerational dialogue that explored the experiences of women of faith since the adoption of the Beijing Platform for Action in 1995. As Sr. Lacson explained, “it highlighted

the rich history and contributions of religious women, emphasizing the innovative ways they have navigated and worked within patriarchal systems to effect meaningful change.”

For Fr. Sivalon, one of the most poignant moments of the conference came during a panel where Amal Hamad, the Palestinian Authority Minister for Women’s Affairs, delivered an emotional testimony about the impact of war in Gaza on women and girls. “Under the bombardment of Israeli warplanes, children, mothers, spouses, or entire families are being killed,” Hamad said, noting that women and girls account for 73 percent of the total number of civilians killed and wounded.

He also recalled the presentation by the special rapporteur for the rights of woman on how the last few years have led to a denigration of the rights of women and girls because of conflict. “She warned how things could get even worse because of the financial constraints that the UN is now facing. States are not living up to their commitments to the UN.”

Fr. Sivalon also shared about side events concerning gender apartheid in Taliban-controlled Afghanistan, the denigration of women’s rights in conflict settings like South Sudan and Ukraine, and a conversation on the politics of resource extraction in the Democratic Republic of Congo.

While the final Political Declaration, the document that is the fruit bourn by the conference as a concluding statement, failed to adequately incorporate the significance of climate change in women’s equality, the declaration highlighted adolescent girls, gender-based violence, equality in participation, peace and security, care work, and universal health coverage as key issues still affecting women.

Maryknoll Sister Ester Warioba had this to say about the session: “The UN helped me to hear how different countries in the world are working in Beijing +30 declarations either through the same strategies or different strategies to achieve the goal.”

“The Beijing Platform for Action was decided upon 30 years ago,” noted Maryknoll Sister Felista Wanzagi. “And now we have many women who are political leaders in their countries, like the newly appointed vice president in Namibia.” Sister Wanzagi remarked, “The experience at the UN gave me hope for women’s empowerment.” ✠

# Legacy of Pope Francis

*The following is a brief excerpt from an article published on Apr. 28 on the Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns website. <https://mogc.me/PF>*

**P**ope Francis was laid to rest in a funeral Mass in Saint Peter's Basilica in Rome on April 28. As we reflect on his 12-year pontificate, we celebrate a life and legacy rooted in Gospel values of mercy, social justice, and care for creation.

## LANDMARK ENCYCLICALS

Foremost among Francis' achievements are his encyclicals, which boldly charted a moral vision for the Church in the 21st century. In *Laudato Si'* (2015), he issued an historic appeal to care for "our common home," confronting human-driven climate change through a spiritual and moral lens. More than a treatise on carbon emissions and climate, *Laudato Si'* looks at the fundamental brokenness of our modern society and its rift with nature. The encyclical is a clarion call for all of humanity to right its relationship with God's creation.

Another of Pope Francis' landmark encyclicals was *Fratelli Tutti* (2020), on fraternity and social friendship in which he offered a remedy to social fragmentation:

openness to love and kindness, rejection of war and the death penalty, and a commitment to dialogue and peace.

## A PILGRIM POPE

In 12 years, Pope Francis visited over 60 countries on 47 apostolic trips, living out his vision of the Church as a "field hospital," addressing the wounded in a broken world.

His first trip as pope was to the tiny Italian island of Lampedusa, where he mourned African migrants lost at sea and decried a "globalization of indifference" to the suffering of migrants everywhere. This set the tone for a papacy on the move, where, from the favelas of Brazil to the refugee camps of Bangladesh, Francis sought out those on the margins.

*For the rest of the article about Pope Francis' legacy, particularly his record canonizations, voice for the marginalized, and voice for peace, visit the article online.*

<https://mogc.me/PF>

# Pilgrims Respond to G7 Summit with People's Forum

**AS THE G7 LEADERS' SUMMIT** convenes in Kananaskis, Alberta, from June 15 to 17, 2025, a parallel gathering — the G7 Jubilee People's Forum — will unfold in Calgary, offering a platform for global citizens to envision a more equitable world.

Scheduled from June 12 to 15 at Ambrose University, the People's Forum invites pilgrims and activists from across Canada and beyond to engage in community-building, learning, prayer, and action. Organized by KAIROS Canada and Development and Peace, the event aims to amplify grassroots voices during the G7 period.

The Forum's agenda includes an interfaith worship service hosted by the Calgary Interfaith Council, a visit to an outdoor medicine wheel on Stoney Nakoda land, and training sessions for the Jubilee 2025 Turn Debt into Hope campaign.

The Turn Debt Into Hope campaign, launched by Caritas International and supported by the Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns, is a central initiative of the 2025 Jubilee Year proclaimed by Pope Francis. In the wake of COVID and unsuccessful frameworks for managing sovereign debt, countries across the Global South

are stuck in a debt trap, forced to spend more on debt repayments than on climate, health and education priorities. In the spirit of the jubilee, in which the Old Testament tradition calls for the forgiveness of debts, restoration of land, and liberation of the oppressed, the campaign seeks to cancel sovereign debt and reform the system to prevent debt crises from resurging.

Organizers emphasize the People's Forum as a space to "build, from the ground up, a Jubilee world — where slaves and the indentured are freed, debts are cancelled, and the land is returned and allowed to rest." The gathering seeks to foster economic and ecological justice, decolonization, and solidarity among diverse communities.

With 200 spots available, individuals and groups are encouraged to participate and contribute their expertise, ideas, and resources to the movement.

As world leaders convene at the G7 Summit, the People's Forum speaks to the power of collective action and the pursuit of a just world. ✧

**FAITH IN ACTION:** Sign the Turn Debt into Hope Petition <https://turndebtintohope.caritas.org/>

# Resources

1. **UN HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL DEBT ROUNDTABLE CONCLUDES DEBT CRISIS IS A HUMAN RIGHTS CRISIS**, April 15, 2025. <https://mogc.me/HRC-debtcrisis>
2. **JUBILEE COMMISSION OF EXPERTS TO ADDRESS DEBT AND DEVELOPMENT CRISES**. The Pontifical Academy of Social Sciences (PASS) and Columbia University's Initiative for Policy Dialogue (IPD) will convene during 2025 to address the growing sovereign debt and development crises in the Global South. <https://mogc.me/VA-debtcrisis>
3. **EXPLAINER OF PAROLE TERMINATION FOR REFUGEES IN THE UNITED STATES** prepared by Refugee Council USA <https://mogc.me/IR-parole>
4. **FIRST 100 DAYS OF TRUMP ADMINISTRATION ACTION ON IMMIGRATION** by the Migration Policy Institute <https://mogc.me/MP-100days>
5. **SIGN THE PETITION FOR JUSTICE FOR KILMAR ABREGO GARCIA** who was unlawfully deported and detained in El Salvador <https://mogc.me/CASA-KAG>
6. **EL SALVADOR**: Testimony on prison conditions by director of Human Rights Watch as part of the case J.C.C. v. Trump. <https://mogc.me/HRW-ESprison>
7. **PERU**: UN Human Rights Office expressed concerns about new law in Peru to expand government control over NGOs that receive international funding. <https://mogc.me/UNHRC-PeruNGO>
8. **PERU**: Catholic bishops of Peru's Amazon vicariates (CAAAP – Amazon Centre for Applied Anthropology) and the Bishops' Social Affairs Commission (CEAS) sent a letter Mar. 25 to the Peruvian government to with concerns about the new law expanding government control over NGOs that receive international funding. In English <https://mogc.me/Peru-CAAP-EN> and en español <https://mogc.me/Peru-CAAP-ES>
9. **CAMBODIA**: Church accompanies scarred Cambodians 50 years after the Khmer Rouge genocide. <https://mogc.me/OSV-KRG>
10. **CATHOLIC RELIEF SERVICES TESTIMONY TO U.S. CONGRESS** on April 2 on the need for Congress to maintain funding for global health, development, disaster relief and migration and refugee programs. <https://mogc.me/crs-testimony>
11. **VIDEO: WHY GUTTING USAID WILL HURT AMERICA** by WIRED <https://mogc.me/WIRED-USAID>
12. **STATEMENT BY INDIGENOUS WOMEN IN BRAZIL**. "We are on the front line of the fight against inequality and the attacks of extractivism. <https://mogc.me/REPAM-IWB>
13. **UN: CATHOLIC SISTERS HELP HIGHLIGHT THE CRISIS OF GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE** An article on the 69th session of the UN Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) was published by Global Sisters Report, which will be running a special series in 2025 on violence against women called "Out of the Shadows." <https://mogc.me/GSR-CSW69>
14. **UN HOLY SEE MISSION STATEMENT AT THIRD MEETING OF STATE PARTIES TO THE TREATY ON THE PROHIBITION OF NUCLEAR WEAPONS** On March 4, Archbishop Gabriele Caccia, Permanent Observer of the Holy See to the United Nations, issued a statement during the General Exchange of Views. <https://mogc.me/UNHSM-TPNW>
15. **REPORT: REWRITING THE NARRATIVE ON NUCLEAR WEAPONS** by the Nuclear Threat Initiative and Ploughshares to shift the prevailing narrative and bolster collective efforts for nuclear risk reduction. <https://mogc.me/NTI-NWRN>
16. **"REMEMBERING POPE FRANCIS'S CALL FOR A UNIVERSAL BASIC WAGE"** by economist Pavlina R. Tcherneva of the Levy Economics Institute of Bard College <https://mogc.me/LEI-PF-UBW>
17. **MAASAI CONSERVATION VISION** - 24-page report launched by the Maasai International Solidarity Alliance (MISA) based on input from Maasai communities in northern Tanzania. A one-page summary, the report, and the latest MISA newsletter are available at <https://mogc.me/MISA>
18. **UNSPEAKABLE SUFFERING: THE HUMANITARIAN IMPACT OF NUCLEAR WEAPONS** by Reaching Critical Will examines the humanitarian impact of nuclear weapons and is aimed at civil society actors, academics, and governments interested in approaching weapons negotiations with a humanitarian lens. <https://mogc.me/RCW-US-HINW>