



# Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns

# NewsNotes

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

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P.O. Box 29132 Washington, D.C. 20017-0132  
Phone: (202)832-1780 Fax: (202)832-5195  
ogc@maryknoll.org www.maryknollogc.org

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**Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns:**

Peace, Social Justice and the Integrity of Creation  
<http://www.maryknollogc.org>

Maryknoll Sisters  
Maryknoll Lay Missioners  
Maryknoll Fathers & Brothers

- Marie Dennis — Director.....[mdennis@maryknoll.org](mailto:mdennis@maryknoll.org)
- Sr. Ann Braudis, MM.....[abraudis@mksisters.org](mailto:abraudis@mksisters.org)
- Judy Coode.....[jcoode@maryknoll.org](mailto:jcoode@maryknoll.org)
- Yamileth Coreas.....[ycoreas@maryknoll.org](mailto:ycoreas@maryknoll.org)
- Sr. Rose Bernadette (Meg) Gallagher, MM.....[rgallagher@mksisters.org](mailto:rgallagher@mksisters.org)
- David Kane, MLM.....[dkane@maryknoll.org](mailto:dkane@maryknoll.org)
- Rev. Jim Kofski, MM.....[jkofski@maryknoll.org](mailto:jkofski@maryknoll.org)
- Kathy McNeely.....[kmcneely@maryknoll.org](mailto:kmcneely@maryknoll.org)
- Susan Weissert, MLM.....[sweissert@mksisters.org](mailto:sweissert@mksisters.org)

MOGC Washington  
P.O. Box 29132  
Washington, D.C. 20017  
(202)832-1780 phone  
(202)832-5195 fax  
[ogc@maryknoll.org](mailto:ogc@maryknoll.org)

MOGC Maryknoll NY  
P.O. Box 311  
Maryknoll, N.Y. 10545-0311  
(914)941-7575 phone  
(914)923-0733 fax  
[ogc@maryknoll.org](mailto:ogc@maryknoll.org)

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

**Take action - Email, call, fax or write U.S. decisionmakers**

President Barack Obama  
The White House  
Washington, D.C. 20500  
[www.whitehouse.gov](http://www.whitehouse.gov)

Robert Gates  
Secretary of Defense  
The Pentagon  
Washington, D.C. 20301  
(703) 695-5261 phone  
[www.defenselink.mil](http://www.defenselink.mil)

Robert B. Zoellick  
President  
World Bank Group  
1818 H Street, N.W.  
Washington, D.C. 20433  
[www.worldbank.org](http://www.worldbank.org)

Vice President Joe Biden  
The White House  
Washington, D.C. 20500  
[vice\\_president@whitehouse.gov](mailto:vice_president@whitehouse.gov)

Eric Holder  
Attorney General  
U.S. Department of Justice  
Washington, D.C. 20530  
(202)353-1555 phone  
[AskDOJ@usdoj.gov](mailto:AskDOJ@usdoj.gov)  
[www.justice.gov](http://www.justice.gov)

Dominique Strauss-Kuhn  
Managing Director  
International Monetary Fund  
700 19th Street, N.W.  
Washington, D.C. 20431  
[www.imf.org](http://www.imf.org)

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

Hillary Rodham Clinton  
Secretary of State  
2201 C Street, N.W.  
Washington, D.C. 20520  
(202) 647-6575 phone  
(202) 647-2283 fax  
[www.state.gov](http://www.state.gov)

Susan Rice  
U.S. Representative to UN  
799 United Nations Plaza  
New York, NY 10017  
(212) 415-4000 phone  
[www.usunnewyork.usmission.gov](http://www.usunnewyork.usmission.gov)

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## Where faith, ecology, global economy intersect

*Beginning in March 2009, Maryknoll missionaries and affiliates have met in small groups to reflect on the crossroads of their faith, the ecological state of the world and the global economic system. Some of the important values and experiences surfaced in these reflections follow. The Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns will incorporate this wisdom as we continue to work on the root causes of global ecological and socio-economic crises faced by the world community.*

“Greater, bigger, faster, better, cheaper, more efficient! More! More! More!” If there were a more appropriate mantra for the world as it is today it would be “Grow, grow, grow!” But in the 35 countries in Asia, Africa and Latin America where Maryknoll missionaries live and work, it is this rallying cry for growth that lies at the root of the global ecological and socioeconomic crises the world faces today.

In responding to these attitudes and their role in global crises, it is most important to understand that Earth has limits. Missioners and affiliates are extremely familiar with this understanding. They have witnessed first hand resource depletion, species extinction, the erosion of soil, melting of icecaps and serious changes in climate patterns in countries where they have lived, worked and visited.

Missioners also point out that it is critically important to understand and embrace the notion that all things are interconnected. This awareness helps people to become more mindful of the impact of their choices. Maryknollers have always had a sense of this interconnection – for years missioners have told stories of the human misery brought on by economic policies that serve to make a few extremely rich while a growing number of people slip further into dire poverty. Oligopolies, conglomerates and business interests such as mining companies, water bottling companies, consolidated food industries, etc. take control of water, land, and forests and leave pollution, contamination and destroy ecosystems and communities in their wake. One small group in Lima, Peru, comments, “The poorer countries are being robbed of their resources and are becoming the dumping grounds of the rich.”

Yet, in the U.S. and increasingly in urban so-



cieties around the world, disconnection is the norm as people are increasingly removed from having any role in producing what they consume. For most U.S. citizens, much of the food, clothing, and tools they use daily are produced in another country. The danger is that people begin to believe that their purpose is to consume. This was tragically amplified by President Bush encouraging the U.S. public to shop in the wake of the terrible events of September 2001. A consumer identity brings with it a certain sense of spiritual emptiness. Shopping, buying and consuming replace the notion that humans are co-creators with God – that they act with God in producing that which is needed to support and sustain life.

In reflecting on this reality, Maryknollers around the world emphasize simplicity, sufficiency, and frugality, as well as the notion that one should live within one’s means – to “live simply so that others may simply live.” Some recall that during World War II U.S. citizens were encouraged to live simply, so they saved, reused, repaired, remodeled and when they made something new they built it to last. People were proud of their contribution to the greater society; and in going without, they took stock of what aspects of their lives they truly valued.

In traveling to other countries and living within other cultures, Maryknollers are impacted and transformed by the life stories and experiences they share. Many deeply embrace the understanding that living well is not a bi-product of wealth accumulation; rather it is about finding peace and harmony with the rest of creation, always trusting that God will provide.

Maryknollers stress the need for humility. Both humans and the economic system they operate under must fit within Earth’s limits. Currently the human relationship with the natural world is lopsided and bringing the economic system into right relationship is a key starting point to balancing this relationship. This entails building an economic system that recognizes the dignity and rights of humans, communities, species and Earth itself.

A new rallying cry for many missioners and affiliates could well be: “Simpler, smaller, slower. Share more, love Earth, de-grow. Less! Less! Less!”

## Burma: Is Aung San Suu Kyi or the junta on trial?

*Nobel laureate Aung San Suu Kyi went on trial in May on charges of breaking the terms of her long house arrest. It sparked an international outcry, with growing calls to put Burma's ruling generals themselves on trial for alleged war crimes and crimes against humanity. The protest apparently led the junta to extend Suu Kyi's trial, which resumed in late June, to allow additional defense witnesses to testify. The peace prize winner, who has been under house arrest for 13 of the past 19 years, is the world's only Nobel laureate being held in custody.*

Suu Kyi, who turned 64 on June 19, went on trial in Rangoon's Insein Prison. Her current five-year confinement – extended by a year in 2008 – was set to expire at the end of May. To many observers the trial seemed a sham to keep her confined through national elections scheduled next year.

Suu Kyi's National League for Democracy won elections in 1990, but the results were nullified. The country has been under military rule since 1962.

Her trial arose after John Yettaw, a 53-year-old U.S. citizen, allegedly swam past security May 3 to her home on the shore of Inya Lake in Rangoon. Suu Kyi, facing a possible five-year prison term, pleaded innocent. She said government security personnel should be held responsible for the breach.

Suu Kyi spoke to several ambassadors May 20 in the courtroom after the government allowed journalists and foreign diplomats in.

"All the paraphernalia of the courtroom is there – the judges, the prosecution, the defense," British Ambassador Mark Canning said. "But I think this is a story where the conclusion is already scripted. I don't have any confidence in the outcome. While the access we had today was very welcome, it doesn't change the fundamental problem."

Meanwhile, five international jurists have recommended that the UN Security Council establish a commission of inquiry to investigate war crimes and crimes against humanity allegedly committed by the junta. The report examines human rights violations documented by the UN over the past 15 years: sexual violence, forced displacement, torture and extrajudicial killings. The 114-page report, "Crimes in Burma," was released in late May by the International Human Rights Clinic at Harvard Law School.

It cites "the destruction, displacement or dam-

age of over 3,000 ethnic nationality villages over the past 12 years – many burned to the ground. This is comparable to the number of villages estimated to have been destroyed or damaged in Darfur."

The jurists who prepared the report include South Africa's Richard Goldstone. He recently led a fact-finding mission to investigate "all violations of international humanitarian law" stemming from Israel's 22-day assault on Gaza that ended in January. The other jurists were from Britain, Mongolia, the U.S. and Venezuela.

The Security Council has discussed the situation in Burma, notably after the September 2007 crackdown on pro-democracy demonstrators. In May of this year it called for the release of 2,100 political prisoners. However, it has not authorized a commission of inquiry like that requested in the report.

Paulo Sergio Pinheiro, UN Special Rapporteur on Human Rights in Burma from 2000 to 2008, has added his voice in support of a commission of inquiry, with a potential indictment by the International Criminal Court. Pinheiro wrote May 27 in *The New York Times* that UN representatives had visited Burma 37 times since 1990 in an effort to facilitate dialogue and promote human rights, but the efforts had proved fruitless.

"It is time for the United Nations to take the next logical step: The Security Council must establish a commission of inquiry into crimes against humanity and impunity in Myanmar [Burma]," Pinheiro wrote. "The Security Council took similar steps with regard to Rwanda, Bosnia and Darfur. The situation in Myanmar is equally as critical."

China, which seems more interested in stability than democracy in its southern neighbor, might well veto such a Security Council resolution, but the effort should be made. Pinheiro cited three important goals a commission of inquiry could accomplish:

"First, it will make the junta accountable for its crimes with a potential indictment by the International Criminal Court. Second, it will address the widespread culture of impunity in Burma. Third, it has the potential to deter future crimes against humanity in Myanmar," he said.

Pinheiro might have added that the threat of an indictment – with solid international support behind a Security Council resolution – might deter crimes against humanity in other countries, as well.

## Timor-Leste: Young nation+old technology = poor decision

*Independent since 2002, Timor-Leste (East Timor) ideally should be exploring new technologies to tap into renewable energy. Instead, government leaders seem intent on resurrecting the discredited technology of heavy oil to generate electricity. Oil fields beneath the Timor Sea are a boon to the nation's economy. However, Timor-Leste would have to import heavy oil to power the Chinese generators it proposes to buy. The nongovernmental organization (NGO) La'o Hamutuk – the East Timor Institute for Reconstruction Monitoring and Analysis – urges the development of alternative energy sources such as wind, solar power and natural gas instead.*

The government has pledged to provide electricity to each of the country's 13 districts this year and to every subdistrict by the end of 2010. However, La'o Hamutuk ("walking together") says the proposed heavy oil project employs a dirty, outmoded technology that would be damaging to both the economy and the environment.

La'o Hamutuk says the project involves buying used engines and generators that have operated in China for more than 20 years. But it warns that burning heavy oil creates water pollution, toxic solid and liquid wastes, particulate air pollution and greenhouse gas emissions. It also causes acid rain that damages agriculture, forests, fisheries, ecosystems and water supplies, and threatens the health of both humans and animals.

In its report "Heavy oil power plants: Project without process," La'o Hamutuk says heavy oil "can be considered as a waste product from oil refining, after the gasoline, kerosene, diesel and other useful materials have been removed."

The NGO says many nations have moved away from heavy oil because of its negative impact on human health and the environment in favor of other fuels that are cleaner and safer. "Indonesia, Western Europe and North America used a lot of heavy oil to generate electricity 50 years ago. However, they have not built any heavy oil plants for decades, and they have shut down nearly all the existing ones," it says.

La'o Hamutuk says the electricity project, at a cost of about \$375 million from 2008 to 2011, will leave less than \$62 million for all other infrastructure investments combined – roads, water, bridges, flood

control, other energy projects, communications and airports. The NGO says the heavy oil generators could last another 15 years, after which Timor-Leste would be left with large quantities of toxic waste as well as polluted soil, air and water.

"We will have wasted scarce human capital and time to learn obsolete technology," the NGO says. "The revenues from our non-renewable petroleum resources, which should be used to benefit future generations, will have been squandered for short-term benefits, rather than investing in long-term infrastructure. By 2025, when Timor-Leste will have to buy a new power generation system, all the oil and gas from Bayu-Undan will have been sold, and we will have 1.7 million citizens who need health care, education and other services. Where will the money come from?"

Timor-Leste officials reportedly discussed the electricity project with a Chinese company as early as February 2008. La'o Hamutuk says in June 2008 the Finance Ministry invited bids for the work to be submitted within three weeks. A contract was to be signed by July 25. Prospective contractors were told they must "complete the whole project, from design to commissioning, of power plants and transmission lines within one year after the signing of the Contract Agreement." In October a contract was signed with the original firm, the Chinese Nuclear Industry 22nd Construction Co.

Government officials have given their assurance the project would comply with 2008 World Bank emissions guidelines, but La'o Hamutuk says the project has already violated several of those guidelines. They include use of the cleanest fuel economically available, use of fuel with a lower content of sulfur where economically feasible, and preparation of an environmental assessment.

"We do know that other technologies – hydroelectric, biogas, wind, solar, ocean, renewable fuels, locally extracted natural gas – are cleaner, less risky, respectful of the global climate, more sustainable, dependable and more appropriate to Timor-Leste," the NGO concludes.

For the good of the nation's 1.1 million people, environment and resources, the government should reconsider its heavy oil proposal. If not, Timor-Leste – or "Timor of the rising sun" – could soon be left in the dark.

## Afghanistan: No peace without mutual understanding

*“How can there be peace without people understanding each other, and how can this be, if they don’t know each other? How can there be cooperative coexistence, which is the only kind that means anything, if [people] are cut off from each other, if they are not allowed to learn more about each other?” – Lester B. Pearson, former Canadian prime minister and 1957 Nobel Peace Prize winner*

Afghanistan and Iraq are separated by just 750 miles – the shortest distance across Iran – and a world of difference. At \$800 Afghans earn one-fifth of Iraqis’ GDP. The rate of poverty and unemployment among Afghans is twice as high as in Iraq, and the average lifespan is 45 years in Afghanistan compared with 70 for Iraqis.

The contrast only begins to illustrate the challenge the U.S. faces in trying to understand this volatile region. The U.S. needs a better grasp of Islam and Christianity, of the geography, languages and cultures of the people, if it is to be an effective peacemaker in the region.

By relying instead on its military power, the U.S. has adopted a skewed and short-sighted policy toward these nations bridging the Middle East and Central Asia. In June Congress approved a supplemental budget that includes \$75 billion to fund military operations in Afghanistan, Iraq and Pakistan for the rest of fiscal year 2009. The measure provides only \$7 billion for humanitarian, civil affairs, reconstruction and diplomatic efforts.

However, the scale of U.S. military aid to Afghanistan seems beyond what the country can effectively use. For example, the U.S. plans to build up Afghan forces at an estimated cost of \$20 billion over the next few years – compared with a national budget of just \$1.1 billion this year.

The mere presence of foreign troops, along with mounting civilian casualties, serves as an effective recruiting tool for our enemies. With few jobs available, unemployed young men have little choice than to join the Taliban and fight for \$7 or \$8 a day. Unfortunately, when U.S. or NATO forces pursue Taliban soldiers, they often push their quarry across the border into Pakistan, where they link up with like-minded militants who together threaten to destabilize the state.

Ultimately, U.S. policies like these are apt to be self-defeating. A clear-cut military victory in Afghanistan or the wider region seems unlikely, and civilian deaths are stoking anti-U.S. sentiment. In addition, for every civilian killed in recent fighting in Afghanistan, an estimated 20 have died of poverty and hunger. Human crises like these cannot be resolved with weapons.

The conflict in Afghanistan also seems to conflict with criteria of the Church’s traditional, if now discredited, just war theory. The fighting does not adequately distinguish between combatants and civilians. The wanton death and destruction often seem out of proportion to the gains that are sought. An outright military victory over insurgents – non-state actors – seems increasingly unlikely. Sadly, the Church’s modern teaching on war seems to go unheard, for example, “Nothing is lost by peace; everything may be lost by war” (Pius XII, 1939) and “[War] is always a defeat for humanity” (John Paul II, 2003).

Rep. Jared Polis (D-CO) said after visiting Afghanistan, “One American soldier charged with working with local groups told me that when he arrived in a remote village he was assumed to be Russian because they hadn’t heard that the Russians had quit Afghanistan [in 1989]. This is the kind of information gap we are talking about.”

This degree of isolation illustrates the steep challenge the U.S. faces in helping a country provide water and health care, education and promotion of women, security and democracy for its own people. These are worthy objectives, but our friends and allies must set their own targets and timetables to achieve them. If we truly want to learn more about each other for the sake of peace, we might first have to assume the perspective of local citizens. The thought of a powerful moral leader in another time, another place, might be instructive:

“Recall the face of the poorest and the weakest person whom you have seen, and ask yourself if the next step you contemplate is going to be of any use to that person. Will that person gain anything by it? Will it restore that person to a control over his or her own life and destiny? In other words, will it lead to freedom for the hungry and spiritually starving millions?” (Mahatma Gandhi, 1947)

## Iraq: Refugees fall victim to weak world economy

*Iraqi refugees continue to struggle financially, both in their first country of refuge and even in the U.S., due to the failing world economy. Work visas are difficult and expensive to obtain in Syria and Jordan, where most have fled, and financial aid is minimal. The refugees soon deplete their savings, and many find themselves faced with eviction. Donor countries have been slow to respond to this human crisis. The Office of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) says funding of its work among Iraqi refugees and displaced stands at 52 percent.*

Syria and Jordan have admitted most of the estimated two million Iraqi refugees. However, the newcomers are treated as guests rather than as refugees and normally are not allowed to work. Aid is aimed at enrolling Iraqi children in Syrian schools, and preventing child labor and homelessness, for example. But the assistance is limited. UNHCR says it gives heads of households \$100 each month in Syria, with an additional \$10 for each dependent.

Refugee families find themselves strapped for cash, which has a direct impact on education. Among refugee children in Syria, 33,250 registered for the 2008-9 academic year, down 30 percent from a year earlier. While many might have returned to Iraq or been resettled, UNHCR says surveys indicate “the majority have dropped out due to economic hardship and the necessity for children to supplement the family income by working.”

The Iraqi government has come under criticism for not doing more for its own citizens who have fled to surrounding countries to escape the violence at home. However, falling oil prices have created a dilemma. When prices for oil, roughly 90 percent of the government revenue, dropped from more than \$150 a barrel last summer to less than \$40 a few months later, the 2009 federal budget shrunk from \$82 billion to less than \$60 billion. With few options to boost revenues, Parliament member Ismail Shukir Hartuy declared, “It’s a disaster. What are we going to do in 2009, 2010, 2011?”

The number of Iraqis who have returned home is not very encouraging. UNHCR says some 44,400 returned in the first four months of 2009, including 12,600 refugees and 31,800 internally displaced persons (IDPs). However, the number was consider-

ably lower than the rate a year earlier.

UNHCR says economic hardship was the principal reason most of the returnees went back, followed by an improved security situation at the time. A lack of educational opportunities in the country of asylum and decreasing hopes for resettlement also encouraged some to return.

However, refugees and IDPs often return to ransacked or occupied homes, a lack of basic services and few employment opportunities. Insecurity and violence can also prevent resettlement. According to UNHCR, families returning to the Al Katoon area of Ba’quba quickly left again after being threatened by local insurgents. Too often, refugees who return to Iraq after running out of resources later become displaced persons in their own country.

The International Organization for Migration (IOM) says about 250,000 people have returned, mostly to Baghdad, and most of these had been IDPs. In addition, an IOM survey shows most of the estimated 2.6 million IDPs would eventually like to return home, but don’t feel ready yet. Another 39 percent would like to either integrate in their current communities or resettle elsewhere. If these population movements are not reversed, IOM foresees serious consequences for Iraq’s political future, as entire neighborhoods and cities will remain homogenous.

Economic challenges continue to pursue refugees even after resettlement. The International Rescue Committee says only 10 percent of the refugees recently resettled in the U.S. found work within 120 days, compared with 74 percent in late 2007. It estimates one in eight among newly resettled refugees is at immediate risk of homelessness. One exasperated refugee asked, “Did you bring us here just to humiliate us?”

Meanwhile, the Iraqi culture – which suffered an incalculable loss with the destruction in 2003 of museums and libraries – continues to bleed. UNHCR found 35 percent of adult refugees in Jordan held a university or post-graduate degree, and 60 percent had at least a high school diploma. The UN agency has also registered more than 22,000 Chaldeans, a Christian ethnic group that traces its origin to ancient Mesopotamia. Will refugees like these, who have been integral to Iraq’s culture, ever return to help restore the cradle of civilization?

## U.S.: Complexities of Iraqi refugee processing

*The following article was written by Anthony Cortese, an intern with the Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns, and is based on information from Cathy Breen, a former Maryknoll lay missionary who has lived and worked with Iraqi refugees in Jordan and Syria for the past several years.*

Over two million refugees have fled Iraq since the beginning of the U.S.-led invasion in 2003. The majority of these refugees have found sanctuary in neighboring countries, while others have been welcomed in places such as Sweden and Australia. The U.S. had admitted fewer than 800 Iraqi refugees from 2003 until the middle of 2007.

In response to pressure from refugee rights and religious organizations, the U.S. initiated “large scale Iraqi refugee processing” in February 2007. Since then, the U.S. Refugee Admissions Program (USRAP) has significantly increased the number of Iraqi refugees admitted into the U.S.

Despite this progress, many Iraqi refugees applying for asylum in the U.S. are extremely frustrated by the process, particularly when they have family members in the U.S. ready to receive them or when they are rejected on unexplained grounds of “credibility” or “persecution of others.”

In the case of one family recently rejected by Department of Homeland Security (DHS), the father when asked couldn't produce his military document. He mentioned that the U.S. had given a 48-hour evacuation order over Iraqi TV right before the bombing of Baghdad. In response, his family fled to the north and returned two months later to their home, which had been burglarized. Among the things stolen was the father's military document, but the DHS interviewer did not believe his story. What was particularly painful was that the interviewer asked him, “Why didn't you report that the document was stolen to the police?” evidently unaware that absolutely no police or any form of security was available to report to at that time.

Another family of nine living in Damascus was apparently rejected by an interviewer because the man's military document stated that he worked as a “cook,” when in reality he worked at a military base overseeing management of the cafeteria – purely a clerical job. Originally hired to be a cook, his military supervisor saw that he had a degree in hotel

management and simply put his education to use. The DHS interviewer did not accept this story and rejected the family for lack of “credibility.”

When asked if they had any sense during the 1½ hour interview with a DHS representative that there were any discrepancies or misunderstandings, a member of another family replied, “No. In fact, the interviewer said ‘very good’ after each question.” When this particular family received their rejection form letter with “credibility” checked, the mother literally collapsed and had to be taken to the hospital. Her mother lives in Detroit, and her husband's brother lives in Detroit.

When these and similar cases were later presented to representatives of the Refugee Affairs Division at DHS, they promised to follow up on each. They also pointed out that interviewers are specially trained to work with traumatized Iraqi refugees. Interviews are supposed to be non-adversarial and officers are supposed to point out “inconsistencies” they have detected, giving an applicant an opportunity to explain. Each decision by an interviewer is reviewed the same day by a supervisor and can be appealed within 90 days.

According to DHS, army service or Baath Party membership does not cause automatic disqualification, yet if the applicant ever served in a situation where there was known to be persecution of others by anyone it will be difficult for them to get a U.S. visa. There is no “under duress” exemption. (Despite ample legal precedent since World War II, exclusion for “persecution of others” has not always been applied by the U.S. For example, in the wake of horrendous human rights violations by Central American security forces during the 1980s, many high level military officials were given asylum.)

People who accompany Iraqi refugees describe the devastation of those who are rejected for reasons that they feel are unreasonable and unjust and that remain unexplained on post-interview forms.

Although the U.S. refugee processing method has improved greatly, these human stories underscore the importance of advocating for its just and transparent implementation. No adequate restitution is possible for Iraqis' suffering, but a welcome to the country responsible for their displacement and a serious commitment to support Iraqi-led reconstruction of their homeland might help.



## El Salvador: FMLN wins presidency

*On March 15, El Salvador became the latest Latin American country to elect a progressive president when the FMLN's Mauricio Funes won with a narrow 51 percent of the vote. While Funes will have to negotiate with opposition parties that maintained their majority in Congress, he has already announced new measures and promises marking a significant shift from the ARENA party that had controlled the presidency for more than 20 years.*

In the weeks before his June 1 inauguration, Funes signaled significant changes by initiating a series of meetings with leaders of social organizations in a process that he calls a "Permanent Dialogue." Funes stated that he would end the process of criminalizing social movements by instead "welcoming them into the Presidential Palace" and designating two of his staff as permanent liaisons with the movements. Funes also participated in the Workers' March on May Day, a first for any Salvadoran president.

On June 1, inauguration day, Funes announced that he had formally re-established diplomatic relations with Cuba, making El Salvador the final Central American country to do so. That morning, Funes visited the tomb of Monsignor Oscar Romero and referred to the assassinated archbishop as an inspiration, holding up Romero's vision of a "preferential option for the poor" as a guiding theme for his presidency. He said that the country would no longer have a "government of the few, of the privileged" but one where all people would be "recognized for their talents and honesty, not for their connections or their last name."

It was not until after the mid-March election that the government released the bleak economic numbers. Two weeks after the election, the Central Bank announced that the economy was showing signs of recession with negative growth rates in the first quarter of 2009 as well as significant drops in remittances and overall economic activity. In the first five months of 2009, remittances totaled \$1.4 billion, a 10 percent drop compared to 2008, with May's remittances falling at an even faster rate. The new government will also inherit a fiscal deficit equal to at least 4.8 percent of GDP, a deficit Funes says he

will tackle by reducing tax evasion by businesses.

To confront the economic crisis, Funes launched his Global Anti-Crisis Plan which aims to create 100,000 jobs in the next year and a half as well as increasing and improving public services and infrastructure. The government plans to build 25,000 new houses and guarantee credit to small farmers. He announced a "System of Social Protection" that will carry out health, education and nutrition programs as well as establishing a basic pension for senior citizens in extreme poverty. Funes also promised to continue the Solidarity Network, a cash-transfer program, under the new name of Rural Community Solidarity Network with an increased focus on areas of rural poverty. In all, he plans to invest \$474 million dollars in these crisis-fighting initiatives. Much of that



**Mauricio Funes**

money will be loans from the Inter-American Development Bank, World Bank and the Central American Bank for Economic Integration that were originally sought by then President Tony Saca who served from 2005-2009.

Besides being the first electoral victory for the FMLN, another noticeable and perhaps not unrelated change in this election was the role played by the U.S. In the 2004 elections, similar to elections before it, members of the State Department made statements denouncing the FMLN; Rep. Tom Tancredo (R-CO) sponsored a bill that would cut off remittances from Salvadorans in the U.S. if the FMLN were to be democratically elected. However, this year when a group of 46 Republican legislators wrote a letter to President Obama urging him to cut off remittances if the FMLN were to win, the administration responded with public guarantees to the Salvadoran people that it would do no such thing. The U.S. embassy in San Salvador published a statement saying, "[W]e have made it very clear that this is a choice of the Salvadoran people that we will respect and that we look forward to, continuing our very positive relationship with El Salvador, and working with the next elected government." Without threats against them, the Salvadoran people were finally able to vote freely with no outside interference and the results show their desire for change in the political life of El Salvador.

## Peru: Police attack indigenous protest

*On the morning of Friday, June 5, 600 police and Special Forces officers opened fire on approximately 2,500 unarmed indigenous protesters who were blocking the main supply road just outside of Bagua, Peru. The blockade, one of many similar peaceful protests throughout Amazonian Peru that had been in place since April, was set up in response to a set of decrees passed in the last year to open up traditionally indigenous territories and national reserves to mining, logging, and oil drilling companies without previous consent or consultation of the indigenous communities. The following article was written by Hannah Rakoczy, an intern with the Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns.*

These “legislative decrees” (collectively known as the Law of the Jungle) were passed by President Alan Garcia under fast-track authorization (meaning he did not require Congress’ approval before implementing them), claiming the laws were necessary to execute the U.S.-Peru Free Trade Agreement signed in 2006. President Garcia then used the blockades as an excuse to declare a state of emergency in the region, suspend constitutional rights, and use unnecessary force and violence in an attempt to break through the demonstrators. Twenty-four police officers and over 40 protesters were killed in the ensuing encounter; more than 150 protesters were injured and over 250 are reported missing.

Rather than providing any kind of aid or medical assistance to those affected by the violence, the government responded to the incident by attempting to cover it up. It quickly blamed the protesters, who had been demonstrating peacefully for over 50 days and were armed with nothing more than wooden spears. The media reported the government’s official statement that only nine protesters had been killed despite eye-witness accounts that the number was actually much higher. Stating that the the protesters are “pseudo-indigenous” and “not first-class citizens,” President Garcia accused them of “savagery,” “barbarity,” and “elemental ignorance.” He also has accused the Venezuelan, Bolivian, and Nicaraguan governments of “inciting unrest” within his country; on June 15 he withdrew the Peruvian ambassador to Bolivia after Bolivian President Evo Morales condemned the massacre as genocide. In addition, seven indigenous Congress members were suspended for

120 days due to their hunger strike in protest of the government response to the massacre; a warrant of arrest for Alberto Pizango, a popular indigenous leader who is currently seeking refuge in Nicaragua, has also been issued.

Rather than give up in fear, however, the indigenous community has only become more resolved. Its leaders are calling for a permanent repeal of the Law of the Jungle, the creation of a permanent commission on indigenous issues with indigenous representation, recognition of property rights and titles to indigenous lands, the suspension of current free trade agreements (FTAs) with the U.S., European Union, China, and Chile, and the dismissal of Prime Minister Yehude Simon as well as other high-ranking administration members. The National Organization of the Amazon Indigenous People of Peru (AID-ESEP), an umbrella organization of over 30 separate indigenous communities, organized a national day of protest, held on June 11. The mass gatherings demonstrated overwhelming popular support for the indigenous community, and over the next few days spread from the main cities out into the countryside. Protests outside Peruvian embassies and consulates around the world were coordinated to coincide with the national demonstration and show solidarity with the indigenous population of Peru.

In light of the strength and determination of the indigenous protesters and their supporters, Congress agreed to temporarily suspend two of the more threatening decrees, and voted 82-12 on June 12 to permanently repeal them; the remainder of the laws were due to be debated in the coming weeks, despite claims by President Garcia that he would continue to push ahead with his model of development regardless of the outcome. After several days of negotiations with indigenous leaders, Prime Minister Simone stated that he would resign his office once the decrees are rescinded and the remainder of the demands are met.

Activists in the United States have asked the Obama administration to examine the current FTA with Peru to determine whether or not the decrees were in fact necessary for implementation. If so, the U.S. could be seen as directly responsible for the deaths that occurred in Bagua at the beginning of June. The examination might also lead the administration to take a closer look at similar existing FTAs

and be more careful when drafting future agreements. An official statement or position from the U.S. would put the Peruvian government under even closer international scrutiny and help ensure that the demands of protesters are met and that the situation is resolved peacefully, fairly, and quickly.

The situation in Peru can be seen as a foreshadowing of growing conflicts between indigenous communities and mining projects around the world. Governments, desperate to fuel growing economies, increasingly are encroaching on indigenous lands where much of the world's natural resources remain. In order to resist these intrusions, indigenous

communities are becoming progressively more organized. Unfortunately, the repression that occurred in Bagua is only an indication that as our planet's resources become more limited, indigenous populations will be further threatened by the governments that should be protecting them.

### **Faith in action:**

Go to the Quixote Center's website, [www.quixote.org](http://www.quixote.org), and sign on to a letter to President Obama calling for him to publicly denounce the massacre of June 5 in Bagua. Scroll through the list of "recent news" items to find the letter.

## **Honduras: Coup turns violent, sanctions imposed**

*On Sunday, June 28, members of the military ousted democratically elected President Jose Manuel Zelaya. The following is an excerpt from an article written by Laura Carlsen of the Center for International Policy's Americas Program and published on June 30. The entire article can be found at [www.americas.irc-online.org](http://www.americas.irc-online.org).*

“Thousands of Hondurans are in the streets to protest the coup d'état ... They have been met with tear gas, anti-riot rubber bullets, tanks firing water mixed with chemicals, and clubs. Police have moved in to break down barricades and soldiers used violence to push back protesters at the presidential residence, leaving an unknown number wounded.

“If the coup leaders were desperate when they decided to forcibly depose the elected president, they are even more desperate now. Stripped of its pretense of legality by universal repudiation and faced with a popular uprising, the coup has turned to more violent means.

“The scoreboard in the battle for Honduras shows the coup losing badly. It has not gained a single point in the international diplomatic arena, it has no serious legal points, and the Honduran people are mobilizing against it. ...

“Only one factor brought the coup to power and only one factor has enabled it to hold on for these few days—control of the armed forces. Now even that seems to be eroding.

“Report[edly] ... several battalions ... have rebelled against coup leadership. Both Zelaya and his supporters have been very conscious that within the

armed forces there are fractures. Instead of insulting the army, ... many protesters chanted, ‘Soldiers, you are part of the people.’ ...

“The Bolivarian Alliance (ALBA) [a collective of nine Latin American and Caribbean nations] issued a resolution, announcing the withdrawal of its ambassadors ... The group urged other nations to do the same — a growing list including Brazil and Mexico has already followed suit. ...

“Putting teeth behind the words has already begun. The Central American countries agreed to close off their land borders to all commerce with Honduras for the next 48 hours. The Central American Bank for Economic Integration has cut off all lending until the president is restored to power. ...

“The U.S. government has been unambiguous in its condemnation of the coup and support of President Zelaya. [On June 30] President Obama stated: ‘We believe that the coup was not legal and that President Zelaya remains the democratically elected president there.’ ...”

The coup represents a growing backlash against elected progressive governments throughout Latin America. It is important that voters' decisions are respected.

### **Faith in action:**

The Obama administration's response to the coup has been tepid so far. Call the State Department (202-647-5548) and say that the U.S. should step up the pressure against the military junta by suspending all military aid to Honduras and working multilaterally to support the restoration of President Zelaya.

## Kenya: Nairobi's two million slum dwellers

*Amnesty International's Demand Dignity Campaign, launched in May 2009, addresses the human rights violations that drive and deepen poverty. According to its description in AfricaFiles (6/1/09), the Amnesty International (AI) campaign "demonstrates the connection between deprivation, insecurity, exclusion, and denial of opportunities for people to participate in decisions that affect their lives." The overall goal of the campaign is to end the human rights violations that keep people poor. Much of the following article is taken from AI:*

As part of the campaign, on June 12 Amnesty International released a report, "The unseen majority: Nairobi's two million slum dwellers," on the dire conditions and gross human rights abuses endured in Nairobi's informal settlements. The report describes how half of Nairobi's population lives in informal settlements, but is crammed into only five percent of the city's residential area and just one percent of all land in the city.

Successive Kenyan governments have failed to protect slum dwellers; years of neglect by politicians have allowed informal settlements to swell, turning their residents into prisoners of poverty.

In the report, slum dwellers themselves describe a life characterized by deprivation, rising food prices, lack of health and education facilities, harassment by the authorities and the constant threat of being forcibly evicted. According to victims, forced evictions are often conducted at night or in bad weather conditions and excessive force is often deployed. Inadequate notice, or often no notice at all, is given and people's belongings are destroyed along with their homes.

The report identifies up to 127,000 people at immediate risk of having their makeshift homes and informal businesses demolished under a government-led plan to clean up the Nairobi River Basin.

Despite a national housing policy adopted four years ago that promised the progressive realization of the right to housing, the government has failed to provide accessible, affordable housing. The slum upgrading program has been too slow and under-resourced. Residents feel they have not been adequately consulted on its implementation.

The report draws on interviews with individuals and focus group discussions conducted by Am-

nesty International delegates in December 2008 and February/March 2009 with more than 200 residents of five informal settlements and slums in Nairobi: Deep Sea, Kibera, Korogocho, Mathare, and Mukuru Kwa Njenga. Those interviewed included both landlords/structure owners and tenants. The report also draws on interviews with government officials, in particular officials in the Ministry of Housing and the Nairobi City Council, as well as representatives of UN agencies, local non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and community-based organizations working in and on the slums and informal settlements. The report's findings are further informed by extensive published and unpublished research on the housing situation in the settlements by UN agencies and by local and international NGOs.

The report ends with a series of recommendations to the Kenyan government:

- Immediately cease all forced evictions, legislate and enforce a clear prohibition on forced evictions, and develop and adopt guidelines for evictions that comply with international human rights law. Until such steps have been taken, impose a moratorium on mass evictions.
- In relation to planned mass evictions regarding the Nairobi River Basin Program and planned construction of government infrastructure, ensure genuine consultation with the affected communities to identify all feasible alternatives to evictions, put in place appropriate procedural and legal safeguards, and develop a comprehensive relocation and compensation plan.
- Ensure that implementation of the slum upgrading program complies with the government's obligations in relation to the right to adequate housing. This includes the obligation to consult adequately with affected communities regarding slum upgrading and to ensure the affordability and accessibility of housing, particularly for the most disadvantaged sections of the community.
- Ensure that the slum upgrading program and policies address immediate needs in relation to security of tenure and access to essential services, in addition to medium- and long-term goals.
- Ensure a minimum degree of security of tenure that guarantees legal protection against forced eviction, harassment and other threats, including for those living in informal settlements and

slums, in line with government commitments under the slum upgrading strategy.

- Ensure, as pledged in the official housing policy, the development of low-income housing to meet the housing needs of the majority of urban poor, giving priority to the most marginalized and vulnerable groups in allocating public housing.
- Ensure the right to adequate housing and other economic, social and cultural rights enshrined in international human rights treaties to which Kenya is a party are included in the proposed new Constitution and reflected in domestic legislation.

The following recommendations are made to UN-HABITAT and UN Environment Program (UNEP):

- Ensure that the collaborative projects, in particular the Kenya Slum Upgrading Program (involving UN-HABITAT) and the Nairobi River Basin Program (involving UNEP) comply with human rights standards, including the government's obligation to consult properly the affected communities.
- Assist the Kenyan government - both central and local authorities - in fulfilling its obligations to guarantee the right to adequate housing.

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## Sudan: Significant challenges to free elections

*The following article was written by Alice Burger, an intern with the Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns.*

When the Sudanese government and the Sudan People's Liberation Movement/Army (SPLM/A) signed the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) in hopes of ending the on-going civil war, they agreed to elections. Although steps are being taken to prepare for elections in February 2010, uncertainty remains about whether the government will live up to its obligations. Meanwhile, conflict continues among ethnic groups in southern Sudan, often over land and resources, increasing the humanitarian crisis that has troubled the area for over 20 years.

The National Congress Party (NCP), which was in control of the government when the CPA was signed in 2005, has historically disregarded the civil rights of Sudanese citizens, suppressing dissenting voices. According to Enough!, the international community has not sufficiently ensured that free campaigning will take place in the run-up to the elections, potentially endangering the practice of open elections.

At the same time, the international community has not addressed the issue of power-sharing in the country. The NCP, as sole authority in the government for years, has not shared power with other groups. In order to build a lasting peace, the SPLM/A must be included in the governance of Sudan, but it is unclear how elections will fit into the over all goal of creating a power-sharing government.

Additionally, the logistics of the election are

daunting for the government to implement. Voter education efforts have been slow in a country where there have never been free elections. The rainy season poses a problem as well in southern Sudan, hindering voter registration efforts. And even if the elections do take place, the government is ill-prepared for the problems that it might face during and after the votes are cast.

Most importantly in southern Sudan, the lack of basic services for the people means that elections will be more difficult to accomplish. In recent months, violence has escalated in southern Sudan. Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF, Doctors Without Borders) reports that doctors in Jonglei and Upper Nile states have treated over 170 people for wounds sustained in conflicts there. In May, conflicts between ethnic groups resulted in the deaths of 66 people.

What is especially troubling about this situation is that the areas where the conflict is taking place are also areas with significant food shortages. On June 12, boats carrying grain and other supplies for the World Food Program, along with a number of other vessels, were attacked by a group of armed men. Four boats were sunk and all of the food was stolen from the remaining vessels. This has caused food supplies to be cut off for 19,000 people who are in desperate need of this assistance.

The danger posed by these armed groups has forced aid workers to use airplanes to deliver relief food. Unfortunately, the planes are more costly to use than boats and cannot carry as much food – each plane can only carry about five tons of cargo while several hundred tons need to be delivered.

## Zimbabwe: Coalition's first 100 days

*The following article was written by Alice Burger, an intern with the Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns.*

In February, Zimbabwe established a coalition government after its contested 2008 elections (as detailed in each *NewsNotes* since May-June of last year). In this coalition government, Robert Mugabe, the leader of the ZANU-PF party, retained his position of president while Morgan Tsvangirai, the leader of the Movement for Democratic Change (MDC), became prime minister – a newly-created position. At the time that the coalition government was established, several problems were apparent, including that the final authority within the government remained undefined and the distribution of cabinet positions was uncertain.

How has the government fared, now that it has been in power for over 100 days? Have some of the initial concerns and objections been addressed? Has the coalition government responded to the basic needs of the population?

In some ways, the compromise has formed a government that functions reasonably well and is making progress in addressing the political problems that face the country. Dzikamai A. Machingura of the Crisis in Zimbabwe Coalition wrote recently of the current state of the coalition government in his article “Has the political climate in Zimbabwe changed since the formation of the coalition government 100 days ago?” He reports that Mugabe and Tsvangirai have developed a “good working relationship” allowing the government to take some steps forward. The MDC has been able to conduct its business without interference, holding meetings and rallies freely. Other parts of civil society have been able to hold meetings as well. In general, the state security agents have relaxed the most restrictive policies, and the legislation supporting these practices may even be repealed.

The government, however, has not overcome many of the obstacles that threaten its success. Mugabe holds the final decision-making power, leaving Tsvangirai in a secondary position that goes against the spirit of the coalition. The repressive laws that have helped to keep Mugabe in power remain intact as well, potentially allowing further muting of opposition voices challenging government

practices.

Furthermore, many of the political prisoners remain in state custody without trials. Journalists continue to be harassed and some incarcerated by the government. State owned media sources supply distorted and biased information. Additionally, police and the judiciary apply the law unequally, and court orders are regularly disregarded.

The government also has failed to address the many needs of Zimbabwe's citizens, maintaining a very serious humanitarian and human rights situation in the country: 800,000 people are in need of food aid; an estimated 44,000 children under the age of five require treatment for malnutrition. Unemployment rates are over 80 percent. Prisoners do not receive adequate food, leading to chronic malnutrition and other hunger-related diseases. More than 1,000 prisoners have died in police custody since January.

Cholera also remains a threat to the citizens of Zimbabwe. According to UNICEF, 100,000 cases have been reported throughout the country and 4,000 people have died. Experts predict that the number of cases will rise again as the rainy season begins. Six million people lack access to clean drinking water – especially in the suburbs of Harare – and the sanitation system remains inadequate, leading to sewer eruptions. Women and children are most affected by this crisis because they have to search long hours to find safe drinking water and then carry the heavy containers back to their homes.

The education system remains in shambles – many schools, especially in rural areas did not re-open for the new academic year beginning in January. Those schools that are open lack the resources to provide an adequate education. The cholera outbreak puts further strain on the ability of children to receive an education because of the time that must be spent retrieving water.

The situation in Zimbabwe remains dire. While the members of the coalition government have created a working relationship with each other, many of the problems still remain, harming the people of Zimbabwe. Political repression has decreased, but the potential for further repression still exists. As the government continues to neglect the needs of its constituents, the people must work that much harder just to survive.

## UN: "Seal the Deal" in Copenhagen

*"The climate change crisis is the greatest humanitarian and development issue facing the world today." These are words continuously repeated by Ban Ki-moon, Secretary General of the United Nations.*

In keeping with this concern, the Secretary General has launched a major project to raise public awareness about climate change through the Copenhagen Seal the Deal campaign. This is a call to the governments of the world to agree this December, in Copenhagen, on a deal that will protect people and the planet from greenhouse gas emissions

The campaign is being promoted by the UN Environmental Program (UNEP) through posters and a rubber stamp bearing the Seal the Deal slogan. The rubber stamp can be duplicated all over the world. Everywhere, groups of people are asked to assemble in order to stamp their approval for a global agreement for a climate change solution that is fair, effective and rooted in scientific information that is clear and unequivocal. Individuals, businesses, churches and community groups are stamping the slogan and fixing their signatures to simple homemade scrolls and posters designed for the occasion.

Wherever possible, people are asked to link this occasion with a tree planting activity. Every tree that is planted will count toward achieving the UN goal of planting seven billion trees by the end of 2009 in order to help ameliorate the effects of greenhouse emissions.

While the Seal the Deal campaign was launched on World Environment Day, June 5, a good time for joining the campaign is during Climate Week, September 20-26, a week designated by the UN for gaining momentum in every corner of the world for Copenhagen. One can even join the campaign on line at [www.sealthedeal2009.org](http://www.sealthedeal2009.org). Every voice counts.

The Secretary General is well aware that the upcoming agreement may fall short of what is actually needed for avoiding severe climatic changes.

However, he believes that it is in the best interest of all to establish an agreement even if the agreement is weaker than it ought to be. He is tirelessly urging every nation to do what it can in order to protect its own long term interests and the interests of the entire planet. With this in mind, the Secretary has been contacting

and personally visiting heads of state, heads of government agencies and members of parliaments, coaxing all to come to terms with the clear need to mitigate carbon emissions. Country negotiators need to participate in the December meetings knowing they are backed by government commitments.

Fundamental to the Copenhagen agreement

is the call to nations that have been putting large quantities of carbon into the earth's atmosphere over long periods of time to take the greatest responsibility to reduce the amounts of carbon through binding commitments. New heavy emitters, especially China, Brazil and India, require a different standard. In their case the concept of Nationally Appropriate Mitigating Actions (NOMAs) will be applied. These are commitments that are serious, verifiable and reported to the United Nations. However, they are not on the same level as the long term emitters and they are not binding. This arrangement appears to be gaining acceptance by the United States and other states that had formerly resisted a tiered system of responsibility.

The next challenge to the nations is assistance through funding, scientific information, and technology sharing for countries most threatened by climate change at the present time. These are located in Small Island States, Delta areas, Sub-Saharan Africa and communities near the polar extremities.

### **Faith in action:**

Learn more about the Seal the Deal campaign at [www.sealthedeal2009.org](http://www.sealthedeal2009.org) or write to [sealthedeal@unep.org](mailto:sealthedeal@unep.org). In the U.S., write the UN Environmental Program for North America, 900 17th Street, N.W., Suite 506, Washington, D.C. 20006.



## UN: Convention on the Rights of the Child

*The following article was written by Amalia Kane, an intern with the Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns.*

Change is in the air, or, at least, the need for change is in the air. Healthcare reform, clean energy projects, working for justice – these key initiatives are grounded in one thing: they seek to make the world a better place for children. In that light, it is important that the rights of children remain in the forefront of our minds and are embodied in our public statements and legislation. For the sake of children in the U.S. and the rest of the world, the U.S. should ratify the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC).

In 1989, after a decade of worldwide collaboration, the UN General Assembly adopted the CRC. To date, 193 of the 195 UN member countries have ratified the CRC and have used it as a basis for child rights legislation; that is to say, every nation in the world except the U.S. and Somalia, which currently doesn't have a recognized government. The U.S. played a substantial role in the drafting of the document; in 1995, U.S. delegate to the UN Madeleine Albright signed it, suggesting that official U.S. ratification would soon follow. In 2002 the U.S. ratified the two optional protocols of the CRC (one on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography, and the other on involvement of children in armed conflict). However, as of today, a few months short of the 20th anniversary of the CRC, there has been very little movement on the U.S.'s ratification of the Convention.

The U.S. has yet to ratify the Convention because of strong opposition from political and religious conservatives. These opponents claim that implementation of the CRC would be an intrusion on national sovereignty and U.S. federalism, would threaten and diminish parental rights, and allow international scrutiny of U.S. social policy. In essence, they are more concerned with strict verbatim interpretations of the constitution and the protection of "our" way of life than they are with the safety and security of the world's children. What the opposition fails to take into account, however, is that the

civil and political rights of the CRC are designed to protect children from governmental actions and intrusions, not parental supervision. In fact, the role of parental guardianship and duty is emphasized several times throughout the document, including in the preamble and more than 10 separate articles.

Written out of the recognition of the particular need to protect youth (defined as persons under 18 year old) due to their heightened vulnerability as dependents, the CRC clearly states that the human rights of all children must be respected, honored, and protected.

Many organizations work tirelessly to do just that, here in the U.S. and around the world. However, millions of children are deprived of a safe home environment and lack basic necessities such as food, clothing, shelter, education, and proper health care. They make up over half of the world's refugees. In the U.S., it is estimated that 36.5 million people live in poverty; one in six of these is a child; 300,000 U.S. children are in danger of being prostituted (according to a University of Pennsylvania study). The U.S. ranks poorly among industrialized nations in relative child poverty, the gap between rich and poor, teen birth rates, and child gun violence. It ranks first in the number of incarcerated youth.

Obviously, much work must be done to secure the basic human rights of children, both in the countries that have ratified this Convention as well as in the U.S. By ratifying the CRC the U.S. can take a leadership role on this vital issue. The public commitment from the U.S. would shift the world-wide perception of the Convention: respect for the rights of children could move from being merely a nice idea to being something about which there is universal agreement. If the U.S. adds its weight – uniting with the world behind the rights of children everywhere – it would be a significant step towards a peaceful and more just future.

### **Faith in action:**

Contact the Campaign for the U.S. Ratification of the CRC for suggestions on how to get involved: [www.childrightscampaign.org](http://www.childrightscampaign.org), or write to the Campaign, c/o Covenant House, 5 Penn Plaza, Suite 319, New York, NY 10001.



Photo by Amalia Kane  
El Salvador, 2007



## Migration: A defining moment

*The following article was written by Anthony Cortese, an intern with the Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns.*

Recent trends in human migration reveal an important reality: the movement of people has reached a defining moment. All across the globe, traditional “push” and “pull” factors continue to displace millions of humans, most visibly in places such as the Democratic Republic of Congo, Sudan, Chad, Zimbabwe, Afghanistan, Pakistan, Iraq, Mexico, Guatemala, the Philippines and Sri Lanka. In these places, conflict, environmental degradation, mining, “free” trade agreements, globalization and even drone attacks are just some of the latest causes of the 350 million human displacements in the world.

As if the above problems were not enough, another development in migration is unfolding: mass numbers of humans are now migrating because of climate change. Of the 350 million displaced throughout the world, 26 million are considered “climate displaced people,” a term coined by the recently published “Human impact report: Climate change - The anatomy of a silent crisis.” Published on May 29 by the Global Humanitarian Forum and former UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan, this report is receiving considerable attention and debate in international spheres. Utilizing the most respected scientific data and making a “significant and conscious effort to neither over-state nor under-state the human impact of climate change,” the report will likely become one of the principal documents during the United Nations Climate Change Conference in Copenhagen later this year.

According to the report, climate displacement most seriously affects island states, several African nations, Southeast Asia and the delta areas and coastal zones of several countries. Rising sea levels, abnormal ocean temperatures, an increase in tropical storms and more frequent and intense droughts are just some of the causes of climate displacement.

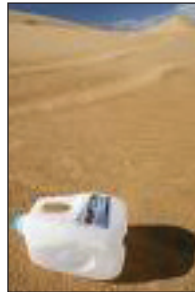
In Bangladesh, the frequency of major weather-related disasters has increased dramatically over the past decade. Since 2000, the country has been overwhelmed by more than 70 major disasters, leading to a massive migration from rural to urban areas. In

Uganda, a strange increase in drought frequency and intensity has led to a 30 percent decrease in agricultural output in some areas. This, in turn, has resulted in substantial internal and external displacement of farmers. In Ghana, a survey of 203 internal migrants found that the vast majority mentioned environmental reasons for leaving their homes. And in small islands such as Tuvalu, Kiribati and the Maldives, rising sea levels are already sending people away from their homes. The people of Tuvalu, for example, have grudgingly accepted the idea of relocation and have started moving to New Zealand, under the terms of a negotiated migration scheme. As the report notes, “Where adaptation isn’t feasible, migration is the main alternative.”

Cases such as these, however, are just the beginning: According to the report, if displacements continue at the current rate, the number of climate displaced people will triple by the year 2030. This presents humanity with a daunting task: We will have to respond to not only the more traditional sources of migration – which are crises of their own – but also to nearly 100 million climate displaced people.

There is an irony in this new wave of migration: Before the development of agriculture some 8,000-10,000 years ago, movements of people reflected “migrations” of other animals. Like other animals – mammals and birds -- humans would undertake seasonal journeys in response to changes in habitat, food availability and weather. Further, humans would work in “flocks” or “herds” to ensure the safe migration of their fellow species.

Paradoxically, this new wave of climate displacement is taking the human race back in time. Like our ancestors, many humans have no permanent home; they find themselves entirely at the mercy of the climate, just as the climate is at the mercy of wasteful consumers. Like our ancestors, many humans are undertaking seasonal journeys – this time because the seasons are more extreme. Like our ancestors, for some, growing one’s own food is not an option; scavenging is the only choice. And like our ancestors, we must once again work in “flocks” to ensure the safe migration of our fellow humans. However, unlike our ancestors, we are now the cause of our own displacement.



## Special series: Corporations in the U.S., part 4

*The corporate regulatory system in the U.S. was created over many decades. While ostensibly created to rein in corporations' power, in many ways regulatory agencies instead have been used to limit competition and public influence.*

In 1887, the first regulatory agency, the Interstate Commerce Commission (ICC), set the mold for future bodies. Originally proposed by frustrated citizens unable to stop the railroads' unwanted actions, the ICC's formation eventually was overtaken by the leaders of the railroads themselves. Documents from the time show that executives saw the ICC as an effective way to shield the railroads from the growing Populist movement which called for tough state laws and government ownership of railroads and utilities. Then-Attorney General Richard Olney explained to executives that the ICC was to be "a sort of barrier between the railroad corporations and the people." Through their influence, railroad leaders were able to design the ICC to pay the costs of coordinating the industry in terms of standards, inspections and enforcement while guaranteeing a profit for large corporations. Profits were guaranteed by setting price limits -- not maximum limits, but minimum prices so that smaller railroads could not undercut the corporations. The Railroad Gazette opined its hope that the ICC would "go ahead and catch every law-breaking rate cutter in the country." John D. Rockefeller hoped it would stop what he called the "ruinous competition" of the smaller railroads.

Seeing the benefits brought to the railroads by the ICC, corporate leaders in a host of other industries often led the push for, or at least were deeply involved in, the formation of regulatory agencies for meat packing, insurance, banking, communications, etc. (Gabriel Kolko has written on this history using original documents from the time.)

After the Great Depression, President Franklin Roosevelt created 42 major regulatory agencies and programs for such specific sectors as broadcasting, oil and agriculture production, airlines, etc. As William Greider notes in *Who Will Tell the People?*, "The explosion of modern regulation, more than anything else, is what brought the money to Washington and transformed the capital from a sleepy small town to a glamorous power center."

In the 1960s another flourish of regulation be-

gan with 53 programs enacted; from 1970-80, 130 more regulatory laws were passed. The new agencies, such as the Environmental Protection Agency or the Occupational Safety and Health Administration, differed from previous ones in that they were not limited to specific sectors like oil or airlines, but could police corporations in any sector. This led corporations to create multi-sector coalitions staffed with hundreds of lawyers and lobbyists providing expert advice for the new laws and regulations.

In 1986, Monsanto lobbied for regulations on genetically engineered (GE) crops even though no such products had been produced yet and successfully managed to get rules passed that allow manufacturers, not the government, to determine the dangers of GE crops, and permit testing only when corporations want. The rules also stipulate that consumers would not be notified which foods are genetically changed so as to not "mislead" the public by implying that there was reason for concern.

Greider writes, "Instead of containing the political influence of concentrated economic power and liberating government from its clutches, the steady diffusion of authority has simply multiplied the opportunities for power to work its will. The original progressive purpose of the New Deal has been stood on its head and now the weak and unorganized segments of society are the principal victims."

In her aptly titled piece "Sheep in wolf's clothing," Jane Anne Morris writes: "1) Regulatory agencies have too much discretionary authority, which is almost invariably abused. 2) They combine legislative, executive, and judicial power in one place. 3) Their personnel and outlook reflect the views of the corporations they are supposed to be regulating. 4) Since individuals and small businesses can't afford the time and expense to fully participate, large corporations dominate. 5) Procedural considerations are so intricate and demanding that matters of fairness, justice and overall policy questions, not to mention common sense, are ruled irrelevant if they come up at all."

Today the regulatory system in the U.S. is, at best, dysfunctional requiring very significant reforms. But even with good regulatory reform, we will have to make deeper changes in order to truly rein in corporate power.

## Special series: Ecological economics, part 4

*Earlier in this series, we focused on the overall size and growth of the economy. The issue of scale or overall size is the key difference between ecological economics and traditional economics: Proponents of ecological economics believe that scale is an economy's primary challenge, while traditional economists rarely consider it. Since these two groups hold dissimilar opinions about the limits to an economy's size, they also hold very different views on the distribution of wealth and allocation of resources, which we will consider in this fourth part of the series.*

If you accept the premise that we cannot continue to grow the global economy indefinitely, then distribution becomes the only real solution to overcoming poverty. As Brian Czech, president of the Center for the Advancement of the Steady State Economy, wrote, "Given a global economy exceeding its maximum sustainable scale, the only ethical and ecologically economic approach to alleviating poverty while moving closer to sustainable scale is the capping of income and wealth, with pre-existing excess used to alleviate poverty." This cap should be defined democratically and could start with voluntary caps that gradually move to mandatory caps. Another approach would be to define a maximum proportion in income between the highest paid and lowest paid people in a company, city, state, nation, or even on a global level.

A more equitable distribution of costs and benefits is considered controversial for those who believe that the rules of the current market system are fair -- in this mindset, someone accumulates wealth due to his or her hard work or ingenuity. To distribute the "hard-earned" wealth of the rich to the "lazy" poor in such a situation would be an injustice. But when we consider a person's wealth, ecological economists look at how that wealth was created and who bore the costs of that creation. Wealth is often created by nature or society, and many costs of production are borne by society instead of by the producer. Wealth created by nature or society is part of the commons

and should be distributed equitably.

For example, when a subway station is built near a house or business, the value of those homes and businesses increases through no work of their owners. This is wealth created by society. Similarly, if the government were to demand cuts in oil production, this would raise oil prices and profits for oil companies. Again, this wealth was created not by the hard work of oil companies, but by a societal decision. Low income families that spend larger parts of their income on rent and energy would be most heavily affected by both decisions.



Looking at costs, when a business pollutes a stream without penalty, it can maintain its profits since it is not paying to clean up the waste. In this country, those costs are currently covered by society through the Environmental Protection Agency's massive Superfund. Yet the human costs of that contamination are shared unequally as pol-

luting industries are statistically much more likely to be located in communities of color.

Ecological economists design policies that governments could use to reduce overall scale, capture the value created by nature and society, and address unequal distribution. In the case of cutting oil production, for example, the government could create a mechanism to capture the excess profits that oil companies make and distribute the excess to those most affected by rising prices. The cap and dividend system -- money raised from auctioning off carbon rights is then disbursed evenly to every member of the country -- is another workable option that has been proposed by Rep. Chris Van Hollen (D-MD).

Many environmentally focused economists think that pricing is the issue. That is, if we could account for all the externalities of production -- costs or benefits, like those above, not counted for in the market -- into the prices of goods and services, then we could rely on the market to achieve the economy's correct scale and a good distribution. Yet determining all externalities is nearly impossible. First, many goods and services provided by nature have no price -- consider the ozone layer, climate stability,

natural water systems and dozens of others. There is some movement to measure the value of some of these services, but it is incredibly difficult, perhaps impossible, to measure their true value. Second, to correct all the prices in an economic system would be a staggering task. Resource extraction and waste emissions are part of every economic activity, so at least two new costs must be calculated into most every input in the production of all goods and must be fed into the market to be reflected in prices. Then as the market adjusts to these new prices, it will change costs of inputs, entailing new measurements and new prices. This would require monitoring by a centralized body, which goes against the original notion of using the free market to solve the problem. As Herman Daly and Joshua Farley wrote in the workbook for their ecological economics textbook, "There is ... little reason to believe that market economists

can calculate the efficient price of nonmarket goods any better than Soviet planners could calculate the efficient price of market goods."

According to ecological economists, the necessity of maintaining the size of the global economy within the limits of earth means that wealth distribution is critical. We can no longer rely on endless growth to fight poverty; without growth, wealth distribution is the only way to achieve poverty reduction. It is only after addressing issues of scale and distribution that ecological economists look to questions of allocation. Only when the economic limits have been established within the possibilities of nature, and a legal framework is established that distributes costs and benefits equitably, will a market system work within the limits of the planet, without creating unsustainable inequalities.

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## Market speculation: An update

*Much movement is underway in the administration and Congress around excessive speculation in food and energy commodities (see NewsNotes, July-August 2008), but calls and letters are needed, demanding that Congress act quickly.*

In a May 13 letter to Congress, Treasury Secretary Timothy Geithner wrote of the administration's expectations on this issue. Its proposed measures to rein in commodity speculation go much further than expected, though not quite far enough. Geithner's letter has been endorsed by both Rep. Collin Peterson, chair of House Agriculture Committee, and Rep. Barney Frank, chair of House Finances Committee. The administration later sent an 85 page white paper which spells out its expectations for financial regulation reform in greater detail.

The administration calls for clearing almost all trades through an exchange, a big improvement on the unregulated markets created in the past few years. By clearing through an exchange, government regulators would have access to the information needed to avoid meltdowns like the current recession. An improvement would be to require exchange trading (not just clearing) because that would provide information not only to regulators, but to the

public which would be able to see and point out imbalances in the market. The current crisis shows that relying only on regulators is not enough. Making information public ensures fewer major problems in the future.

Another positive item regarding commodity speculation was the release of a study by the Senate Permanent Subcommittee on Investigations that details how speculation directly contributed to high wheat prices in the past three years.

Advocates on international hunger issues are concerned that Congress probably will not vote on financial regulation laws until the fall, which will be too late to avoid another crisis of high food and energy prices. It's clear that speculation is the main cause of the current rise in oil prices, despite record low demand and high supplies. It is important that members of Congress know that their constituents are aware of the problem and want re-regulation of the commodity futures markets.

### **Faith in action:**

Call your representative and senators and demand that Congress stop excessive speculation in food and energy commodities as quickly as possible.

## New debt crisis on the horizon

*Ten years ago, debt campaigners, particularly the Jubilee campaign, forced the world to focus on the unjust and overwhelming burden of debt being carried by many impoverished countries. Using the turn of the millennium as a year of jubilee, people of faith and good will around the world gave the debt crisis of the 1990s a human face and made its resolution a moral imperative. The debt crisis of the late 1990s was predominantly visible in Sub-Saharan Africa, although its grip included countries in Latin America, Asia and the Pacific as well.*

Over a decade earlier, Latin America and the Philippines had been at the center of a debt crisis storm when activists like the Philippines' Freedom from Debt Coalition and the international Debt Crisis Network had effectively engaged commercial and bilateral creditors in debate about proposed solutions.

Building on the educational and advocacy efforts of the 1980s, debt campaigners in the 1990s developed significant political will for debt cancellation, and creditors, including the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank, agreed to an evolving set of policies – ultimately the HIPC (highly indebted poor country) Initiative - that were to have made debt “sustainable” for the most impoverished, highly indebted countries.

Under the leadership of Jubilee South and their allies, a vigorous debate about debt continued long after bilateral and multilateral creditors considered the matter settled. Central to the dissatisfaction of campaigners were macroeconomic policy conditionalities attached to every debt cancellation proposal, as well as to new loans. Ongoing efforts continued to increase the number of countries able to benefit from debt cancellation schemes; to preclude the destructive impact of vulture funds on vulnerable countries; to address the deep injustice of illegitimate debt; to recognize the reality of ecological debt; to make visible the systemic injustice that leads to repeated debt crises and to create just international structures for dealing with unjust, overwhelming or disputed debt obligations.

After nearly 30 years of struggle to end the debt bondage of impoverished countries, the current financial and economic meltdown is likely to cause yet another global debt crisis. Already made more

vulnerable by food insecurity, wildly fluctuating energy prices, the impact of HIV, AIDS and other treatable diseases and ecological destruction, the poorest countries of the world are reeling from the current financial and economic crisis that began in the global North.

As governments gathered at the UN Conference on the Financial and Economic Crisis and Its Impact on Development (June 24-26), the global debt movement insisted that

- international financial institutions and global economic and financial governance must be democratic and accountable;
- measures to address the present crisis should not be financed through new lending;
- debt cancellation and repudiation of illegitimate debt are needed to free up resources for crisis responses;
- new mechanisms for the resolution of debt disputes should be established; and
- the UN must address the linkages between debt, trade and other issues and support the development of alternatives.

The UN Conference held in New York under the leadership of Maryknoll Father Miguel d'Escoto Brockman, president of the UN General Assembly, gave focus to three extremely important challenges inherent to a just and lasting response to the crash of the global economy. The first is the importance of defining and implementing solutions through a completely inclusive process, making the UN General Assembly, where all nations have voice and vote – rather than the G8 or the G20 - the appropriate venue for addressing the crisis. The second is recognizing that deep transformation of the global economy itself is necessary. The third is that, as Fr. d'Escoto said in his opening address, “We must collectively adopt a set of decisions that, as far as possible, meet the needs of all,” which included the great community of all nations and its shared home, Mother Earth.

### **Faith in action:**

Contact Jubilee USA about ongoing educational and advocacy efforts for debt cancellation: [www.jubileeuusa.org](http://www.jubileeuusa.org); 202-783-3566; 212 East Capitol Street, N.E., Washington, D.C. 20003.

## Torture: Indispensable truths

*The following article was written by Teyvn East, a Discipleship Year volunteer who has worked with the Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns since September 2008.*

President Obama's quick action upon entering office to halt military commission procedures, support freedom of information, and issue an executive order calling for an end to torture and the closure of Guantánamo, was applauded by human rights advocates around the globe. Unfortunately, Obama's principled stance has lacked consistency. In recent months he has

opposed a Commission of Inquiry, prevented the release of photographs depicting detainee abuse, and articulated a plan which would reform (and reinstate) military commissions and create a legal framework for indefinite detention.

Righting the wrongs of the previous administration's interrogation and detention policy is no easy task. However, the only way to repair the damage done and redeem the U.S.'s credibility as a proponent of human rights is to commit to a process of accountability and to fully comply with all international treaties and human rights laws.

Full accountability requires declassification of all evidence surrounding torture practices, the implementation of a Commission of Inquiry (or Truth Commission) and legal prosecutions where there is adequate evidence. Every report on the abusive techniques employed at Abu Ghraib and Guantánamo have been limited to a single agency or department. Key players, who developed legal arguments and endorsed the techniques which fostered a culture of abuse, have not testified for the record. Key documents relating to interrogation policy and practices are not available to the public. The only way to determine what crimes were committed and to prevent them from being repeated is to establish an independent, nonpartisan commission to investigate the actions of the executive branch, the CIA, the justice department, the military and Congress. Furthermore, Obama should not abuse his classification powers or use state secret privilege to hide the history of abusive counter-terrorism policies. Truthfulness is imperative in redress of past injuries and restoring

the integrity of this nation.

On May 21, Obama spoke at the National Archives about his plans to close Guantánamo and reform the military commissions. The fundamental flaws of military commissions are their lack of



Anti-torture vigil at White House, winter 2009; photo courtesy of 100 Days Campaign to Close Guantánamo

independence, their acceptance of dubious evidence, and their provisional nature. Managed by the military, these commissions are vulnerable to pressure from the executive branch. Obama is restricting the use of hearsay evidence, but it is still admitted in the commission proceedings. The ability to prepare a defense is strained when prosecutorial procedures are ad hoc and untested,

often leading to legal challenges and delays. Human Rights Watch speaks to the risk of reviving such an unpopular program, "The unhappy history of these commissions virtually guarantees that in future commissions the unfairness of the proceedings will distract from the gravity of the crimes." The most expedient, reliable and just due process for terrorist suspects is our federal court system.

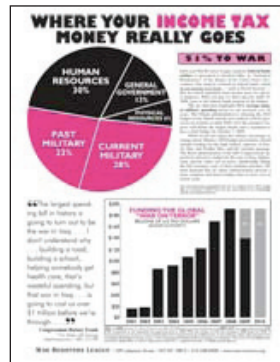
In the same speech, Obama said that he would work with Congress to write legislation that would set up an "appropriate legal regime" for detaining terrorism suspects without trial. Human Rights Watch notes that indefinite detention would "create a glaring loophole in the U.S. justice system, and set a dangerous precedent for other types of prosecutions." The Bagram Air Force Base, which is being expanded, still holds 600 detainees who have been denied the right to trial. For people abroad who have lived under military dictatorships, the U.S. military commissions and the threat of indefinite detention too closely resemble the gross injustice of such oppressive rule. It also gives a signal to repressive rulers around the world that acting outside of the law is permissible and tolerated by international players.

The U.S. cannot be a nation of principles if its policies and actions are not congruent with its espoused values. Lack of integrity undermines trust, strains foreign relations, and challenges needed multinational cooperation. Obama himself stated that moral authority is the United States' "strongest currency in the world." When actions are congruent with values, it will not only provide greater security but can heal the soul of this nation.

## Resources

1) **Film: “Scenes from a parish”:** In 2001, Fr. Paul O’Brien arrived at St. Patrick parish in Lawrence, MA and soon discovered that trying to foster an inclusive community amidst the ethnic tensions of this working-class, multicultural parish would be no mean feat. Older parishioners were resentful of a new generation of immigrants, and other parishioners tried to reach out to those in need but faced cultural entanglements that grew more complicated with the passage of time. Filmed over four years, “Scenes from a parish” explores the personal stories of a Catholic parish struggling to reconcile the ideals of faith with the cultural realities of a globalized United States. See [www.scenesfromaparish.com](http://www.scenesfromaparish.com) for more information or contact filmmaker James Rutenbeck at [jrutenbeck@gmail.com](mailto:jrutenbeck@gmail.com), 978-204-8935.

2) **Chart: Where your income tax really goes:** Each year, the War Resisters League (WRL) analyzes federal funds outlays of the budget of the U.S. government. WRL’s analysis is based on federal funds, which do not include trust funds — such as Social Security — that are raised separately from income taxes for specific purposes. What you paid (or didn’t pay) by April 15, 2009, goes to the federal funds portion of the budget. To download the chart, go to <http://www.warresisters.org/federalpiechart>, or contact WRL for copies at 212-228-0450; 339 Lafayette Street, New York, NY 10012. If you have questions about ordering, email [wrl@warresisters.org](mailto:wrl@warresisters.org). Copies are available for \$.10 each (1-199), \$.07 each (200 or more), \$.06 each (500+) plus 20 percent postage. Call for information on very large or rush orders.



grams, odious debt, health and the link between debt and global AIDS. It also includes action materials with advice on how to start a Jubilee local group, work with the media, and write letters to elected officials. Available for download or ordering online at [www.jubileeusa.org/?id=118](http://www.jubileeusa.org/?id=118). Full color kits cost \$5. You can order online or contact Jubilee USA, 212 E. Capitol Street, NE, Washington, D.C. 20003; 202-783-3566; [co-ord@jubileeusa.org](mailto:co-ord@jubileeusa.org). Please allow 2-3 weeks for us to process your order.

4) **Blog: Waging Nonviolence:** To read current postings about actions and efforts for peace and nonviolence, check out the new blog, [www.wagingnonviolence.org](http://www.wagingnonviolence.org); well-known activist Kathy Kelly is a regular contributor. According to its description, Waging Nonviolence “is a community and a resource for news, analysis and discussion on the many ways that ordinary people around the globe are using nonviolence every day, often under the most difficult circumstances. We welcome activists, students, scholars and critics, as well as those just discovering nonviolence, to read and take part.”

5) **Faith-economy-ecology:** The Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns is giving special priority in 2009 to the connections between our faith, the global economy and ecological justice. Check our website for several related resources, including items from the May 2009 forum held in Washington, D.C.: [www.maryknollogc.org/](http://www.maryknollogc.org/)

6) **“Together with Africa: Celebrating hope”:** The Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns will give special focus to Africa in the months prior to the Catholic Church’s Extraordinary Synod, October 4-25. Sign up for a free weekly email from our office that will include a monthly prayer; a weekly Africa update and action with a focus on the countries where Maryknoll has experience, as well as important trans-regional issues such as ecology, poverty, violent conflict, HIV and AIDS, the impact of U.S. policy on justice, peace and reconciliation; and a weekly story of hope from Africa. Send your name, email, city and state to [ogc@maryknoll.org](mailto:ogc@maryknoll.org) to sign up.