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# The global water crisis – food for thought

Water is essential to life, yet only 2.6 percent of all the water on Earth is usable freshwater. “With every forest that is razed to the ground, with every acre of wetland that is drained dry, with every stream that is polluted with runoff from nearby factory farms, that number drops,” writes a recent publication of the Interfaith Center on Corporate Responsibility (“The Global Water Crisis,” December 6, 2004). Lack of access to water and its increasing commodification are exacerbating poverty and disease and burdening women who have little access to decisions made about the resource in which they are the main stakeholders.

NewsNotes begins 2005 with a theological reflection on water, written by Liam Bergin, rector of the Irish College, Rome, from “Water for Life!”, a booklet published during the International Year of Freshwater by the Ecology Working Group of the Justice, Peace and Integrity of Creation Promoters of religious congregations in Rome. We plan to continue our reflection on water throughout the year.

Water is a primordial reality whose importance and symbolism touches every level of existence. Ancient myth and modern science converge when they see water as the cradle of life, the amniotic fluid that holds the embryo of evolution and growth. As the basic constituent of all organic material, water is necessary for the existence of all living things, human, animal and plant. Its presence assures life and growth; its absence presages death and decay.

Water refreshes and renews: a pool revives and restores limbs that are tired and weary; a fountain cools and soothes a spirit that is burdened and troubled; a bath cleans and purifies a body that is dirty and contaminated. Not surprisingly, people choose places close to water for holidays to be renewed and refreshed.

Water has a cycle all its own that is beyond our control. The rain that falls on all, rich and poor alike, reminds us that creation is a gift entrusted to our care. Water belongs to no one in particular but is freely given for the good of all.

Whenever politics or economics seek to block general access to this universal right, the natural order of things is upended. “The principle water difficulty today is not one of absolute scarcity, but rather of distribution and resources ... Access and deprivation underlie most water decisions. Hence linkages between water policy and ethics increasingly emerge throughout the world.” [from “Water, An Essential Element for

Life,” for the Third World Water Forum (Kyoto, March 16-23, 2003.) For copies of the text in several languages go to [http://www.vatican.va/roman\\_curia/pontifical\\_councils/justpeace/index.htm](http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/pontifical_councils/justpeace/index.htm)]

In the Judeo-Christian tradition the rich symbolism of water finds a wonderful summary in the “Prayer over Baptismal Waters” in the Rite of Baptism. At the very dawn of creation the Spirit of God breathed on the waters making them the source of all goodness. The waters of the great flood were a sign of the waters of baptism, prefiguring the life to come, an end to sin and a new beginning for all creation. Through the waters of the Red Sea the Lord led Israel out of Egypt. In the waters of baptism the new People of God is freed from the slavery of sin. Through the Jordan River, the Lord brought his chosen ones into the land of Canaan to live in integrity and peace. Through the waters of baptism, God’s pilgrim people enter the promised land where justice and harmony prevail. The prophets announced a future cleansing which would create a new heart and bestow a new spirit. John the Baptist preached a baptism for the forgiveness of sins and dramatically prefigured the dawn of redemption with his rite of washing.

In fulfilment of his baptism, Jesus died on the cross and, as water and blood flowed from his side, he opened for us the way to salvation.

Baptism is not a rite of passage into a privileged club. It is primarily a commitment to live in the service of our sisters and brothers and to manifest the justice of our God and Father as Jesus did. It is the sacrament by which believers express their commitment to live as the Spirit-filled community that seeks to anticipate the fullness of life that God holds in store for all creation.

- “Water for Life!,” published by the Ecology Working Group of the Justice, Peace and Integrity of Creation Promoters of religious congregations in Rome, is available in multiple languages at [www.ofm-jpic.org/agua](http://www.ofm-jpic.org/agua).

- “The Global Water Crisis,” published by the Interfaith Center for Corporate Responsibility, is available for \$5. ICCR, 475 Riverside Drive, #1842, New York NY, 10115; (212)870-2295; [info@iccr.org](mailto:info@iccr.org); [www.iccr.org](http://www.iccr.org)



## East Timor-Australia revenue split on hold

*At the close of 2004 it seemed increasingly unlikely that East Timor and Australia would agree soon on a formula to share revenues from large oil and gas fields beneath the Timor Sea. Talks broke off Oct. 27, 2004, without resolving the issue.*

Billions of dollars in potential revenue are at stake. One major issue has been the question of where to draw a permanent maritime boundary between the two countries. Australia wants the line to follow its extensive continental shelf, which would bring Australian control to within 90 miles of East Timor's coast. East Timor argues that maritime law requires the line to be drawn midway between the two nations.

Australia and East Timor signed the Timor Sea Treaty in 2002. The treaty assigns East Timor 90 percent of the revenues from the Bayu Undan field, which could bring the government up to \$3.3 billion over the next 20 years. However, a proposed unitization agreement under the treaty would give Australia 82 percent and East Timor 18 percent of the revenues from the much larger Sunrise and Troubadour fields – the so-called Greater Sunrise project.

Unitization is the process through which two parties agree to share revenues from oil and natural gas resources located in two jurisdictions. The revenues are allocated in the same ratio as the geographic distribution of the field. East Timor's parliament has not yet ratified the unitization agreement.

There had been indications that an agreement might be reached by the end of 2004. Jose Ramos-Horta, East Timor's foreign minister, predicted in August that "Australia will give us a Christmas gift."

Some gift. The value of oil and gas reserves beneath the Timor Sea is estimated at \$30 billion. Prime Minister Mari Alkatiri says that, with the present maritime boundary, East Timor would receive an estimated \$4 billion from those reserves. He says a maritime boundary midway between the two countries should give East Timor \$12 billion instead.

"The Australian government has behaved very unfairly to us," East Timor President Xanana Gusmao says. "We fought for 24 years. Many countries said it was a dream." Gusmao estimates that East Timor is losing \$365 million a year from disputed oilfields over which Australia claims jurisdiction. East Timor's annual budget is about \$120 million.

Australia claims that its current maritime boundary

with East Timor – which was set earlier between Australia and Indonesia – legally entitle it to an 82 percent share. East Timor argues that the boundary should be redrawn to recognize its rightful claim to a greater share of the resources.

Nearly three years after independence, East Timor remains one of the poorest countries in the world. Its estimated per capita income is \$500. Meanwhile, Australian industry has been trying to persuade East Timor that approving the unitization agreement is in its best interests. Don Voelte, chief executive of Perth-based Woodside, Australia's second-biggest oil and gas producer, urged East Timor to ratify it by the end of 2004 to avoid holding up the Greater Sunrise project for as long as a decade. Woodside spokesman Rob Millhouse warned that, if there were no agreement by the end of 2004,

"the project stalls, and that means we won't spend any more money on it."

Commercial partners have invested \$150 million so far on studies, exploration and drilling for the Greater Sunrise project. Its reserves are valued at an estimated \$25 billion. If

development proceeds, a further \$4.5 billion will be invested in production and processing facilities. East Timor has so far refused to ratify the unitization agreement because its entitlements could be affected by changes in the maritime boundary. Once a permanent boundary is fixed, the two governments would renegotiate their share of revenue from the project.

Meanwhile, Gusmao, who led armed opposition to Indonesian occupation and spent seven years in jail in Jakarta, has criticized comments by Australia's foreign minister. Alexander Downer said East Timor should feel grateful to Australia for its leadership of UN armed intervention in 1999, which helped free East Timor from Indonesian occupation. "Okay, 1999, thank you very much," Gusmao says. "But if Australia thinks all our suffering during the war is over with champagne... We say no, don't hide the past."

### **Faith in action:**

Write to the Australian Embassy at 1601 Massachusetts Ave., N.W., Washington, D.C. Urge the country to negotiate a permanent maritime boundary midway between Australia and East Timor, or to submit the issue to International Court of Justice for arbitration.



*Banners at an April 2004 rally in Dili, East Timor. Photo courtesy of [www.timorseajustice.org](http://www.timorseajustice.org)*

## Burma: A military junta by any other name...

*Despite claims of moving Burma toward democracy, the ruling military junta recently extended Aung San Suu Kyi's house arrest by another year. Some delegates to the annual summit of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) were privately critical of the action, but a draft resolution directed at Burma was reportedly blocked by Thailand, Burma's immediate neighbor and a major trading partner.*

Suu Kyi's National League for Democracy (NLD) won a landslide victory in national elections in 1990, but the winners were never allowed to take office. Suu Kyi, 59, has spent most of the past 14 years under house arrest.

The extension of Suu Kyi's confinement was announced during the ASEAN meeting in Vientiane, Laos. "When they came here we were promised that the roadmap (to democracy) is on, they're moving toward democracy, they will do everything possible, so that's why everybody has taken a positive way," Malaysian foreign minister Syed Hamid Albar said after delegates abandoned the effort to adopt the resolution.

The draft resolution expressed concern over the junta's decision to extend Suu Kyi's confinement, and it urged Burma's military regime to stick to its pledge to move toward democracy. Backers had hoped that delegates would adopt the resolution at the end of the summit Nov. 30. However, two diplomats, speaking on condition of anonymity, said it was abandoned after Thai officials "expressed reservations."

Thai Foreign Ministry spokesman Sihasak Phuangketkeow said no such resolution was proposed to ASEAN leaders during the meeting. However, ASEAN observes a principle of non-interference in domestic affairs of its member countries. While Burma's politics were not discussed during formal sessions at the summit, the topic was raised in informal talks.

ASEAN, whose goal is "cooperative peace and shared prosperity," comprises Brunei, Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, Burma, Philippines, Singapore, Thailand and Vietnam.

Thailand maintains close ties with its western neighbor. In 2003 Burma reportedly exported more than \$1 billion in goods to Thailand and imported nearly \$99 million in goods from its neighbor – accounting for about half of the trade that passed through Burma. As Burma's third largest investor, Thailand accounts for nearly a fifth of foreign investments in the country. In February 2004 Thai investors were involved in

49 projects in Burma, such as logging concessions, for which funding totaled nearly \$1.3 billion. In April 2004 Thailand announced it would open four new customs checkpoints along the border to facilitate Thai investments in development projects in Burma.

Hydroelectric power generation in Burma represents another major potential investment for Thailand. Both nations have a vested interest in the proposed \$5.5 billion Salween River hydropower project. The proposed dams would produce electricity at half the cost of Thailand's coal- and petroleum-generated power. In addition, Thailand would not have to concern itself with the environmental impact. One of the dams would have a storage capacity of 120,000 cubic meters of water, or 20 times

Thailand's largest dam. The reservoir would stretch 236 miles across Burma's Karen and Karenni states.

Besides concern over environmental impact, critics say many development projects in Burma advance at the cost of human rights. They contend that entire villages are forcibly relocated to less prosperous areas without compensation, and that villagers are often used as forced labor. The U.S. imposed trade sanctions on Burma in 2003 in response to reported human rights violations there.

There were hopes in November 2004 that the human rights situation in Burma was improving. The release from jail of prominent student leader Min Ko Naing raised hopes that other opposition figures might also be freed. However, four NLD officials lost their appeals against seven-year jail terms even as the regime claimed to have released 9,248 other inmates. The four had been arrested for distributing NLD party material to the town of Mae Sot across the border in Thailand.

Meanwhile, the junta announced that a national convention called to draft a new constitution – the first of seven steps in Burma's roadmap to democracy – would resume in February. The convention's future seemed in doubt after the roadmap's main advocate, General Khin Nyunt, was sacked as prime minister in October for alleged corruption. The roadmap has been dismissed as a sham by critics, who view it merely as an attempt by the junta to legitimize its own rule. Prospects for the convention do not seem overly bright. In the first session last May, 1,076 hand-picked delegates met outside of Rangoon – sequestered in a conference center surrounded by army bases.



Aung San Suu Kyi

## Two Koreas: Mend ties to enhance security

President Bush should try to improve U.S. relations with the Korean peninsula to strengthen mutual security and to enhance stability in Northeast Asia. Fostering better relations with the two Koreas could also help to set conditions for their eventual reunification.

However, the president must first resolve the incompatibility of his administration's North Korea policy with South Korea President Roh Moo Hyun's "peace and prosperity" policy and Kim Dae Jung's earlier "sunshine" policy. Roh seeks to establish permanent peace on the Korean peninsula and to promote prosperity throughout the region. His predecessor's sunshine policy focused mainly on inter-Korean reconciliation.

John Feffer, a Pantech Fellow in Korean Studies at Stanford University, says the incompatibility presents "one of the most profound crises in security relations between Washington and Seoul in five decades." His analysis, "Untangling the Knot: The Future of U.S.-South Korean Security Relations," can be found on the website of Foreign Policy in Focus at <http://www.fpiif.org/papers/0410korea.html>.

Feffer says Washington and Seoul have fundamental differences over the North Korean threat. "South Korea, feeling the tyranny of proximity, is more concerned about artillery barrages than long-range missiles," he explains. "And economically, the Roh government believes that commercial engagement is the best way of improving relations, turning the North into a stakeholder in peninsula economics and ultimately offering all sides in the security equation an opportunity to shift resources from the military sphere into the economic sphere."

In contrast, he says, the U.S. is focused on North Korea's nuclear program and its capacity to dispatch such weapons over long distances or pass them to terrorist organizations. "Despite several comments from Bush administration officials about the importance of market reforms within North Korea, the current White House has concerns that economic engagement will provide dual-use commodities that could enhance North Korea's offensive capabilities," Feffer says. "More generally, engagement is envisioned as bolstering a government that the administration would prefer to see collapse."

Feffer also perceives other fundamental differences. For example, he says the U.S. views multilateral mechanisms such as the Six Party Talks or the Proliferation Security Initiative "as a means to the end of isolating and containing North Korea. South Korea, on the other hand, tends to embrace multilateralism as a value in itself." He says Seoul uses

multilateralism to help make North Korea "a more viable entity in the interests of peaceful reunification."

The U.S. and South Korea also have different perspectives on the issue of U.S. ground troops. The Bush administration announced in 2004 that U.S. forces in South Korea would be reduced by one-third. In fact, much of the U.S.'s present deterrent capability is based outside of the peninsula, such as the Fifth Air Force or the Seventh Fleet in Japan. And some experts believe South Korea could repulse an attack by North Korea even without U.S. support.

However, U.S. forces stationed in Korea still serve an important role. Feffer says the South Korean government values the U.S. military presence as a sign of U.S. commitment to its defense. North Korean leaders reportedly would support a U.S. military presence even after unification – perhaps in a peacekeeping role – as insurance against revived Japanese militarism.

Another principle of South Korea's engagement policy is that better economic relations with North Korea could benefit national security. Toward that end, Feffer says, the Kaesong development project should be considered a national security priority. This large economic zone, which will eventually employ 100,000 South Korean and 725,000 North Korean workers, is located just north of the demilitarized zone. As such, it represents as significant a confidence-building measure as withdrawing troops from the border.

Some U.S. policymakers have objected to economic engagement with North Korea because it could prolong the life of the Pyongyang government. However, economic isolation allows North Korea's leadership to blame all domestic ills on outside imperialists – much as Fidel Castro has retained power by blaming Washington for Cuba's travails. "Several U.S. administrations have built their North Korea policy around the expectation of the government's collapse, only to readjust this policy when presented with obvious evidence to the contrary," Feffer says. "Hard-line policies seem to do little more than harden the resolve of the leadership in Pyongyang."

*For more historical background and further analysis of U.S.-Korea relations, see the Friends Committee on National Legislation, "Overview of U.S. Policy Toward Korea: Security Issues." Go to the website at <http://www.fcnl.org>, choose "Issues we work on" from the left side menu, and scroll down to North Korea. Another source is the report "Seeing North Korea Clearly," written by Daniel A. Pinkston and Phillip C. Saunders on the Center for Nonproliferation Studies' website <http://cns.miis.edu/>. Enter "Pinkston" in the search bar to find the report in pdf format.*

# Philippines: Official policies fuel poverty, hunger

*The Philippines' financial straits have been widely reported since the Marcos regime ended in 1986. A private research center says the beleaguered country now faces a dual crisis, exacerbated by current government policies: poverty and hunger.*

In a Social Weather Stations (SWS) survey for the third quarter of 2004, 53 percent of the respondents rated themselves as poor. More than 15 percent of household heads said their families had had nothing to eat at least once in the previous three months. The full SWS report – “With Hunger on the Rise, It’s High Time We Revisited our Food, Agriculture and Trade Policies” – can be found on the website of Focus on the Global South-Philippines at [www.focusweb.org/philippines/html/](http://www.focusweb.org/philippines/html/).

Although food production expanded 6.6 percent in the first half of 2004, many Filipinos can’t afford to buy the food they need. SWS says one factor is inflation, which gradually rose from 3.4 percent in January to 6.9 percent in September. Other factors include unemployment and underemployment, which in April stood at nearly 14 percent and 19 percent, respectively. More than four million job seekers cannot find jobs. Another 5.6 million are working part time or desire more work.

In addition, wages average \$3 per day in agriculture and \$3.50 in industry, depending on the region. The government estimates a family of five needs \$60 per month for food, which typically requires two persons working full time at minimum wage, but few poor families have two members formally employed.

SWS says 39 percent of the country’s labor force depends on agriculture. However, agricultural jobs declined from 11.29 million in 1994 to 11.22 million in 2003 – despite the government’s assertion that joining the World Trade Organization in 1995 would create a half million jobs annually. In addition, the farm sector shrank from 22 percent of GDP in 1993 to less than 15 percent in 2003, making agricultural jobs still more competitive.

SWS also says the government’s policy to ensure food security emphasizes availability and affordability rather than efforts toward food self sufficiency. As a result, SWS says, food imports have become a matter of policy rather than a stopgap measure to alleviate production shortfalls. Annual food imports grew from \$714 million in 1993 to \$2.38 billion in 2003. Yet even the supposed advantage of a liberalized trade regime

on consumer prices remains elusive for Filipinos, as rising food prices continue to outstrip overall inflation.

Liberalization has become integral not only to Philippine farm policy, but to trade and development policy as a whole, SWS says. It notes the country unilaterally reduced nominal tariffs from nearly 24 percent in 1993 to less than eight percent in 2001. Meanwhile, tariffs were also eliminated on about 60 percent of all Philippine products on an inclusion list for the ASEAN (the 10-member Association of Southeast Asian Nations) Free Trade Area.

The SWS survey highlights the situation in

Mindanao. Blessed with abundant agricultural resources, in recent years the southern island has run an annual trade surplus in bananas and coconut oil of around \$600 million. Nevertheless, Mindanao is the Philippines’ poorest island, with six of the country’s poorest provinces. These include all four provinces of the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao, in which half the population lives in poverty. Far from Manila, Mindanao has long been marginalized in national development policy. Political violence in the South further contributes to the region’s poverty.

At the global level, the UN Food and Agriculture Organization raised its 2004 cereal output forecast in September by 29 million tons. With an anticipated harvest of 1,985 million tons, another major drawdown in global cereal stocks should be averted. Over the past four years world cereal stocks have declined sharply.

Nevertheless, SWS says the Philippine government should reconsider its reliance on trade liberalization to resolve the country’s food security concerns. Even with liberalized trade, world food production seems poised to meet demand for only the first time in five years. Unless the Philippines gives higher priority to food production, SWS says it could encounter both a serious food shortage and rising food prices, pushing the spiral of poverty and hunger still higher.

*The nonprofit, Philippines-based Social Weather Stations was established in 1985. Its members include social scientists in economics, political science, sociology, statistics and market research. Website: <http://www.sws.org.ph/>*



*Photo by Sean Sprague, courtesy of Maryknoll Fathers & Brothers*

## Thailand, Australia sign Free Trade Agreement

*The Thailand-Australia Free Trade Agreement (TAFTA) set to take effect on Jan. 1, 2005, links Australia's economy with the second-largest and fastest-growing economy in Southeast Asia. Thailand was Australia's 12th largest trading partner in 2003-2004, with two-way trade valued at US\$4.7 billion.*

However, critics in Thailand say the agreement could sacrifice small farmers to big business, and could threaten the social fabric in rural areas. They say TAFTA puts Thailand's dairy farmers particularly at risk.

More than half of Thailand's 5,000 tariffs were to be eliminated on products such as instant food, cars and jewelry with the implementation of TAFTA. Most of the remaining tariffs would be eliminated by 2010 on products including canned tuna, textiles, footwear, auto parts, steel, chemical products and plastics, with tariffs on some "sensitive" products to be phased out by 2015 and 2020. On the Australian side, 83 percent of tariffs were to be eliminated in 2005 and remaining tariffs by 2015.

In his analysis of the pact, Ben Moxham notes that TAFTA provides an extended phasing-out period for directly competing products, such as beef and pork. In the most contentious area, milk and dairy products will be able to enter Thailand tariff-free by 2020. Moxham's analysis can be found on the website of Focus on the Global South at <http://www.focusweb.org/main/html/Article537.html>.

Adul Vangtal, president of the Thai Holstein Friesian Association, is an outspoken critic of TAFTA. Milk has never been widely consumed in Thailand, he says. Instead, the dairy industry was born 40 years ago as a royal project. King Bhumipol Adulyadej, an ardent promoter of rural development, saw it as an opportunity to create employment in struggling rural communities and to increase the amount of calcium in the Thai diet.

It has been reasonably successful. "The farmers in Ratchaburi Province where I am from used to be sugarcane farmers, but they were badly in debt," Adul says. "The government started this project with the king to assist these indebted farmers. Now farmers have enough cash income to buy a bicycle or a motorbike and to send their kids to school."

Adul says about 40,000 families work in the dairy industry in 117 cooperatives. Overall, 60 percent of Thais depend on agriculture, and one-third of these are small-scale farmers.

This is in stark contrast to Australia, where 10,654 registered farms in 2002-2003 held about 200 cows each. Most Thai farmers have 10-20 head of cattle each, Adul says. Australian dairy farmers, given their larger operations and higher technology, can produce milk for about two-thirds of the cost of Thai dairy farmers.

Even without the increased imports that lower tariff barriers would bring, competition is already hurting Thai farmers. "Our raw milk already has to compete with imports of powdered milk," says Cherdchai, a farmer in Udon Thani Province. "Each year when the imported products come, the price of our milk drops and we are forced to throw it away." Adul adds that, while production is growing by 10 percent per year, consumer demand is growing at only five percent, "so we already have an oversupply problem here."

The outlook seems bleak. Research commissioned by the Thai government predicts that under TAFTA, dairy imports will increase by 30 percent and the domestic price will drop by 30 percent. "Many farmers have already sold their land in anticipation of hard times," Adul says. "Why should we keep risking debt to improve our production when we know we are going to lose?"

Jacques-Chai Chomthongdi, a trade specialist with Focus on the Global South, warns that TAFTA could increase the demographic pressures already facing Thailand. "There will be an erosion of the social fabric in the rural areas," he predicts. "Failed farmers will be forced to come to Bangkok. It is already overstretched with a population of 10 million, and a third of that is unregistered."

Jacques-Chai says free trade agreements such as TAFTA are tools of developed countries like Australia, and are used to pry open the economies of developing countries like Thailand. He notes it is larger Thai businesses that are strong enough to capitalize on such liberalization.

Moxham writes that liberalization under free trade agreements, and privatization, both "fit a pattern of big business filling up the political and institutional spaces left by the waning military bureaucracy." As Supinya Klangnarong, secretary general of the Campaign for Popular Media Reform, puts it, "There is a radical liberalization, and we do not have the time to democratize the institutions needed to monitor these processes. We are running from the tiger (the military and the bureaucracy) but are facing the crocodile (big business)."

## Brazil: Struggle over land, water continues

*In November, as the Justice Tribunal of Para was rendering a decision regarding the massacre of 19 landless workers in 1996, another massacre was taking place in the state of Minas Gerais, making painfully evident the ongoing nature of the conflict over land in Brazil.*

The judge in Para acquitted the 145 police who participated in the massacre, but found Colonel Mario Colares Pantoja and Major Jose Maria Pereira de Oliveira, who led the operation, guilty and sustained their prison sentences of 228 and 158 years, respectively. The two officials had already been convicted, but were not serving the sentence while it was on appeal. The court ordered their immediate arrest.

A few short hours after the sentence was rendered, another massacre happened in the state of Minas Gerais. There, nearly 200 families have been occupying for two years an area known as Fazenda Nova Alegria. The land is claimed by both Adriano Chafik Luedy and the state of Minas Gerais. On November 20, 2004, 18 gunmen entered the families' encampment and began to shoot into a tent where a meeting of the families was in session. By the end of the shooting spree, five men of the occupation were killed and 20 others wounded, including a 12 year-old child. The gunmen also set fire to the tents of 100 families.

Since the occupation began, Luedy has been attempting to scare the families off the land, threatening them and even kidnapping adolescents. The Minas Gerais police were made fully aware of all of these threats and crimes, but did not take action.

A few days later, the National Conference on Land and Water met in Brasilia, gathering organizations and entities that struggle for land, justice, and environmental preservation - thousands of rural workers, landless workers, family farmers, "quilombolas" (descendants of runaway slaves of the 19th century), indigenous peoples, fishermen, and artists.

The conference drew direct lines between current macroeconomic policies initiated by former president Cardoso, but maintained by the Lula government, and the crimes committed against the landless in Minas Gerais. These policies, they said, prioritize production for export, favor agribusiness and transnational business and concentrate wealth. The result is that poverty, inequality, and unemployment affect one fourth of the population and lead to an increase in crime, impunity, and insecurity not only in big and small cities, but in the rural areas as well.

Participants in the conference demanded the advancement of a true social, economic, and political democracy that placed more value on internal markets and the just distribu-

tion of income and resources. They called on the Brazilian government to:

- give land title to those families currently in encampments;
- apply the principle of the social function of land, emphasizing workers' rights and environmental protection (as already included in the Constitution) to the appropriation of lands for social interests and for agrarian ends, and to update the indices of the productivity of lands;
- strengthen family and small-scale farming, taking away incentives for agribusiness, directing resources to create and/or amplify public programs of credit and commercialization, providing free, quality technical services, so that this sector would be the principal producers in rural areas;
- implant a program of financing small, associative, cooperative agro-industries in rural areas;
- approve a bill under consideration which proposes to confiscate all lands where slave labor is practiced;
- promote a respect for the human rights of rural populations, especially in recognizing the rights of indigenous peoples, quilombo communities, and demarcating the lands of these populations;
- prevent and combat all types of violence committed against the poor of the land, especially through the outlawing of private militias, and the condemnation of those who mandate and those who kill rural workers;
- support the development of agro-ecological programs, and the production and control of seeds by small-scale or family farmers, including the creation and support of a public technical assistance program and studies in agro-ecology and agro-biodiversity;
- apply the precautionary principle, as adopted by the Brazilian State upon its ratification of the Protocol of Cartagena, which prohibits the commercial production of transgenics until guarantees of minimal risks to health and the environment have been established, and demanding, as outlined in the Federal Constitution, environmental impact studies of genetically modified organisms;
- prioritize investments in research, development and implementation of alternative sources of energy, respecting the criteria for economic and environmental sustainability, and taking away subsidies to big energy-intensive businesses;
- guarantee the human right to healthy food, securing the food sovereignty of the Brazilian people;
- create and/or strengthen programs for free health, education, and social assistance for all Brazilian people, especially guaranteeing attention to rural populations;
- guarantee the preservation of biodiversity, including main-

taining public control over the forests of the country, and creating legal mechanisms to prevent bio-pirating; and

- reform and strengthen all public organs related to agrarian reform, family and small-scale farming, indigenous populations and quilombos, increasing resources and contracting new public providers.

Among other things, participants also reaffirmed their opposition to unjust trade agreements and called for citizen participation through plebiscites in crucial public decisions.

They promised to “look for respectful, holistic relationships with the land, water and all human beings, through the struggle for a profound change in foundational structures and in social relationships, creating a vision of land, water and nature as universal goods, not as products for marketing our simply means of production or business.”

For more information see “News from Brazil” SEJUP, Number 522, December 3, 2004, <http://www.sejup.org>

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## Chile: Pinochet charged with kidnapping, murder

*In an historic ruling on Monday, December 13, 2004, Chilean Judge Juan Guzman Tapia determined that General Augusto Pinochet was competent to stand trial for human rights abuses that occurred during his dictatorship and immediately charged him with nine counts of kidnapping and one of murder, all part of Operation Condor. Judge Guzman also ordered that Pinochet be placed under house arrest, although Pinochet's lawyers immediately filed an injunction with the Santiago Court of Appeals.*

The decision reversed earlier rulings that have allowed Pinochet to avoid prosecution for human rights abuses during his rule, but, according to the *New York Times* (December 14, 2004), quoting Viviana Diaz, a leader of the Relatives of the Disappeared in Chile, “This time is different ... Guzman probably feels he is supported by other judges who are also advancing human rights investigations and by the Supreme Court.’ Last month, the Supreme Court confirmed sentences against rights violators in the military rather than allow an amnesty law to be applied.”

Chile is slowly dismantling the impunity enjoyed by Pinochet and other perpetrators of human rights violations. Formal investigations by the Chilean Congress, judiciary and tax service have followed revelations earlier last year that Pinochet had secretly deposited as much as \$8 million in Riggs Bank in Washington, D.C. Additional criminal charges are likely to result. A few weeks before, an appeals court also stripped Pinochet of his immunity from prosecution in the investigation of the assassination of General Carlos Prats, a predecessor of Pinochet as army commander.

Meanwhile, according to *NotiSur* (Oct 22, 2004), in October representatives from all sectors of the Chilean government reached an agreement which will allow lawmakers to alter the “authoritarian bonds” of the Constitution imposed in 1980 under the dictatorship of Pinochet. Senators from *Concertacion*, the coalition that has governed since 1990, the rightist *Alianza por Chile*, and Interior Minister Jose Miguel

Insulza, representing the executive branch, all signed on to the accord. This is the ninth attempt to reform the Constitution since the *Concertacion* coalition came to power in 1990. Key reforms include restoring the president’s ability to remove commanders in chief of the armed forces, although only with a prior consultation with the Senate, and the elimination of nine “designated” senators and one senator for life. The accord will also allow Chileans living abroad to vote, facilitate granting nationality to the children of Chileans born outside the country and reform the *Tribunal Constitucional*.

At the same time, also according to *NotiSur* (Nov 19, 2004), top figures in the Chilean government, armed services, and police have taken steps to redress abuses committed during the dictatorship of Pinochet. The head of the Chilean Army unexpectedly took responsibility for the torture and killings that occurred under the Pinochet regime and the national police later offered an apology for its role in abuses.

The military and its officers, including Pinochet, had until now insisted that the abuses were the individual responsibility of officers acting beyond official institutional policies. The last major state report on human rights abuses was the 1991 Rettig Report. The official report said that 3,190 people were killed for political reasons during Pinochet’s dictatorship and 1,197 others were disappeared.

While response to the action was positive, some human rights groups cautioned that this admission of responsibility might be used in an effort to avoid prosecuting officers involved in the widespread abuses of the 1970s and 1980s.

President Ricardo Lagos has accepted a three-volume report on torture during the dictatorship and has said he will make the report public when he finishes reading it. The report contains documents from a special commission headed by Santiago Auxiliary Bishop Emeritus Sergio Valech, a commission that spent a year gathering testimony from 35,000 torture victims.

## Bolivia: Former president put on trial

After a 13-hour debate played live on state television on October 14, the Bolivian Congress authorized a trial for Sanchez de Lozada, a member of the *Movimiento Nacionalista Revolucionario* (MNR), for the bloody repression that preceded his 2003 fall from power. In the vote, 126 of 140 legislators approved the criminal trial, 21 votes more than needed to pass the measure authorizing the *Corte Suprema* to order a trial that would prosecute the former president for “violations of rights and constitutional guarantees.” Thirteen MNR legislators voted against the move and one abstained. The charges include genocide, murder, actions against the constitution, and human rights violations. (NotiSur 10/29/04)

Sanchez de Lozada (Goni) stepped down one year ago during the “gas war,” when plans to export natural gas through Chile and terms for companies exploiting gas led to a nationwide uprising (see *NewsNotes* November-December 2003). The 74-year-old Sanchez de Lozada, the second-wealthiest man in Bolivia, is currently living in self-imposed exile in the U.S., residing in the Washington, D.C. area.

*Latin America Press* (October 21, 2004) described the sequence of events:

A year after 66 people died and dozens were wounded in the military crackdown against the “gas war” — the term used for the Bolivian people’s resistance against the export of natural gas through a Chilean port to North America — Congress authorized the Supreme Court to try former President Gonzalo Sánchez de Lozada and his 15 ex-ministers.

In October 2003 the demonstrators protested against the lack of transparency in the gas project and the likely benefits that Sánchez de Lozada (1993-97 and 2002-03) planned to give Chile, a highly unpopular country for much of the population after Bolivia lost its access to the sea to Chile in 1879 in the War of the Pacific. The popular insurrection forced Sánchez de Lozada to resign on October 17. His vice president Carlos Mesa, a journalist and historian, succeeded him, as called for under the constitution.

Rev. Wilson Gonzalo Soria, testifying last year before Congress on what he called a “civilian massacre” between Oct. 10 and 12 in the poverty-stricken city of El Alto in the highlands of La Paz, recalled the scene after soldiers fired indiscriminately against civilians. “One person was missing half their neck...another had his chest blown open. I began to give the last rites...I began with the first then went on to the second...when I went back to the first, he had already died.”

Twelve months passed and the survivors continued to demand justice. The victims’ families had threatened to close Congress by force if it failed to order a political trial against Sánchez de Lozada, named as the main official responsible for

the bloodshed. In the end force was not necessary. On October 14, in midst of a climate of intense social pressure demanding justice for the former president, Congress decided in an exhausting, 12-hour session to put Sánchez de Lozada and his ex-collaborators on trial.

According to the Law of Trials of Responsibilities, the legislature must approve by a minimum of 105 votes to try any president or state official, a process which is carried out by the Supreme Court...

To speed up the opening of these trials, two joint commissions (senators and deputies) were appointed to review the accusations and present reports on whether the trials could go ahead or not. In the October 5 session — the deadline for the presentation of the reports — legislators allied with Sánchez de Lozada failed to show up and presentation of the reports was left pending... In response to the delay tactics, opposition parties and labor organizations launched a series of protest actions aimed at what they called “seeing justice done.”

On October 13, the congressmen met as Bolivians watched. Although MAS was confident of having obtained the support of the NFR and MIR for its request to try Sánchez de Lozada and the two former ministers, events took an unexpected turn. Seeking to separate MAS from its allies, Sánchez de Lozada’s MNR proposed that the accusation include the entire cabinet of the former president, some of whom were also members of parliament from the MIR and NFR.

However, instead of delaying Congress’ decision, the legislators approved the motion, turning the MNR’s move into a shot in the foot.

After finding out the results of the vote, the Bolivian Workers Confederation (COB) said it would ask Mesa’s government to seek the extradition of Sánchez de Lozada, who since October 17, 2003 has been living in the United States.

The president of the Association of Families of Dead and Grave Amputees (AFFAGO), Néstor Salinas, and a group of human rights activists expressed satisfaction for a successful first step in what is likely to be a long, complex process.

The Criminal Code establishes a prison sentence of 10 to 20 years for genocide — the crime of which Sánchez de Lozada and his ex-collaborators are accused.

It is the second time in history that Congress has paved the way for a trial against a former president. Former dictator Luis García Meza, who in 1980 led a bloody military coup, was tried in a process that lasted more than seven years and was sentenced to 30 years in jail with no chance for a pardon.

## Nicaragua: Murder investigation continues

*Ivan Argüello, who was convicted in absentia of the murder of Francisco García, a businessman and university professor in Bluefields, Nicaragua, was captured in Costa Rica on August 30. The next day he spoke before a Costa Rican television audience stating that land speculator Peter Tsokos had sent him to the Bluefields home of García and his wife, human rights lawyer Maria Luisa Acosta, to rent an apartment. The apartment was used to gain access to the home of García and Acosta at the time of the murder.*

With the capture of Argüello, the case against the suspected intellectual authors of the murder may be reopened. Shortly after his capture, Argüello, Peter Tsokos' former chauffeur, reportedly said that Tsokos complained repeatedly that María Luisa Acosta was causing him a lot of trouble with the properties he was buying.

Argüello was extradited to Nicaragua on September 2 and was sent to Bluefields a few days later. At that time, many human rights activists wrote to Julio Vega, Nicaraguan Minister of Governance, asking him to provide special security protection for Argüello, so that when judicial proceedings were begun against the intellectual authors of the murder, he could give his testimony. Vega personally answered a number of the messages he received.

Argüello was convicted of the murder by a Bluefields criminal court in November 2003. Noting that the Managua police forensic lab had found that bullets which killed García matched those from the gun of Tsokos' lawyer Peter Martínez, the Bluefields jury convicted co-defendants Gilberto Ochoa (captured last year) and Argüello of "murder for hire."

Argüello's partner in crime, Ochoa, testified at the November trial, in which they both were found guilty, that Argüello, who had been Peter Tsokos' chauffeur, was the leader of the two and the one who actually killed García. With the capture of Argüello, the fight to indict the suspected intellectual authors of the crime, Tsokos and his lawyer Martínez, gained new impetus.

At the time of the murder of her husband, Acosta was representing the Monkey Point and Rama indigenous communities in legal battles over land rights against Peter Tsokos

(who is always referred to in Nicaragua as a Greek, but who has U.S. citizenship) and his partner and lawyer, Peter Martínez of Bluefields. Tsokos was then illegally selling and continues to sell land that belongs to the indigenous people of Nicaragua on the internet at [www.tropical-islands.com](http://www.tropical-islands.com).

Acosta believes that she was the target of the murderers, noting that she returned home late on April 8, 2002, after a meeting with a visiting Pastors for Peace delegation. The killers, not finding her at home, tortured her husband and shot him in the heart. The investigative judge in the case, Julio Acuña, arrived at the scene of the crime in the car of Peter Martínez. This was just the beginning of a series of irregularities that have plagued the García murder case. When Acosta accused Peter Tsokos and Peter Martínez of being the intellectual authors of the crime, they reacted by accusing her of being involved herself in her husband's murder and suing her for slander. The judge then issued a ruling that permanently absolved Acosta, Tsokos and Martínez of any responsibility for the crime. Acosta filed an appeal of this absolution of



Tsokos and Martínez; the appeal has been before the Supreme Court for many months. With Argüello's capture and his testimony on Costa Rican television and afterward, that appeal should finally be heard.

This attack on the family of a human rights worker in order to prevent her from continuing her labors should not be allowed to stand with impunity. While there are other organizations promoting indigenous rights on Nicaragua's Caribbean Coast, Dr. Acosta was the only lawyer who was willing to take the cases of the indigenous groups against dangerous land grabbers. Until all the murderers of Francisco García are put safely behind bars, the rights granted to Nicaragua's indigenous under the 1987 Constitution are not safeguarded because their defenders are not safe.

*For additional information, contact the Nicaragua Network, <http://www.nicanet.org/>, 1247 E Street, N.E., Washington, D.C., 20003, (202)544-9355.*

## Guatemala: Violence against women increases

On November 25, 2004, more than 600 women joined in protest in Guatemala City to demand an end to a wave of violence that has claimed the lives of over 400 women this year alone. AP reporter Sergio De Leon described the scene: "Factory workers, housewives, residents of poor communities and non-governmental women's advocates carried cardboard silhouettes representing the victims accompanied by the messages, 'They shot me,' and 'No one listened to me.' The march coincided with the UN-designated International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women."

Los Angeles Times staff writer Chris Kraul wrote, "Ana Cecilia Gonzalez left home for the corner grocery in October and never came back. The 19-year-old student was found bludgeoned to death a day later." She was one of 445 Guatemalan woman (according to Hilda Morales, an Amnesty International Ambassador of Conscience) slain this year in a crime wave that has baffled authorities.

About half the killings have occurred in the capital, in a murder rate that exceeds that of Ciudad Juárez (see story below). But the deaths in Guatemala have not attracted nearly as much international outrage as have those in Juarez.

Violence generally is on the upswing in Guatemala. The U.S. State Department has issued a warning to tourists about murder, rape and armed robbery. Killings of women in particular have more than doubled in the last two years. Criminologists, government officials and human rights activists are struggling to explain why. Many blame weak or nonexistent laws related to offenses against women — including domestic abuse, rape and sexual harassment — and a

corrupt and poorly trained national police force, whose members were implicated in at least 10 of last year's slayings.

Observers also cite Guatemala's unfinished process of national reconciliation after more than three decades of civil war. Commitments to improve women's rights made in the 1996 peace accords have not been fulfilled, according to a panel of the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights.

The huge caseload and the ineptitude and complicity of the police mean criminals largely enjoy impunity. Of every 100 homicide cases in Guatemala, only 15 are investigated and just seven result in prosecution. Police say 67 suspects have been arrested in connection with the women's deaths this year, and 30 others are being sought. Activists say that's not good enough. They also want Congress to toughen the legal punishment against those convicted of domestic violence and to label sexual harassment a crime.

In addition, several gang-related murders of women have been committed by youths who by law must be released at age 18. Many of those set free commit murder again.

As an aside, Guatemala is one of several countries still retaining laws which state that a rapist will not be charged with a crime if he marries his victim, if she is at least 12 years old. (Article 200 of Guatemala's Penal Code.)

The 2005 meeting of the UN Commission on the Status of Women will review progress toward implementation of the Beijing Declaration, now 10 years old. The kind of violence perpetrated against women in Mexico (both Juárez and Oaxaca) and Guatemala suggests that we have a long way to go.

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## Justice remains elusive in Ciudad Juárez

In the past 10 years, approximately 400 women have been disappeared and murdered in Ciudad Juárez and the state of Chihuahua. Over the years, several suspects have been named, but none of the accusations have proven reliable. (See NewsNotes May-June 2003, November-December 2003, and May-June 2004.)

In October 2004, Judge Gustavo Muñoz sentenced Victor Javier García Uribe to 50 years in prison for the rape and murder of eight women whose bodies were found in November 2001. Garcia Uribe and Gustavo Gonzalez Meza had been arrested two days after the bodies were found.

The two men confessed to the murders, but it is believed that they made the statements under torture. (Gonzalez Meza died in prison in 2003 under suspicious circumstances.) Victims' families and human rights groups do not believe the

two men were responsible for the deaths.

Salvador Urbina Quiroz of the State Federation of the College of Lawyers said, "There are many things about this case that leave a lot of doubts, especially the delay in the sentencing of Victor Javier García; it seems like the case has been politicized, and the judge was waiting for the elections to end to dictate the sentence." (*El Diario*, Oct. 14, 2004.)

On October 25, 2004, *El Diario* reported that the fund for the victims' families seems to be in limbo. Special Federal Prosecutor María López Urbina, chosen to investigate the crimes against the women, had announced in the summer that there would be a special fund of approximately US\$2 million for the families of the victims in Ciudad Juárez. However, neither the mechanism nor the list of those who will receive assistance has been decided.

# Venezuela: Prosecutor Anderson assassinated

Venezuela's Fourth Attorney General, Danilo Anderson, was assassinated in November when a remotely-controlled bomb blew up inside his car while he was driving in Los Chaguaramos, a middle-class Caracas neighborhood. Anderson had recently made headlines seeking the prosecution of 400 people allegedly involved in the April 2002 coup against Venezuelan President Hugo Chavez Frías.

Following the assassination, President Chavez postponed his trip to Costa Rica, where he was to attend the XIV Heads of State Summit.

U.S. Ambassador to Venezuela William R. Brownfield expressed his condolences to the victim's family and condemned the killing as brutal and barbaric, qualifying it as a terrorist attack. Speaking on behalf of the Bush administration to Venezuela's Union Radio, Brownfield said, "In a civilized world, there is no room for acts of terrorism." The Carter Center has also categorically denounced the bombing.

Danilo Anderson was in charge of the prosecution of 400 opposition members who participated in the failed 2002 coup against President Chavez. Implicated and subpoenaed by Venezuelan authorities for their involvement in the coup were Carlos Fernandez, head of FEDECAMARAS during the oil strike; Carlos Ortega, former President of the CTV, one of Venezuela's largest labor federations which also played an active role in both the oil strike and the 2002 coup; actor Orlando Urdaneta; Roberto Alonso, the mastermind of the Plan Guarimba, a system of organized violent civil disobedience; and former Caracas metropolitan mayor Alfredo Peña.

During his tenure as Caracas mayor, Peña controlled the police forces that allegedly aided coup leaders in President Chavez's overthrow. Venezuela has asked the United States to extradite Peña, who is purportedly hiding in Miami. Police raided Peña's home and found several boxes of ammunition. Venezuela and the United States currently have an extradition treaty.

Danilo Anderson also handled the cases of German Rodolfo Varela and Jose Antonio Colina, two military officials who participated in a protest camp in December of 2002 at the Francia Square in Altamira, an affluent Caracas neighborhood, calling for President Chavez's overthrow and voicing their opposition towards the government. The two men were later indicted for their alleged participation in terrorist bombings on the Embassy of Spain and the Consulate of Colombia in Caracas on February 26, 2003. Both are currently in Miami seeking political asylum.

Outraged by disclosures that the Congressionally-funded National Endowment for Democracy (NED) has been linked to leaders of the 2002 coup against President Chavez, U.S. Congressman Jose Serrano inserted language in the Commerce, State and Justice Appropriations bill that directs the NED to provide legislators with a "comprehensive report on its activities in Venezuela from fiscal year 2001 through the present..." The bill language notes that, "Any perception that funds are used to directly support a particular party or candidate, or to support the removal of elected leaders through unconstitutional means, undermines the credibility and effectiveness of NED programs." Serrano is the ranking Democrat on the House Subcommittee that funds the State Department and the NED.

In a news advisory, the Congressman criticized the NED for its links to groups who supported the illegal coup against President Chavez in 2002. The press advisory also criticized the CIA for being "blatantly deceptive when it denied knowing about coup threats and downplayed the role that dissident military officers played in carrying out the coup against President Hugo Chávez of Venezuela on April 11, 2002." Recently declassified CIA documents show that the U.S. government had prior knowledge of the coup that briefly deposed Chavez. The documents, distributed to roughly 200 top U.S. officials, contained detailed information as to how the coup would take place. Despite being aware of these facts, the U.S. government, in the immediate aftermath of the coup, blamed Chavez for the events and claimed that Chavez had in fact resigned.

For months, critics have argued that the use of NED funding may have broken Venezuelan law, and that by supporting organizations linked to the coup, the NED was violating its own guiding principles. A Congressionally-mandated accounting is a good first step, but it doesn't take the place of a Congressional investigation, which could explore these questions.

## **Faith in action:**

Please contact Congressman Serrano today. Thank him for his continued support of the people of Venezuela, especially for his work getting this important language passed into law; urge him to push for a thorough Congressional investigation into the activities of the NED. Congressman Jose Serrano, U.S. House of Representatives, Washington, D.C. 20515-3216, [jserrano@mail.house.gov](mailto:jserrano@mail.house.gov)



## Haiti: People remain destitute

*The following article attempts to put recent events in Haiti into historical context. It was written by Jennifer Betz, intern at the Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns, with information provided by Dr. Robert Maguire, Director of Programs in International Affairs and of the Haiti Program at Trinity University in Washington, D.C., and with information provided by the Haiti Reborn Project at the Quixote Center.*

Imagine a country where life expectancy is less than 50 years old. Half of the country is undernourished. Over 10 percent of children will die before they reach the age of five. In the last 10 years, the number of people who have continuous access to a water source has dropped. The HIV infection rate has increased. Eighty-five percent of the population lives on less than US\$1 a day. Only half the population can read. People are afraid to leave their homes due to street violence. The country being described is not Iraq nor is it one of the AIDS-ravaged countries of Africa. Instead it shares the island of Hispaniola, 600 miles from the U.S. shoreline. Welcome to Haiti, the only country in the Western Hemisphere included on the UN's list of the 30 least livable countries.

The U.S. media treats Haiti as newsworthy only occasionally. The ousting of President Jean-Bertrand Aristide on Feb. 29, 2004 and the hurricane in the fall of 2004 were noted with interest, but then Haiti faded into obscurity. The daily humanitarian crisis near the U.S. border almost never receives attention.

Current news from Haiti features statements by interim Prime Minister Gerard Latortue or statements by Aristide about the political situation in Haiti, each blaming the other for the violence. Many voices in the world have risen for Aristide and others against him, but to understand the crux of the crisis in Haiti, we may need to leave Aristide out of the argument altogether for now.

Aristide has become a symbol for the dispossessed and disenfranchised of Haiti. In 1990 in the first free and fair democratic elections in Haiti after the dictatorship, the mood was absolute elation. Hundreds of thousands of Haitians took to the streets and celebrated not only the election of Aristide, but the spirit of hope he carried with him. The history of Haiti offers many stories of exploitation, inequalities, and repression; seldom had it offered such promise.

Heartbreakingly, the jubilation was short-lived as a coup against Aristide occurred just six months after the election. If we see that coup in the light of what Aristide represented, we can better understand the climate of politics in Haiti now. Aristide represented everything the elite and military (often one and the same) feared: an end to the status quo. His

administration undertook a major adult literacy program, health reform, the redistribution of land to the landless, an increase of minimum wages, more transparency in government, and an anti-crime program amongst other programs. This list is not meant as a litany of Aristide's achievements but as a description of what threatened the powerful. The struggle between the powerful and the poor majority is a story that has repeated itself again and again in the Western Hemisphere—in El Salvador, Guatemala, Chile, Argentina, Nicaragua, Venezuela, and in Haiti.

When Aristide was returned to power in 1994, one of the required conditions of the international community was a structural adjustment plan (SAP) for Haiti. Development assistance from international financial institutions and the U.S. began to be withheld in the late 1990s because Haiti did not comply quickly enough with the terms of the SAP. Then, after irregularities in the 2000 elections, the U.S. completely suspended bilateral and multilateral aid to the Haitian government and convinced other countries to follow suit. Heavily dependent on international aid, Haiti faced yet another crisis when assistance was withdrawn. This act stimulated a well-known cycle of poverty on all levels of Haitian society: the scarcity of resources led to desperation, desperation led to lawlessness, and lawlessness led to violence.

Following the most recent political turmoil, in July 2004 a coalition of donors, including the U.S., pledged \$1.075 billion dollars worth of aid to Haiti for reconstruction and development. As Dr. Maguire pointed out in remarks at a conference entitled "Haitian Development and Public Policy: The Next Decade," it is ironic that after four years of an essential embargo of international assistance to the Haitian government, which exacerbated the social, economic, and political problems within the country, the international community has now come forth with an aid package. It must be noted too that the aid is being sent to an interim government led by Prime Minister Latortue, chosen by a seven-member U.S. backed advisory commission called the "Council of Sages," which excludes Aristide's Lavalas party.

No immediate fix exists for the problems of Haiti. The money does not change the actions of the interim government which has sought revenge against Aristide supporters. The elite remain powerful as they continue to deny both political and economic inclusion of all people of Haiti. The gangs are still present in the streets as is the violence. Nor has the polarization of Haitian society lessened. The people who are hungry and sick continue to struggle to survive. Whether we choose to look across the water or not, the current crisis of Haiti continues.

# Great Lakes Regional Peace Conference

*This article was written by Fr. David Schwinghamer, MM .*

In the long search for a lasting peace, the peoples of Africa's Great Lakes Region now see a glimmer of hope. The reason for this new-found hope lies in the strategic decision made by the region's leaders to come together and craft a plan for regional peace. The first step in this plan for peace took place at the International Conference on Peace, Security, Democracy and Development in the Great Lakes Region held November 19-20, 2004 in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania. The preparations for this important conference required several years of hard work.

Following the Rwandan genocide in 1994 and two wars in the Congo (1996-97 and 1998-99), the Organization of African Unity (OAU) adopted several resolutions calling for an international conference to address the underlying cause of the growing conflicts in area surrounding Africa's Great Lakes. By June 2000, the UN Security Council joined in the efforts to hold a regional peace conference. The difficulties encountered in implementing the national peace accords in Burundi and the Democratic Republic of the Congo gave further impetus to a larger regional peace initiative. It was clear to many people in Africa that the regional character of these conflicts and the fact the populations of the region were so closely linked in ethnic and cultural terms meant that any lasting peace had to be sought within a framework that encompassed not only the nations experiencing conflict, but also those who had become involved in what has been termed Africa's first world war.

Between December 2001 and April 2003, three joint OAU and UN missions were sent to the Great Lakes region to gather the views of the authorities in the countries affected by conflict, and to brief the leaders of neighboring countries about the purpose of the conference. These missions were extended to include bilateral and multilateral partners of the process, the so-called "Friends of the Great Lake Region."

In July 2003, the newly-formed Africa Union reiterated support for the conference and emphasized that this meeting should provide a holistic and concerted approach to tackle the recurring instability in the region. In September 2004, it was agreed that the conference membership should be enlarged to include the circle of countries directly affected by the conflicts (The Democratic Republic of the Congo, Rwanda, Burundi, Uganda, Tanzania, Kenya) as well as several other nations who are indirectly involved, i.e. South Africa, Zambia, Angola, the Central African Republic, and Sudan. Several other African and 26 non-African countries were also invited as observers, as were many sub-regional groups and civil society organizations including faith-based organizations.

The aim of this large conference was to address four interconnected regional concerns: peace and security, democracy and good governance, economic development and regional integration, and social and humanitarian issues. At its widest level, the conference hoped to provide a framework that would tackle the full range of issues raised by the four regional concerns. Likewise, the conveners of the conference hoped to transform the words of their Dar es Salaam Declaration into detailed programs of action that would give the region a comprehensive peace agreement.

Not only did the participants of the conference write a lengthily "Declaration," but they also decided to establish a follow-up mechanism that would lead to a pact on security, stability and development that is to be adopted at a second summit in 2005.

Despite its dense bureaucratic language, the Dar es Salaam Declaration is worth studying for the following reason. First it lays out a clear analysis of the causes of the conflicts in the Great Lakes area. Many of these are well known: economic stagnation, mistrust and suspicion among governments, massive violation of human rights and other policies of exclusion and marginalization, impunity and crimes of genocide, and the illicit trafficking of small arms and light weapons. Second, it provides a collective vision about how to transform the Great Lakes region into a space of sustainable peace. Finally, it lists 11 priority policy options that can lead to such peace.

To achieve this lofty societal vision of peace in a continent torn by horrific conflicts, the signers of the Dar es Salaam Declaration reaffirmed their commitment to achieving a common destiny within a multilateral framework bounded by the UN Charter, the Africa Union, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, and the African Charter on Human and Peoples Rights.

How this commitment will be implemented in a world marked by increasing unilateral thinking remains to be seen. In 2005 a second conference will be held, this time in Nairobi, Kenya. At that meeting the leaders of the governments involved in this historic effort will sign a formal pact on security, stability and development.

In his speech to the conference, UN Secretary General Kofi Annan told the participants they would need both good leadership and wisdom to make the Dar es Salaam Declaration more than just a theoretical exercise. To this end, Annan quoted the words of a wise African leader, Julius K. Nyerere who, in the months before his death, said: "No miracle is going to take place. Collective self-reliance is Africa's only future hope."

## Sudan: Mixed signals, ominous signs

*On November 19, 2004 the UN Security Council held an unprecedented meeting in Nairobi, Kenya in order to draw diplomatic attention to its concerns over the lack of a formal peace accord in South Sudan and the growing humanitarian crisis in Darfur, West Sudan. The meeting concluded with the Security Council passing resolution UNSCR 1574 and acting as signatory witnesses to an agreement between the Government of Sudan (GoS) and the SPLM/A, the opposition/rebel group in South Sudan. The following article was written by George Corrigan, intern with the Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns.*

Since July 2002, the GoS and the Sudan People's Liberation Movement/Army (SPLM/A) have been working on the details of the Machakos Protocol which establishes the framework for a comprehensive peace agreement in South Sudan. This protocol called for a six-year interim period, at the end of which a referendum would be held to determine whether the south will remain part of a united Sudan. While the international community hoped that the two opposing Sudanese groups would sign the final peace accord, the two sides instead signed a memorandum of understanding that they would complete negotiations and sign the peace accords by December 31, 2004. One year ago a similar agreement was signed – the peace accords have yet to be signed.

UNSCR 1574 concerns Darfur, the western region of Sudan. This is the third, and weakest, UN Security Council resolution this year. Where previous resolutions have demanded that the GoS disarm the GoS-backed Janjaweed and prosecute those responsible for what the Prime Minister of Canada and the U.S. Secretary of State have called genocide, the new resolution drops those demands and seems to assign human rights violations to Janjaweed and rebel soldiers alike.

Oxfam's and Human Rights Watch's (HRW) analysis was that the United Nations softened their stance on Darfur in order to move the South Sudan peace treaty to completion. The hope was that stability in the north-south Sudan axis would allow a similar stability in Darfur. Their assessment is that GoS linked these two conflicts in order to secure a free hand in resolving the Darfur crisis internally.

South Sudan needs the peace accords. The human toll in the South Sudan conflict has been enormous. UNHCR documents estimate total deaths at two million during the 20 years of civil war. In addition there are 1.5 million refugees registered with UNHCR to return home to South Sudan once the hostilities have ceased.

Meanwhile the human toll is rising in Darfur because of the deteriorating security situation. Comprehensive food security surveys, completed in late October by World Food Program (WFP), UNICEF, Save the Children, Oxfam and

Doctors Without Borders indicate a looming famine which will likely be worse than the famines of the 1980s and 1990s. Currently the WFP serves 1.35 million people in Darfur; 1.85 million are in need of food aid. This number is expected to rise to 2.5 million by early 2005 due to drought, loss of seed, tools and cattle due to insecurity, and the vast numbers of people internally displaced from their farms and homes.

The security situation has worsened since October. Although 3,320 Africa Union peacekeepers and police have been authorized to enter Darfur, only 587 have been deployed. They lack the logistic support and are largely confined to several cities outside the areas of conflict. The resulting lack of security has given the GoS the opportunity to attempt forced relocations of IDP in South Darfur from UNHCR monitored camps. Meanwhile, Janjaweed attacks have escalated in North Darfur, despite the November 9 ceasefire agreement between the GoS and SLM (Darfurian rebels).

The November 9 agreement (Abuja agreement) called for an immediate cease fire, a no-fly zone over all Darfur and unfettered access by aid workers to all IDP. All three key elements of the agreement have been repeatedly violated since the agreement. GoS planes bombed a Save the Children feeding center in the North, causing the termination of the feeding program to 30,000 people. Similar attacks in other parts of Darfur have resulted in a net decrease of aid distribution to 175,000 people. At the same time, the UNHCR has withdrawn all its personnel from South Darfur.

So, what happened in Nairobi? Anne-Louise Colgan of Africa Action believes the UN Security Council was unable to reach an agreement on Darfur because key members, Russia and China, consistently oppose sanctions. Russia is the largest arms supplier to Sudan; China has extensive oil holdings in Sudan. "No one wishes to set a precedent for international intervention or punitive action based on human rights concerns – too many are exposed because of their own internal repression of ethnic communities."

As a result HRW and other international monitoring groups believe the GoS has been given a freer hand in Darfur. No one is expecting the situation in South Sudan or Darfur to improve. Meanwhile, eastern provinces of Sudan are reporting increasing incidences of violence.

The UN Food and Agriculture Organization is monitoring a particularly disturbing development concerning Sudanese land law. Over the past two years, both in the south and in Darfur, there have been consistent efforts to displace people from their lands. Sudan is governed by the 1984 Sudan land tenure law. If imposed in Darfur, it would dispossess 1.7 million or more people who are displaced living in camps in Darfur or neighboring Chad.

“There has to be a lot of pressure . . . to send a clear message: Don’t do this,” said Tony Hall, the U.S. ambassador to the UN World Food Program, who visited Nyala, the capital of South Darfur, last week. “The effects of this could be horrendous. Even if you get the displaced to go home, they would not own their land anymore. They might have to rent it or be forever homeless. I think we would then see a conflict

and death toll that would be horrifying.”

### **Faith in action:**

The new Congress has seen changes in staff personnel. You are encouraged to contact your representative and senators in order to raise the visibility on these important issues.

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## **Children victimized by poverty, wars, HIV/AIDS**

The State of the World’s Children 2005, UNICEF’s annual report, affirms that “[m]illions of children around the world miss out on their childhood as a result of poverty. Poverty deprives them of the capabilities needed to survive, develop and thrive. It prevents them from enjoying equal opportunities. It makes children more vulnerable to exploitation, abuse, violence, discrimination and stigmatization.”

According to the figures in this report, half of the world’s child population suffers extreme deprivation due to current wars, poverty and HIV/AIDS. War and HIV/AIDS have a direct relationship with poverty. The UNICEF report urges governments to rethink development based on the fulfillment of children’s rights. The report also seeks to examine the degree of implementation of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) in areas related to children. (The MDGs were adopted by the countries of the world in the UN Millennium Forum; their five-year review will take place in 2005.)

In poor countries, 150 million children still suffer from malnutrition. Data on underweight children indicate that there has been moderate to substantial progress in East Asia and the Pacific, Latin America and the Caribbean, and South Asia. Sub-Saharan Africa remains the region with little or no change. Underweight rates for the Middle East and North Africa have worsened, and the report indicates that under achievement there is due to the nutritional situation in Iraq.

Despite UNICEF and WHO efforts, the lack of clean water and sanitation in poor countries continues to take the lives of children or to jeopardize their quality of life. Diarrhea alone causes 2.2 million deaths of children under five each year, and 29,000 children die daily from preventable diseases.

In the developing countries and in economies in transition, prostitution and trafficking have increased. Figures indicate that more than two million children are in the service of the sex industry, and 1.2 million are victims of trafficking.

Over 120 million children are still out of school worldwide, 65 million of them girls. Again Sub-Saharan Africa is the area with the lowest rates of school attendance, with only 58

percent of boys and 54 percent of girls attending.

Almost half of the 3.6 million deaths caused by armed conflicts since the 1990s were of children. New strategies of war target the civilian populations, and oblige children to join armed groups, bear arms and sometimes kill their own people. Boys are abducted to become combatants and girls to become sexual slaves. Soldiers and rebels rape women and girls as a weapon of war. In the same time, 20 million children were forced to leave their homes.

More than two million children worldwide have been infected with HIV/AIDS, in most cases during pregnancy or through breastfeeding. Last year alone, half a million infected children died. Children orphaned by the pandemic reached 11.5 million, according to the most conservative figures. Sub Saharan Africa is the region being most victimized by this worldwide disease.

In the UNICEF view, strategies to revert this reality require strengthening protections for children and gender perspective in poverty reduction. Involving families and children to be active parts in the solution is crucial. The reality also questions the commitment of governments, the private sector and the international community to past agreements in favor of children and poverty alleviation. Presenting the report in London, UNICEF Executive Director Carol Bellamy said, “Too many governments are making informed, deliberate choices that actually hurt childhood ... Poverty doesn’t come from nowhere; war doesn’t emerge from nothing; AIDS doesn’t spread by choice of its own. These are our choices.”

The annual UNICEF report calls on local and national governments to demonstrate their commitment to children by monitoring and analyzing their budgets from the perspective of children’s needs. It invites governments to spend more on families and to review government budget priorities. Estimations done by Financing for Development are that the developing countries will need an additional \$50 billion a year to meet the MDGs goals for education, water and sanitation, which will be possible in a world economy of \$30 trillion and with military expenses reaching US\$956 billion.

The whole report is found at [www.unicef.org](http://www.unicef.org)

## Zimbabwe: Food insecurity and upcoming elections

*In November 2004, a Zimbabwean parliamentary portfolio committee of lands and agriculture reported what the United Nations World Food Program (WFP) had been reporting for some months – that the government of Zimbabwe (GoZ) seriously miscalculated the size of its harvest and grain stocks. Meanwhile the nation of Zimbabwe moves forward towards national elections scheduled for March 2005. What are the risks to human rights and good governance in the confluence of food insecurity and contentious elections? The following article was written by George Corrigan, an intern with the Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns.*

For most of 2004 the GoZ has claimed that the annual grain harvest was a “bumper crop.” This was despite independent estimates from the WFP, the Famine Early Warning System (FEWS), and a number of NGOs involved in food supplementary feeding programs in the north and west of Zimbabwe. The parliamentary report revealed that rather than the 2.4 million metric tons (mt) of maize under control of the Grain Marketing Board (GMB), only 388,558 mt had been received. The GMB has a legal monopoly on the purchase of the maize and wheat harvest.

In outlying regions of the country, e.g., Chipinge, the distribution of grains is being done through district administrators and traditional leaders who exclude people perceived to belong to the opposition political party, according to the allegations of the area’s minister of Parliament, Wilson Lumbula. The food security situation is worsening in Chipinge, but does not yet approach perennially drought-affected provinces of Masvingo, Midlands, Matabeleland North and Matabeleland South.

Earlier this year the government decided not to renew an appeal for international food aid and controversially cancelled a crop assessment mission by WFP.

The effects of food insecurity have become evident in the annual food inflation rate of 260 percent, among the highest in the world. The rising costs have caused even more Zimbabweans to require assistance and supplemental feeding programs. The WFP hopes to expand its feeding program from 600,000 beneficiaries to 1.6 million – although the GoZ has not indicated that it supports the expanded service. At the same time, several international NGOs, e.g. Medair, a Swiss-based organization, have been forced to leave the country when their registration and work permits were not renewed for the expatriate staff. This action suspended the feeding program for 90,000 families.

NGOs and other charity groups working in Zimbabwe are also waiting to see how the controversial “NGO Bill” is implemented. The most worrisome elements of the NGO Bill, which was passed in December, are the provisions which

give the GoZ wide discretion in denying and renewing registration to NGOs receiving foreign funding for “promotion and protection of human rights and political governance issues.”

Leaders in Zimbabwe have united in a call for calm and restraint as fears mount over a possible surge in violence ahead of parliamentary elections in March 2005. Political violence has been a feature of Zimbabwean elections since independence in 1980. However, it reached a new level in the polls of 2000 and 2002, when President Robert Mugabe and the ruling ZANU-PF faced their first real challenge in the form of Morgan Tsvangirai and his Movement for Democratic Change (MDC).

In its latest report, the Zimbabwe Human Rights NGO Forum noted that tension and political violence has continued to rise ahead of next year’s parliamentary election. Human Rights Watch (HRW) notes that the “Zimbabwe Electoral Commission Bill” contains provisions that fall short of the benchmarks for democratic elections recently agreed by the Southern African Development Community (SADC), of which Zimbabwe is a member state. The SADC Principles and Guidelines Governing Democratic Elections, approved at the organization’s summit in August, mandate principles for the conduct of democratic elections, the responsibilities of the member states and the procedures for electoral observation missions.

HRW believes that the bill’s provisions impede the creation of a fully independent and impartial electoral authority in at least four key ways: (1) the method of appointing electoral commissioners does not provide for the sufficient inclusion of various political parties; (2) the bill does not adequately restrict high-ranking political party officeholders from being appointed as Commissioners; (3) the bill provides numerous opportunities for ministerial intervention in the work of the Commission; and (4) the establishment of the Commission solely through an ordinary statute makes it vulnerable to repeal. Moreover, the bill’s provisions governing voter education appear to infringe on SADC Principles and Guidelines. These provisions give the Commission far-reaching powers over voter education. The bill also bars all foreign support for voter education activities except through the Electoral Commission.

All this raises the concerns of human rights watchers inside and outside of Zimbabwe. What are the risks to human rights and good governance in the confluence of food insecurity and contentious elections? The Southern African Catholic Bishops’ Conference (<http://www.sacbc.org.za/>) has said, “The Zimbabwean situation of starvation and malnutrition, willful political violence and intimidation, and the immoral

use of food aid by the Zimbabwean government demands stronger and transparent intervention by African governments through the AU [African Union]. With more than three million people displaced as a result of the crisis in Zimbabwe, a generation of exiles and refugees has been created. This situation cannot be allowed to continue. The

Government of Zimbabwe must care for its own people. In addition, strong measures must be taken by the international community to ensure a meaningful and honest election in Zimbabwe in 2005, especially through sustained independent international and regional monitoring of the pre-election process as a prerequisite for validating the election itself.”

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## **Iraq: War puts Iraq, U.S. and the world at risk**

*Two think tanks in Washington, D.C., Foreign Policy in Focus and the Institute for Policy Studies (IPS), recently assessed costs of the Iraq conflict. Citing Iraqi as well as U.S. losses, their analysis takes into account human, economic, security and social costs, among others. Their full report, “A Failed ‘Transition’: The Mounting Costs of the Iraq War,” can be found on the IPS website at [www.ips-dc.org](http://www.ips-dc.org).*

Ask anyone the cost of the Iraq war to date, and they might cite U.S. military lives lost (around 1,300 by Christmas) or U.S. expenditures in Iraq (more than \$150 billion).

Strangely, Iraq – which has lost at least ten times the number of U.S. military casualties – is often left out of the equation. Yet, the cost of the war to Iraq and its culture is incalculable.

In their report, the authors assessed the first three months after Iraq’s transition government was installed on June 28, a period the Bush administration had promised would be marked by falling human and economic costs. Instead, U.S. military casualties (dead and wounded) jumped 50 percent, and war-related violence continued taking a grim toll in Iraqi deaths and injuries.

The report makes a signal contribution in viewing the conflict within a global perspective. Besides assessing the human, social, economic, security and even human rights costs to both Iraq and the U.S., the authors view the war in terms of its costs to the world. It analyzes these consequences in terms of disabling international law, undermining the UN, weakening global security and disarmament efforts, and hurting the environment.

The Bush administration’s preemptive war doctrine was a blow to international law. The policy flies in the face of Articles 42 and 51 of the UN Charter, which forbids war unless a nation is acting in self defense or the Security Council sanctions armed action. Bush’s assertion that “[i]f we need to act, we will act, and we really don’t need United Nations approval to do so” showed scant respect for other nations’ positions. The U.S. doctrine of preemptive war also sets a dangerous precedent that other countries might choose to follow.

The report cites intense U.S. pressure on UN Special

Envoy Lakhdar Brahimi to select candidates favored by the U.S. for Iraq’s interim government. It also describes U.S. pressure on other countries to join a “coalition of the willing” for the U.S. attack on Iraq in 2003. Just how willing can perhaps be seen in the spate of countries that pulled out in 2004. At no time did the nations in the coalition represent even 20 percent of the world’s population – a far cry from the administration’s claim that one billion people supported the war, when polls showed strong majorities opposed to the war in virtually every country except the U.S. and Israel.

Contrary to the Bush administration’s assertion that the war has made the U.S. safer, the State Department was forced to admit in June 2004 that international terrorist attacks had increased during the previous year. Further, the State Department had not blamed Iraq for an international terrorist attack at least since 1993. Now, however, the country seems to have become a haven for international terrorist groups galvanized by the U.S. occupation. The world has also seen military spending grow from \$795 billion in 2002 to an estimated \$956 billion in 2003, with the U.S. accounting for three-quarters of the increase.

The war has wreaked havoc on the environment in Iraq, and the damage is likely to spread to neighboring countries as well. For example, depleted uranium (DU), used to coat U.S. armor-piercing missiles, is suspected in the mysterious Gulf War Syndrome among U.S. soldiers and in increased cancer and birth defects in southern Iraq. Pollutants in the Tigris River – including DU particles and chemicals released by U.S. and Iraqi weaponry used since the 1991 Gulf War – threaten Iraq, Iran and, through the Shatt al-Arab entry point, Kuwait.

The authors of the report conclude the U.S. has paid a very high price for the war and has “become less secure at home and in the world. The destabilization of Iraq since the U.S. invasion has created a terrorist haven that did not previously exist in Iraq, while anti-American sentiment worldwide has sharply increased.” President Bush declared the transfer of sovereignty in Iraq to be a great victory for democracy. Events since June 28 indicate it has been a Pyrrhic victory.

## IFC falls short of its principles

*This article is a follow up to the November-December 2004 NewsNotes article on Guatemala. It was written by Jennifer Betz, intern at the Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns*

Navigating the structure of the World Bank is a daunting task. The world's largest public development institution is not one entity but contains five agencies, or arms, which make loans or guarantee credit to member countries. The fastest growing agencies of the World Bank are the private sector arms which work with businesses. The largest of the two private sector arms is the International Finance Corporation or IFC. Developed in 1956, the IFC is the largest multilateral source of loan and equity financing for private sector projects in the developing world. Although it operates under the World Bank Group's president and board members, it is legally and financially autonomous.

The mission of the IFC states that its promotion of private sector investment in developing countries aims to help reduce poverty and improve lives. The principles state that projects are to be "economically beneficial, financially and commercially sound, and environmentally and socially sustainable." Recently the IFC has begun the process to revise its Environmental and Social Policy and Performance Standards and Disclosure Policy. These standards are to address environmental and social impacts of projects.

Safeguard policies are important to ensure that the rights and interests of locally affected communities are protected. Social and environmental sustainability are vital in order to create solutions which address root causes of poverty. The IFC wants to be a leader in this field; however, IFC sponsored investments in the past have blatantly contradicted its commitment to the environment and the engagement of local communities. Likewise the IFC's public consultation process for the new Environmental and Social Policy and Performance Standards has subordinated the interests of local communities to businesses by creating a review period which did not allow sufficient time for the translation and transparent sharing of information.

The review of the draft Performance Standards shows clear signs that the rhetoric of change is still not backed by action. The IFC falls short on concrete requirements for its client companies, allowing the responsibility for the develop-



ment projects to fall in the hands of those in search of profit rather than poverty alleviation. Methods of accountability and transparency as well as an obligation to international legal obligations remain poorly implemented in these safeguards.

The Glamis Gold Mining project in Guatemala is one example of the IFC allowing a company to exploit communities and the environment, placing profit before people and the environment. Glamis Gold received funding from the IFC for a \$45 million loan, of the \$254 million needed for the project in San Marcos, Guatemala. The press release of the IFC stressed that they would be working closely with Montana Exploradora S.A., the subsidiary of Glamis implementing the project, in order to plan and implement the company's social and environmental programs.

However, it must be questioned if the economic opportunities created by these programs can offset the reality of mining. The company will use open-pit mining and cyanide leaching to extract the gold, despite the obvious threats to the environment. Worse yet, the communities who will be most affected by the mining were not given full participation in the process despite Guatemala being a signatory of the ILO Convention 169.

The situation could have been avoided entirely if the IFC focused on the eradication of poverty rather than serving the interests of businesses. While the importance of affordable housing, good education, and health care are obvious in the fight against poverty, only 1.7 percent of the 2004 fiscal year \$5.6 billion IFC budget went to these three areas *combined*. On the other hand, the extractive industries - oil, gas, and mining - received 11.2 percent or \$630 million, despite the destruction created by these industries.

Ensuring the IFC fulfills its core mission of poverty reduction and sustainability is imperative. Yet, within the new Safeguard Policies the IFC emphasizes the roles of its clients rather than defining and specifying the IFC's specific responsibilities to local communities. The IFC does not have sufficient measures to ensure that the projects it finances will deliver upon sustainable development and poverty reduction. While international financial institutions like the IFC continually espouse the need to reduce poverty, their policies and actions create a world in which the gap between the poor and the rich grows wider.

# Unfolding Financing for Development

*The Financing for Development (FfD) process began in June 1997, when the UN General Assembly adopted the Agenda for Development recommending intergovernmental dialogues to address the challenges of development financing and poverty alleviation. While the process has most directly addressed the lack of investment funds for the realization of development plans to eradicate poverty and improve economies, it has also invoked wider discussions about global economics, the governance of the international finance institutions (IFIs), and the political will, or lack thereof, the world's wealthiest nations (the G7) to restructure their economic policies toward alleviating poverty in "developing" nations. Rebecca Cutter, intern at the Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns, contributed to the following article.*

At the March 2002 UN Conference on Financing for Development, held in Monterrey, Mexico multi-stakeholder groups raised concerns about and proposed new solutions to the inequalities of global economics. Governments, civil society and the multilateral institutions have embraced the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), calling for the world's nations to halve global poverty and hunger by 2015. Many developing countries, civil society organizations and academics proposed alternative sources of financing to reach the MDGs, including the cancellation of illegitimate debt; increased financing through grants, not loans; improving global economic governance; global taxes called "currency transaction tax" or the Tobin Tax; and annual increases in Official Development Assistance (ODA) from the world's richest countries to provide 0.7 percent of their gross national product (GNP) to developing nations.

As part of the follow-up process to the FfD Conference, New Rules for Global Finance, a coalition of nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), in conjunction with the Financing for Development Office at the UN, has organized a series of multi-stakeholder consultations on systemic issues. The series relates to section F of the Monterrey Consensus ("Addressing systemic issues: enhancing the coherence and consistency of the international monetary, financial and trading systems in support of development") and is envisioned to provide an important input to the High-Level Dialogue on Financing for Development, which will take place in the autumn of 2005.

The purpose of the consultations (in Washington, D.C., Lima, Nairobi and New York) is to identify reforms that will promote financing for development, systemic stability, poverty reduction and income equality. Some of the overriding problems to be addressed are capital drought, boom-bust cycles of international capital flows, continued debt accumulation and exposure to foreign exchange, interest rate and

commodity price risk.

The Financing for Development Office at the UN is helping to organize other multi-stakeholder consultations in anticipation of the Fall 2005 High-Level Dialogue. One of these, called "Sovereign Debt for Sustained Development," relates to section E of the Consensus ("External debt"). The Issues Paper for this dialogue and a response to the Issues Paper from a number of NGOs in North America, Latin America and Europe, including the Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns, are available at [www.un.org/esa/ffd](http://www.un.org/esa/ffd).

Key recommendations from the NGOs response are:

1. We urge governments and the international financial institutions to acknowledge that the debt issue is at its core a political issue and that the current creditor-led approach to the resolution of recurrent debt crises is failing;

2. It is urgent, in this context, that a fair and transparent arbitration process framework be made available. Longer-term, a permanent body should be institutionalised under the aegis of the UN to deal with successive debt crises;

3. We urge governments and the international financial institutions to recognize the illegitimacy of much of the debt of the developing world, and to take responsibility for odious loans, defensive and onerous lending practices and ill-conceived development projects;

4. We advocate the human development approach to assessments of debt sustainability. This approach prioritises basic human needs (and therefore human rights) over debt repayments. This approach should be adopted to determine how much debt needs to be cancelled immediately in developing countries in order to free up resources for investment in essential services such as health and education and in important infrastructure such as rural roads. We recommend that such assessments be carried out in advance of the High-level Dialogue on Financing for Development planned for autumn 2005;

5. We believe in developing country ownership of debt sustainability analyses: they should not remain the exclusive preserve of the international financial institutions who stand at the same time as creditor and judge;

6. All debt relief should constitute additional resources to developing countries. This is essential if they are to make any progress towards achieving the MDGs.

The IFIs have focused on the World Bank's Highly Indebted Poor Country (HIPC) initiative as a framework for debt cancellation to help reach the goals of poverty reduction established in the MDGs. To date, the HIPC initiative has cancelled \$30 billion worth of multilateral debt. The benefits are clear: with 3,600 new teachers trained each year in Malawi

and a 54 percent increase in health care spending in Benin, it seems evident that debt cancellation improves a country's ability to provide basic services which then reduce poverty. However, the HIPC initiative, bound by IMF-imposed structural adjustment, has a limited scope and is moving much too slowly. Money that could be invested in health, education and infrastructure in the "developing" world is being channeled to the North, to the sum of \$200 billion per year in the form of debt servicing. Debt cancellation without destructive conditions that exacerbate poverty is one of the most effective and appropriate ways to mobilize finances for development. It

creates savings, directs budget support to national planning, supports more local ownership and is more pro-growth than conventional aid as the transaction costs are minimal.

### **Faith in action:**

See a recent statement by the Religious Working Group on the World Bank & IMF, "A Slow Small Step - Much Too Little, Much Too Late," at [www.sndden.org/rwg](http://www.sndden.org/rwg), or contact the Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns for a copy. To learn more about the FfD process see [www.un.org/esa/ffd](http://www.un.org/esa/ffd) and the New Rules Coalition for Global Finance at [www.new-rules.org](http://www.new-rules.org).

## **Agreement on textile export quotas ends**

*In 2004, about 16 percent of the clothing imported to the United States came from China. In the future, with the end of the Multi Fiber-Agreement (MFA), it is estimated that the percentage will jump to be 50-75 percent. The MFA, which has been in place since 1974, came to an end on January 1, 2005, after a 10-year phase out. It had placed quotas on some countries limiting the amount of clothing and textile exports in order to protect cheap labor and low production costs in the clothing and textile industries in industrialized countries, threatened by "developing" countries. The following article was written by Jennifer Betz, intern with the Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns.*

However, as multinational corporations (MNCs) continued to search for cheaper production costs, the quotas created an interesting barrier and forced companies to extend their production throughout the "developing" world, continually moving to where quotas were not yet filled or none were in place.

Many countries fought against the quota system because of the protection it gave to industrialized nations. The fact that the MFA protected smaller countries from mega-competitors with very low production costs was not widely acknowledged. It was agreed in the 1994 Uruguay Round on Multilateral Trade Negotiations that the quotas would be phased out over 10 years and the MFA would be replaced with the Agreement on Textiles and Clothing (ATC). Any extension of the MFA is virtually impossible as it would take a unanimous vote in the World Trade Organization (WTO), which now includes China and India, two countries who will benefit from the end of the quotas. The price of all this is high; some predict 25 million jobs will be lost around the world.

Some are championing of the Dominican Republic-Central America Free Trade Agreement (DR-CAFTA) due to the end of the MFA. In reality, however, *maquilas* (most of which assembly clothing) actually make up a very small

percentage of the economies of Central America. In Guatemala, for example, there are 230 factories, or *maquilas*, in the apparel industry employing fewer than 120,000 people. This is a small percentage of Guatemala's labor force when compared with other areas. Over seven million Guatemalans, for example, engage in some form of agriculture. They will be devastated by DR-CAFTA. (Other repercussions are noted in the March/April 2004 issue of *NewsNotes*.)

Some suggest that DR-CAFTA will have little to offer Central America after the MFA expires. Although Central America has a geographical advantage, and low shipment costs to the U.S., enticing some factories to stay despite higher production costs, it is likely that the cost of production disparity will make a difference, and that Central America is fighting a losing battle.

There is no doubt that the textile and clothing sector is facing a crisis in many countries of the world. Jobs lost exact a tremendous price in human suffering. However, the answer to this problem rests not in a free trade agreements, but in economic justice for all – sustainable fair trade and just development.

### **Faith in action:**

Continue to engage in dialogue with your Congressional representatives about free trade agreements and encourage them to look for just alternatives for development and trade. For more information contact the Interfaith Center on Corporate Responsibility: <http://www.iccr.org/issues/css/featured.php>

Support fledgling efforts for justice in other countries, such as El Salvador's Just Garments factory, which is unionized and is attempting to be a model there for respecting workers' rights and making a high quality product. Write to: [info@justgarments.net](mailto:info@justgarments.net)

## UN: Explaining the “Oil for Food” program

*The following article is an overview of the United Nations’ “Oil for Food” program, which has received heightened, often misleading, media focus in the past couple of months.*

The Oil for Food program (OFF) was introduced in 1996 as a result of Security Council Resolution 986. It set up a framework allowing Iraq to sell oil, the profits of which were stipulated for relief. The OFF program, then, had two parts: selling Iraq’s primary natural resource, followed by buying food and other relief commodities.

Why was this kind of a program necessary in the first place? Security Council Resolution 661, adopted in August 1990, set up the framework for sanctions against the government of Iraq, imposed as punishment for its invasion of Kuwait. The sanctions failed to impact Baghdad’s ability to govern, nor did they influence that government to change its policies. Instead, during this period, people were weakened, with 4,000-5,000 children dying each month from malnutrition, lack of medical supplies to care for otherwise treatable diseases, and from the destruction of Iraq’s water and sanitation facilities. The price of sanctions was too high, and in April 1995, in a move to ameliorate the damage done to Iraqi people, the UN finally established the Oil for Food program through Security Council Resolution 986. (The implementation did not occur until December 1996.)

The OFF program was given to nine different UN agencies, which then developed and carried out one of the most successful humanitarian operations in recent times. For nearly seven years, the program was able to meet urgent needs of Iraq’s civilian population. In particular, agencies put great effort into monthly food distribution, on which 60 percent of the population were totally dependent to keep them from starvation. NGOs in Iraq have confirmed just how necessary this program was in saving lives of innocent Iraqi people put in jeopardy by severe sanctions which were imposed not just on the regime of Saddam Hussein, but on the entire nation.

However, the oil part of the program was a different thing. The UN’s Security Council allowed the Iraqi government, as a sovereign entity, to negotiate contracts with purchasers of Iraqi oil and suppliers of commodities. It was here that illegal surcharges and commissions were apparently levied by the Iraqi government. Under the Security Council resolution, all member states were responsible for enforcing the sanctions. While the OFF program involved extensive monitoring, its staff was in no position to inter-

fere. Yet on more than 70 occasions, UN staff brought irregularities to the attention to the Security Council.

Indeed, authority in these matters resided in the Security Council, including approval of or withholding any contracts from suppliers. Every member of the Security Council had to approve every contract for the oil sales. As early as 2000, the OFF staff alerted the Security Council to suspicious oil surcharges by the Iraqi government; Secretary General Kofi Annan drew attention to the problem in a 2001 public report. Review procedures were put into place with a mechanism to curb the practice, but on no occasion did the U.S. or any other Security Council member take steps to stop contracts for “pricing” reasons. The U.S., however, did block billions of dollars of humanitarian contracts for “security” reasons.

After seven years of operation, the Oil for Food program was terminated November 19, 2003 and handed over to the Coalition Authority. Former U.S. Federal Reserve Chairman Paul Volcker has been appointed by the UN to head an

### **Income from the sale of oil: \$64.2 billion**

\$42.7 billion was allocated directly to relief efforts.

\$1.1 billion allocated to operational expenses. The UN expenses were under-budget so:

- \$ 272 million saved were transferred to the humanitarian relief efforts
- \$ 100 million saved were transferred to Coalition-managed Fund for Iraq (DFI)
- \$ 8+ billion was left over at the end of the Oil for Food Program and transferred to DFI.

The Security Council allocated the rest:

- \$ 18.6 billion to Kuwait to pay war damages from the Gulf War
- \$ 500 million on UN weapons inspection program -and-reimbursing advanced funds which had been lent for the relief program

### **Estimated illegal revenues from 1997-2002: \$10.1 billion**

- \$5.7 billion in oil smuggled out of Iraq (by former Iraq regime and unrelated to Oil for Food) In 1991, the Security Council mandated a Multinational Interception Force, not administered by the UN.

- \$4.4 billion though surcharges on oil sales and illicit commissions from suppliers

independent investigation into the Oil for Food program.

For more information, visit these websites:

- UN Oil for Food website: <http://www.un.org/Depts/oip>
- “Ten things progressives should know about the UN Oil-for-Food scandal,” written by Michael Pan, published on Dec. 8, 2004 on [www.commondreams.org](http://www.commondreams.org)

- “UN Oil for Food ‘Scandal,’” written by Joy Gordon, *The Nation* magazine, Dec. 6, 2004; [www.thenation.com](http://www.thenation.com)
- Interview with Joy Gordon, Denis Halliday and Claudia Rosett on “Democracy Now”: [www.democracynow.org/](http://www.democracynow.org/); search for the December 3, 2004 broadcast.

## U.S. increases foreign military training

*Since September 11, 2001, the United States has greatly increased its training of foreign security forces. Several of the countries now receiving training were prohibited from such training prior to 9-11 because of poor human rights records. For example, the effective ban on U.S. training for militaries in Pakistan, Tajikistan and Azerbaijan has been lifted since 9-11 even though the State Department’s annual report on human rights practices lists these countries as having “poor” human rights records. In addition, foreign militaries receiving U.S. training have in some cases used child soldiers or worked closely with paramilitary forces or armed groups that utilize child soldiers. Examples include Colombia, Angola, Burundi, and Uganda.*

The U.S. justifies much of its training on the grounds that training helps professionalize these forces, and maintains that through “professionalization” and contact with U.S. soldiers, human rights practices will improve. Yet, this hypothesis has never been tested because there is no systematic way to monitor or track the record of those soldiers who do receive U.S. training.

Given this situation, several organizations, including the Africa Faith and Justice Network, Amnesty International USA, East Timor Action Network, and School of the Americas Watch, have proposed some modest reforms to U.S. training of foreign militaries which have been incorporated in an draft bill. The bill calls on the U.S. to do three things: 1) discontinue training to countries with militaries that use child soldiers; 2) mainstream effective human rights and humanitarian law education into all foreign security force training; and 3) establish a joint Departments of Defense and State database of U.S.-trained foreign security force personnel.

While other deep concerns about U.S. foreign military training programs remain, this bill would be a good starting point. For example, the bill would expand current U.S. commitments on ending the use of child soldiers. While training in human rights and international humanitarian law is no guarantee of success, as demonstrated by the experience at the Western Hemisphere Institute for Security Coopera-

tion (WHINSEC, formerly the School of the Americas), a training program at all 275 U.S. training facilities, not just WHINSEC, is important to ensure that no one can say that they did not know the laws of war, as has been suggested in the Abu Ghraib scandal. Finally, the bill would also provide improved access to information about whom the U.S. is training so that policy makers and nongovernmental organizations could better monitor human rights practices after training is completed.

The next step is to secure primary sponsors for this legislation before the 109th Congress begins, so it can be introduced and move toward passage more quickly in the new Congress.

### **Faith in action:**

*The following brief statement was endorsed by many human rights and religious organizations and sent to Congress to demonstrate wide support for legislation like this. Please adapt as needed and sign the statement yourself, invite others in your Congressional district to do so, and send it to your members of Congress, urging them to support reform of U.S. training programs for foreign security forces.*

We, the undersigned, believe there is an urgent need to reform current U.S. training programs for foreign security forces. The dramatic increase in training for countries with poor human rights records continues to have a serious impact on human rights for ordinary citizens around the world, and will have a lasting impact on the security of hundreds of millions. We join together in asking members of Congress to introduce legislation that would include the following proposals for reform: 1) discontinue military training to countries and groups that use child soldiers; 2) mainstream effective human rights and humanitarian law education into all training of foreign security forces; 3) establish a joint State and Defense Department database of U.S.-trained foreign security force personnel.

We believe the attached draft bill provides a viable platform that addresses these concerns. We ask for your co-sponsorship and active support for its passage.

## Congress deletes new nuke funds; work remains

*Arms control and disarmament advocates celebrated as 2004 ended. On November 20, the House and Senate Appropriations Committees passed an Omnibus Spending Bill, which eliminated funds for new nuclear weapons for fiscal year 2005. All funds for the Robust Nuclear Earth Penetrator, known as the "bunker buster," and Advanced Concepts Initiative, which could include work on new low-yield nuclear weapons, were deleted. Daryl Kimball, executive director of the Arms Control Association, said the bill represents "an important rejection of the administration's costly and counterproductive drive to invent new nuclear arms for new missions." The following article was written by Maryknoll Lay Missioner Tim O'Connell.*

Grassroots pressure and congressional courage came together to curtail the Bush administration's nuclear ambitions. Rep. David Hobson (R-OH), chair of the House Energy and Water Appropriations Subcommittee, led congressional opposition. Hobson, security analysts, and people of peace believe the administration's pursuit of new or redesigned nuclear weapons for new missions undermines the moral authority the U.S. needs to prevent the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and diverts scarce resources to wasteful programs.

The administration insists that funding is needed for "research," and that no decision has been made to build new nuclear weapons. However, the Energy Department projects spending \$484.7 million dollars over five years on the bunker buster. This spending plan leaves Hobson's subcommittee "unconvinced by the Department's superficial assurances that the [earth penetrator] activity is only a study and that advanced concepts is only a skills exercise for weapons designers." (Arms Control Association)

Despite the budget victory, everyone concerned with the growing nuclear danger must stay engaged. "President Bush has made new and modified nuclear weapons an important piece of his plan for U.S. strategic planning, and he is not likely to give up easily on this effort," predicted Matt Martin, deputy director of the British American Security Information Council. The president is expected to request funds for new nuclear weapons in the FY2006 budget.

The United States is not alone in its efforts to enhance its nuclear arsenal. Russia recently announced that it will deploy new nuclear weapons in 2006. Some Russian officials have acknowledged they are working on weapons that are unlike anything that currently exists. In a recent article carried

by Defense News, General Nikolai Solovtsov, the head of Russia's nuclear forces, stated, "Unfortunately, there is no alternative to nuclear arms. This is why so many other countries are trying to get them."

In May, members of the international community will meet at the UN in New York to discuss this reality. The forum will be the Review Conference of the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty (NPT). The NPT was built upon three pillars: (1) non-nuclear weapon states are obligated to not pursue nuclear weapons; (2) nuclear weapon states are obligated to move towards the elimination of their nuclear weapons; (3) all signatories are required to promote and cooperate in the peaceful uses of nuclear energy.

At least two of these three pillars are under assault from signatories to the treaty. Some non-nuclear states are pursuing nuclear weapons. North Korea, for example, developed a weapons program, withdrew from the NPT, and is believed to possess a limited number of nuclear bombs. At the same time, some of the nuclear weapon states including the U.S. Russia, France, and China are enhancing their own nuclear capabilities, in violation of their obligation to work towards nuclear disarmament.

The NPT reflects agreement within the international community that nonproliferation is essential for global security. However, the actions of individual states seeking their own national security undermine efforts to achieve nonproliferation objectives and pursue global human security. The Review Conference will provide the opportunity for the nations of the world to demonstrate whether they are committed to nonproliferation in theory. The years ahead will demonstrate whether they can commit to it in practice.

### **Faith in action:**

The NPT Review Conference will allow non-governmental organizations (NGOs) to present papers and opinions at the conference in May. For more information on how to become involved, visit [www.reachingcriticalwill.org](http://www.reachingcriticalwill.org), a project of the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF), which is coordinating efforts of NGOs that are committed to nuclear disarmament. This site also contains information on the massive rally to demand nuclear abolition scheduled for May 1, 2005 in New York City. [You can also contact WILPF in the U.S. at 777 UN Plaza, New York NY 10017; tel: (212)682-1265; fax: (212)286-8211; email: [wilpfun@igc.org](mailto:wilpfun@igc.org).]

## Resources

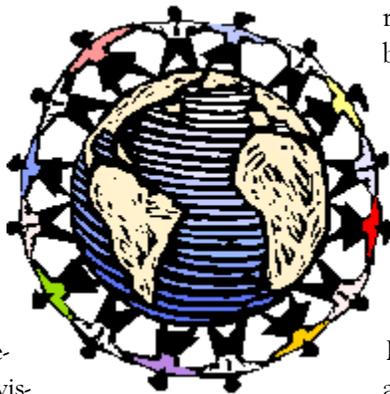
- 1) **Ecumenical Advocacy Days 2005 "Make All Things New":** The Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns is a cosponsor of the third annual Ecumenical Advocacy Days gathering in Washington, D.C., to be held **March 11-14**. Advocacy Days takes place in the context of a new presidential term, a new Congress and a new opportunity for people of faith to learn together and raise their voices in advocacy for a more just and peaceful world.

This gathering will highlight the urgency of pursuing wise and peaceful solutions to conflicts and the need for aid, debt and trade policies that benefit our impoverished brothers and sisters throughout the world.

Participants will examine U.S. policy regarding the Middle East, Africa, Asia, Latin America, global economic justice, global security, eco-justice and U.S. domestic issues. There will be challenging speakers, issue briefings and training in advocacy. Comprehensive briefings will precede visits with members of Congress or their key policy staff assistants. Registration is \$135.

For more information, contact the MOGC office, or go to [www.advocacydays.org](http://www.advocacydays.org); c/o Washington Office on Africa, 212 East Capitol Street, Washington, D.C. 20003; email: [info@advocacydays.org](mailto:info@advocacydays.org); phone: (202)543-4150.

- 2) **Working for a Just Peace in Palestine and Israel: In Word and Deed:** This gathering, subtitled "A Conference for Peacemakers," is sponsored by Friends of Sabeel, AFSC's Middle East Peace Education Program, and Columbia Theological Seminary, and will be held **February 4-5** at Columbia Theological Seminary in Decatur, GA. Its aim is to educate about the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, to explore biblical interpretations of the conflict, and to empower people to work for a just peace. Registration is \$40 before January 28, \$50 after January 28. Contact Friends of Sabeel, P.O. Box 9186, Portland OR 97207; phone: (503)653-6625; email: [friends@fosna.org](mailto:friends@fosna.org); [www.fosna.org](http://www.fosna.org)



- 3) **Like Grains of Wheat: A Spirituality of Solidarity:** Written by Margaret Swedish and Marie Dennis, published by Orbis Books. In the decades of the 1970-90s, tens of thousands of U.S. citizens traveled to Central America. For many it was their first time outside the borders of the U.S. In a time marked by civil war and violence they went to see the reality of poverty and experience the resilient hope of the Central American people. What they saw and experienced left a permanent mark. Their vantage point on the world was radically altered. Drawn from interviews with hundreds of these solidarity activists, *Like Grains of Wheat* offers their stories—"stories that still inspire, that point to a new and better way of living faithfully in the context of our broken world." 240 pages, \$18.00. Contact Orbis Books at 800-258-5838, or email [orbisbooks@maryknoll.org](mailto:orbisbooks@maryknoll.org)

- 4) **Convictions: Prisoners of Conscience:** This is the latest film by veteran SOA Watch producer Robert Richter. It highlights the human side of those who crossed the line in November 2003 to protest the Pentagon-sponsored School of the Americas during the annual demonstration and vigil outside the gates of Ft. Benning, GA. Featured are the everyday people - mothers and daughters, priests and lay people - who felt called to make this symbolic gesture in the name of the hundreds of thousands of victims throughout Latin America. Each of them faced certain jail time (usually six months), yet all were clear in the need to actively confront the horrors that the SOA represents. \$14.95. Available from Maryknoll World Productions; [www.maryknollmall.org](http://www.maryknollmall.org); phone: (800)227-8523.

- 5) **Just Add Justice: Bringing Fair Trade to Your Community:** Oxfam America's new comprehensive guide to fair trade activism is for individuals, campus and community groups. Just Add Justice explores a variety of topics, from the realities of fair trade's role in sustainable development to tips for fundraising and working with the media. This guide helps you reach your goals for a fairer and more just community. Contact Oxfam America at 800-77-OXFAM (800-776-9326, in the U.S.), or go to [http://www.oxfamamerica.org/pdfs/Just\\_Add\\_Justice.pdf](http://www.oxfamamerica.org/pdfs/Just_Add_Justice.pdf)