

# Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns

## NewsNotes

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

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## Global climate change and the environment

*"... Ask the beasts to teach you, and the birds of the air to tell you; or the reptiles on earth to instruct you, and the fish of the sea to inform you ... In God's hand is the soul of every living thing ..." Job 12: 7-10*

Kessai Boseto lives in a small fishing community in the Solomon Islands in the Pacific Ocean. Historically, tuna fishing has been the economic mainstay of the community. But, because the local sea water temperature has risen, the fish have moved farther north in search of cooler waters. The migration of the fish has left the community with no steady source of livelihood.

Kessai is concerned about how to earn enough money to support his family. How will he send his children to school? What will he do if one of the children becomes seriously ill? Kessai is understandably bewildered. The temperature rise of the ocean has not been caused by anything he or his fellow islanders have done in their small unindustrialized part of the world. Nevertheless, everyone -- the women and children as well as the men of the village -- are profoundly affected and will surely face hardship. Maryknoll sisters working on other Pacific Islands express similar concerns.

It has long been understood that pollution affects the local environment, but it is a new realization that carbon emissions from the United States and other industrialized countries have far-reaching effects around the globe. Ocean temperatures are rising, droughts are longer, hurricanes and floods are stronger and fresh water sources are disappearing as glaciers melt.

Catholic social tradition emphasizes care for creation, right relationships with the community of all life and a responsibility to future generations as part of the universal common good.

Realizing that the earth is limited and fragile presents an opportunity to make a dramatic adjustment in lifestyle toward a way of living that will be sustainable for the entire world. Resolve to act correctly in this regard is strengthened by faith, by the realization that all are sisters and brothers

and by recalling factors that have forged the U.S. heritage of generosity.

Industrialized countries need to "power down" -- use less energy and consume less -- in order to meet everyone's needs, now and in years to come. Powering down will mean diminishing dependence on oil, gas and coal, which emit large amounts of carbon dioxide, while rapidly developing alternative, clean and renewable energy sources, such as wind, solar, tidal, small scale hydro and local biofuels. Corn ethanol does not significantly reduce carbon dioxide emissions when the entire production process is taken into account, and nuclear energy is too dangerous to use.

The era of cheap oil has ended. New sources of oil will not resolve the problem. Lower consumption levels and the value of sufficiency are needed to bring society back within the limits of nature. This will require concerted effort, moral conviction, enormous creativity, and good financing. Just and realistic government policy will be required to set the direction.

Important policy goals include:

- End oil and corn-for-ethanol subsidies.
- Reject investments in new nuclear power plants.
- End mountaintop removal in the coal mining industry.
- Create incentives for development and use of alternative energy sources that reduce greenhouse gases, such as wind, solar, tidal, small scale hydro and local biofuels.
- Help poorer, more vulnerable countries with financial and technological assistance to develop measures for adapting to and mitigating the effects of climate change.
- Agree to set and abide by international standards for carbon emissions through the Climate Change Treaty process.

- Work to guarantee the right of everyone to fresh, clean water, and stop support for the privatization and commodification of water.
  - Suspend genetically modified food production that uses chemical fertilizers and pesticides, and support organic agriculture.
  - Support public transportation.
- Questions for candidates:
1. What are the first steps you would take in response to global warming?
  2. What would you do to transition to alternative energy sources?
  3. What is your position on the dangers of nuclear power plants?
  4. What would you do to guarantee the right of everyone to fresh, clean water?
- 

## **Climate change: Gore speaks at Bali conference**

*The UN Climate Change conference was held Dec. 3-14 on the Indonesian island of Bali. One of the guest speakers was former Vice President Al Gore, who shared the 2007 Nobel Peace Prize for his work on climate change. Below is an excerpt from his presentation to the conferees:*

We the human species face a planetary emergency. ... I remember years ago listening to the scientists, who specialize in the study of ice and snow, express concern that sometime toward the end of the 21st century we might even face the possibility of losing the entire north polar ice cap. I remember only three years ago, when they revised their estimates to say it could happen halfway through the 21st century, by 2050. I remember at the beginning of this year, when I was shocked, along with others, to hear them say it could happen in as little as 34 years. And now, this week, they tell us it could completely disappear in as little as five to seven years.

For those who have believed that this climate crisis was going to affect their grandchildren, and who were shaken a bit to hear that it would affect their children, and still said and did nothing: it is affecting us, in the present generation, and it is up to us in this generation to solve this crisis. [People] all across my country and around the world are beginning to look much more clearly at what is involved here. We are seeing the early stages of the first global people-power movement. ...

Decades ago Martin Luther King Jr. said, "Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere." In like fashion, global warming pollution increased

anywhere threatens the future of world civilization everywhere. That is the basis for rethinking what used to be called "foreign aid," or assistance. We have an obligation to form partnerships to reduce CO2 everywhere on Earth. So we must leave here with a strong mandate.

The greatest opportunity inherent in this climate crisis is not only to quickly deploy the new technologies that will facilitate sustainable development and create the new jobs and to lift standards of living. The greatest opportunity is that in rising to meet the climate crisis, we in our generation will find the moral authority and capacity for long-term vision to get our act together in this world. We are one people, on one planet. We have one future, one destiny. We must pursue it together and we can.

When we hear of that phrase "capacity building," it's usually used by someone in a wealthy country talking about poor countries. I think it's time we had capacity building in the wealthy, developed countries. For leadership, and for partnership, and for cooperation, and for vision.

Instead of shaking our heads at the difficulty of this task and saying "woe is us, this is impossible, how can we do this? We're so mad at the ones that are making it harder." We ought to feel a sense of joy that we have work that is worth doing that is so important to the future ... . We ought to feel a sense of exhilaration that we are the people alive at a moment in history when we can make all the difference. That's who you are. You have everything you need. We have everything we need, save perhaps political will. But political will is a renewable resource.

## A fair and sustainable economy

*"Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others."  
Philippians 2: 4*

Jesús' family has been living on the same piece of land in Oaxaca, Mexico, for centuries. In the past few decades, life has grown increasingly difficult as the prices for their crops of corn, beans and wheat have fluctuated greatly while many expenses have increased.

Social services such as health and education became scarcer and more expensive in the 1980s when Mexico accepted loans from the International Monetary Fund (IMF) that demanded reduced spending on public services. Since the early 1990s when Mexico prepared to enter the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), life has become precarious. As part of the agreement, the Mexican government eliminated the aid it had given to farmers to buy fertilizers and pesticides, so the cost of those items shot up. The bag of fertilizer for which Jesús once paid 90 pesos now cost 320 pesos. At the same time, the price of his maize plummeted as cheap imported corn flooded the local markets. A kilo of corn once worth three pesos was now hardly worth 1.5 pesos. Ironically, tortillas became over four times more expensive because the government also agreed to remove long-standing subsidies that had ensured the affordability of Mexicans' daily tortillas. Since early 2007, international corn prices have skyrocketed due to increased interest in bio-fuels made from corn. As a result, prices of food like tortillas, chicken and eggs have gone up even further, but manipulations by giant corporations that dominate the corn market have prevented the benefits of higher prices from reaching Jesús and other small farmers in local markets.

While many still have enough food from what they grow, they often lack the money to buy other necessities. Many men have left to go north to look for work. Some have ended up in overpopulated Mexican cities, while others have crossed the border into the United States. More recently, women and children are leaving to join their family members.

Many of those who remain are dependent on the money sent back by those who left. Some, however, like Jesús, have changed their farming and marketing methods. They have started producing their own fertilizers through the use of composting, worm beds and nitrogen-fixing plants. They have also diversified their food production so they can sell year-round in local markets.

Since World War II, the U.S. has played an important role in shaping the global economy and today has an obligation to help change economic policies so that people like Jesús don't suffer needlessly.

Catholic social tradition advocates an economy that guarantees the human dignity of all members of society and the well-being of God's creation, our planet. In the last few decades, however, the globalized economy has provided huge benefits for the world's wealthiest people with little trickling down to others, and Earth is threatened as never before.

Maryknoll missionaries have seen little improvement in the situations of the poorest and most at risk members of the human family; poverty rates have remained too high in many of the countries where we work. Racism continues around the world. In many countries, including the U.S., we see that the darker a person's skin, the poorer they tend to be. Women too are undervalued in the world economy. Though half of the population, women continue to be excluded from participating in economic decisions that affect their lives.

The growing influence of mega-corporations on political processes encourages economic decision-making that focuses on wealth and prosperity while forgetting more vulnerable people in the U.S. and abroad. Many of these decisions profit larger businesses at the expense of smaller ones and encourage unsustainable levels of consumption.

Important policy goals:

- Enforce a separation of large corporations and

state, strengthen and enforce anti-trust laws and promote enforceable mechanisms for corporate accountability.

- Pass the Jubilee Act, which addresses the issue of unjust and overwhelming debt, and extend debt cancellation to heavily indebted middle-income countries in the global south.
- Change restrictive trade policies to allow countries space to meet the needs of local communities, adapt to a future without cheap oil and provide real job opportunities for poor people.
- Include explicit gender and racial equity goals in government decision making.
- Place less emphasis on simple economic growth (GDP growth) as a measurement of U.S. well-being and consider using tools like the Human Development Index to measure our progress as

a society.

Questions for candidates:

1. What specific proposals do you have to reduce the excessive influence of powerful corporations on our public policies?
2. What would you do to make our economy both fairer and more sustainable?
3. How would you address the reality that the median household wealth of white families in the U.S. is much greater than that of families of color?
4. Would you support the cancellation of unjust debts of impoverished and middle-income countries to the United States, the World Bank, IMF and regional development banks?
5. How would you change U.S. trade policy to strengthen local economies and adapt to a future without cheap oil?

### **“The Story Of Stuff ” challenges U.S. consumerism**

“The Story of Stuff,” a short film released online in December 2007, takes viewers on a provocative tour of the U.S. consumer-driven culture — from resource extraction to iPod incineration — exposing the real costs of this use-it and lose-it approach to stuff.

In 2006, U.S. residents spent \$456.2 billion during the holiday season; 2007 sales are predicted to rise to \$474.5 billion. “The Story of Stuff” reveals that holiday consumption is not a seasonal phenomenon, rather a U.S. American maxim that has devastating consequences for the environment, impoverished nations, working class U.S. residents, personal health and even the general state of happiness in the United States.

Throughout the 20-minute film, Annie Leonard, the film’s narrator and an expert on the materials economy, examines the social, environmental and global costs of extraction, production, distribution, consumption and disposal. Her illustration of a culture driven by stuff allows her to isolate the moment in history where she says the trend of consumption mania began. The “Story of Stuff” examines how economic policies of the post-World War II era ushered in notions of consumerism — and how those

notions are still driving much of the U.S. and global economies today.

According to the film, consumer mania may have been born from the post-World War II era, but economic manipulation has driven consumerism to where it is today. From the limited life cycle of personal computers to changes in footwear fashion, Leonard demonstrates that products are either designed to be regularly replaced or to convince consumers that their stuff needs to be upgraded. This notion of planned and perceived obsolescence drives the machine of consumerism year round.

The film features Leonard delivering a rapid-fire, often humorous and always engaging story about “all our stuff — where it comes from and where it goes when we throw it away.” The film’s website, [www.storyofstuff.com](http://www.storyofstuff.com), serves as an interactive launch pad for information and activism. The site features hundreds of organizations working to change the cycle of the materials economy and offers viewers “another way.” It also includes resources and information, a footnoted script, a suggested reading list and ideas for educational activities and discussion topics for local screenings.

## Welcoming the stranger

*"I was a stranger and you invited me in." Matthew 25:35*

Amir is an Egyptian who traveled to the United States on at least two occasions, with proper temporary visas, to study English. Over time, he decided he no longer wished to follow traditional ways, for which he received serious threats of bodily harm from his family and home village in Egypt.

Amir returned to the United States and requested asylum from persecution. He spent five months in the Elizabeth, N.J., facility for immigration detainees where Maryknoll affiliates heard his story. None of the over 300 detainees at the facility, which is run by the Corrections Corporation of America, have criminal records; about half are asylum seekers and the others are undocumented immigrants who were picked up by federal agents. Many are from Asia, Africa and Latin America; other detainees are from Eastern Europe and the Middle East, all places where economic hardship and violent conflict are pervasive.

Amir's attorney was able to help him receive asylum based on his credible fear of persecution, but a government prosecutor immediately challenged the judge's ruling. While the appeal was pending, Amir was able to live for over a year in a sanctuary program, study, hold a job (with a proper work permit) and pay taxes. But after 14 months, despite acknowledging that he was threatened if he returned home, the courts reversed Amir's asylum ruling, and he was held again at the detention facility and forbidden to contact his attorney.

After seven months of confinement, Amir said he would rather return to Egypt and "die once, rather than die here a little bit every day." He was deported to Egypt, but eventually secured passage to Canada, where he lives and works today.

Amir is one of an estimated 191 million migrants in the Americas, Asia and Africa. They include political and economic migrants, refugees from war and civil conflict, asylum seekers and internally displaced persons. Three percent of the world's population -- about one in 35 persons -- is a migrant.

In their 2003 pastoral letter "Strangers No Longer: Together on the Journey of Hope," the Catholic bishops of Mexico and the United States

enunciate five principles of Catholic social teaching applicable to migration: 1) persons have the right to find opportunity in their home land; 2) persons have the right to migrate to support themselves and their families; 3) sovereign nations have the right to control their borders, but are obliged to accommodate migrant flows; 4) refugees and asylum seekers should be afforded protection; and 5) the human dignity and human rights of undocumented migrants should be respected.

Important policy goals include:

- Implement just and compassionate national immigration policies that counter punitive and isolationist tendencies, that recognize the importance of global solidarity in an intensely polarized world and that respect the inherent dignity and human rights of all migrants and asylum seekers, documented and undocumented alike.
- End the use of workplace raids, and stop the practice of deporting parents of under-age U.S.-born children.
- Give urgent attention to the root causes of involuntary migration, especially war and economic injustice.
- Definitively end human trafficking, and provide protective and rehabilitation services for trafficked persons.
- Protect refugees and asylum seekers and reverse laws and policies that lead to their incarceration.
- Ratify and implement the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of their Families, and support the creation of a Permanent Forum on Migration Issues within the UN as a space for ongoing dialogue and policy formulation among governments, migrants, non-governmental organizations and the private sector.

Questions for candidates:

1. What would comprehensive immigration reform look like in your administration?
2. Would you support the ratification of the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members

- of their Families?
3. What steps would you take to stop the exploitation of migrant workers and the anti-migrant attitudes in the U.S. and around the world?
  4. What would you do to stop trafficking in human persons?
  5. What do you feel is the obligation of wealthy nations toward migrants? What would you do to support development efforts in poor countries that might reduce the disparity between wealthy and poor nations that drives many to take perilous journeys across borders?

## Planning the war on immigrants

*No matter how the political parties are represented in Congress, whoever is the next president of the United States is very likely to encounter an ongoing debate about immigration policy. A spectrum of legislative proposals has been under discussion with little movement toward a just and comprehensive solution. Some individuals, community groups and elected officials espouse a strategy called "attrition through enforcement." This strategy is described in the following excerpted article, written by Tom Barry and published by the Americas Program of the Center for International Policy, <http://americas.irc-online.org>.*

[In an April 2006 article from the Center for Immigration Studies (CIS),] CIS analyst Jessica Vaughn [writes], "The purpose of attrition through enforcement is to increase the probability that illegal aliens will return home without the intervention of immigration enforcement agencies. In other words, it encourages voluntary compliance with immigration laws through more robust interior law enforcement."

Key components of the war of attrition include eliminating access to jobs through employer verification of Social Security numbers and immigration status; ending misuse of Social Security and IRS numbers by immigrants in seeking employment, bank accounts, and driver's licenses, and improved information sharing among key federal agencies in the effort to identify unauthorized residents; increasing federal, state, and local cooperation, particularly among law enforcement agencies; reducing visa overstays through better tracking systems; stepping up immigration raids; and passing state and local laws to discourage illegal immigrants from making a home in that area and to make it more difficult for immigrants to conceal their status. ...

Without driver's licenses and without work because of employment-centered enforcement, immigrants will leave the country – as many as 1.5 million annually, predicts the CIS study. "A subtle increase in the 'heat' on illegal aliens can be enough to dramatically reduce the scale of the problem within just a few years," says Vaughn. ...

Immigration raids in the interior of the country and imprisonment by immigration officials of those crossing the border illegally combined with pervasive enforcement of the "rule of law" by police and government bureaucrats will slowly but surely drive all undocumented immigrants out of the country. Restrictionists increasingly argue that mass deportation will be unnecessary since an ever-increasing number of immigrants will "self-deport." ...

[Another] "reasonable" solution ... includes measures such as denying federal money to states and local governments that provide social services to undocumented residents, and ending federal educational aid to public universities that provide in-state tuition to undocumented residents.

The Federation for American Immigration Reform (FAIR) is spearheading the attrition war on the state level, working closely with a new group called State Legislators for Legal Immigration ...

The war of attrition is already leaving a trail of divided communities and split families in its wake. Detentions and deportations are shattering immigrant communities and families as restrictionists applaud and call for ever-harsher measures. ...

As this war against the country's most vulnerable population deepens, [U.S. citizens] will need to ask themselves if they feel any safer or more secure, if they have more hope to find better-paying jobs, if their neighborhoods and town economies are more or less vibrant as immigrants leave, and if they are proud of themselves and their country.

## HIV/AIDS

*"We are all members of one body" Ephesians 4:26*

Ruth was found along a dirt road in Mbuya, Uganda, together with her ill and malnourished baby and her 4-year-old daughter. Sent away from her village by her family, she had come to Kampala to seek treatment for HIV/AIDS, but after a short hospital stay, she was discharged. She had not eaten for days, had no home, and she could not tolerate the medicines she'd been given. Ruth wanted to die ... and she wanted her baby to die.

A community worker from the Reach Out program, herself living with HIV/AIDS, took the little family into her home. She helped Ruth receive treatment for tuberculosis and other infections, and after a few weeks, both Ruth and her baby were started on antiretroviral therapy for AIDS. When Ruth grew stronger, Reach Out rented a small room for her close to the community worker, who stayed by her side during the first difficult months.

Six months after her first visit to Reach Out and following the support she received, Ruth is proudly showing off her baby to other clients at Reach Out and people in the community, especially other struggling women. She attends adult literacy classes and soon will be able to run a small business and care for herself and her children.

An estimated 33 million people still live with HIV/AIDS, 25 million have died and more than 15 million children worldwide have been orphaned. In many places where Maryknoll missionaries work with communities devastated by AIDS, as in the U.S., stigma is still a major obstacle to overcoming this disease, and prevention efforts have not caught up with the high rate of transmission. More than six million people, many of them children, die each year of TB, malaria and HIV/AIDS for lack of medicines. Overwhelming debt payments and unjust trade policies impede governments' adequate response to the pandemic.

At their recent summit, the leaders of the G8 wealthier countries promised an increase in investment in programs to respond to AIDS, TB and malaria. However the \$60 billion they committed is only one-third of what the UN estimates is needed in the next five years. The President's Emergency Program for AIDS Response (PEPFAR) made a good begin-

ning, but recent funding is far less than the amounts needed, and restrictions on access to more affordable generic drugs have created insurmountable obstacles for HIV-positive poor people. Less than 30 percent of those in the global South who need them receive antiretroviral drugs.

Important policy goals are suggested by our Catholic social tradition that holds as sacred the right to life and the dignity of every person, especially the most vulnerable:

- Allocate \$50 billion (which constitutes the U.S. fair share of supporting treatment for at least 33 percent of those in clinical need, and continues existing bilateral programs) over the next five years in response to AIDS, TB and malaria worldwide. Increase U.S. donations to the Global Fund, which finances HIV/AIDS programs beyond what the U.S. can cover bilaterally.
- Respect the World Trade Organization's rules to make generic medications available worldwide.
- Approve use of U.S. funds to purchase generic medication.
- Cancel unjust and overwhelming debt without conditions that restrict government spending on health care.
- Invest in the training, retention and support of health workers in poor countries.
- Include nutrition and health care education with programs responding to HIV/AIDS.

Questions for candidates:

1. How would you address the racial disparity in HIV/AIDS prevention and services here in the U.S.?
2. Would you support a greater U.S. contribution to the Global Fund? Why or why not?
3. How would you ensure that the United States and other G8 nations keep their promise to increase investments in programs to fund AIDS, TB and malaria for the rest of the world?
4. Should the U.S. require that funds designated to purchase HIV/AIDS medicines for people in other countries be limited to medicines produced by U.S. pharmaceuticals?
5. What can our government do to ensure the lowest possible prices for essential medicines?

## Peace and sustainable security

*"I will heal my people and let them enjoy abundant peace and security." Jeremiah 33:5-7*

Cathy, a former Maryknoll lay missionary, has visited Iraq and neighboring Jordan several times during the past few years. Refugees in Amman and her friends in Baghdad tell her about what it is like for the people of Iraq to live in extreme hardship for long periods of time. Asked about the harshness of the summer heat and lack of water and electricity, one Iraqi told Cathy, "There are nights when no sleep



Photo of Baghdad children by Linda Panetta, [www.opticalrealities.org](http://www.opticalrealities.org)

was possible because of the sound of low-flying aircraft, of explosions and mortars." Another said, "Believe me when I tell you we did not feel the heat this summer as in years past. We had so many other problems to face." Near desperation was evident in the comment, "Do you know what people are saying now? We don't need to eat or drink or sleep anymore! We just want to be safe. That is all we want...."

Meanwhile, Fatima, a 40-year-old mother from Wassit Province in Iraq, feels more confident these days. Since a literacy campaign for women began in her area, Fatima has attended every class, motivated by hopes of a more promising future and of being a better parent.

The women's literacy campaign is a community action program, funded by USAID but run by Iraqis with training and support from U.S.-based non-governmental organizations. Thousands of Iraqi women have taken advantage of the program. Beyond the obvious benefit of empowering women with literacy and knowledge, it provides job opportunities for hundreds of previously unemployed teachers and brings together different sectors of Iraqi society.

With a very small investment, community action programs like this and small-scale, local peacebuilding efforts have helped provide stability in different parts of Iraq, mitigating somewhat the enormous frustration that is often a recruiting tool for insurgents.

The National Security Strategy of the United

States describes the U.S. military as a co-equal partner with our diplomatic corps, our development agency and our homeland security department. Official policy is to "pursue national security by championing aspirations for human dignity, strengthening alliances, defusing regional conflicts and expanding development." But the military budget absorbs more

than eight times the money spent on all non-military security tools together, including diplomacy, foreign aid, nonproliferation and homeland security, even though these other areas are likely to be more effective.

Despite the sacrifice of thousands of lives in Iraq and Afghanistan and mammoth expenditures on war, far too many in the U.S. and around the world, especially women and children, continue to be insecure. Some live in war zones without access to basics like housing, health care and education. Others live with the violences of poverty and racism, with little to look forward to besides unemployment, displacement and humiliation.

Unless all people have basic needs met and are protected from harm, we will never be secure. Unless we respect each other as neighbors, though we live on different sides of the world or come from different cultures, we will never really be secure.

Those seeking election in 2008 should redefine U.S. priorities from national security to sustainable human and community security. This would guarantee access to food, clean water, healthcare, education and meaningful work for all people everywhere, the right of all women and men to participate in important decisions that affect their lives and a sustainable future for human beings and the Earth. Sustainable security would emphasize international cooperation to build understanding, to prevent or resolve conflict before it becomes violent and to diminish violence where it is already raging.

Catholic social tradition's emphasis on the protection of human life would suggest important policy goals, including:

- End the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. Invest in dialogue and diplomacy, reconstruction and development. Emphasize regional and global cooperation toward an enduring peace.
- End torture in all its forms and under any circumstances.
- Support U.S. engagement in multilateral efforts to solve grave transnational problems, including terrorism and tyranny, weapons proliferation, racism, hunger, global warming, resource depletion, migration and disease.
- Support the participation of women in peace processes, gender training in peacekeeping operations, the protection of women and girls and respect for their rights.

- Begin immediately to convert the U.S. military budget to invest in conflict prevention, nonviolent conflict resolution and peace education at every level in the United States.

Questions for candidates:

1. What is your plan for U.S. engagement in Iraq and Afghanistan?
2. How would you contribute to a just resolution of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict?
3. What would you do to ensure the integrity of existing treaties and promote cooperative approaches to peace and security through the UN and other organizations?
4. How would you restructure the federal budget to promote sustainable security for neighborhoods and communities at home and abroad?
5. How would you use U.S. power for preventive diplomacy and nonviolent conflict resolution?

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## What brings true security?

In late 2001, when Ehsanullah Nasrullah was eight years old, he and his cousin Nabile were hurrying to school on the outskirts of Kabul, the capital of Afghanistan, when they saw on the ground a small, yellow canister that looked like a tin of biscuits. When Nabile picked it up, it began to smoke and he threw it in the air, inadvertently toward his cousin. The canister exploded, sending shrapnel in all directions, seriously injuring Nasrullah. Doctors wanted to amputate both of his legs and one arm, but his father refused and finally arranged for him to travel to Germany for surgery and rehabilitation. Eight long months later, Nasrullah was back home and healing, but he was having difficulty walking, was in constant pain, and still needed daily medication to help with the healing. His family was being devastated by medical expenses, and U.S. war planes still were dropping on Kabul loads of cluster bombs – each of which carried 202 deadly, bright yellow bomblets.

Nasrullah's traumatic injury offers a visceral understanding of the futility of war – even in response to terrorism. Many, many people, including very young children, have been devastated by the U.S. war there. In 2002, as Nasrullah began to heal from his wounds, no one seemed to think that a war in Afghanistan – or a war in Iraq – would bring an end to terrorism.

Dean Brackley, SJ, who teaches at the University of Central America (UCA) in San Salvador, raised the same question at a Pax Christi consultation in 2003: “What makes us secure? The ‘war against terror’ demonstrates every day that military force can no longer do that, if it ever could. Instead, traditional military action is making everyone, including the U.S., less secure ... .

“The word of God is eloquent on these points. Security comes from God, not from Tomahawk missiles or oil. ‘Trust in Yahweh and you will be secure.’ (2 Chronicles 20) ...

“Insecurity and danger are part of the human condition. It is important to recall, especially in affluent countries, that the vast majority of people who have ever lived (and all poor people today) have struggled daily to stay alive in the face of dangers: natural disaster, sickness, scarcity and social violence. The practical measures people take to address these threats never eliminate insecurity altogether. So, throughout history, people have turned to gods – yes, gods. Gods are supposed to provide security. In Israel, we have a unique situation: the people are to trust in only one God, Yahweh, for all their security needs. Only Yahweh provides real security and prosperity – *shalom*. The psalms constantly profess this reliance on Yahweh in

the face of multiple dangers. While people take all kinds of practical means to counter threats, including violent means, these, of themselves, cannot save. 'The war horse is a vain hope for victory, and by its great might it cannot save. . . . Our soul waits for Yahweh; he is our help and shield' (Ps 33). When people rely on other gods or other creatures for security, they turn these into idols.

"In Israel, reliance on God ruled out alliances with Egypt and Assyria and relativized all practical security measures. But it had nothing to do with passivity or inaction. Rather, faith inspired daring initiatives, both military and nonviolent. We see this from the stories about Moses and Gideon, David's victory over Goliath, and Isaiah's and Hezekiah's defiance of the invader Sennacherib. We see it later in the fearless witness of Jesus and the early Christians.

"Jesus demands 'total' faith: Do not fear those who can kill the body. Do not worry about what you are to eat or to wear. Do not worry or be afraid of anything. Do not let fear, a normal enough reaction to danger, dominate your lives. Seek first the Reign of God and its justice. The rest will take care of itself.

"Life is insecure, and sin makes it more so. There are only two responses to this insecurity: We either strive to control our surroundings or we abandon ourselves to God in faith. In the first case, the means of security turn into idols that demand ritual, enslave their devotees and produce sacrificial victims. In the second case, we treat others, even our enemies, as we would have them treat us.

"As the prophets of Israel recognized, there can

be no national security without social justice. How could a divided community, a divided world or a divided heart find peace? The globalization of insecurity discloses that we can only be secure in a world where trust can grow among nations. That requires treating all peoples as we would have them treat us . . . . It requires a regime of international law in defense of the rights of individuals and nations. Above all, it requires admitting the poor half of humanity to the dinner table and the table where decisions are made.

"It is essential to unmask the official lies that would justify imperial conquest and violations of human rights. It is crucial to promote the road of non-violent peacemaking and to advance in our ethical thinking as a church. However, the present situation suggests to me the fruitfulness of posing questions like these: Is the war on terror making us more secure or less so? What really can make us secure? What does our faith say to this? Can we be secure if half the world lives in misery? What idols do we rely on for national security? What idolatrous rituals does our nation engage in? How do these idols enslave? What victims are we sacrificing to them as a nation?

"I suspect that questions like these -- perhaps more than debating the moral criteria of war versus nonviolence -- can draw people into a deeper appreciation of what is at stake in the 'war on terror.'

"In this, as in other matters, we have a great deal to learn from poor people. Extensive practice at facing insecurity has turned many of them into true experts at trusting in God."

### **Congress terminates Reliable Replacement Warhead (RRW) program**

*Good news is often hard to find in peace work. The Friends Committee on National Legislation recently sent out this positive report.*

The administration's plan for a new nuclear weapon [the Reliable Replacement Warhead (RRW)] has been rejected by Congress. [Thousands of activists] . . . lobbied Congress, researched and analyzed government documents about RRW, published articles on the dangers of new nuclear weapons, run advertisements in newspapers, contacted members of Congress, and much more.

[In mid-December] the House of Representatives took up a massive "omnibus" spending bill that includes almost all of the federal government's discretionary spending. Deep within the half-trillion omnibus bill, one line indicates zero money has been appropriated for RRW. . . .

That one budget line represents . . . a huge victory for the arms control community. In the harsh political climate of the past seven years, the arms control community and individual activists stopped the nuclear "bunker buster," a new nuclear bomb plant, and now the RRW.

## Africa and the U.S. 2008 elections

*Knowing that the next administration and Congress will formulate U.S. policy toward Africa that will have a huge impact on their own lives and countries, Africans, like so many others around the world, are keenly observing the process leading up to the 2008 elections in the United States. They are particularly attentive to what the candidates are saying about the following issues:*



Photo by Jim Stipe, [www.jimstipe.com](http://www.jimstipe.com)

The U.S. is implementing health programs in Africa through USAID and PEPFAR, and does contribute to the Global Fund. However, the engagement of 2008 presidential hopefuls in these issues is crucial to encourage the next administration to provide adequate funding for PEPFAR, increase the U.S. contribution to the Global Fund, and formulate policies that would help address both the HIV/AIDS pandemic, especially with regard to access to treatment, and

the health care crisis in Africa.

### **Peace, security and humanitarian assistance**

Will the next U.S. president and Congress take interest in situations of actual or threatened conflict, such as in the Sudan, including Darfur, the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Northern Uganda, and use this country's significant leverage to help bring an end to these crises by, for example, facilitating talks between the warring or recently warring parties, sending a U.S. representative to observe the talks, and providing financial assistance for the same for peacekeeping missions, transition processes, and reconstruction and other humanitarian activities, so that people can return to their communities.

### **Health and HIV/AIDS**

Africa is faced with several enormous health-related challenges. Its health care crisis is due in part to an acute shortage of health workers and inadequate health facilities and equipment. Diseases like malaria and tuberculosis are common, and child/maternal mortality rates are very high. HIV/AIDS continues to spread, claiming the lives or futures of many people, especially those in the most productive age group (15-49 years). This pandemic is negatively affecting the economies of African countries and having devastating effects on households and communities. While some progress has been made in the fight against HIV/AIDS, more investment is desperately needed to achieve universal access to treatment (ART), pediatric treatment, and comprehensive prevention efforts.

### **Debt cancellation**

African countries carry a burden of external debts, the repayment of which often absorbs a significant portion of their national budgets, preventing adequate expenditures in important sectors like health and education. The U.S., directly by canceling bilateral debt owed by African countries to the U.S., and through its significant voting power in multilateral institutions like the World Bank, the IMF and the African Development Bank, can impact the amount of debt cancelled, the number of countries that benefit and the conditionalities attached to debt cancellation and new loans. The U.S. also can help regulate the activities of vulture funds that threaten to undercut the achievements of debt cancellation in some countries.

### **International trade**

International trade, if it is justly structured, can make an important contribution to the health of any country's economy in this era of globalization. African countries are no exception, but the current international trade regimes in many ways fail to benefit African countries. For example, African countries can access western markets if they are exporting raw materials, but the entry of their value-added goods into the same markets is often restricted. In addition, they are highly vulnerable to fluctuations in commodity prices and often have been required to restructure their economies to favor production for export rather than production to meet domestic needs. Whether the U.S. is

committed to reforming international trade structures and promoting just/fair trade will have a tremendous impact on Africa.

### **Ecology**

Three-quarters of greenhouse gases (GHG) are emitted by rich nations, including the United States, yet poor countries, especially those in Africa, are hit hard by the consequences of climate change. Droughts in Africa are resulting in food shortages and scarcity of water; floods destroy people's homes and property. Furthermore, African countries rarely benefit from the sale of natural resources like gold, diamonds, timber, and oil. Rather, a few local elites, in collaboration with multinational corporations, benefit. U.S. energy and GHG emissions policies will have a huge impact in Africa, as will a U.S. commitment to exact social and environmental accountability from mining companies doing business in the U.S.

### **Foreign aid**

Poverty is pervasive in Africa, with many people facing hunger, lack of access to clean water, health care and education, and a shortage of other basic needs. Additionally, unemployment and child and maternal mortality are high on the African continent. The scale

and structure of U.S. aid programs in Africa are very important. U.S. aid can either serve U.S. needs and perpetuate poverty on the African continent or address the basic needs of African people. It probably cannot do both.

### **Women and girls in Africa**

African women and girls are affected by all of these issues. They are especially vulnerable in zones of conflict where they are often subjected to rape and other inhumane treatment. And they are often denied political and economic rights. How U.S. foreign policy will promote the basic rights of women and girls is of crucial importance in the coming elections.

### **Militarization**

Many in Africa and the U.S. alike have raised concerns about U.S. militarization of the African continent and the establishment of the U.S. Africa Command (AFRICOM). Integrating in Africa "development" work, humanitarian assistance and the pursuit of U.S. national security appears to many observers as a very bad idea. U.S. national security policy is incompatible with the best interests of the African people. How the U.S. military conceives its role on the continent will be of intense interest to the people of Africa.

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## **Asia/Middle East and the U.S. 2008 elections**

*The process of globalization predates even the 13th century, when Marco Polo followed the fabled Silk Road across Asia. The tragedy of Sept. 11, 2001, however, brought about an urgent quest for security that tempered unrestricted travel and international trade in goods and ideas. Yet, isolation is not an option. China's growing influence, for example – and that of regional partnerships in both Asia and the Middle East – serves as a reminder that all nations, acting in concert with one another, have the right to determine the road that would best promote both mutual security and mutual prosperity. Voters in 2008 should question candidates about some of the issues below, as they might prove to be key to promoting progress, harmony and good will among the family of nations. They illustrate well the impact of U.S. policy in Asia and the Middle East.*

### **Israeli-Palestinian peace process**

Negotiations between Israelis and Palestinians were given a jump start Nov. 27 with a summit in Annapolis, MD, that drew representatives of more than 40 countries and organizations. Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas and Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Olmert agreed to implement their mutual obligations under the Road Map of 2003. They also committed themselves to meet bi-weekly with the objective of concluding a peace treaty by the end of 2008, with the U.S. monitoring the process. Voters should urge candidates in 2008 to make the U.S. an honest broker in the conflict. For example, the U.S. should support the Palestinians in seeking an end to Qassam rocket attacks from Gaza on southern Israel; it should be equally firm in holding Israel to a settlement freeze and withdrawal from occupied territory

***Iraqi self-determination, reconstruction***

Five years after Saddam Hussein was overthrown, Iraqi citizens are caught up in daily violence and ethnic cleansing. Tens of thousands of U.S. military personnel and Iraqi civilians and militia have been killed or maimed, and much of the country's educated elite have fled to Jordan, Syria and Egypt. The government, plagued by corruption, asserts its authority with difficulty. Potential officeholders in the U.S. must consider whether an international peacekeeping force, perhaps under Arab command, might be more acceptable to Iraqis than the present Western coalition. Every effort should be made to help the internally displaced return to their homes when it is safe to do so. But the U.S. should also welcome Iraqi refugees whose lives are in danger because they provided translation or other services to coalition troops.

***Military aid to Indonesia, Philippines***

The U.S. Congress declined in December to reduce military aid to Indonesia (\$15.7 million) and the Philippines (\$30 million) despite concerns about the human rights situation in both Southeast Asian countries. However, lawmakers are holding up \$2.7 million to Indonesia pending approval of a plan to call the Indonesian military to account for past human rights violations, as in East Timor prior to its independence in 2002. Similarly, \$2 million of the Philippine funding is contingent upon that country cracking down on extrajudicial killings, allegedly by government agents. More than 800 such deaths have been reported during Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo's presidency. U.S. candidates for public office should be encouraged to give weight to human rights criteria in determining military aid even to U.S. allies.

***Human rights in Burma***

The world watched streaming video (uploaded from cell phones to the internet) as the Burmese junta cracked down on demonstrators demanding democracy last October. Human rights activists estimate that hundreds were killed in the first major challenge to the regime since student-led demonstrations were violently suppressed in 1988. Unfortunately, the U.S. has limited options. When Western nations impose trade sanctions, neighboring China, Thailand and India are quick to fill the vacuum. China trades arms for Burmese timber – much of it harvested illegally.

Candidates for U.S. public office face a quandary. To press Burma's allies to close ranks over human rights issues could lead, for example, to a deterioration in U.S.-China relations. Candidates should be asked to present alternatives – perhaps encouraging action by the UN or ASEAN (the Association of Southeast Asian Nations) – with the possible political fallout for the U.S.

***Japan's military alliance with the U.S.***

Japanese Prime Minister Yasuo Fukuda faces strong opposition in his effort to provide military support for U.S.-led forces in Afghanistan. Beginning in December 2001 Japanese naval vessels in the Indian Ocean provided fuel to the U.S. and its coalition partners in Afghanistan. However, Japan's antiterrorism law expired Nov. 1, so its ships had to return home. Opposition leader Ichiro Ozawa says he would be willing to send Japanese troops to participate in NATO-led missions authorized by the UN, but not to take part in what he calls an "American war." On a broader front, the U.S. has urged Japan to amend its Peace Constitution – a change that would enable Japan to integrate its defense forces more closely with global U.S. military strategy. The Catholic Church in Japan opposes the change. U.S. political candidates should describe the defense policy they would like to see Japan adopt, and spell out its possible ramifications. For instance, amending the Constitution could spur an Asian arms race and dredge up memories of the Second World War, leaving Japan's neighbors feeling uneasy.

***China and the U.S.***

China, whose complexity challenges even academic scholars, is perhaps still more puzzling for lay persons. As Chinese society and culture are multi-faceted, so too are Western perspectives on the country. Some in the U.S. mistrust China, perceiving it primarily as a non-democratic and repressive state. Others cite China to justify a large U.S. military establishment. Still others fear the economic challenge that China poses. And those views do not touch on issues such as freedom of speech or assembly or other human rights. Potential office-holders in the U.S. owe it to their constituents to take the time to learn all they can about China. A nation of 1.3 billion might be seen by some as a competitor or even a threat. But it could also prove, in time, to be one of U.S.'s most important allies.

## Middle East: Annapolis follow-up needs good will

*More than 50 participants, a third of them representing Arab states, attended a conference Nov. 27 in Annapolis to re-start negotiations to resolve the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Saudi Arabia and Syria were among those present; Iraq and Kuwait did not attend. (Iran was not invited.) Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas and Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Olmert agreed to launch “vigorous, ongoing and continuous negotiations” to try to conclude a treaty by the end of 2008. The agreement would establish two states, Israel and Palestine, living side by side in peace and security. Abbas and Olmert pledged to meet bi-weekly and to implement their respective obligations under the Road Map of 2003, with the U.S. monitoring their efforts.*

Abbas spoke of his hope for a peaceful solution “offered today – the contours of which [are] known to each one of us.” He enumerated key issues: Jerusalem, refugees, borders, settlements, security, water. Meanwhile, he called for freezing all settlement activity, reopening Palestinian institutions in Jerusalem, removing Israeli checkpoints in the West Bank and releasing political prisoners.

Those issues have bedeviled negotiators since the 1967 war in which Gaza and the West Bank became the Occupied Palestinian Territories. While Olmert spoke of the terror of suicide bombings and Qassam rockets, he also said, “We are not oblivious to the tragedies you have experienced.” The prime minister added: “We will not avoid any subject, we will deal with all the core issues.”

It seems unlikely Israelis and Palestinians will sign a treaty by the end of 2008, which would leave the next U.S. president to encourage the peace process. The new administration should reconsider U.S. policy on foreign aid and its notion of security. The U.S. gives Israel nearly \$4 billion a year in economic and military aid, and it recently pledged another \$30 billion in military aid over the next ten years. The U.S. gives the Palestinians \$85 million to \$100 million annually in humanitarian aid.

The Road Map calls for parallel measures by both sides. Neither is expected to fulfill all of its obligations before the other side begins. Yet, Israel has dragged

its feet with at least tacit U.S. approval. For instance, the Palestinians recognized Israel’s right to exist and amended their election laws, as the Road Map required. Israel ignored its obligations to cease home demolitions and to freeze all settlement activity. Abbas maintained in Annapolis that “[Palestinians’] determination to end occupation stems from our vision that by doing so we destroy one of the most important excuses for terrorism in our region and in the world.”

Olmert pledged to take UN Security Council Resolutions 242 and 338 into account during negotiations. (The resolutions call on Israel to withdraw its armed forces from territory occupied in the 1967 and 1973 conflicts.) He said he hopes for “peace with all the Arab states,” and he expressed appreciation for the Saudi peace initiative of 2002 – which calls on Israel to pull back to 1967 boundaries, and promises Arab diplomatic recognition of Israel in exchange.

In the follow-up to Annapolis, Abbas says, the challenge of peace will test the credibility of all parties: Israel and the Palestinian National Authority, the Quartet (the U.S., Russia, the UN and the European Community) and the entire international community.

However, credibility seems at risk with Israel’s announcement Dec. 4 that it would build more than 300 new housing units in the disputed Har Homa neighborhood of East Jerusalem. While the Palestinians consider construction in East Jerusalem or the West Bank alike to be illegal settlement activity, Israel says the settlement freeze called for in the Road Map does not apply to Jerusalem. Yet, East Jerusalem was considered part of the now-occupied West Bank until the 1967 war. Israel annexed East Jerusalem in that year, but the annexation has not been recognized by the international community, including the U.S.

As negotiating partners, Israelis and Palestinians are unequal both economically and militarily. They will need an honest broker in the U.S. if the negotiations begun in Annapolis are to bear fruit. The “contours” of a just peace settlement, as Abbas says, are known to all. But to reach such an agreement will require the essential element of good will. And that is one obligation that cannot be legislated.

## Latin America and the 2008 elections

*Relationships in the Americas between the United States and its neighbors to the South have a long and checkered history. From the Monroe Doctrine to the Good Neighbor Policies to the Alliance for Progress to the low intensity “war on communism” and the multi-dimensional “war on terror,” the U.S. presence in South America, Central America and Mexico has been huge.*

Foreign policy decisions made by the next president and Congress will continue to impact the rest of the Americas. Although U.S. influence is waning in some areas, especially in South America, the U.S. culture, economy, political priorities, national security policies and military strategies are felt throughout the hemisphere in both negative and positive ways.

Pew Global Attitudes Surveys show notable increases in negative views of the United States since 2002 in all Latin American countries. A majority of those interviewed agreed that “[t]he United States promotes democracy mostly where it serves its interest,” and that U.S. policies “increase the gap between rich and poor countries.” U.S. foreign policy in the coming years could improve that image by participating in positive change in the region.

### **The democratic process**

A number of Latin American countries have elected progressive leaders who are searching for new development models after living through more than 20 years of stagnant growth. U.S. policies and actions can support or subvert their efforts to find a more just and sustainable economic model. At the very least U.S. leaders and the media should not demonize countries like Venezuela, Bolivia and Ecuador that have democratically elected leaders with a mandate for change. Efforts to work with these new leaders can be of great significance in Latin America and in hemispheric relationships for the future.

### **Peace and security**

The U.S. can have a positive impact on indi-

vidual and community security in the region as well. U.S. foreign aid, for example can support violence prevention programs and help professionalize police forces. If U.S. aid supports corrupt and excessively violent police forces, it will be noticed throughout the region. The U.S. “war on drugs,” especially in the Andean region, contributed to displacement and human rights violations in many local communities. U.S. policy should support new methods being tried by Bolivia that focus on community enforcement rather than violent police raids and the use of aerial herbicide spraying, as in Colombia. Bolivia’s methods are proving to be even more effective in reducing coca production and are much more humane. The U.S. could also play a positive role in supporting the investigations of the hundreds of women being killed in Central America for unknown reasons. So far, most Latin American governments have been slow in investigating these cases resulting in increased impunity.

Finally, the U.S. should close the Western Hemispheric Institute for Security Cooperation (WHINSEC), formerly the School of the Americas, which is known to have trained many of those responsible for the worst human rights abuses in the hemisphere. Five Latin American countries have announced their withdrawal from the school and others are considering the same. The school should be shut down as quickly as possible.

### **Economic justice**

One reason the majority of Latin Americans think that U.S. policies “increase the gap between rich and poor countries” is because many of them have felt quite immediately the impact of “free trade” agreements between the U.S. and various countries in the region. They see that the laws created by these agreements tend to benefit foreign corporations while deteriorating living and working conditions of workers. Despite promises of increased “development,” for example, the legacy of NAFTA for the Mexican countryside has been devastating. Intellectual property rules in these trade agreements

not only reduce the availability of cheaper, generic medicines, but also exploit traditional knowledge of indigenous groups to patent medicines without any reimbursement to the indigenous source. Many are also worried that the agreements will interfere with the ability of governments to make the necessary changes to adapt to a future of increasing climate change and the end of cheap oil. The U.S. should renegotiate the trade agreements that it has signed with Latin American countries in order to make the agreements beneficial for a wider part of the population.

### **Immigration**

Changing trade policies to help real development in Latin America will have mid- to long-term effects in decreasing the number of people who migrate north, but the next president and Congress must act quickly to resolve the situation of the millions of immigrants already in the U.S. They must address the reality that the U.S. economy depends on a significant number of low-paid (usually foreign) workers and increase immigration quotas to balance this need. All raids and deportations should be suspended.

### **Climate change**

At the recent climate change summit in Bali,

Latin American governments made it clear that they will need financial assistance to make the required changes to adapt to the changing climate. Mountain glaciers are melting at disturbing rates threatening water supplies for millions of people and island nations face rising tides and higher water temperatures that threaten fishers' livelihoods, among other related problems.

In its latest report, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), co-winner of the 2007 Nobel peace prize, predicts that semi-arid regions in Latin America will become waterless and the eastern Amazon will turn to savanna. The number of people at risk of hunger will grow due to food production losses and shrinking glaciers will affect agriculture and energy generation as well as access to drinking water for millions of people. The U.S. could regain some social capital by helping Latin American governments prepare for these significant changes. The U.S. should also stop its push for increasing imports of agrofuels like sugar and corn ethanols from Latin America as this drives land speculation, deforestation, and rising food prices in those countries.

By participating in these positive changes, the future president and Congress can change our relationship with our neighbors from one of distrust and suspicion to one of care and mutual support.

### ***Below the Radar: U.S. Military Programs with Latin America, 1997-2007***

In 1997, the Latin America Working Group Education Fund, the Center for International Policy, and the Washington Office on Latin America launched a project to monitor U.S. military programs in Latin America. A myriad of funding mechanisms and programs presented a complex picture, and limited information was provided through a haphazard series of reports mandated by Congress. Today, the funding mechanisms and programs have only grown more numerous and complex, but some improvements in transparency have made it possible for a clearer picture to emerge.

This year *Below the Radar* presents a summary of major trends over the past 10 years, rather than the annual analysis usually provided. The database

on U.S. military programs in the region is drawn entirely from official U.S. government sources, which backs up this analysis.

Why does having a clear picture of military aid programs matter? Military training and aid, even in peacetime, is not incidental to foreign policy and the U.S. image abroad. The relative balance and visibility of economic or military aid to a country affects public perceptions about the way the U.S. chooses to project its power. In addition, the choice to fund, train and equip foreign militaries is perceived as a U.S. endorsement of those militaries.

To download a copy of *Below the Radar* in both English and Spanish, go to [www.lawg.org](http://www.lawg.org) or to [www.ciponline.org](http://www.ciponline.org)

## ICC deserves attention in presidential campaign

*The International Criminal Court (ICC) is empowered to try individuals for genocide, serious war crimes and crimes against humanity. The Rome Statute establishing the court came into force in 2002. More than 100 nations – not including the U.S. – have ratified or acceded to the treaty. The ICC is currently investigating alleged abuses in Darfur, the Central African Republic, the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Uganda. Views on the court of U.S. presidential hopefuls are posted on the website of the American NGO Coalition for the ICC at <http://www.amicc.org/> (see the Advocacy Center link for a discussion of the U.S. position on the court). Kate Karacay, co-director of the Iowa United Nations Association, wrote the op-ed below for The Des Moines Register on the importance of asking candidates about the ICC.*

Foreign policy is a crucial issue facing candidates in the upcoming presidential elections. It's clear from recent events that the United States cannot face global problems such as terrorism alone and that restoring relationships with the world community will require multilateral cooperation and respect for international treaties.

The United States has always championed itself as a defender of human rights both at home and abroad. An important gesture that will demonstrate the United States' willingness to uphold human rights and the rule of law in the world community is ratification of the International Criminal Court.

The upcoming presidential elections are critical to ensure we elect a leader who is willing to support the International Criminal Court. So far, Democratic candidates Chris Dodd, Dennis Kucinich, Bill Richardson and John Edwards have come out in full support of participation. Barack Obama gave support for the court in his 2004 Senate campaign, but has not spoken publicly about it in his current campaign. Republican candidate John McCain has stated that it is in the interest of the United States to support the International Criminal Court with its prosecutions of Sudanese war criminals.

It is up to voters to ask candidates their position regarding the court.

The International Criminal Court is an independent, permanent tribunal located at The Hague, Netherlands, with jurisdiction to try individuals suspected of the most heinous crimes, such as genocide, war crimes and crimes against humanity. Created as a permanent court following the temporary war crimes tribunals for Rwanda and the former Yugoslavia, it intervenes only in cases involving the most severe crimes and only if nations involved are unable or unwilling to prosecute the crimes on their own. As a recent series in the Register explained, Iowa native Stephen Rapp is prosecuting former Liberian President Charles Taylor for war crimes in this court.

As of 2007, 105 nations have joined the International Criminal Court, including the United Kingdom, Germany and Japan. Although the court will continue without participation from the United States, our participation would ensure that our government has a say in how the court works. Also, the court is the best leverage the world has to end impunity by grave human-rights abusers.

Recently the International Criminal Court issued arrest warrants for two Sudanese men, a former militia leader and a state minister, for their involvement in the ongoing genocide in Darfur. Given that the U.S. government has stated that current events in Darfur amount to genocide, the court's intervention shows that the court is working exactly as it was intended.

So far, the Bush administration has shunned participation. President Clinton signed the Rome Statute, the international treaty that governs the court, in December 2000. However, the Bush administration later suspended Clinton's signature and has since actively campaigned against participation, claiming a possibility that politically motivated charges would be brought against U.S. military personnel and U.S. nationals. This is not a real threat. The court concerns itself with only the worst cases such as genocide and crimes against humanity; it is not a tool for politically motivated attacks.

Along with warrants for Sudanese leaders, it has opened four investigations in Africa. The court has issued arrest warrants for five Ugandan leaders of the Lord's Resistance Army and a Congolese warlord who will face trial this fall for enlistment of child soldiers. It's common that a war-ravaged country will be unwilling or unable to prosecute such crimes on its own after witnessing the world's worst war crimes in recent years.

Many key issues are at stake in the upcoming

election. Ensuring the next administration is willing to move forward on protecting human rights around the world should be one of them. Our nation is a lone superpower, and lending support to the International Criminal Court is a great step in asserting our position on human rights.

[Voters] can play an important role in this. When you meet candidates, ask them for their position on the International Criminal Court. Ask them to support it.

## Women's connection to critical issues

*History has shown in cultures around the world that women have been the mainstay of civilization – the givers of life, nurturers of families, sustainers of communities, quiet builders of nations. But across time and culture, women have suffered dishonor, regarded as mere property, cheated by gross inequity because of gender, burdened by overwork, and physically violated in her person. Women around the world are significantly affected by every aspect of U.S. foreign policy. In the Maryknoll election guide, we focus on five topics, but we are aware that many subjects overlap each; the rights of women is just one of those subjects. The March-April 2008 issue of NewsNotes will focus on women's issues more closely.*

### **Women, labor and work**

“Women's rights and worker's rights are two branches nurtured by the same tree – human rights. They are intrinsically linked.” (Mary Robinson, former president of Ireland and UN High Commission for Human Rights)

Women are severely dishonored and grossly cheated in the workplace. Throughout the world, millions of women work in low-paid and dangerous jobs. In Indonesia, for example, where Dita Sari, 23, worked in a garment factory, earning 16 cents an hour, 70 hours a week. She was sentenced to five years in prison for

leading 20,000 striking workers in protest against inhuman working conditions. Hundreds of thousands of young women have migrated from the countryside of Mexico to work in assembly plants on the U.S./Mexico border. Similarly, long hours, poor wages, and dangerous working conditions characterize their plight. The HIV/AIDS epidemic in South Africa is decimating the workforce, especially among young women in their prime years; most are denied basic health care benefits. Many women in the U.S. also work in hazardous and dangerous environments. Their skills are often ignored and their wages are low as compared with a male worker, and they often lack compensation to support their families. U.S. trade policy, as well as its support for labor rights and basic human rights, will impact women workers.

### **Women, peace and security**

Women's engagement in all aspects of peace processes and systematic attention to their needs and priorities are not only basic gender equality goals, but they are crucial to the creation of lasting peace. Women know the costs of war – what it means to be displaced, to be excluded from public life, and to be regarded as less than full citizens. They know the



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realities on the ground and what needs to be done to address the injustices of war and prevent relapses into conflict. They can be, and must be, part of the solution for peace and security. The Security Council landmark resolution 1325, adopted unanimously by the UN Security Council on October 31, 2000, spoke with one voice in emphasizing the need to mainstream gender justice and equality in peace-making, and called upon all actors concerned to adopt measures to ensure the protection of and respect for the human rights of women and girls.

### Women and climate change

Climate change is an environmental problem with a strong political and development component. The impacts of global climate change are not only physical and economic, for example, in the form of natural disasters, but also social and cultural, jeopardizing environmentally-based livelihoods in many areas of the world. This falls disproportionately upon poorer countries, increasing the susceptibility of impoverished people. Gender-poverty links show that 70 percent of poor people in the world are women; their vulnerability is accentuated by race, ethnicity, and age. When natural disasters and environmental change happen, women and men are affected differently because of traditional, socially-based roles and responsibilities. Women will be affected by the direction of the U.S. response to the climate change crisis. It is time to refocus the thinking and the debate on energy and climate change to include a human rights perspective that considers women's specific needs.

### The female face of migration

About 192 million people live outside their place of birth, which is about three percent of the world's population; this means that roughly one of every 35

persons in the world is a migrant. In some countries, the percentage of women migrants is as high as 80 percent. Migration also has a young face with about one-third of migrants from developing countries aged between 12 and 24 years old. Women and children, in particular girl children, are among the most vulnerable of all migrants as seen in conflict-based violence, discrimination, and cultural restrictions. On the other hand, the voluntary migration of women could benefit families and society in both sending and receiving countries. U.S.

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*"My mother is such a special, wonderful and unique person. She is a teacher, always shaping young minds who will be the citizens of tomorrow. She is humble, benevolent, and always ready to help others. She has a strong national culture, whose roots lie deep in the ancient wisdom of the country, but her branches spread out to catch the sunshine of today. Her words of wisdom are so precious to me. I collect each piece of advice like a pearl, and shall attach each one to the necklace of my life."*

-- Marushka Dia, 15 years old, India

immigration policy will affect women, and should be crafted in such a way that protects their dignity and human rights.

On the occasion of the 45th session of the Commission for Social Development, NGOs urged Member States to:

- Ratify and implement the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of their Families.
- Recognize the link between migration, trade, aid, development, gender rights, and support the eight Millennium Development Goals.
- Create or transform social, economic and political structures to promote conditions leading to the human development of all people.

In conclusion, as we look out upon our world, and the challenges to be faced, our Christian faith sustains us as we pray: "Blessed are the hopeful; they hold a promise for tomorrow. Blessed are the liberators; they will set all the captives free. Blessed are the children, celebrating spontaneity and new life. Blessed are the creation-centred; they appreciate earth's beauty." (Fr. Jim Conlon, "From Stars to Street")

## **Resources**

- 1) **Claiming a Vision of True Security: 2008 Ecumenical Advocacy Days:** The 2008 Ecumenical Advocacy Days (EAD) conference will be held March 7-10, 2008 in Alexandria VA, just outside of Washington, D.C. EAD is a movement of the ecumenical Christian community (including the Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns), grounded in biblical witness and our shared traditions of justice, peace and the integrity of creation. Our goal is to strengthen our Christian voice and to mobilize for advocacy on a wide variety of U.S. domestic and international policy issues. Registration: \$160 includes conference materials, two lunches and Sunday dinner. After Feb. 15, price is \$175. Student scholarships are available; visit the young adult page or email [scholarships@advocacydays.org](mailto:scholarships@advocacydays.org). Consider making a donation to help students attend the conference. For more information, go to [www.advocacydays.org](http://www.advocacydays.org) or call 202-386-6397. (The Maryknoll Global Concerns office will gladly welcome any Maryknollers, Affiliates, supporters and friends who would like to participate in this great conference. Please let us know if you want to join us for EAD -- email [ogc@maryknoll.org](mailto:ogc@maryknoll.org) or call 202-832-1780.)
- 2) **Christian Peace Witness for Iraq 2008:** If the United States continues to occupy Iraq, Christian Peace Witness for Iraq (CPWI) will create another opportunity for Christians to ‘speak their peace’ through worship and witness. Immediately preceding Ecumenical Advocacy Days, all are invited to come again to the nation’s capitol on March 7 for worship and public witness. On the same date, if you cannot make it to Washington, you are invited to create worship services in your community. Over 200 local vigils were held March 16, 2007, all empowering participants to advocate for peace in their communities, countries and the world.
- 3) **“Holy Land, Common Ground”:** This new documentary by Ed Gaffney and Alicia Dwyer focuses on peacemakers in Israel and Palestine. The film includes three stories of Israelis and Palestinians who show the importance of family life in both societies, the terrible impact on families when their homes are lost or destroyed, and the deep yearning of both communities for a safe, secure homeland they can call their own. Commentators include former Sen. George Mitchell and South Africa’s Archbishop Desmond Tutu. 90 minutes. For more information, contact Ed Gaffney at [Edward.Gaffney@valpo.edu](mailto:Edward.Gaffney@valpo.edu).
- 4) **Economic Cost of War:** One day of the Iraq war costs the U.S. \$720 million, in addition to the tragic loss of lives and the destruction of Iraq’s infrastructure. The American Friends Service Committee (AFSC) has developed a program called “The Economic Cost of War” to highlight the economic cost of the war and demand that Congress shift war funding to support human needs here and real solutions in Iraq. For downloadable resources on this project, and to sign a petition demanding a de-funding of the war, go to AFSC’s website at [www.afsc.org](http://www.afsc.org). The AFSC National Office can also be contacted at 1501 Cherry Street, Philadelphia, PA 19102; (215) 241-7000; fax: (215) 241-7275.