Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns
NewsNotes

a bimonthly newsletter of information on
international peace and justice issues

July/August 2003
Volume 28, Number 4

Puzzling attitudes for peace in U.S. culture.................................................................3
Faces of war – faces of God......................................................................................4

Latin America
Peru: Ongoing challenge for Toledo........................................................................5
Chile: Protestors meet torture ship...........................................................................6
Mesoamerica: Dam threatens culture, homes..............................................................7
Brazil: Government rejects U.S. use of base..............................................................8
Colombia: Impact of U.S. aid.......................................................................................9
Colombia: Children’s peace movement.....................................................................10
Mexico: Indigenous activists attacked.......................................................................11
El Salvador: Early election controversy.....................................................................12

Asia & the Pacific
Burma: Democracy back under “house arrest”.........................................................13
East Timor: Caught between larger neighbors...........................................................14
Philippines: Fight poverty to weaken terrorism.........................................................15

Africa
DRC: Global community ignores death, destruction................................................16
Libera: Civil war is international responsibility.........................................................17
Fair coffee trade update..............................................................................................18
U.S. leadership against AIDS, TB and malaria.........................................................19

Small arms: Global week of action...........................................................................20
Genetically-modified food stirs conflict, controversy..............................................21
Human trafficking remains urgent issue.................................................................22
“Faith in Practice: Connecting the Dots for Global Economic Justice”.................23
U.S. reps offer bill to cancel Iraq’s debt....................................................................24
UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues.............................................................25
U.S. should join International Criminal Court......................................................26

Resources.................................................................................................................27
MARYKNOLL OFFICE FOR GLOBAL CONCERNS:
Peace, Social Justice and the Integrity of Creation
http://www.maryknoll.org

Maryknoll Sisters
Maryknoll Fathers & Brothers
Maryknoll Mission Association of the Faithful

Marie Dennis — Director..........................................................mdennis@maryknoll.org
Judy Coode..............................................................................jcoode@maryknoll.org
Yamileth Coreas...............................................................ycoreas@maryknoll.org
Sr. Jean Fallon, MM..........................................................globalconcerns@mksisters.org
Rev. Carroll Houle, MM..................................................choule@mksisters.org
Rev. Jim Kofski, MM.........................................................jkofski@maryknoll.org
Kathleen McNeely, MMAF..............................................kneels@igc.org
Mercedes Roman, MMAF..................................................mroman@mksisters.org

MOGC Washington
P.O. Box 29132
Washington, D.C. 20017-0132
(202)832-1780 phone
(202)832-5195 fax
ogc@maryknoll.org

MOGC Maryknoll NY
P.O. Box 311
Maryknoll, N.Y. 10545-0311
(914)941-7575 phone
(914)923-0733 fax
globalconcerns@mksisters.org

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

Maryknoll AIDS Task Force
Susan Weissert
P.O. Box 311
Maryknoll, N.Y. 10545-0311
(914)941-7575 phone
sweissert@mksisters.org

Maryknoll World Productions
P.O. Box 308
Maryknoll NY 10545
(800)227-8523
salesmwp@maryknoll.org

Orbis Books
P.O. Box 308
Maryknoll NY 10545
(800)258-5838
orbisbooks@maryknoll.org

Important Contact Information

President George W. Bush
The White House
Washington, D.C. 20500
president@whitehouse.gov

Vice President Dick Cheney
The White House
Washington, D.C. 20500
vice.president@whitehouse.gov

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

Colin Powell
Secretary of State
2201 C Street, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20520
(202) 647-6575 phone
(202) 647-2283 fax
secretary@state.gov
www.state.gov

Donald Rumsfeld
Secretary of Defense
The Pentagon
Washington, D.C. 20301
(703) 695-5261 phone
(703) 679-9080 fax

John Ashcroft
Attorney General
U.S. Department of Justice
950 Pennsylvania Avenue, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20530-0001
(202)353-1555 phone
AskDOJ@usdoj.gov
www.justice.gov

Condoleezza Rice
National Security Council
The White House
Washington, D.C. 20500
(202) 456-1414 phone
(202) 456-2883 fax

John D. Negroponte
U.S. Representative to the UN
799 United Nations Plaza
New York, NY 10017
(212) 415-4000 phone

Current Status of Bills:
(202) 225-1772
http://thomas.loc.gov

Capitol Switchboard:
(202) 224-3121

Senator _____
U.S. Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510
www.senate.gov

Representative _____
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515
www.house.gov
Puzzling attitudes for peace in U.S. culture

Are U.S. people a peaceful people? If so, there are some puzzling attitudes transmitted through commercials and public media which seem to distract U.S. residents and Christians from being about peace in their day to day interactions. The following is an exploration of some prevalent attitudes conveyed by U.S. media and other commercial outlets that seem to bode poorly for U.S. people being people of peace.

There is danger all around you

Certainly since September 11, 2001 people of the U.S. have become more aware of their vulnerabilities, but the notion that we all live in a dangerous world has been drilled into us long before any plans of an attack on the U.S. were formed. The movies in theaters, but especially those available on TV and in video stores, give a frightening message that our world is filled with bad guys, robbers, rapists, murderers, many crazy persons on drugs. These crazies are all over the place, on the streets and in the malls, in the bars and banks, in our neighborhoods. They want to hurt us and have no guilty conscience about doing it.

We extend this mistrust to the justice systems meant to protect us and believe that when these evil doers are picked up by the police and come before the judge, they are clever enough to beat the rap or get off lightly, and are back on the streets in no time.

The message comes across that these evil and dangerous “others” are numerous. We dehumanize and demonize them, making them things or objects, because we have a right to our fear. As a matter of fact, we seem to delight in our fear. Our TV, radio, and newspaper are constantly plugging into and increasing this delight. Our media, formerly a place for news and education, has primarily become a source of entertainment and fear is a best seller in the U.S. entertainment industry. This fear of the “other” can easily be manipulated locally or globally, as has happened after the September 11 terrorist attacks.

You have a right to no pain

Commercials on TV, radio and printed publications announce to us that we have “a right to no pain.” The market industry has pronounced this axiom as valid for all of our physical, social, psychological, and spiritual (variously defined) existence. The mall can provide us with food, entertainment and clothes; even help us avoid the pain of loneliness and unmet desire by supplying us with new friends, and bringing instant and constant satisfaction. We can make ourselves more lovable by paying specialists who can straighten out our noses, make our eyes larger and more sparkly, decrease the bulge around our midriff, and darken or lighten our skin, depending on our preference. We can purchase machines which will give us abs to make us the envy of all on the beach, advertised as a simple and almost painless effort.

If we buy into this self-deception that we have “a right to no pain” (which is neither human nor possible), as Christians we negate the core message of the Pascal Mystery which tells us that as followers of Christ we must pick up our cross daily. Only from dying to self with Christ do we rise with him. Just as Christ faced fully his suffering and death, we, likewise, must face our problems and painful experiences, to come to new life, both here in our present state and in eternity.

The two contradictory messages – “danger all around us” and having “a right to no pain” - are a potent mixture, making us vulnerable to corporate-sponsored media’s manipulation. In addition, U.S. people tend to hold up the power of the individual to the extent that relationships and relatedness to others and to the rest of creation becomes a weakness. The insecurity coming from the cultural attitudes of having a right to no pain, danger all around us, and being an isolated individual, is in stark contrast also to the Gospel message that security is found in loving relationships with God and others.

As people of faith we are challenged to reject these cultural messages and become people of peace. This requires embracing the Pascal Mystery and picking up the cross. It requires us to trust in the goodness that God created. It requires that we feel secure and loved as children of our God.
Faces of war – faces of God

When painting an icon the artist prays and meditates on the characteristics and personality of the individual s/he is painting and through that prayer reveals a notion of God in the image created. In the following article, Global Concerns program associate Kathy McNeely creates three icons and in doing so offers a glimpse of God who lives in places steeped in conflict and war. In those places, Kathy more profoundly encountered the God who accompanies people in their suffering. This article is offered to deepen our reflection as we search for peaceful means to end to war and terrorism.

Like Hagar (Genesis 16:13) I rejoice in having seen the face of God in suffering and in death while living to tell the story. The God who demands we respond to those who suffer most (Matthew 25:45) shines through in these vignettes where war, terror, neglect and death seem to reign.

In Nicaragua 1986, a battle is taking place just outside the town of Jicaro. Nestled in the rolling mountains of Nueva Segovia, anyone in town can look to the northern chain of hills and see clouds of smoke emerging from mortars hitting the earth only three kilometers away. It seems to go on for hours as people in the town become increasingly concerned. Eventually the sound of mortar fire dies down and in the quiet of the afternoon people start moving from their homes and into the streets – safe from attack once again.

As I stroll down a street, I hear the sound of helicopters moving closer. I catch the eye of Roger, standing in front of his office looking to the sky. I see complete horror in his eyes as he follows the movement of the helicopter. Later I find out that helicopters were used by the National Guard while Samosa was president, and in Jicaro helicopters often came to take away people who were never seen again. The sound of the helicopter alone, now there to airlift the wounded from the battle, strikes terror in the hearts of people who lived through Samosa’s reign of terror. I recognize in Roger’s face a fear that finds it hard to believe in a God that says, “Have no fear, I am with you.” But that night at a bible study Roger shares that he knew God was with him that day, and in the past when the helicopters came for other reasons.

In Guatemala 1995 accompanying reporters interviewing people who returned from Mexico to Guatemala, I meet Jose who talks about his hopes for rebuilding the community now that he has returned to Guatemalan soil. He smiles while thinking of his future as he talks about when he will plant and build his house. Then the interviewer asks him to tell the story of how he left Guatemala. Suddenly his posture changes. He bends his back and fixes his gaze on the floor. As his spine curves his hopeful spirit seems to leave him. A blank stare takes over his face as he tells the trauma of his exodus, how the soldiers attacked, how family members were killed and how he was forced into exile. I am reminded of God accompanying the Israelites in their slavery and long desert journey.

In reflecting on the faces of God I met in places of suffering and war, my prayer is that a different face of God is brought to life as we struggle to create a world without the violence of war. This new face will bring with it the hope that the resilient God brings and enables the individual to proclaim, “I have seen the face of God and lived.”

Faith in action: We invite others to share their reflections on the impact of war in their lives. If you have a story to share, please send it to the Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns at ogc@maryknoll.org, or use the mailing address found in the inside front cover.
Peru: Ongoing challenge for Toledo

Complaints about the government’s incompetence and lack of attention to an ongoing threat from Sendero Luminoso (SL) added to a rising crescendo of criticism of Alejandro Toledo’s performance as president of Peru and to a general atmosphere of unrest as the Truth and Reconciliation Commission finishes up its work and a new round of economic measures go into effect, further taxing people who are already paying their taxes.

On May 9, 50 armed people entered the Techint camp located near Tocate in the jungle of the Ayacucho department in central Peru, taking workers, including one Argentine, a Chilean and several Colombians, hostage. According to Latinamerica Press (www.lapress.org), the intruders carried away food, medicine, communication equipment and computers and demanded $1 million in ransom as well as explosives and additional supplies. Faced with pressure from government forces, the subversives freed their captives the following day.

Sendero Luminoso (SL) — which carried out an armed struggle in Peru from 1980 to 1992 resulting in some 30,000 deaths — continues to operate in three valleys of the central jungle, taxing drug traffickers and loggers in exchange for protection and guns. The recent kidnapping took place in an area where SL maintains a presence.

In May, thousands of campesinos and state health workers joined 280,000 members of the Sindicato Unico de Trabajadores de la Educacion (SUTEP) in demanding better salaries and working conditions and a reduction in taxes on agricultural products. On May 27, after weeks of widespread strikes and protests, Toledo declared a national state of emergency. Despite that, the teachers (SUTEP) continued their protests.

The following is based on an article in NotiSur (June 6, 2003) and a commentary by Carlos Basombrio Iglesias of El Instituto de Defensa Legal.

Despite a good economic growth level of 5.2 percent in 2002 (the highest in Latin America) and an annual inflation rate of only 1.5 percent, many Peruvians are angry with Toledo, saying he has failed to keep his promise to create jobs and reduce poverty. Toledo had promised wage increases during his election campaign but later agreed with the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and changed his mind.

Teachers earn about US$200 a month. They asked for an increase of US$60, but Economy Minister Javier Silva Ruete said the funds needed to meet the striking teachers’ demands simply do not exist, and that he would not issue currency “because the country has made a commitment to the IMF and World Bank to maintain fiscal discipline.” While unions and opposition parties have been calling for a drastic change in the government’s economic policies, most admit that any president of Peru would be hard-pressed to defy the international financial institutions.

The state of emergency gave the police and the military the authority to use force to clear the highways, restore order, detain strikers, and enter homes without warrants. It also limited freedom of movement and prohibited public assembly.

The president’s action in declaring a state of emergency was very controversial. He had the support of many political parties, the business community, and the U.S. government. Some acknowledged the need for strong measures, but saw real danger in giving the military a primary role in dealing with civil unrest. Major unions, including the CGTP, and the opposition Alianza Popular Revolucionaria Americana (APRA) party, condemned the president’s move.

Toledo, who took office in July 2001, is viewed by most Peruvians as a weak, indecisive leader who is prone to giving in to protests. He has offered no clear vision of where he is going or how he plans to get there. He has failed to encourage the spirit of shared sacrifice that might help the country accept the fact that enormous problems cannot be solved overnight. His own salary of US$12,000 a month plus additional perks was scandalously high in a country where more than half the population of 27 million live on US$1.25 or less a day. He has recently presented a proposal to Congress that would reduce his salary from $12,000 to $8,400 per month.

The day after the state of emergency was declared, in Lima and elsewhere, the police used tear gas and water cannons to disperse protesters. Armored vehicles and thousands of soldiers carrying assault rifles patrolled the streets.

On May 29, in Puno, soldiers killed 22-year-old student Eddie Quilca Cruz who was with a group protesting.
On June 2, Toledo called a meeting of the Acuerdo Nacional de Gobernabilidad, which includes unions, political parties, civic organizations, business and church leaders, to look for an end to the crisis. Luis Bambaren, bishop of Chimbote and former head of the Conferencia Episcopal Peruana (CEP), was named mediator in the conflict.

The following day, Interior Minister Alberto Sanabria said that as soon as the teachers called off the strike, the administration would lift the state of emergency.

On June 3, the government issued a “supreme decree,” giving the Finance Ministry eight days to present a retooled budget to come up with funds to give teachers a raise. Finance Minister Javier Silva Ruetí said the overhaul would mean across-the-board cutbacks to pay teachers.

A serious self-evaluation by Toledo and his government seems essential if Peru is to move beyond the stalemate it has experienced for so long. Some would say that Toledo has to make absolutely clear what he can and cannot do – that he cannot afford to make more promises that will have to be broken – that he should move forward with institutional reform in essential areas, including the judiciary, the armed forces, the police, education, and others.

For additional information on Peru contact the Washington Office on Latin America (www.wola.org) at 202-797-2171; El Instituto de Defensa Legal (elena@idl.org.pe); Latin America Press (www.lapress.org); or NotiSur (info.unm.edu or 1-800-472-0888).

**Chile: Protestors meet torture ship**

The dramatic Chilean tall ship *La Esmeralda* has set sail once again as part of an annual training voyage. Behind its stately image lies a terrifying history that has led people around the world to protest its arrival and challenge its self-proclaimed status as “the good will ambassador of all Chileans.”

In 1973, in the aftermath of the military coup led by General Augusto Pinochet, the Chilean Navy used *La Esmeralda*, a four-masted naval ship, as a prison and torture chamber. According to testimony collected by Amnesty International and the Organization of American States, at least 110 political prisoners were interrogated and tortured aboard the ship for more than two weeks without charges or trial. This information was corroborated in the report issued by the Chilean Truth and Reconciliation Commission.

At least one of those tortured on board *La Esmeralda*, a British-Chilean priest named Michael Woodward, died as a result. His body was later thrown into an unmarked mass grave. Father Woodward’s sister, Patricia Bennetts, has repeatedly requested that the Chilean Navy clarify the events surrounding her brother’s death. Her letters have gone unanswered.

*La Esmeralda*’s arrival has historically been met with protest at a number of international ports, both during the Pinochet dictatorship and in the 1990s. This year’s voyage has been no different. Although the ship now sails as a representative of a democratically elected government, the Chilean Navy has never acknowledged the crimes perpetrated on board *La Esmeralda*, and those who participated in the acts of torture have not been brought to justice. Thirty years after the savage interrogations that led to at least one man’s death, victims and their families are shocked to see *La Esmeralda*’s history whitewashed and the ship touted as an ambassador of good will.

This year marks the thirtieth anniversary of the coup in Chile and the atrocities committed aboard *La Esmeralda*. It is high time that these crimes be officially acknowledged by the Chilean Navy and the torturers held accountable. For a clearing house of information on *La Esmeralda*’s sordid past and actions planned around this year’s voyage, go to www.chile-esmeralda.com.
Mesoamerica: Dam threatens culture, homes

The following article was written by Dana Hill, a graduate student at American University who interns with the Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns, Washington office.

The Usumacinta, the largest river in Mesoamerica, runs from Guatemala along the border into Mexico. It is essential to the life of the Selva Maya, the largest rainforest north of the Amazon and the central territory of the ancient Mayan kingdom. Today the land is home to a multitude of endangered animals and plants, as well as indigenous peoples and many marginalized communities. Maryknoll Father Bill Mullen, based in San Luis, Peten, Guatemala, reports that upcoming plans to dam the river will completely change the rainforest ecosystem and threaten to obliterate both ancient and present culture by destroying ancient Mayan ruins and displacing thousands of indigenous peasant farmers.

Prior plans to dam this river in the 1980s and 1990s were unsuccessful; it was the emergence of the Plan Puebla Panamá (PPP) in 2001 that has made the damming of the Usumacinta an imminent issue. The PPP aims to improve infrastructure in Central America in order to attract multinational corporations and foreign investment (see NewsNotes March/April 2003, September/October 2002, January/February 2002, July/August 2001). One of its seven major components is “Energy Sector Integration,” which entails building an energy grid that would connect the Mesoamerican nations.

In an article on the “Mexico Tercer Milenio” (“Third Millennium Mexico”) website, the “Boca de Cerro” (“Hill’s Opening”) project, as it is called, is heralded as one which will not only produce electricity for the countries, but will also “attract industries, factories, and trade centers on its riversides.” This will make the area even more productive, because, with their land underwater, the natives of the submerged land will need work, supplying cheap labor to these factories. This illustrates a pattern often seen in Latin America under liberal trade laws – infrastructure is developed in impoverished areas, creating an environment hospitable to large multinational corporations because of improved infrastructure and a cheap labor supply created when native peoples’ land was taken to build roads, dams, etc. Cultures are being destroyed, poverty intensified, environmental and human dignity ignored as “progress” marches across the world.

Citizen groups around Latin America and the United States are extremely concerned about this dam, and have begun to organize around the issue. Information from the financial and governmental institutions involved in the project has been scarce and contradictory. Officials at the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB) and the PPP deny the Usumacinta dam is part of the PPP, and information from government sources has both confirmed and denied its existence.

Despite the unwillingness to admit its existence, in Guatemala’s Prensa Libre on June 24, 2003, Rigoberto López reports that construction on the river is underway. (This article, written in Spanish, can be found at: http://www.prensalibre.com/pls/prensa/detnoticia.jsp?p_cnoticia=59411&p_fedicion=24-06-03)

It has been estimated that if the Usumacinta is dammed, between 30,000 and one million people will be displaced - robbed of their land, livelihood and culture. Poverty will increase, and the type of poverty will change. If this situation follows current patterns, rather than living off the land, people will be forced to live in industrial zones, which are reputable for inadequate protection of labor and other basic human rights, as well as poor sanitation, crowding, and high rates of sickness and death. Rainforests and hundreds of archeological sites including priceless ancient Mayan structures will be submerged and destroyed. The ecosystem of the area will be severely affected. But multinational corporations will have electricity to run their factories and cheap labor to work in them.

photo by Dennis Dunleavy, courtesy of Maryknoll Fathers & Brothers
Brazil: Government rejects U.S. use of base

In 1982 the Brazilian government created a launch site for missiles in the municipality of Alcântara, expropriating an area of 52,000 hectares to do so. Five hundred families were affected, the majority descendants of escaped slave communities (quilombos) who lived on fishing and subsistence agriculture. Those families were moved to seven villages and granted 15-hectare lots, far from fishing access. In 1990, the Collor government increased the size of the base by expropriating an additional 10,000 hectares. The following is based on an article from SEJUP (Servico Brasileiro de Justiça e Paz) on May 15, 2003.

In October 2000, the Cardoso government signed an agreement with the U.S. government to cede the base with its 62,000 hectares of land. Under the accord, the United States would control the area and Brazilian authorities would not even be able to monitor it. In practice, Alcântara would be a U.S. military base.

Alcantara is currently the property of the Brazilian Air Force. Its location, three degrees south of the equator, allows rockets - due to the rotation of the earth - to be more efficiently launched into space. Scientists estimate that rockets launched from the site spend 30 percent less in fuel and can carry a bigger payload.

At the same time, according to SEJUP, analysts are concerned that the real U.S. objective is not just to launch rockets, but to use nuclear warheads as a way to maintain military control of the Amazon. The geopolitical strategy of the U.S. in the Amazon region already includes military bases in Bolivia, Ecuador and Colombia, which can benefit from intelligence provided by the Amazon Intelligence System, or SIVAM, which was set up by U.S. corporations.

The debate over Alcantara once again draws attention to the importance of the Amazon, which alone represents 50 percent of the national territory of Brazil. Some in the debate say that this immense green space, which is currently sparsely inhabited, is at the mercy of foreign powers, especially the United States.

By the Brazilian constitution, all international agreements must be approved by Congress. The Brazilian government sent the agreement to Congress in 2002 for approval.

Recently, the Minister of Foreign Relations, Celso Amorim, the Minister of Defense, Jose Viegas Filho, and the Minister of Science and Technology, Roberto Amaral, recommended to President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva that he veto the proposal. It is almost certain that he will accept their recommendation.

Last year, Brazilians gave a resounding “No” to an unofficial plebiscite on the base proposal. A veto will also be a victory for “quilombo” communities. Were the accord approved, more people from these communities would have been forced off their lands.

It is estimated that over the next four years, the telecommunication, weather and military industries will spend US$45 billion sending rockets and missiles into space. Had the agreement been made, Brazil would have benefited very little from this billion dollar industry. Additionally, it would have had no control over what could be launched from the base.

For additional information, contact SEJUP at sejup1@alternex.com.br.

SOA Watch Annual Vigil and Nonviolent Civil Resistance Action
November 21-23, 2003, Fort Benning, GA

Join us from November 21-23, 2003 at the gates of the U.S. military base Fort Benning in Georgia - home of the notorious School of the Americas [renamed Western Hemisphere Institute for Security Cooperation] - to stand in solidarity with the victims of the School of Assassins and to speak out against terror and violence.

What you can do: Organize nonviolent direct action trainings, talks about the SOA, video showings or other educational events in your community. Write to your members of Congress and ask them to support legislation to close the SOA/WHISC. Organize a bus, vans or carpool to Georgia, publicize the vigil action in your region and invite others to join you. Order videos about the SOA to educate your family and friends about the SOA/WHISC.

Contact SOA Watch, P.O. Box 4566, Washington, D.C., 20017
phone: (202)234-3440; email: info@soaw.org; www.soaw.org
Colombia: Impact of U.S. aid

As the U.S. Congress considered the Bush administration’s foreign aid request, a number of religious, human rights, labor and solidarity organizations asked Congress to evaluate the impact of U.S. aid delivered through Plan Colombia. Specifically, they called on Congress to:

1. Insist that the Colombian government end collusion between the Colombian armed forces and paramilitary forces responsible for severe human rights violations … Remarkably little progress has been made since the passage of the first substantial aid package in 2000 to investigate, prosecute and sanction high-level military officials who face credible allegations of collusion with and tolerance of paramilitary forces. …[T]he United Nations’ March 2003 report states that direct violations by the Colombian armed forces increased in 2002.

2. Shift attention to the social side of the equation. As alternative development efforts barely begin to take root and the humanitarian crisis of Colombia’s internally displaced escalates, the administration proposes a decrease in the already inadequate social aid to Colombia (according to the International Affairs budget request summary for FY04, from $164 million requested for FY2003 to $150 million requested for FY2004). The Congress should:

*Increase alternative development and phase out aerial fumigation. While the welcome drop in coca cultivation in Colombia was cited as an example of success of the aerial spraying program, 44 percent of the drop in the Putumayo region, the main focus of eradication efforts, was attributed by USAID statistics to manual eradication with alternative development. Many farmers who were fumigated and not provided aid of any kind—either emergency food aid or crop substitution programs—moved to neighboring provinces to grow illicit crops once more…

* Increase aid to the displaced and insist on better protection and assistance to the displaced by the Colombian government. The number of people displaced by political violence increased dramatically to 412,000 displaced during 2002, with Afro-Colombian and indigenous populations strongly affected, according to the respected Colombian nongovernmental agency CODHES. The Colombian government’s “early warning system” which, with U.S. funding, is supposed to protect communities and prevent displacement, has functioned poorly as a protection mechanism. …Moreover, the Uribe administration has embarked upon a policy of returning people to their land regardless of risky security conditions.

3. Insist that security measures do not undermine the democracy they seek to protect. The Uribe administration, in its efforts to strengthen security, has introduced measures that reduce democratic rights and constitutional guarantees. These included emergency measures that permitted arrests, searches, and wiretaps without warrants.

4. Call upon the Colombian government to increase efforts to protect threatened labor leaders, religious leaders and human rights defenders. Colombia continues to lead the world in assassinations of labor leaders, while human rights defenders, religious leaders and other civil society leaders are threatened and killed with frightening regularity by paramilitaries and guerrillas…

5. Step back from escalating military involvement. U.S. military aid to Colombia has spiraled from $100 million in 1998 to $600 million this year. More U.S. troops are on Colombian soil than ever before (almost 400). Last year, Congress expanded the military-aid mission beyond the drug war, to something resembling Central America-style counterinsurgency. Yet after $2.5 billion since 2000 – 80 percent of it for Colombia’s military and police – there has been no change in the availability of drugs in the United States. Colombia’s violence has only intensified, including in Putumayo and Arauca, the areas of greatest U.S. and Colombian security focus. …

6. Adequately fund effective drug treatment and prevention programs in the United States. U.S. eradication efforts chase drug production from one province of Colombia to another, from one Andean country to the next. Making substance-abuse treatment available for all who seek it will help address the problem of drugs at home and lessen the profits that fuel violence in Colombia.

Faith in action:
Write to your member of Congress urging them to incorporate these changes in U.S. aid to Colombia. For a copy of the entire letter sent to Congress, please contact the Latin America Working Group, 110 Maryland Avenue N.E., Box 15, Washington, D.C. 20002; phone: (202)546-7010; fax: (202)543-7647.
Colombia: Children’s peace movement

Peace is often elusive to adults; children have the minds and attitudes that can promote peace in places where it seems impossible. Archbishop Desmond Tutu has said, “It is we adults who teach children how to hate. It is we adults who teach children to fight in our wars.” (learning.turner.com/cnn/soldiers) Melanie Similien, an intern in the Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns Washington office, wrote the following article.

In 1996, UNICEF and local organizations helped to organize the first democratic children’s vote in Colombia. Children came to their local voting areas and cast ballots on what they thought were their rights as children. Paramilitary groups and guerrillas were asked for a day of cease-fire while the children voted. During that day no one was killed and about 2.7 million children voted.

They voted on a list of things that they thought to be their rights as children, including: the right to live, the right to love and family, the right to a clean environment, the right to be different, the right to special protection, the right not to have to work before permitted age, the right of freedom of expression, the right to be well treated, the right to be taken care of, the right to peace and justice. These items were taken from the Colombian constitution and the Convention of the Rights of the Child, a UN document that has been endorsed by all nations except Somalia and the U.S.

As a result of the children’s vote, the Colombian government officially banned paramilitaries. Although it is unlikely that this decision will make much difference in the on-going conflict, it was a step in the right direction.

In Colombia approximately 6,000 children are soldiers. They are kidnapped or recruited to fight in the paramilitary and guerilla groups. Every sixth child in this war-torn country has killed someone; eight out of 10 have seen dead bodies - often either their parents or a relative. Not only do they see these horrific scenes, but they are also the victims of these madmen. Many times they are orphaned by such acts.

Since its beginning in 1996 with 27 children, the Colombian Children’s Peace Movement has grown. Today there are 100,000 children involved from over 400 organizations of children and youth all over Colombia. They give programs in schools about the rights of the child, and often speak in other countries. The president of the movement, Juan Uribe, was displaced with his family for fear of being killed, but that has not kept him down. He travels around the U.S. speaking to children in schools on peace and advocacy, while he finishes his high school degree. The members of Colombia’s Children’s Peace Movement often speak to politicians about making schools and parks peace zones, places where children can be safe to play and be children. Protection is their right so they demand that it be given to them.

This movement has been recognized all over the world as one of the best movements for peace, and has received two nominations for the Nobel Peace Prize. There is a CNN documentary about the movement called “Soldiers of Peace-A Children’s Crusade,” and a book by Sara Cameron titled: “Out of War: True Stories from the Front Lines of the Children’s Movement for Peace in Colombia.”

For more information on the CNN documentary, see: learning.turner.com/cnn/soldiers/. For more information on the movement, see: www.childrensworld.org.
Mexico: Indigenous activists attacked

In February 2003, indigenous communities of Unión Hidalgo, Oaxaca, Mexico, in conflict with municipal authorities over the suspected misuse of funds by the Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI) mayor, formed the Consejo Ciudadadano de Unihidalguense (CCU). Many of the indigenous leaders of the CCU have been active participants in a two-year battle to stop an environmentally devastating shrimp farm from being built in Unión Hidalgo.

On February 13, 2003, the mayor ordered police to fire into a crowd demonstrating in front of the municipal palace, killing one protester and injuring nine others. The CCU immediately demanded the resignation of the mayor, but the PRI government of the state of Oaxaca intervened, stepping in to support the mayor - issuing arrest warrants on trumped up charges for residents who are active in the CCU. Underlying the conflict is indigenous opposition to the privatization of land and to many of the mega-projects of Plan Puebla Panama (see NewsNotes, March-April 2003).

The community is an indigenous Zapotec fishing village. The proposed shrimp farm - heavily promoted by Mayor Armando Sánchez Ruiz - would be built on communal lands. The industrial shrimp farm would destroy the local economy and ecology, but fits well with the model of industrial development program being supported through the PPP by the Interamerican Development Bank.

On May 14, Juchitan police forces illegally detained indigenous leader Carlos Manzo, a member of the CCU. According to eye witness testimony, Carlos Manzo was leaving a bank in the center of Juchitán (a city near Unión Hidalgo) when eight police officers presented a document, saying they had a warrant for his arrest charging him with robbery and “deprivation of liberty.”

On May 15, 300 people peacefully blocked the Pan American highway north of Unión Hidalgo, demanding the immediate release of Carlos Manzo. After the group blocked the road from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m., the police fired tear gas on the protesters, including women and children, and began to beat them in an attempt to break up the protest.

Since the police attack on May 15, two other indigenous activists have been arrested, Luis Alberto Marin and Francisco de la Rosa also of the CCU. Manzo, Marin and de la Rosa are three of 37 local indigenous leaders and environmental activists who are in jail or who have outstanding warrants for their arrests issued by the attorney general’s office of the state of Oaxaca.

For additional information, contact Action for Social and Ecological Justice, P.O. Box 57, Burlington, VT 05402; phone: (802)863-0571; cell: (802)598-8373; fax: (802)864-8203; http://www.asej.org.

---

Border Pilgrimage:  
A journey of hope and life along the U.S.–Mexico border

San Diego/Tijuana to El Paso/Ciudad Juarez,  
October 27-November 2, 2003

Co-sponsored by the Border Working Group and the Maryknoll Border Team, the Border Pilgrimage will start on October 27, in both San Diego/Tijuana and Brownsville/Matamoros. Along the way people on both sides of the border will build community, ask for forgiveness and provide and receive hospitality. There will be stops including Calexico, Yuma and Tucson where celebratory events will take place, and others can join the journey to El Paso/Juarez. Towns and organizations along the border are invited to participate by hosting events. (Contact borderpilgrimage@yahoo.com to add an event to the pilgrimage.)

For more information, contact: Border Pilgrimage, Maryknoll Border Team, 109 N. Oregon #302 El Paso, TX 79901; 915-543-6771; borderpilgrimage@yahoo.com. To download an education packet on the border, go to the Religious Task Force on Central America and Mexico’s website: www.rtfcam.org
El Salvador: Early election controversy

The next presidential elections in El Salvador are scheduled for March 21, 2004. Recent polls indicate that the Faribundo Marti para la Liberacion Nacional (FMLN) is likely to win, as voter dissatisfaction with the present right-wing Alianza Republicana Nacionalista (ARENA) government remains high, especially over the ARENA-proposed privatization of the health care system (see NewsNotes March-April 2003).

As it became clear that the candidate most favored by FMLN leadership is Jorge Schafik Handal, a former communist, outgoing U.S. Ambassador Rose Likins, according to NotiCen (June 12, 2003), told the press that the FMLN has “generated worry.” She continued, “[T]heir holding up Cuba, China, or Vietnam as a model or speaking of an end to privatizations when there are U.S. companies that have invested in developing key sectors of national life could endanger investment.”

Perhaps aware that her remarks were pushing diplomatic limits, Likins cautioned that her appraisal should not be taken as blackmail. On the other hand, she said that in the case of an FMLN victory, diplomatic relations would be “analyzed.” The FMLN has been outspoken in its disapproval of post-September 11 U.S. foreign policy, particularly its invasions of Afghanistan and Iraq. The U.S. also faults the party for its relationship with Cuba and Venezuela.

FMLN spokespersons affirmed that the party wants to build with the United States a cooperative and friendly relationship based on the self-determination of the Salvadoran people and the “principles of nonintervention recognized by international law.”

But NotiCen describes President Francisco Flores as “making the most of the U.S.-FMLN rift…. The U.S. State Department is currently his only visible means of support, not only in his current role, but also because he needs U.S. support for his bid to become secretary-general of the Organization of American States (OAS) next year.” Flores held out the possibility that tensions with the U.S. could occasion the return of thousands of Salvadorans now residing in the U.S; the loss of the millions of dollars in remittances that they send home annually; the loss of foreign investment; and failure of negotiations for a free trade agreement with the U.S.

In response to the public statements of Ambassador Likins, the Washington Office on Latin America (www.wola.org) wrote: These statements, so early in the electoral game, appear intended to influence the FMLN nomination of candidates and to color public perception of the FMLN going into the elections. Public statements like this constitute unacceptable interference in Salvadoran electoral affairs. It is unfortunate that the United States has not moved beyond this kind of relationship with El Salvador…

This reflects an unfortunate trend in the Bush administration’s Latin America policy, one that was evident in the 2002 elections in Bolivia where the U.S. ambassador spoke publicly against the coca growers’ party candidate, Evo Morales, as well as in the 2001 elections in Nicaragua where several U.S. officials expressed strong public dislike for FSLN candidate Daniel Ortega. (The State Department also recently commented on the Guatemalan elections.) In all these occasions, the U.S. has publicly expressed a negative view of a presidential candidate… Given the history of the U.S. in El Salvador, official Washington statements are likely to carry a great deal of weight. In addition, insinuations that an FMLN presidency could harm U.S.-Salvadoran relations are not to be taken lightly in a country where remittances (mostly from Salvadorans living in the U.S.) are a mainstay of the economy, and are vital to many families’ livelihoods.

...Ambassador Likins, in the interview, says that U.S. relations with El Salvador have matured. U.S. policy should reflect that maturation, by unequivocally expressing our respect for multi-party democracy in El Salvador, and for the right of voters there to go to the polls free from heavy-handed political manipulation.

**Faith in action:**

Write to Secretary of State Colin Powell expressing your concern about inappropriate U.S. interference in the electoral process in El Salvador.
Burma: Democracy back under “house arrest”

President Bush has expressed outrage over the arrest of Aung San Suu Kyi by Burma’s military rulers and the killing of a number of her party members. To pressure the government into releasing her and implementing reforms, Sen. Mitch McConnell (R-KY) has introduced the “Burmese Freedom and Democracy Act of 2003,” which would impose an import ban on goods manufactured in Burma (Myanmar).

The administration said it would also deny U.S. visas to Burma’s military junta and managers of the country’s state-run enterprises, and would seek to freeze assets of the country’s leaders and ban U.S. travel to Burma.

Last year the U.S. imported about $350 million, about a quarter of Burma’s exports, principally in textiles.

The denunciation of the Rangoon regime came after Suu Kyi’s political motorcade was stopped by hundreds of assailants May 30 near Mandalay. The confrontation occurred after a month-long swing through northern Burma. In the ensuing melee at least 17 of her followers were killed and Suu Kyi, 57, was arrested.

The 1991 Nobel laureate was released from house arrest in May 2002. Her political party, the National League for Democracy (NLD), had won a landslide victory in 1990 elections, but the military voided the results. She has spent most of the last 13 years under house arrest.

The government called a news conference on May 31 and delivered a turgid statement blaming Suu Kyi and her followers for the violence the day before. The junta claimed that NLD members had frequently blocked thoroughfares as Suu Kyi delivered her speeches and attacked counter-demonstrators who met the motorcade. The government labeled Suu Kyi’s speeches as “inflammatory attempts to incite unrest” and said violence broke out May 30 after vehicles in the convoy tried to force their way through crowds protesting Suu Kyi’s visit, putting pedestrians at risk.

Subsequent news reports, however, indicated that Suu Kyi’s entourage was set upon by pro-government militia reinforced by specially trained prison inmates. The attack was seen as a government attempt to intimidate Suu Kyi, who had been met by larger and larger crowds of supporters during her tour. She had also opened some 200 party offices, which the government later closed.

The government’s brutal action conformed to its usual repressive policies. Burma’s 1,400 political prisoners are subject to torture. The country also leads the world in slave labor, forced child conscription into the military, and rape as an instrument of terror.

Even the biggest lie often contains a grain of truth, however, such as a letter from the Embassy of Myanmar to the Washington Post. Information officer Wunna Han insisted that “(t)his unfortunate incident will not derail the national reconciliation and democratization process in Myanmar.” As a Post editorial observed, “You can’t argue with that, because there has never been such a process.”

A solid international consensus might help to persuade Burma’s illegitimate regime to step down, but it could be difficult to win over the country’s economic partners, notably Japan and Thailand. Until now most countries in the region have expressed the belief that economic trade with Burma would prove more effective than sanctions in achieving change.

Thailand is considered critical to the survival of Burma’s regime, and Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatra has been one of Burma’s closest supporters over the last two years. After his election in 2001 he reversed the critical stance that Thailand had long taken toward Burma, and he encouraged Thai investment in its neighbor. However, some critics say that Thaksin, a businessman turned politician, is interested in furthering the prospects for his telecommunications business in Burma.

Opponents say stiffer sanctions would harm ordinary Burmese before the regime begins to feel the pinch. However, it might be a necessary price to pay to curtail the greater harm caused by military rule.

Faith in action:
Write to the Embassy of Myanmar, insisting that Aung San Suu Kyi be released and that political parties be allowed to operate freely: 2300 “S” Street, N.W., Washington, D.C. 20008; fax: (202)332-9046; thuriya@aol.com. Write to U.S. lawmakers urging pressure on the Rangoon junta to make reforms and to recognize the results of the 1990 popular election, in which the National League for Democracy won 392 of 485 seats.
East Timor: Caught between larger neighbors

Since its independence in May 2002, East Timor has been struggling to build national institutions amid serious political and economic disputes with its powerful neighbors Indonesia and Australia.

Justice remains elusive following a wave of violence after the East Timorese voted for independence from Indonesia in a 1999 referendum. It is estimated that 1,300 Timorese civilians were slain by pro-Indonesia militia and members of the Indonesian security forces, and more than 250,000 were displaced.

A dozen cases have gone to trial in a state-appointed human rights court in Indonesia. Twelve of 18 defendants had been acquitted as of May. Five others were convicted and sentenced to three to 10 years in prison. Those convicted remained free pending appeal.

The UN Transitional Administration in East Timor (UNTAET) set up a separate Serious Crimes Unit (SCU) to prosecute human rights violations. By the end of February 2003 the SCU had charged 225 persons with crimes including murder, sexual offenses, torture, inhuman acts, persecution, deportation and unlawful imprisonment.

However, most of those indicted by the SCU remain at large in Indonesia. Foreign Minister Hassan Wirayuda has said Indonesia would “simply ignore” SCU indictments, and none of the accused has been extradited to East Timor.

Meanwhile, the SCU is set to expire next year with UNTAET’s successor, UNMISET (UN Mission of Support in East Timor), which could end the SCU’s work.

Momentum is growing for an international tribunal to bring the guilty to justice. East Timor President Xanana Gusmao, meanwhile, has tried to strike a balance between seeking retribution and building reconciliation in his new country. While he is not opposed to an international tribunal, Gusmao also sees an important role for amnesty. “Will having one or more people in jail for 10, 15, 20 years heal somebody?” he asks. “(If) we could not forgive each other and we have our relatives in prison, we will only continue the environment of intolerance - and conflict.”

Issues between East Timor and Australia, meanwhile, center around maritime boundaries and royalties from oil and natural gas reserves in the Timor Sea, revenues essential to preserving East Timor’s economic independence.

In 1972 Indonesia agreed to a boundary with Australia in the Timor Sea based on Australia’s continental shelf. Australia obtained 85 percent of the ocean territory between the two countries. In contrast, Portugal had sought a boundary located mid-way between Australia and East Timor (then a Portuguese colony). The contested area became known as the Timor Gap.

In 1989 Australia and Indonesia signed the Timor Gap Treaty. The agreement signified Australia’s formal endorsement of Jakarta’s claim to East Timor, which it had invaded in 1975. The treaty assigned a sizeable portion of oil and gas revenues from the Timor Gap to Australia.

Australia signed a treaty with East Timor in April 2003, weighing upon its smaller neighbor to accept the current demarcation. The treaty assigns 90 percent of the revenues from the Bayu Undan field to East Timor, which could bring East Timor $6 billion over the next 20 years. However, Australia will receive the lion’s share of revenues from two other oil and gas fields in the disputed Timor Gap area, estimated at twice the size of Bayu Undan.

East Timor could probably claim a greater proportion of Timor Sea oil and gas reserves with a maritime boundary mid-way between the Australian and East Timorese coasts. Such a claim could be decided by the International Court of Justice (ICJ) through provisions of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS).

However, the Australian government ruled this option out last year when it withdrew from the maritime boundary arbitration mechanisms of UNCLOS and the ICJ. This effectively prevents East Timor from seeking independent resolution of the issue under international law.

Faith in action:

See the East Timor Action Network at www.etan.org for news about an international tribunal to try human rights abuses in East Timor. Write to the Australian government at petroleum.exploration@industry.gov.au and urge a return to international maritime arbitration to determine a just border between Australia and East Timor. Write to the Australian embassy at 1601 Massachusetts Avenue, N.W., Washington, D.C., 20036-2273; fax: (202)797-3168.
Philippines: Fight poverty to weaken terrorism


A possible scenario for 2003, perhaps, but it happened after the breakdown of the 1899 Bates Treaty, under which the Sultan of Sulu recognized the sovereignty of the U.S. In some ways, history repeats itself.

Muslims in Mindanao and the Sulu Archipelago were never completely subjected despite nearly 400 years of Spanish occupation, according to Oblate Fr. Eliseo Mercado. What has dramatically changed in recent times, however, is the demographic makeup of the south. More than 90 percent Muslim as recently as 1900, Mindanao was 80 percent Christian by 1970 due to an influx of economic migrants from the north.

Sowing the seeds of future conflict, the newcomers obtained government land titles and tilled large tracts of land claimed by Muslims and other indigenous peoples as their homeland, according to Mercado, former president of Notre Dame University in Cotabato City, Mindanao.

For years the Philippine government has fought separatist movements including the Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF), Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) and Abu Sayyaf.

Mercado, a Fulbright scholar, says the MNLF arose after 1972 due to a government “policy of neglect” toward Muslims in the south. A 1996 peace agreement between the two sides raised hopes for an end to fighting that had cost more than 120,000 Filipino lives and left 300,000 to 600,000 displaced. The accord set up the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (ARMM), which gave predominantly Muslim areas a degree of self-rule. However, Mercado says leadership failed to implement promised economic development in the ARMM.

The MILF split from the MNLF in 1978 and seeks to impose Islamic law in areas under its control. In 2000, then-President Joseph Estrada adopted a hard-line military strategy against the MILF to try to end ongoing violence in the south. Current President Gloria Macapagal Arroyo, by contrast, has introduced what she calls an “all-out peace effort.” However, peace talks scheduled in March 2003 were called off after the Philippine military overran MILF headquarters on Feb. 11, Eid al-Adha (Feast of the Sacrifice), Islam’s holiest day.

The Abu Sayyaf group broke with the MNLF in 1992 with the stated goal of establishing an independent Islamic state in Mindanao and the Sulu islands. However, it is better known for its criminal activities in the island provinces of Basilan and Sulu and on the Zamboanga Peninsula. The kidnapping of school children and Fr. Rhoel Gallardo (later murdered) in Basilan, and the taking of foreign tourists hostage in Sabah, Malaysia, won Abu Sayyaf international notoriety as a terrorist group.

Earlier this year, U.S. and Philippine officials discussed sending 350 U.S. Special Forces and 2,700 support troops to the island of Jolo, an Abu Sayyaf stronghold. Entering the field with Filipino troops, U.S. forces seemed poised to assume a combat role against the insurgents. The Philippine constitution forbids foreign troops from fighting on Philippine soil, however, and the U.S. involvement was canceled after the plan was publicly aired in both countries.

In May, President George Bush declared the Philippines a major non-NATO (North Atlantic Treaty Organization) ally, giving the country greater access to U.S. defense equipment and supplies. Argentina, Australia, Bahrain, Egypt, Israel, Japan, Jordan, New Zealand and South Korea enjoy similar status.

President Arroyo, meanwhile, describes a road to peace and prosperity in Mindanao that cannot be guaranteed solely by force of arms.

To resolve hostilities, it will be essential “to do away with these very poor areas of Mindanao, which have led many of our unemployed and uneducated residents to answer the siren call and recruitment of the terrorist groups,” she said. “(T)he battle against poverty and the battle against terrorism are twins.”

Faith in action:

Write to your lawmakers and urge that the U.S. put higher priority on humanitarian aid than military assistance to the Philippines. Helping to build roads, medical clinics and water systems in the southern Philippines would do more to end the violence than resorting to a military option.
DRC: Global community ignores death, destruction

Child soldiers as young as ten years of age, equipped with AK-47s and ammunition belts slung from their shoulders, featured on TV and in print media, portray the gruesome reality in Bunia, a north-eastern city of the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC). Bunia’s latest atrocities and those of the entire Ituri province are a continuation of a four year war in the Congo which has killed at least 3.3 million people. Mary Anne Hoekstra of the Africa Centre for Peace and Democracy describes the situation as “a humanitarian disaster on a scale that surpasses the horrors of World War II.” The following update comments on the poor response of the world community.

On March 18, 2003, the Democratic Republic of the Congo signed a cease fire agreement with armed ethnic groups and the Uganda government, whose troops control the province in north-eastern Congo. Sadly, cease-fire agreements do not always guarantee the security and protection of civilians. Amnesty International documented previous killings, rapes and plunder by the Uganda People’s Defense Forces (UPDF), various armed groups and allied ethnic militias. The UPDF reportedly sold arms to warring ethnic groups and trained militias, including child soldiers.

When the UPDF pulled out of Bunia after the ceasefire agreement, at least 500 people were killed in a violent conflict between local militias for control of the town. UN peacekeepers on the ground there gave strong warnings that this would happen. Among the victims were children, infants and two priests, whose bodies were horribly mutilated. Thousands of people sought shelter at the UN premises and at the airport. United Nations Resolution 1296 of April 2000 gave the UN authority to open security zones of safe corridors for the protection of civilians and delivery of assistance but, without the resources to do so, millions were slaughtered throughout the Congo. These latest victims in the Ituri province are in addition to what the UN estimates to be 50,000 civilians killed and 500,000 displaced in Ituri alone. The figure could be higher because it has been difficult to know what is happening outside the town.

The French have led efforts to get 1,400 troops dispatched by the UN to restore law and order. There are two major problems in this plan. The troops are designated to stay in the town, while armed conflicts continue to take place in the countryside of the province, outside of Bunia. Also, the multinational force does not have the authority, or enough resources, to disarm the militias.

The international community is doing too little, too late. This inaction reflects a new security division where the United States and other rich nations handle “hard issues” such as weapons of mass destruction, terrorism and nuclear proliferation. The “soft issues” of local conflicts, poverty and HIV/AIDS are left to others, including the UN without sufficient resources, says Salih Booker, executive director of Africa Action. It is puzzling how 3.3 million deaths can be put in the category of “soft issues.” The war on terrorism and on Iraq has put blinders on the UN Security Council, led by the U.S., to the shame of us all.

During the recent killings and lootings in Bunia, some of the university students remained behind, determined to continue their studies, as the Washington Post reported (June 19). One is John Kabaseke, an English major, whose only suit jacket was shredded by bullets that whizzed through his room. He cites William Faulkner as a favorite because “[h]e understands sadness.” We should all be sad, grieving the millions of people killed and the other millions of refugees and displaced people of the Congo. May our grief inspire us to action, so that millions more in Africa and other parts of the world do not have to live through such horrors.

**Faith in action:**

Contact your parish or diocesan justice and peace offices, and ask them to request the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops to speak out on the DRC.

Contact your members of Congress and ask them to ensure adequate U.S. support of UN peacekeeping operations in the Congo.
Liberia: Civil war is international responsibility

The June 17 ceasefire agreement among the various warring factions in Liberia brought relief to the beleaguered citizens of the God-forsaken country. Ezekiel Pajibo, a Liberian who works as an interdependent researcher/consultant on Africa policy contributed the following update on Liberia. Pajibo currently resides in Harare, Zimbabwe.

It took nearly two weeks to agree to the ceasefire, as the Liberian army battled the anti-government militia Liberia United for Reconciliation and Democracy (LURD) for control of the seaside capital, Monrovia. LURD launched its war against Charles Taylor’s regime in 1999. Another rebel group, the Movement for Democracy in Liberia (MODEL), joined the fray in early 2003 when they overran the south-eastern part of the country. According to press reports, both groups now control about 70 percent of the country. Although LURD and MODEL claim to be independent groups, they are largely a reconstitution of the former warring factions that participated in the Liberian civil war which began in 1989 and ended in 1997 with the election of Charles Taylor as president. At that time, Taylor was the leader of the largest warring faction, the National Patriotic Front of Liberia. The leadership of LURD and MODEL are comprised of several officials of and supporters of former military dictator, Samuel Doe, who was killed in 1990.

The ceasefire called for the cessation of hostilities by June 18 and the establishment of a Joint Verification Team (JVT). The JVT would visit Liberia by the end of June to verify positions held by the various warring factions at the time the ceasefire agreement was signed. Warring factions were required to declare their troop strength and artillery power within 72 hours of the signing of the ceasefire. A Joint Monitoring Committee, charged with the responsibility of monitoring the ceasefire, was to be established. An international Stabilization Force also was created and deployed in Liberia to oversee the ceasefire and the eventual peace process.

On political reconciliation, the ceasefire agreement called for the establishment of a transitional government to be established within 30 days. Taylor’s government, along with LURD, MODEL and political parties, as well as other interest groups, will form the transitional government, but Taylor, who had been indicted by United Nations War Crime Tribunal on Sierra Leone, will not be part of it.

 Liberians are not strangers to peace/ceasefire agreements. They have witnessed similar ceremonies in the past. During the first phase of the war (1989-1997), 13 peace agreements were signed and violated. Aside from international rhetoric and posturing, there was a gross inadequacy of political will and logistical support to ensure the fruition of those agreements which had the possibility of resolving the Liberian imbroglio. In addition, the conflict was overshadowed by several other international and African developments. These included Gulf War I, the release of Nelson Mandela, the Rwanda genocide, and Somalia, a la “Black Hawk Down.”

Today, prevailing international and continental conflicts are not dissimilar. The war in Iraq, the DRC conflict (especially in the Bunia and Ituri regions), the situation in northern Uganda, the constant struggle in Sudan and conditions in Zimbabwe, where private property rights are attacked and a regime fights to save its life, all continue to beg for international attention. On top of these, everyone has some “plan” including the New Partnership for Africa Development, the Millennium Development Goals, President’s Bush visit to Africa, etc.

Liberia, with its three million wretched souls and a land mass of about 43,000 square miles, certainly cannot tickle the conscience of a world wracked with greater things to be concerned about. After all, aside from rubber and some gold and diamonds, Liberia does not have geo-strategic importance compelling enough for great power interests. (The attempt to link Al Queda did not suffice and fell by the way side.) This is the Liberian dilemma.

But because Liberians are people too we have to make noise to get heard. After all, failure in the past to listen resulted in the following:

- war in Sierra Leone where amputation of limbs became the hallmark and continues to prick our conscious; remember the “blood diamond campaign;”
- threats of instability/coup d’etat and even war in Guinea, where the days of an ailing president and his repressive regime may be numbered; and
- “regime change” and war in Cote d’Ivoire, where the French are not going to allow their interests to be jeopardized.
Liberia destabilized West Africa and, if left to its own devices, may wreak more havoc in the region and beyond. That is why there needs to be some assistance for its war to end.

The ceasefire agreement has to be robustly and vigorously supported. This means that the constitution and support for the international stabilization force cannot be left to the Economic Community of West Africa States (ECOWAS) alone. All nations of good will must be involved, especially those with power, influence and funds. ECOWAS tried before but was not sufficiently endowed to resolve the conflict and this, in part, is why Liberia is where it is at now. Hopefully, the International Contact Group on Liberia, which includes the United States and the European Union and has been involved in this process, will use its influence and material support to ensure that the tenets of the agreement are fully implemented to the letter.

In addition, Charles Taylor must be arrested as a matter of urgency. He should be brought to Sierra Leone and face justice. This is rather important and necessary for it will clear the air of the kind of impunity that is not only pervasive in Liberia but most of the civil wars and conflicts in Africa. The international community must establish very clearly that it will not countenance the level of human rights abuses and international war criminality that was demonstrated by the Liberian regime.

The indictment of Taylor, if followed to its logical conclusion, will send a powerful message throughout Africa. On the other hand, if it is not scrupulously implemented, then many of the African despots still lingering around will continue to call the international community’s bluff. Liberia may not be an important geo-political entity after all, but it certainly can represent a powerful symbol—the restoration of faith in the international systems and laws (which are now threatened to completely erode by the U.S. action in Iraq). This tremendous challenge in our times — especially for those of us so concerned about Africa and its many wars and warlords.

Fair trade coffee update

Small farmers who grow coffee in a number of African countries have suffered the impact of falling coffee prices in the past year. Maryknoll missioners all over the world have written to the U.S. State Department urging the U.S. to join the International Coffee Organization (ICO) to become more active in finding solutions to the problems these small farmers face. While news on U.S. action is pending, coffee farmers were given a boost when at the end of April 2003, Dunkin Donuts announced that it would begin using only fair trade beans in all its espresso beverages.

The fair trade movement is one that tries to combat the vulnerability of small coffee farmers by ensuring that their crop brings a fairer price in terms of labor and input. When Dunkin Donuts announced that it would use fair trade beans for all its espresso beverages, fair trade promoters like Transfair USA and Oxfam America celebrated the decision.

Dunkin Donuts sells 2.5 million cups of coffee per day and prides itself in providing customers with high quality coffee. The company sees its move toward fair trade espresso as a means of guaranteeing these quality standards. Paul Rice, the CEO of Transfair USA, a major promoter of fair trade coffee, commented that the Dunkin Donuts announcement was a “major step forward for efforts to help coffee farmers, and to protect quality coffee supplies for the years to come.”

Oxfam America President Raymond C. Offenheiser remarked that Dunkin Donuts decision to sell and promote fair trade certified coffee was “a commitment that will benefit the many coffee growers facing hardship while also providing a superior cup of coffee to consumers.”

Dunkin Donuts espresso line of beverages will be introduced in stores beginning in September. By the spring of 2004, an estimated 3,100 stores nationwide will be selling these beverages. Fair Trade espresso coffee is expected to represent approximately two percent of total Dunkin Donuts coffee bean purchases.

To learn more about TransFair USA see: www.transfairusa.org. To learn more about Oxfam America and its coffee campaign, see: www.oxfamamerica.org.
U.S. leadership against AIDS, TB and malaria

On May 15, the Senate passed U.S. Leadership Against AIDS, TB and Malaria (H.R. 1298). Although many activists praise it while others express disappointment in some of its provisions, all wonder if it will be fully funded at the levels indicated in the bill. The following article examines the bills strengths and weaknesses (especially for the African context) and suggests action.

U.S. Leadership Against AIDS, TB and Malaria (H.R. 1298) authorizes $3 billion to combat health crises in 2004, and similar levels of funding for 2005-2008; ensures that religious organizations, who are the principal providers of care of those affected by HIV/AIDS, will not be discriminated against on the basis of their religions or moral convictions; recognizes that sexual abstinence and fidelity programs are essential components of prevention and education in curbing the spread of HIV; suggests that the U.S. work with other creditors to provide increased debt relief to poor countries sufficient to reduce annual payments no more than ten percent of government revenues and, in the case of countries suffering a public health crisis, no more than five percent of government revenues.

The legislation is meant to put flesh on the president’s State of the Union announcement of a U.S. contribution of $15 billion ($10 billion of which would be new money) over the next five years to combat HIV/AIDS, tuberculosis and malaria abroad (See NewsNotes March/April 2003, p. 25). As stated in the May/June 2003 NewsNotes, authorizing bills suggest funding levels and set direction while “the success of any program depends on the resources that the U.S. is willing to contribute.” Given that Congress just passed a huge tax cut and the administration has indicated that it will hold first year funding low, prospects are bleak, so bleak that Dr. Paul Zeitz of Global AIDS Alliance remarked, “This bill is a check given to countries fighting AIDS, but it will come back marked ‘insufficient funds.’”

Of critical concern to several AIDS activist is the fact that the bill limits U.S. contributions to the Global Fund to a third of what all sources, including the U.S., contribute. Since the G-8 proved little definite commitment to greater Global AIDS contributions, it essentially means that the total U.S. contribution could be lower than the $3 billion the bill suggests. An amendment did change the one-quarter cap to one that included, rather than excluded the U.S.; but since the president’s own budget for FY 2004 specifies only $1.52 billion for on the ground delivery of AIDS services, many feel that it will be impossible for Congress to appropriate the total funding authorized. Another concern is that, although the bill contains important debt relief provisions, it does so in non-binding form.

President Bush is scheduled to visit Africa July 7-15; activists are encouraging him to pledge a more secure commitment to combating HIV/AIDS in the African continent. Activists are also contacting members of Congressional Appropriations Committees and invite you to join them.

Faith in action:

Call Senate and House appropriators and ask that they:

1. Appropriate $3.5 billion to fight global AIDS, TB, and malaria NOW for real on the ground programs of which at least $1.75 billion is for the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, TB, and Malaria without taking away precious resources from other development and humanitarian aid programs.

2. If your members of Congress sit on the House Appropriations Committee (to find out see: www.house.gov/appropriations/members.htm) or the Senate Appropriations Committee (appropriations.senate.gov/), call them in their home office. Go to: http://www.maryknoll.org/GLOBAL/NEWSNOTES/newsnotes_5603oth.pdf (p.24) for a sample letter and talking points.

3. If your members of Congress do not sit on an appropriating committee, ask them to weigh in with the chairs of the foreign operations appropriations subcommittees in support of this same message above. The Chair of the Foreign Operations Appropriations subcommittee in the House is Rep. Jim Kolbe (R-AZ). In the Senate, it is Sen. Mitch McConnell (R-KY).
Small arms: Global week of action

A follow up to the 2001 Small Arms Conference, the Biennial Meeting of States on Small Arms (BMS) will take place in New York from July 7-11, 2003. At this meeting the UN Program of Action (PoA) will be reviewed. In preparation, the International Action Network on Small Arms (IANSA) drew media attention to over 100 events taking place in 42 countries around the world during the “Global Week of Action against Small Arms” from June 1-8. The following article lists some of the public events that took place to highlight the impact of small arms on local communities.

In Brasilia, a banner hung in front of Brazil’s famous National Congress proclaimed “Disarmament is the First Step,” as Brazilian IANSA participants held a silent march, using victims’ shoes to symbolize the high toll of gun death in the country. Participants revealed that Brazil has one of the highest gun death rates in the world. Nearly one hundred people die every day in shoot-outs, most of them young boys and men between 15 and 29 years of age.

On May 30, in Stung Treng, a remote northern Cambodian province bordering Laos, a “Flame of Peace” destroyed 2,535 weapons that had been collected from the civilian population by provincial authorities. Then on June 5, large pockets of ex-Khmer Rouge communities residing in areas such as Ta Ken Koh Sla, Cambodia, voluntarily handed in 473 weapons to the local authorities in exchange for 20 community-owned water wells. At the request of the local people, the weapons were destroyed in a small ceremony at the point of collection. These “Flames of Peace” events demonstrated both to the people of Cambodia, and to the world that the time for violence and isolation has passed.

In Kenya, the Security and Information Research Council (SRIC), an IANSA member organization, released a report asserting the existence of over 120,000 illegal firearms in the North Rift Valley. SRIC claims that at least 50 percent of Kenyan men over 15 years of age, especially those living among the pastoralist communities, are armed. SRIC worked closely with a network of over 35 local non-governmental organizations to sponsor several public events raising small arm awareness.

In South Africa, the action focused on gun violence among teenage students. According activists at Gun Free South Africa (GFSA), at least 30 people are killed in gun-related incidents across South Africa each day, and 15-24 year olds are most at risk. GFSA finds that school shootings happen most often in poor areas affected by high unemployment. As a result, education has come to a standstill in some communities. Michael Moore’s Academy Award-winning documentary “Bowling for Columbine” was screened throughout South Africa during the week of action. GFSA is also working with police to set up firearm free zones at 25 schools in a number of townships.

In the United States a roundtable discussion took place on June 5 with IANSA members Oxfam, the Arias Foundation, Human Rights Watch and the Center for Defense Information making public presentations. The U.S. public might be hardest to convince with the likes of Rep. Ron Paul (R-TX) who firmly agrees with the Gun Owners of America(GOA) in claiming the UN developed a “sinister plan” to outlaw guns. Rep. Paul introduced the “American Sovereignty Restoration Act of 2003” (HR 1146, a bill that would call for the U.S. to leave the UN).

Faith in action:

Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns is a participating member of IANSA. For more on the week of action, and on information on the Biennial Meeting of States on Small Arms (BMS), go to: http://www.iansa.org/.
At an African NGO meeting in Washington, D.C. in May 2003, a Nigerian representative remarked “the European Union and the United States are fighting a war and they are using Africa as their battleground!” Her colleagues emphatically agreed that this northern hemisphere conflict over genetically modified (GM) food deeply impacts a continent of people who are often left out of the discussion. Earlier that week (May 13) the office of the U.S. Trade Representative (USTR) filed a case at the World Trade Organization (WTO) against the European Union’s Moratorium on Biotech Foods and Crops, calling the moratorium illegal, non-science based and harmful to agriculture and the developing world. The following explores other implications of the U.S. – EU conflict.

In support of the USTR announcement to file the case against the EU, George Bush was quoted as saying that the “European governments should join - not hinder - the great cause of ending hunger in Africa.” The U.S. claims that GM crops will play a key role in ending world hunger and blames the EU’s narrow views on GM food for influencing the Zimbabwe and Zambia decisions to reject shipments of U.S. surplus corn because it contained GM seed last year when the two countries were facing severe food shortages (see NewsNotes September/October 2002, p. 11).

As the fifth WTO ministerial meeting approaches (September 10-14, 2003), agricultural themes slated for discussion are making their way into the news. The conflict on GM crops is significant among them. At issue is a fundamental competition between the right to trade goods without too many barriers and a government’s right to block the import of foods it deems unsafe.

At the WTO, imports can be restricted only when there is clear scientific evidence that a crop, either GM or conventional, could harm human health or the environment. The U.S. action against the EU claims that the EU’s lack of “sufficient scientific evidence” risks thwarting “trade in safe, wholesome, and nutritious products.”

At the same time, an interesting UN treaty awaits one more country’s ratification before it comes into force. The Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety, will allow for the restriction of exports of genetically modified crops through the “precautionary principle.” Once in force, this protocol requires countries trading GM food to supply detailed information about the content of its cargoes to a databank established in Montreal. Importing countries can then access this information and decide whether or not to accept it. It has the potential to strengthen the hand of any country wishing to block imports if they are not satisfied with the exporter’s supplied information about the content and potential environmental risks of any GM shipments.

Clearly, WTO rules are in conflict with those stated in the Cartagena Protocol and the real question at hand is whether WTO rules will trump this protocol, sprung from the Convention on Biological Diversity, signed by 130 countries (excluding the U.S.) and ratified by a minimum of 50. At last year’s Johannesburg World Summit on Sustainable Development, a courageous delegate from Ethiopia was successful in adding the notion that UN agreements hold more weight than WTO rules, to the non binding-declaration that emerged from that meeting.

As the battle rages on, people of faith around the world are struggling to come up with a way to navigate through issues of hunger and appropriate cautiousness around a potentially dangerous new technology. Particularly interesting are the following statements which can be found at www.maryknollogc.org: 1) statement by the South African Conference of Catholic Bishops entitled “Genetically Modified Food: The Impending Disaster”; 2) statement by the bishops of the Pastoral Land Commission (of Brazil), expressing their opposition to the use of GMOs.


For more information on the U.S. Trade Representative’s action at the WTO see: http://www.ustr.gov/releases/2003/05/03-31.pdf. To read more about the Cartagena Protocol see: http://www.biodiv.org/biosafety/protocol.asp.
Human trafficking remains urgent issue

“Trafficking in persons” is both a domestic issue and an international problem. Western society bears a responsibility to look at the destructive realities of buying and selling women and children, in order to drive this shocking issue into open, public scrutiny. It is imperative to reexamine the personal and social values that have permitted the “demand” that fuels local sex industries (which have become a global criminal enterprise), an examination that asks why there has been a general failure to provide strategies of protection and prevention; and why we continue to allow the burden of guilt to be put upon the victims. The following is an overview of the issue with links to enable a deeper study.

**What does “trafficking in persons” mean?**

According to the “UN Supplementary Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children,” signed by over 40 nations in December 2000, “‘Trafficking in persons’ shall mean the recruitment, transportation, transfer, harboring or receipt of persons, by means of the threat or use of force or other forms of coercion, of abduction, of fraud, of deception, of abuse of power or of a position of vulnerability or of the giving or receiving of payments or benefits to achieve the consent of a person having control over another person, for the purpose of exploitation.

“Exploitation shall include, at a minimum, the exploitation of the prostitution of others or other forms of sexual exploitation, forced labor or services ...”

**Who is being trafficked?**

Millions of women worldwide, including many originally targeted for domestic labor, are trafficked into the sex industry. Women and children have been trafficked into street prostitution, are made to prostitute out of bars, rooms, small hotels, massage parlors, even exclusive clubs. This situation prevails despite the UN’s Convention for the Suppression of the Trafficking in Persons and of the Exploitation of the Prostitution of Others, which entered into force in 1949.

Recently, child sexual exploitation has experienced explosive growth in all countries, but most dramatically in the global South, particularly in Asia, Africa, and Latin America, where children have become a commodity to be sold in the North. Child trafficking has emerged as a key component of commercial sexual exploitation and has become a global issue demanding immediate global action.

**The causes**

Poverty is one of two main causes of “trafficking in persons;” demand is the other. If there were no demand, this billion dollar global industry would dry up. Is there a reason that this aspect of trafficking receives so little attention? This question remains a challenge for those involved at every level of prevention, protection and advocacy. Another question that begs thoughtful response is why is there such a tepid social response? Is it because it is impoverished women and children that are being sold by men involved in this trade, by men who have the demand? In most cases, men are also the ones who make the laws and who enforce them.

**No time left to debate**

For those involved in combatting this issue, there is an urgency for action, as it is understood that those engaged in this global trade are now truly selling death. For young women and children who have been sold into prostitution there is no future, as this is most likely to become for them a fatal transaction. In some places, 80 percent of the prostitutes are likely to become HIV-positive. It is the fear of HIV that fuels the demand for very young girls who, due to their physical vulnerability, will often become infected within six months of entering the trade.

Selling young women and children into forced prostitution is one of the worst aspects of global trade. Clearly, trafficking cannot happen without the complicity of government officials somewhere along the route. A serious response requires a clearer understanding of the connections between the authorities and organized crime, connections that involve police with handlers who connect politicians with brothel owners. In some countries it is more open, in others, hidden. This multi-million dollar industry has developed an international net that safeguards the criminal and traps the victims so there is no escape, or worse, sets them up as criminals to be punished.

Since it provides the basis of both national laws and international enforcement of these laws, the “UN Supplementary Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children” is the place to begin. If there is any hope for change it must come from civil society’s pressing interest in seeing that their own nation signs, enacts and enforces this Protocol.
For more information and ways to become active please check out these organizations/links:

- U.S. State Department Report: [http://www.state.gov/g/tip/rls/tiprpt/](http://www.state.gov/g/tip/rls/tiprpt/)
- Coalition Against Trafficking in Women: info@catwinternational.org; [http://www.catwinternational.org](http://www.catwinternational.org)
- *Singing to the Dead* by Vicki Armour-Hileman, University of Georgia Press, pg. 97, 98; books@ugapress.uga.edu

---

**The Religious Working Group on the World Bank & IMF invites you to**

**FAITH IN PRACTICE:**

**Connecting the Dots for Global Economic Justice**

*September 18 & 19, 2003*

*Washington, D.C.*

*What does the Lord require of you but to do justice, to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God?*

Micah 6: 8

Are you challenged by how to connect all of the dots on the map of global economic justice and then educate and mobilize your faith community? The International Monetary Fund and the World Bank, through debt and structural adjustment programs, have influenced most other global economic justice issues. Come learn and discuss with peers about how to make connections from our faith to the global economy.

Together we will explore the teachings of our faith and how to turn these teachings in to practice as we work for a more just world. We will ask ourselves how our campaigns for change fit together and what role we each play. We will explore how we can better collaborate with one another, supporting each other’s work on these interconnected issues. Our goal is to conclude with some concrete next steps to cooperatively mobilize the faith community towards a more just global economy.

Join us to put your faith into practice and connect the dots between:

- debt and structural adjustment
- trade and labor
- AIDS
- environmental issues
- Millennium Challenge Account, development goals and models
- privatization and private sector development
- militarism and globalization
- local and global -- making the connections for people of faith

For information, contact Marie Clarke at Jubilee USA Network at marie@jubileeusa.org or Susan Thompson of the Medical Mission Sisters at susanstellastonethompson@juno.com or (703)624-1454.

*Sponsored by the Religious Working Group, including Jubilee USA Network, the Religious Action Center of Reform Judaism, the National Council of Churches and the Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns.*
U.S. reps offer bill to cancel Iraq’s debt

Congresswoman Carolyn Maloney (D-NY) and Congressman Jim Leach (R-IA) have introduced the Iraqi Freedom From Debt Act (HR 2482) that would require the United States to persuade Iraq’s creditors, including the World Bank, the IMF, France and Russia, to cancel or reduce the Iraqi debt, much of which is considered odious debt, “incurred by dictatorships for the purposes of oppressing their people or for personal purpose.”

According to Reuters, “U.S. officials have repeatedly said Iraq will require some form of forgiveness on debts estimated to be between $60 billion and $130 billion to help the country get its economy up and running again after the war and rule of Saddam Hussein. But calls for debt relief have been met with resistance from countries like Russia which is estimated by the charity Oxfam to be owed $9 billion by Iraq, a much larger amount than the estimated $2.1 billion owed to the United States. Some countries also feel that as they did not support the U.S.-led war they should not be required to forgive debts … Iraq owes $87 million to the World Bank and around $75 million to the IMF. The World Bank said the focus should be on larger creditors while the IMF declined to comment.”

In a letter to their Congressional colleagues, urging them to cosponsor HR 2483, Reps. Maloney and Leach wrote:

“We have introduced HR 2482, the Iraqi Freedom from Debt Act. As in post-war Germany, debt relief can be an essential tool in rebuilding a nation destroyed by war or despotic rule. Debt relief is an effective development tool that releases funds within a nation that can be used to address poverty and meet essential human needs.

While estimates on Iraq’s debt range from one hundred billion to several hundred billion, the combined debt owed the IMF and World Bank is just over $150 million. These institutions have the resources to relieve this debt, setting an important precedent for the rest of the world.

“HR 2482 will require the U.S. to negotiate in the IMF, World Bank and other appropriate multilateral development institutions for the IMF and World Bank to relieve the debts owed by Iraq to these institutions. Furthermore, this legislation includes a sense of Congress that the president should urge France and Russia and all other public and private creditors to relieve the debts owed by Iraq.

“The case for debt relief in Iraq is especially compelling given that much of the debt can be characterized as odious. Odious debt is recognized as debt that is taken on by a country for the personal benefit of corrupt leaders or for the oppression of a people. Clearly much of the Iraqi debt falls in this category.”

While this bill deals only with Iraq, the Jubilee USA Network believes that there are many more countries in the global South whose illegitimate debt should be declared null and void. This bill would set a precedent that could be very significant for South Africa, Congo, Haiti, Kenya, Argentina and many other countries paying debts accrued by dictators who stole the money or used it to oppress their people. While the odious debt of Iraq must be cancelled, Africans and others of the world’s poorest citizens have been standing in line for decades waiting for limited debt relief.
UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues

The following article was written by Maryknoll Affiliate Jo Albright who volunteers as a Maryknoll representative at the United Nations in New York.

Some 1,500 indigenous people from around the world were among those who gathered at the United Nations for the second session of the Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues from May 12-23, 2003. They presented their concerns on such matters as development, health, environment, human rights, culture and education. The Permanent Forum, a new UN body established in 2000 that met for the first time in 2002, is seen as the best opportunity yet to provide a broader horizon for indigenous issues within the UN system, and lead to more effective protection for some of the most threatened and vulnerable peoples in the world.

For much of the past year, the 16 independent experts, either indigenous or government nominated who make up the Forum, have been learning how to work under the broad mandate set by the UN’s Economic and Social Council. An important part of their mandate is to liaise with and coordinate the activities of the many UN agencies, funds and programs whose work relates to indigenous issues and to whom it is authorized to make direct recommendations.

After the opening of the session which dealt with procedural matters, the theme of “indigenous children and youth” was debated, with the Forum recommending that UN bodies such as UNICEF, in collaboration with governments and in coordination with indigenous peoples, prepare a Latin American conference of indigenous children and youth in 2004. Then observers of countries and organizations began presenting their statements on the mandated areas of economic and social development, environment, health, human rights, culture and education. This comprised the bulk of the session’s time allowing opportunities for everyone to speak. A sampling of those who did – besides country representatives and UN bodies – included the following: Indigenous Peoples of Africa Coordinating Committee; Rapa Nui Parliament; Aotearoa Dwan Adat Papua; Centro de Estudios Aymaras, Bolivia; Parlamento del Pueblo Quillana Aymara; Inuit Circumpolar Conference; Confederaciones Nacionalidades Indigenas del Ecuador; Pine Ridge Reservation; Kenya Female Advisory Organization; Assembly of First Nations; Teton Lakota Nation Treaty Council; Asian Indigenous and Tribal Peoples Network; Fundacion de Gente Indigena Yanomami; Navajo Nation; Bangladesh Indigenous Peoples Forum; Coordinadora Nacional de Mujeres Indigenas de Mexico; Nepal Federation of Nationalities; Indigenous Women’s Network of Rataukiri, C’dia; Maasai Women for Education and Economic Development; Indigenous Youth Caucus; and American Indian Law Alliance.

Numerous side events took place sponsored by NGOs plus an interactive dialogue was conducted between UNESCO and members of the Forum. The World Bank was there promoting its on-going efforts in implementing its Indigenous Peoples’ Policy. It welcomed input from indigenous peoples’ organizations on “good practice” examples of international development projects that can serve as models, of consultation and participation approaches and capacity-building initiatives and of statements as to what constitutes “development” from an indigenous viewpoint. The Bank announced the launching of a new initiative, called the “Grants Facility for Indigenous Peoples,” to provide small grants directly to indigenous peoples’ organizations to support implementation of sustainable development projects and programs based on their cultural preferences.

The session ended with the Forum’s recommending to ECOSOC the following:

- The third session of the Forum be held at the UN headquarters in New York from May 10-21, 2004;
- The convening of a three-day workshop on the collection of data concerning indigenous peoples, with the participation of three members of the Forum and experts from UN agencies, to produce a report by the third session in 2004;
- The participation of members of the Forum in meetings of ECOSOC’s subsidiary bodies of relevance to its mandate throughout the year;
- That ECOSOC and relevant UN cooperating agencies provide technical facilities and necessary support for organizing the Fourth Continental Summit of Indigenous Women of the Americas in Lima in March 2004.
- Finally, it called upon governments, foundations and others to give generously to the Voluntary Fund in order to promote the work of the Forum, and a draft report of decisions taken by the Forum for adoption by ECOSOC was circulated.
U.S. should join International Criminal Court

Despite its declared “war on terrorism,” the U.S. remains opposed to joining the International Criminal Court (ICC), which was set up to prosecute individuals for crimes against humanity, war crimes and genocide.

Until now, the international community has resorted to ad hoc tribunals such as those in Rwanda and the former Yugoslavia to enforce basic human rights norms. However, such tribunals are time-consuming and expensive, and delays in their creation allow the accused to remain at large and evidence to be destroyed.

U.S. negotiators helped to write definitions of the crimes to be tried by the ICC (a non-UN body) as well as protections for the accused. Last year, however, the U.S. withdrew its support for the Court before it was established.

The ICC is based on the Rome Statute, which entered into force on July 1, 2002. The Court will prosecute crimes committed after that date. These include murder, rape, torture, enforced disappearances and the use of child soldiers. The Court should be ready to begin hearing cases in The Hague by the end of this year.

The crime of aggression is also listed in the Rome Statute, but the Court may not prosecute aggression until it is fully defined. The earliest that could happen is at the ICC’s seven-year review conference in 2009. (States Parties that do not agree with a new definition may opt out of its coverage.)

Some proponents had hoped that terrorism and drug trafficking would also fall within the Court’s jurisdiction. However, there was no consensus on the definition of terrorism; and some countries feared that investigating drug offenses could overextend the ICC’s resources.

Meanwhile, the U.S. is signing the bilateral “Article 98” agreements with other nations to help ensure that U.S. citizens will not be turned over to the ICC.

The Rome Statute allows states that have ratified the treaty to seek immunity for their troops – through agreements under Article 98 – in countries where the troops are serving.

Some critics maintain that the U.S. immunity pacts go too far, however, granting broad immunity to all U.S. citizens – including stationed troops, government officials in Washington and international contract workers – for crimes committed anywhere in the world.

By mid-June 37 countries had signed such agreements with the U.S., including many small nations that rely heavily on U.S. military assistance.

Last summer President Bush signed the American Servicemembers’ Protection Act (ASPA). Unless specifically exempted under that law, countries that belong to the ICC but do not sign an Article 98 agreement were to lose U.S. military assistance as of July 1, 2003.

Exemptions include all NATO countries and Argentina, Australia, Egypt, Israel, Japan, Jordan, the Republic of Korea, Taiwan and New Zealand. Broad waivers and exemptions under the ASPA also allow the president to continue sending aid to other countries that choose not to conclude Article 98 agreements if it is deemed important for U.S. national security.

In fact, it is highly unlikely that U.S. citizens would ever be handed over to the ICC for trial. The ICC will always defer to a national court with jurisdiction over a crime. In addition, the ICC will only act when the relevant country or countries are unwilling or unable to do so.

Nevertheless, the president signed the ASPA into law last August, authorizing him to use any means necessary to free U.S. citizens and allies held by the ICC, leading some to label the law “The Hague Invasion Act.”

Little wonder that results of a poll by the Pew Research Center released several months later found the U.S. losing popularity in 19 countries including Britain, Canada and Germany as well as numerous Muslim states.

Faith in action:

An estimated 174 million people died in genocides and mass murders during the 20th century. The ICC was set up to bring the perpetrators of heinous crimes to justice when nations will not or cannot. See the World Federalist Association USA website at www.wfa.org/issues/icc.html for fact sheets and links related to the ICC, including the Washington Working Group on the ICC at www.wfa.org/issues/wicc/wicc.html. Send a message to your elected officials and tell them that the U.S. should support the ICC because without justice, there is no peace.
Resources

1) Cast your vote for a just trade policy for the Americas! The Free Trade Area of the Americas (FTAA), currently being negotiated among 34 of 35 countries in the Americas, would establish the hemisphere as a free trade area. As the negotiations unfold, several of the values most important to Maryknollers and the people with whom they live and work are being overlooked. In September 2002, close to 10 million Brazilian citizens voted against Brazil’s participation in the FTAA. This summer post card campaigns throughout the U.S. will ask U.S. citizens to cast their vote on whether the U.S. should participate in the FTAA. Call or write the Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns in Washington, D.C. (email may be sent to dana@maryknollogc.org) for postcard ballots and cast your own vote, or organize a postcard writing campaign in your community. Send a message to trade ministers asking them to respect and uphold basic justice values as trade negotiations move forward. Your messages sent to our office by October 10, 2003 will be delivered to trade ministers in November when they meet in Miami to further discuss the FTAA.

2) “A World on the Brink: A Gated Empire or Global Solidarity?”: Pax Christi USA will hold its annual national assembly August 1-3, 2003 at St. John’s University, Jamaica, NY. Keynote speakers will be Michel Sabbah, Latin Patriarch of Jerusalem and Pax Christi International President, and Njoki Njehu, director of 50 Years is Enough. For more information, contact Pax Christi USA at www.paxchristiusa.org, or call (814)453-4955. PCUSA’s mailing address is 532 W. 8th Street Erie, PA 16502.

3) If Only Today You Knew ... the Things That Make for Peace. Published by the Institute for Peace and Justice (IPJ) and written by Dr. James McGinnis with Kevin LaNave, these two unique manuals aid religious educators and youth ministers in teaching peacemaking in the post-9/11 U.S. For Christian elementary schools (K-8) and religious education programs: This 160-page manual for religious educators on “peacemaking in post-9/11 America” is structured similarly to the high school manual, providing reflection and activities for K-8 students on the peacemaking vision of Jesus and other images of peace, and much more. For Christian high schools and youth groups: This unique 125-page manual challenges youth to put the Gospel call to peace into practice at a critical moment in U.S. and human history. The manual provides reflection and activities for youth on a number of timely themes. Visit IPJ’s website (www.ipj-ppj.org) and order by credit card; call toll-free (800-833-0245); or write to the Institute for Peace and Justice, 4144 Lindell Boulevard #408, St. Louis, MO 63108; (314) 533-4445; fax (314) 715-6455; e-mail: ppjn@aol.com. The manuals are $19.95 apiece, shipping/handling not included.

4) Free Trade: Free Rein for Transnational Corporations: EPICA presents a new popular education resource, now in English, this popular education book from El Salvador explains trade, the history of trade, and what is now being called “free” trade. Complete with fun and thought-provoking cartoons and photographs, this is an ideal book for learning about the role of the World Trade Organization (WTO) and the implications of the proposed Free Trade Area of the Americas (FTAA). A resource from the South, it can be used by the organizers in the North to begin dialogue on how the same economic system is hurting the poor everywhere. By Miguel Cavada Diez and José Victor Aguilar. Translated by Kathy Ogle; 85 pages; illustrations. $9.95, plus $4.50 shipping and $ 0.50 for each additional book. (Bulk discounts and free organizer’s copy available) Pay by check to EPICA or credit card. Phone: (202)332-0292 Fax: (202)332-1184; epicabooks@igc.org Send order to: EPICA, 1470 Irving Street, N.W., Washington, D.C. 20010.

5) Bottom of the Barrel: Africa’s Oil Boom and the Poor: In this new report, Catholic Relief Services (CRS) says that if the necessary changes are not made, oil riches will most probably continue to produce corruption and mismanagement, environmental destruction, human rights violations and conflict. The United States currently imports 17 percent of its petroleum from Africa, with projections indicating that this figure will rise to a quarter in the next seven years. Yet CRS notes that “countries that depend upon oil exports, over time, are among the most economically troubled, the most authoritarian, and the most conflict-ridden states in the world today.” CRS makes several recommendations on oil revenue transparency how their activities in the oil sector directly impact on poverty reduction. To access the report see http://www.catholicrelief.org