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March/April 2004

MARYKNOLL OFFICE FOR GLOBAL CONCERNS:
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Due to ongoing security measures, there is a significant delay in delivery of mail to Congressional offices. It is advised that constituents either use email or fax, or send mail to Congresspersons’ home offices, rather than to the Washington, D.C. office.
The U.S. elections: Peace and security, part one

In this issue of NewsNotes we continue our reflection on topics of concern in the approaching U.S. elections, looking particularly at some of those related to peace and security. Our intent is to evaluate the proposals of political parties and their candidates through a lens held by the communities around the world where Maryknoll missioners live and work, and by the values articulated in the Gospel and in Catholic social teaching. (See Faithful Citizenship: A Catholic Call to Political Responsibility www.usccb.org/faithfulcitizenship/index.htm)

The United States is the unrivaled global superpower. While the attacks of September 11, 2001 demonstrated the vulnerability of our people, they also offered a unique opportunity for the U.S. to contribute to a more peaceful and stable world. In the days immediately following 9/11, we responded as a people with a passion to preserve life and a commitment to compassion. We tasted the suffering of other victims of horrendous violence, and we received abundant international sympathy and good will, but we squandered that opportunity to become a different presence in the world.

We believe that traditional notions of national security have committed our country to failed policies, giving rise to deeper insecurity. We propose a redefinition of security in terms of basic human needs, rights and responsibilities. Human security, as opposed to national security, guarantees access to food, clean water, healthcare, education and employment. It recognizes the right of people to participate in important decisions that affect their lives and respects the integrity of creation. Human security would emerge from a “globalization of solidarity” that promotes international cooperation to preemptively manage conflicts before they turn violent. Human security must become the basis from which the United States engages the world.

U.S. unilateralism

U.S. unilateralism undercuts the cooperation necessary for addressing global problems. Terrorism, weapons proliferation, hunger, global warming, resource depletion, the movement of peoples, disease (such as HIV/AIDS), and other challenges transcend national boundaries and require cooperative action. However, the United States has moved away from multilateral cooperation to a policy of unilateralism. The U.S. has displayed its resistance to international agreements by, for example:

- attempting to undermine the International Criminal Court;
- refusing to sign the Treaty to Ban the Use of Landmines, which 150 other countries have signed;
- refusing to ratify the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child;
- refusing to ratify the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW);
- withdrawing from the Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty with Russia;
- obstructing the creation of legally binding international treaties on arms brokering or marking and tracing mechanisms for small arms transfers at the 2001 United Nations Conference on the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects.

Suggested questions for candidates
- What would you do to insure the integrity of existing treaties and work toward cooperative approaches to peace and security through the UN and other organizations?
- How would you repair fractured relationships with countries around the world, including Muslim countries?

The war on terror

The U.S. response to 9/11 does not address the underlying problems which lead to terrorism. A military response to what was an egregious criminal action is more likely to birth new terrorists than to bring those responsible to justice. A military response to terrorism, a complex social, economic and cultural problem, is inadequate and dangerous. In fact, failure to address the root causes of terrorism, including U.S. foreign military deployments, may work against the ultimate objective. Furthermore, U.S. imprisonment of “enemy combatants” without clear charges, access to legal representation, or fair trials is immoral, violates international law and threatens the treatment of U.S. captives now and in the future. The Patriot Act threatens basic rights of U.S. citizens by granting to the U.S. government unprecedented powers of surveillance, investigation and detention.

Suggested questions for candidates
- What do you think are the root CAUSES of “terrorism?”
- How best could the U.S. address these?
- Would you work to modify or repeal the Patriot Act in order to restore to U.S. citizens liberties lost (or stolen) in the hunt for terrorists?

The second part of the “peace and security” section of the election guide will be published in the May-June NewsNotes. Please visit www.maryknollogc.org for a copy of the entire document in Word format.
Burundi: Death of a papal nuncio

The recent murder of the papal nuncio to Burundi, Archbishop Michael Courtney, horrified the citizens of Burundi and shocked the entire international community. During his four years of service in the central African nation, the Irish Archbishop had been intimately involved in Burundi’s tortuously slow peace process. His untimely death in a bloody ambush comes amidst several important developments in the search for a lasting peace in Burundi. David Schwinghamer, MM contributed the following update on Burundi.

David Rothrock, working with Catholic Relief Services in Burundi on a peacebuilding campaign supported by local and international organizations, recently wrote of Archbishop Courtney: “He was Irish and often hid his great capacity and astuteness behind self-deprecating humor. He was a man of faith and a man of action. His gregariousness and fun-loving nature brought him close to those he met. He was greatly esteemed by the diplomatic corps in Burundi, by the bishops of Burundi and perhaps most especially by the many poor Burundians he met in his travels throughout the country during the past three years. He will be greatly missed.” Indeed, Bishop Courtney was devoted to making peace in Burundi, and that peace is yet to be realized.

In May 2002, the second phase of the transitional government in Burundi began with Domitien Ndayizeye, a Hutu, assuming the presidency. By December 2002, the transitional government had signed a number of ceasefire agreements with several factions of the armed opposition forces. Only the PALIPEHUTU - FNL (Party for the Liberation of the Hutu People - National Liberation Forces) faction led by Agathon Rwasa, adamantly refused to participate in any negotiations until their demands were met. By mid-2003 the negotiations on how to implement the ceasefire agreements of 2002 faltered as both sides in the conflict continued to wage bloody warfare throughout the country. By July the entire peace process in Burundi appeared to be in a shambles.

On July 7, 2003, the FNL launched a deadly, weeklong mortar and rocket attack on the capital of Bujumbura, shaking Burundi’s political establishment to its very foundations. A fundamental flaw in the Arusha peace process had become abundantly clear: it was an accord negotiated and signed without including the FDD (Forces for the Defense of Democracy) and the FNL, two significant Hutu rebel opposition groups.

Soon after this attack, the transitional government and the FDD (Nkurunziza faction) resumed negotiations to implement ceasefire agreements. This time, however, the parties involved adopted a different approach to negotiation: face-to-face discussions between Domitien Ndayizeye, president of transitional government, and Pierre Nkurunziza, leader of the main FDD faction.

By October 8, 2003, an agreement known as the “Pretoria Protocol on Political, Defense and Security Power Sharing in Burundi” was reached. This document described in precise terms which positions of executive and legislative power would be granted to the FDD in the transitional government. A key provision of the protocol created a new executive position of minister of State. This powerful post would soon be assumed by Pierre Nkurunziza. In addition, the Pretoria Protocol outlined a powersharing process for defense and security issues such as the assembly of combatants in designated areas, verification of the size of the respective assembled forces, and the formation of the Burundi National Defense Force.

The issues of temporary immunity for the government and opposition forces, the status of the FDD as a political party, and a Forces’ Technical Agreement were left to a further meeting. By late November these issues had been settled and the FDD entered the transitional government as a political party.

By early January, just after the murder of Archbishop Courtney, Hutu soldiers from the FDD were being integrated into the high command of the traditionally Tutsi-led army. These forces then joined with the government troops and began to fight against the FNL. Some observers believe that the FNL were involved in the brutal murder of the Archbishop. These accusations, unproven and vehemently denied, along with the growing military campaign against the FNL, may have compelled the FNL to contact the transitional government and to enter into preliminary discussions about ending the conflict.

Throughout the long and bloody conflict in Burundi, the issues of political and economic exclusion keep rearing their ugly heads. Human rights groups like Amnesty International claim that the Pretoria Protocol left Burundi with significant unresolved challenges. Amnesty also warned about the growing human rights abuses by all parties to the conflict and called on all actors in the peace process to address fundamental questions such as impunity and accountability of their forces.

For several years a number of Hutu-led Burundian parties that were signatories to the Arusha Accord in 2000 expressed concerns about the way that accord is being implemented in their
nation. One of the main reservations is that the CNDD (National Council for the Defense of Democracy), FROLINA (National Liberation Front) and factions of the PALIPEHUTU have been excluded from the transitional government, the ceasefire negotiations and the power sharing agreements. They complain that recent negotiations between the transitional government and the FDD circumvented the Joint CeaseFire Commission set up under the Arusha Peace Accord. They say there are signals that the current transitional government would like to organize the upcoming elections so as to exclude other political parties. Many feel that until these concerns are addressed there will be no real peace in Burundi.

For additional information see NewsNotes, September/October 2003, January/February 2002; and Human Rights Watch’s 2003 report on Burundi: http://www.hrw.org/wr2k3/africa2.html

Update on access to HIV/AIDS medicines

In his New Year’s message for 2004, United Nations Secretary General Kofi Annan, referred to HIV/AIDS, poverty, and other global issues, commenting that “[w]e don’t need any more promises. We need to start keeping the promises we already made.” Over a year after President Bush pledged $15 billion over five years to fight global AIDS, the president’s new program has announced grants totaling only $350 million. In the meantime, lines were lost and new orphans created. Since access to HIV/AIDS medications (described in March-April 2003 NewsNotes) was one of explicit promises made in his 2003 state of the union address, the following article looks at new developments in this debate.

When Bush decided to take on the issue of global HIV and AIDS, it was going to be on his own terms. Instead of contributing a generous portion of U.S. funds to the Global Fund to Fight AIDS Tuberculosis and Malaria while working out the infrastructure for his new program, Bush withheld the money, pushing Congress to lower its 2004 appropriation. Now that the new program has a leader, Randall Tobias, former CEO of Eli Lilly Corporation, the generous funding promised last year is just now beginning to trickle out.

AIDS activist around the world are watching to see the kinds of decisions Tobias will make. Since he comes from a pharmaceutical industry background, many fear that he will favor the industry at the expense of getting affordable, safe and reliable treatments to people who need them as quickly as possible. For instance, a new fixed-dose combination (FDC) pill that can cost as little as $140 per year (as compared to $420-700 per year brand name first line AIDS drugs) combines generic versions of the three drugs in a triple cocktail. Patients on this new combination pill take one in the morning and one at night. This greatly simplifies “triple cocktail therapies” which came from combining either two or three expensive pills twice a day. A one-pill FDC treatment is more easily monitored by health workers who are not doctors. Although the FDC is made by two distinguished manufacturers and was approved by the World Health Organization (WHO), Tobias’s office indicated that it will not buy the FDC.

Medecins Sans Frontieres (MSF - Doctors without Borders) uses the FDCs, and recognizes them as a key element of efforts to scale up AIDS treatment in developing countries. MSF is currently providing antiretroviral treatment to more than 11,000 people living with HIV/AIDS in over 20 countries in Africa, Asia, Latin America, and Eastern Europe. Over half of MSF’s current patients and over 70 percent of those newly enrolled in treatment programs are starting their therapy using WHO-recommended triple FDCs. So far MSF reports that the clinical results are excellent.

MSF advocates for the use of FDCs based on field experience. FDCs are easy to use compared to combining a number of products, thus drug adherence is less challenging. MSF also finds a reduced risk of resistance; competitive prices; and procurement and stock management advantages when the entire treatment comes in one pill. MSF has expressed concern that the U.S. government will stand in the way of countries and programs wishing to use triple FDCs (available today only from generic manufacturers), as well as other quality generic medicines, despite the fact that they are generally three to five times less expensive than originator (“brand name”) versions.

The Vatican joined a healthy choir of world leaders in condemning the “genocidal action” of pharmaceutical companies making massive profits from anti-AIDS drugs which remain unaffordable to millions dying from the disease in sub-Saharan Africa. In Pope John Paul II’s Lenten message released in late January, the Vatican blasted drug companies for a “lack of social conscience” and called for public pressure to force them to lower the cost of anti-retro viral drugs, a move which it said could easily save the lives of 25 million HIV sufferers in sub-Saharan Africa.

For information, read MSF’s recently released briefing paper on fixed dose combinations, which can be downloaded at: http://www.accessmed-msf.org/documents/factsheetfdc.pdf
Sudan update

The United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) has made ongoing advocacy and active solidarity with and for the people of Sudan major priority. Working closely with the Catholic church in Sudan to pursue a just and lasting peace, the USCCB has visited northern and southern Sudan and has been active in Washington, D.C. where it plays a significant role in the policy debate. The USCCB’s partner organization, Catholic Relief Services (CRS), is one of the largest non-governmental organizations operating in Sudan. CRS provided relief to approximately 400,000 Sudanese in 2003. In partnership with local and international organizations, CRS also supports initiatives focused on peace building, health, and education. The following update is based on a recent USCCB update that can be found at: http://www.nccbuscc.org/sdwp/international/stpag.htm

Sudan is Africa’s largest country and has been historically divided along geographic, cultural, ethnic, and religious lines. The most recent outbreak of war in Sudan erupted following the imposition of Shari’a law in southern Sudan in 1983. Since that time, more than two million people have died while at least four million others have been forcibly displaced.

The war has been marked by a systematic campaign of terror by the government in Khartoum against non-Muslims (Christians and practitioners of African traditional religions). Sources of conflict include forced conversion to Islam, the destruction of African culture, political marginalization, and the thirst to control the oil fields in southern Sudan.

Since July 2002, the government of Khartoum and the Sudan People’s Liberation Movement/Army (SPLM/A) have been working on the details of the Machakos Protocol which establishes the framework for a comprehensive peace agreement. This protocol calls for a six-year interim period that would enable the people of the south to establish a civilian administration and regional army, and at the end of which a referendum would be held to determine whether the south will remain part of a united Sudan.

Additional elements of the protocol include the creation of a wealth-sharing mechanism to manage the distribution of national revenues. On January 7, 2004, both parties signed an agreement to share oil revenues on a 50-50 basis. Representatives from the geographical areas Abeyei (center of the oil fields), Nuba Mountains, and Blue Nile have not been involved in negotiating elements of the comprehensive peace process (see NewsNotes November/December 2003 and September/October 2002). Although these areas mostly sided with the SPLM/A, a separate symposium was created to deal with the future of these three disputed territories. No final agreement has been reached on the future status of nor have agreements been signed with regards to the new political structures that will operate during the six-year interim period.

While the U.S. government, with the member and partner states of the Inter-Governmental Agency on Development (IGAD), have pushed both parties to work on the Machakos framework that will lead to the eventual signing of a comprehensive peace agreement, a troubling development continues to unfold in western Sudan. In Darfur, rebel forces united under the banner of the Sudan Liberation Movement (SLM) have been engaged in conflict with the government and government-sponsored militia forces since February 2003. (For more details, see this issue of NewsNotes, page 7.)

Should a comprehensive agreement be signed, immediate and sustained development assistance will be needed to help consolidate the resolve of the parties and provide the means necessary for southern Sudan to undertake a comprehensive program of reconstruction. A peace agreement in Sudan could also greatly contribute to efforts to help bring an end to the conflict in northern Uganda between the Lord’s Resistance Army and the Ugandan government.

Faith in action:

The USCCB asks others to join them in encouraging the U.S. administration and the international community to remain intensely engaged in the peace process, and in calling on the U.S. government to lead international efforts to mobilize resources needed for capacity building and reconstruction.

For the complete USCCB update, more action suggestions and resources on Sudan go to: http://www.nccbuscc.org/sdwp/international/stpag.htm or call the Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns for more information.
Sudan: “Why are they bombing us?”

“At a time when the IGAD peace process for Sudan appears most encouraging, the developments in Darfur threaten to embroil the country in further internecine warfare. Only a comprehensive peace can restore the security and stability that the country so desperately needs and bring lasting solutions to the growing number of displaced persons.” Francis M. Deng, representative of the UN on Internally Displaced Persons.

“Why are they bombing us?” is the question asked in the Darfur region in western Sudan. In the past six months of the year-old conflict in Darfur, the area has endured the same heavy-handed Sudanese army response that characterized Sudan’s long civil war. Independent sources indicate that over 3,000 civilians have been killed, more than 700,000 have been internally displaced and an additional 135,000 have fled to neighboring Chad. These figures, released in mid-February, grow steadily each day. Most of these refugees are women and children and half of the six million people in the region affected by the war are considered to have serious food problems.

Despite the rhetoric by the government of Sudan, the situation is far from being “under control.” The GOS has not allowed sufficient international assistance to the internally displaced people. GOS forces have forcibly closed camps for these people and conduct indiscriminate aerial attacks. The Janjaweed (Khartoum-backed nomadic Arab militant gangs) are attacking and burning villages and other civilian targets in the region.

The current rebellion in western Sudan is led primarily by the Sudan Liberation Movement/Army (SLM/A), not to be confused with the large southern Sudan resistance group under John Garang, called the SPLA. The Darfur SLA took up arms in February 2003 in response to the Khartoum government’s policies of marginalization, racial discrimination and exploitation. Most of the Darfur people are African (as opposed to Arab), from the ethnic groups of the Fur, Masalit and Zaghawah, and are Muslim. Darfur is the most underdeveloped region in northern Sudan and prone to drought and famines, factors which have fueled conflicts between the nomadic Arab groups armed by the government and other militias against the local African villagers.

This rebellion will continue as long as Khartoum refuses to acknowledge the legitimate complaints of the people of Darfur, rejects a political solution to the crisis and blames the whole thing on “armed criminal gangs and outlaws.” According to Amnesty International, some rebels are also using this occasion to steal from the people; this criminal activity has to stop.

Some commentators say that the northern elites want to deplete the region of its native African population, “Arabize” those who remain behind, and take over the natural resources of oil, iron ore and copper deposits. Since the work of Gerhart Baum, the UN Rapporteur for Human Rights in Sudan, has been halted, violations of human rights have doubled in Darfur. (Pambazuka News, an electronic newsletter for social justice in Africa, www.pambazuka.org, Feb. 12, 2004.)

While it is too late to include Darfur in the IGAD Sudan peace process, it can be seen as an extension of it. The solutions to end the killings, destruction and suffering of the Darfur people may be difficult to implement, but they are easy to state, namely, humanitarian aid, a cease-fire and long-term peace. The U.S. government can have an important role in making this possible.

Faith in action:

Ask the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops to press the government in Khartoum for unimpeded humanitarian access into the region of Darfur, and ensure protection of humanitarian works and supplies. Send messages to Fr. Michael Perry, USCCB, 3211 Fourth Street, N.E., Washington, D.C., 20017; mperry@usccb.org; www.usccb.org

Encourage the U.S. government to work with the UN, IGAD and other international bodies to pressure the Khartoum to bring about a cease-fire and eventually come to a satisfactory peace process for all parties involved. Contact Charles R. Snyder, Bureau of African Affairs, U.S. Department of State, 2201 C Street N.W., Washington, D.C. 20520; afpastaff@state.gov

Ethiopia: Deadly clashes in Gambella

“Many birds are wandering in the sky...please pray for us,” Abba Angelo Moreschi, the Apostolic Prefecture of Gambella in southwest Ethiopia, wrote to his fellow bishops in December 2003, explaining why he must stay with the people and not attend their meeting.

A UN-plated vehicle, on its way out of Odier, a proposed site for a camp for Dinka and Nuer Sudanese refugees, had been attacked and eight people killed and mutilated, including three government refugee workers, called Highlanders, from northern Ethiopia. The Anyuak people were blamed because the proposed refugee camp site was on their land and they had let it be known that they were not prepared to give it up to the Dinka and Nuer. In retaliation, Highlanders massacred 150 Anyuak in Gambella, burned hundreds of their homes and displaced thousands. In the
following month, another 250 people were killed and 15,000 of the Anyuak community fled to the Sudan.

Gambella is a swampy, malaria-infested lowland area of 228,000 people in southwest Ethiopia, bordering Sudan. Traditionally, its largest ethnic group has been the Anyuak people. The porous border with Sudan is part of the problem: Sudan’s Nuer people have fled into Gambella, trying to escape the Sudanese war between the north and the south, as well as the battles between them and the Sudan People’s Liberation Army. The Nuer people also need a lot of territory with their nomadic cattle lifestyle.

The Anyuak see themselves losing their land, their lives and political influence to the Nuer and Highlanders. The 1994 census, which gave the Anyuak 27 percent of the population of the Gambella Region, the Highlanders 10 percent and the Nuer 45 percent, is highly disputed by the Anyuak. Traditionally the two groups had reciprocal arrangements, granting the Nuers access to grazing land, and the Anyuaks benefiting from milk and some cattle provisions. If clashes resulted in the loss of lives, the elders from both groups would meet and agree upon a number of cattle as compensation and symbolically break spears so that no more fighting or revenge would take place. The traditional role of the elders and such practices have diminished because the government administrators are trying to take responsibility for such conflicts. The increase in population, with a scarcity of fertile land and water, and the easy access to modern arms are also eroding the authority of the elders.

The recent hope for peace in the Sudan could enable the Nuer and Dinka to return to their homes, but it is dubious whether many Nuer will want to leave the pasture land and water of the Gambella region. The civil war in the Sudan makes access to arms easy, which could fuel continued conflicts. Gambella is the only town on either side of the border which offers such modern services as education, health and markets. In addition to all of this is the recent complication of the Malaysian oil giant Petronas, which is moving into the region and hopes to begin production in four years. The Anyuak see this venture as a source of increased marginalization for them.

Solutions mentioned to bringing peace and security to the people of the Gambella region involve better border and arms control, support for traditional methods of conflict resolution, and peace education of the younger generation. A long-term resolution must be development for people in the rural areas on both sides of the border. Almost all humanitarian aid organizations left Gambella after the recent conflicts until calm was restored. The church is the main source of immediate assistance. These church workers need our prayers and support because they play a small part in alleviating Anyuak fears and in promoting reconciliation efforts.

**Take action to protect African farmers’ rights**

Patents and other forms of intellectual property rights over African agricultural resources threaten the ability of local farmers to freely safeguard, access, use, exchange and sell their seeds and crops. Current patenting systems mandated by U.S. Trade Agreements and by World Trade Organization (WTO) rules put local food security and farm income at risk by taking control of traditional resources (such as seeds and farming methods) away from local farmers. Globally U.S. corporations promote the use of herbicides, pesticides and other agricultural inputs while securing patents on certain seed gene traits threatening biodiversity and encourage an industrial type of agriculture ill-suited to small scale farmers and African patterns of land ownership.

H. Con. Res. 269, the Agriculture and Farm Resources for Indigenous Communities of Africa Resolution (the AFRICA Resolution), based on an African Union initiative, was originally introduced in the 107th U.S. Congress. It expresses a sense of Congress that African farmers’ rights to safeguard, access, use, exchange and share their agricultural and biological resources should be upheld under international trade law. The resolution is consistent with the position of the Africa Group of delegates to the WTO that seeds, plants, crops and other agricultural genetic resources should not be patented.

H. Con. Res. 269 was re-introduced on July 25, 2003 by Rep. Maxine Waters (D-35-CA). It was referred to both the House International Relations Committee and the House Ways and Means Committee. You can view the full text of the AFRICA Resolution on the Africa Faith & Justice Network website at http://afjn.cua.edu/News

Urge your Congressional representative to cosponsor H. Con. Res. 269. Contact the capitol switchboard (202)224-3121 and ask for your representative’s office; ask your representative to contact Rep. Waters’ Office and cosponsor H. Con. Res. 269.
International Criminal Court responds to Uganda

The chief prosecutor of the International Criminal Court (ICC) in the Hague says there is sufficient evidence to warrant an investigation into alleged human rights abuses by the Lord’s Resistance Army (LRA) in Uganda. An 18-year conflict between the rebel group and the Ugandan People’s Defense Forces (UPDF) has claimed tens of thousands of lives and forced more than one million people to flee their homes. Uganda is the first government to refer a case to the ICC.

Luis Moreno-Ocampo made the announcement after Ugandan President Yoweri Museveni formally asked the ICC to bring LRA leaders to trial. Under the Rome Statute, which created the ICC, the court is mandated to prosecute war crimes, genocide and crimes against humanity committed after July 1, 2002.

The November-December 2003 issue of NewsNotes reported that the ICC would investigate war crimes in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), an investigation requested by nongovernmental organizations. Since the government of Uganda, party to the Rome Statute, requested an ICC investigation, its appeal will take precedence over the NGOs’ request to investigate the DRC.

Ironically, the ICC picked a U.S. prosecutor to lead its first investigation. Christine Chung, a Harvard-trained lawyer, prosecuted street gangs and mob bosses during a 12-year career in the U.S. attorney’s office in New York. The U.S. signed the Rome Statute in 2000 during the Clinton administration, but withdrew from the treaty two years later under President Bush.

The LRA is blamed for serious human rights abuses mainly against the Acholi tribe in northern Uganda. News accounts and reports from survivors allege a pattern of atrocities including summary execution, torture and mutilation, rape, recruitment of child soldiers, and looting and destruction of civilian property. The LRA has allegedly abducted more than 20,000 children, who reportedly comprise 85 percent of its forces.

On January 22, in one of the most deadly incidents of the war, LRA troops overran the Barlonyo refugee camp, home to 5,000 people, and killed more than 200 unarmed civilians.

Although Uganda’s president asked the ICC to investigate alleged LRA crimes, the court might also look into allegations against government troops. “Human Rights Watch has documented many shocking abuses by the LRA in Uganda, but the ICC prosecutor cannot ignore the crimes that Ugandan government troops allegedly have committed,” according to Richard Dicker, director of HRW’s international justice program.

HRW has reported UPDF violations including extra-judicial killings, rape and sexual assault, forcible displacement of civilians, and recruitment of children under age 15 into government militias.

Moreno-Ocampo’s announcement Jan. 29 in London came despite fears that ICC involvement might jeopardize negotiations over a possible ceasefire. Museveni set up the Uganda Amnesty Commission three years ago to encourage LRA rebels to give up their arms. Justice Peter Onega, head of the commission, says the amnesty process could be put at risk if the ICC tries to prosecute top LRA leaders, adding, “I would say reconciliation is the best option for us at the moment.”

John Washburn, convener of the American Coalition for the ICC (AMICC), says he is skeptical of the amnesty process because “[the LRA was not negotiating in good faith, but just to get a ‘breather.’” He adds, “The LRA has committed such horrible crimes that it is questionable whether the people would accept an over-all amnesty that would include LRA leaders.”

Human Rights Watch and UN Secretary General Kofi Annan say the Rome Statute and international law generally hold that amnesties do not bar prosecution for serious offenses such as war crimes, genocide and crimes against humanity. Museveni, meanwhile, has said he would amend the complaint to exclude LRA leaders from the proposed amnesty.

Moreno-Ocampo said investigations into alleged LRA crimes could begin as early as June. International arrest warrants for commander Joseph Kony and other rebel leaders could be issued in September, and prosecutions could begin in 2005 – if the LRA leaders are taken into custody.

Washburn, of New York, said evidentiary hearings would be important even if those being sought had not been arrested. He said such proceedings would help to preserve evidence until a future trial could be held, and would bring the case to world attention.

Meanwhile, representatives of 55 countries met in Sweden and signed a declaration Jan. 28 to fight genocide and ethnic cleansing. However, the statement – which closed the Stockholm International Forum 2004 – left out any mention of the ICC because of U.S. objections to the court. Instead, the delegates committed themselves to “monitor and report genocidal threats to human life and society in order to prevent the recurrence of genocide, mass murder and ethnic cleansing.”

In a more perfect world, simply monitoring and reporting genocidal threats from leaders like Slobodan Milosevic and Foday Sanko – or Joseph Kony – might help to prevent such crimes. In the interim, however, as long as the ICC continues to meet opposition from parties such as the U.S., crimes against humanity are likely to be repeated.
Brazil: Violence against indigenous

The indigenous people of Raposa Terra do Sol in the state of Roraima began their struggle for independence more than 30 years ago with the hope to take back their land from invaders and guarantee the future of their people. The Brazilian Constitution of 1988 secured their right to the demarcation of their land but the struggle continues and violence has increased.

According to representatives of the Indigenous Council of Roraima (CIR), Paulo Cesar Quartiero, one of the largest rice producers in the state, had personally commanded the invasion of the FUNAI office.

Confirmation that the most recent violence in Raposa do Sol was provoked by local political and economic elites came from a variety of sources, including the Indigenous Council of Roraima (CIR), the National Council of Christian Churches of Brazil (Conic), the Pastoral Land Commission (CPT), the Catholic Church’s Indigenous Organization (CIMI), the Amazon Worker Group (GTA), the Diocese of Roraima, Greenpeace, and the Rural Movement of Landless Workers. They wrote:

“Local elites of the state have never accepted the struggle of the Roraima indigenous for demarcation of their land but have systematically used violence against the indigenous and slandered and disqualified groups allied with the indigenous cause, especially the Catholic church.”

Faith in action:

Send a letter to President Luis Inácio Lula da Silva (Exmo. Senhor Luis Inácio Lula da Silva, Presidente da República, Brasília, DF, Brasil; governo@brasil.gov.br) expressing your solidarity with the struggle of the indigenous people in Raposa/Serra do Sol, Roraima to have their land boundaries demarcated and legally ratified with the utmost urgency, in the terms declared and determined by the Portaria 820/98. Tell President Lula that you are very concerned about the violence against the indigenous peoples of Roraima and urge him to ensure the Brazilian government to protect the physical and cultural integrity of these indigenous people.

Report on deforestation

The report of Brazil’s Interministerial Group on Deforestation, which was created by presidential decree in July 2003, concluded that the government should reconsider its development strategy in the Amazon.

According to a recent article in Brazil Network (www.brazilnetwork.org), the Brazilian Amazon has the world’s highest rate of forest destruction, averaging nearly five million acres a year since 1995. Much of the forest exploitation is illegal, with no environmental controls or payment of government royalties. In 2002 the rate of forest loss increased to 6.4 million acres a year, spurred by a number of new government-sponsored roads, highways and infrastructure projects, as well as by a rapid expansion of industrial soybean farms.Land speculation and colonization have risen sharply along the new routes. Though initiated by the previous government, the Lula administration’s three-year development plan promises more of the same.

The Interministerial Group’s report says that a number of the planned infrastructure projects should be reevaluated, including the Porto Velho-Manaus and Humaita-Labrea highways, the Urucu-Porto Velho gas pipeline and the Belo Monte and Madeira River hydroelectric plants. It thus makes a direct link between new infrastructure projects and Amazonian deforestation, a step being praised by environmentalists.

Faith in action:

To send an electronic letter to President Lula as part of an international campaign to persuade the Brazilian government to follow the report’s recommendations, go to: http://forests.org/emailaction/brazil.htm.
Venezuela: Fragile option for the poor

In January 2004, the Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns (MOGC) and the Medical Mission Sisters’ Alliance for Justice, in coordination with Maryknoll lay missioners and Medical Mission Sisters working in Venezuela, brought a small delegation to that country in an attempt to understand better the situation there and to support efforts for social justice and peace. Delegation participants were from Pax Christi U.S.A., Sojourners magazine, the Washington Office on Latin America and SOA Watch.

The reality in Venezuela is extremely complex. Within Maryknoll there is not consensus on how to interpret the situation, but the delegation was convinced that the Church and religious communities, including in the international arena, can play an extremely important role there on behalf of the poor. The MOGC will continue to promote a clearly nonpartisan role in Venezuela for the U.S. government, in support of a nonviolent and Constitutional process for resolving the conflict.

Some of the delegation’s observations follow:

Venezuela has made an option for the poor, who comprise 80 percent of the population. The process of implementing this commitment, which began with and remains rooted in the new constitution and participatory democracy, is very important. The changes underway are significant and very difficult, signaling a serious attempt to shift power toward the poor, to redistribute the wealth of the country (especially benefits from Venezuela’s oil), to create programs that respond quickly to the immediate needs of the poor and to create an economy in which the poor can participate and from which the poor can derive benefit.

President Hugo Chavez talks about building a new economy with an emphasis on small business, small-scale farming, cooperatives, and food self-sufficiency. Whether Venezuela’s oil wealth can be used to benefit all Venezuelans and as a motor for sustainable development rather than a crutch is key. The education/literacy, health care and land reform programs are well underway and seem to be popular in the barrios. Chavez is creating new programs with much of the old, entrenched system and the old bureaucracy still in place.

The empowerment of the poor and their conscientization were evident. Many spoke about a new sense of self-esteem and dignity. Many poor people were actively participating in their communities with new energy and optimism. Some were concerned that programs in the barrios were undercutting existing programs and organization; others believed that they were serving a previously unserved population and were encouraging organization at a barrio level.

The political situation is extremely polarized. Many call it a political war. The opposition has not articulated a clear alternative to Chavez’s process nor identified a person to take his place were they to succeed in removing him democratically from office. Chavez seems slow to build alliances across political differences. There is a danger that he will become entrenched against the opposition and unable to move forward with the democratic process. Thus there is a great need for intermediary forces, especially those who would support an option for the poor and understand the need for a transformation of Venezuelan society and institutions, and who could bring their skills and education into the process in a constructive and nonpartisan manner.

The institutional Catholic church is in conflict with Chavez and publicly supports the opposition, although there are a few bishops who are more sympathetic to the process for change. Many people across economic classes noted with deep sadness that the government is making an option for the poor, while the church appears to be hindering that movement. They want the church to find ways to reduce the conflict and to rally critical support to the democratic process. Many religious communities who have worked in poor barrios for decades are trying to find space to do exactly that.

Human rights organizations are in different places politically. One major group, COFAVIC, is reported to be closely associated with the opposition. Others have been trying to create space for a dialogue with the government. Red de Apoyo continues to work on behalf of individual victims of crime, including extortion, and police collusion with criminals. Provea focuses more on social and economic rights and is supportive of the option for the poor. Several human rights organizations have been offered funding from the U.S. National Endowment for Democracy (NED). There have been some improvements in terms of human rights, including the legal framework for processing people arrested; decreased repression against demonstrations; increased support for education; agrarian and urban land reform. The strongest criticisms of human rights were of criminal impunity, police repression of suspects, and prison conditions - which all acknowledged existed before the Chavez administration. There is concern about the immediate need for reform of the judicial system.

The role of the international community in promoting and supporting a constitutional and nonviolent resolution to the political conflict has been important. Given its initial support for the coup in April 2002, the role of the Bush administration has been less constructive and more suspect.

For a summary of the delegation’s visit to Venezuela, send an email to ogc@maryknoll.org or visit www.maryknollogc.org.
Nicaragua: Banana workers converge in Managua

In early February thousands of banana workers converged on Managua, Nicaragua from Chinandega and Leon to call attention to the serious damage to their health from the use of the pesticide Nemagon on banana plantations. They are seeking compensation from three of the companies involved in the manufacture and use of Nemagon: Dow Chemical, Shell Chemical and Dole Food Company.

Nemagon, created with the chemical DBCP (dibromochloropropane), was manufactured by U.S. companies and employed in Nicaragua by the Dole Food Company, despite its ban in the U.S. since 1979. The World Health Organization has classified the pesticide as “extremely hazardous” and the Registry of Toxic Effects of Chemical Substances classifies it as a carcinogen. It has caused sterility, cancer, birth defects, and miscarriages in the workers, their families, and those residing in the environs of the plantations. DBCP was banned in the United States because of proven cases of sterility in California.

The companies responsible for the damage have refused to make court-ordered compensation in the case, ignoring a Nicaraguan judgment that found them liable. Furthermore, they countersued the Nicaraguan workers who filed the suit, claiming they misrepresented their numbers to include those who never worked on the plantations. Yet the poisonous effects of Nemagon can be passed through air, ground soil and water contamination, making it very likely that others would have suffered from similar effects.

Paul Baker, a reporter for the Nicaragua Network and for Great Britain’s Nicaragua Solidarity Campaign, was present when the march reached Managua. He said that about 600 of the marchers had had to turn back, returning to Chinandega and environs because they were too ill to finish. Among them three died shortly after reaching home. Baker continued:

“The camp is like something out of The Grapes of Wrath, only worse. I saw not one single tent. Most people simply slept out on the bare ground, with an occasional scrap of plastic for cover ... Overall, the camp is well-organised. It has a directorate of six members (woman/man proportion unknown), headed by Victorino Espinales, a fiery and dynamic leader, elected by his fellow workers. This directorate is selected from about 50 sector leaders (five women, 45 men), each of whom is responsible for anywhere between 100 and 400 people. The work, checking in new arrivals, maintaining cleanliness, assisting the health workers, etc. is shared among the groups, organised by the sector leadership.

“I spent most of the morning within the camp, talking with as many people as possible. Practically everyone I spoke with had some tale of horror to tell, able to show the effects of the pesticide either on themselves or on someone within their immediate family. One of the most powerful women present, Maria Isaidris Cruz Salgado, showed not only the scabs which have affected her whole body for more than 20 years, but also described how, when she became pregnant while working in the plantations, she swelled up to such an extent that doctors had to insert a drainage duct into her womb. Eventually, the foetus had to be cut out. It emerged completely without bone structure, a bag of flesh and jelly. Maria Isaidris walked the whole 100 miles or so from Chinandega with one foot heavily bandaged. Most people seemed to have skin complaints, breathing difficulties, problems with vision. Most of the worst cases had been left at home, too sick to make such a grueling pilgrimage.”

Faith in action:

Send a letter to U.S. ambassador to Nicaragua, Barbara Moore (United States Embassy, Managua, Nicaragua, fax: 011-505-266-9074), asking her to support the case of the banana workers and to urge Dole, Dow, and Shell to accept their liability and compensate the Nicaraguans harmed by the long-term use of Nemagon, as ordered by the court.
Nicaragua: Debt relief

The World Bank Group’s International Development Association (IDA) and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) agreed in late December to support a comprehensive debt reduction package for Nicaragua under the enhanced Heavily Indebted Poor Countries (HIPC) Initiative. Critics immediately denounced both the HIPC’s measure of “debt sustainability” and the macroeconomic reforms required by the international financial institutions prior to and following debt relief.

Total debt service relief from all of Nicaragua’s creditors is worth nearly US$4.5 billion, or US$3.3 billion in Net Present Value (NPV) terms. According to the World Bank, this is equivalent to 72 percent of the total debt outstanding after the full use of traditional debt relief mechanisms. This is the largest debt relief package yet committed under the HIPC Initiative.

Jeffrey D. Sachs, director of the Earth Institute at Columbia University in New York called the HIPC formulas for debt sustainability “meaningless.”

Sachs said, “It is perfectly possible, under HIPC, for a country filled with massive hunger, extreme poverty, and pandemic disease to be pressed to service debt on the grounds of formal debt-export ratios, which say nothing about true ability to pay.”

The Nitlapan-Envio team at the Central American University in Managua wrote: “[T]he initiative officially admits Nicaragua into the club of the most miserable and insolvent countries on the planet; it is international recognition of a national tragedy.” (Envio, December 2003)

In contrast, David de Ferranti, World Bank Vice President for Latin American and the Caribbean Region, wrote in a Miami Herald op-ed on January 30, 2004: “This is a huge step forward for Nicaragua. It promises to unlock debt relief from Nicaragua’s creditors that will cut the country’s external debt by almost three-fourths. This in turn should help the country pay its way in the future. It will also permit higher spending on essential social programs for the country’s largely impoverished population (Nicaragua’s average national income, at around $750 per capita, makes it the second poorest society in the Western Hemisphere).”

Referring to the macroeconomic reforms already underway, de Ferranti continued, “To be eligible for help under HIPC, a country must not only be poor and heavily indebted but also prove — by deeds, not just words — that it is implementing policies that will help its people escape from poverty and help the country move toward debt sustainability. In Nicaragua’s case, the government demonstrated adherence to a disciplined, fiscally sustainable macroeconomic program it had agreed with the IMF. It attracted new private investment, especially in telecommunications and energy. These steps (plus trade reforms leading up to CAFTA) reduced interest rates and boosted investor confidence.”

The kind of reforms recommended by the IMF and described by de Ferranti as “helping people escape from poverty” included the privatization of state-owned hydroelectric dams, the hydroelectric company and water systems in Leon, Chinandega, Matagalpa and Jinotega — a process that, according to some analysts, was fraught with corruption and irregularities and that met organized citizen resistance. In response, the National Assembly unanimously pass a law that suspended all private concessions involving water uses until a national regulatory framework for water could be established.

Other reforms being encouraged by the IMF would impose user fees for Nicaraguan children to attend schools through implementation of “school autonomy” legislation. This legislation, according to the Nicaragua Network, reduces national government funding for schools to cover only teachers’ salaries, which are very low, plus some special training and some school repairs. Parents must come up with the money for additional salary, desks, books and materials, electric bills and cleaning materials. For many parents, these fees mean that their children cannot go to school. The fees are supposed to be voluntary, and poor children exempted. But, in Nicaragua, only poor families send their children to public elementary schools (the middle class and the rich send their children to private elementary schools) so pressure is put on the parents to pay the fees since the schools cannot run without them.

Faith in action:

In November 2000, the U.S. Congress passed legislation requiring the United States to oppose any World Bank, IMF, or other multilateral development bank loan which includes user fees for basic health or education services, and to report to Congress within 10 days should any loan or other agreement be approved that includes such user fees. Representative Nancy Pelosi (D-CA) sponsored this legislation. Write to Rep. Pelosi, thank in her for sponsoring the legislation in 2000 and ask her to ask questions of the U.S. Treasury about the IMF conditions on a loan to Nicaragua.
CAFTA countries will not be “trading in justice”

“Trading in Justice,” Maryknoll’s statement on trade, grounded in lived experience and the values of Catholic social teaching, was highlighted in the September/October issue of NewsNotes. The document noted some of the problems with unjust trade agreements, problems that are also true of the Central America Free Trade Agreement (CAFTA). The following article, written by MOGC intern Dana Hill, draws on analyses of CAFTA done by InterAction, the Institute for Policy Studies and the Center of Concern.

Although the voices of opposition to the current trade rules are growing in strength, as seen in the collapse of the WTO meeting in Cancun and the watered-down FTAA agreed upon in Miami, the U.S. succeeded in pressing Central American countries to accept CAFTA, which threatens to harm their working poor. Although the five Central American countries began the negotiations with a unified front, the U.S. strategy of ultimatums and bilateral negotiation with individual countries resulted in those countries conceding on many issues in the trade agreement.

In the months preceding the final negotiations, the Costa Rican telecom and electricity workers’ union led a series of demonstrations, asking the government to postpone CAFTA. It seemed their voices were heard when Costa Rica walked out of the December negotiations, saying there was not enough time to negotiate sensitive issues such as telecommunications, insurance, textiles, and several agricultural products. However, by late January the country was back into the agreement, with all the issues “resolved,” including commitments to gradually open the Costa Rican telecommunications market and to fully open the insurance market in the next 4-7 years.

The CAFTA agreement (text and analysis available at www.interaction.org/trade/) was negotiated with little meaningful civil society participation best characterized by no public access to the actual content of the negotiations. The final agreement contains many of the same provisions that have been so costly to the poor people with whom Maryknollers live and work, prompting the creation of the Trading in Justice statement. A few of the provisions of great concern under the agreement are:

• Agriculture: Duties will immediately be lifted on over half of U.S. agricultural exports and remaining tariffs on sensitive products will be eliminated in 15 to 20 years. The U.S. refused to eliminate subsidies. This opens the door to devastating the livelihoods of small farmers growing rice and corn, as their products cannot compete with subsidized imports from the U.S. In return for opening their markets, Central Americans received very little new market access in the U.S., their new market access for sugar reported at only 4.4 percent of current regional production. (For further detail, see USTR’s agriculture fact sheet at http://www.ustr.gov/)

• Investor security at the expense of state autonomy and local laws: CAFTA provides strong protection for U.S. investors, allowing, as does NAFTA’s Chapter 11, governments to be sued by investors for regulations (such as the enforcement of environmental laws) seen as infringing on their rights. This practice undermines local authority, legal and political systems, and is costly for governments which, if they lose certain cases, must compensate investors.

• Labor: Unlike the enforceable protections established for corporations, labor concerns are addressed in CAFTA solely through a commitment of participating countries to enforce their already inadequate domestic labor laws. There are no oversight or enforcement mechanisms, safeguards for minorities, nor requirements of countries to strengthen current laws. It is unlikely that labor standards will actually improve under these terms.

• Environment: As explained above, CAFTA’s investor safeguard mechanisms undermine national environmental protection laws: lawsuits or simply a threat of litigation may be enough to deter countries from adopting and enforcing environmental standards. In addition to this, the agreement lacks rules for an appellate system. CAFTA also lacks specific enforceable environmental standards – it contains no requirements for countries to possess and enforce environmental laws and regulations, or for corporate responsibility in areas of environmental concern. Lastly, the agreement contains no food or other sanitary standards, failing to protect human health and safety as well as the environment.

• Privatization and access to services: Investment barriers will be removed, opening the public and service sectors to privatization. As seen in privatized economies around the world, this often substantially raises prices, effectively excluding the poor from receiving services.

• Intellectual property: Intellectual property rights will be strongly enforced under CAFTA, threatening generic production of essential medicines, notably HIV/AIDS medicines, and farmers’ right to use, sell, trade, and sell seeds. The agreement does not recognize national rights over biological resources as recognized in established international treaties and conventions.

Across Central and North America, individuals and organizations are mobilizing to oppose CAFTA’s passage. On February 20, 2004, President Bush notified Congress of his intent to enter into a trade agreement with Central America. Next, the administration must send implementing legislation to Congress. Congress cannot amend the agreement, but can vote for it or against it thanks to “Fast Track” legislation passed in 2002.

For more information on CAFTA, go to the website of the Washington Office on Latin America: www.wola.org, and click on “Economic Issues” on the left-side menu. To get involved in the “Stop CAFTA” movement, see: www.stopcafta.org.
El Salvador: U.S. intervention in elections

According to the SHARE Foundation and other sources, on February 6 the U.S. “unabashedly” intervened in El Salvador’s electoral process, indirectly threatening Salvadorans with sanctions if they were to elect an FMLN president.

While in El Salvador to promote the Central America Free Trade Agreement (CAFTA), Roger Noriega, assistant secretary of Western Hemisphere Affairs for the U.S. State Department, had scheduled meetings with all of the candidates, but then canceled his meeting with FMLN candidate Jorge Schafik Handal at the last minute. Noriega said, “I think it is fair to note that the FMLN campaign has emphasized its differences with [the U.S] concerning CAFTA and other subjects. And we know the history of this political movement, and for this reason it is fair that the Salvadoran people consider what type of relations a new government could have with us.”

A statement from CISPES said, “This type of comment is not new, and the U.S. State Department is fully aware of the weight the threat carries in a country so economically dependent on its relationship with the U.S.” The most recent incident followed closely a paid ad by the FMLN citing the U.S. ambassador’s promise that the U.S. would respect the results of the elections.

The assistant secretary’s remarks were a pointed reference not just to the aid money given to El Salvador, but also to the status of Salvadoran immigrants in the U.S. Nortiega’s insinuations echo comments made by former ambassador Rosa Likens, who suggested that an FMLN presidency would cause the U.S. to reconsider its relationship with the El Salvador, having serious impacts on the Salvadoran people in both countries. (See NewsNotes, July-August 2003.) With nearly two million Salvadorans living in the U.S., sending over two billion dollars back to relatives in El Salvador each year, Likens’ and Noriega’s comments are threats intended to frighten and sway voters.

Faith in action:

Send a fax to Roger Noriega, Assistant Secretary of Western Hemisphere Affairs, at (202)647-0791, asking for greater respect for the right of Salvadoran sovereignty, self-determination, and a peaceful democratic process and a public promise that the U.S. will respect the results of the elections and work with whatever party emerges as the winner.

U.S.-Mexico border: New repatriation plans

According to recent reports, the U.S. and Mexico are crafting an agreement for repatriation of Mexican nationals who are found in the U.S. without documents. In the past, the U.S. has simply transferred undocumented migrants onto the Mexican side of the border, which has contributed to overpopulation in Mexico’s border communities. The new plan, which is still being negotiated, would send migrants all the way back to their hometowns. The hope, according to officials from both countries, is that this effort will both prevent migrant deaths and undermine smugglers.

At a news conference in Mexico City in February, Homeland Security Secretary Tom Ridge announced that the U.S. intends to begin this program by the summer, when crossings are more frequent and more dangerous. The program would apply only to migrants who are caught in the act of crossing; undocumented migrants apprehended in the U.S.’s interior would continue to be deported to the Mexican border.

After apprehension by the U.S. Border Patrol, the migrants would be sent back to their hometowns. According to the Arizona Republic, “few details of the plan have been worked out, and arriving at a final agreement may be difficult given Mexico’s concerns about sovereignty and migrant complaints about being sent all the way home.”

Despite the U.S.’s optimism about the program, Mexico’s Interior Minister Santiago Creel said that the repatriation must be voluntary. “Our constitution guarantees the free movement of people in our country,” he said. “What we want is that human rights be respected.”

Omeheira Lopez, director of the Center for Border Studies and the Promotion of Human Rights, compared the proposed deportation plan to the highly criticized “lateral repatriation” program, a month-long pilot program in which undocumented migrants were deported hundreds of miles away from where they crossed.

“The only thing they would do is punish migrants by making it harder for them to cross,” Lopez said. “Migrants would have to scrape up the money to head north, but that won’t stop them from trying again.”
Haiti: The current crisis

The present crisis in Haiti is of urgent concern to all of us who have accompanied the Haitian people in their long struggle for social justice and liberation. The situation there is heartbreaking and enormously complex.

As the conflict and violence in Haiti escalated, the Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns (MOGC) wrote, “We are very afraid that the present violence will expand and disintegrate into utter chaos, opening the door for a return to the rampant violations of the sanctity of life that have too often been a part of Haitian history... International solidarity must promote an immediate end to the violence from all sides; ensure that the future of Haiti remains in the hands of the Haitian people; and support multilateral efforts at mediation, peacemaking and the protection of human rights.”

Now President Jean Bertrand Aristide has left Haiti. According to news reports, he had resigned as president. Almost immediately, however, Aristide claimed that he was kidnapped and taken by force to the Central African Republic (http://www.accuracy.org). Within hours after Aristide’s departure, U.S. Marines landed in Port-au-Prince.

The long history of interference and covert action by the United States in Haiti (see http://globalresearch.ca/articles/CHO402D.html) and accusations that U.S. force was involved in removing Aristide from office make any U.S. intervention in Haiti tremendously problematic. Again, the future of Haiti must remain in the hands of the Haitian people.

Please contact the State Department and your Congressional representatives to say that:

- any international military or police presence in Haiti, including the U.S. forces there now, must be placed immediately under the command of the United Nations or the Organization of American States (OAS).
- the U.S. must financially and politically support multilateral efforts at mediation, peacemaking and the protection of human rights;
- the U.S. should respond generously and quickly to Haiti’s humanitarian crisis, stop immediately the policy of repatriating Haitian refugees and welcome Haitians seeking refuge.

We believe it is extremely important now to understand the historical context. Excerpts from a statement written before Aristide left Haiti by the Ecumenical Program in Central America and the Caribbean (EPICA) seem very relevant (to see whole EPICA statement, go to www.epica.org):
Middle East: Economic aid realignment needed

Forty percent of U.S. foreign aid goes to two nations – Israel and Egypt – and most of that comprises military assistance. However, political and economic security in the Middle East cannot be guaranteed without just relationships, poverty reduction and grassroots empowerment. In the document “Middle East Security and Development: A New Approach,” U.S. religious, humanitarian and development organizations address some of these issues. The complete text of the document, on which this article is based, will be posted on the website of Churches for Middle East Peace at www.cmep.org.

Present U.S. policy in the Middle East is driven by security concerns related to petroleum and the state of Israel. Seemingly of less concern is the economic security of the area’s peoples and states. Meanwhile, the spiral of military spending in the region hurts area economies. Countries in the Middle East spend an average seven percent of GDP to maintain and equip their armed forces – a high price to pay at the expense of badly needed programs in health, housing and education.

Disease and disability reduce life expectancy in the Arab region by an estimated 5-11 years. Illiteracy in Arab countries is 38 percent. Per capita income in the Arab world has declined by 28 percent from its high in 1980.

By contrast, Israel’s per capita annual income of $20,000 is 10 to 15 times that of nearby Arab states. Palestinians, meanwhile, suffer 37 percent unemployment, and 60 percent live in poverty. While the economic divide between Israel and its Arab neighbors did not cause the current state of hostility, it is hard to imagine an enduring peace that does not address this reality.

Foreign aid alone has a limited but crucial role to play in promoting economic development that would benefit Palestinians, Israel and neighboring Arab states alike. Aid cannot compensate for corruption or poorly managed economies, but it can speed the benefits of a well-conceived development strategy.

Therefore, a new approach is needed to U.S. foreign aid in the Middle East – a strategy that would commit the U.S. to promote regional, rather than country-specific, development. The U.S. must break out of its present pattern of rewarding traditional allies with more military aid without considering where the greatest human development needs exist.

For example, the U.S. could participate more effectively in regional development by stimulating and supporting:
- Regional development institutions such as a Middle East development bank and the Arab Fund for Economic and Social Development
- Regional infrastructure initiatives such as water resource development and management, electric power grids, highways, ports and communications systems
- Freer flow of products, capital and labor across national borders in order to allow countries in the region to take advantage of larger markets and resource sharing not available to the individual states
- Regional programs aimed at protecting natural resources and a fragile environment
- Joint production in agriculture, manufacturing and tourism

Over the long term, most of the financial resources for regional development will have to come from area governments and private investors. However, governments in the region will be unable to invest significantly more in their economic future unless military reductions are achieved.

The U.S. could promote such a policy by joining other international actors in brokering a regional arms reduction regime. The U.S. could even call on other arms suppliers to join in a five-year ban on the sale and delivery of major military equipment to the region. As the area’s largest supplier, for the U.S. to commit to such a policy would create immense leverage in gaining the cooperation of the other major purveyors: Britain, France, Russia and China.

For over half a century, much of the political turmoil in the Middle East has been approached almost exclusively as a dispute over land. It has been assumed that social and economic development must wait until nations feel militarily and politically secure.

No comprehensive peace can be achieved without an agreement that ends the occupation, establishes a viable Palestinian state and upholds Israel’s legitimate security needs. Elements of a regional economic development program, however, can be explored and implemented while a political solution unfolds. Peace will come more rapidly and be sustained more surely if all people in the region can see positive improvement in their daily lives.
A Christmas card sent last year to Dr. Marwan Muashar, Jordan’s foreign minister, still reflects the current state of the Middle East peace process: the Three Kings, trying to visit the Nativity site, are stopped by a wall. As Muashar related to a six-member U.S. church delegation in January in Amman, the barrier that Israel is building on the occupied West Bank separates Palestinians from their land, work, medical and educational facilities ... and other family members. Israeli spokespeople whom the group visited acknowledged the “inconvenience” the barrier causes to Palestinians, but they maintained that it is necessary to help stem terrorist attacks in Israel. Fr. Jim Kofocki, MOGC staff member, was a participant in the delegation.

The two-week trip to Beirut, Amman and Jerusalem was organized by Churches for Middle East Peace, a Washington, D.C., coalition of 19 public policy offices of national churches and agencies – Catholic, Orthodox and Protestant. The visitors spoke with politicians, religious leaders and others.

Many hosts, both Arab and Jewish, said the separation barrier could make a viable Palestinian state impossible, endangering the peace process. Moreover, if the West Bank is effectively divided into three cantons by the barrier, settlements and settler roads, they said living standards of Palestinians are apt to decline. Dr. Menachem Klein of Jerusalem, a board member of the Israeli human rights group B’Tselem, foresees a possible upsurge in drug use and other crimes, and perhaps closer links between criminal elements in Israel and the occupied territories.

Dr. Mahdi F. Abdul Hadi of PASSIA, a Palestinian think tank in Jerusalem, says the barrier will put people in prison and “will give Sharon three or four years, but it won’t be sustainable. ... Israel needs to wake up now to fulfill its national interest.” Gadi Golan – head of the Religious Affairs Bureau, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, in Jerusalem — insists that “[t]he fence can be ‘de-built’ as rapidly as it was built. When the day [of a peace agreement] comes, we will find a way.”

Several hosts expressed helplessness over the situation. Elie Ferzli of Beirut, deputy House speaker, said, “Only the U.S. can do what is necessary for everlasting peace in the Middle East. ... The U.S. must put pressure on Israel to shift from reliance on the use of force to making peace politically.”

Michel Sabbah, Latin Catholic patriarch in Jerusalem, also sounded pessimistic. He said that, although Israel and the Vatican normalized relations in 1993, “Neither the Church nor the U.S. can change the situation. Only a change in the public opinion of the Jewish community in Israel, and in the U.S. and the rest of the world, can do that.”

In the view of a researcher in Ramallah, the West Bank, irrational thinking fuels the ongoing conflict. Dr. Khalil Shikaki of the Palestinian Center for Policy and Survey Research has done joint polling with Hebrew University in Jerusalem. He said one poll found that 75 percent of Israelis support assassinations and targeted bombing, even if innocent children are killed; yet 70 percent also say they do not think retaliation is effective. “Threat perception diminishes people’s capacity to think rationally,” Shikaki said. “They may act contrary to their interest.”

Jordan’s Foreign Minister Muashar described three proposals to help get over the hurdles to peace. He said Jordan was bringing the issue of the separation barrier before the World Court in the Hague on behalf of the Palestinians. He said however, that, while a decision is expected in May or June – probably in favor of the Palestinians – he did not expect construction to stop without U.S. pressure on Israel.

Muashar also said Jordan’s King Abdullah hoped to send a delegation of Muslims and Christians to the U.S. to speak to lawmakers and others about the Middle East peace process. (The four-member group visited the U.S. for ten days in March.) And he said Jordan is proposing a regional council from area nations – who know the region’s history and culture – to advise the U.S. on its Iraq policy.

Despite both the real and the virtual walls that threaten the Middle East peace process, Rami Khouri, executive editor of the Daily Star in Beirut, suggests several reasons for optimism. He said that most strong-man governments and ideologies in the region have failed and that people across the Middle East are hungry for better government. A trained sociologist, Khouri also points to the bottom line, judging that the comparative costs and benefits favor change toward progressive government.
Depleted uranium: So many questions

According to the Federation of American Scientists (FAS), “[n]atural uranium is a slightly radioactive metal that is present in most rocks and soils as well as in many rivers and sea water.” All uranium, whether depleted or enriched, is both chemically and radiologically toxic, differing only by a fraction of one percent. Enriched uranium is used in nuclear weapons and power plants; depleted uranium is a byproduct of the uranium enrichment process. For every gram made of enriched uranium there are seven grams of depleted uranium left which results in huge stockpiles of radioactive waste.

At present there is no safe disposal of radioactive waste. Due to its resilient quality, DU is often offered by the U.S. government free to military contractors and weapons manufacturers (for use in “armor penetrators”), which can be seen as a very costly “free” waste disposal system. When will we see the full payback due for free DU?

Asking the right question is the first step to raising interest in an issue. This can lead to the engagement necessary to work through a complicated maze.

Take the case of Great Britain and its use of DU. Initially, Britain denied that it used depleted uranium (DU) weapons in Afghanistan in 2001 and 2002. As late as November 2003, the British Ministry of Defence disclaimed findings of high levels of radioactivity in British-led battlefields. Since then, however, high concentrations of uranium were found in its 1st Armoured Division troops who served in Basra, Iraq. Britain now has publicly admitted its use of these weapons. According to the UN Environmental Program’s (UNEP) Post-Conflict Assessment Unit, Britain is willing to give their battlefield coordinates in order to discover exactly who and where has been contaminated, and, since local people usually have free access to the affected areas, to protect civilians and other personnel in the future. At last, we have an example of a principled response by an international actor in regard to their use of radioactive weapons in battle. When the question shifted from “are we using” to “why have we found such high concentrations of uranium in our troops who fought in Basra,” Britain was able to go from denial to engagement. Now what remains is for the rest of the international actors to go beyond the first step to a real solution.

In the case of the primary international actor, the United States, there are 200,000 reasons to ask questions: the 200,000 veterans of the first Gulf War. However, neither the U.S. military nor the U.S. government seriously has asked the right question: Why has there not been testing for DU contamination?

According to Dan Fahey in his paper “Use, Effects and Legal Standing of Depleted Uranium Munitions,” the Pentagon “conservatively estimates that approximately 866 to 932 American soldiers had moderate to heavy exposures during the Gulf War, including 104 soldiers who were inside vehicles at the time they were struck by DU penetrators. In addition, the Department of Defense estimates untold ‘thousands’ of other American veterans may have inhaled or ingested small amounts of depleted uranium during inspection and routine entry of contaminated vehicles. However, the health effects, if any, of exposure to depleted uranium among U.S. veterans are unclear.

“In nearly eight years of existence (1993-2001), the U.S. study of exposed Gulf War veterans … examined a total of just 60 veterans. In 2001, while European governments assessed the health of tens of thousands of their soldiers who served in the Gulf and the Balkans, the [U.S.’s] Depleted Uranium Program examined only 39 Gulf War veterans.”

The UN is a large and unwieldy system that works when engaged properly. When one venue fails to respond to an issue there is yet another that can be opened. Thus the urgent issue of usage/effects of depleted uranium weaponry have been kept alive within various bodies and agencies of the UN despite great efforts of the U.S. and the UK to stop it. The World Health Organization has failed in its obligations towards the health of the Kuwaiti, Iraqi and Afghani people. But in August 2002, the Commission on Human Rights, resisting great pressure, issued the decision that depleted uranium weaponry does qualify as weapons of mass destruction. UNEP, in response to DU contamination in Kosovo, set up their post-conflict assessment unit that continues its efforts to research, warn and protect earth’s citizens from the ecological disaster that is DU.

Who in the U.S. will ask the right questions? To whom shall these questions be addressed? Who will finally take the first steps from denial to engagement to a principled and responsible resolution?

The following are references used in this article and are helpful for further information.

- Uranium Medical Research: www.umrc.net; info@umrc.net
- Canadian Coalition for Nuclear Responsibility: www.ccnr.org
- Depleted Uranium and Canada’s Role (audio transcript of remarks by Dr. Rosalie Bertell, a leading expert on the health effects of low-level radiation): www.peace.ca/depleteduranium.htm
- “Use, Effects and Legal Standing of Depleted Uranium Munitions,” a paper by Dan Fahey: www.du.publica.cz/papers/Fahey.htm#_fin1
New UN protocol to end human trafficking

Recently, the U.S. media has given more attention to the trafficking of children and women with the purpose of sexual exploitation. Governments, media and organizations concerned with this issue need to work more within the legal framework available for this kind of human rights violations.

Exploitation of women in prostitution, and the use of children, both girls and boys, for prostitution and pornography happen within the boundaries of a country, but the crime is increasingly transnational, bringing huge profits not only to direct perpetrators but also, in the case of sex tourism, to businesses such as airlines, hotels, and restaurants.

To respond to these transnational crimes, the UN Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children came into force in December 2003. This Protocol supplements the UN Convention on Transnational Organized Crime, which came into force on September 2003. Once a country ratifies the Convention and its Protocol, the country must ensure that its national policies and practices comply with the provisions of these treaties.

Figures on trafficking frequently are not consistent — estimates vary from 700,000 to four million worldwide, but without a doubt the numbers are increasing and the age of the victims is decreasing. The perpetrators can be well-organized rings, operating internationally, or individuals who travel abroad who buy a child for personal use. They profit from the victims’ vulnerability, in most cases created by poverty and a lack of alternatives for survival. Communication technology - a key element of globalization - facilitates these crimes. The availability of on-line communications has enhanced the abuse and traffic on children for pornography and prostitution markets.

According to the U.S. Department of Justice, victims are trafficked into the U.S. from countries as diverse as China, Mexico, Honduras, India or Vietnam; perpetrators especially target undocumented migrants. In one case, the Justice Department discovered a 15-member family ring in the Midwest who exploited more than 40 women, half of them girls, trafficked to 24 different states and Canada.

Last September 23, while addressing the UN, President Bush made a special call to governments to be proactive in combating sex tourism and trafficking with the purpose of sexual exploitation. He said, “Each year, an estimated 800,000 to 900,000 human beings are bought, sold or forced across the world’s borders. Among them are hundreds of thousands of girls, [some] as young as five, who fall victim of the sex trade. This commerce in human life generates billions of dollars each year — much of which is used to finance organized crime.”

The U.S. monitors other countries regarding trafficking, and signed the above UN treaties on December 2000. However, the Bush administration has not ratified them, therefore the U.S. is not a state party to these important international agreements.

Excerpts from the Protocol’s summary follow:

**Part I - Purpose, scope and criminal sanctions (Art. 1-3)**

Trafficking is the “…recruitment, transportation, transfer, harbouring or receipt of persons …” by improper means, such as force, abduction, fraud or coercion, for an improper purpose, like forced or coerced labour, servitude, slavery or sexual exploitation. Countries that ratify the Protocol are obliged to enact domestic laws making these activities criminal offences, if such laws are not already in place (Art.3).

… Finding language to capture a wide range of coercive means used by organized crime has also proven difficult. With the exception of children, who cannot consent, the intention is to distinguish between consensual acts or treatment and those in which abduction, force, fraud, deception or coercion are used or threatened. As with the Convention, the nature and degree of international and organized crime involvement required before the Protocol applies has also been the subject of extensive discussions. Generally, cases in which there is little or no international involvement can be dealt with by domestic officials without recourse to the Protocol or Convention. On the other hand, requiring too direct a link might make it impossible to use the Protocol provisions in cases where purely domestic offences were committed by foreign offenders or as part of a larger transnational organized crime scheme. ...

**Faith in action:**

President Bush’s spoke against trafficking in September 2003. Contact the U.S. State Department and request the U.S.’s compliance with this statement by ratifying both the UN Convention against Transnational Organized Crime and its Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children.

For more information, go to the WomenWatch website at www.un.org/womenwatch. Click on “International Instruments and Treaty Bodies,” and then choose the Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons. Also check out: www.Protectionproject.org

The Intercommunity Center for Justice and Peace’s Winter 2004 issue highlights a report by Sr. Mary Ann Smith, MM, entitled "Human Trafficking: Its Impact on Women in 2004." Please contact ICJP for more information about copies: icjp@icjp.org; (212)475-6677.
PetroPolitics meeting underscores addiction to oil

“The extent to which the world’s largest, and arguably most destructive, industry influences and dictates policy and politics - particularly in the United States today - is what we call PetroPolitics. Our collective addiction to oil is at the root of at least six fundamental issues facing our nation, and our planet, today: corporate-driven globalization, global warming, poverty, war, terrorism, and the undue influence of money on the political process.” (Oil Change: PetroPolitics Briefing Book 2004, Foreign Policy in Focus) The following article was written by Julie Cook, MOGC intern.

From January 6 through 8, the National Summit on PetroPolitics, sponsored by Foreign Policy in Focus (FPIF) and the Sustainable Energy and Economy Network (SEEN), ushered in the new year with 300 people in attendance. Over 60 presenters were available throughout the three days for panel discussions and informal networking. Researchers, analysts, scientists and activists exposed the realities of oil’s politics and “the weight of scientific evidence [which] makes clear that drastically curtailing global fossil fuel burning, long before supplies run out, is necessary to avoid a future wrecked by the catastrophic consequences of global climate change.” (Oil Change: PetroPolitics Briefing Book 2004)

The conference offered increasing clarity into oil’s role in the political process, militarization, and ecological degradation. A few highlights included:

- Steve Kretzmann of SEEN reported that in May 2003 President Bush signed into law “Executive Order 13303 that grants impunity for any U.S. oil company’s actions in Iraq.”
- Ann Aurilio of the U.S. Public Interest Research Groups (U.S. PIRG) decried the “corporate giveaways in the 2003 Energy Conference, increasing tax breaks and subsidies to the producers of dirty energy and designing new loopholes to protect polluters.”
- Michael Klare, chair of the Five Colleges Program in Peace and Security Studies and author of Resource Wars and PetroPolitics, put the U.S. relationship with oil in perspective: In 1945, Franklin D. Roosevelt agreed to protect the Saudi royal family in exchange for oil; in 1980 Jimmy Carter declared that “protection of oil is vital to U.S. national security and access to oil will be protected with force, if necessary,” and according to Klare, “George W. Bush has internationalized the Carter Doctrine.”
- Dane Erickson of the Arlington Institute, a futurists’ think tank contracted by the Department of Defense, developed A Strategy: Moving America Away From Oil. “Hydrogen will replace oil as the major source of transportation energy - the future of transportation will be an all-electric world. (Transportation comprises 26 percent of U.S. total oil consumption.)”
- Michael Tidwell of Chesapeake Climate Action Network (CCAN) converted his home to green energy, i.e., solar and corn burning fuel, and 18 months ago began hosting open houses. CCAN has assisted 30 other home owners to convert their homes and has gained a victory in the recent passage of the Maryland State Energy Bill – seven percent of the total state energy use will derive from “green energy sources.” The Network is now working on a similar bill for Washington, D.C.
- Ross Gelbspan, former Boston Globe reporter and author of The Heat Is On, stated, “The global climate change is progressing far more rapidly than scientists anticipated. To control the escalating pace of change and to allow the climate to re-stabilize, humanity has to cut its burning of fossil fuels by at least 70 percent in a very short time. That is the consensus of more than 2,000 scientists from 100 countries reporting to the UN-sponsored Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change in the largest and most rigorously peer-reviewed scientific collaboration in history.”

The knowledge, skill, and commitment evidenced throughout the three days of superbly presented workshops revealed a bold determination to work to “break the hypnotic grip of fossil fuel’s lobby.” Foreign Policy in Focus aptly articulated the bottom line: “The global community is faced with its greatest challenge and if it rises to this challenge, humankind will ultimately move toward a more environmentally sound, equitable, economically and politically stable future.” (Oil Change: PetroPolitics Briefing Book 2004)

For additional information, see the following websites:

- The Arlington Institute: www.arlingtoninstitute.org
- Center for Health and the Global Environment: www.med.harvard.edu/chge
- Chesapeake Climate Action Network: www.chesapeakeclimate.org
- Foreign Policy in Focus: www.foreignpolicy-infocus.org
- Michael Klare’s writings: pawss.hampshire.edu/klare
- Natural Resources Defense Council: www.nrdc.org
- PetroPolitics conference: www.petropolitics.org
- State PIRGs’ action center: www.newenergyfuture.com
- Sustainable Energy and Economy Network: www.seen.org
U.S. intelligence probe needs independent panel

The story about a man looking for his car keys under the glare of a streetlight (“The light’s better over here”) – instead of in the shadows where he lost them – seems apropos to the president’s commission to study U.S. intelligence before the Iraq invasion. Seeking to restore U.S. credibility, President Bush might be looking in the wrong place.

“The issue is not just shortcomings of U.S. intelligence,” says Sen. Chuck Hagel, Nebraska Republican and a senior member of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, but “the credibility of who we are around the world and the trust of our government and our leaders.”

President Bush named the bipartisan commission Feb. 6 to assess U.S. intelligence capabilities with respect to weapons of mass destruction and the ongoing threat of terrorist activity. The commission was specifically tasked to investigate information gathered on Iraq’s weapons and the intelligence that was produced from that information.

However, the panel was not authorized to examine the handling or use of the intelligence by administration officials in the lead-up to the March 2003 invasion of Iraq. Moreover, the commission was not scheduled to report its findings until March 2005, well after the U.S. elections this fall.

Remaining outside the commission’s purview is a harsh reality. The war in Iraq has cost the U.S. more than $150 billion, the lives of more than 500 U.S. service members, nearly 3,000 U.S. wounded, and an estimated 10,000 Iraqi lives. Tommy Franks, commander of the U.S.-led invasion, reportedly said, “We don’t do body counts.” It’s no wonder that U.S. credibility is at risk both at home and abroad.

To help increase transparency and hold the administration more accountable, two measures – HR 2625, by Rep. Henry Waxman, D-CA; and S. 1946, by Sen. Jon Corzine, D-NJ – have been introduced in Congress. The bills call for an independent investigation into U.S. intelligence on Iraq. (The text of the measures can be found on the website of the Friends Committee on National Legislation at http://www.fcnl.org/act_lam_current/lam25_04.htm.)

The president’s decision to name an investigative panel was a clear acknowledgment of growing public concern over the issue of U.S. intelligence and Iraq’s purported weapons of mass destruction. Launching the commission constituted an important first step. Given that officials and agencies within the executive branch might well come under investigation by the commission, however, the body must be able to act independently of the White House and the intelligence agencies. This seems unlikely as the commission is presently constituted.

The commission was created after the testimony of David Kay, the administration’s former chief weapons inspector. On Jan. 28 Kay testified before Congress that Iraq did not have the chemical, biological or nuclear weapons that the administration had insisted Iraq possessed. Kay led the search for unconventional weapons in Iraq following the U.S. invasion. However, he stepped down from that position after months of searching without substantive results.

A truly independent commission – mandated by Congress to investigate the full scope of the use of intelligence and to provide timely reports – might be the only way to restore trust in government while keeping a much-needed search for truth above the fray of election-year politics.

At stake in the investigation is the Bush administration’s credibility as much as that of the U.S. Moreover, taking responsibility for the cost of the war and its aftermath – both in lives and in destruction – would be a huge step toward restoring the credibility of both. Meanwhile, voters will have a chance to weigh in with their opinion in November – and perhaps begin to restore U.S. credibility four months earlier than the presidential commission’s first scheduled report.

Faith in action:

Contact your members of Congress. Ask your representative to cosponsor HR 2625, and your senators to cosponsor S. 1946. Thank them if they are already cosponsors. The legislation would create a truly independent and bipartisan commission to investigate not only the quality of pre-war intelligence, but also the administration’s use of that intelligence in making the case for war.
Extractive Industries Review challenges Bank

The Extractive Industries Review (EIR) was initiated at the World Bank annual meetings in Prague in 2000 by Bank President James Wolfensohn, who pledged to evaluate how much (or whether) extractive industries contribute to poverty alleviation.

The EIR’s final report, entitled “Striking a Better Balance: the Extractive Industries Review,” concluded that if the World Bank Group intends to pursue its mandate of poverty alleviation, then it should not support extractive industries unless the broad set of good governance enabling conditions outlined in the report are in place first. Furthermore, the EIR found that support for coal and oil, as well as projects in critical natural habitats and areas of conflict, does not represent the best use of public World Bank money to promote sustainable development, and thus that the World Bank Group should phase-out its financing for these types of projects and reallocate its funds towards renewable energy.

The report validates many of the concerns that communities and civil society organizations have been raising with the Bank Group for more than two decades. In a letter to World Bank President James Wolfensohn, Nobel laureates, including Desmond Tutu, Jody Williams, Rigoberta Menchu Tum, Sir Joseph Rotblat, Betty Williams, and Mairead Maguire, wrote “War, poverty, climate change, greed, corruption, and ongoing violations of human rights — all of these scourges are all too often linked to the oil and mining industries. Your efforts to create a world without poverty need not exacerbate these problems. The Review provides you an extraordinary opportunity to direct the resources of the World Bank Group in a way that is truly oriented towards a better future for all humanity.”

Hundreds of nongovernmental and religious leaders also sent letters to Wolfensohn urging him to support full implementation of recommendations in the report. The Christian and Jewish leaders said, “We hold the World Bank Group as a global financial institution accountable for serving the common good, alleviating poverty and preserving the natural environment.”

Signers of the religious leaders’ letter emphasized to President Wolfensohn that just economic policies and programs must 1) respect and enhance human dignity, gender equity and the integrity of creation; 2) be flexibly designed and implemented with the consent of the people expressed through authentically participatory and democratic processes; and 3) be held accountable to international human rights standards and treaties.

In January, Dr. Emil Salim, leader of the review process, said, “Since the WBG is committed to alleviating poverty through sustainable development, it has a moral obligation to change its priorities, working arrangements, and internal incentive systems and to use all the power it possesses, including convening power, to meet ‘the challenge of leadership’ to reach for ‘a new global balance.’”

For more information on the EIR, view www.eireview.org. Copies of the Nobel Laureates’ letter, the international NGO letter and the religious leaders’ letter can be viewed at www.eireview.info.

Odious and illegitimate debts demand attention

Debt campaigners in the global South have, for many years, been calling attention to the illegitimate and odious nature of much debt claimed by creditors in the North. In the fall of 2003, Jubilee South released a working document that contains a call for countries to engage in audits of their loans or debts as one way to move forward the campaign against illegitimate debt.

Several countries, including Brazil, have already done public audits or referendums on debt. Others, including Norway and Ecuador, have partnered to expose or audit a particular loan or series of loan.

A companion proposal for creditor countries like the United States is for a moratorium on debt service while audits are being done. Such a moratorium might call for an immediate suspension of debt service payments for countries with a heavy debt burden (some of which is probably illegitimate or odious) and with high levels of poverty and/or infection with HIV/AIDS. It could require the Government Accounting Office (GAO) to do a public audit of all loans made by the United States to the nations on the list since a given date. The criteria/questions for the audit could include:

• How much was loaned? Who were the parties of the loan agreement?
• Was the person who took responsibility for the loan a legitimate leader that could be held accountable by the population?
• Was there any member of civil society present?
• What were the economic terms of the loan agreement, including the purpose and timeline on the loan?
• Did any element of the loan go towards military expenditure or any expense that could be used contrary to the interest of the people of the country taking the loan?
Did any element of the loan go to non-productive industry, like Title 1 food aid, export-credit agreements on food/agriculture, education or health care? Did any element of the loan go to a failed project and by export-credit guarantee get transferred to the people for payment?

Was the U.S. aware of oppressive activity by or corruption in the government being lent the money?

How possible is it for deeply impoverished countries to pay the debt without obstructing a country’s ability to protect the basic human needs of its people?

The GAO would be given a specific timeline for the audit. After the audit report is released to the public there would be a period of time, perhaps a year, for public debate about the findings. At the end of that debate there would be a determination of how to proceed. Interest earned on the debt during the moratorium would be written off by the creditor to ensure that there is no penalty or debt increase due to the moratorium.

For additional information about odious and illegitimate debt or a debt audit, contact Jubilee USA Network at coord@jubileeusa.org; www.jubileeusa.org; (202)783-3566.

Limited progress on small arms, landmines at UN

The United Nations First Committee (Disarmament and International Security) last year voted on a draft resolution on the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons in all its aspects. It was passed with 162 votes in favor, no votes in abstention, and just one solitary vote in opposition by the United States. The U.S. explained that they had trouble with the budgetary requirements, but some believe that the negative vote was due to the lobbying power of pro-gun advocates, which work to influence the First Committee.

Thankfully, a draft submitted by Japan, South Africa and Colombia was adopted by consensus by the General Assembly December, 23, 2003. This will enable states to identify and trace illicit small arms and light weapons. Much work needs to be done in the future on arms embargoes and the elimination of the demand for small arms. The U.S. public must exert much more pressure on its politicians to halt the proliferation of small arms and light weapons made and sold by the U.S. locally and abroad.

Around the same time, a Thailand-sponsored landmines resolution passed with 143 votes in favor, 19 abstentions and no votes against. This is progress, however limited. Although the governments abstaining are still claiming their “legitimate security needs” as justification for non-accession to the treaty, they are also supporting the values and concerns of the Ottawa Convention, at least theoretically. Several countries, including India and Pakistan, said they would accept less comprehensive land-mine controls. The U.S. has yet to sign the convention and balks at a comprehensive resolution, citing the necessity of mines in such places as the border between North and South Korea.

In fact, on February 26, the Bush administration announced that it would allow the military to continue to employ more sophisticated mines that supposedly pose little threat to civilians.

This new policy, according to the Washington Post, “represents a departure from the previous U.S. goal of banning all land mines designed to kill troops. That plan, established by President Bill Clinton, set a target of 2006 for giving up antipersonnel mines, depending on the success of Pentagon efforts to develop alternatives.”

The current administration has changed the target year to 2010 to end the use of “dumb” landmines – those without self-destruct features, and which are used only in South Korea – but will not restrict the use of “smart” landmines, which have timing devices to automatically defuse the explosives within hours or days, officials said.

However, the U.S. is the only country that attempts to categorize “smart” and “dumb” mines.

“The rest of the world rejected this distinction for a number of reasons,” said Steve Goose of Human Rights Watch. “Some were technical, based on concerns that smart mines would still have an unacceptable failure rate. Some were political, along the lines of ‘How can you expect other nations to give up their antipersonnel mines but allow the United States to keep theirs, claiming they’re more technologically advanced?”

However, Bush is also expected to endorse a 50 percent jump in spending, up to $70 million in fiscal 2005, for a landmine-removal assistance in more than 40 countries. The State Department program would also support mine-awareness programs abroad and offers some aid to landmine survivors.

Faith in action:

Ask your presidential and congressional candidates what their position is on the UN resolution on small arms and light weapons as well as the Convention on Landmines. For more information, go to the International Action Network on Small Arms’ website: www.iansa.org. Also, check the U.S. Campaign to Ban Landmines’ website: www.banminesusa.org.
Pressure needed to de-fund nuclear arsenal

The following article was written by Tim O’Connell, a Maryknoll lay missioner and a member of the Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns’ peace advisory committee. Sources include the Arms Control Association www.armscontrol.org and Friends Committee on National Legislation www.fcnl.org.

In a recent speech at the National Defense University, President Bush proposed steps for controlling the proliferation of “weapons of mass destruction” (WMD). The president presented some positive ideas such as strengthening the International Atomic Energy Agency and enhancing export controls on dangerous technology and materials. However, his proposals do not go far enough. The president also needs to support efforts such as the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty and a ban on the production of weapons grade uranium and plutonium. More importantly, the U.S. must move beyond its “do as I say not as I do” nuclear weapons policy as noted by the Arms Control Association. As long as the United States and others possess nuclear weapons, efforts to reduce the danger posed by WMD will be inadequate.

Unfortunately, President Bush’s budget for FY2005 demonstrates the U.S. government’s commitment to maintaining and “improving” its nuclear arsenal. For example, President Bush requested $27.7 million for the Robust Nuclear Earth Penetrator (RNEP), which would more than triple current funding levels. The RNEP, or “bunker buster,” would be an existing nuclear bomb equipped with a hardened case enabling it to penetrate earth and rock, before exploding. The president also requested $9 million, an increase of 50 percent from FY2004, for research on advanced nuclear weapons concepts such as new low-yield nuclear weapons or “mini-nukes.” Both programs seek improved capabilities for attacking WMD stockpiles and facilities as well as enemy leaders in underground bunkers. In contrast to requesting higher funding for enhancing U.S. nuclear capability, the president would increase funding for the Defense Nonproliferation Program by only 1.1 percent, according to the Friends Committee on National Legislation.

Congress will take up these issues in the spring. The last legislative session resulted in good news and bad news for opponents of nuclear weapons. On the positive side, lawmakers reduced by half the president’s request for the bunker buster, authorizing $7.5 million. Although they fully funded the $6 million request for advanced concepts like mini-nukes, $4 million is unavailable until the Department of Energy submits detailed plans for reducing the current nuclear stockpile. In the present security minded atmosphere in Washington these were important moves by Congress.

On the other hand, the time necessary for scheduling and conducting nuclear tests was reduced and approximately $25 million was authorized for preparing the Nevada Test Site. Another blow was the repeal of the Spratt-Furse law, which prohibited research on low-yield nuclear weapons. While this hurdle was eliminated, a new one was raised requiring explicit authorization from Congress before a “mini-nuke” can be built. However, it is a hurdle moved further down the path towards new nuclear weapons. That is to say, once millions have been spent, concepts researched and designs made, it would be easier, technically and politically, to build a low-yield nuclear bomb than it would be if research had never begun in the first place.

The United States is moving to increase the flexibility and utility of its nuclear arsenal. These efforts are not new, but have gained momentum under the Bush administration and especially since Sept. 11, 2001. Despite this momentum, funding for new nuclear weapons passed in the Senate by only a slim margin in the last legislative session and Congress has been reluctant to grant the administration everything on its nuclear wish-list. This is largely due to grassroots efforts to influence lawmakers. With increased pressure it is possible to cut funding for new nuclear weapons in FY2005.

People of peace are working to make this happen. In December, an inter-religious consultation on nuclear disarmament was convened. Over 50 representatives from various faith traditions discussed the growing nuclear danger. From that meeting a focused strategy emerged to influence key members of Congress in the nuclear weapons debate. For information on how to help in these efforts please contact nonewnukes@mail.com.
U.S. arms sales: Instruments of death

More than 200 million people were killed in 250 wars and genocidal onslaughts in the last century, which is more than perished by lethal weapons in the previous two hundred years. Since the end of the Cold War more than six million people have died in war. The river of human blood continues to flow, aided in part by the production and sale of arms. Two-thirds of arms sales worldwide during 2002 went to developing countries, according to a recent reliable report based on the data compiled by the U.S. government (Conventional Arms Transfers to Developing Nations 1995-2002). Nearly half of all those sales were made by the United States.

U.S. arms sales to developing countries amounted to US$ 8.6 billion, almost 48 percent of all arms transfers to poor countries. Next was Russia, which sold $4.5 billion, then Ukraine at $11.6 billion, Italy at $1.5 billion, and Germany and France, each at $1.1 billion.

China purchased the most arms in 2002, spending $33.6 billion, followed by South Korea with $1.9 billion, India with $1.4 billion and Oman with $1.3 billion. Besides Oman, the other Middle East countries in the top ten arms buyers were Egypt, Kuwait, Saudi Arabia and Israel. Along with China, South Korea and India in Asia, Malaysia also was in the top 10 big spenders for military wares.

The U.S. sold 76 percent of the arms bought by Middle East and became the dominant supplier to Latin America in the last three years, primarily because of the war planes to Chile. Germany (due to a big sale to South Africa) and Russia, along with central and eastern European countries, were the main source of arms to Africa, which fuel the region’s many civil conflicts.

The global proliferation of small arms and light weapons, the “weapons of mass destruction” (WMD) in Africa and other areas of the world, proceeds unabated. Small arms, including handguns, rifles and long guns, cause 500,000 deaths a year.

People and governments around the world know what to do to stop such killings and to make armed conflict increasingly rare. Greed, lust for power and domination, fear, and poverty are some of the reasons that lead to the flow of human blood, the crippling physical and psychological wounds, and the destruction of lives, property and infrastructure. A first step in attacking these causes is to make the instruments of death less available.

In the U.S. the federal ban on Uzis and other semiautomatic weapons expires Sept. 13, 2004, and it looks unlikely to be renewed unless there is a massive outcry from below. Even some Democratic lawmakers, who under President Bill Clinton voted for the ban, are waffling now. The National Rifle Association (NRA) and other gun activists targeted several Democrats who supported the ban and they were voted out of office.

At the United Nations, the U.S. has been in the forefront to undermine attempts to impose stricter laws to regulate the flow of weapons globally. At the last major UN Conference on Illicit Use of Small Arms and Light Weapons, representatives from the NRA were part of the U.S. delegation, an outrageous move. (See article on page 24.)

As the world’s largest arms exporter, the United States has a responsibility to ensure that arms are not used to terrorize. Specifically, the United States should support the creation of legally binding international treaties on arms brokering, marking and tracing, and arms export criteria. The United States has good – if not the best – policy in these areas, but has resisted taking the lead to put U.S. best practices into international treaties. (See article on page 25.)

Effective marking and tracing practices would provide a trail to track the diversions or criminal use of weapons. Restrictions on arms brokers’ practices would ensure that “middlemen” could not move weapons from conflict to conflict with impunity. Common export criteria could help prevent arms from getting into nefarious hands. Better stockpile security would eliminate theft from national arsenals, a primary way that small arms enter the parallel market.

Faith in action:

Join the Million Faces Petition sponsored by Oxfam, Amnesty International and the International Action Network on Small Arms (IANSA). For details see: www.controlarms.org

The Million Moms March, held to oppose gun violence, will be held May 8-9 in Washington, D.C. Call (202)898-0792 for more information, or visit www.stopthenra.org

To read more about efforts to support the federal ban on assault weapons (which is due to expire in September), go to the website for Physicians for Social Responsibility (PSR), www.psr.org, and click on “violence prevention.” If you do not have access to the internet, contact PSR at 1875 Connecticut Avenue, N.W., Suite 1012, Washington, D.C., 20009; tel: (202)667-4260; fax: (202)667-4201.
Resources

1) **Agribusiness Accountability Initiative:** Co-sponsored by the Center of Concern and the National Catholic Rural Life Conference, this initiative is a growing international network of academics, activists and food system experts who recognize that corporate concentration and vertical integration among transnational agro-food companies threaten the sustainability of the most important industry on earth—the global food system. The Agribusiness Accountability Initiative website offers an overview of problems and solutions related to corporate power in the food system including: information on the multiple impacts of corporate concentration; data on horizontal and vertical integration in the global food industry; links to promising civil society responses to oligopoly power; global perspectives on reforming the food system; and AAI’s clearinghouse library of relevant articles and research. The AAI is an emerging network—and this site is an evolving resource. Take a moment to contact us and help build the movement for agribusiness accountability, or propose articles or links we can add to these resources: http://www.agribusinessaccountability.org/

2) **The Costs of Doing Business: How oil, U.S. militarization and corporate activity intersect in Colombia:** In Colombia, economic security and global financial flows have been accompanied by an ever-increasing militarization project, largely funded by the U.S. In this report, the American Friends Service Committee (AFSC) examines Colombia’s oil sector, taking U.S. Occidental Petroleum Corporation as a case study, to analyze how militarization, trade, corporations and oil intersect in Colombia’s conflict. Available online at www.afsc.org/colombiaoil. Contact AFSC at 1501 Cherry Street, Philadelphia PA, 19104.

3) **Structural Adjustment: The SAPRI Report - The Policy Roots of Economic Crisis, Poverty and Inequality:** The Structural Adjustment Participatory Review International Network (SAPRIN) presents this report, the most deeply researched, bottom-up study of its kind, covering a wide range of economic sectors. It is essential reading for development economists, aid agencies, researchers, students and journalists. It is the result of a five-year collaboration among citizens’ groups, developing country governments, and the World Bank itself. It reveals the consequences for manufacturing, small enterprise, wages and conditions, social services, health, education, food security, poverty and inequality. ISBN/price: 1-84277-389-5 (paperback) US$25.00. For more information or to order a copy of this title by post, contact: Zed Books 7 Cynthia Street, London N1 9JF; tel: +44(0)20-7837-4014; email sales@zedbooks.demon.co.uk. Ordering details and order forms for all Zed titles may be found on our website at http://www.zedbooks.co.uk/. Customers in the USA please contact: Palgrave, 175 Fifth Avenue, New York NY 10010; order line: (888)330-8477; email: roxanne.hunte@palgrave-usa.com

4) **Sojourners Bulletin:** What does the Bible have to say about social justice? Sojourners’ new monthly bulletin inserts will provide tools to help energize, educate, and enrich your church. These four-page, four-color pamphlets are ideal for: bulletin inserts, worship services, Christian education, outreach/social action, spiritual formation, bible studies. Every month, Sojourners bulletins will address a current social justice or Christian lifestyle issue, sometimes by profiling a person who has lived a life of faithful discipleship; include a prayer suitable for worship service or social justice group use; and link to a special section on Sojo.net for learning more and taking action. Bulletins are available as a yearly subscription; minimum quantity of 50. To place your order, please contact the Sojourners Resource Center at resource@sojo.net or 1-800-714-7474. To download a sample, go to www.sojo.net/resources and click on “Sojourners Bulletin.”

5) **Find Lenten resources from Pax Christi USA,** including daily meditation guides, prayer cards and novenas, at www.paxchristiusa.org, or request a catalog by emailing sales@paxchristiusa.org or by calling 814-453-4955, ext. 231.

6) **Prophets Without Honor [non-fiction], KGB, Joe Coffee’s Revolution, Twins, and The Truth:** These books on justice and peace by Mike Palecek are available through your local bookstore or Amazon.com. The Truth can be ordered by calling 1-888-874-6904 or by visiting www.essentialbooks.com. Palecek is an Iowa author, former federal prisoner for peace; former Catholic seminarian; former newspaper reporter; was the Iowa Democratic Party nominee for the U.S. House, 5th District, 2000 election. He lives in Sheldon, Iowa with his family.