Martyrs call us to reflection, courage and persistence

**Latin America**

U.S.-Latin America policy: Running backwards

Andean bishops’ statement on free trade agreement

Guatemala: Without informed consent

Bolivia: The long road to stability

Peru: Potato agreement

Chile: The Pinochet indictment

Dorothy Stang, presente!

Venezuela: U.S. targets “negative force”

SOA prisoner of conscience, Sr. Lil Mattingly MM

Haiti: One year after coup, tragedy persists

**Africa**

Kenya: Anti-corruption program threatened

Zimbabwe: Food security worsens; elections draw near

Sudan: Peace agreements, peacekeepers, war crimes and more tragedy

S. Africa bishops: Poverty kills like tsunami

**Middle East and Asia**

MidEast: U.S. should commit to Iraqi withdrawal

Church asks U.S. help over taxes in Israel

Two Koreas: Trade might improve political ties

Democratizing the World Bank and IMF

UN: Darfur should be referred to the ICC

U.S. should separate energy, military policies

Kyoto Protocol in effect; investors call for greater corporate accountability

Resources
**Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns:**
Peace, Social Justice and the Integrity of Creation
http://www.maryknoll.org/globalconcerns

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

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

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

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

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

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

**Take Action—Email, call, fax or write U.S. decisionmakers**

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Current status of bills:
(202) 225-1772
http://thomas.loc.gov

Capitol switchboard:
(202) 224-3121
www.senate.gov
www.house.gov

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.
Martyrs call us to reflection, courage and persistence

On March 24, 1980, the archbishop of San Salvador, Oscar Arnulfo Romero was gunned down as he celebrated Mass. Romero was an untiring and outspoken advocate for the marginal and oppressed people of El Salvador. He was a prophet in the most classical sense, whose inspiration was the struggle of the poor themselves to be faithful, to work for justice, to participate in the transformation of the world.

Almost exactly 25 years later, on February 12, 2005 Sister Dorothy Stang, SND was gunned down as she accompanied the poor of Para, Brazil in their unflinching efforts to protect the rainforest and their lives from the greed of logging firms and ranchers (see page 10.) She too was a prophet, whose inspiration was the struggle of the poor for justice, but the additional insight her life and death reflected was that the well-being of the poor and the well-being of the earth are inextricably linked.

“With every forest razed to the ground ...,” the first words of last month’s opening reflection on water echo around us. In an interview immediately after Sister Dorothy’s death, Brazilian Bishops Tomas Balduino, the president of the Pastoral Land Commission (CPT) and Erwin Kröutler of the Diocese of Xingu, Para said, “Landowners, loggers, soja planters use the discourse of productivity to take over public lands and territories occupied by traditional peoples - indigenous, river-side populations, small farmers, and many others. They promote the illegal occupancy of properties, the devastation of the forests and pastures, the pollution of waters... With the communities of Anapu, Sr. Dorothy was developing a new type of agrarian society, respecting the land as a source of life and helping people live together in society by preserving the values of solidarity, respect for the environment, and in producing self-sustainable food. However, this form of life-style challenges the economic model adopted by Brazil and is seen as an impediment to those who seek, above everything, immediate profits.”

The martyrdom of Oscar Romero 25 years ago captured the attention of the world. Tens of thousands of others in El Salvador had already been slaughtered for defending life, but due to his international visibility and deeply faithful, very public witness, Romero’s death evoked a global response.

As he found his voice and proclaimed with increasing clarity and courage the Word of God on behalf of life, Archbishop Romero had received many death threats. Aware of them, he persisted in his prophetic role. “If they kill me,” he said, “I will rise again in the Salvadoran people.” He did, but the persecution of the poor continued. Tens of thousands more gave their lives, including many, many others known internationally, like Maura Clarke, Ita Ford, Dorothy Kazel and Jean Donovan, who were brutally murdered only a few months later.

Outrage over the death of the archbishop, the four U.S. church women, labor leaders, the Jesuits, the poor - finally helped end the fighting in El Salvador in 1992, but the war on the poor and on the rest of creation went on. Driven by greed and a hunger for power, it endured in economic exploitation and environmental destruction. It is the very same war that snuffed out Sister Dorothy’s life and the lives of her “beloveds” in the Brazilian rainforest 25 years later.

Sister Dorothy’s death just weeks ago has recaptured the attention of the world. This time, may we see the war with more clarity and respond with greater courage and persistence. May we see the vast reach of its power and recognize its threat to the whole community of life. May we come to understand the role of wasteful lifestyles in perpetuating the violence. May there arise in us a passionate response to the death of a colleague in Christ, a deep reflection on our own part in the destruction and a firm commitment to the protection of abundant life.
U.S.-Latin America policy: Running backwards

With the appointment of John Negroponte to be Director of National Intelligence and Elliot Abrams to be Deputy National Security Advisor, a “Salvador option” proposal on the table for Iraq, and U.S. training programs around the world that blur the lines between the role of the military and that of civilian police forces, it appears that U.S. foreign policy is running backwards toward the “bad old days.”

As ambassador to Honduras from 1981 to 1985, Negroponte supported the Contras in Nicaragua and the brutal military dictatorship of General Gustavo Alvarez Martínez in Honduras. According to Foreign Policy In Focus, “on Negroponte’s watch, diplomats quipped that the embassy’s annual human rights reports made Honduras sound more like Norway than Argentina. Former official Rick Chidester, who served under Negroponte, says he was ordered to remove all mention of torture and executions from the draft of his 1982 report on the human rights situation in Honduras. In a 1982 letter to The Economist, Negroponte wrote that it was ‘simply untrue to state that death squads have made their appearance in Honduras.’” (www.fpif.org)

Elliott Abrams, a figure from the Reagan-era Iran-Contra scandal, describes himself as a “neo-conservative and neo-Reaganite.” (see Right Web, http://rightweb.irc-online.org) He will oversee the administration’s promotion of democracy and human rights while continuing to provide oversight to the National Security Council’s directorate of Near East and North African affairs-including involvement in the Israeli/Palestinian conflict.

These two men and many others around them in the Bush administration know well the implications of the “Salvador option,” by which the U.S. would fund and train counterinsurgency forces in Iraq.

In the Jan. 19 edition of SojoMail (http://www.sojo.net/sojomail), David Batstone wrote, “The plan refers to the secret support of the Reagan administration in the 1980s for hit squads in El Salvador that targeted rebel militia and their civilian sympathizers. Many Pentagon conservatives credit these so-called ‘death squads’ with turning the tide against a strong revolutionary movement in El Salvador...Death squads roamed freely in El Salvador and Guatemala at the time. In these two countries alone, they assassinated or ‘disappeared’ more than 150,000 civilians. They targeted anyone - church pastors, literacy teachers, community development workers - who appeared to support social reform.

“All the same, I witnessed countless cases of military abuse. The security units...justified the murder of civilian suspects as a necessary defense in the fight against ‘terrorists.’ The military acted as judge, jury, and executioner. The police worked hand in hand with the military. The police investigated community leaders working for social change during the day, and would turn that information over to army hit squads who made the civilians ‘disappear’ in the middle of the night.”

Maryknoll lay missioner Gigi Gruenke lives now in El Salvador. In response to this proposal, Gigi wrote, “The people continue to suffer from the cruelty of the U.S.’s strategy to point fingers and assassinate normal civilian people. That is all this strategy achieved. It did NOTHING to win the war. Those who suffered from this strategy of the U.S. do not wish it, ever, upon anyone. They pray constantly for the victims of war in Iraq, knowing what it is to be civilians in a war.”

The “Salvador option” may be proposed for a particular circumstance in Iraq, but the direction it suggests is an ominous one as U.S. training programs for militaries and police around the world take a turn in a similar and wrong direction. From September’s Shadow: Post-9/11 U.S.-Latin American Relations, published by the Latin America Working Group Education Fund and the Center for International Policy:

“The number of Latin American personnel trained by the United States increased by more than 50 percent from 2002 to 2003. ...The United States continues to encourage military practices, programs and doctrine that promote a confusion of civilian and military roles, especially the creation of new military missions within countries’ own borders. This trend raises an increasingly urgent question: What happened to the line between civilian and military roles?

“This is not an academic question. It goes to the heart of democracy—which includes a clear division between the civilian and military spheres. In most functioning democracies, the military—which makes decisions through a top-down, hierarchical structure—focuses on external security and leaves politics and development to elected civilians.

“Blurring this distinction—for instance, by having the military carry out crimefighting or other roles that civilians can fill—risks politicizing the armed forces, which in turn leads the military to use (or threaten to use) its monopoly of arms whenever it disagrees with the
civilian consensus. Utilizing the armed forces in police roles can lead to excessive use of force. Too often in Latin America, when armies have focused on an internal enemy, the definition of enemies has included political opponents of the regime in power, even those working within the political system such as activists, independent journalists, labor organizers, or opposition political-party leaders.”

**Faith in action:**
Write to Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld expressing your opposition to the “Salvador option” as it was reported in *Newsweek* magazine in January.

---

**Andean bishops’ statement on free trade agreement**

*Six South American bishops, representing Catholic conferences in Peru, Ecuador, Colombia and Bolivia, released the following statement in February on the occasion of their visit to Washington, D.C.*

Our pastoral vision, which is inspired by the Gospel and the social teaching of the Church, holds that the human person is the focus of all economic activity. In an increasingly interdependent world, it is imperative that economic globalization be humanized by globalizing solidarity among individuals and peoples. In fact, “If globalization is ruled merely by the laws of the market applied to suit the powerful, the consequences cannot but be negative” (*Ecclesia in America*, 20).

The overall situation of the [Andean] people is characterized by high levels of poverty, social exclusion and a growing gap between rich and poor. In particular, there is a lack of opportunity for small-scale agriculture, small businesses and micro enterprises — sectors that employ the majority of people in our countries, as well as inadequate educational and public health systems, insecurity and violence, the lack of food security and migration due to limited employment opportunities.

Trade policies need to be fashioned in ways that will stimulate economic growth while at the same time combating poverty and overcoming hunger. ... From our experience as pastors among our people we have concerns that the free trade agreement currently under negotiation between the U.S. and the Andean countries may fail to reach its potential in increasing opportunities for the poorest and most vulnerable. For the poor to really benefit from an increase in trade, complementary measures need to be adopted that will improve education and public health, that will include minorities and disabled persons, and that will strengthen the participation of all concerned.

Given this, in light of the principles and values that we have stated and the situation of our people, we express the following concerns about key points in the negotiation of the free trade agreement.

**Agriculture:** The provisions under negotiation could leave small farmers and their families in our countries very vulnerable. ...

**Intellectual property:** The U.S. proposes patenting seeds and life forms, in addition to extending the existing monopoly period that international pharmaceutical companies enjoy over the sale of medicines. These measures may well endanger farmers’ access to the resources on which they depend, as well as access to medicines particularly by the poor and most vulnerable.

**Labor:** Trade agreements should offer an opportunity to strengthen the protection of workers. In the absence of binding commitments to respect workers’ rights, such workers, especially the majority of the working poor, may not enjoy some of the potential benefits of increased trade ...

**Environment:** ... Without adequate enforceable environmental protections, the trade agreement will not live up to its potential of contributing to the rational, sustainable use of resources such as water and forests, especially given the important role that the Amazon region plays in these four countries. ...

**Citizen participation:** Such trade agreements offer a unique opportunity for the peoples of the region to express and strengthen a sense of participative democracy that will lead to greater security for all. ... **Comprehensive agenda:** More broadly, any trade agreement should form part of a comprehensive agenda for sustainable human development that is supported by adequate financial and other resources. The moral measure of any trade agreement should be its positive effect on the life and dignity of families and of poor and vulnerable workers, whose views should receive special attention in this debate.
Guatemala: Without informed consent

In late 2003, the Guatemalan government, under then-President Alfonso Portillo Cabrera, granted a mining license to the U.S./Canadian corporation Glamis Gold for use on land in San Marcos. In doing so without adequate consultation of the indigenous Mayan peoples who would be affected by the mine, the government violated the International Labor Organization's Convention 169 on Indigenous and Tribal Peoples (ILO 169), to which Guatemala is a signatory. Additionally, they violated Guatemalan law which requires consultation before initiating activities that could have significant impact on indigenous peoples. The following article was written by Jennifer Hojaiban, intern with the Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns.

According to ILO 169, it is the responsibility of the Guatemalan government to consult with indigenous and tribal peoples when decisions are being made that will affect them directly. This consultation should be carried out “with the objective of achieving agreement or consent to the proposed measures.” While both Glamis Gold and the Guatemalan government claim to have consulted with the local population, it is clear that many of the local people did not know about the proposed mine when they sold their land to an agent of the mining company.

Additionally, the International Finance Corporation (IFC), the private-sector lending arm of the World Bank, provided a $45 million loan to Glamis Gold for the mine in San Marcos, which is called the Marlin project. IFC regulations also require consultation with local populations. Although many Guatemalan and international organizations urged the World Bank Group to delay this loan until proper consultation took place, the loan was approved on schedule.

Many people in the community are concerned about the potential social and environmental effects of the mine. Glamis Gold has already demonstrated problems dealing with environmental issues and community concerns. In Honduras, its mine has caused problems with relocation of local farmers and water contamination. In Nevada, a Glamis mine has released contaminants that are now moving toward drinking water supplies.

The mine in San Marcos will create a huge open pit that will permanently change the landscape of the area. The mining process will use cyanide to leach gold from other metals, which may contaminate the water supply. The water is also threatened from acid mine drainage, which occurs when ore rich in sulfides is exposed to air releasing water and acid into the environment. Once sulfur gets into the water, the only way to control it is to dump neutralizing chemicals into the water supply. This problem can affect local communities for generations to come. Additionally, in this area where water is scarce, the Marlin mine will use 66,000 gallons of water per hour.

As a result of these concerns and frustration at having been left out of the consultation process, indigenous people in San Marcos and the surrounding areas have resisted the opening of the mine. Protests started when Glamis was transporting equipment to the Marlin mine. Indigenous people in a community miles away from the mining site, who originally thought the equipment was destined for their communities, blocked passage of mining equipment at a bridge along the PanAmerican Highway. Workers for the gold company were dismantling part of a pedestrian bridge to allow the equipment to fit through. The demonstrators blocked the equipment for over 40 days, until Guatemalan police and military were sent in to end the blockade. During the clash that ensued, two demonstrators, Raúl Castro Bocel and Miguel Tzorín Tuy, were killed. In addition, about 2,000 demonstrators have protested in San Marcos.

Glamis Gold is obliged to pay a one percent royalty to the central and municipal Guatemalan governments, but this amount is far less than the six percent royalty the Guatemalan government used to require. The mine is expected to produce about 217,000 ounces of gold each year for the next 10 years. Each ounce of gold will produce about $93 profit. It has been reported recently that Guatemalan President Oscar Berger will ask the corporation to provide economic support to the San Marcos community in addition to the one percent royalty. Berger will ask that Glamis’ local subsidiary, Montana Explorada, pay for two hospitals and invest in programs that will benefit the local economy. Despite efforts of the national government and the company to “sell” the project as beneficial to the community, opposition of local people from San Marcos, Sololá, Totonicapán, Quicho, and Huehuetenango is strong. Glamis expects to finish construction and begin production at the Marlin mine later this year.
Bolivia: The long road to stability

Major strikes in Bolivia during January again underscored the fragile nature of the political accord there and the shaky ground on which President Carlos Mesa is standing. According to NotiSur (Jan. 28, 2005), calls for autonomy from Santa Cruz, the country’s economic engine and home to the oil, sugar, and soy businesses, were fueled by efforts of the central government to eliminate subsidies for gasoline. At the same time, coca growers in Los Yungas protested the installation of a police checkpoint and communities in El Alto demanded ouster of the multinational corporation that controls its water.

Mesa has kept a shaky hold on power since taking office in October 2003 after the deadly street riots that killed dozens and forced former president Sanchez de Lozada to flee the country. Since then, Mesa, a political independent and former television news anchor, has struggled to pull Bolivia out of a protracted recession amid simmering social tensions between the country’s poor indigenous majority and the ruling elite. In early January he vowed to resign if there was a loss of life in the wave of popular protests, strikes and blockades.

Mesa has taken steps to fulfill some of the promises he made when he assumed power. A national referendum on the sale of Bolivia’s vast natural gas reserves was held on July 18, 2004. The results of the referendum stopped short of calling for outright nationalization, but gave Mesa a mandate to ensure that a greater share of the profits from the sale of natural gas would accrue to Bolivia. According to Maryknoll Father Steve Judd in Cochabamba, many critics believe that the referendum doesn’t “come close” to addressing the deeper issues of how to deal with the country’s chief natural resource.

Another one of Mesa’s promises was fulfilled by the December 2004 municipal elections when the traditional parties again were repudiated as voters shifted their allegiances to newly found parties or civic movements. The only existing party that came out of the elections with a stronger hand was the Movimiento al Socialismo (MAS).

Massive unemployment in Bolivia has contributed to the social unrest throughout the country. More than 65 percent of the working-age Bolivian population is jobless or has low-productivity work, according to the International Labor Organization (ILO). (NotiSur, Jan. 28, 2005) More than 70 percent of Bolivians live on less than $2 a day, the gap between the rich and the poor is huge, and the tax base is virtually non-existent.

Steve Judd, MM, continues, “The consequences of the privatization policies and schemes that were put into place in the 1980s are very much present despite the wholesale disapproval of the general public and most economic analysts, notably the architect of the neo-liberal model in Bolivia, the now repentant Jeffrey Sachs....Studies that show the failure of the model proliferate but nothing has replaced these failed policies. Bolivia, obedient to a fault, did everything by the book and the consequences are there for the whole world to see...Reactivation of the economic sector is at a standstill as the country limps along with nothing new or hopeful on the horizon. All of this produces more social discontent and contributes to the lack of confidence.

“A frequent scene viewed at any one of the country’s airports is the growing exodus of young people, mostly from the impoverished rural and urban social classes, bound for low paying jobs in Spain and Italy. Remittances from what they earn abroad are an important source of economic survival and a strategy to withstand the effects of the chronic economic crisis.”

The Democracy Center (www.democracyctr.org) describes well the situation in El Alto, where the water system was privatized in 1997 after the World Bank made water privatization a condition of a loan to the Bolivian government. The private company, Aguas del Illimani, is owned by a consortium led by the French water giant, Suez, the World Bank, and others. Public protests against the company charged that it failed to extend water and sewage service to tens of thousands of families in the city’s impoverished outskirts and that hook-up costs exceed more than half a year’s income at the Bolivian minimum wage.

The citywide uprising against water privatization in El Alto also comes exactly five years after the launch of the revolt against water privatization in Bolivia’s third largest city, Cochabamba. The Cochabamba water revolt ended with the ouster of a multinational consortium led by the Bechtel Corporation of San Francisco. Bechtel’s company later filed a $25 million legal action against
Bolivia in a closed-door trade court operated by the World Bank. Under heavy international pressure Bechtel has reportedly agreed to drop its action and an end to the case awaits an equivalent concession from one of Bechtel’s co-investors, the Abengoa Corporation of Spain.

Mounting political pressure led Mesa to rearrange his cabinet in early February. Now there are three major tasks facing the “renovated” administration. (*NotiSur*, Feb. 11, 2005) First is to allow departments to choose their own governors, currently appointed by the president; second, to give way to departmental autonomy, most likely through a popular referendum; and third, to prepare for a Constituent Assembly, which may convene in August.

---

**Peru: Potato agreement**

The Peruvian potato is helping to drive forward global policy thinking about how to return control of homegrown agricultural resources to indigenous populations. A new agreement, the first of its kind in the world, means that Andean communities can unlock the potato genebank and repatriate biological diversity to farming communities and the natural environment for local and global benefit. The initiative will be conducted in a conservation “potato park” in southern Peru where indigenous peoples can access genetic resources and have a greater say in their management. The following is from the International Institute for Environment and Development (www.iied.org)

Though excluded and often oppressed today, indigenous peoples are the traditional custodians of biodiversity; this agreement restores these rights while recognizing that “the conservation, sustainable use and development of maximum agrobiodiversity is of vital importance in order to improve the nutrition, health and other needs of the growing global population.”

The Association for Nature and Sustainable Development (ANDES), a Cusco-based civil society group led by indigenous peoples, helped broker the ground-breaking agreement with the International Potato Centre, one of 15 Consultative Group for International Agricultural Research centers responsible for the world’s largest agrobiodiversity genebank collections.

The new deal is unique because it will “ensure that genetic resources and knowledge remain under the custody of local communities and do not become subject to intellectual property rights in any form.” This bucks the trend of privatizing genetic resources and indigenous knowledge which has seen seed genebanks swallowed up by unaccountable research bodies and corporations, threatening local livelihoods and cultural ways of life.

Alejandro Argumedo, associate director of ANDES, said, “Biological diversity is best rooted in its natural environment and managed by indigenous peoples who know it best and can use it for everyone’s benefit. The new agreement is a major breakthrough that should have policy implications worldwide for ensuring culturally-appropriate and sustainable development.

“This pioneering agreement opens the way for a greater complementarity between genebank and field-based conservation. It is not a blueprint, but it does show a way forward and proves that solutions can be found if the political will exists.”

Policy analysts and civil society campaigners believe the new agreement marks a turning point and provides a good practice model that can inform similar initiatives across the globe. They are calling for greater action at crucial international meetings this year in Bangkok and Geneva, but warn that potential progress is being undermined by a lack of political and financial commitment from the international community, including the UK, to help build the capacity of civil society to negotiate effectively at a local and national level.

The London-based International Institute for Environment and Development (IIED) and the government of the Netherlands have been working with and providing support to ANDES for four years.

Dr Michel Pimbert, director of the Sustainable Agriculture and Rural Livelihoods Program at IIED, said: “Civil society groups, particularly those led by indigenous peoples, should not be dictated to, but they do need greater support from the rich countries. Ground-breaking agreements, like this example in Peru, require negotiation with all parties on an equal footing, which means boosting the capacity of local indigenous communities to argue their case for access to the genetic resources they helped develop in the first place.”

The new agreement gives practical meaning to the FAO International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture and the Convention on Biological Diversity. It also reflects the ideals of the UN Millennium Development Goals to ensure sustainable and culturally-appropriate development of local and indigenous communities.
Chile: The Pinochet indictment

Despite the fact that Chile’s former dictator Augusto Pinochet was released from arrest in Spain in 2000 and that his 2002 case in Chilean court was suspended, Pinochet has been found to be mentally fit for trial. In a number of cases where he has been stripped of his immunity, Pinochet will face charges of human rights abuses and embezzlement. Judge Juan Guzman filed charges and ordered that Pinochet be placed under house arrest on December 13, 2004. The following article was written by Jennifer Hojaiban, intern with the Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns.

In 1978, the Chilean military put in place an amnesty law that prevented most human rights abusers from being tried or imprisoned. Additionally, before leaving office, Pinochet granted himself amnesty and made himself a senator for life. Despite these efforts to evade prosecution, Pinochet is now facing charges in three different cases and there are rumors that he may be stripped of immunity in two others.

When Judge Guzman declared Pinochet competent to stand trial, he charged him with 10 counts of kidnapping and murder that were part of “Operation Condor,” a coordinated effort of six South American dictatorships led by Pinochet’s Chile to assassinate or kidnap political opponents. Emanuel Contreras, the chief of the secret police force that Pinochet created shortly after seizing power, has already served jail time for Operation Condor crimes. He recently expressed anger at being made the scapegoat for human rights abuses committed during the dictatorship, insisting that Pinochet assume responsibility. Contreras may be preparing to implicate Pinochet in abuses committed under Operation Condor and other cases.

In a related case, Pinochet is being prosecuted for the assassination of General Carlos Prats, his predecessor as commander of the Chilean Army. The prime suspect for the murder of General Prats and his wife in 1974 has always been Pinochet’s secret police force. In fact, Michael Townley, a U.S. American who was an agent in the secret police force, has admitted planting the car bomb that killed General Prats and his wife. Townley and Armando Fernandez Larios, who were convicted of the 1976 killing of Chilean foreign minister Orlando Letelier in Washington, D.C., but who live freely in the U.S. as a result of a 1978 plea bargain, recently spoke with a Chilean investigative judge regarding the assassination of Prats. The information the two men provided to the judge may lead to the conviction of Pinochet.

The third case against Pinochet, while not related to human rights abuses, has further tied up his time and has led to the freezing of many of his assets. In June, a United States Senate subcommittee revealed that Pinochet was holding up to $8 million in secret accounts at Riggs Bank in Washington, D.C. Further investigations have shown that Pinochet amassed nearly $16 million which is held in foreign accounts under five different aliases. As a result of these revelations, many of Pinochet’s strongest supporters will no longer come to his defense. With his assets frozen and without the support of wealthy friends, Pinochet could not afford to post the required bond when he was released from house arrest in January.

In addition to these three pending cases, in early February, a judge requested that Pinochet be stripped of his immunity and be investigated for Operation Colombo, an alleged plot by the secret police to cover up the killing of 119 dissidents. Additionally, lawyers for the family of Charles Horman, a U.S. American journalist who was kidnapped and presumably killed in the days after Pinochet’s coup, are considering legal action against Pinochet.

Pinochet was hospitalized for a stroke after Judge Guzman’s indictment. Despite his health problems, the Appeals Court upheld the indictment in a 3-2 decision. Additionally, faced with Pinochet’s failing health, high-level government officials have confirmed that Pinochet will not receive official honors at his funeral or a national holiday upon his death.

Recently, Judge Guzman was quoted as saying that he is receiving pressure from the Chilean government, army, and church to be lenient on Pinochet. Guzman also claims that his investigation of the former dictator has cost him a promotion to the Supreme Court. The Supreme Court announced that it will investigate Guzman’s comments.
Dorothy Stang, presente!

Sr. Dorothy Stang, SND, a 73-year old U.S. missionary who worked in Brazil for 37 years, was assassinated on Saturday, February 12. For decades she had championed the cause of poor farmers in their battles with ranchers and loggers intent on claiming vast tracts of jungle. Brazil’s rain forest, the world’s largest, has been rapidly diminishing in size as loggers and large landowners expropriate land and clear huge areas. Last year alone, forest territory the size of New Jersey was lost.

Some hope that the tragedy will put pressure on Brazil to take firmer action in a region where weak government has created a bloody power vacuum. According to the Amazon Alliance for Indigenous and Traditional Peoples of the Amazon Basin (http://www.amazonalliance.org), the problem is often collusion between corrupt local authorities and the ranchers and loggers. More people die from land conflicts in Para than in any other state, and most cases go unresolved.

Sister Dorothy’s goal was to have the area around Anapú, the town where she lived for more than 20 years, declared a sustainable-development reserve. She was on her way to a meeting with local settlers when two gunmen confronted her. Witnesses reported that she took out her Bible and was reading aloud from it when the men shot her. She was buried in Anapú, a small town about 200 miles southwest of Belem, the state capital. At least 2,000 people attended the funeral.

Last June, Sister Dorothy was falsely accused of inciting violence in Anapú and the surrounding area and of supplying ammunition to the people. At that time, the leadership team of the Sisters of Notre Dame de Namur called for letters of support from the international community in an effort to protect Dorothy and the communities she accompanied.

Despite the danger, Dorothy decided to return to Brazil after a visit to the U.S. In response to the many letters of support she received, Dorothy wrote:

“I want to tell you of my deep gratitude for the tremendous support you sent to me and to the people of Anapú recently. This is a case where the voice of the poor cannot be heard because of the constant danger of assassination, but my belonging to an international Congregation has made it possible for their voices not only to be heard but to receive a favorable response. [On] July 7, the federal police, and land and environmental agents should arrive in Anapú to begin clearing the area of gunmen and their sponsors who have been invading the homesteads of our people, cutting the Amazon forest and turning it into cattle grazing grassland. Already in the last 30 years, 25 percent of the virgin forest has been destroyed. Our project seeks to preserve the forest and promote sustainable development through use of the natural resources such as cacao, pepper, coffee, fruits and dyewoods. We have government titles for some of the land.

“The greed of the invaders, loggers who take out the hardwoods and cattlemen who burn the forest, depletes the already low fertility of the land, causes erosion and temperature rise and lessens the rainfall. When the settlers attempt to defend their land, they are accused of violence. Their homes have been burned, and in the recent trouble, a group of hooded gunmen paid by the cattlemen were repelled by the homesteaders, and one was killed. This is the reason I was falsely accused of supplying ammunition.

“Before flying to the U.S., I went to say goodbye and to bless all the homesteaders, encouraging them to keep up the struggle for the sake of the future of their children. ... I can speak out when others cannot because of my relationship with the church, with my international Congregation and my long years in the area.

“I am grateful to Notre Dame for not asking me to leave. This shows we are aware of the needs of the poor. The sisters have said they are glad I am safe. It is not my safety but that of the people which matters. All of us as the Brazil Unit work very closely with our people and want to be a sign of hope.”

For more information, go to the Sisters of Notre Dame’s website, http://www.sndden.org/news/stang.htm

Faith in action:

Write a letter to the president of Brazil asking that 1) the Brazilian government conduct a federal investigation of Sr. Dorothy’s murder, assuring that the case will be judged in Federal Court; 2) the federal government guarantee the land reserve for sustainable development and give poor farmers in Anapu clear legal title to the land; 3) there is assured, prolonged federal protection for poor farmers in Anapu faced with the anger of the powerful landowners and the loggers; and 4) the federal government work aggressively for land reform in the Amazon.

President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva, Palacio do Planalto, Praca dos Tres Poderes, Brasilia, DF, Brazil.
Venezuela: U.S. targets “negative force”

Mainstream media coverage of Venezuela has focused on that country’s perceived instability. However, Venezuela’s most marginalized communities, who are the people with whom Maryknoll missioners live and work, tend to support the “proceso,” the political movement introduced by President Hugo Chavez. The following article is written by Lisa Sullivan Rodriguez, a Maryknoll lay missioner who has lived in Venezuela for over 20 years.

In recent statements by CIA and State Department chiefs, Venezuela is being targeted as a top area of concern in Latin America. This focus comes at a time when President Chavez has significantly consolidated internal support in Venezuela after overcoming three major efforts to unseat him. It also comes at a time when Chavez increasingly is being perceived as a key spokesperson for the growing anti-globalization movement in Latin America.

In recent statements, CIA Director Porter Goss called Venezuela a “flashpoint for 2005” and a “potential area for instability.” He criticized Chavez, indicating that he is “consolidating his power by using technically legal tactics to target his opponents and meddling in the region.” Likewise, newly-appointed Deputy Secretary of State Robert B. Zoellick, formerly the U.S.’s top trade negotiator and strong supporter of Free Trade Area of the Americas, called Venezuela’s government a “new breed of authoritarianism.”

Not all U.S. policymakers are comfortable with these recent attacks on Venezuela by the Bush administration. When Condoleezza Rice declared at her confirmation hearings that President Chavez was a “negative force in the region” several U.S. senators expressed concern that this could amount to a position of meddling with a democratically elected and popular government. One of them, Sen. Lincoln Chafee (R-RI), called the remarks “disrespectful” both to Chavez and to the Venezuelan people who have gone to the polls repeatedly in the past six years to support his administration.

This new wave of criticism towards Chavez on the part of the Bush administration does not indicate a change of position but of focus and intensity. Previously, efforts by the administration to isolate or remove Chavez from power were pursued by quietly acknowledging, supporting and funding Venezuelan opposition forces. Recently declassified CIA documents indicate that the CIA was well aware of the April 2002 coup plans before the fact, even though at the time the Bush administration vigorously denied having any previous knowledge. The National Endowment for Democracy channeled millions of dollars to over 20 opposition groups in recent years. However, after the failed coup, an unsuccessful oil strike and a stunning defeat in the August referendum, Venezuelan opposition forces have become demoralized and their leaders have all but disappeared from sight.

The recent statements by members of the administration seem to indicate that the State Department has decided to pick up this battle against Chavez themselves. This new focus includes bringing concerns about Venezuela more intentionally to the forefront, throwing around words like “authoritarian democracy” and “elected dictatorship” which gain public attention, while offering few facts to support their use. Elements of the media have not been far behind this portrayal of Venezuela as a source of concern for U.S. citizens. Just last week the Miami Herald used the word “war” for the first time in characterizing tensions between the Bush administration and Chavez, using a subtitle of “Chavez Arms for War with the U.S.” in a recent article. At the same time, Fox news was running a three-part series filled with factual errors entitled: “The Iron Fist of Hugo Chavez.”

Contrary to this portrait of Chavez as an antidemocratic force in Latin America, his supporters would point to an opposite reality, citing Venezuela as a model for initiating major social reform about via the ballot box. Over the past six years Chavez has been not only been elected twice by large majorities, but has promoted and won several referendums, including a participative process to draft a new constitution. This document, frequently found in the pockets of ordinary Venezuelans, led to a series of laws which outlined everything from major land reform to affirmation of state ownership of the all-important oil industry. All of these elections, including the August recall referendum which Chavez won easily with 59 percent of the vote, have been acknowledged as accurate and transparent by groups such as the Carter Center and the OAS.

Meanwhile, the internal situation of Venezuela is at the calmest point in six years. Shortly following the recall victory, Chavez candidates won 21 of 23 governorships in October elections. Many people acknowledge that the growing internal support for Chavez reflects his ability in the past 18 months to transform his promises of social reform into concrete programs and results. Under the title of “missions” and funded by the rev-vamped oil industry, sweeping educational and health care reform has taken place in the poor sectors of the
March/April 2005

country – a sector that comprises 70 percent of the population. Over 17 million Venezuelans have been seen by the 12,000 Cuban doctors who are living and working in the poorest Venezuelan barrios and towns, in an oil-for-doctors program with the Cuban government.

Five nights a week, you can see adults of all ages carrying their pens and notebooks to a local house or community center to participate in Mission Robinson – the basic literacy course which has enticed millions of poor Venezuelans to learn to read and write. While the opposition seemed stunned by their defeat, anyone who lives even near a poor community knew why people would go to such great lengths to support this government. An elderly Mission Robinson graduate from a Barquisimeto barrio recently said, “I’m voting ‘no’ because, for the first time in my life, I can read the question on the ballot and answer the way I want.”

SOA prisoner of conscience, Sr. Lil Mattingly MM

Maryknoll Sister Lil Mattingly recently “crossed the line” as part of a solemn procession during the annual School of the Americas (SOA) Watch vigil at Ft. Benning, GA. (The SOA, the U.S. Army’s training facility for Latin American military officers, was renamed the Western Hemisphere Institute for Security Cooperation several years ago.) The vigil is held each November on the anniversary of the 1989 murder of the six Jesuits and their two female co-workers in El Salvador, a murder orchestrated by graduates of the SOA. The gathering at Ft. Benning also commemorates all victims of SOA-inspired murders in Latin America, including Lil’s Maryknoll Sisters Maura Clarke and Ita Ford, who were killed along with Ursuline Sister Dorothy Kazel and lay woman Jean Donovan in December, 1980.

For her act of trespassing onto federal property, Lil was sentenced to six months in jail. Her prison term will begin in mid-March and will be served at the federal women’s prison in Danbury, CT. Following is the statement she gave to Judge G. Mallon Faircloth at her trial in Columbus, GA on Jan. 25, 2005.

I am grateful for this opportunity to speak, to express what is very deep in my heart. I join a long line of others who have stood here before you, whose experiences and reasons for being accused of breaking a federal law are similar to my own. I value their words which speak to my heart as they cry out for justice, and for an awakening of our U.S. sense of moral outrage in response to a degraded U.S. foreign policy.

I believe that I followed my conscience and my sense of moral outrage by prayerfully and peacefully protesting the school known as Western Hemisphere Institute for Security Cooperation (WHINSEC) at Ft. Benning. I crossed the line because of what the school teaches, what many of its students have done, and what it represents in the madness of military rationale that “might makes right.”

How have I come to know U.S. foreign policy as degraded? Permit me to share with you and the court some of my own personal experience. I grew up in Louisville, KY, in a working-class family in the 1940s-50s, in what I now know to have been a sheltered environment, unaware of the extremes of militarism used for economic and political advantage.

Even when I joined the Maryknoll Sisters in 1960, what was important in the U.S. was that Russia be defeated and that we win all the wars out there for our good and noble people. ... [M]y first awakening that something wasn’t right with our own government was in nursing school in 1970 when I joined most of my class on the streets to protest the war in Vietnam.

Soon after nursing school, I went to my first mission in Bolivia and was delayed because of a bloody takeover that was happening in August 1971. When we were allowed in, I learned that the leader of the military coup was General Hugo Banzer Suarez. He ruled the country; his military chased, grabbed, shot, killed, imprisoned and tortured thousands during his seven years of dictatorship. Not only was he responsible for those horrible physical atrocities, but he also received so-called loans from U.S. banks in the millions, which grew into the billions of dollars that have now enslaved the Bolivian people by an unpayable debt.

Judge Faircloth, if you have ever been to the SOA/WHINSEC that we are presently protesting, you may have seen General Banzer’s picture there in its Hall of Fame. Can you imagine what an insult that is to the beautiful people of Bolivia who suffered terribly under his tyrannical regime?

I was privileged to live for 20 years in Bolivia and to learn from the people there who are oppressed politi-
cally, militarily, and economically; but still the people are committed to peaceful protests. Just recently, 84 indigenous people were shot down by the military and killed for protesting. Bolivia has sent many officers/soldiers to the SOA/WHINSEC, and presently has U.S. military advisors-trainers there now.

In 1980 in El Salvador, protests were also being repressed, and two of my Maryknoll sisters who were helping refugees, were raped and killed along with another sister and lay missioner. Hundreds of thousands died with them in those years when our U.S. policies funded and trained militaries in Central America to fight what they called “communism.” I ask the court to note that of the military officials and soldiers cited for abuses of human rights in reports time after time, many, if not most, are graduates of the SOA/WHINSEC and they continue to operate with impunity in El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Mexico, Colombia ...

The level of deliberate brutality in massacres which we know about where the graduates have practiced the skills learned at this school defies imagination.

In 1987 I lived in Nicaragua. I had gone to accompany our sisters and the people during the U.S.-trained, financed, and illegal “contra war.” At that time, the Sandinista government was trying to implement much-needed social reforms as the dictator Anastasio Somoza, put in power by the U.S., had stolen most everything in the country and left the people starving, landless, uneducated, and terrorized. I myself came to know many persons, Marisol Rodriguez is one, who had lost loved ones, ambushed, executed, beheaded by the contras. One of my own sisters was kidnapped.

Can you see, your honor, how this process of awakening impacted my soul?

The story is long. After being in Nicaragua, I worked for my community in mission education in the Midwest, but grew increasingly frustrated by the Reagan doctrines and growing suppression of the truth about realities in Central America and beyond. Lies and media control were becoming commonplace as U.S. foreign policy became more aggressive and imperialistic.

Part of my frustration when visiting and speaking in schools, parishes, and with groups, was in realizing how misled many of our people were about U.S. foreign policy. That frustration continues today, but even more so, as more persons are deprived of the truth.

Not only do most U.S. persons become frightened and very easily convinced through misinformation of our “need” to go to war, as in the case of Iraq, but the majority erroneously believes that the U.S. is number one in helping other countries. Statistics tell us otherwise, that we are one of the last in the order of industrialized nations in giving foreign aid. These are only two indications of how our people are misinformed. ...

I could talk about Iraq, my experience there in December 2002, and how I have become convinced that every U.S. citizen needs to be aware of how greed for oil and power have taken us to terrible extremes leading to the widespread death and destruction we have caused there.

And for those of us who know how the SOA/WHINSEC was responsible for the training of militaries to assassinate persons struggling for human rights in Latin America, we are seeing recently how these same strategies are in the planning to be used against the people of Iraq. Some believe that death squads, as used in El Salvador, will destroy the resistance. This is the so-called “Salvador Option,” which means killing the civilians who will not turn in the insurgents.

What is our country becoming?

Can you see, Judge Faircloth, why we continue to peacefully protest, and put our bodies on the line to bring attention to these injustices? I have tried to follow my convictions, to follow a higher law. I am inspired by a long line of nonviolent resisters. Before taking the action in November, I spent years writing and calling members of Congress to vote to close the SOA/WHINSEC... marching, praying, and fasting so others would know what WHINSEC is and does, until I realized that very few were listening, and that I needed to do something more. I thank all who have supported me.

Your honor, we can only bring about peace through love and justice in our world. This is what befits our good and noble people. Thank you.
Haiti: One year after coup, tragedy persists

One person was killed on Monday, February 28, when Haitian police opened fire on a crowd of demonstrators protesting last year’s U.S.-supported ouster of former President Jean-Bertrand Aristide. A few days earlier, an armed gang broke into the city’s main prison and released more than 500 prisoners, including Yvon Neptune, a former Lavalas prime minister, and Jocelerme Privert, a former interior minister. Both returned to prison that day; they have been in prison for months without charges. Sean McConnell, an intern with the Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns, contributed to this article.

Aristide was forced into exile following intense pressure from a united, U.S.-backed opposition movement and weeks of armed conflict during which insurgents, including members of Haiti’s disbanded military and violent paramilitary groups, took over much of northern Haiti. Since then, an interim government, led by former chief justice, now interim President Boniface Alexandre and Prime Minister Gerard Latortue, has routinely used violence and imprisonment to repress religious workers, former government officials, members of Aristide’s party, Fanmi Lavalas, labor unions, peasant organizations, and other political activists.

According to the United Nations, the appointment of Alexandre as interim president followed constitutional rules of succession. The Caribbean Community and Common Market (CARICOM), however, has consistently refused to recognize the interim government, and an Organization of American States (OAS) resolution acknowledged that “an unconstitutional alteration of the constitutional regime” had occurred in Haiti. Other sources assert that, even if Aristide did resign and was not forced out of office as he claims, the interim president should have been confirmed by the Haitian Parliament. The Parliament has not met since January 2004, when terms of most legislators expired. Furthermore, new presidential elections were to have been held between 45 and 90 days after Aristide left office.

Various analyses of the situation in Haiti paint dramatically different pictures of the past and point toward very different futures, but recent accounts of violent and repressive actions, including by official forces, speak for themselves.

Brian Concannon, director of the Institute for Justice and Democracy in Haiti (IJDH), said, “After Haiti’s democratic governments struggled for nine years to break with the country’s dictatorial, violent past, today’s power brokers embraced the worst chapters of that past in one short year. The hated army returned and resumed its trademark brutality, a presidential election deadline was ignored, political prisoners filled the jails, and the justice system was attacked and ignored. Execution returned as a routine police tactic, rape as [a] means of political persuasion. Journalists are executed and arrested, radio stations attacked and shut down.”

The International Crisis group says, “... there are no clear signs of either political reconciliation or economic reconstruction. Violence — criminal, score settling and political — is still extremely high. The initiative for a national dialogue jointly endorsed by the transitional government and the international community is hindered by political polarization, human rights abuses (some by rogue elements of the Haitian National Police, HNP), and illegal detentions of Aristide supporters.”

Elections planned for late 2005 are unlikely to produce the legitimate government the country needs without significant improvements in security, a pluralistic national dialogue that establishes some common objectives for the next government and a measure of social justice.
Kenya: Anti-corruption program threatened

One year ago Transparency International (TI) gave a very positive assessment of Kenya’s efforts to curtail corruption. Their 2004 report said, “The overall results provide strong indication that the government’s campaign against corruption has had a significant positive impact on the vulnerability of ordinary citizens to corruption, and petty bribery in particular... It is important to note however, that the survey does not adequately capture corruption at the higher levels.”

The recent resignation of respected anti-corruption campaigner John Githongo from the Kenyan government underscored that concern.

AfricaFocus Bulletin (Feb. 11, 2005) wrote, “In a speech in May 2000, Githongo, who was the head of the Kenyan branch of Transparency International (TI), before joining the new government in early 2003, distinguished between the petty corruption of bribery among minor officials, grand corruption at senior ranks, and ‘looting’ - scams of such a scale that they have macroeconomic impact.”

The U.S. suspended assistance to Kenya’s anti-corruption program after Githongo’s resignation, and other donors issued strong statements. Foreign Minister Chirau Ali Mwakwere and Justice Minister Kiraitu Murungi vociferously denounced the criticism as foreign lies. But several other cabinet members, including Health Minister Charity Ngilu and Planning Minister Peter Anyang’ Nyong’o, joined civil society critics in demanding that top officials involved in corruption should resign. The February 8 statement from Kenyan civil society follows:

We, the undersigned civil society and private sector associations and organisations would like to express our anger and outrage at the implications of the resignation of John Githongo from the position of Permanent Secretary for Governance and Ethics under the Office of the President.

As the founder of the Kenyan chapter of Transparency International (TI), Githongo brought to the government ethical credibility and legitimacy whose financial benefits can only be said to be indisputable. Thus his resignation, despite already being framed by the government as being the result of “professional opportunism” sounds the death knell on this government's purported anti-corruption effort.

The implications of his resignation are many, however much this government may try to dispute them:

First, his resignation makes it clear that the influence of reform-minded civil society actors in government with respect to accountability is over. We are particularly concerned about the fate of other former civil society actors in anti-corruption initiatives as well as in the Law Reform Commission and Kenya National Human Rights Commission (KNHRC);

Second, his resignation makes it clear that of the two parallel imperatives within this government -- the first being ethical and reform-minded and the second being corrupt and politically-expedient -- the latter is winning. We are especially concerned about the future of the so-called ‘war against corruption’ in this dynamic;

Third, his resignation makes it clear that the plethora of so-called anti-corruption initiatives need harmonisation and legal standing. We no longer believe in this government’s commitment to hold individuals and institutions accountable for corruption. The Attorney General’s office ... has failed to use its Constitutional powers and has become an accomplice to corruption;

Fourth, Githongo’s resignation from the position of advisor to the President on matters of ethics and governance, makes its clear that the President has lost interest in the anti-corruption effort in this country. We no longer have faith that the President’s personal commitment to anti-corruption exists.

We therefore demand that:

1. The President immediately dismisses all Cabinet ministers and suspends all senior government officials against whom substantive allegations of corruption have been made;
2. The President immediately re-constitute his government on the basis of competence and integrity ... ;
3. Parliament consider a vote of no confidence in this government in the absence of Presidential action on the above;
4. Parliament insist on the right to freedom of information and demand to subject to public scrutiny the budget for anti-corruption initiatives ... ;
5. Civil society organisations, including the private sector, re-consider its engagement in smokescreen reform efforts ... until such accountability measures are taken;
6. Citizens, local businesses and other civil society organisations halt the payment of all taxes until such accountability measures are taken.

In addition, we demand that the President and the rest of the Executive guarantee the safety of Githongo ...

For more information see www@africafocus.org.
Zimbabwe: Food security worsens; elections draw near

Zimbabwean parliamentary elections are scheduled for March 31, 2005. Zimbabwean and internal coalitions have been and are continuing to question the electoral environment being established by the Government of Zimbabwe (GoZ). Food security continues to be an issue and is worsening. In late January, the Famine Early Warning System (FEWS) upgraded the status of Zimbabwean food security from a “warning” to “emergency.” The following article was written by George Corrigan, OFM, an intern with the Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns.

In November 2004, 2.2 million rural people needed food assistance; the World Food Program (WFP) and its NGO partners assisted 1.6 million people. FEWS last week said 5.8 million Zimbabweans - almost half the population - were in need of food aid as of January 2005 – a figure the GoZ disputes.

The steadily increasing need for basic assistance is due to a combination of factors, including inadequate commercial and household crop production, and shrinking income options. While urban dwellers are affected, people in the rural areas are affected more because in the face of inadequate household crop production, they do not possess the income to “compete” on the open market for grains. The rise in maize grain prices far outstrips the people’s ability to acquire maize from either the Grain Marketing Board (GMB) or from private sources.

Even in the grain surplus areas in the north central part of the country a bucket of grain (18 kg) which sold for US$1.45 in May, sold for $2.72 in October and has continued to rise, passing $3.63 at the end of the year. This increase has significantly affected the monthly cost of “basic goods and services” for a family of six, now estimated at $253 – in the face of a minimum wage of $79/month. In the perennially drought-affected provinces of Masvingo, Midlands, Matabeleland North and Matebeleland South, grain prices are even higher. Many producers have kept the reduced local production for private sale, leading to a situation where the GMB only has 16 percent of the needed maize grain supplies in reserve. Meanwhile the government, previously having decided not to renew an appeal for international food aid, continues to proclaim record harvests. The next maize grain harvest is May/June 2006.

At the same time the nation is preparing for parliamentary elections at the end of March.

In early February the GoZ announced large one-time cash payments – along with increased educational and health benefits – for “war veterans.” Cash payments would amount to $1,650 per eligible person. Independent sources estimate the total program cost to be as much as $41 million. Gideon Gono, governor of the Reserve Bank of Zimbabwe (RBZ), warned that a large payout would be a serious detriment to its efforts to fight severe inflation. Economist and member of the RBZ’s advisory board, Eric Bloch, said the payouts made more political than economic sense, with parliamentary elections due on March 31. “That is blatantly an act of vote buying ahead of elections in March, and that will have a negative impact on the government’s deficit, as it will have to resort to more borrowing. The decision will counteract the bank’s efforts to fight inflation.” In 1997, the government made a large unbudgeted payout to war veterans, which resulted in severe inflation and a fall in the value of the Zimbabwe dollar. This latter effect reduces the ability of GoZ to purchase grains from neighboring countries such as South Africa and Zambia.

In early February, the government also raised the allowances and salaries of chiefs and village heads by 150 percent.

At a mission center in rural Zimbabwe (names and location withheld by request), the experience of a community of religious men is not atypical. After the 2004 grain harvest, they sold part of the harvest to the GMB, retained part in storage and for seed production, allowed a portion of the fields to be harvested by the local people for their own needs, and then used the remaining for cattle grazing.

In Zimbabwe, the term “war vets” is used to cover a wide variety of people, some of whom have no connection to the war for independence. In some parts of Zimbabwe, the “war vets” are really youth brigades supported and funded by the leading political party. A group of such “war vets” came to the mission center and demanded the grain in storage. The leader of the religious
community negotiated with those making the demands so that only a portion of the grain was taken. The next day, the community made arrangements to distribute the remaining grain to local people and other groups in need – knowing that the “war vet” would return. When the “war vets” returned and realized the grain had been given away, they took the mission’s cows.

This mission center is part of a religious foundation with international connections, allowing it the possibility of replacing the grain seed and livestock. But the same things are happening to individual farmers and other rural people – especially those suspected of not supporting the current in-power political party. These people do not have the means or possibility of replacing their losses – natural or man-made.

These are the same people who will not be able to vote without producing new written proof that they reside in the community where they are registered. This new requirement was instituted in January. Critics do not believe the requirement is necessary and many rural voters will not discover the requirement until election day. Voters in rural areas are required to produce written confirmation from their chiefs and village heads. What can the people of Zimbabwe do?

Faith in action:

Zimbabwe is one of several African countries which suffer from emergency food conditions. Visit the Catholic Relief Services website (www.catholicrelief.org) to learn more about the status of the U.S.’s response and how you can initiate contact with members of Congress and the White House to 1) encourage an immediate release of more resources from the Bill Emerson Humanitarian Trust (BEHT), a food reserve intended for unanticipated food shortages in poor countries, and 2) advocate that the FY2006 budget includes robust funding for food aid.

Sudan: Peace agreements, peacekeepers, war crimes and more tragedy

During the month of January, significant steps were made in the progress toward peace with the formal signing and approval of the southern Sudan peace agreement. The UN called for a 10,000-member Africa Union (AU) peacekeeper contingent to monitor the nascent peace in the south. Meanwhile, the AU monitors in Sudan’s Darfur region continued to be understaffed while the violence, fueled by the janjaweed militia, the Government of Sudan (GoS) and rebel forces, spread further. On January 31, UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan made his official remarks on the report of the UN’s International Commission of Inquiry on Darfur. The following article is written by George Corrigan, OFM, an intern with the Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns.

January 9, 2005 was a touchstone moment in the history of modern Sudan as a formal peace agreement was signed between the GoS and the Southern Sudanese SPLM/A rebels. The agreement establishes a window of opportunity for the people of southern Sudan to fulfill their quest for self-identity. The opportunity exists for a meaningful peace to be fashioned after 20 years of violence that has claimed the lives of over two million people and made refugees of an equal number. But a host of other events threaten the fragile peace, including:

- The return of hundreds of thousands of refugees from Uganda, Ethiopia and Kenya, as well as other countries;
- The return of hundreds of thousands of internally displaced persons (IDPs) from northern and eastern Sudan;
- The need for humanitarian relief to support so many people returning to southern Sudan;
- Land and property disputes among those returning and those who stayed; as well as emerging issues as social and political expectations encounter the reality of a complex peace arrangement.

The scope of the humanitarian problem is indicated by the World Food Programme (WFP) challenge to its donors to support the southern Sudan peace. WFP appealed for $302 million to fund emergency food relief for 3.2 million people in the south during 2005.

The complexity of returning people is indicated by one example: There are 240,000 Sudanese refugees living in camps in northern Uganda who are reluctant to consider repatriation for a variety of reasons, including the lack of basic civil society facilities in southern Sudan. Many of the refugees in Uganda are neither SPLM/A...
sympathizers nor Dinkas, the ethnic community from which the SPLM/A gets its core support. They are concerned for their reintegration into southern Sudan whose peace was signed without their input or representation.

Clearly there needs to be sufficient international commitment to what will be an ongoing process. To that end, the United Nations has asked that the AU provide 10,000 soldiers and 1,100 policemen to form a peace monitoring group for southern Sudan. To date, the AU has been unable to field the full complement of peace monitors for its Darfur operations.

On February 1, Secretary-General Kofi Annan reported on the UN International Commission of Inquiry on Darfur. “The Commission has established that the Government of Sudan and the janjaweed are responsible for crimes under international law. It also found that attacks on villages, killing of civilians, rape, pillaging and forced displacement have continued even while it was conducting its inquiry.” It was reported that janjaweed, GoS and rebel forces are responsible for serious violations which may amount to war crimes, including murder of civilians and pillage. The report concluded that the GoS “has not pursued a policy of genocide” although it adds that “the crimes against humanity and war crimes that have been committed in Darfur may be no less serious and heinous than genocide.” The findings of the commission, working from The Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide in effect since January 1951, which (in article 2) defines genocide as acts committed with intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnic, racial or religious group, as such, “deliberately inflicting on the group conditions of life calculated to bring about its physical destruction in whole or in part.” The Commission did not find sufficient intent for genocide, rather laid the actions at the feet of tribal, political and land-based issues.

At the same time the world is slowly coming to the understanding that the UN-reported 70,000 deaths in Darfur is a serious underestimate. On February 8, both the New York Times and Washington Post reported on the work of Dr. Jan Coebergh who, in the influential British publication Parliamentary Brief, detailed that at least 300,000 people have died in Darfur. His work combines the findings of a variety of non-Sudanese governmental and NGO agencies. More troubling is the report of monthly mortality rate estimates of 10,000 to 35,000. Unchecked, the numbers of death could approach the totals of the Rwandan massacres.

The tragedy of Darfur in many ways has had unprecedented press coverage in the United States especially through the work of the newspapers already cited, as well as untiring individual advocates. Both houses of the U.S. Congress have passed resolutions condemning the violence and naming the tragedy as genocide. The U.S. is by far the largest monetary contributor to aid and relief to Darfur, yet, the security conditions in Darfur are only degrading since the end of 2004 causing more NGOs and aid agencies to curtail or stop relief operations inside Sudan. Without increased international action, to prevent what the GoS has not, or will not, stop, the war crimes will continue. People will die in Darfur and other governments will understand the blueprint of how to accomplish its objectives short of “genocide.”

Faith in action:

The Save Darfur Coalition is an alliance of over 100 faith-based, humanitarian and human rights organizations whose mission is to raise public awareness and to mobilize an effective unified response to the atrocities that threaten the lives of people in the Darfur region. The Coalition’s unity statement was signed by more than 100 organizations and had its beginnings July 14, 2004 when the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum and American Jewish World Service organized a Darfur Emergency Summit at the CUNY Graduate Center in Manhattan featuring Holocaust survivor and Nobel Peace Prize winner Elie Wiesel. Wiesel inspired the group with his impassioned remarks about the suffering being inflicted on Darfurians: “How can I hope to move people from indifference if I remain indifferent to the plight of others? I cannot stand idly by or all my endeavors will be unworthy.”

Go to the “Take Action Now” page on their website which contains practical and simple steps for individuals and communities: www.savedarfur.org
S. Africa bishops: Poverty kills like tsunami

The following media statement was released by the Southern African Catholic Bishops’ Conference (SACBC) on February 2. For more information on the SACBC, go to its website at http://www.sacbc.org.za/.

The recent devastating tsunami in South East Asia has shown that when the citizens of the world demand it, political leaders can act. However, poverty kills the equivalent of a tsunami every week throughout the world, a situation that is completely unacceptable and which requires the same political will if it is to be overcome.

Reflecting on South Africa’s strong role in engaging with world leaders on international development issues, the SACBC said that overcoming poverty remains not only South and Southern Africa’s, but the world’s greatest challenge. The SACBC also noted recent debates about a debt moratorium for tsunami-hit countries and the deliberations of the British Prime Minister’s Africa Commission.

However, greater advances must be made on these initiatives through the forthcoming series of international summit meetings which will take place throughout 2005. In fact, concerted international action is required to deliver results on the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) through real debt cancellation, trade justice, and better international development aid.

Multilateral debt cancellation

The first step on the road to overcoming poverty must be decisive debt cancellation for poor countries. With the many promises of debt relief made before by world leaders, people can be forgiven for believing that the debt burden has been lifted from the poor of the world. However, poor countries continue to pay $100 million dollars a day in debt repayments. This is both unsustainable and unjust if anti-poverty programmes are to be prioritised.

We believe that the G7 Finance Ministers meeting in London during the first week of February 2005 can act to deal decisively with this situation. We urge them to reach agreement on working towards 100 per cent multilateral debt cancellation for poor African countries. Recent proposals are welcome but more decisive action should be taken to include more countries that require debt cancellation, and to introduce a fair and transparent international procedure for debt cancellation.

Trade justice

The present international trading system is very unjust. More attention must therefore be given to building a more equitable international trading system that at once offers preferential trading opportunities to producers from poor countries, protects the jobs and livelihoods of vulnerable communities, and guarantees the provision of affordable public services to the poor.

International development aid

At the same time, rich countries must honour their long-standing commitment to increase international development aid levels to at least 0.7 percent of their GDP. However, such sustained development aid grants must not be traded off against debt cancellation.

Political leadership in under-developed countries

Correspondingly, political leaders in under-developed countries in Africa must introduce development programmes, practices of good governance and anti-corruption measures, to support the efforts of communities to lift themselves out of the poverty trap. Communities must also take responsibility to build their social institutions and take action to participate in efforts aimed at overcoming poverty. Some initiatives undertaken through the New Partnership for Africa’s Development (NEPAD), such as the African Peer Review Mechanism (APRM), represent a promising start in this regard.

Conclusion

The year 2005 offers a unique opportunity for rich and poor countries to act together to end world poverty. The SACBC recommits itself to the extensive anti-poverty programmes that it undertakes through its various agencies, and to expanded partnerships with different role-players, both national and international, in overcoming poverty.

It is possible, in this generation, to relegate extreme poverty to the archives of South African and world history, the SACBC said. However, this requires strong political will, the inclusion of all state and civil society role-players, ownership by communities, and the prioritisation of resources towards achieving the Millennium Development Goals.
MidEast: U.S. should commit to Iraqi withdrawal

The Friends Committee on National Legislation (FCNL) has urged Congress to declare the U.S. intention to completely withdraw from Iraq, and to give Iraqis full control over funds for national reconstruction. The complete FCNL statement, from which the following is taken, can be found at www.fcnl.org.

The war policies of President Bush present Congress with a paradox: It is unthinkable for the U.S. to leave Iraq as a failed state, yet a continuing U.S. military presence in Iraq may well lead to a failed state.

...(W)ill Congress “stay the course” and fund the same failed war policies of the past two years, or will it condition funding on the U.S. implementing new policies to de-escalate the violent conflict, to end the occupation, and to return Iraq to Iraqis?

To “stay the course” means confronting insurgent violence with greater U.S. violence. The temptation to stay the course stems partly from a denial of the reality that the U.S. preventive war and nation-building experiment in Iraq have failed. “Success” for the U.S. in Iraq is no longer an option, if it ever was. War is not the answer.

Some argue that U.S. responsibility under international law to restore security and protect civilians demands that the U.S. military remain and help stabilize Iraq. In fact, the presence and offensive operations of U.S. troops have become the greatest threats to Iraq’s future. U.S. operations, including aerial bombings, city sieges (witness Fallujah), and neighborhood sweeps, foster resentment among Iraqis, fuel the insurgency, and threaten lives. Iraqi security forces are attacked more often when U.S. troops are present, and the Green Zone – a barricaded neighborhood housing the interim Iraqi government alongside the U.S. embassy – has become a prime target for suicide bombings and mortar attacks.

Arguably, sufficient military force could overcome the insurgency with time. “Sufficient” might mean a U.S. troop strength of a quarter million or more staying for a decade. That will not happen and, because of the inevitable civilian casualties, it would not be recommendable. To fulfill the moral and legal obligations it has incurred to help rebuild Iraq, the U.S. must now accept its responsibility and withdraw.

The Bush administration continues to claim its experiment in building democracy through war is on track. In fact, since the invasion and occupation nearly two years ago, the U.S. has failed to meet its obligations under international law to restore security, support reconstruction, and return sovereignty to Iraqis. Instead, the occupation has been mired in a long list of missteps, scandals, and abuses. Moreover, any progress made toward a new political order in Iraq has been eclipsed by the surging violence and swelling resentment of many Iraqis. ...

In February, the White House (sent) Congress a fourth war “supplemental” spending request, adding (nearly $82 billion) to the more than $187 billion already appropriated. The war has cost far more and lasted far longer than the administration estimated in 2003.

The human costs of the war now include [1,500] U.S. troops killed and some [10,000] wounded; an estimated 100,000 Iraqi civilian deaths from war and occupation; as many as 100,000 returning U.S. troops in need of mental health care; billions of dollars in Iraqi revenue and reconstruction funds lost due to violence, war-profiteering, and mismanagement of funds by U.S. authorities; and rising anti-U.S. sentiment globally.

...(L)egislators should condition any further funding on the U.S. taking clear steps toward the withdrawal of all its troops and bases from Iraq and support for Iraqi-led reconstruction.

Meeting U.S. moral and legal obligations to restore security and rebuild Iraq requires the removal – not build-up – of U.S. forces. FCNL calls on the administration and Congress to:

• Cease fire: Halt U.S. military actions immediately;
• Declare withdrawal policy: Congress should pass a “leave no bases behind” resolution, declaring that U.S. policy is to withdraw all U.S. forces and bases from Iraq;
• End the occupation: Withdraw immediately U.S. forces from major population centers to remote temporary bases and shift to a limited role of providing border control and assuring Iraq’s territorial integrity until other security forces can take over;
• Support Iraqi sovereignty: Fund Iraqi efforts to re-employ ministry staff, train new police and security forces;
• Nationalize reconstruction: Give Iraqis control over reconstruction funds, terminate contracts with U.S. contractors and turn projects over to Iraqis, and provide transparent accounting of all U.S. contracts;
• Stabilize Iraq: Commit to long-term U.S. financial support for Iraqi-led reconstruction.
Church asks U.S. help over taxes in Israel

The U.S. Catholic Conference of Bishops (USCCB) has asked the U.S. Secretary of State to help work out taxation and property disputes between Israel and the Vatican, saying their resolution is key for the religious liberty of Christian communities in Israel. In their appeal Jan. 13 to Condoleezza Rice, the bishops made no distinction between the state of Israel and the occupied Palestinian territories, where many Church properties, including popular pilgrim destinations, are found.

"Among the most critical issues facing the Church in Israel is its ability to maintain its rights to Church properties," the bishops wrote. "Maintaining these properties is key to the mission and ministry of the Church in the Holy Land and thus its religious freedom."

Bishop William S. Skylstad of Spokane, WA, USCCB president, said Israel’s taxation of Church properties, as well as a lack of access to Israeli courts to settle property disputes, violate international law.

In 2002 Israel began taxing religious properties that up to that point had been exempt. The Vatican argues that this violates UN Resolution 181 of 1947, which in effect created Israel and which specified that religious properties that had previously been exempt from taxation should remain so. Officials also say the tax burden would force many monasteries and convents to close.

With respect to due process, Israel maintains that under a 1924 law from the British mandate era, disputes concerning Church property are considered outside the jurisdiction of Israeli courts and should be decided by the government. The Vatican insists that religious property owners should be able to turn to the courts to resolve disputes.

The USCCB welcomed the Fundamental Agreement of 1993 between the Holy See and the State of Israel, in which the Vatican formally recognized and established diplomatic ties with Israel, Bishop Skylstad wrote. He said other issues were left to be resolved based on the Church’s rights acquired before UN Resolution 181. “These rights were reaffirmed in the UN mandate establishing the state of Israel and in the Israeli declaration of independence,” he added.

“Our concerns do not minimize the suffering of Jews and Muslims, but the issues between the government of Israel and the Holy See are also of great importance for religious liberty, not only for the Catholic Church but for the vitality of all the Christian communities within Israel," he said.

Members of a Vatican delegation expressed frustration in December when, at the last minute, the Israeli government canceled a meeting aimed at finalizing taxation issues for Church entities. The on-again, off-again talks had been revived in July 2004 due to strong U.S. encouragement, but things did not run smoothly.

"(W)e have been told the Israeli negotiators have not had full empowerment to conduct talks with the degree of seriousness they need," Bishop Skylstad wrote. "The failure to enact and implement the Fundamental Agreement, including the lack of progress in negotiations on economic matters, raises serious questions about the basic commitments made by the Israeli government.”

"U.S. intervention in this matter is critical. We ask you to urge the government of Israel to renew its negotiations with the Holy See without further delays,” he told Secretary Rice. "Resolving these matters is vital to the mission and life of the Catholic Church as well as other Christian communities in the Holy Land. A just resolution of these serious concerns is also critical to interreligious relations in the wider region and the world.”

The USCCB sent a similar letter on Jan. 10 to Daniel Ayalon, Israel’s ambassador to the U.S., urging Israel to move the negotiations forward “expeditiously and effectively.”

Israeli and Vatican representatives were reportedly preparing to resume negotiations in mid-February over the issues of taxation of Church properties and the right of due process in Israeli courts.

On another issue, a Vatican spokesperson told Catholic News Service that only limited progress has been made over delays in granting Israeli visas to foreign Church personnel. The source said visas are now expedited for most Church applicants, but delays persist for applicants from Arab countries. (See “Visa delays hamper Church ministry” in May-June 2004 NewsNotes.)

Faith in action:

In the 1993 Fundamental Agreement, Israel recognized the right of the Catholic Church to maintain its own institutions in order to carry out its religious, moral, educational and charitable functions. Write to the Israeli Embassy and urge Israel to dialogue in good faith with the Holy See over outstanding issues. Ambassador Daniel Ayalon, Embassy of Israel, 3514 International Drive, N.W., Washington, D.C. 20008.
Two Koreas: Trade might improve political ties

A special economic zone in North Korea three miles north of the Demilitarized Zone employs North Korean workers in South Korean factories. The combination of North Korean labor with South Korean capital and technology offers a glimpse of potential benefits and challenges that would face a united Korea.

The Gaeseong Industrial Complex opened in December with two factories employing 340 workers. The two are among 15 South Korean firms chosen from 230 applicants to participate in the project’s initial phase.

The complex is projected to be fully developed by 2012. More than 2,000 companies are expected to employ one million workers – 280,000 South Koreans and 720,000 North Koreans – who will produce $20 billion in goods annually. While South Korean companies will benefit from low production costs, North Korea will earn an estimated $600 million a year from taxes on wages and corporate profits.

The zone’s first output, 2,000 cooking pots from Livingart, a Seoul-based kitchenware manufacturer, sold out in a Seoul department store in two days. “We plan to export 70 percent of the products from Gaeseong to European countries, as those countries do not place high tariffs on kitchenware made in North Korea,” said Chang Jung-gil, a director of Livingart. “We expect $3 million in exports monthly if the factory in Gaeseong manufactures products as good as South Koreans make.”

The second company at the complex, SJ Tech, makes rubber components for automobiles and plastic components for computers. It completed a factory and an office building at the park in December. Lim Hwang-ryong, a director of SJ Tech, said a quarter of the products from Gaeseong will be destined for export to China, Germany, Mexico, Sweden and the Middle East.

Hyun Chung-eun, chairwoman of Hyundai Group, said she hopes Gaeseong will become an economic powerhouse once goods can be transported by rail to China and Russia, and after a new highway is built to connect Gaeseong to Inchon’s international airport and city harbor.

The arrangement at Gaeseong benefits both countries. A typical wage in the industrial park is $57.50 a month, compared with the $1,000 that South Koreans demand. At North Korea’s official exchange rate, the lower salary is still three times as much as the average North Korean worker makes, and 19 times more if calculated at the market rate.

The complex is managed by Hyundai Asan Corp., the South Korean company leading the project, and the Korea Land Corp., South Korea’s state-run land developer. “This month we will complete a power distribution grid which will be connected from Paju, South Korea, to the complex,” according to Song Yong-kwon of Hyundai Asan. He added that Hyundai Asan planned to lay 100 telephone lines by February. He also said a 2 million-kilowatt thermal plant would be built by 2009 to provide power for the project’s second stage of development.

Nonetheless, the industrial complex could fail early unless the companies make a profit. Many experts predict that export controls for strategic materials will be a major obstacle in building production facilities, and import restrictions will be a primary barrier in selling products manufactured at the complex. The South Korean government has not approved the moving of production equipment requested by two companies because of defense-related export restrictions.

The U.S. government also has regulations governing the export or re-export of U.S.- or foreign-made goods containing U.S. technology to certain countries including North Korea. In addition, North Korean exports are virtually banned in the U.S., and some North Korean products face high import barriers in Europe and Japan.

North Korea’s nuclear policies and the response of other nations could also affect the outcome of the Gaeseong enterprise. North Korea has established diplomatic, economic and cultural ties with many Western nations. By contrast, the U.S. threatens to ask the UN Security Council for economic sanctions against North Korea over its nuclear weapons program. On Feb. 10 North Korea claimed again to possess nuclear weapons. If the nuclear issue is not settled by the latter part of 2006 when large numbers of South Korean companies begin to move into the complex, it could threaten the success of the project.

Faith in action:

Write to President Bush. Point out that U.S. pressure alone is unlikely to change North Korea’s nuclear policy and could impede relations between North Korea and South Korea. The U.S. should continue negotiations with North Korea through six-party talks without setting preconditions, which undercut North Korea’s status as an equal negotiating partner and weakens its position in the region.
Democratizing the World Bank and IMF

The following statement, written by the IFI (International Financial Institutions) Democracy Coalition, anticipates the debate about selection of a World Bank president to succeed James Wolfensohn, who will retire within the next year. It was prepared by a group of non-governmental organizations who are committed to improving governance of the IFIs. The statement was endorsed by 49 organizations from many different countries. Traditionally, the United States has named the World Bank president and European countries have selected the managing director of the International Monetary Fund (IMF). Efforts failed last year to initiate a more democratic process for selection of the IMF managing director.

As James Wolfensohn’s term as World Bank president nears its end, we alert the public that world leaders are preparing to appoint the head of a major international financial institution behind closed doors for the second time within a year. Just as we condemned the overtly undemocratic selection of the IMF managing director, we now warn that the same is likely to happen again at the World Bank. Recognizing that these institutions remain rooted in an outdated model of governance, we call on the member governments and the institutions themselves to take responsibility for creating and following a process that is consistent with contemporary standards of democracy.

After World War II, it was widely considered acceptable for technocrats to make foreign aid and development policies in secrecy. But today citizens and civil society recognize an urgent need for greater democratic involvement in and improved governance of global institutions. This demands processes that provide for more transparency, direct civic input, and public accountability. We interpret the fact that over 50 countries have adopted freedom of information laws, with half of them doing so over the last decade, as a sure sign that citizens and civil society organizations are able interlocutors with full intent of meeting the responsibility of active democratic participation.

But it is widely recognized that democratic institutions at the national level alone will not solve the modern “democratic deficit.” Today, international financial institutions (IFIs) wield tremendous power over the economies of developing countries in matters ranging from trade policy to the level and composition of public expenditures to the role of the private sector. Yet, the IFIs are stuck in a 19th century model, with a few very powerful people operating as the ultimate authorities by “unwritten agreement.” In the 21st century, people demand transparency and accountability. Only by re-shaping our global institutions can we accomplish these objectives.

We support the spirit of some recent governance reform proposals at the IFIs, although we recognize that they do not advocate the kinds of systemic changes that we find necessary. In 2000 broad-based public criticism of the undemocratic selection of Horst Köhler as the IMF managing director compelled the World Bank and IMF to establish a joint panel of board members to recommend guidelines for the next succession. However, even this limited reform proposal, presented to the IFIs’ boards in 2001, was ignored in the 2004 selection process of Rodrigo Rato as the new IMF managing director. The closed-door process prompted unprecedented criticism from within the institutions as 11 IMF board members (representing well over 100 countries) issued a public statement calling for a more open process without geographical restrictions. Similarly, recent proposals to improve the “voice and vote” of developing countries on the executive boards of the World Bank and IMF have also not been adopted. While these proposed initiatives would still fall far short of the structural changes required, we support their spirit of reform to bring outdated governance structures of IFIs up to modern democratic standards.

We strongly affirm the need for the public in both borrowing countries, whose citizens are affected by their operations, and rich countries, whose governments exercise disproportionate influence at IFIs, to have a far greater degree of input into the decision making processes than currently exists. As a starting point, we call on the establishment of a transparent and accountable process for the selection of the next World Bank president. The process should provide for the selection on the basis of explicit criteria, including the commitment to a genuine democratization of the institution, and be open to candidates from all countries. Furthermore, we call on the IFIs themselves to support such a process. This time around, IFIs will have to demonstrate that they are the appropriate channels for development resources, and one part of proving that is accepting responsibility for their own governance.
UN: Darfur should be referred to the ICC

Members and leaders of 72 faith-based groups have urged President Bush to support a UN Security Council resolution to refer the Darfur crisis to the International Criminal Court (ICC).

The conflict in western Sudan has claimed more than 70,000 lives. In September, then-Secretary of State Colin Powell called the violence in Darfur “genocide.” However, only the Security Council can refer the Darfur situation to the ICC for investigation and possible prosecution of the leaders responsible.

The U.S. has condemned the violence in Darfur, but it seems likely to suggest an alternative to an ICC referral, such as setting up a new ad hoc international court. The U.S. is adamantly opposed to the ICC, claiming that it could subject U.S. citizens to spurious, politically motivated charges.

In fact, it is highly unlikely that a U.S. citizen would ever stand trial at the ICC. Created under the Rome Statute of 1998, the ICC steps in only if a nation’s courts are unwilling or unable to make a good faith effort to investigate or prosecute an alleged crime. President Clinton signed the statute in December 2000, but President Bush “nullified” the U.S. signature in May 2002.

Nicholas D. Kristof of the New York Times writes, “Reasonable people can differ about the court, but for Mr. Bush to put his ideological opposition to it over the welfare of the 10,000 people still dying every month in Darfur – that’s just madness.”

The full text of the religious leaders’ Feb. 4 letter to President Bush follows:

As representatives of religious organizations and faith-based groups, we urge the United States to support a United Nations Security Council resolution to refer the Darfur crisis to the International Criminal Court (ICC).

The conflict in western Sudan is estimated to have claimed more than 70,000 lives and displaced millions of people – acts which former Secretary of State Colin Powell termed genocide. The ICC was established precisely to prosecute acts of genocide, war crimes and crimes against humanity.

Pope Paul VI said, “If you want peace, work for justice.” U.S. churches have decried the violence in Darfur and called for peace, but the world’s response has been woefully inadequate. The U.S. Catholic Conference of Bishops has called on the U.S., the UN, the African Union and the international community to secure a ceasefire in Darfur, protect innocent civilians, ensure the delivery of humanitarian assistance and seek a negotiated settlement.

The Jewish Council for Public Affairs has called for UN intervention into “the dire situation in Darfur where mass murder, forced starvation, slavery and the rape of women and children continues to go unchecked.”

Statements such as these were adopted in addition to entreaties from the Save Darfur Coalition, comprising more than 70 faith-based, humanitarian and human rights organizations.

At the direction of the UN Security Council, Secretary General Kofi Annan established a Commission of Inquiry last October to investigate the ongoing tragedy in Darfur. The commission has concluded that serious violations of international law up to and possibly including crimes against humanity and genocide have been committed, and “strongly recommend[ed]” that the Security Council “immediately refer the situation of Darfur to the International Criminal Court.”

Although we represent different faith communities and might differ about the ICC, we all agree that something must be done to end the atrocities in Darfur. The ICC is the only credible route to holding individuals accountable for the commission of war crimes and crimes against humanity. The alternatives, including the creation of a new ad hoc international court or the expansion of the Rwandan tribunal, are too complicated and time-consuming. The ICC is the only organization ready to begin its work now. Consequently, we urge the U.S. to support a referral of the situation in Darfur to the ICC.

Faith in action:

Write to President Bush, urging the U.S. to support a Security Council resolution to refer Darfur to the ICC. This would speed an investigation and possible indictment of alleged leaders in the conflict, including those of the Janjaweed. A UN Commission of Inquiry found evidence of serious violations of international law and called the ICC “the only credible way of bringing alleged perpetrators to justice.”

For more information, go to the official ICC website: www.un.org/law/icc/ or visit www.usaforicc.org/
U.S. should separate energy, military policies

For more than 50 years, protection of oil supplies has been central to U.S. national security interests, vigorously defended with military and diplomatic pressure. However, it is time for the U.S. to separate its energy policy from its military policy, Physicians for Social Responsibility (PSR) says.

The U.S. imports more than half of the oil it consumes, and might import two-thirds of its oil needs by 2020, according to the medical- and public health-oriented public policy organization. (With only three percent of proven reserves, the U.S. consumes a quarter of the world’s oil.) With growing competition for oil among the world’s burgeoning economies, especially China – the world’s second largest oil consumer – the U.S. runs the risk of future conflicts with other oil-importing states.

For national and global security, the U.S. should focus on reducing its energy consumption and investing in renewable energy technologies, PSR says in its report “Powering Foreign Policy: The Role of Oil in Diplomacy and Conflict.” The full report can be found at http://www.psrenergysecurity.org/PoweringForeignPolicy.pdf.

U.S. policymakers have focused on diversifying oil sources and augmenting oil supplies rather than diversifying energy sources and managing oil demand, PSR says. To protect access to inexpensive petroleum in volatile oil-producing regions, the U.S. supports undemocratic regimes that protect stability and provide access to oil. This support can take many forms, including arms transfer agreements, International Military Education and Training (IMET) funds and the presence of U.S. military advisors. “As long as oil is a primary energy source in the United States, military troops will remain overextended and global security will be compromised,” PSR warns.

As early as 1943 President Franklin D. Roosevelt, recognizing the strategic importance of Saudi Arabia, declared that “the defense of Saudi Arabia is vital to the defense of the United States.” The George W. Bush administration’s National Energy Policy continued to view access to global oil as a vital national interest. With a focus on protecting foreign oil supplies and expanding the development of oil production capabilities abroad, however, “American foreign policy will continue to promote these objectives in the Persian Gulf and other emerging oil-producing regions, ultimately undermining regional and global security,” PSR says.

Critical U.S. goals in Iraq rely on increasing oil production, which in turn could require an augmented military effort, the report says. However, it also says the long-term military presence required to protect the oil infrastructure in Iraq could provoke more resentment and hostility toward coalition forces or the U.S. itself.

Iraq’s proven oil reserves are second only to Saudi Arabia’s holdings. U.S. officials had hoped that by the end of 2004, Iraq would produce three million barrels per day. Instead, attacks have reduced the output below 2.5 million barrels per day, less than the pre-war output.

Besides Iraq, the U.S.’s largest oil suppliers are Algeria, Angola, Canada, Mexico, Nigeria, Norway, Saudi Arabia, the United Kingdom and Venezuela. Only a few are considered stable democracies. Part of the problem is clear from a 1988 comment by Dick Cheney, then CEO of Halliburton: “The problem is that the good Lord didn’t see fit to put oil and gas reserves where there are stable governments.”

“As the U.S.’s dependence on foreign oil increases in the coming decades, so will its military support for U.S.-friendly governments, regardless of standards of democracy and human rights,” the report says.

PSR makes three primary recommendations:
- The U.S. should raise fuel efficiency standards for new cars and trucks. For example, improved fuel efficiency of 3.25 miles per gallon of the 2000 light vehicle fleet would have cut its gasoline consumption by an estimated 14 percent.
- The federal government should encourage research and development in transportation technology, including alternative fuels such as clean biomass. Congress should also shift subsidies away from mature energy industries such as oil and gas, and instead provide incentives for energy-efficient technologies and renewable energy industries.
- The U.S. should invest more in public transportation. If the U.S. increased its use of public transportation to approximately 10 percent of daily travel needs, it is estimated that oil imports would fall by up to 40 percent.

Faith in action:

Write to your lawmakers. Express your concern over rising U.S. oil consumption and the country’s heavy dependence on oil imports, with its potential for future military conflict. Urge lawmakers to promote reduced oil consumption in the U.S. and greater investment in renewable energy technologies.
Kyoto Protocol in effect; investors call for greater corporate accountability

Oil and gas companies, electric power producers, real estate firms, manufacturers, financial institutions and automakers face a record number of global warming resolutions that have been filed by shareholders for the 2005 proxy season. The following article is written by Cathy Rowan, consultant on corporate responsibility issues for the Maryknoll Sisters.

Religious groups (including the Maryknoll Sisters), state and city pension funds, labor, foundations, and other institutional shareholders have filed 31 resolutions requesting financial risk disclosure and plans to reduce greenhouse gas emissions with nine oil and gas companies, six manufacturers, three electric power providers and two automakers. The companies are among the largest greenhouse gas emitters in the country, making them especially vulnerable to the risks of likely regulatory- and market-based limits on carbon dioxide emissions worldwide. In addition to the 31 resolutions, shareholders are also involved in negotiations with several dozen other companies aimed at improving those companies’ disclosure and action on climate risk.

On February 16, the Kyoto Protocol, which requires dozens of industrialized countries around the world to reduce their greenhouse gas emissions by about five percent below 1990 levels by 2012, went into effect. The United States did not ratify the protocol, but many of the U.S. companies targeted by shareholder resolutions will need to reduce emissions in Europe, Canada, Japan and other countries.

The 31 filings easily surpass the 22 global warming shareholder resolutions filed last year. Many of last year’s resolutions received the highest voting support ever, particularly in the oil and gas sector where support levels were as high as 37 percent. Filers withdrew seven resolutions last year after companies agreed to undertake climate risk assessments and committed to specific greenhouse reduction targets.

One or more resolutions have been filed with each of the following U.S. companies:

- Auto sector: Ford Motor Co.; General Motors
- Electric power sector: Dominion Resources; First Energy; Progress Energy
- Oil and gas sector: Anadarko Petroleum; Apache Corp.; ChevronTexaco; ExxonMobil; Marathon Oil Energy
- Manufacturers: Allergan; Avery Dennison; Analog Devices; Corning; Dow Chemical; Newell Rubbermaid
- Real estate sector: Centex; Health Care Property Investors; Lennar Corp.; Liberty Property Trust; Ryland Group; Simon Property Group
- Financial services sector: J.P. Morgan Chase; Wachovia; Wells Fargo

Many of the resolutions seek greater disclosure on how the companies are responding to and preparing for rising regulatory and competitive pressures to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. ExxonMobil, which generates more than a third of its revenues in Kyoto Protocol-participating countries, and the manufacturers, have received resolutions that focus specifically on understanding how the companies plan to meet Kyoto greenhouse gas reductions targets.

The resolutions come at a time of growing investor demand for information on how energy-intensive sectors are planning for coming constraints on carbon emissions. The electric power sector, which generates 39 percent of the CO2 emission in the U.S. and 10 percent globally, has received many of the resolutions in the past. Last year, American Electric Power, Cinergy, TXU and Southern all agreed to shareholder requests by promising climate risk reports. Those reports have all been completed except for Southern’s.
Resources

1) *Thou Shall Think and Do! Adventures with the Social Teachings of the Catholic Church*: Written by Maryknoll Fr. Eugene Thalman, this four-volume series of lessons was composed over the course of a three-year program with the social concerns group at Fr. Thalman’s parish in Hong Kong. Each volume contains ten exercises intended to raise awareness and understanding of the Church’s social teachings. Each exercise is three-part: anecdote and reflection; church teaching; and activity. Materials are available on the website of the Asian Center for the Progress of Peoples (ACPP), www.acpp.org; students’ books and facilitators’ notes for each volume are available from ACPP, 1/F 52 Princess Margaret Road, Kowloon, Hong Kong; hotline@acpp.org

2) *Peacemaking and the Powers — Promoting Justice & Peace in Post-9/11 America: A 6-Session Program for Churches, Youth, & Religious Communities on Racism, Materialism & Militarism*: This new program from the Institute for Peace & Justice offers Biblical inspiration and prayer, challenging readings and worksheets, and practical action suggestions for responding to Jesus plea to do the things that make for peace, to Dr. Martin Luther King’s call to confront the giant triplets of racism, materialism, and militarism, and to Walter Wink’s unmasking of the powers of domination. Ideal as a parish or congregation Lenten program or as part of a college or high school course on justice and peace, this 155-page binder provides detailed options and directions for leaders and the worksheets and optional background readings for participants for each of the six sessions. Supplementary resources include a calendar of peace and justice days and seasons, additional reflective passages, music and videos, and books and websites on these issues. For Catholic groups, there is an additional supplement on Catholic Social Teaching on these issues. Cost: $29.95, plus shipping; order online at www.ipj-ppj.org, or call toll-free 1-800-833-0245.

3) “Thirst”: This presentation from Bullfrog Films is a piercing look at the global corporate drive to control and profit from our water — from bottles to tap. Is water part of a shared “commons”, a human right for all people? Or is it a commodity to be bought, sold, and traded in a global marketplace? “Thirst” tells the stories of communities in Bolivia, India, and the U.S. that are asking these fundamental questions, as water becomes the most valuable global resource of the 21st century. A character-driven documentary with no narration, “Thirst” reveals how the debate over water rights between communities and corporations can serve as a catalyst for explosive and steadfast resistance to globalization. 62 minutes. (DVD version available with many extra features.) Grade level: 10-12, college, adult. ISBN (VHS): 1-59458-039-1; ISBN (DVD): 1-58458-112-6. Bullfrog Films, P.O. Box 149, Oley, PA 19547; tel: 610-779-8226; fax: 610-370-1978. $250 to buy, $85 to rent. Check with Bullfrog Films for nonprofit discount rates.

4) ¡Cochabamba! Water War in Bolivia: This book by Oscar Olivera, in collaboration with Tom Lewis, tells the story of the Water War, the first great victory against corporate globalization in Latin America. Olivera reflects on themes that emerged as a result of the war over water: the fear and isolation which Cochabambinos overcame through a spirit of solidarity; the new practices of popular democracy realized during the struggle; the challenges of operating the city’s water service in a community based manner; and the impact of the Water War on subsequent struggles. ISBN (paperback) 0-89608-702-6, $16; ISBN (hardback) 0-89608-703-4, $40. For more information, contact South End Press at www.southendpress.org, or call 800-533-8478.

5) September’s Shadow: Post-9/11 U.S.-Latin American Relations: This new publication examines how the U.S. response to 9/11 has affected U.S.-Latin American relations. Using polls, op-eds, aid trends, and case studies of Mexico, Brazil, Colombia, Bolivia and Cuba, the report details the fallout of the Bush administration’s foreign policy as well as Latin American governments’ cooperation on practical counterterrorism measures. $5. Available from the Latin America Working Group, 202-546-7010. Order online or download the PDF version from http://www.lawg.org/Misc/Publications.htm