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Peace, Social Justice and the Integrity of Creation

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Due to ongoing security measures, there is a significant delay in delivery of mail to Congressional offices. It is advised that constituents either use email or fax, or send mail to Congresspersons' home offices, rather than to the Washington, D.C. office.

Our work is far from done

We write this issue of *NewsNotes* not knowing the outcome of the U.S. elections. That may be just as well.

For the past year we have examined some of the issues that have enormous impact on the communities around the world where Maryknoll missionaries live and work and that *should have been* part of the campaign debate. In reality, only a few of the concerns we raised got any attention from the campaigns or the media and almost none of our questions received satisfactory answers – at least from the presidential candidates.

In terms of “peace and security,” for example, the emphasis was clearly on who would be tougher, who would kill the enemy more surely, who would do more to secure the U.S. and enable us to maintain our “way of life.” Any suggestion that we are part of a global community, that we should pursue inclusive human security rather than our own national security in isolation was quickly diminished by tough talk about a bigger military and a “no holds barred” response to threats. The proliferation of weapons of mass destruction was identified as the highest priority concern, but with no suggestion that the U.S. nuclear weapons program, failure to support arms control treaties or huge arms export business were contributing to the problem.

Discussions about social justice and the economy were slightly better, though largely they were about the U.S. domestic agenda. Different perspectives were clear – around tax cuts or social security, health care or education, even about labor and environment clauses in trade agreements, but there was no notice that the present, almost-universally applied economic model is creating a virtually unbridgeable gap between the rich and the poor. There was talk about jobs and outsourcing, but little notice was given to the millions of people worldwide who don’t have jobs at all, or the U.S. poor who won’t benefit from any tax cuts because they don’t earn enough money to pay taxes – or to survive. No mention was made of enforceable codes of conduct for U.S. corporations doing business internationally.

The environment was on the agenda from time to time, but there was little said about the unsustainability

of the U.S. lifestyle, our wasteful patterns of consumption, or limits to growth. Oil was discussed, including where we can get more and at times how we might use

less, but water, an equally scarce and even more valuable resource, was not high on the campaign agenda.

In our U.S. Elections 2004 paper and previous issues of *NewsNotes* we did not attempt to address all issues of critical importance to people of faith, but to identify some of the key issues of concern to Maryknoll

missionaries and the communities around the world where they live and work.

In the coming years we will have to have the conversations missing from the campaigns and others like them. Policy decisions that will be made by the new Congress and the president will have an enormous impact on peace, social and economic justice and the integrity of creation around the world.

Our work is far from done, but that is no surprise. Perhaps it is time to step back a bit, to reflect on what motivates us and where we are going.

The heart of the matter is clear: protect and enhance life ~ human life as part of the community of all life.

The values are well articulated in Catholic social teaching: labor over capital; social mortgage on private property; subsidiarity; option for the poor; global solidarity; just war theory moving toward nonviolence.

But the application in our times is extremely difficult ~ full of prudential judgment about specific proposals that are far from perfect.

As people of faith we have to keep enough distance to judge honestly all proposals. Then we have to pray for our elected leaders, open our hearts to the guidance of the Spirit, and settle in for the long haul.

In her Prayer for Leadership, Sister Joan Chittister, OSB, said “... Let us pray for the newly elected U.S. leadership, and let us recommit ourselves to working for policies and practice that promote human dignity and protect the integrity of creation.” Amen.



Bolivia: New accord on coca signed

After almost three weeks of tension in the Chapare coca-growing region, the Bolivian government, on October 3, 2004, signed a landmark agreement with coca growers to permit 3,200 hectares of coca to remain in the region for one year. The following article is based on a report from the Andean Information Network.

The accord represents a dramatic departure from past stilted efforts at dialogue, limited by U.S. government intervention, which had characterized negotiations and agreements since 1998. In that year, Plan Dignity, an accelerated militarized eradication program, was initiated with the unattainable goal of total elimination of the Chapare coca crop. By the new agreement, coca growers agreed to eradicate voluntarily approximately 3,000 hectares of coca by the end of the year to meet an 8,000-hectare eradication quota. In addition, coca farmers accepted eradication in the two major national parks in the region, although the boundaries of these parks remain poorly defined.

The document also stipulates that a study of legal coca markets and consumption in Bolivia, part of a May 15, 2004 agreement, will be carried out within a year and will be used to determine future coca policy. Coca growers applauded the agreement, citing an end to the failed "zero coca" policy in the region. Uncharacteristically, U.S. embassy officials did not express outright rejection of the accord, and instead chose to emphasize that it confirmed eradication efforts. This more strategic stance is in stark contrast to past blanket opposition to anything but zero coca production in the Chapare region.

Coca growers agreed to suspend vigils and to work with the Joint Task Force to identify and eliminate excess coca plants. There are many potential pitfalls in the agreement, but the greater flexibility demonstrated by the Bolivian government, coca growers, and the U.S. embassy has provided a viable short term solution to ongoing conflict and much-needed breathing space to seek enduring proposals and strategies.

In spite of this new agreement, and although

President Carlos Mesa has called for a complete investigation of human rights violations during the conflicts, prospects appear grim for transparent legal processes in the civilian court system as stipulated by Bolivian and international law.

Renewed resistance in September to forced eradication arose partially in response to what growers perceived as the Bolivian government's noncompliance with a May 15 agreement to redesign largely ineffectual alternative development programs. Reforms to existing alternative development programs had come as a result of U.S. willingness to improve the programs it funds, accepting a more participatory approach and working with Chapare municipalities.

The new participatory approach is clearly a positive step and responds to long-term coca grower demands and experts' and advocates' recommendations. It remains to be seen,

though, how these efforts will be implemented. Coca growers continue to protest that USAID salary and overhead expenses are as high as 82 percent, limiting the funds available to directly benefit Chapare farmers. As Villa Tunari Mayor Felipe Cáceres explained, "[A]fter two terms running a local government, we know that it is possible to carry out a project for one third of what USAID says it spends to do the same thing. We don't pay for all those expensive consultants." In spite of these denunciations, USAID has rehired the Development Alternatives, Inc. to carry out the new strategy. The continue participation of these contractors and other firms threaten to keep costs high and limit results.

Faith in action:

Write to the State Department Bolivia Desk Officer David Boyle (boyledw@state.gov), expressing your support for the change in the attitude of the U.S. embassy in Bolivia toward greater dialogue with coca growers. For further information consult the Andean Information Network's website, www.ain.org.bo.



Chile: Reflections on contrasting cultures

The following story was written by Jennifer Betz, intern at the Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns.

Walking through the glass and steel corridor of the Santiago, Chile airport, I felt a bit dizzy. In my preparation to do service work in Chile, I had learned much about culture shock. I hadn't expected it though between Bolivia, where I had studied at the Maryknoll Instituto de Idiomas, and Chile where I was to spend the coming year. Going through the heart of Santiago is like going through the heart of any North American city. Billboards saturate the air with consumerism, Lider mega-stores look suspiciously like Wal-Marts, and skyscrapers cling to the sky along with a healthy dose of smog.

Chile could be the poster-child for neo-liberalism. A brutal coup and 17 years of dictatorship gave Augusto Pinochet unrestrained power to implement plenty of time to open the market and privatize state-run industries. The economic boom or "Chilean miracle" then arrived and Chile found itself in a much better economic position than many of its Latin American neighbors. So the story goes, yet how the country fared and how the multitudes live are two different economic tales.

Living in Pocuro, a small pueblo in the fifth region of Chile, I experienced the unwavering faith of a people who live hand to mouth day-by-day. My first impression of my new home painted a beautiful picture of the Aconcaqua Valley rich with grapes, peaches, and apricots surrounded by the Andes Mountains with their abundance of natural resources. However, I worked with the people who picked and packed those grapes to send to the U.S. and other countries, and I began to realize the injustices inherent in the economic system. I arrived in Chile at the end of spring just as the temporary work to pick the fruit began. I watched my neighbors entering work at 10 or 11 in the morning and exiting at two or three in the morning. They stand on their feet all day to make a pittance of what they deserve to be paid.

Compounding long hours and low pay, there are the frequent difficulties of working without contracts, without the right to organize, and without paychecks the rest of the year. Nearly half of all men in Chile and

80 percent of the employed women only have a seasonal jobs. Many earn around 120,000 pesos (\$200) a month, but because Chile's economy is so "successful," prices are higher than what people can afford to pay. In Chile the bottom five percent of the population has 200 times less resources than the upper fifth. This translates into some people receiving only 5,000 (\$8) pesos a month and some receiving two million pesos (\$3,300) a month.



The people have just enough to survive, and when they are confronted with an unexpected illness or the cost of sending children to school, ends often don't meet. A mother of two boys and a close friend of mine had to choose between medicine for her baby or the nutrition of her family when her husband and many others who worked for a mining company lost their jobs with no recompense. Another friend is often confined to her bed due to back problems for which she cannot afford the necessary operation. In the family where I was so generously regarded as one more child, I watched my Chilean brother wait at home for his older sister to finish school where she was earning a degree so that he too may have a turn.

Movements are slowly forming around the issues of globalization, health, education, and the gender inequality in Chile's present society. However, mobilizing citizens is a lengthy process after 17 years of repression. The dictatorship created a society in which Chileans feared the consequences of civic participation. That residue is hard to erase. The government has yet to develop sufficient mechanisms which will encourage broad civic and political participation.

Listening to people's stories in Chile, I realized the importance of family and community to economic survival. Families in difficult times will find themselves the recipients of gifts of food, a few weeks worth of work, or even the proceeds of a community bingo. The "free-market" and consumerism are already embedded in Chilean society. However, the culture of Chile has managed to retain its identity in the collective rather than the individual. Perhaps this is the true "Chilean miracle" and a lesson that our own U.S. society could learn.

U.S. militarization of Latin America

U.S. military assistance to Latin America is increasing while economic aid stagnates. Record numbers of military and police are receiving training. New counter-terror aid, often framed as combating such non-traditional threats as crime and “ungoverned spaces,” differs little from the controversial military support given during the Cold War and the drug war. Meanwhile, U.S. aid programs continue to promote a dangerous confusion between military and civilian roles in Latin America’s young democracies. These are among the principal findings of *Blurring the Lines*, a new report by the Washington Office on Latin America, the Latin America Working Group Education Fund, and the Center for International Policy.

In a review of the report published by OneWorld.net, Jim Lobe described some of the “vague new doctrines” propagated by the U.S. Southern Command (Southcom). “Effective sovereignty,” for example, considers that U.S. security may be threatened by Latin American governments’ failure to exercise control over vast “ungoverned spaces” within their borders. In his annual “Posture Statement” in early 2004, Southcom Commander Gen. James Hill presented a list of emerging threats in Latin America that went far beyond the military’s normal purview, identifying “radical populism” and street gangs as major new threats facing the region with the suggestion that the uniformed military - rather than the police or other civilian-led institutions - has a role in dealing with them.

The identification of “radical populism” as a threat is of great concern given the history of Latin American militaries in repressing leftist and populist groups in the name of “national security,” the doctrine that the U.S. promoted in building up the region’s armies during the 1960s.

Of equal concern is Southcom’s application of what it has called the “war on terrorism” to a whole variety of problems: “Terrorists throughout the Southern Command area of responsibility bomb, murder, kidnap, traffic drugs, transfer arms, launder money, and smuggle humans.” Describing “terrorism” in such broad terms fails to distinguish between guerrilla and paramilitary organizations in countries like Colombia from *al Qaeda* or other international terrorist groups that directly threaten the United States and its territory.

Colombia was by far the largest recipient of military aid and training in the region. The U.S. provided training to about 13,000 Colombian soldiers in 2003, almost 4,000 more than Iraqis and almost 8,000 more than Afghans.

Other concerns raised in the report were the strong increase in the number of Bolivian troops - more than 2,000 - in 2003, a year that was characterized by political upheaval and serious abuses committed by its army and police; Washington’s efforts to press Latin American and Caribbean governments to sign bilateral “Article 98” agreements granting U.S. forces immunity from the jurisdiction of the International Criminal Court (ICC) for acts committed in their countries; and Washington’s support for creating a multinational naval force through its ‘Enduring Friendship’ exercises.

Another example of U.S. militarization of Latin America was described by Brazilian Aloizio Lins Leal, a professor at the Federal University of Pará who specializes in the militarization of the Amazon area in an interview by *Brasil de Fato* published by SEJUP (October 22, 2004).

According to Leal, the Brazilian military still understands the Amazon region in terms of the Doctrine of National Security. Leal states that the principal preoccupation of the armed forces is to restrain the action of possible internal enemies, such as organized political movements, and not to protect the region from external aggression. This type of thinking, born in the Pentagon, hopes to interfere with any actions of the Colombian Revolutionary Armed Forces (FARC) in the region and to strengthen the U.S. presence there.

Faith in action:

See SEJUP’s website at <http://www.sejup.org> for the *Brasil de Fato* interview from October 20, 2004. *Blurring the Lines* is available as a PDF document on the Washington Office on Latin America’s website, www.wola.org. Individual country breakdowns and other information on U.S. military programs in the region are available at the *Just the Facts* website: www.ciponline.org/facts



Haiti: People deserve truth and relief

Truth is fundamental for a democratic society, but the truth of this year's events in Haiti remains hidden, covered by murky flood waters and destroyed towns. It has been buried in the mass graves of the flood victims and now under serious human rights abuses. It has been concealed in a violent transition of government and now bloody gun battles in the streets. The following article was written by Jennifer Betz, intern at the Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns.

Unfortunately, during October, Haitians also experienced intensified conflict. On September 30, supporters of former President Jean-Bertrand Aristide had organized demonstrations to show continued support for their ousted leader. Many ex-soldiers, originating from the military disbanded for human rights abuses, returned to "guard the peace." However, gunfire erupted and two protesters were killed, and the day marked only a return to violence. According to Amnesty International, dozens of civilians and 10 policemen were killed in skirmishes allegedly between Aristide's Lavalas Party supporters and security forces.

An accurate picture of the reality of Haiti is elusive. Some facts though are clear. Many of Aristide's colleagues and supporters are now in prison. Perhaps the most shocking arrest came in mid-October as Rev. Gerard Jean-Juste, an advocate for poor and marginalized people, was arrested by hooded men as he was providing food for hundreds of hungry children and adults. As of this writing his crime had not been explained by the police except that he was "linked" to those inciting violence. He was arrested with no written mandate as required by the Haitian Constitution and has not yet appeared in court although Haitian law requires prisoners to be brought before a judge in 48 hours. Many others have been treated in a similar manner.

The U.S. role in Haiti is also a muddy issue. While there is no doubt of U.S. muscle or its ability to exert influence, there is doubt as to the current role of the U.S. in Haiti. Many, including Aristide, insist that what happened in February 2004 was a coup backed by the U.S. Some believe that the U.S. is lifting the arms embargo on Haiti and supplying weapons to the interim government and reestablished military, which have clearly abused the rule of law, the Constitution, and human rights. As Pax Christi USA stated in their Haiti report, "the primary concern of recent U.S. policy in Haiti has not been for

democracy, human rights, or fairness to the poor and powerless. It must be." We agree.

From the U.S. shores, it is easy to see flood waters but harder to see hunger. We take notice of violence but often ignore illiteracy. We will speak out against bloodshed but stay quiet when a hillside is deforested. While these problems may not seem as urgent as the current violence and human rights abuses, Hurricane Jeanne proved that wrong. Jeanne, a tropical storm when she hit Haiti, managed to kill 70 times the number of people there than in all other countries combined. Deforested hillsides offered no protection from the rain which flooded the city of Gonaives and left 3,000 people dead. In a country without infrastructure, the people did not have sturdy houses to shield them from the waters nor drains to carry the water away. The interim government did not even issue a warning of the storm in a demonstration of incompetence or gross negligence. Stable roads did not exist to get help there quickly and as desperate people began fighting over food, emergency operations were suspended.

Unfortunately, the 200th anniversary of Haiti as a republic will be remembered by tears rather than jubilation. Haitians have watched their democracy fall, human rights abuses surge, and floodwaters subside to reveal death and destruction. How can a new Haiti emerge?

Faith in action:

Write to your congressional representatives with three demands: 1) An independent commission should be set up to investigate our past role in Haiti and to ensure that any future role is for legitimate democracy and human rights; 2) the U.S. government should demand the release of all political prisoners including Fr. Jean-Juste if he is still being held; and 3) the U.S. government should grant temporary status for Haitian refugees.

For more information about the legal case of Fr. Jean-Juste, see the Institute for Justice and Democracy in Haiti's website at www.ijdh.org. Individuals also can help with the reforestation and reconstruction of Haiti. Contact Haiti Reborn, a project of the Quixote Center (www.quixote.org) to learn more.

From prison, Fr. Jean-Juste sought help for his parishioners; see the website of the What If? Foundation, www.whatiffoundation.org



photo by Joe Towle, courtesy of Maryknoll Fathers & Brothers

Guatemala: Mines of San Miguel Ixtahuacan

As Guatemala pursues new revenue sources to diversify its economy, it has opened the door to a number of mining companies. The majority of these concessions are located in indigenous areas and threaten severe environmental damage. Cardinal Rodolfo Quezada Toruño, archbishop of Guatemala, recently voiced his concern about the threat that such mining activities pose to Guatemala's indigenous people. One mine is located in San Marcos where Maryknoll Sisters, who shared the following story, live and work.

Juan Lopez, a farmer, 60 years old, has always lived on the same piece of land which he inherited from his father. Not too far away are four *cuerdas* (about 1/10th of an acre each) of land which his father abandoned long ago because he was unable to make anything grow there. Nor was it good for pasturing the few sheep they own. He had tried selling it for 50 *quetzales*, the equivalent of a bit more than \$6, but no one wanted it. Two years ago some people came from far away offering to buy his abandoned land for 4,000 *quetzales*, or \$500. He couldn't believe his luck and sold it immediately. For a family who had always lived precariously, the windfall of 16,000 *quetzales* was too good to be true.

Soon Juan realized other people who owned the surrounding worthless land were also selling to the same people for the same high price. It wasn't until many months later that they realized that those who bought the land were representing a U.S./Canadian mining company named Montana Exploradora SA, a subsidiary of Glamis Gold, and that they intended to extract gold and silver which were detected by satellites some time ago.

Juan and his neighbors who either had sold their land or were considering doing so, went to talk to the mayor to see if he could give them the bigger picture. They were told that the national government had made a contract with the mining company and there was nothing the local folks could do to stop it - that by law the government and the mining company could make con-

tracts without consulting the local people. If they didn't sell their land, it would be taken by force. Those who have titles to their land are owners only of the topsoil, not of the subterranean riches. Later everyone discovered that the mayor was buying up the infertile land beneath which were the rich gold reserves and making a killing when he resold it to Montana.

Juan's two sons were angry with him for selling the land without consulting with the family. In fact, many families and communities are bitterly divided. There are hard feelings over having sold the land to unknown foreigners who knew of the secret wealth beneath the barren rocks. And there are divisions because of the frightening rumors that are spreading: that the poison cyanide used in the mining process will render streams and rivers unusable for generations; that the children will

The peoples concerned shall have the right to decide their own priorities for the process of development as it affects their lives, beliefs, institutions and spiritual well-being and the lands they occupy or otherwise use, and to exercise control, to the extent possible, over their own economic, social and cultural development. In addition, they shall participate in the formulation, implementation and evaluation of plans and programmes for national and regional development which may affect them directly ...

Governments shall take measures, in co-operation with the peoples concerned, to protect and preserve the environment of the territories they inhabit.

International Labor Organization, Indigenous and Tribal Peoples Convention 169

die; that where this company has a mine in Honduras the children are going bald and women are having frequent miscarriages. Three million tons of earth are moved to extract approximately one ton of gold. The way of life of the agrarian traditional people will be destroyed forever.

The mining process is expected to take at least 10, and up to 40 years. Even this early you see in San Miguel people suddenly "rich" who have never handled even small amounts of money. One of Juan's neighbors sold his land for the grand sum of 100,000 *quetzales* (\$13,000) but spent it quickly on women and drink. Other men from the *aldeas* and towns earn unheard of salaries which they spend on women and thereby ruin their families. The mining company is very strict with its workers and demands 12 hour days, seven days a week which leaves little time for family. If the workers arrive late or miss a day they

lose their job.

The mining company invited 10 people from San Miguel to go with them to Honduras to see their mine there. They traveled five hours to the capital and another five to Honduras where they were shown the areas the mining company had reforested as the mine moves along. They were shown the process of extracting the gold with cyanide in closed pools to try to prevent contamination. Strangely, though, they never saw nor were able to speak with any of the people who live nearby and have been affected by the ecological devastation. They were at the mine for less than four hours and then returned to Guatemala.

Apart from the fearful rumors, though, people in San Miguel are largely in favor of the mine. For the next year and a half 2,000 of the total 29,000 residents of the municipality and *aldeas* of San Miguel will be employed building necessary infrastructure for the mine. After that, 200 people will be employed for the next 10 years. No one in San Miguel, except the few teachers whose jobs are secure, has ever had a secure job and income. Though the coffee market bottomed out two years ago and there is scarce work on the plantations, the majority of the people still leave San Miguel in search of work, according to their pastor, Padre Erik. The wives of the men who have work

with the mine are happy because their husbands are at home and making decent money which, when channeled justly, improves the life of the family. And those who earn salaries will largely spend locally, greatly improving the over-all economy of the town.

Juan's wife Alicia is cooking for the mining personnel already there for the exorbitant sum of 2,000 *quetzales* a month! Other women are washing clothes and making five *quetzales* for each piece of clothing washed! One of Juan's *comadres* who lives in the town of San Miguel has transformed her modest home into a cantina well stocked with the finest whiskies and wines for the foreigners who want to relax. Rumors from Honduras are that close to the mine many young women have turned to prostitution and the number of single mothers is staggering. And then there is the fear of AIDS.

In response to this situation, indigenous organizations are demanding a suspension of the mining contracts, consultation with the people affected and a revision of Guatemalan mining laws. Guatemala is a signatory to Agreement 169 of the International Labor Organization, which recognizes the rights of indigenous people to "participate in the use, management and conservation" of their lands, as well as reserving the right to reject a governmental mining concession on their lands.

Peru: Residents stop destructive gold mining

On September 17 Oxfam America reported that the Newmont Mining Corporation would stop operations at Yanacocha, the largest gold mine in Latin America, in response to the demands of local communities. Peru's government agreed, in effect, to cancel the Denver-based Newmont Mining Corporation's permit for further exploration of Mount Quilish.

For several weeks thousands of local residents had been protesting the proposed expansion of Newmont's Yanacocha gold mine in Cajamarca. The situation was extremely tense, with local residents taking control of Mount Quilish and roads leading to the mine. Demonstrations of 10,000 people or more took place in Cajamarca's town square.

Newmont, the Peruvian government and local commu-

nities will engage in dialogue to attempt to resolve ongoing community concerns and discuss a plan for conducting an independent assessment of the potential environmental impacts of mining on Mount Quilish.

"Oxfam America supports communities affected by mining around the world and promotes constructive debate and dialogue about mining issues in Peru and other countries," said Keith Slack, Oxfam America's Senior Policy Advisor for Extractive Industries. "We are not opposed to mining investment in Peru or any other country. We do support reform of the global mining industry so that it demonstrates greater respect for the human rights of communities affected by mining."



Thousands of people protest gold mining in Cajamarca. Photo courtesy of Oxfam America/GRUFIDES.

El Salvador: Liability for Romero assassination

On September 3, 2004, a California judge issued a historic decision holding California resident Alvaro Saravia responsible for his role in the assassination of Archbishop Oscar Romero of El Salvador. Judge Oliver Wanger ordered Saravia to pay \$10 million to the plaintiff, a relative of the archbishop, who has still not been identified for security reasons.

Until today, no single individual has been held responsible for the assassination, which was carried out while Romero was saying Mass on March 24, 1980.

Judge Wanger ruled that the evidence clearly established Saravia's responsibility for organizing the murder. He also determined that the murder constitutes a crime against humanity, because it was part of a widespread and systematic attack intended to terrorize a civilian population. Wanger said, "[T]he evidence shows that there was a consistent and unabating regime that was in control of El Salvador, and that this regime essentially functioned as a militarily-controlled government." The government perpetrated "systematic violations of human rights for the purpose of perpetuating the oligarchy and the military government."

He also concluded that what happened in El Salvador was the "antithesis of due process" and that there could not be a better example of extrajudicial killing than

the killing of Archbishop Romero.

The judge's ruling is one of the few in the United States finding an individual liable for crimes against humanity. Such crimes were first defined and condemned in 1945 in the Nuremberg Charter, established to try Nazi war criminals. The novelty of crimes against humanity is that they can be committed by a government against its own citizens. In contrast, genocide is widespread persecution directed against a distinct people, defined by race, ethnicity, or religion.

The case was brought by the Center for Justice & Accountability (CJA), based in San Francisco, together with the law firm of Heller Ehrman White & McAuliffe.

Co-counsel Russell Cohen of Heller Ehrman White & McAuliffe said, "This case builds on the efforts of people around the world to counter impunity with accountability and ultimately to bring justice for and in El Salvador. The case is part of a world-wide movement that includes the Chilean Supreme Court's decision that [former dictator Augusto] Pinochet must stand trial for his crimes. What these cases are saying is that justice is needed if reconciliation and the rule of law are to take root."

For additional information see www.cja.org.

2005: The year of the Salvadoran martyrs

In 2005 we will commemorate the 25th anniversary of the deaths of Archbishop Oscar Arnulfo Romero and the four U.S. churchwomen - Ita Ford, MM, Maura Clarke, MM, Dorothy Kazel, OSU and Jean Donovan. During the year there will be a number of opportunities to remember those who gave their lives for life, to walk in the footsteps of the martyrs and to accompany those who still struggle for peace and justice in El Salvador.

- **March 28 - April 4, 2005:** Delegation in honor of Archbishop Oscar Romero sponsored by the SHARE Foundation: Building a New El Salvador Today with the Religious Task Force on Central America and Mexico, Pax Christi USA and others. For information contact Angela Urata: angela@share-elsalvador.org.
- **June 4 - 14, 2005:** Mission Pilgrimage in honor of Archbishop Oscar Romero sponsored by the Maryknoll Mission Education Centers from New Orleans and Dal-

las. For information contact Matt Rousso, mklnola@yahoo.com or Patricia Ridgley, mkldallas@aol.com.

- **June 14-17, 2005:** Symposium on Memory, Prophecy and Hope to remember Archbishop Romero and the martyrs of Central America and to celebrate the 25th anniversary of the Religious Task Force on Central America and Mexico, sponsored by the Center for Peace and Social Justice, Rivier College, Nashua, NH. For information contact Art Kubick, akubick@rivier.edu.
- **November 30 - December 6, 2005:** Delegation in honor of the four U.S. churchwomen sponsored by SHARE Foundation: Building a New El Salvador Today with the Religious Task Force on Central America and Mexico, Pax Christi USA, the Leadership Conference of Women Religious and the Conference of Major Superiors of Men. For information contact Angela Urata: angela@share-elsalvador.org.

Sudan: Hidden side of visible crisis

In September, U.S. Secretary of State Colin Powell declared that genocide has been committed in Darfur. Powell cited a "consistent and widespread" pattern of atrocities – including killings, rapes and burning of villages. "This was a coordinated effort, not just random violence," he said. Yet little has changed in Southern Sudan or in the western region of Darfur. Both peace talks have been inactive, and there is a growing concern that neither the Government of Sudan nor the SPLM/A seem to be taking the necessary steps to bring the Machakos protocols to completion via the Naivasha agreement. Meanwhile the lack of peace and security continue to haunt the people of Darfur. The following article was written by Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns intern George Corrigan.

In early October the Government of Sudan (GoS) agreed to allow an additional 1,000 African Union (AU) troops to enter Darfur to work with the police. This announcement came after Juan Mendez, an Argentine human rights expert who now serves as the UN Special Adviser on the Prevention of Genocide, told the Security Council that war crimes had occurred on a large and systematic scale, citing the police as sometimes perpetrating those very crimes. Currently there are 68 AU ceasefire monitors protected by 300 AU troops assigned to Darfur, a region the size of France.

How should security be provided to the six million people of Darfur, 2.2 million of whom the UN classifies as internally displaced persons (IDPs) living in refugee camps? How can security be provided for the humanitarian and aid workers against the rising banditry and lawlessness? Some experts estimate that the needed security force should be 30,000 – a level likely beyond the capacity of the AU to muster, and beyond the means of the AU to support logistically and technically.

A lack of security means that the Darfur cease-fire signed in N'Djamena, Chad (April 2004) is repeatedly violated. UN Security Council resolutions 1556 and 1564 remain largely ignored by the GoS and thus many areas of Darfur remain untouched by either humanitarian aid or outside monitors. There is a hidden side to this crisis.

The World Health Organization reports that 70,000 people have died in refugee camps inside Darfur since March. Other agencies estimate that 15,000 – 50,000 people have been killed by the partisan Janjawiid fighters supported by GoS armed forces. Some estimates claim higher numbers based on their on-the-ground intelli-

gence gathering in areas not penetrated by the aid organizations. The UN World Food Program (WFP) and Norwegian Church Aid also see the death toll as being much higher when one considers deaths among the IDP due to disease and malnutrition. Total deaths since the fighting began, due to all causes, are estimated as high as 300,000 in this 22-month crisis.

The most comprehensive humanitarian assessment from the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) shows that among the 2.2 million displaced people, 50 percent are without adequate shelter, 60 percent are without access to clean water and primary medical care, with the same number having unsustainable diets. The remainder are increasingly food-dependent in the camps and depots. The WFP does not see an end to this crisis before the end of 2005. The rate of additional people entering IDP camps is 25,000 per month.

In the camps disease remains a major concern. The traditional malaria season is underway, cases of cholera and dysentery are on the rise, and outbreaks of Hepatitis E have been reported – all this in advance of an expected polio season. USAID estimates that an additional 300,000 people will die this year due to rising disease and malnutrition in the face of a missed planting season due to a lack of security. But by the end of the year 40 percent of the population in Darfur will have reached the state of wasted malnutrition. Within the camps, child mortality is expected to rise to the rate of 11 deaths per day for every 10,000 children. Some estimates place that as high as 800 children per day. The estimate sadly comments that the rate of death among children will abate after December 2004 due to a depletion of the population of "the most vulnerable children."

According to representatives of Women Waging Peace and ICIS, also unseen are the arming of resistance fighters and the movement of Janjawiid into police units and into the Nuba Mountains and Upper Blue Nile districts, indicating the potential for a new outbreak of violence in the eastern provinces of Sudan.

A Sudanese refugee woman, Anya Kima, pointed to security as the principle element of a peaceful Sudan. She asked, "They want the people who stole our children to now guard our cattle? It makes no sense." Without security in Sudan, the humanitarian situation may never make sense.

Kenya: Nobel awarded to Green Belt movement

This year's Nobel Peace Prize was awarded to the Kenyan environmentalist and activist Wangari Maathai for her "contribution to sustainable development, democracy and peace." This is a new direction for the prize, which traditionally has been awarded to leaders in peace-keeping, disarmament and human rights. The prize is also a tribute to the many African women who work with Wangari Maathai to enhance the possibility of peace and democracy through environmental healing. The following article, written by Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns intern Rebecca Cutter, looks at Maathai's many accomplishments.

Maathai said that she was delighted that the role of the environment has been recognized, "The environment is very important in the aspects of peace because when we destroy our resources and our resources become scarce, we fight over them." She is the first African woman to receive the award, joining the African men who are Nobel laureates: Kofi Annan of Ghana (2001); Nelson Mandela and F.W. de Klerk of South Africa (1993); Desmond Tutu, South Africa (1984); Albert John Lutuli of South Africa (1960).

Born in 1940 in Nyeri, Maathai has a degree in Biological Sciences, and was the first African woman in East and Central Africa to receive a Ph.D. She headed the department of veterinary medical research at her alma mater, the University of Nairobi.

In 1977 she left her academic career to found the Green Belt Movement (GBM), having seen in Nyeri the ecological and social effects of deforestation and poor land management. An estimated 75 percent of Kenya's forests have been cleared by British colonists and Kenyan farmers in the past 50 years.

Combining science, community organizing and political activism, Maathai has struggled for environmental and human rights, especially the rights of women. The GBM began as a women's organization and is run primarily by women concerned with protecting existing resources and establishing a strong resource base for future generations. Maathai's strategy was to enlist village women to plant trees. Currently there are more than 6,000 tree

nurseries established and 30 million more trees in Kenya thanks to her vision and the GBM.

For three decades, Maathai fought with the Kenyan government on issues of environmental and human rights. She clashed with President Daniel arap Moi in the 1970s and 1980s over government land grabbing and destructive deforestation. Repeatedly, she was arrested and beaten for her protests against Moi's environmental policies and human rights record. In 1987 she founded Kenya's Green Party. In 1989 she successfully stopped the construction of a high rise building in Nairobi's Uhuru Park. She has protected state-owned forest land from being given away and inappropriately developed.

In 1997 Maathai ran for president; however, without notifying her, the party withdrew her candidacy a few days before the election. In December 2002 she was elected to Parliament and appointed as the Assistant Minister of the Environment by President Mwai Kibaki. Maathai has recently been active in the drafting

of a new Kenyan Constitution that recognizes "...rights to not only humans but animals and the environment." She has pioneered a chapter within the new constitution on culture to represent the plurality of Kenya's 40 plus tribal groups and she heads the Committee on Environment and Land.

Maathai and the GBM completed a pilot project for the restoration of the Aberdare National Forest, one of Kenya's largest water catchments, where 16,500 hectares need rehabilitation. The forest rehabilitation project brought together the GBM, government and communities in an effort to protect the Aberdare. Her work has empowered women not only in Kenya but throughout Africa and the world. She believes that political stability and democracy comes from sustainable natural resource management. "Many wars in the world are actually fought over scarce resources. In managing our resources...we plant the seeds of peace both now and in the future."



Students with seedlings, ready for planting; photo courtesy of Green Belt Movement, www.greenbeltmovement.org

Zimbabwe: How will the people be served?

The United Nations World Food Program has reached a far different conclusion than the Government of Zimbabwe regarding the ability of the nation to supply its own citizens with adequate nutrition from its annual harvests. Meanwhile, the legislature in Zimbabwe is considering passing the Non-Governmental Organizations Bill 2004, which suggests that the government wishes to exert full and complete control over non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and other human rights and development organizations in Zimbabwe. The following article was written by Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns intern George Corrigan.

There is mounting evidence that people in Zimbabwe continue to suffer from hunger. Although the government has claimed that the 2004 harvest was a “bumper crop,” many independent monitors, including local and international non-governmental organizations involved in food security, dispute the government’s figures. The Famine Early Warning System (FEWS) concurs with this assessment and has placed Zimbabwe in emergency status needing 178,000 metric tons of grain to prevent widespread famine. However, the government insists it does not need international food aid and, since mid-2004, most food aid distribution in Zimbabwe has ceased. Despite the government’s claims, 43 deaths from malnutrition occurred in the city of Bulawayo in September.

The combination of erratic rainfall, the drop in commercial maize production due to the land reform program, lack of sufficient access to seeds and fertilizer, the government’s monopoly on cereal imports and the HIV/AIDS pandemic have stripped Zimbabwe of its former status as southern Africa’s breadbasket.

Poor harvests in 2002 and 2003 left millions of people in need of food assistance. In addition, the supply of maize available through the government’s Grain Marketing Board is often erratic and scarce, while the price of maize on the parallel market rose significantly. Many rural households resorted to coping mechanisms such as distress sales of livestock. Government price controls caused or exacerbated urban shortages of staple foods, such as maize and wheat. Meanwhile, the purchasing power of families in both urban and rural areas has been undermined by increasing inflation (over 500 percent) and unemployment (70 percent).

While the number of people in need of assistance has dropped from a peak of over seven million in the early months of 2003, it is estimated that 2.3 million rural poor and an equal number of urban poor will still require some

form of food assistance through 2005.

Meanwhile the legislature is considering the “NGO Bill” which is an expansion of the already-existing Private Voluntary Organizations Act, No 63 of 1966 (the “PVO Act”). The PVO Act was drafted during the Smith regime at a time when the war of liberation in Zimbabwe was beginning to gain impetus. The purpose of the act was to counter the interests of the black citizens of Zimbabwe in order to maintain control in the hands of the elite.

The NGO Bill states that it is “for the registration of non-governmental organizations, to provide for an enabling environment for the operations, monitoring and regulation of all non-governmental organizations ...” The key differences between the definition of NGOs in the bill and “private voluntary organizations” is the expansion to include “any foreign or local body.” There is virtually no NGO which would not come under the purview of the government. Analysis by international legal scholars indicates that the provisions of the proposed law contain the administrative framework to include private trusts, law societies and other advocacy bodies – including the various church-related charity and advocacy groups. In addition, the bill prohibits foreign funding, which means the state has the means to prevent any and all foreign assistance from entering Zimbabwe.

The bill has a provision for a state control board to receive complaints from the citizens of Zimbabwe – in fact one citizen alone is sufficient – against the “maladministration” of the NGO. The language of the bill presumes the validity of the charge and thus entitles the control board to order the NGO to cease operations, as well as for the state to attach the assets of the NGO.

All this raises serious concerns that organizations working on some of the most critical support projects in Zimbabwe – e.g. food distribution, AIDS relief, education, community-based development projects, as well as a host of other such projects – which are at present almost entirely foreign funded, could be closed.

The Justice and Peace Department of the Southern African Bishops’ Conference (SACBC) said that the poor would suffer even more if the bill were passed:

“While the SACBC Justice and Peace Department supports the need for regulatory frameworks for civil society organizations in any country, the extensive social development work of many Zimbabwean faith-based organizations that are strongly supported by international charities, is threatened by the repressive nature of the Zimbabwean Bill...”

Thailand: UN warns of HIV/AIDS resurgence

A UN report warns that complacency in Thailand's fight against HIV/AIDS could trigger a new epidemic in that Southeast Asian country. Thailand's program in the 1990s to combat the disease was hailed as the world's most successful. The rate of new HIV infections fell from 143,000 in 1991, the height of the epidemic, to 19,000 in 2003.

Nevertheless, more than one million Thais have been infected with HIV, and over 400,000 have died of AIDS. About 58,000 died of AIDS in 2003 alone. The disease is now the leading cause of death among young adults in Thailand. The country loses an estimated \$1 billion in income each year due to AIDS-related illness and death.

The United Nations Development Program (UNDP) released its report "Thailand's Response to HIV/AIDS: Progress and Challenges" July 8 in Bangkok. The complete text can be found at <http://www.undp.or.th/HIVReport.htm>.

The report attributes Thailand's earlier success to political commitment, a strong health infrastructure and generous public spending. Virtually every government ministry was mobilized in AIDS prevention and education, including the ministries of agriculture, education, interior and even the judiciary.

The health infrastructure includes a network of clinics for sexually transmitted diseases that was established as early as the Vietnam War. The clinics kept costs down and eased coordination of the campaign against HIV/AIDS. Public spending on HIV/AIDS jumped from just \$684,000 in 1988 to \$82 million in 1997. However, the financial crash in 1997 forced profound cuts in the national AIDS budget.

Robert England, UNDP resident representative in Thailand, warns that "the epidemic is evolving, and there are now clear warning signs of a possible new wave of infections. The message of this report is that past successes must not turn into complacency and inaction in the future."

The report says that public information and education campaigns have all but faded from view, and public concern about HIV/AIDS has ebbed.

As a result, the report says, young people are increasingly at risk of infection. Too young to remember the AIDS campaign of the 1990s, less than five percent of young Thais are being reached by adequate prevention services. In addition, HIV prevalence among injecting drug users is on the rise, from 30 percent in 1994 to as

high as 50 percent today. HIV infection rates among brothel-based sex workers remain at around 7-12 percent.

The report says these warning signs have yet to translate into a resurgence of overall HIV prevalence among the general adult population in Thailand. In fact, the rate has edged downward to 1.5 percent of the population. However, the epidemic has reduced the life expectancy in Chiang Mai in the north from 68 to 63 years. And HIV infection is increasing among young adults in the south, where the rate exceeds 3.5 percent in Nakhon Sri Thammarat and Phuket provinces.

The report commends the government for its intent to provide 50,000 people with antiretroviral drugs by the end of 2004, adding to the 20,000 who already have access to treatment. Thailand produces low-cost generic versions of antiretrovirals at less than \$300 a year per patient, compared with over \$8,000 a year for similar drugs in Europe and North America.

However, the report urges additional strategies to address the changing epidemic, invigorate prevention efforts and extend those efforts to all sections of the population at risk of HIV infection.

The report urges increased public funding for the national AIDS program. Expenditures decreased by 24 percent from 1997 to 2000, and fell another 31 percent from 2001 to 2003.

Prevention efforts must be revitalized. Funding for prevention programs decreased from \$5.2 million in 1997 to \$2 million in 2003, when just eight percent of the HIV/AIDS budget was devoted to prevention.

The epidemic is shifting, with a high rate of HIV among migrant workers in the construction, agriculture and fisheries industries. In some industrial locations the infection rate has reached six percent, and infection rates of 5-10 percent are reported among deep-sea fishing boat crews in parts of the south. An aggressive program of AIDS education is needed for sectors of the population that are most at risk.

A quarter of those living with the virus say they have been insulted or harassed because of their HIV status. About 40 percent report breaches of confidentiality within the health system. A public education campaign is needed to defuse the stigma surrounding HIV/AIDS and to tighten confidentiality.

Community-level programs are most likely to succeed. Therefore, the report recommends more technical and financial support for local programs and monitoring, and decentralized planning and budgeting authority.

Nepal: Combatants must stop targeting civilians

Human Rights Watch has called on the government of Nepal and Maoist rebels to stop targeting civilians in their eight-year-old civil war, and urged them to sign a human rights accord. More than 10,000 Nepalis, most of them civilians, have died in the struggle.

Human Rights Watch (HRW) makes the recommendations in its report "Between a Rock and a Hard Place: Civilians Struggle to Survive in Nepal's Civil War," found at <http://hrw.org/reports/2004/nepal1004/>.

Both sides agree in principle to the idea of a human rights accord, but they have refused to sign such an agreement. Brad Adams, executive director of HRW's Asia division, said an accord would allow impartial investigations by the National Human Rights Commission and other monitors. He also said an accord would help overcome mistrust and recriminations on both sides.

The report details how civilians in contested areas are often faced with untenable choices. Refusal to provide shelter to the rebels puts villagers at risk from Maoists who administer ruthless punishment. However, providing such support leaves villagers vulnerable to reprisal attacks from state security forces.

Government efforts to break the back of the rebellion have led to many extrajudicial killings and "disappearances" by its forces. The Maoists, by contrast, rarely commit enforced disappearances. Instead, they usually declare their abductees to be "class enemies" and execute them.

HRW says both the government and the Maoists engage in intimidation and extortion. The Maoists impose a "tax" on local villagers and travelers, while the government attempts to isolate the Maoists by cutting off access to food and shelter in the villages. Many soldiers exploit their position by engaging in extortion and blackmail. The Maoists use children as messengers, cooks and porters - in violation of international law prohibiting the use of children in armed conflict.

HRW also says the international community has failed to play a constructive role in the conflict. It calls on India, Great Britain, the U.S. and other countries that provide military aid to the government to expand the human rights training they offer, and to monitor the end use of all lethal aid. HRW says no country provides arms to the Maoists.

HRW offers specific recommendations to the parties involved in the conflict.

HRW asks King Gyanendra to accept the limits

placed on his role under the 1990 Constitution. HRW says the Constitution clearly denies the king the right to choose his own prime minister and council of ministers.

Human Rights Watch also asks the king to respect the people's right to elect their own representatives at the local and national levels. HRW says it is an unacceptable exercise of power for the king to summarily dismiss an elected prime minister or to fail to hold elections.

HRW urges the government to implement its poverty reduction strategy, targeting "the very poor, deprived communities and backward regions through the increased involvement of local bodies in improving service delivery and accountability" and ensuring that "deprived groups will be involved in decision-making and will be adequately represented in the decision making process."

The government is also encouraged to provide security officials with training in human rights law, humanitarian law and the code of criminal procedure.

HRW urges the Maoists to stop forcing villagers to provide food, shelter and money, or using schools as training and recruiting grounds.

HRW also urges Maoist forces to abide by humanitarian and human rights law, to guarantee the freedoms of assembly, expression and association, and to refrain from violations of the Geneva Conventions.

HRW calls on both the government and the Maoists to stop the abduction, torture and killing of civilians. It urges both to cooperate with investigations conducted by the National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) and other independent bodies into allegations of serious violations of human rights and humanitarian law.

HRW also calls on both to provide for the long-term protection of human rights in any political settlement. Provisions of such an agreement could include the deployment of international human rights monitors, the expansion of NHRC offices, resolution of all outstanding cases of disappearances and compensation for victims and their families.

Nepal's insurgency began as an isolated rebellion in remote mountain districts of the west. However, it has reached as far as the capital of Kathmandu, where the threat of Maoist attacks has at times brought the city to a standstill.

Desperate poverty contributes to the unrest. HRW says about 40 percent of the country's 23 million people live below the poverty line. Per capita income is approximately \$230 per year. Life expectancy is about 60 years, and infant and maternal mortality rates are among the

highest in the region.

Adding to the tension, HRW says, many government supporters have been frustrated by the king's policies and by bickering among the main political parties. Nepal's political system has been effectively paralyzed since 2002, when the king assumed direct rule over the

country and suspended the country's struggling democratic process. A new government was installed in June 2004, but Human Rights Watch says it has dubious legitimacy. Parliament has ceased to function, and the courts have been neutralized by the executive branch and armed forces.

Cambodia: Cooperation needed to end sex tourism

Law enforcement officials worldwide are coordinating their fight against sex tourism, which is growing along with the wider practice of trafficking in women and children. The U.S. weighed in with a new law last year under which one U.S. pedophile was sentenced to eight years in prison for abusing a 13-year-old boy in Cambodia. However, much more remains to be done. ECPAT (End Child Prostitution, Pornography and Trafficking of Children) estimates that 25 percent of sex tourists worldwide are Americans, including U.S. military overseas. Maryknoll lay missionary Roberta McLaughlin follows this issue in Cambodia and assisted with this article.

World Vision says sexual abuse of children occurs in all countries, but Cambodia has one of the highest rates of commercial sexual exploitation. Children - young people under age 18 - are most at risk, especially the poor, street children and runaways. UNICEF estimates that one-third of all prostitutes in Cambodia are children.

Besides extreme poverty and limited job opportunities, Cambodia has the added burden of landmines - the legacy of recent conflict - which make some of its agricultural land dangerous to farm. Other factors contributing to the commercial sexual exploitation of children include lack of education, drug use, organized crime, weak law enforcement and lack of political will to end the practice.

Illegal trafficking of humans has grown with the increasing migration of labor around the world. Until recently, trafficking - which necessarily involves exploitation - has tended to be treated as an illegal migration issue in which victims of sexual exploitation were punished for illegal entry. As the International Labor Organization (ILO) points out, however, the problem with legal migration for most people is that it costs too much and takes too long.

The ILO recognizes that pressure and deception are common in the trafficking of women and children, but many people move voluntarily or with the blessing of their families. Movement can be legal, with deception and exploitation taking place later in the process. Inevitably it is the poorest and the most vulnerable who are most

susceptible to unscrupulous traffickers. The ILO estimated there were 88,000 trafficked Cambodian women in Thailand, Cambodia's comparatively well-off neighbor, several years ago. At the same time, thousands of girls from southern Vietnam - many under the age of 15 - were trafficked into Cambodia for prostitution in a single year.

The U.S. has laws prohibiting sex with minors in other countries, and it is increasing government efforts to combat the problem. Under the Protect Act of 2003, U.S. citizens or residents who engage in sexual activity abroad with a child can face 30 years in a U.S. prison. U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement investigates alleged American sex tourists abroad and makes arrests.

The U.S. State Department credits Cambodia for trying to rise to the minimum standards for eliminating human trafficking, despite financial restraints. However, it says Cambodia is hampered by "endemic corruption and an ineffectual judicial system. Cambodian government officials and their family members are reportedly involved in or profiting from trafficking activities." Nonetheless, in its 2004 Trafficking in Persons report, the State Department said the Cambodian Interior Ministry claimed to have arrested 153 individuals during the previous year for trafficking-related offenses. Of these, the Ministry said, 142 were sentenced to prison terms of 5-20 years.

The State Department also said the Cambodian government operates two temporary shelters for victims, and tries to place victims with nongovernmental organizations for long-term sheltering.

Faith in action:

Join the fight to protect children from sexual abuse and exploitation. Contact your senators and congressperson and ask them to increase the resources to prosecute U.S. citizens who sexually exploit children overseas. Raise awareness in your church, school, community or professional association about the problem. Contact your local newspaper and ask for more press coverage on the subject.

N. Korea: U.S. should push human rights, security

President Bush signed the “North Korean Human Rights Act of 2004” (HR 4011) into law on Oct. 18. Four days later North Korea announced three conditions to be met before it would consider returning to six-party talks on its nuclear program – including a demand that the U.S. drop its hostile policy toward that country. The following analysis is excerpted from “The North Korean Human Rights Act and other Congressional Agendas” by Karin J. Lee of the Friends Committee on National Legislation. The full text is available on the site of the Nautilus Institute, www.nautilus.org/fora/security/0439A_Lee.html.

“While the bill is still recognizable as kin to its predecessor, S. 1903, the North Korean Freedom Act of 2003, the Human Rights Act is a great improvement. ... (Most of the changes) involve deletions. For example, gone are many of the Freedom Act’s provisions that would have needlessly endangered North Koreans hiding in China. One section in the Freedom Act would have granted special expanded ‘S Visas’ to North Koreans with information on North Korea’s WMD (Weapons of Mass Destruction) programs – raising the North Korean government’s suspicion that any North Korean in China was a potential traitor. Promises of special treatment to ‘informants’ would have practically guaranteed that U.S. intelligence offices would be flooded with false information. Gone as well is the Freedom Act’s heavy-handed and undiplomatic criticism of long-term ally South Korea and China, the new-found partner in negotiations with North Korea....

“Perhaps most importantly the Human Rights Act eschews the Freedom Act’s association with the goal of regime change, an association that grew from congressional hearings that dangerously politicized the plight of refugees by linking the concept of refugee ‘exodus’ with North Korea’s collapse....

“With all that has been eliminated, what remains? The North Korean Human Rights Act focuses much more narrowly and successfully on raising North Korean human rights and humanitarian concerns. Reflecting the enduring concern the American people hold regarding human rights, the bill sends a message to North Korea that the U.S. Congress is deeply disturbed by reports of human rights abuses in North Korea. The bill requests that ‘[T]he human rights of North Koreans should remain a key element in future negotiations between the U.S., North Korea, and other concerned parties in Northeast Asia.’ The legislation calls for greater transparency in the provision of food aid, but does not impede humanitarian

assistance or activities in North Korea....

“The bill also encourages discussion of North Korean human rights within a regional framework. The U.S. approach on behalf of the North Korean people will be made more effective when it is done in concert with South Korean and European Union allies, as well as with other regional players such as China and Russia. It asks the president to appoint a special envoy on North Korean human rights, thereby ensuring that discussions of human rights and security can each proceed along separate tracks when such dialogue is impossible on a single track....

“Change is dependent on increasing, not decreasing contact, and increasing information flow through inviting North Koreans to interact with rest of the world. Not only does the U.S. government want North Korea to understand U.S. expectations, the U.S. government also needs to understand North Korean perspectives....

“Congress has spent the last two years refining its approach to North Korean human rights. Now it needs to expand its vision to address other urgent concerns, such as security, while continuing to pursue human rights improvements.

“A human rights dialogue should not become a barrier to the security dialogue. [Human rights expert] David Hawk stated during a presentation at University of California at Berkeley on September 15, ‘I actually don’t favor linkage on security issues. I think if security issues can be isolated, then you should trade security for security. I think that the U.S. should establish diplomatic relations with North Korea irrespective of all other considerations because that will enable the U.S. to have more conversations with North Korea and the North Korean people about human rights. If the North Koreans would trade with the Americans a security guarantee for their plutonium or enriched uranium [programs], the U.S. ought to take it and give them a peace treaty.’...

“Congress has failed to prioritize the abolition of North Korea’s nuclear program and must correct this omission as soon as possible. [Preparations] should be made now. Congress needs to authorize funding for the dismantlement of North Korea’s nuclear weapons program, contingent on a verifiable agreement to do so. Such a move would be greatly reassuring to all of our partners in the Six-Party talks, especially South Korea, which has been frustrated with the dominance of the human rights agenda in Congress and the potential chilling effect it has on negotiations with North Korea....”

MidEast: Political violence victimizes children

Eighty-one Palestinian children were killed and some 350 were arrested during Israeli military actions in the first six months of 2004, according to child advocates. Defence for Children International (DCI), Palestine Section, reports 324 Palestinian children, including 10 girls, were being held in Israeli prisons and detention centers in mid-July. The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child defines children as those under 18. The DCI report, "Violations of Palestinian Children's Rights Stemming from the Israeli Occupation: January-June 2004," is available at <http://www.dci-pal.org/english/doc/reports/2004/sep24.pdf>.

DCI said 595 children had died and more than 10,000 had been injured since the Intifada began in September 2000. An average of 11 Palestinian children were killed each month in 2003. That number rose to nearly 14 per month in the first half of 2004, peaking at 35 in May – the highest monthly toll since April 2002, when Israel re-invaded major West Bank cities.

Children who are arrested are subjected to physical and psychological abuse during interrogation, DCI said. It reported that "[c]hildren are routinely handcuffed with painful nylon restraints, subjected to beatings, forced to remain for prolonged periods in unnatural and agonizing positions, soaked in cold and hot water, sexually harassed, threatened with rape and deprived of food, sleep and contact with the outside world, including, most painfully of all, family visits."

DCI said about 30 boys were being held under administrative detention – imprisonment without charge or trial – in mid-July. Questioning can take a month or longer, and administrative detention orders can be renewed indefinitely. At that stage as many as a dozen children are sometimes held in cells measuring six by six meters with insufficient bedding or food, DCI said.

Most Palestinian children detained at length by Israeli authorities are held in prisons outside of Gaza or the West Bank, in violation of the Fourth Geneva Convention, DCI said. Detaining children outside of the occupied territories makes it difficult for the children's families to visit them, since many West Bank residents do not have permission to enter Israel.

The children complain of harsh conditions in custody. These include overcrowding, poor ventilation, poor hygiene, lack of adequate medical care and even attacks by prison staff, DCI said. Symptoms of depression are common, and some children have tried to commit suicide in detention, according to the report.

DCI said at least 30 Palestinian child detainees in 2004 suffered from serious medical conditions including rheumatism, asthma, allergies, bone fractures, severe stomach pain or psychological illness. Of these, DCI said half were thought to have developed their ailments while in detention. However, DCI said treatment was inadequate, with prison administrators often providing nothing more than over-the-counter pain killers.

Many of the children detained in 2004 were represented by the legal unit of DCI's Palestine Section. Sentences were pronounced in 175 cases. DCI said sentences of six months or less were handed down in 46 percent of the cases, 1-3 years in 26 percent, and over three years in 25 percent.

DCI said Israel's treatment of Palestinian child prisoners violates the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. The Convention provides that no child should be subjected to torture or other inhuman or degrading treatment, and a child should be arrested and detained only as a last resort and for the shortest appropriate time (Article 37).

The Convention also recognizes the right of every child to education (Article 28). However, UNICEF (the United Nations Children's Fund) says one-third of all school-age Palestinian children face daily obstacles on their way to school, including checkpoints, earth mounds and trenches. DCI said schools have also been attacked or occupied by Israeli troops, especially in Jenin, Nablus and Gaza.

The Convention declares that every child has the right to an adequate standard of living (Article 27). However, DCI said the separation barrier Israel is building on the occupied West Bank impacts some 30 percent of the Palestinian population. As a result, entire families find themselves isolated from one another or cut off from medical services and schools, and many breadwinners have lost their means of livelihood.

The Convention also provides for protection against unlawful interference with a child's privacy, family or home (Article 16). However, DCI reported that, in the first five months of this year, 500 houses were demolished, mostly in the Gaza Strip, leaving the affected families with little or nothing. The UN reports that more than 2,500 Palestinian homes or buildings have been destroyed since the beginning of the Intifada, affecting thousands of Palestinian children.

DCI, a non-governmental organization founded in 1979 in Geneva, has offices in 35 countries.

Iraq: Distressed U.S. troops urged to get help

Alarmed by stress and suicides among U.S. troops fighting in the Middle East, the Army and the medical profession recently conducted two studies of U.S. military personnel. The research focused on assessing the mental health of troops in the war theater, and helping them deal with battle trauma. The studies found that troops fighting in Iraq feel more stressed than those who served in the Gulf War, a one-month engagement. Iraq's desert heat, along with extended deployments, contribute to feelings of low personal and unit morale. Unclear battle lines and an unidentifiable enemy, reminiscent of the Vietnam War, also contribute to high levels of stress.

On average, the Army said, two soldiers in the war zone committed suicide each month in 2003. The suicides represented nearly 16 per 100,000 soldiers, compared with 12 per 100,000 from 1995 to 2002. After the number of suicides jumped to five in July 2003, the Army asked the Operation Iraqi Freedom Mental Health Advisory Team to study troops' mental health. Its report can be found at www.h4hmediacenter.us/archive/mhat_report.pdf.

The team surveyed 756 soldiers, 82 percent of whom had been in combat in Iraq. Half of the soldiers surveyed reported low personal morale, and 72 percent reported low unit morale. The Army deploys behavioral health units in the field and boasts a 95 percent return to duty rate. However, almost half of the soldiers surveyed said they did not know how to obtain those services. Of those soldiers wanting help, only one third had received any assistance.

Among soldiers who screened positive for depression, anxiety or traumatic stress, 26 percent reported it was too difficult to get to the location of behavioral health services. Perceived stigma was a major issue. Nearly 60 percent of those surveyed thought they might be seen as weak, or the unit leadership would treat them differently, if they sought behavioral health care services. Almost half said that the unit would have less confidence in them or that their leaders would blame them for the problem.

Recommendations of the Army study include: training personnel in early identification and intervention in psychosocial problems at the company level, establishing a climate that encourages distressed soldiers to seek help, providing health care services to soldiers who want them closer to the soldiers' unit, and improving behavioral healthcare services to soldiers

who are evacuated from the combat area.

In the other study, reported in the New England Medical Journal (NEMJ), a group of doctors administered an anonymous survey to 2,530 soldiers and Marines before their deployment to Afghanistan or Iraq, and to 3,671 three to four months after their return from combat duty. The study found that 12-17 percent of the troops suffered from major depression, generalized anxiety or Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) after combat duty. A report on the study can be found at the NEMJ's website, <http://content.nejm.org/cgi/content/full/351/1/13>.

Respondents to the survey who had been deployed to Iraq reported a very high level of combat experiences, with more than 90 percent of them reporting being shot at. The doctors found a strong correlation between PTSD and combat experiences such as taking enemy fire, handling bodies, knowing someone who was killed, or killing enemy combatants.

Doctors also found that, of those whose responses indicated a mental disorder, only 23-40 percent sought mental health care. Those surveyed often cited the perception of stigma as a major obstacle to seeking assistance. The report noted that fear of stigmatization was "disproportionately greatest among those most in need of help from mental health services."

The doctors said they were unable to survey persons who had been severely wounded or who otherwise had been removed from their units. Thus, they noted that their estimates of mental disorders could be conservative, reflecting the prevalence only among working, non-disabled combat personnel.

Recommendations of the doctors' study include making greater efforts to address the problem of stigma, providing wider allocation of mental health services in primary care clinics, and offering confidential counseling through employee-assistance programs. The study says screening for major depression is becoming routine in military primary care settings, but it says this should be expanded to include screening for PTSD.

The proposals from the medical profession and the military should help protect the health of U.S. troops, both in the war zone and upon their return home. However, the steps fail to address the major underlying reasons for U.S. involvement in Iraq. These include the Bush administration's preemptive war policy, a U.S. lifestyle dependent on foreign oil at any cost, and a lack of U.S. respect for other peoples' right

to self determination.

Secretary of State Colin Powell acknowledged on Sept. 26 that the U.S. was fighting “an intense insurgency” in Iraq. However, he blamed the worsening situation on efforts to disrupt Iraqi elections in Janu-

ary – not on Iraqi efforts to resist the U.S. occupation. One wonders if Powell’s reasoning will make it any easier for Iraqis – who have suffered an estimated 13,000-15,000 civilian casualties to date – to survive and recover from their own trauma.

Iraq: Oil revenue audits show poor record-keeping

Recent audits of U.S. and Iraqi funds for the reconstruction of Iraq have exposed serious shortcomings in U.S. oversight of the money, according to a report from Iraq Revenue Watch. The audits show that some contractors made little effort to control costs, while the Coalition Provisional Authority (CPA) – which was in charge of managing the funds – kept poor records and monitored contracts ineffectively.

The audits were released in July by the Coalition Provisional Authority Inspector General (CPA-IG), which Congress created late last year. Iraq Revenue Watch (IRW) released its report on the audits in September. A PDF version of the report – “Disorder, Negligence and Mismanagement: How the CPA Handled Iraq Reconstruction Funds” – can be found at the IRW website, <http://www.iraqrevenuewatch.org/>.

“The CPA did not do its job regarding the oversight of reconstruction funds,” said Svetlana Tsalik, IRW director. “It failed to stop the misuse and waste of money that belonged to the Iraqi people and American taxpayers.”

IRW said the CPA apparently awarded U.S. firms nearly three-quarters of \$1.5 billion in contracts paid for with Iraqi funds. By contrast, Iraqi firms received just two percent of those contracts. Tsalik said U.S. government favorites such as Halliburton subsidiary Kellogg, Brown and Root (KBR) benefited at the expense of Iraqi companies whose workers badly needed jobs.

(In December 2003 Pentagon auditors found that KBR had overcharged the U.S. government as much as \$61 million for fuel imports into Iraq. A criminal investigation of KBR was launched by the Department of Defense in February 2004.)

The CPA-IG audits corroborated other findings, IRW said. A report released in July 2004 by the International Advisory and Monitoring Board, a UN watchdog agency, criticized the CPA’s control and use of Iraqi oil assets during the U.S. occupation. Issues included an absence of oil metering to control theft, poor record-keeping on oil sales, lack of oversight of spending by Iraqi ministries, and noncompetitive bidding for contracts.

IRW said the CPA-IG summarized the results of 11

audit reports, 69 criminal investigations and other initiatives in its quarterly report to Congress in July. The agency had a number of additional audits under way that were scheduled for release at the end of August. Among them were audits to assess the timeline for committing the \$18.4 billion U.S. appropriation for reconstruction in Iraq. The CPA had been criticized for its rush to commit Iraqi funds while its U.S. funds remained largely untapped. As of late July, only 31 percent of the funds had been obligated, and only two percent expended. Nevertheless, IRW said, the CPA-IG will cease to operate after Dec. 28 unless its term is extended by Congress.

IRW said the timing of the audits raises questions as to how improvements could be made. The Coalition Provisional Authority, which served as the temporary government of Iraq, managed Iraqi revenues during the U.S. occupation and handled many reconstruction contracts. When the CPA was dissolved on June 28, it ceded control over the Development Fund for Iraq (DFI) to the interim Iraqi government. The DFI now collects all earnings from the sale of Iraq’s oil and gas, which is the government’s primary source of revenue. IRW said little information on the balance of the fund has been released since the transfer of power to the interim government.

U.S. agencies will still manage contracts signed when the CPA governed Iraq, including those funded by U.S. appropriations and those paid for with Iraqi funds. The Project and Contracting Office, which reports to the U.S. Department of the Army/U.S. Department of Defense, will control contracting and program management. The State Department and the Iraq Reconstruction Management Office at the new U.S. Embassy in Baghdad will control priorities and requirements related to the \$18.4 billion U.S. appropriation for Iraq.

Meanwhile, IRW said the Department of Defense planned to break up Halliburton’s billion-dollar logistics civil augmentation contract by the end of 2004 and open it up to competitive bidding. IRW said the U.S. Army planned to break the main contract into six smaller contracts for food, transportation and other services. KBR would be free to bid on the contracts once again.

Kyoto Protocol finally goes into effect

After nearly seven years of difficult yet consistent efforts, many in the United Nations and environmental groups felt joy when news broke on September 30 that Russia had decided to approve ratification of the Kyoto Protocol. It joins more than 120 countries, including Japan and the European Union, that have already ratified the Treaty. Maryknoll priest John Brinkman, who has worked on environmental justice issues for many years, and was present at the December 2003 "conference of parties" (COP) meeting in Milan, contributed to this article.

The climate change treaty was approved on October 22 by the Russian Duma and on October 28 by Russia's upper house of parliament, leaving only the approval of President Vladimir Putin to complete the ratification process. Once Russia completes this ratification, the treaty gives all signatory countries only 90 days to begin reducing emissions of six gasses specified, and by 2010 the reduction is to be an average of 5.2 percent below 1990 levels.

Russia's move is vital for global efforts to tackle climate change. According to the Public Information Desk of the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (FCCC): "To enter into force, the Protocol must be ratified by 55 Parties to the Convention, including developed countries whose combined 1990 emissions of carbon dioxide exceed 55 percent of that grand total. With the U.S. (36 percent) not intending to ratify, the 55 percent threshold can only be met with the participation of Russia (17 percent). The Protocol will enter into force 90 days after Russia's instrument of ratification is received by the United Nations in New York. Both the United States and Australia... have stated that they do not intend to ratify the Protocol."

The ratification of the Protocol means that the "conference of the parties" (COP) at the UN FCCC will become the "members of the protocol" (MOP). This may well mean that the conference will no longer have to engage the inadequacies of the U.S. delegation under a Bush administration and its history of presenting road blocks in the Protocol process.

At the December 2003 Milan meeting of the COP, the U.S. presentations attempted to cast doubt on the science that calibrates climate change and its links to human-made industry. In a *New York Times* opinion piece (Dec. 4, 2003), Paula Dobriansky, head of the U.S. delegation, wrote: "[T]he extent to which the human-made portion of greenhouse gases is caus-

ing temperatures to rise is still unknown." In contrast, the Third Assessment Report (TAR) of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) stated that "there is new and stronger evidence that most of the warming observed over the past fifty years is attributable to human activities." At the December 10 High-Level Segment Round-Table Discussion, the U.S. effort to disparage climate change science was rebuffed by some of the U.S.'s closest allies as simply inadequate to the task at hand.

At a press conference for the Milan gathering, Dobriansky was asked if the president thought that climate change exists. Her response was that the president has acknowledged that warming and increased temperatures have been observed but that they were "cyclical changes." This prompted Alden Meyer, Union of Concerned Scientists, to quip that "cyclical" in this case may mean the election year cycle. It may be noted that for representatives to hold such a position so late in the game and to cast doubt on the voluminous evidence linking climate change to human activity is to ignore a number of documents, not the least of which is the U.S. Catholic bishops' June 2001 document on climate change, "Global Climate Change: A Plea for Dialogue, Prudence, and the Common Good."

In all of this, the real inadequacy was the absence of the U.S. delegation in any true participation in the Protocol process. This created a vacuum filled by other forces in the scheme of international negotiations.

Russia's decision could not have come any too soon, especially considering the severe storms and climate change experienced in every part of the globe. Some nations are more drastically affected than others. All of earth's waters have been getting higher as a result of melting ice caps of both the North and South Poles, leaving many island states, among them Maldives, literally struggling to keep their heads above the waters. The Maldivian Islands, which extend from the southwestern tip of India down to the equator, are known as a tourist paradise, but one that is soon to be lost. The capital, Male, is surrounded by a three meter-high wall, protecting this solitary isle among 200 inhabited islands. (Aid from Japan paid the wall's \$66 million cost.) Plans for evacuating one of the densely populated northern islands are already in place because tidal surges already flood islanders' homes at regular intervals.

The sea is also encroaching on Alaska where the village of Shishmaref on Sarichef Island in the Chukchi

Sea, just north of Bering Strait, lies on the edge of the Arctic Circle. It literally is being eaten away by the surrounding waters. Thawing of the permafrost is causing the ground to crumble, so the earth is dissolving underfoot, while waves are rising all around since the glaciers are melting and causing sea levels to rise. Efforts the villagers to build barriers were not successful, so the entire village will be relocated to the mainland, making its people among the first refugees of global warming.

In the Pacific, the nations of Marshall Islands, Kiribati, Samoa, and Fiji face a similar fate. Yet Pacific Islanders are virtually absent from most of the critical negotiations on climate change. The Pacific peoples want their voices to be heard as representing countries whose culture, way of life and very existence as island people are threatened, not just by political and economic decisions but by the lifestyles of peoples of developed nations.

With Russia's pledge to begin in a serious way to tackle climate change, civil society has now an urgent challenge to do whatever is possible locally. The UN Environmental Program estimates that 95 percent of energy used in transportation is derived from petroleum which results in large quantities of carbon pollution.

Unless U.S. corporations and individuals begin

to take seriously the need to quickly and creatively change our way of life and the shape of our economy, efforts to enforce the Kyoto Protocol will be as useless as setting up barriers to protect the village of Shishmaref from the rising waters. The time has come for the U.S. to take climate change seriously. We have a treaty, thanks to the courage of Russia, and now we also have a new season under heaven, one of hope.

As the U.S. Catholic bishops wrote in their June 2001 document "Global Climate Change: A Plea for Dialogue, Prudence and the Common Good,"we ... believe that the atmosphere that supports life on earth is a God-given gift, one we must respect and protect. ... If we harm the atmosphere, we dishonor our Creator and the gift of creation. The values of our faith call us to humility, sacrifice, and a respect for life and the natural gifts God has provided. ... In [the] spirit of praise and thanksgiving to God for the wonders of creation, we ... call for a civil dialogue and prudent and constructive action to protect God's precious gift of the earth's atmosphere with a sense of genuine solidarity and justice for all God's children."

For more information, see the film "Rising Waters: Global Warming and the Fate of the Pacific Islands" at www.itvs.org/risingwaters/index.html. To purchase a video of "Rising Waters," contact Bullfrog Films, 800-543-FROG, fax: 610-370-1978, video@bullfrogfilms.com

Free trade is not *fair* trade

The March/April 2004 issue of NewsNotes stressed the possible repercussions of the free trade agreement with Central America and the Dominican Republic (DR-CAFTA). The current model of free-trade may well spell disaster for the protection of small farms, labor, the environment and biodiversity, access to public services and medicines, and usurping state autonomy in favor of multi-national corporations. The following article was written by Jennifer Betz, intern with the Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns.

The U. S. presidential campaign centered on the war in Iraq and domestic security, while the numerous free trade agreements which the current administration has prioritized were less visible during most of the debate in the political arena.

Critics of the Central America Free Trade Agreement, including small farms and businesses, labor, environmental, religious, indigenous, and women's groups, remain alert to the possibility of a vote on DR-CAFTA

during U.S. Congress's lame duck session before the new Congress sits in January.

On September 30, hope emerged from the House Ways and Means Committee as 12 Democrats signed a letter criticizing the Bush administration for the protection of intellectual property rights in free trade agreements which would severely hinder a country's ability to obtain essential medicine, especially generics. In the light of the current AIDS crisis and the continually daunting statistics that over 30,000 children die a day from preventable diseases, the protection of pharmaceutical companies in lieu of public health is unconscionable. Yet, even this intellectual property critique falls short. It neglects the reality that protecting intellectual property rights could also decrease biodiversity and undermine the rights of small farmers through the patenting of food crops.

Clear differences on trade issues between President Bush and Democratic nominee Sen. John Kerry emerged during the election season. As President Bush and U.S.

Trade Representative Robert Zoellick continued to rush free trade agreements through Congress using fast-track authority, Kerry voiced his desire for a 120-day review period for all trade agreements, including those currently being negotiated, in order to secure better labor and environmental standards within them. Many hope that Kerry would include intellectual property rights in this review.

In response to the fierce opposition of community groups and some governments to the wide-ranging Free Trade Agreement in the Americas (FTAA), the United States is pursuing bilateral and smaller regional trade agreements that are more limited in scope, including the DR-CAFTA and an Andean Free Trade Agreement between the U.S. and Colombia, Ecuador, Peru, and possibly Bolivia.

The United States also continues to press for a regional free trade agreement with the Southern Africa Customs Union ~ South Africa, Namibia, Swaziland,



Grape harvesters in Chile; photo by Fr. Steve DeMott, courtesy of Maryknoll Fathers & Brothers

Lesotho, and Botswana. U.S. corporations have joined forces in a MEFTA-Coalition meeting with Trade Representative Zoellick in order to continue to demand Bush's proposed Middle East Free Trade agreement. And there is continued work with the countries in ASEAN to set up bilateral free trade agreements between the U.S. and the 10 ASEAN member countries in Southeast Asia.

Faith in action:

For more information, see the Trading in Justice website at www.tradejusticeusa.org. Also please contact your representatives and senators in order to say "no" to CAFTA. For more actions against CAFTA, visit www.stopcafta.org.

U.S. to rejoin International Coffee Organization

In September the United States announced its intention to rejoin the International Coffee Organization (ICO). As the world's largest coffee importer, the U.S. must act to develop a meaningful and comprehensive strategy to address the economic and humanitarian crisis facing small coffee farmers around the world. The following article outlines policy recommendations made by Oxfam America and suggests other actions that can be taken to promote fairly traded coffee in local communities.

In recent years, coffee prices have plunged causing increased poverty, hunger, and dislocation among coffee farmers around the world (see *NewsNotes* November-December 2002, November-December 2003). Plunging coffee prices and an overabundance of low-quality coffee on the market created a "coffee crisis" that has wreaked havoc on coffee-growing communities in poor countries since 1999. Today, the price of coffee still remains below the cost of production for millions of small producers. Many farmers have abandoned their land and have migrated looking for work, while others struggle to stay afloat with little access health care, education and food.

The international aid organization Oxfam commended the U.S.'s announcement. Since 2002, Oxfam has insisted the U.S. rejoin the ICO as a key element of

its coffee rescue plan. Seth Petchers, the coffee program coordinator for Oxfam America, said that "[w]ith the U.S. coming back to the table, the next step is development of a meaningful and comprehensive strategy to address the coffee crisis. Oxfam America calls on the U.S. to:

- commit to technical assistance for coffee farmers who are able to improve crop productivity and quality;
- support crop diversification for less competitive coffee farmers;
- expand access to rural financing and micro-credit for coffee cooperatives and farmers affected by the global coffee crisis;
- assist in developing public-private partnerships that will strengthen market access for growers."

Faith in action:

Another area where Oxfam is looking for action on the coffee crisis is to increase the demand for fair trade coffee in local grocery stores. For information on how to become active in this effort, go to Oxfam America's website at www.oxfamamerica.org, and click on the "what you can do" button. Click on "act now" and choose the coffee campaign button.

Slow steps toward debt cancellation

At the G8 summit in early June, world leaders considered for the first time a proposal that would provide 100 percent multilateral debt cancellation for selected highly indebted poor countries (HIPC). The proposal gave great hope to the many organizations and individuals pressuring the international financial institutions (IFIs) to respond to the humanitarian crises inflicted by economic policies on millions in the global South. On October 1 we waited and watched for the outcome of the G7 finance ministers' meetings. Unfortunately, they failed to move forward on debt cancellation. Their hesitancy is attributed to a lack of political will on the part of stakeholder countries; however James Wolfenson, president of the World Bank, stated, "I think the debate is engaged, and I hope it will be resolved before too long." A report on their progress is due at the end of the year. The following article was written by Rebecca Cutter, intern at the Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns.

The World Bank (WB) and International Monetary Fund (IMF) reports on the October 1 meeting provide little explanation for the hesitation to cancel debt. One argument against cancellation is that debt relief might be offset by reductions in aid flows. Another is that these countries will lose credibility with investors. The IFIs firmly believe that the best way to support the poverty reduction strategies of the low-income countries is by opening their markets to the exports of poor countries and by increasing new concessional flows. They also believe that with greater access to industrial country markets, impoverished countries can earn their way in the global economy. The WB and IMF fear that selling gold reserves to finance debt cancellation will weaken the Poverty Reduction and Growth Facility (PRGF) which provides low-interest loans to low-income countries. It has been proven, however, that between donor country contributions and the investment income from off market gold sales, the IMF and World Bank could cancel a considerable amount of sovereign debt. (See *NewsNotes*, September-October 2004).



South African poet and former political prisoner Dennis Brutus speaks at a prayer service at the World Bank, April 2004

U.S. Treasury Secretary John Snow and Britain's Chancellor of the Exchequer Gordon Brown have agreed on the principle of 100 percent cancellation and they have commented that the issue is definitely on the political agenda.

At the same time the WB/IMF continue to emphasize "debt sustainability," defined as the amount of debt a government can carry without going into arrears. Maryknoll and our colleagues believe that the most important concern is not "debt sustainability" but a country's ability to provide for its citizens basic needs, and take steps toward the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). Analysts from the United Nations Commission on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) have determined in a recent study, "Debt Sustainability: Oasis or Mirage," that "virtually all of the outstanding debt would need to be

written off, as the resources needed to attain the MDGs are substantial." The analysis calls for a moratorium on debt servicing, and points out the arbitrariness of the debt sustainability indicators applied thus far. It concludes that "a write-off of the debt of poor African countries is unlikely to cause financial distress to the IFIs as the amount involved is relatively small compared with their capital and could thus be absorbed through their loan loss provisions."

Meanwhile, the effectiveness of debt relief is evident. Resources freed up from annual debt payments have helped boost education spending by as much as 55 percent in the 23 African countries currently receiving relief, and health expenditures are up by almost as much. The evidence and the justification for immediate debt cancellation without conditions that exacerbate poverty and environmental destruction remain clear.

Faith in action:

See the website of the Religious Working Group on the World Bank and IMF (www.sndden.org/rwg) to read *A Moral Assessment of Progress Toward 100% Debt Cancellation: A Slow Small Step – Much Too Little, Much Too Late*.

Call to stop executions of juvenile offenders

"In the past 10 years, the United States has executed more juveniles than the rest of the world combined," reports Physicians for Human Rights (PHR). The organization is currently supporting efforts against the death penalty for offenses committed by people under 18 years of age, specifically the Call to Abolish the Execution of Juvenile Offenders in the United States campaign.

The campaign, backed by former U.S. surgeons general, health professionals, neuroscientists, organizations for children, and worldwide political figures, publicizes findings of neurological research that indicate that minors do not have the mental maturity to be fully responsible for acts that could be punished with the termination of their life. If their mental and emotional development is in a rather early phase, rehabilitation is not only the appropriate human approach but also the rational scientific response.

Following this line of argument, the campaign refers to recent studies that indicate that the brains of children and adolescents operate differently than those of adults. A young person's brain is dominated by the regions associated with impulse and aggression. This is why youth tend to have swifter reactions and why adolescent are less able to control behavior and consider consequences and alternatives. Nevertheless the administration of juvenile justice operates with an adult-centered approach. Moreover, it is well known that minors that commit violent acts have often been abused and neglected, which shifts the responsibilities of their behavior, in considerable measure, to adults and to social institutions.

David Satcher, Surgeon General during Bill Clinton's administration, has said, "Our country's practice of executing its youth is one that is unacceptable and should end as soon as possible. Not only must we acknowledge the relative immaturity and underdevelopment of our youth, but we must also acknowledge our society's responsibility for many of their behaviors. ... [M]ore than two thirds of the children who ended up in the juvenile justice system would not be there if they had received the appropriate mental health interventions that they needed to develop normally. It is our responsibility to see that each child has an optimal chance for a healthy start in life." Along with Satcher, endorsing the Call to Abolish campaign are former Surgeons General C. Everett Koop and Julius Richmond.

The U.S. is among only a few nations that allow execution for crimes committed by juveniles. And under intense national and international pressure, the U.S. Supreme Court is currently reconsidering whether such executions are constitutional.

The issue of capital punishment goes beyond the matter of executions for juvenile offenses, of course. This past October, the Second World Congress against the Death Penalty was held in Montreal. Addressing that congress, the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, Louise Arbour, said, "This congress convenes at a crucial moment, when old notions of state security wrestle with new understandings of human security, and when the resulting risks to unpopular vulnerable groups -such as minorities, migrants and prisoners- have never been higher."

Arbour called for "...all states to move with deliberate speed to the complete abolition of the death penalty," to which she referred as an archaic practice that needs to be relegated "to nothing more than a macabre curiosity in the world's history museums." She committed her office to promote the states' ratification of the Second Optional Protocol on the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, and to be vigilant on the Convention on the Rights of the Child, treaties that ban the death penalty.

Article 37 of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child refers to the prohibition of capital punishment or imprisonment for life for crimes committed by minors. This article has been a contentious one in UN forums on children due to the U.S. government's opposition to its provisions. If PHR's Call to Abolish campaign is successful, there may be no remaining federal legislative provision on the basis of which the U.S. government can continue to remain the only state in the world that has refused to ratify this Convention.

Faith in action:

Join the Call to Abolish campaign by contacting Physicians for Human Rights: c/o John Heffernan, 617-431-6407, jheffernan@phrusa.org. For more information, go to the PHR website at: www.phrusa.org.

Write to your congresspersons requesting their support for the U.S. ratification of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, and the Second Optional Protocol on the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights.

Small arms, light weapons are WMD of poor

The deadly world trade in small arms and light weapons (SALW) – in league with illegal trade in many other commodities, including human beings – aggravates deep-rooted problems such as poverty, member states told the UN General Assembly in October.

The Netherlands declared that poverty, disease and economic failure are often linked to the spread of violent conflict. Turkey and India described a complementary view – that the spread of small arms and light weapons poses a significant threat to peace and political stability and to social and economic development.

Addressing the Assembly's Disarmament and International Security Committee, Turkey's Mehmet Hasluk Ilicak said an estimated half million people are killed each year by small arms, adding that only one-third of those deaths are attributable to armed conflict. The Committee met during the first three weeks of the 59th General Assembly in New York.

In Committee debate a number of states faulted the traditional notion of "national security" for failing to take into account issues of poverty, HIV/AIDS, development, environment and health. China cited the growing gap between the rich and the poor, while Brazil noted that the purchase of arms diverts essential funds from national social programs. Colombia, the Dominican Republic, Iran, Israel, Malawi and Nepal expressed concern over the availability of SALW to non-state actors and noted that the weapons facilitate terrorism and drug trafficking.

However, member states also described signs of progress. The Ukraine said it would destroy 1.5 million units of SALW and 133,000 tons of arms with NATO assistance. Algeria said it planned to host a conference of the League of Arab States on small arms and light weapons, predicting that the Mediterranean would become "a lake of peace and cooperation."

A number of draft resolutions were introduced in the Committee pertaining to conventional weapons.

Colombia, Japan, South Africa and others co-sponsored a resolution expressing support for ongoing efforts to help states identify and trace illicit small arms and light weapons. Ninety-eight states co-sponsored a resolution encouraging closer integration of efforts to stop the illicit trade in SALW with efforts aimed at disarmament, demobilization and reintegration of former combatants.

Argentina, Australia, Kenya, Thailand and Turkey urged states to help fight illicit trade in surface-to-air missiles designed to be carried by individuals. Bulgaria, France and the Netherlands co-sponsored a draft deci-

sion to add the issue of surplus stockpiles of conventional ammunition to the General Assembly agenda next year.

In a related effort, the Center for American Progress (CAP) in Washington, D.C., has released a report entitled "The Tangled Web of Illicit Arms Trafficking." The Center argues that the world black market, like the legal market, has become increasingly globalized.

"The illegal trade in diamonds, for instance, links governments in Liberia, Togo and Burkina Faso to private arms smugglers in Bulgaria, Ukraine and Russia to precious stone dealers in Antwerp and Tel Aviv. In addition, rebel groups and terrorist organizations that take advantage of these illegal networks often use the profits from these commodities to purchase weapons and fund their operations," the Center said. The CAP report, available at www.americanprogress.org, includes the following urgent steps to reduce arms proliferation:

- Regional and international arms embargoes must be monitored and enforced. The UN should create a body to help monitor embargo enforcement and suggest consequences for violations.
- A common international system for marking and tracing weapons must be developed. Current international law allows separate marking systems, making identification difficult.
- Common international criteria are needed to determine who should be eligible to receive arms exports. The same standards should be applied to prevent the transfer of arms to those who might misuse them.
- Strengthening national and international end-use monitoring must become a top priority of arms-exporting states.
- Global stockpiles of small arms must be kept under control. Many countries have no formal system to ensure that arsenals are safely secured and properly managed.
- Countries must destroy surplus and obsolete weapons, especially in conflict areas, and reduce stockpiles of obsolete and surplus weapons in government arsenals.

If the world's major powers were more willing to reduce their own weapons stockpiles, including nuclear devices, it might help to end the proliferation of small arms and light weapons among weaker states. Anything less will only fuel the growing illicit trade in those weapons. As the representative of Papua New Guinea told the General Assembly Committee, for many nations "This category of weapons is our weapon of mass destruction."

Resources

1) ***Like Grains of Wheat: A Spirituality of Solidarity.***

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



2) ***Just Add Justice: Bringing Fair Trade to Your Community.***

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

3) ***September's Shadow.*** This new report from the Latin America Working Group (LAWG) examines how the U.S. response to 9/11 has affected U.S.-Latin American relations. Using polls, op-eds, aid trends, cartoons, 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. (One copy, \$6; bulk, \$3/copy plus shipping). Contact LAWG at 202-546-7010, or go to <http://www.lawg.org/docs/SeptembersShadow.pdf>

4) ***Blurring the Line: Trends in U.S. Military and Training Programs in Latin America.***

The Latin America Working Group's (LAWG) latest analysis of military training and aid trends shows that: the number of Latin American troops trained by the United States jumped 52 percent in one year and U.S. training increasingly blurs the line between military and civilian roles. This short, graph-filled publication gives you a snapshot of U.S. military programs in the hemisphere. (LAWGEF/CIP/WOLA publication) (One copy – \$3; bulk - \$1.50/copy plus shipping) Contact LAWG at 202-546-7010, or go to <http://www.lawg.org/docs/BlurringTheLines.pdf>. Please note that LAWG still has available the publication *Going to Extremes: The U.S.-Funded Aerial Eradication Program in Colombia* (\$3) (published March 2004, this comprehensive report on fumigation is still quite up to date). <http://www.lawg.org/docs/Going2ExtremesFinal.pdf>

5) ***Hidden in Plain Sight.*** Was the torture we saw at Abu Ghraib Prison really an aberration? In this documentary film narrated by Martin Sheen, experts say the U.S. has been exporting tactics such as "coercive interrogation" to Latin America for decades. "Hidden in Plain Sight" is directed by John H. Smihula, produced by Vivi Letsou, John H. Smihula and Andrés Thomas Conteris. VHS, 71 minutes, English. Spanish subtitles available. [DVD, 71 minutes, but can be used to show a shorter (52 minute) version; includes additional material (extra sequences, soundbites, interviews, and an epilogue).] Grades 9-12, college, adult. 2003 Latin American Studies Award for Merit in Film. Special promotional offer: Now available to individuals and nonprofit groups (including faith communities) for \$25 plus \$5 shipping. (The price through the website is \$250.) Specify VHS or DVD. Make checks (or money orders) out to Nonviolence International. Mail your order to: Raven's Call Productions, 4545 42nd St Suite 209, Washington D.C. 20016. For more information, contact Raven's Call Productions, email: promo@hiddeninplainsight.org; web: <http://www.hiddeninplainsight.org/main/home.html>