



Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns

NewsNotes

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Women and peacemaking

“In no other area is our collective failure to ensure effective protection for civilians more apparent...than in terms of the masses of women and girls, but also boys and men, whose lives are destroyed each year by sexual violence perpetrated in conflict.” (UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon)

The dignity and personhood of women can only be realized when women are honored as equal members of our global community, using their gifts of intellect, intuition, understanding and compassion for all, in pursuit of a world of peace and justice. Sadly, this has not been their reality. Women and girls are targeted as a tactic of war to humiliate, dominate, create fear, punish, disperse and/or forcibly relocate members of a community or ethnic group. Sexual violence exacerbates conflict and perpetuates insecurity in the wake of war. It holds entire communities hostage, and has an economic, social, cultural and inter-generational impact: women cannot access water-points and markets; children cannot safely get to school; “war babies” are ostracized. (UN Women)

Since its opening in the summer of 2005, marking the 60th year since the end of World War II and the tenth year since the Beijing Conference on Women, the Women’s Active Museum on War and Peace in Tokyo has demonstrated its commitment to retrieving the painful memories of wartime sexual violence and creating a setting in which the stories of “comfort” women who were victims and are survivors of that violence can be retold, and healing can begin.

The museum has helped sustain international attention on the process and findings of the Women’s International War Crimes Tribunal, which made sexual slavery a symbol of wartime violence against women and gave women around the world, especially those caught in the violence and tragic aftermath of war, new hope. The proceedings of the Women’s International War Crimes Tribunal, and its ruling that the Japanese military sexual slavery system was a war crime according to international laws then in force made a tremendous contribution to exposing the gendered nature of war crimes and to ending the impunity with which wartime sexual violence has been committed against women around the world.

The Women’s Active Museum on War and Peace has become a center for women activists aiming to stop war, eliminate all forms of violence in war and conflicts, ensure the protection of women’s human rights, and contribute to reconciliation in the Asia/Pacific region.

In October 2000, the UN Security Council passed

unanimously Resolution 1325 to recognize the importance of including women in matters of peace and security. It recognizes that women are disproportionately affected by conflict and calls for their active participation at all levels of decision-making in conflict prevention, conflict resolution, peace processes, post-conflict peacebuilding and governance. SCR 1325 further calls for the effective protection of women from sexual and gender-based violence in conflict settings, for the mainstreaming of gender perspectives in all aspects of peace operations, and for the promotion of women’s rights and gender equality.

The Women’s International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF) and many other women’s organizations around the world insist that Resolution 1325 is not merely “a tool for making war safe for women,” but a way to advance the status of women everywhere and prevent future wars.

In 2008, Security Council Resolution 1820 recognized conflict-related sexual violence as a matter of international peace and security. It calls for armed actors to end the practice of using sexual violence against civilians to achieve political or military ends, and for all parties to conflict to counter impunity for sexual violence and provide effective protection for civilians. It also calls on the United Nations and peace operations to develop mechanisms to prevent and respond to sexual violence, including through the training of personnel, the deployment of more women to peace operations, the enforcement of zero-tolerance policies and strengthening the capacities of national institutions.

Despite the passage of Security Council Resolutions 1325 and 1820, according to the United Nations, women’s participation in peace negotiations remains ad hoc, not systematic, averaging less than eight percent of the 11 peace processes for which such information is available. Fewer than three percent of signatories to peace agreements are women.

No women have been appointed chief or lead peace mediators in UN-sponsored peace talks, but in some talks sponsored by the African Union or other institutions women have joined a team of mediators. A positive case is the role of Graça Machel as one of the three mediators for the Kenya crisis in 2008.

Out of 300 peace agreements for 45 conflict situations in the 20 years since the end of the Cold War, only 18 have addressed sexual violence in 10 conflict situations (Burundi, Aceh, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Sudan/Nuba Mountains, Sudan/Darfur, Philip-

piners, Nepal, Uganda, Guatemala, and Chiapas). With regard to trials of sexual violence as a war crime, crime against humanity, crime associated with genocide, and use in torture, sexual violence has been the “least condemned war crime.” At the International Criminal Tribunal for Former Yugoslavia, 18 decisions resulting in convictions are related to sexual violence. The number is lower in other courts: eight in the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda, and six in the Special Court for Sierra Leone.

Much more political will is needed to include wartime sexual violence in peace negotiations, and women must be included in negotiation process. As victims of social inequity women’s expertise must be honored.

The Nobel Women’s Initiative (nobelwomensinitiative.org) and the Women Peacemakers’ Program at the University of San Diego (http://www.sandiego.edu/peacestudies/ipj/programs/women_peace_makers/) give insight into the work of women peacemakers.

Caravan for Peace wends through U.S.

“Estamos hasta la madre! [We are fed up]” is the rallying cry of Mexican poet and author Javier Sicilia, who has mobilized people on both sides of the border to stop the bloodshed caused by drug violence. In 2011, after his son Juan Francisco was brutally murdered by drug traffickers, Sicilia mobilized the Caravan for Peace with Justice and Dignity, a series of peace marches throughout Mexico. As reported in the July-August NewsNotes, Sicilia brought the caravan and its message to the U.S. this summer: The caravan made its first U.S. stop in San Diego August 12 and, after stops in 22 cities, will conclude in Washington, D.C. during the week of September 10.

Along the cross-country journey, the 110 people traveling with the caravan were greeted by a multitude of individuals and organizations welcoming their message. In San Diego, the procession got underway with a rally and vigil at the border fence in Border State Park. Attendees held posters and signs with photographs showing the faces and names of those who have died or disappeared due to the drug war. One of the caravan’s organizers told *CounterPunch*, “We want people to be able to put a face to the news reports. The impact may not be immediate but we’re going to sow seeds.”

In Los Angeles, Mexican directors, actors and artists working in Hollywood pledged to bring to the forefront the need for an alternative to the war on drugs. In Albuquerque, Sicilia and others in the caravan learned how to buy an AK-47 in less than five minutes when they visited a gun show. At one point during the rally in New Mexico, Sicilia said, “The underlying theme [of the movement] is the same in both countries, but the narrative thread is obviously different. Here, you have the addicts and the guns, which are smuggled to Mexico. There, we have the cartels, victims and endemic state corruption.” Throughout the southwest, the caravan sought to engage

in dialogue and emphasize their desire to demilitarize the border and the war on drugs, which has only led to illegal trafficking in arms and bloodshed.

In several cities, a resolution to dialogue about alternatives to the drug war was passed in courthouses and city halls. A Code of Conduct on Arms Trafficking was also signed by local gun dealers and gun shop owners.

In southern cities like Jackson, Montgomery, and Atlanta, the caravan’s message focused on the negative impact this “war” has on people of color. In Georgia, the caravan also stopped at Fort Benning where about 140-150 people joined the rally to highlight the connection between the U.S. Army’s School of the Americas/Western Hemisphere Institute for Security Cooperation and those murdered and disappeared in Mexico in the last six years. Families of the victims left photographs of their deceased and missing loved ones, along with signs and crosses at the entrance to Fort Benning.

For a list of activities, videos and information see the Caravan for Peace website (www.caravanforpeace.org). Also see “Can the Caravan of Peace end the war on drugs?” printed in *The Nation* magazine (www.thenation.com); and “Mexican poet, activist Javier Sicilia brings peace caravan into U.S. to condemn deadly drug war,” an interview with Sicilia on the Democracy Now! radio program (www.democracynow.org).



Mexican poet and author Javier Sicilia, whose son Juan Francisco was killed by drug traffickers

Honduras: U.S. begins to shift stance

The State Department recently announced that it would withhold assistance including \$1.3 million in foreign military assistance and another \$1.7 million in peace and security funding from Honduran law enforcement units directly supervised by their new national police chief, Juan Carlos Bonilla, until the U.S. can investigate allegations that he ran a death squad a decade ago. This decision in many ways represents the first victory of a long campaign by human rights and faith-based organizations to change U.S. policy toward the Honduran government.

In the early morning of June 28, 2009, members of the Honduran military removed then-president Manuel Zelaya from the presidential palace, flew him into exile in Costa Rica, and helped establish the Porfirio Lobo Sosa government. Although the U.S. suspended \$31 million in aid to Honduras after the coup, it was quickly reinstated in 2010.

Many human rights and faith-based organizations, including the Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns (MOGC), have worked to inform U.S. officials about human rights abuses being perpetrated by members of the Honduran police and military and the total impunity that they receive. MOGC staff and colleagues have met numerous times with many members of the State Department, National Security Council and other key administration officials asking for the U.S. government to assume a stronger stance toward the Honduran government in terms of demanding investigations and, if warranted, prosecutions of government officials involved in human rights abuses.

Despite meetings with administration officials in 2009 and 2010 where MOGC staff and colleagues were able to share evidence of the increasingly violent means being used to put down peaceful protests and the targeting of movement leaders for intimidation, kidnapping, torture and assassination, the State Department continued to support the Lobo regime. In May 2011, while French energy companies and the German government were withdrawing their investments from Honduras due to human rights concerns, the U.S. embassy helped organize and fund the “Honduras is open for business” investment conference that brought hundreds of global corporations to the country to learn of new business opportunities.

Our faith based and human rights coalition switched to educating member of Congress about Honduras and encouraging them to pressure the administration to take

a stronger line with the Lobo government.

Thanks to pressure from constituents, a number of legislators organized several “Dear Colleague” letters to Secretary of State Hillary Clinton calling for more attention to the human rights situation in Honduras. One letter sent on March 9, 2012, signed by 94 members of Congress, called for all military and police aid to be suspended until the Lobo regime honestly investigates and, if warranted, prosecutes members of the military and police who are involved in human rights abuses.

While it is a positive step to have the Obama administration taking a stronger tack in pressuring Honduras for human rights improvements, the suspension of funding for Bonilla’s troops is likely to be short-lived. While Bonilla is alleged to have been involved in at least three killings or forced disappearances between 1998 and 2002 and another 11 cases with other officers, only one of the allegations led to actual murder charges, and he was acquitted in a 2004 decision. It is possible that the State Department investigation will lack the necessary evidence to prove the charges against Bonilla.

While we can celebrate this initial movement within administration policy toward Honduras with the temporary suspension of funding to one police unit, there is still a long way to go before the government-perpetrated human rights nightmare is ended. In fact, larger sums of money continue to flow to security forces known to be involved in targeting community leaders.

A provision in Congressional Appropriations law requires a U.S. State Department report on human rights in Honduras before 20 percent of military and police aid is released. An August 25 *Los Angeles Times* op-ed by University of California Santa Cruz history professor Dana Frank indicates that more than \$50 million in U.S. security and development aid can now flow to Honduras because the State Department reported that “the Honduran government is implementing policies to ensure freedom of expression, freedom of association (including labor rights) and due process of law, and to ensure that military and police personnel who have violated human rights are being investigated and prosecuted.”

Faith in action:

Call your member of Congress through the Capitol switchboard (202-224-3121), thank her/him if s/he signed the letter to Secretary Clinton and encourage her/him to vote to suspend further military or police aid until human rights investigations are diligently carried out and pressure the State Department to do the same.

Central America: The Esquipulas legacy

This August marked the 25th anniversary of the signing of the Esquipulas Accords that catalyzed the end to war in Central America. As they celebrate this historic event, Central American countries look to that legacy to find solutions to current issues of security, development and stability in the region.

Currently Central America is one of the world's most violent regions — organized crime networks and gangs threaten to undermine countries' capacity to deliver justice, protect citizens, and foster a sense of social inclusion.

What better time than now to evoke the successes of 25 years ago when, in the midst of intra-regional hostilities and several failed peace negotiations, Costa Rica's then president Oscar Arias (a future Nobel Peace laureate) led the other Central American nations to a plan, debated in Esquipulas, Guatemala, to demilitarize the region. The strategy included folding all sides into democratic systems and downsizing armies. Weakening military control was pinpointed as the first step toward peace, but the accord also aimed to halt international players, like the U.S., from funding irregular forces like the *contras*.

In a 2000 *Los Angeles Times* interview, when asked how he was able to get leaders to agree to a peaceful solution, Arias said, "I appealed to their sense of history, to their responsibility of transferring to our children a peaceful Central America, to their dignity, not accepting

what Washington was recommending." Michael Shifter, president of the Inter-American Dialogue, commented that the Esquipulas Accord "revealed a degree of initiative and independence that the region hadn't seen before, almost a defiance of the Reagan policy."

Nicaragua recently demonstrated the initiative and independence characteristic of the Esquipulas Accords. In early September the School of the Americas Watch (SOA Watch) reported that Nicaragua became the first Central American country to withdraw its troops from the School of the Americas/Western Hemisphere Institute for Security Cooperation (SOA/WHINSEC), located at Ft. Benning, GA. At a meeting with SOA Watch delegates, President Ortega said that "the [SOA] is an ethical and moral anathema. All of the countries of Latin America have been victims of its graduates. The SOA is a symbol of death, a symbol of terror. We have been gradually reducing our numbers of troops at the SOA, sending only five last year and none this year. We have now entered a new phase and we will NOT continue to send troops to the SOA. This is the least that we can do. We have been its victims." [For more information on the Nicaragua's promise not to send soldiers to SOA/WHINSEC, visit SOAWatch's website, www.soaw.org ("Nicaragua withdraws its troops from the School of the Americas.")]

On August 14 the Organization of American States (OAS) hosted "25 Years After the Esquipulas Agreements: Opportunities and Challenges in Central America," a panel discussion that included the Oscar Arias and former president of Guatemala Vinicio Cerezo, along with leaders and analysts from the region, many of whom had been involved with the original Esquipulas process. It was at the OAS where Arias stated that the legacy of Esquipulas is "fertile" but also "inconclusive.... In Central America we have peace, democracy and development, but what we lack is quality in all these variables." Arias professed that the future of the agreements is "dynamic," and is being built by those who "try to forge a better future for their people," by those who "have opted for diplomacy and understanding between nations as a tool of progress," and with "hope, which must serve to encourage us."

Nobel Peace Prize laureate Oscar Arias, former president of Costa Rica, speaks at the Organization of American States on Aug. 14; he was a participant in a panel held on the occasion of the 25th anniversary of the Esquipulas Accords.



Peru: Concrete action for sustainable development

Maryknoll Sister Pat Ryan on mission in Peru is a member of the NGO Human Rights and the Environment; she is the source of the information in this article regarding the Community of Condoraque.

After World War II the United Nations was established as an institution to bring forth peace and human security, to be accomplished through freedom and development. Throughout the past six decades the UN has kept this vision in sight even though human reality has been far more complex than could have been imagined in the 1940s. Sixty years ago it would have been difficult to imagine that the course of human development would threaten Earth's seemingly endless supply of natural resources, including water.

By the 1970s, however, it was apparent that development would need to be reframed because its trajectory was unsustainable for the long run and negative widespread environmental effects were already very obvious. Also, hard won political freedom in emerging nations was undermined by failure to establish just and equitable standards for the use of economic resources.

Now, through decades of work, the UN has established the concept of sustainable development that takes into account the economic, social and environmental needs of contemporary people and nations while not forgetting the rights of future generations to meet their needs. The recent Rio + 20 Conference renewed international awareness regarding the need for all nations to work together for a sustainable future according to a coherent plan. Once again, the commitment to peace for all people was affirmed as the goal, but this time with a more nuanced expression of what constitutes freedom as it relates to sustainable development. The following is from the common vision statement of the Rio + 20 outcome document.

We recognize that opportunities for people to influence their lives and future, participate in decision-making and voice their concerns are fundamental for sustainable development. We underscore that sustainable development requires concrete and urgent action. It can only be achieved with a broad alliance of people, governments, civil society and the private sectors, all working together to secure the future we want for present and future generations.

The significance of these words is shown through the experience of the Peruvian altiplano community of Condoraque. The plight of the Condoraque community was related in NewsNotes two years ago, in September

2010. In summary, the lives of this small rural community of Aymara people were entirely disrupted through large-scale invasive mining operations. The community's water became contaminated due to toxic tailings, the people became ill, livestock were destroyed and livelihood lost.

There was no consultation with the community before the mining operations began and no clean-up or restoration when the operations were abandoned. Recently, a second mining company began operations in the area. However, before proceeding, the company was to conduct an environmental impact assessment and the findings were to be transmitted to the community. Furthermore, the new company promised the people of Condoraque that before proceeding with new operations, they would completely restore the site destroyed by the first company and submit a specific plan for closing their own operations when their work was completed. These were essential conditions of the community's consenting to the new operations. Unfortunately, the company began mining without transmitting the findings of the environmental impact assessment, ignored its promise to restore the land and water previously contaminated, and no closure plan was submitted.

Regrettably, these circumstances are multiplied throughout the world and illustrate a generalized failure to take into account social and environmental needs and requirements in the planning and implementation of economic enterprises, especially of the extractive type. Clearly, such practices are not conducive to peace; rather, they lead directly to widespread unrest.

Fortunately, a new chapter has been added to the Condoraque story. On April 24, 2012, a judicial decision established that the community of Condoraque had presented sufficient evidence to warrant opening a legal case against the mining company. This decision was contested by the lawyers representing the company. Then, the community's lawyer, from the NGO Human Rights and the Environment, invited the company's attorney and other concerned parties to actually visit the devastated sites. Although with reluctance, all parties agreed to a site investigation. Everyone's safety was guaranteed by the NGO; this was essential given that the non-indigenous professional people representing the company were afraid of the indigenous people who had been successfully marginalized for centuries and were justifiably angry.

On the agreed upon date all parties presented themselves and were able to see the absolute devastation of

the land and water. Beyond this, they met with the members of the Condoraque community and heard their testimony. The outcome of this experience is very hopeful. The mining company has apologized and agreed to the community's requirements. The land and water restoration plan is being elaborated by experts in remediation for mining of the New Castle University of the United Kingdom, arranged by the Catholic Overseas Development Agency, representatives of which have also visited the site.

This case is becoming a source of inspiration in Peru among local communities who do not oppose development but insist on their rights being recognized within a framework of sustainable development. The Condoraque case may well become emblematic globally as it enters into the United Nations log of best practices in keeping with the principles stated in the Rio + 20 vision statement quoted above. Beyond a doubt, peace and human security are fostered!

Peru: Toxic spill in mining community

In the last edition of NewsNotes, we reported on the two deaths and many injuries that occurred in the Peruvian province of Espinar when people protested the Anglo-Swiss mine Xstrata. In early July, violence erupted once again in the region of Cajamarca, this time leaving five protesters dead and many others wounded in demonstrations against the Denver-based mine, Newmont. In a more recent mining conflict, the town of Santa Rosa de Cajacay is still recovering after a toxic spill by the Antamina mining group, which includes Xstrata.

On July 25, the Antamina pipeline carrying copper concentrates and toxic compounds burst and spilled 45 tons of its contents into the village of Santa Rosa de Cajacay. After realizing what had occurred, Abraham Balabarca, who was constructing a house nearby, ran with others to a facility managed by the mine to try and stop the flow. They found the door locked and that the security guard had no key. "By the time someone pried open the lock with a crowbar, the town was shrouded in a toxic cloud," reported the Associated Press (AP) in an August 16 article, "Townfolk sickened after Peru toxic spill."

Antamina's director of community relations provided only absorbent cloth to villagers recruited to help clean up the spill. The AP article cited the work of an environmental chemist and toxicology professor at the University of Idaho-Washington State University, Greg Moller, who called the lack of protective gear "unethical and irresponsible."

An estimated 350 villagers "[were] treated for headaches, respiratory tract bleeding, nausea and vomiting, according to the mayor's office." Pregnant women, and other vulnerable persons, including at least 69 chil-

dren, were among those negatively affected. According to the AP article, Dr. Juan Villena, dean of Peru's College of Physicians, reported that some children in the town had "serious muscular and respiratory problems, bleeding from the nose."

In contrast, in a radio interview, Health Minister Midori de Habich said there have been no serious threats to people's health. In an August 8 meeting between villagers and company executives, Antamina agreed to establish a health committee to provide compensation to victims. Villagers whose emergency treatment was paid for by Antamina, however, are concerned that their health reports may be manipulated – after requests for the results of their blood tests or any other documentation that would attest to their hospitalization were denied. They are now asking that they be treated by more neutral doctors to provide an accurate, trustworthy report to the committee.

At the meeting, Antamina – which has amassed a fortune in the past 10 years – agreed to construct the reservoir that in 2000 had been the condition for the mining group to lay the pipeline in the first place.

According to an August 22 blogpost by GRUFIDES, a Peruvian non-governmental organization, the state was in part to blame for the reservoir not being constructed. The manner in which Antamina and the Peruvian government have behaved towards the Cajacay community is typical in regards to extractive industry projects.

"The cry of the earth and the cry of the poor are one." (Chapter 10, 2004 Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church) Unfortunately, as the explosion of extractive industries ricochets throughout the world, this cry resounds ever more loudly. Who is listening?



Photo from regionlimaaldia.com

DRC: Violence must end

In early September, faith-based organizations worked together to issue a statement citing the “recent surge in violence in eastern Congo with the mutiny and rise of the March 23 movement, or M23,” and their alarm at United Nations reports revealing the government of Rwanda’s role in supporting and perpetuating violence by orchestrating and bolstering M23 with both military and financial support. The violence must end in the war torn country, and the U.S. government could be playing a stronger role in securing peace in the eastern region of the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC).

Efforts by the Rwandan government to support M23 have been documented by experts and confirmed by human rights organizations, and are having a devastating impact on communities in the region, both in eastern Congo and in Rwanda. In an August 4 message to the international faith community, Rev. Josue’ Bulambo Lembelembe, vice president of the Church of Christ of the Congo, pleaded, “Help us. Help our population recover peace. We want unity. These populations say no to violence [and] the illegal exploitation of our resources...” According to Ecumenical News International (ENI), faith leaders in eastern DRC report that more than 30,000 individuals have been displaced in North Kivu Province due to fighting between rebel groups. “The latest fighting started in April following disagreements over a 2009 accord that integrated the rebels into the national army. Army officers mutinied and formed M23,” reports ENI.

Grave concerns have been raised by the fact that the government of Rwanda is supporting the M23 and, by doing so, has breached a number of its international obligations and is posing a serious threat to international peace and security in the region. Faith communities have called on Rwanda to immediately cease all support for the M23 rebellion and be proactive in seeking resolution and long-term, sustainable peace in the region; both the governments of the DRC and Rwanda should take steps to immediately end the violence, provide aid for those affected by the conflict, and begin to engage in an open dialogue that helps create space for local reconciliation efforts.

While some members of the U.S. Congress and State Department have recently spoken out publicly

on the conflict and have taken some initial steps to suspend non-humanitarian aid to Rwanda, much more can be done to stem the tide of violence. When President Obama was a senator, one of the two bills he authored that became law was the Democratic Republic of the Congo Relief, Security, and Democracy Promotion Act of 2006 (S. 2125 [109th]). In 2006, then-fellow senator Hillary Clinton was a co-sponsor, along with 11 others.

S. 2125 includes specific provisions on conflict minerals and sexual violence; sanctions on armed groups and their state-sponsors; and support for democracy. Section 105 of the Obama-written law authorizes the secretary of state to withhold assistance from a foreign country if she determines that the foreign government is taking actions to destabilize the DRC. According to the Institute for Policy Studies, Obama’s law, passed six years ago, is still the only official policy the United States has on the books for dealing with the present crisis in eastern Congo crisis. But as president, Obama has never implemented the law he authored, despite abundant evidence of abuses.

Additionally, Section 1502 of the Financial Reform Act of 2010 requires that the U.S. Securities Exchange ensure that

U.S. American companies do not source minerals from the DRC’s conflict zones – essentially referring to North and South Kivu regions in eastern DRC – as a critical step to achieving peace. Though the U.S. government dragged its feet in implementing this provision, and in spite of industry arguments that such provisions would prove too costly and give rivals sensitive information, on August 22 the Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC) finalized a rule requiring manufacturers to disclose whether their products include certain minerals from the war-torn DRC.

At the same time, the SEC finalized rules for Section 1504 of the Financial Reform Act of 2010, requiring 1,100 oil, gas and mining companies registered with SEC to disclose their payments to U.S. and foreign governments, country-by-country and at the project-level every year beginning September 30, 2013.

Faith in action:

Write a thank you note to the SEC and send it via the SEC’s online comment form (<https://ts.sec.gov/oiea/QuestionsAndComments.html>) or via personal email to Chairman Mary L. Schapiro (chairmanoffice@sec.gov).



East Timor: Ten years of independence

East Timor's road to sovereignty – achieved on May 20, 2002 – was long and traumatic. An independent report commissioned by the UN transitional administration in East Timor said that at least 100,000 Timorese died as a result of Indonesia's 25-year occupation, which was backed by a succession of U.S. administrations – from Presidents Ford to Clinton – that provided Jakarta diplomatic cover and billions of dollars in weaponry, military training, and economic assistance. Sources for the following article include BBC News, FMT News, and the East Timor and Indonesia Action Network (ETAN).

Following a long struggle for independence and increasing international pressure, the occupation ended in 1999 with a referendum that showed overwhelming support for independence and provoked a rampage by the militia, which murdered hundreds and reduced whole towns to ruins. An international peacekeeping force was sent in to stop the violence and to pave the way for the United Nations Mission of Support in East Timor (UNMISSET), which stayed until May 2005.

Another outbreak of violence a year later prompted the UN Security Council to set up a new peacekeeping force, the UN Integrated Mission in East Timor (UNMIT), which has a mandate until the end of 2012.

This past April, the former armed forces chief, Taur Matan Ruak, won the second round of presidential elections. In July, Prime Minister Xanana Gusmao's National Congress for Timorese Reconstruction beat the opposition, Fretilin, in parliamentary elections, but fell short of a majority. The elections were peaceful. Of the four parties, three formed a coalition and Fretilin remained as the opposition, receiving none of the parliamentary positions. As the new government assumes power, grinding poverty, an economy 90 percent dependent on offshore oil and gas, and impunity remain serious issues.

East Timor's Commission for Reception, Truth and Reconciliation (CAVR), established in 2001, functioned from 2002 until its dissolution in December 2005. It was an independent, statutory authority led by seven East Timorese commissioners and mandated by UN Transitional Administration in East Timor (UNTAET) Regulation 2001/10 to undertake truth seeking for the period 1974-1999, facilitate community reconciliation for less serious crimes, report on its work and findings, and make recommendations. Its 2,800 page report entitled "Chega!" was presented to the president, parliament and government of East Timor in October 2005.

The report recommended establishment of an inter-

national criminal tribunal and advocated that countries (including the U.S.) which backed the occupation and corporations that sold weapons to Indonesia during that period should pay reparations to victims. The Commission urged the international community not to support Indonesia's military until it was thoroughly reformed and respectful of human rights. (See East Timor and Indonesia Action Network, <http://www.etan.org>).

The parliament of East Timor never formally discussed the anti-impunity resolutions of CAVR. East Timor's good relationship with Indonesia since 2000 makes the question of accountability for human rights violations during Indonesia's occupation of East Timor extremely delicate.

In an August 12 letter to UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon, the East Timor National Alliance for an International Tribunal (ANTI) said, "The UN representation in Timor-Leste (UNMIT) will complete its mission at the end of this year, but consideration must continue to be given and responsibility must be taken to provide justice to the people in accordance with the fundamental principles set out in the UN Charter.

"We ask for the UN, who has always stated that it will not tolerate the impunity that exists in the world, to take concrete and effective measures to end impunity for the leaders and those who committed crimes against humanity in Timor-Leste. The UN has taken a number of positive and concrete measures to provide justice for serious crimes, including establishment of the Serious Crimes Unit (SCU) to investigate a number of crimes and process those who were responsible for certain crimes committed in 1999; the Special Panel (SP) to try the perpetrators of these crimes (S/2005/458, par. 5); and the Commission of Experts who reported on the judicial process conducted by the SCU, the SP and the Ad Hoc Human Rights Trials in Jakarta – Indonesia (S/2005/458, par. 1-2).

"However, all of these measures were not credible, because all of the recommendations in the aforementioned report were ignored by the Security Council, and the duties of the SCU and the SP were limited to dealing with cases that occurred in 1999, and did not include the killing of civilians that was systematically carried out by the Indonesian military between 1975-1998."

Given that the mandate of UNMIT will finish at the end of 2012, ANTI urged the UN to "set up a unit in Timor-Leste to have ongoing responsibility until justice is provided for crimes committed during the occupation or annexation of Timor-Leste by Indonesia."

Middle East: Uprising in Syria

The following article, contributed by Marie Dennis, co-president of Pax Christi International, is based on a longer piece written for the Center of Concern's Education for Justice Program. For more information about how Catholic social teaching relates to the present situation please visit the Center of Concern's Education for Justice site, www.educationforjustice.org.

Since March 2011, Syria has been embroiled in an escalating and increasingly dangerous conflict that began as a powerful, creative and nonviolent uprising during the Arab Spring. Christians, who have been in Syria since the beginning of Christianity, have long been engaged in the struggle there for freedom and dignity. While there is no one unified "Christian" voice or opinion about how to achieve a just, peaceful, democratic and reconciled Syria, many have played a thoughtful and active role since the beginning of this revolution.

Every day, for months, Syrians have protested in the streets, participated in general strikes and engaged in symbolic actions. Many of the protesters came from the Syrian poor and middle classes that were marginalized politically and economically by the Syrian regime. Their demands for freedom, dignity, and economic justice, for the release of political prisoners and an end to emergency rule were quickly met with violence and increased repression, as Syrian security forces waged war on their own people. While many in the opposition continued the nonviolent struggle – even trying to negotiate with the government, and ultimately trying to depose nonviolently President Bashar al-Assad – others took up arms.

Throughout, according to the independent, non-governmental organization International Crisis Group, a "vibrant, courageous and resilient civil society" mobilized networks and "kept in check some of the worst forms of violence to which any armed opposition operating in a poisonous environment might have resorted."

Since July 2011, the Free Syrian Army (FSA), which includes many government army defectors in small groups under local leadership, has been the main armed opposition group operating in Syria. An opposition government in exile, the Syrian National Council (SNC), was formed of Diaspora Syrians (old opposition) and political activists who had recently left Syria, but its relationship to the FSA and legitimacy inside Syria are complicated. It also differs substantially on key issues from the National Coordinating Committee (NCC) a main political opposition bloc inside Syria.

Youth activists – in many ways the backbone of the

revolution – organized themselves at first into small local committees to document and publicize the uprisings. Over time, they formed a web of commissions, councils, and unions formally grouped around three coalitions: the Syrian Revolution General Commission (SRGC), the Ghad alliance (including the Local Coordinating Committees or LCCs), and the Higher Council of the Syrian Revolution (see Randa Slim, Middle East Institute).

As the violence escalated and spread, tens of thousands of Syrians fled or were forced from their homes. According to the UN, over 140,000 are internally displaced or in refuge in Turkey, Jordan, Lebanon and Iraq. Iraqi refugees who have been living in Damascus found themselves once again caught in the middle of a war.

The role of the international community in response to the uprising has been complicated by geopolitical interests, plagued by disinformation and, to date, ineffective. Sanctions, UN resolutions, efforts of the Arab League to broker a ceasefire and UN envoy Kofi Annan's peace plan have been thwarted. Meanwhile, Russia continues to arm and supply the Syrian government, while Saudi Arabia and Qatar, with Turkey's logistical help, are arming the rebels, and other countries, including the United States, are providing them with other forms of support.

It is easier to say what should *not* be done in relation to the crisis in Syria than to identify what *should* be done. With members in the region, Pax Christi International has been following the course of the revolution with great care, believing that violence is not the answer. To further arm the opposition in response to arming of the Syrian government or to intervene with military force would be to move in the wrong direction and risk igniting the region in a protracted and widespread war.

But nonviolence cannot be passive about injustice or evil and the "responsibility to protect," as stipulated in the Outcome Document of the 2005 UN World Summit, says that the international community has a responsibility to use appropriate diplomatic, humanitarian and other means to protect populations from genocide, war crimes, crimes against humanity and ethnic cleansing if their own government fails to do so.

How is the question, when nations of the world have invested enormous wealth developing capacity for military action but have almost completely failed to develop tools for nonviolent intervention in situations of egregious human rights violations.

Some possibilities include strong support for the sectors of Syrian society committed to active nonvio-

lence; maintaining diplomatic presence in Syria; expanding the presence of human rights observers and the documentation/ publication of human rights violations; engaging all relevant actors in ending the violence and promoting a political solution; tightening sanctions if they are specifically targeting leading figures in the Syrian regime and do not harm vulnerable people, includ-

ing those who are displaced and Iraqi refugees in Syria; supporting neighboring countries to ensure that they are willing and able to welcome and shelter refugees; supporting the International Committee of the Red Cross/ Crescent to ensure that humanitarian assistance reaches affected communities; and withdrawing investment from companies supplying Syrian security forces.

Arms Trade Treaty: Delay in negotiations

Between July 2 and 27, the world's nation-states met at the UN headquarters in New York to negotiate an Arms Trade Treaty (ATT) to regulate the multibillion dollar international trade in conventional arms. Throughout the month most parties supported a new treaty to cover all conventional arms including ammunition, but in the final hours of negotiations, consensus was procedurally blocked by countries that asked for more time - including the U.S., Russia, North Korea, Cuba and Venezuela.

The failure to reach consensus on a final text was tremendously disappointing to the hundreds of civil society activists who were present in New York - many for the whole month - in support of a strong, comprehensive treaty. According to Control Arms [www.controlarms.org], a global civil society alliance calling for a "bulletproof Arms Trade Treaty," the struggle to end the illegal and irresponsible arms trade will go on.

Control Arms alliance member Anna McDonald of Oxfam said: "Some 50,000 people lost their lives through armed violence during the course of these month-long negotiations. The out-of-control arms trade must - and will - be stopped ... The majority of governments in the world have agreed that we need tough rules based around international human rights and humanitarian law to bring the arms trade under control. They've made a statement today confirming their intent to see a treaty realized. It's not a matter of 'if' but 'when.' We will continue campaigning to secure a treaty that will save lives."

Governments will have a second chance to make the treaty a reality by taking the text forward to the General Assembly in the fall. As this process continues Control Arms will continue its advocacy efforts directed at the countries needing more time - the United States being among them.

The Obama administration helped block final consensus thanks to a campaign by the National Rifle Association (NRA) that falsely portrayed the treaty as a threat to gun ownership rights enshrined in the U.S. Constitution. Apparently motivated by the NRA campaign, a bipartisan group of 51 senators wrote a letter to President

Obama and Secretary of State Hillary Clinton to express serious concerns about the draft treaty, saying it signaled an expansion of gun control that would have been unacceptable.

Faith in action:

Write to President Obama and Secretary Clinton expressing your strong support for continued negotiations on a comprehensive ATT. For basic information see www.paxchristi.net. Suggested wording includes:

- Express deep disappointment that the nations of the world failed to reach consensus on an Arms Trade Treaty in July
- [If a U.S. citizen/resident] Express special disappointment that the U.S. delegation contributed to that failure.
- Urge the U.S. delegation to honor the administration's commitment to an ATT and to contribute to consensus when the UN General Assembly convenes in the fall.
- Note that each year, millions of people are affected by the direct and indirect consequences of the irresponsible arms trade. Thousands of people are killed, injured, raped, and forced to flee from their homes as a result of irresponsible arms transfers.
- State that you believe a strong and robust Arms Trade Treaty can reduce the terrible human toll which is a direct consequence of this poorly regulated trade. To be effective, an ATT should establish that no international transfer of arms and ammunition will be authorized if there is a substantial risk that the weapons will be used to commit or facilitate serious violations of international human rights or humanitarian law, or will seriously impair poverty reduction or socio-economic development.
- An effective ATT's scope should be comprehensive. It should include all international transfers of conventional weapons, in particular small arms and light weapons and equipment used to deploy potentially lethal force in military and internal security operations, and also ammunition.

HIV and AIDS: Turning the tide

The XIX International AIDS conference concluded on July 27 and revealed ways in which tides are turning in the fight against the global pandemic. Maryknollers from Peru, Guatemala, Namibia and Washington, D.C. attended many of the activities surrounding this year's conference. The following article is based on reports written by Sr. Veronica Schweyen, MM and Fr. Joseph Fedora, MM.

For the first time, the scientific community, as well as people infected and affected by the HIV virus, have reason to believe that the next generation will be AIDS free. Recent scientific evidence demonstrates that it is possible; what is needed is the economic and political will to see it through. The theme of this year's conference was aptly named for this moment in time: "Together we can TURN THE TIDE."

Scientists are excited about progress made on the development of an AIDS vaccine. The 2009 Thailand Trials – RV144 – showed for the first time "proof of concept" with a 31 percent efficacy rate (at least a 70-80 percent efficacy rate must be demonstrated for a vaccine to be considered practical). Such a vaccine could potentially reduce HIV transmission by 80 percent in 20 years. The positive results of the Thailand Trials open up new areas of investigation. Experts concur that at least another 10 years of accelerated research are needed.

It is estimated that for every person starting anti-retroviral therapy (ART), two are newly infected, a path that is clearly unsustainable. Given these limitations, there is growing recognition that the search for an HIV cure is an imperative. While the search for a cure continues, a tangible sign of the success of ART was demonstrated at this year's conference in that a number of sessions focused on children and adolescents growing up with HIV. More than three million children live with HIV and many of them are reaching adulthood. This proves the success of the 2002 goals set by UNAIDS: By 2005 three million people living with HIV and AIDS (PLWH) were receiving ART. By 2010 this increased to over five million, and now in 2012 the goal is to have 15 million people on ART by 2015. This means reaching seven million people in three years. A difficult task

but with sustained political will and follow-through on previous commitments the world is well on its way to achieving this goal.

While there is much to celebrate, realities that the international community has wrestled with since the first AIDS diagnosis persist. As the world deals with economic downturns traditional donor countries have tightened their belts in regard to international health programs. The mobilization of resources to reverse infection rates, treat people and continue vaccine research remains a serious issue. On the second day of the conference over 10,000 people participated in a march for change raising a number of issues including the need for an international financial transaction tax (see page 14, and *NewsNotes* July-August 2012) to raise the necessary funds to continue the fight against HIV and AIDS.

The march also highlighted the issue of infection rates in women ages 15-24 globally being twice as high as that of men of the same age. Around the world there are settings where women have little say or power or control over sex. Education and behavior change are highly necessary, not only to prevent the disease, but to stem the stigma that has accompanied the disease. A participant in the interfaith preconference shared that "Stigma still kills people through rejection and the isolation that it causes."

In some cases this stigma leads to the criminalization of people living with HIV and AIDS by governments. A small glimmer of hope in this regard was the fact that Washington, D.C. hosted the conference: A recent presidential order lifted a 20-year travel restriction that had prevented people living with HIV and AIDS from entering the United States.

Concluding his report of the International AIDS conference, Maryknoll Fr. Joseph Fedora writes: "I believe with all my heart that if we are going to TURN THE TIDE on the AIDS epidemic, it must begin with unconditional love and compassion. Unless the fear, stigma and self-loathing disappear, the amazing advances and scientific achievements in the fight against AIDS will be less effective. Together – via the heart and brain – we will TURN THE TIDE and maybe even live to see an AIDS-free generation!"



Financial Transaction Tax: Its time has come

See also “Robin Hood Tax campaign launched,” July-August 2012 NewsNotes.

Two central economic problems face the world today: the lack of money available for public investments necessary to create the conditions for human dignity; and increasing economic insecurity due to the growing size and influence of financial institutions.

Over the past few decades, the financial sector has grown to historic proportions. In 2010, the assets of the six largest U.S. banks equaled 62 percent of U.S. gross domestic product – up from 18 percent in 1995. The resulting “casino” economy has created chaos, throwing people out of work and families out of their homes unnecessarily and costing governments trillions of dollars in bailouts.

One strong solution is a financial transaction tax (FTT), which would help decrease economic instability and shift money out of the bloated financial sector and into the real economy where it can create jobs and progress.

What is a financial transaction tax (FTT)?

An FTT would place a very small tax (usually between 0.0001 and 0.5 percent) on different financial transactions. Normally the tax is placed on the buying and selling of stocks, bonds, derivatives, futures, options and/or currencies. Compare that to the fact that many states currently charge a full nine percent tax on the sale

of most consumer goods.

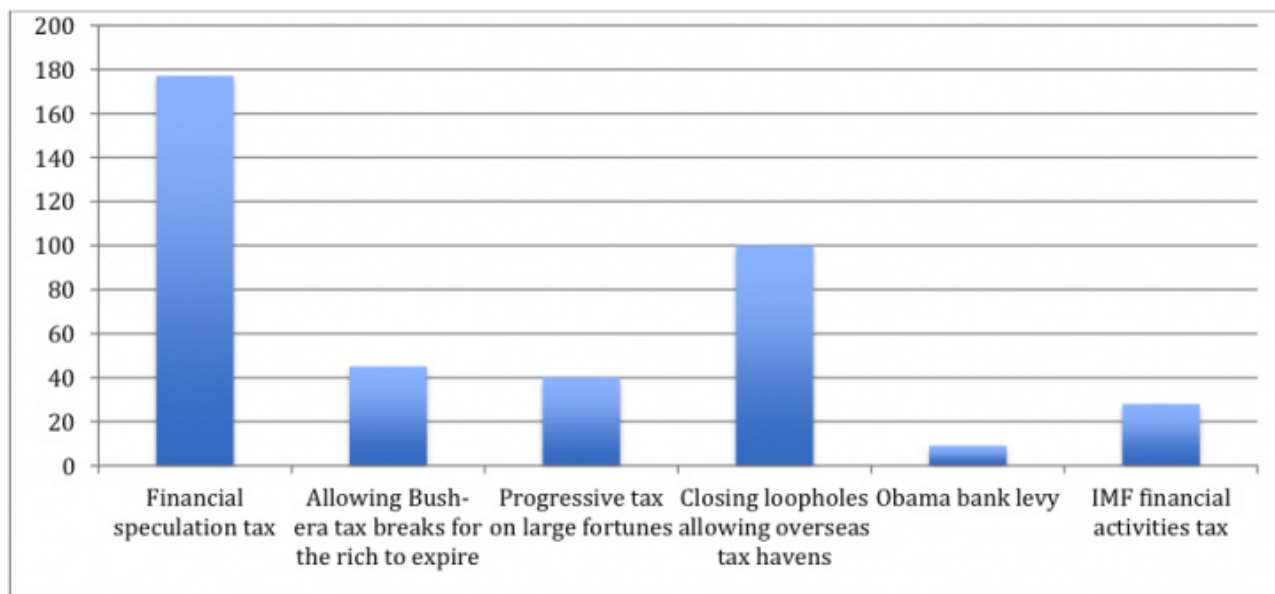
Because the tax is so small, the vast majority of investors would feel practically no impact. Those who would be affected are a new type of investor called high frequency traders. They use complex computer programs to buy and sell thousands or even millions of times every second. While some have argued that these traders help to lower the cost of trading, there is growing evidence that they have a negative effect on markets. Numerous times in the past few years, markets have had to shut down temporarily because of out of control high frequency computer programs.

Has an FTT been used before?

The U.S. currently has an FTT of 0.0034 percent on stock transactions that pays for the Security Exchange Commission’s budget. Between 1914 and 1966, the U.S. had another FTT. In 2011 a total of 40 countries had an FTT in operation. A number of European countries will likely implement new FTTs later this year.

How much money could an FTT raise?

Which transactions are taxed and at what level affects the amount of money raised. Around the world, FTTs brought in a total of \$38 billion in 2011. A study by the Chicago Political Economy Group showed that a U.S. FTT would have brought in between \$750 billion and \$1.2 trillion each year from 2005 to 2009, while the Center for Economic Policy Research (CEPR) has a



Adapted from the Institute for Policy Studies’ [Taxing the Wall Street Casino](#) report

proposal with a (conservative) estimate of \$177 billion being raised.

Are we serious about tackling the deficit?

At the end of 2012, the U.S. faces a “fiscal cliff” when a number of taxes are set to automatically increase and severe cuts in public spending will begin. The cumulative effect of these changes could create a “significant recession” and the loss of close to two million jobs, according to the Congressional Budget Office.

Of the options being discussed to avoid falling off this cliff, none come close to bringing in as much money as an FTT. If members of Congress are serious about tackling this issue, an FTT must be part of the discussion. Even using CEPR’s most conservative estimate of \$177 billion, an FTT would still dwarf the alternatives. (See chart on page 14.)

What does the Catholic Church say about an FTT?

The Vatican’s Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace recently stated that governments should consider

“taxation measures on financial transactions through fair but modulated rates with charges proportionate to the complexity of the operations, especially those made on the “secondary” market. Such taxation would be very useful in promoting global development and sustainability according to the principles of social justice and solidarity. It could also contribute to the creation of a world reserve fund to support the economies of the countries hit by crisis as well as the recovery of their monetary and financial system...”

The FTT provides a clear way to uphold the priority for the poor and marginalized by addressing a core set of habits contributing to the increasing inequity between the rich and poor. The financial sector is a key driver of the recent recession, the massive foreclosures, the increase in unemployment, etc. Thus, the FTT also illuminates one of the deeper structural injustices of our time, helping to cultivate the habit of the faithful and all people to attend to systems of injustice or evil. In turn, we develop the virtues of justice and solidarity as we live out our call to holiness.

Report: Speculation contributes to high prices

The New England Complex Systems Institute (NECSI), which developed a quantitative model to closely predict the FAO’s food price index, released a report in July predicting sharply higher food prices due in part to excessive speculation.

The NECSI model, originally released in September 2011, matched the FAO’s index from 2004 to 2011. Since then it has continued to closely follow the real world numbers.

Unfortunately, the model now predicts, “another speculative bubble starting by the end of 2012 and causing food prices to rise even higher than recent peaks.”

While the researchers acknowledge that the drought in the Midwest U.S. will cause prices to rise, their model shows that excessive speculative activity will have an even larger effect. Though some key financial reforms passed in 2010 may finally begin to be implemented in early 2013 that may be too late to avoid the coming price bubble.

“We find that through the mechanism of speculative activity, the drought may trigger the third massive price spike to occur earlier than otherwise expected, beginning immediately, and sooner than what could be prevented by the anticipated new regulations. This spike may raise prices well beyond an increase justified by the reduced supply caused by the droughts... [w]hile the

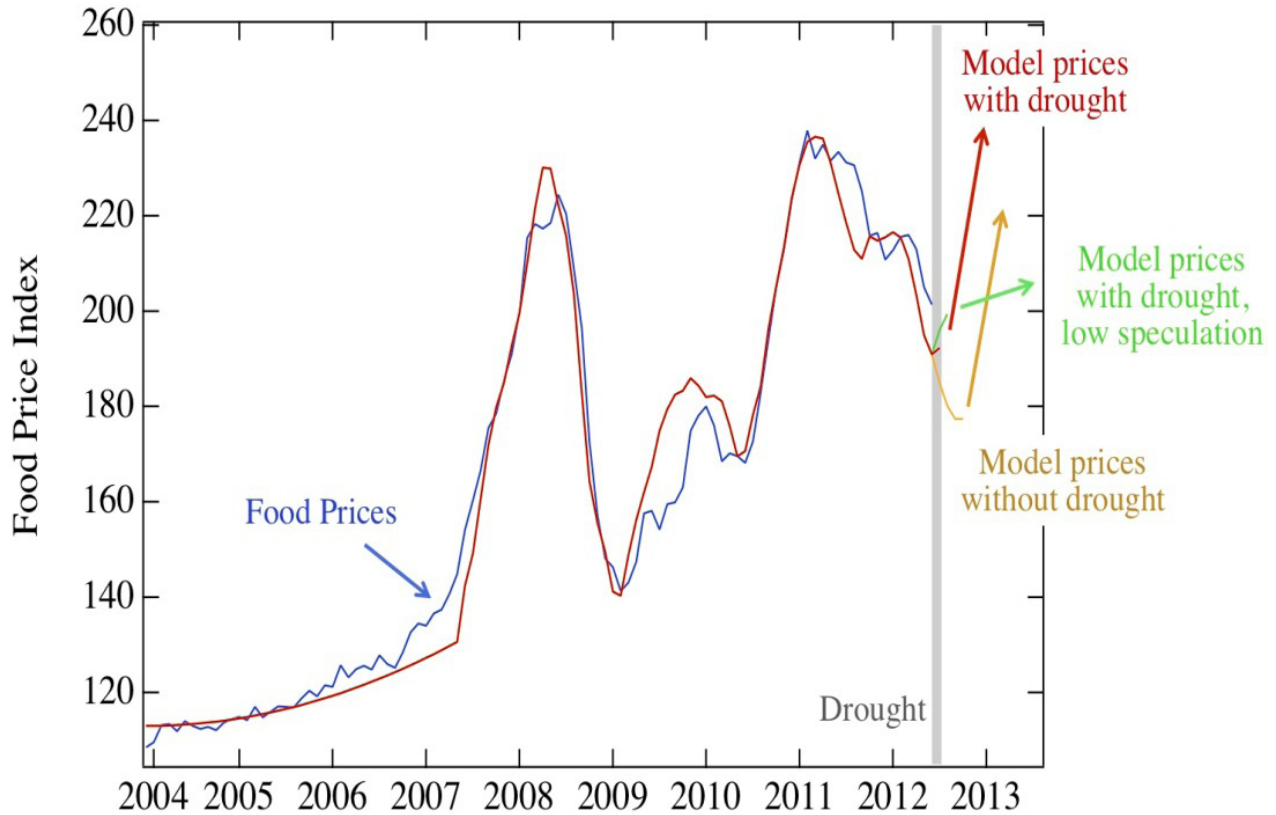
drought only causes a limited price shock, the impact on prices is amplified by the speculative activity,” write the authors. (*See graph #1 on page 16*)

As NECSI president Yavni Bar-Yam said, “We are on the verge of another crisis, the third in five years, and likely to be the worst yet, capable of causing new food riots and turmoil on a par with the Arab Spring,” alluding to another study by the NECSI showing that the last two food price bubbles in 2008 and 2011 correlated with similar increases in violent outbreaks and food riots. (*See graph #2 on page 16*)

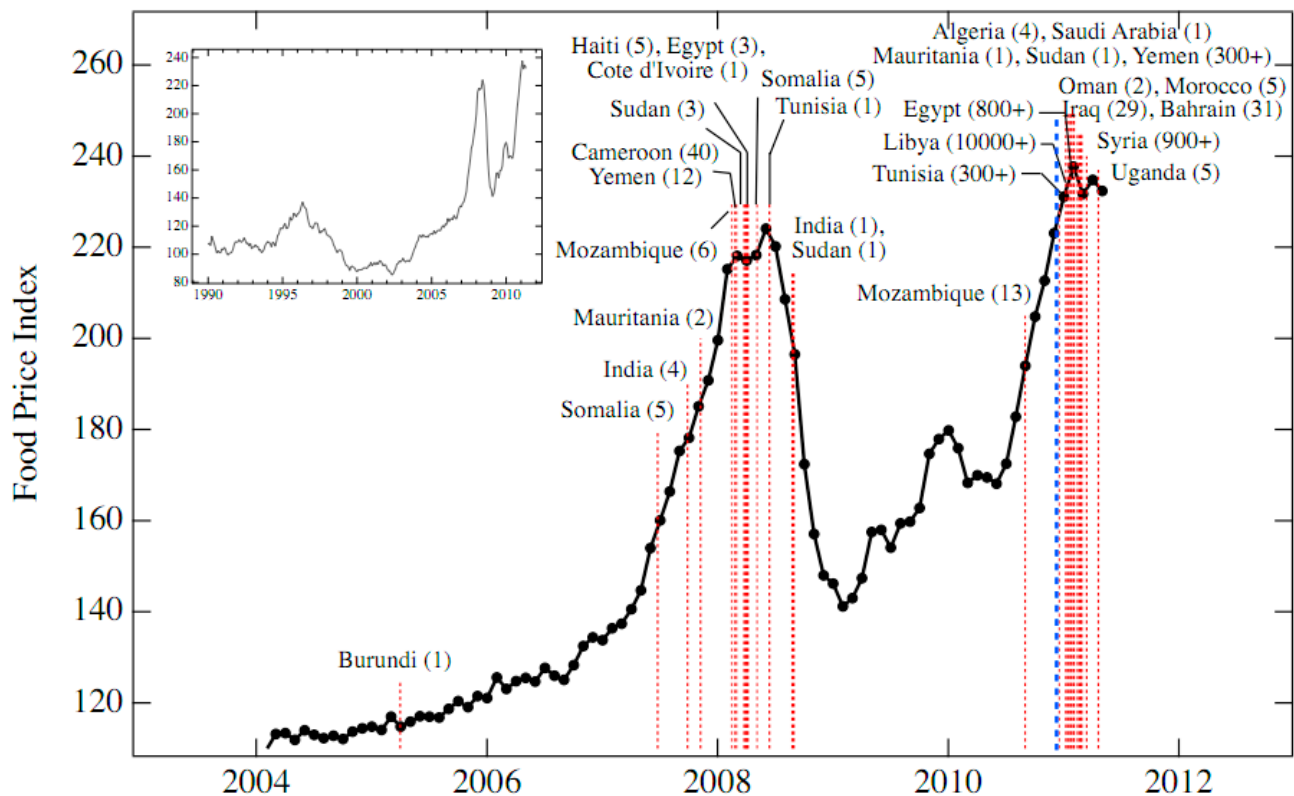
Perhaps most frustrating is that the principal causes of the rising prices are bad public policy:

“Each of these causes is due to particular acts of government intervention or deregulation. Thus, while the food supply and prices may be vulnerable to global population increases and environmental change, the existing price increases are due to specific governmental policies. In order to prevent further crises in the food market, we recommended the halting of government support for ethanol conversion and the reversal of commodities market deregulation, which enables unlimited financial speculation.”

Could it be that we are in for another round of unnecessary, destabilizing and dehumanizing violence?



Graph #1, New England Complex Systems Institute (NECSI)



Graph #2, New England Complex Systems Institute (NECSI)

Is air conditioning inhibiting human adaptation?

In Bill McKibben's sobering article "Global warming's terrifying new math," published in July in Rolling Stone, readers learned about the brief the Chamber of Commerce filed with the Environmental Protection Agency urging officials not to regulate the release of carbon into the air. "[S]hould the world's scientists turn out to be right and the planet heats up," the Chamber advised, "populations can acclimatize to warmer climates via a range of behavioral, physiological and technological adaptations."

Unfortunately, one of the key technological responses probably imagined by the Chamber of Commerce – air conditioning – not only releases increasing amounts of climate change gases into the air, aggravating the problem, but is also making it more difficult for our bodies to adjust to a warmer world. Stan Cox, senior scientist at the Land Institute, provides the evidence in his article, "Air conditioning: The cold reality," published in July by Al Jazeera:

"Largely because of increasing use of air-conditioning, electric utilities worldwide have struggled to satisfy record demand through the torrid summers that have become ever more frequent in recent years. In the United States, consumption of energy for air-conditioning homes and vehicles has more than doubled just since the mid-1990s. In India, total consumption for air-conditioning is projected to climb as much as ten-fold over the coming decade; air-conditioners already reportedly account for a staggering 40 percent of all electricity consumption in the city of Mumbai. In Brazil, air-conditioning demand has more than tripled in just five years.

"The greatest irony, of course, is that by chilling the indoor environment today, we are helping ensure that future summers will be even hotter. Air-conditioning's massive energy demand is overwhelming efforts to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. Take the output from all of the United States' renewable electricity sources combined, multiply it by five, and it still could not satisfy current air-conditioning demand, let alone serve other uses. The U.S. Department of Energy projects that wind, solar, geothermal, and biomass electricity generation will indeed expand almost fivefold, but not until 2030. By that year, if the department's predictions hold, total electrical generation from all renewable sources will be sufficient to satisfy only 75 percent of air-conditioning demand. For everything else, there will be no green alternative."

Due to a phenomenon called Jevons paradox – in

which improved efficiency causes an increase in consumption of a resource – "[b]etter energy efficiency alone cannot reduce the weight of an air-conditioned society," writes Cox. "U.S. home air-conditioning units in service today are an impressive 28 percent more efficient on average than they were in the mid-1990s. But we have taken full advantage of that cheaper comfort, and as a result, the number of kilowatt-hours of electricity used for cooling the average air-conditioned household actually increased by 37 percent over that same period. ..."

This massive increase in cooling does not even have the positive effects that many imagine. "[T]here is a widespread belief among employers that their employees are like computer chips, operating most efficiently when kept as cool as possible. Research does indeed show that people work most productively when they're not feeling excessively hot, but it also shows that the typical office's too-cool conditions are a drag on productivity."

Physiological effects of air conditioning

"The standards that are followed in the cooling of most buildings do not account for the fact that the temperatures that we humans find comfortable don't lie within a fixed range," continues Cox. "Rather, our comfort range shifts up and down, and expands and contracts, depending on the indoor and outdoor temperatures we've experienced in recent days and weeks. This phenomenon, called the 'adaptive model of comfort,' explains why people who typically live and work in air-conditioned spaces have different comfort expectations from those who do not.

"Such adaptation was seen, for example, when a group of office employees in Thailand – half of whom worked in air-conditioned spaces and the rest of whom worked without air-conditioning – were surveyed about their comfort under a variety of temperatures under experimental conditions. Eighty percent of non-air-conditioned workers remained comfortable at temperatures as high as 32 degrees Celsius [approximately 90 degrees Fahrenheit], if ventilation was adequate. Only 20 percent of typically air-conditioned workers were comfortable at temperatures that high.

"Researchers in Brazil, the United States, and Europe have found that people who are employed in air-conditioned workplaces visit doctors and hospitals more frequently and generally have a higher risk of poor health than do those who work without air-conditioning.

“The range of research findings that favour increased flows of outdoor air is remarkable. Under natural ventilation, people have been found to experience fewer problems with headaches, colds, other respiratory ailments, circulation problems, eye dryness, allergies, and chest tightness. There is lower absenteeism when employees work near windows and can open them.

“Air-conditioning creates a need for more air-conditioning. Human-physiology studies show that life in the world of ‘coolth’ undermines our natural adaptation to heat and can disrupt endocrine functions. As we primates evolved in hot climates, nature equipped us with heat-adaptation mechanisms. Experiencing high temperatures, especially when we are also exerting ourselves, builds up tolerance to heat, and we are able to function and work for longer periods under higher temperatures. Without such heat adaptation, our bodies are far more susceptible to heat.

“When faced with the spring and summer onslaught of pollen, dust, and other allergens, millions of allergy and asthma sufferers take refuge in the climate-controlled indoors. Yet the air-conditioning era has seen rates of allergies skyrocket in Western societies, and the prevalence of asthma has doubled with each decade that

passes. The still-evolving ‘hygiene hypothesis’ says that the immune systems of allergy and asthma victims have been disoriented in part by insufficient childhood exposure to bacteria, fungi, nematodes, and/or other organisms. It appears, thanks largely to air-conditioning and electronic entertainment, that youngsters are not getting enough exposure to the more benign microscopic inhabitants of the outdoor environment, especially the rural environment.

“Meanwhile, extremely tight, well-insulated buildings often suffer from so-called sick building syndrome. It is estimated that a productivity loss of as much five to 13 percent is ‘built into’ well-buttoned-up, energy-efficient buildings, even when they adhere to international environmental standards.”

In summary: Global warming threatens to intensify tremendously and one of our principal methods of adapting to these higher temperatures – air conditioning – not only aggravates this warming, but actually inhibits our own bodies from adapting. Contrary to the Chamber of Commerce’s faith in humans mutating to adapt to rising temperatures, we are actually going in the opposite direction.

Food for Life – World Food Day 2012

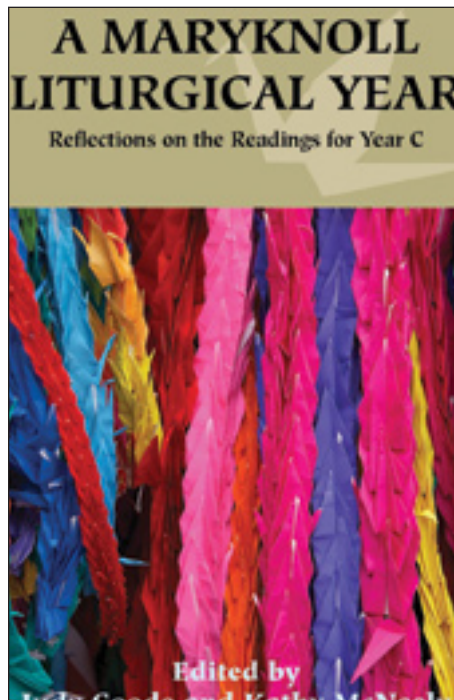
October 16 is World Food Day – an opportunity for Christians all over the world to act and speak out together on food justice issues. Our faith calls us to feed the hungry and care for Creation – this we can do as individuals, as churches, and as global citizens. This year the Ecumenical Advocacy Alliance (www.e-alliance.ch) is promoting Churches Week of Action on Food from October 14-21 to include International Day for Rural Women (October 15), World Food Day (October 16) and the International

Day for the Eradication of Poverty (October 17). Go to the Ecumenical Advocacy website to download free organizing and educational tools including and action guide, a liturgy, food waste tracker and a food quiz to raise awareness about food production and distribution systems, examine our own food consumption, and call for policy changes that will ensure the right to food for everyone. <http://www.e-alliance.ch/en/s/food/2012-churches-week-of-action-on-food/>



Resources

- 1) **A Maryknoll Liturgical Year: Reflections on the Readings for Year C.** This collection of scripture reflections written by Maryknoll missionaries covers the readings for each Sunday and holy day from the first Sunday in Advent (Dec. 2, 2012) until the Feast of Christ the King (Nov. 24, 2013) for the C cycle of the liturgical year. Missioners share their reflections based on their experiences in Nepal, Guatemala, Tanzania, Oaxaca, to name only a few of the places where Maryknollers have served. Edited by Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns' staffers Judy Coode and Kathy McNeely. Available from Orbis website, www.orbisbooks.org; 160 pages, \$20.



- 2) **Annual vigil to close the School of the Americas/WHINSEC:** This year's vigil to call for the closing of the U.S. Army's School of the Americas/Western Hemisphere Institute for Security Cooperation (SOA/WHINSEC) will be held Nov. 16-18 in Columbus GA. (November 16 is the anniversary of the assassination of the six Jesuits, their housekeeper and her daughter in El Salvador in 1989.) Learn more about the weekend's workshops, events, speakers, musicians and more at the SOA Watch website, www.soaw.org.
- 3) **U.S. Election Day is November 6:** *Several resources are available to learn more about current issues and how to evaluate candidates' positions:*

U.S. Elections 2012: Where do candidates stand on issues of mercy and justice? This resource from the Sisters of Mercy of the Americas Institute Justice Team poses questions for reflection when hearing candidates for state and national office speak about their vision and the policies they support. The guide (in PDF format) also provides facts and quotes related to poverty and to each of the Sisters of Mercy "critical concerns." Access it at the Sisters of Mer-

cy website, www.sistersofmercy.org/images/stories/MembersNews/2012/electionguide_2012.pdf.

Catholics Vote for the Common Good, a coalition of congregations and organizations, has developed an election platform for each state with the input of residents. The platforms include support for affordable healthcare for all, just immigration reform, protection of the environment, economic justice and quality education. Consider signing your state's platform, which will be delivered to candidates and public officials. Each of the individual platforms includes a national preamble designed to outline a common-good perspective. Find more information at the Catholics Vote for the Common Good website: <http://commongood2012.org>

Voting and Holiness is a collection of essays that help Catholics grapple with questions such as how to be engaged in the election process – and beyond – when it is difficult to find a candidate who doesn't hold a position at odds with Catholic teaching. The essays explore the difference between moral principles and applying those principles to concrete situations; the importance of civil dialogue and persuasion through love and mutual respect; and the need to attend to the common good not just in the voting box but also through active participation in the life of the local community. You may order the book through Paulist Press, www.paulistpress.com, (800)218-1903.

Forming Consciences for Faithful Citizenship, the voting guide from the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, <http://www.usccb.org/issues-and-action/faithful-citizenship/>.

The **Friends Committee on National Legislation (FCNL)** offers questions to think of when considering candidates' positions on topics that range from Pentagon spending to immigration and energy and the environment: <http://fcnl.org/resources/newsletter/janfeb12/>.