



Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns

# NewsNotes

*A bi-monthly newsletter of information on international justice and peace issues*

## September-October 2024 Vol. 49, No. 5

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**Published by the Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns: Peace, Social Justice & Integrity of Creation**

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# Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns

## Peace, Social Justice, and Integrity of Creation

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Current status of bills:  
<http://thomas.loc.gov>

# Haiti: Two Months Since First of Kenyan Troops Arrive

*The security expedition in Haiti faces uphill battle against well-armed gangs.*

Four hundred Kenyan troops are now in Haiti's capital, Port au Prince, as part of the UN-led Multinational Security Support (MSS). As reported in our July/August Issue, the mission is met with skepticism about its likelihood of success from various sectors of Haitian society. The lack of confidence over the forces' ability to stabilize Haiti has only increased due to inadequate resources and personnel and the alleged corruption of the Transition Presidential Council.

A resident of Port au Prince said to a Maryknoll missionary recently, "Although the Haiti National Police and the Kenya Police carried out an operation in Gressier [a commune about 12.5 miles west of Port au Prince], I prefer to wait and see if the gangs will return to the area. Meanwhile, in Croix des Bouquets [a township only 8 miles east of the capital], the gangs are still gaining territory even with the presence of MSS."

A CNN report from August 10 tells how a gang invaded the Catholic Institut Montfort boarding school for deaf students at the heart of Croix des Bouquets, and the school did not receive any security support despite being just a mere 8 miles away from where the MSS team is stationed. The nuns who run the school for the deaf, the students and the staff have joined the more than 600,000 internally displaced persons.

In another instance detailed in the CNN report, a MSS patrol convoy traveling through the capital city was shelled by gangs, and the convoy had no choice but to retreat in painfully slow three-point turns. The armored vehicles did not have turrets from which to return fire.

The town of Gantheir, 25 miles east of the capital, was attacked by one of Haiti's largest gangs, 400 Mawozo, on July 22. When Haitian and Kenyan security forces arrived, the gang was long gone, the streets deserted, the police department destroyed, and some residents had been tortured and killed.

While the Haiti National Police and MSS have reported some success in areas of Port au Prince, including the arrests of 60 people, gangs maintain control over 85% of the metropolitan area of Port-au-Prince.

When there is insecurity anywhere, women and children suffer more adverse consequences. According to the United Nations International Children's Fund, in only two out of the ten Haitian departments (departments being analogous to provinces or states in other countries)

there were 919 schools that were closed as of June of 2024. The closure of these schools affects over 156,00 children who are vulnerable to gang recruitment. School closures adversely affect childhood prospects and increase the rate of illiteracy in the country.

Women and girls have disproportionately borne the brunt of the insecurity and displacement as targets of gender-based violence. To further aggravate the disproportionality, the Transitional Presidential Council does not include women's perspectives. The only woman on the team is a council observer. Such exclusion will continue to perpetuate perennial discrimination and gendered violence.

The Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns joined 18 other faith-based groups in a letter to Secretary of State Anthony Blinken outlining concerns for the success of the MSS Haitian mission, since the United States remains the single largest sponsor of the mission. The letter emphasizes the United States' responsibility to create accountability mechanisms in consultation with Haitian civil society to address the corruption that is a significant cause of distrust Haitians have for their transitional government.

And lastly, the gang's arms advantage would not be possible in the island nation—which does not manufacture weapons—without a supply of arms and ammunition from abroad. A UN report estimates that Haitian law enforcement could be outgunned ten to one, with guns largely originating from the United States. The United States must do more to prevent the illegal arms smuggling that enables the violence in Haiti.

An article from the United States Institute of Peace, "Mapping Haiti's Road Toward Justice: Lessons from Colombia and Guatemala," considers Colombia's transitional restorative justice model and Guatemala's hybrid prosecution system as useful lessons for the current approach in Haiti. The Institute thereby offers alternative and supplemental nonviolent approaches for dealing with Haiti's crisis.

On September 25-26, a coalition of 40 faith-based groups, including the Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns, plans to descend on Washington, DC, for Haiti Advocacy Days: *Stop Illegal U.S. Arms to Haiti* to meet with Congress and the Biden Administration. §

**Faith in action:** Write to Congress to elevate the Haiti Advocacy Days' message <https://mogc.info/ARMAS>

# Venezuela: Election Stolen

*Lisa Sullivan, 30 year-resident of Venezuela and organizer of over 20 delegations to the country, shares an update since the July 28, 2024, election.*

Many news stories have been written about the recent presidential elections in Venezuela. Mine is written with heart in hand, suitcase half-packed, woven by conversations with friends from barrios and towns where I worked as a Maryknoll Lay Missioner for over 20 years. Most of us gave the best years of our lives to build the dream of what we thought was the Bolivarian Revolution.

The past few years left us in a boxing ring, ungloved and pummeled by assailants on all sides: attacked on the left by an autocratic leader, on the right by global greed for oil, and in the gut by devastating U.S. sanctions. Out of sheer survival, many exited the ring to join the largest migration ever in Latin America. Eight million and counting. Most of us believed a new page might finally turn on July 28.

We were wrong. A few days later, with 27 dead and 2,500 jailed, mostly from poor communities, we saw how the original revolutionary superpower—the vote—could be smashed to pieces by those who touted it as the touchstone of the Bolivarian Revolution’s “participatory democracy.”

One young friend who embodied this momentary hope was Katerin. She was ecstatic when I spoke with her on election day. The return of her husband from Colombia felt so close. She had just come from voting for the opposition candidate at the local school where the mood was electric. Neighbors were lining up to vote for what she termed as “the return of our families.”

Her exuberance brought me back in time to when, along with her Venezuelan folk troupe, Katerin danced tamunangue for U.S. delegations that came to witness the Bolivarian Revolution’s hope. Katerin’s dance was a fitting celebration of the new century unfolding before our eyes: shiny new homes, new health posts, new education diplomas, new free pharmacies, visible expressions of so much hope for those left behind in Venezuela’s century-long oil frenzy. Newly elected President Hugo Chavez drew upon Venezuela’s boundless oil reserves to fund these projects. There seemed no limit to what his Bolivarian Revolution could achieve.

But of course, there was. Chavez died. China’s economic boom flattened, and oil prices plummeted. Chavez’s knighted successor, Nicolas Maduro, eked out his first win. His corrupt and autocratic rule led to mass protest that met with brutal repression. Sweeping U.S. sanctions were imposed, plunging 90% of Venezuelans into poverty. Widespread hunger, 100,000% inflation and dollar-a-day wages unleashed the flood gates, and over a fourth of the

population left.

Katerin was 18 when hunger drove her out of the country. She walked her way to neighboring Colombia. By then, Venezuela, the world’s biggest reserve of petroleum, had no gasoline. Frightened but determined, she worked odd jobs, sent tickets for family, and fell in love.

Then last year, with two small children, she decided to pave the way for her family’s return. Change was in the air as the U.S. dangled sanction relief in exchange for free and fair elections. Maduro took the bite, hungry for money and acceptance. For once, the opposition converged around one figure, Maria Corina Machado, whose mantra of “bring our families home” resonated like a sonic boom. Machado, a long-time ally of the U.S., would certainly usher an end to sanctions and open the country to foreign investment.

Through convoluted political maneuvering, Machado was disqualified to run in the election but remained the de facto leader. For achieving the impossible, uniting the opposition while attracting disaffected chavistas, she was shoved aside by Maduro’s government. But the new coalition overcame huge roadblocks to place a last-minute surrogate on the ballot: Edmundo González – a retired diplomat. Candidate and leader toured the country together. Despite government efforts to silence, jail, deface and threaten supporters, crowds grew, hope snowballed, and anticipation mounted. González was doubling Maduro in the polls.

The evening of July 28, my phone was on fire with texts from around Venezuela. Younger friends were universally elated. Some older friends deeply loyal to Chávez’ legacy were worried. A Chavista friend who headed her polling station in a poor neighborhood reported that the opposition had doubled Maduro’s votes there. Her hope was that Caracas would buck the trend. But texts came from Chavista strongholds there too, reporting similar results.

The Venezuelan voting system had been touted by the Carter Center as the best electoral system in the world 12 years ago. Each voting location prints a paper receipt with a unique QR code showing results that must be signed by a witness from each party. Throughout the country, these receipts were posted, showing an insurmountable victory for Gonzalez.

For a brief window of time, I could taste my return to my beloved adopted country. I could smell the mangoes

ripening on trees I had planted; I could hear the joyful beat of tambores of the children in our cultural center. My own departure, long after Katerin's, came unexpectedly. After thirty years, my resident visa met its unglamorous demise at the hands of a corrupt bureaucrat. I joined my Venezuelan children in scattering across the globe. My family of five now lives in five different countries.

Suddenly, the night of July 28, voting result transmissions were halted. The National Electoral Council (CNE) went silent for hours as nighttime fell. Venezuelans who were celebrating the night before woke up to a declaration by the CNE director proclaiming Maduro victorious with 51% of the vote. Even in the most populous barrios there was no celebration, only shock.

The opposition took two days to gather paper tallies and post results for over 80% of voting tables, showing González nearly doubling Maduro's votes. Even if every single unreported vote went to Maduro, it was mathematically impossible for Maduro to win. Meanwhile, no data was offered by the CNE to support the proclamation of Maduro's victory as is required by Venezuelan law. The Carter Center, one of a handful of independent international observers declared: "Venezuela's 2024 presidential election did not meet international standards of electoral integrity and cannot be considered democratic."

Frustration and anger unfurled in spontaneous protests throughout the country, especially in Caracas. The collective nonviolent effort to achieve relief for a suffering people was demolished in the blaze of police bullets and the slamming of jail doors. A furious Maduro took to the

air waves to declare that there would be no justice for any protester, only decades in the nation's most dangerous prison.

As fear quelled protest in the streets, social media became the only space where people could vent. Soon, X, formerly known as Twitter, was banned, WhatsApp denounced, and police were sent into the barrios to force residents to show their phone content. Katerin's 15-year-old niece was buying food on the main avenue when a truck carrying armed police and colectivos, the independent, government-aligned militias, burst onto the scene, grabbing cell phones and shoving those with dissident photos into their truck. She narrowly escaped in a moto taxi, then promptly erased her phone's memory. At that point, texts from friends halted.

Countries responded in predictable ways. Most of Latin America and democratic countries refused to recognize Maduro and demanded the real election results. Russia, China, North Korea, and Iran formed a tight coalition of support. Many turned to Maduro's allies: Brazil, Colombia and Mexico to forge a solution. All were disappointed by their suggestion of an election re-do.

Maduro's final appeal to legitimacy was tasking the Supreme Court—all appointees of the government's party, none of whom had ever issued a single ruling against it—with certifying Maduro's victory. After much pomp and decorum, they did precisely that.

The streets are quiet now. The Venezuela news cycle has stopped. And Katerin is packing her bags to leave the country again. §

## Sudan: War and Famine

*UN warns of dire conditions in Sudan as the war between two generals drags on into its sixteenth month.*

In a UN press briefing on August 13, UN officials warned that famine conditions are present in Sudan and the situation grows worse by the hour. Officials warned that tens of thousands of Sudanese children could die of starvation and malnutrition if the situation is not reversed.

Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns has followed the Sudan Crisis closely since fighting erupted on April 15, 2023, between two generals over control of the country's rich natural resources. In the past 16 months, glimmers of hope have been rare. On the contrary, Sudan has seen a resurgence of ethnic killings in the Darfur region, the location of the country's most lucrative gold mines. These killings are similar in kind to the genocide from 2004 that targeted the darker-skinned Masalit ethnic group. The U.S. State Department confirms war crimes were committed by both sides of the current conflict.

Out of a population of under 50 million in 2022, over 10 million people have been internally displaced in Sudan and over two million displaced abroad, according to the UN. This makes Sudan the largest internal displacement crisis in the world. Nearly one out of every six displaced persons in the world is Sudanese.

The International Crisis Group, an international non-governmental organization, issued a report in June 2024 that emphasized the sway that larger world powers could have on the conflict, and has recommended that the UN and United States work urgently to mediate a de-escalation and local truce. §

**Faith in action:** Tell Pres. Biden to work for a truce in Sudan and expansion of corridors for humanitarian aid.  
<https://mogc.info/Sudan>

# Kenya: Catholics Support Gen Z Protests, Debt Relief

*Kenyan Catholic bishops expressed solidarity and support for young people in Kenya who, frustrated by corruption, grinding poverty, and lack of jobs, protested President Ruto's proposal to raise taxes for making payments on debts to international creditors, and won.*

Kenya's youth, who successfully spearheaded and actively protested the president's controversial tax proposal known as Finance Bill 2024 in June, were praised by the Kenya Conference of Catholic Bishops for their commitment and love for the country to see that social justice is administered to all.

Commonly referred to as Generation Z ("Gen Z") for their young age, the protesters were lauded as the "hope" of Kenyans in a June 29 statement by the Kenyan Catholic Bishops Conference. The letter was signed by the chairman of the conference, Archbishop Maurice Muhatia Makumba, one day after the protesters' representatives met with President William Samoei Ruto at State House in Nairobi.

Recognizing as "valid" the youth's aspirations in rejecting the tax proposal that would have raised the cost of living for an average Kenyan, who is already struggling to survive, the bishops urged Kenya's young people to move forward holding up "the good values of our faith and morals."

"Your clamor shows your concern for our country, for the lives of others, and for social justice. Our families would be the first beneficiaries of better governance and economy. For this, we wish to encourage you that your aspirations are valid," the bishops' statement said, describing the collaboration and unity of the Gen Zers as "beyond tribe or social class, a sign of true care and love."

They said to Kenya's youth, "You opposed the Finance Bill with passion because it was going to hurt everyone including yourselves. We thank God it is now in the stage of reversal as it is sent back to Parliament. We believe it will not be enacted."

Having succeeded in rejecting the Finance Bill 2024, KCCB members say, "we must also commit to working hard to improve our country's economy. We shall support you where we can, to get worthy employment opportunities, and in your civic pursuit through constructive dialogues amongst yourselves and others in society."

Kenya's bishops promised to journey with the young

generation to build their dreams and "increase their commitment to good causes."

The Church leaders further assured Gen Zers that they are ready to listen and that their doors are open for guidance and mentorship. As their statement says, "We desire that each one of you grows to be the best that our God intends for each one of you. Your hopes are our hopes."

Following the protest that has led to the loss of lives for more than 50 youths and many others injured, the bishops have acknowledged that the young citizens suffered for the good of the country.

"The message of the protests by Gen Z brought many concerns and also tears as we watched many young people suffer. You feel aggrieved and forgotten, and let down in your aspirations," adding, "Some even feel that the Church may have failed them at times."

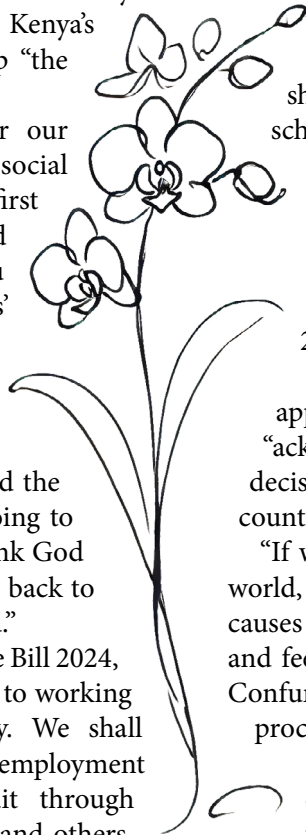
"The concerns raised by Gen Z remain genuine in our eyes," the bishops said. "We share your cry due to unemployment, lack of school fees for many families, failed promises, and a seemingly bleak future. No doubt the Finance Bill would have brought still more suffering."

Just days before the protests, Pope Francis announced a campaign for debt relief for the world's poorest countries during the Jubilee Year 2025.

Proclaiming the Jubilee 2025, Pope Francis appealed to the world's wealthiest nations to "acknowledge the gravity of so many of their past decisions and determine to forgive the debts of countries that will never be able to repay them."

"If we really wish to prepare a path to peace in our world, let us commit ourselves to remedying the remote causes of injustice, settling unjust and unpayable debts, and feeding the hungry," the pope wrote in "Spes non Confundit" ("Hope Does Not Disappoint"), his bull proclaiming the Holy Year.

The United Nations reports that 19 developing countries are spending more on debt interest than on education and 45 are spending more on debt interest than on health. Kenya is one of these countries. §



## Tanzania: Maasai Defend Their Vote and Land

*Tens of thousands of Maasai People living in the Ngorongoro Conservation Area in northern Tanzania joined a five-day protest in August, forcing President Samia Suluhu Hassan to acknowledge their demands to restore essential social services and the right to vote.*

For more than two years, over 100,000 Maasai People, mostly pastoralists, have been living under the threat of forced eviction from a 1,500-square kilometer section of the Ngorongoro Conservation Area in northern Tanzania that was recategorized in 2022 as a game reserve. Under that redesignation, cattle grazing and human settlement is prohibited and wildlife habitat preservation, safari tourism, and designated hunting activities will be permitted. Since then, Tanzanian officials have been implementing a gradual effort to evict, relocate, and resettle the Maasai by confiscating cattle, seizing grazing land, assaulting residents, and cutting off essential social services.

A Human Rights Watch report said that “government-employed rangers assaulted and beat residents with impunity,” with community members reporting 13 alleged incidents of beatings between September 2022 and July 2023. The most egregious police violence occurred in mid-2022 when security forces and Maasai clashed in the town of Loliondo during a land-demarcation exercise, which restricted access to grazing sites, water sources, and some homes. The incident reportedly resulted in gunshot injuries to 32 protesters and the arrest on murder charges of 24 local Maasai, including 10 local leaders—charges that were dropped when it became apparent that the accused had been detained prior to the murders.

More recently, the cover story for the May 2024 issue of *The Atlantic* describes park rangers burning Maasai compounds and seizing cattle by the tens of thousands. New maps and proposals from the government indicate that further tracts could soon be confiscated for tourism and conservation, including a sacred site that the Maasai call the Mountain of God. “This is 80 percent of our land,” a Maasai elder told the reporter from *The Atlantic*. “This will finish us.”

The Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns is a member of a global advocacy group called the Maasai International Solidarity Alliance (MISA) that works with Catholic Church officials and Maasai community leaders to protect Maasai land rights and promote their human dignity. Together, we have appealed to the UN, the European Union, the East African Court of Justice, and Vice President Kamala Harris when she visited Tanzania in 2023. We have written to U.S. tennis star John McEnroe after hearing that he was hosting a \$25,000-a-person safari-and-tennis expedition in the Serengeti. We received

some polite responses but no concrete actions.

The situation came to a head in August after the Tanzanian government published a revised national voter register that did not include the Ngorongoro division, denying over 100,000 Maasai pastoralists their right to hold local elections and participate in next year’s general elections. The move provoked criticism from human rights activists, describing it as part of a broader strategy to expel the ethnic group from their ancestral land.

On August 18, the Maasai community in Ngorongoro organized a major peaceful protest along the Ngorongoro-Serengeti highway, blocking safari vehicles filled with tourists and demanding the government uphold their fundamental rights. Speaking before the thousands of Maasai standing in the road and sitting on the hillsides, community leaders called for meaningful dialogue with Tanzanian authorities to address their grievances and urged the public to support their fight for justice.

After five days of protest, the minister of State in the Prime Minister’s Office responsible for Policy, Parliamentary Affairs and Coordination, William Lukuvi, addressed the crowd on Aug. 23, saying President Samia Suluhu Hassan sent him to instruct local and regional authorities to reinstate social services, mainly education, health and water services. He also said the president plans to meet with representatives of Ngorongoro residents and arrangements will be made for them to address their grievances to her directly.

About elections, Minister Lukuvi said the president has ordered that local elections, scheduled to be held nationwide on Nov. 27, are to be held in Ngorongoro.

The president of the Tanzania Episcopal Conference (TEC), Bishop Wolfgang Pisa, spoke extensively about the injustices facing the Maasai on Aug. 25 during the Silver jubilee celebration of priesthood for the Bishop of Mbulu Diocese, located approx. 90km south of the Ngorongoro Conservation Area, saying “There is no truth that the people are moving voluntarily, but they are being forced out and they are raising their voices about the denial of their rights... good governance is a legitimate way to be responsible and good governance comes from the people themselves... The government should sit at the same table with the people of Ngorongoro; don’t force them to move.” Bishop Pisa’s remarks were received with much applause from the congregation present. §

# Myanmar: Seven Years of Rohingya Genocide

*Benedict Rodgers writes in his column published in UCANews on Aug. 26, 2024, that Rohingyas are facing the gravest threats since 2017 when more than 750,000 were forced to flee to Bangladesh.*

August 25 marked the seventh anniversary of the campaign of massacres, rape, arson, and forced displacement in Myanmar's northern Rakhine against the persecuted Muslim-majority Rohingya people. This campaign is widely recognized as a genocide.

[On March 21, 2022, "following a rigorous factual and legal analysis," the United States Secretary of State determined that members of the Burmese military committed genocide and crimes against humanity against Rohingyas. "Since the Holocaust, the United States has concluded only seven other times that genocide was committed. This determination marks the eighth," Secretary Antony Blinken said at that time.]

Myanmar's desperate human rights crisis continues to worsen by the day, for all the diverse peoples of the country, especially the Rohingyas.

Thousands of Rohingyas are yet again forced to flee their homes and escape by boat on dangerous seas drawing the attention of the UN Secretary-General, the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, Amnesty International, and Human Rights Watch (HRW).

UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres has described the worsening humanitarian and security crisis in Myanmar as "dire" and called on all parties to the conflict to "end the violence and ensure the protection of civilians in accordance with applicable international human rights standards and international humanitarian law."

UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Volker Türk warned that "despite the world saying, 'never again' we are once more witnessing killing, destruction and displacement in Rakhine."

Both HRW and Amnesty International have said that the Rohingyas today are facing the gravest threats since 2017 when more than 750,000 were forced to flee into Bangladesh.

Approximately 630,000 Rohingyas remain in Myanmar in what HRW describes as "a system of apartheid that leaves them exceptionally vulnerable to renewed fighting."

HRW's Asia director Elaine Pearson said the human rights violations perpetrated in recent weeks against the Rohingyas are "tragically reminiscent of the military's atrocities in 2017."

Amnesty International's Myanmar Researcher Joe Freeman said, "The horrific situation in Rakhine state looks disturbingly familiar. Rohingya men, women and children are being killed, towns are emptying out,

and vestiges of Rohingya history and identity are being eroded. Many are once again seeking shelter in refugee camps across the border in Bangladesh, where economic, security and livelihood conditions have deteriorated."

The current escalation began on August 5 when at least 200 Rohingya civilians were killed in drone and artillery attacks in Rakhine state's Maungdaw township while sheltering on the banks of the Naf river along the Bangladesh border.

In what became known as the "Naf River Massacre," most victims—according to a statement by a group of Rohingya civil society groups—were women and children. They had already been forced to flee to the river from Maungdaw after the rebel Arakan Army (AA) advanced and the Myanmar military sent reinforcements.

Some steps have been taken toward justice and accountability since the 2017 genocide. In June this year, a prosecutor in Argentina requested arrest warrants for 25 individuals within Myanmar's regime, under the principle of universal jurisdiction, and in July the International Court of Justice (ICJ) accepted interventions from seven governments in the case brought by The Gambia against Myanmar under the Genocide Convention.

The current crisis in Rakhine is not the only tragedy in Myanmar. Human rights atrocities and forced displacement of civilians because of air and ground attacks by the Myanmar military in Kachin, Shan, Karen, Karenni, and Chin states continue relentlessly, and reports are now emerging that torture and mistreatment in Myanmar's jails are increasing and intensifying.

In a further twist of the knife, the military dictatorship is now enforcing its nationwide policy of conscription for young people into the army and actively preventing eligible youths from leaving the country.

Young people now face a horrible choice—to join the army, against their will, and kill their own people, try to escape, or join the armed opposition against the illegal, brutal, criminal regime.

Myanmar is plunging deeper and deeper into a humanitarian catastrophe. It is hard to imagine how much worse the situation can become, and yet every day the situation worsens. One must ask what it will take for the international community to heed the cries not only of the Myanmar people but of the UN Secretary-General and High Commissioner for Human Rights, and act to stop this horrific carnage. §



# Bangladesh's Yunus Reassures on Rohingyas, Garment Exports

*Setting out priorities in front of diplomats and UN representatives, the new leader of Bangladesh vows continuity on two biggest policy challenges. The following article was published by UCANews on August 18, 2024.*

Bangladesh will maintain support both for its immense Rohingya refugee population and its vital garment trade, Nobel laureate and new leader Muhammad Yunus said on Aug. 18 in his first major policy address.

Yunus, 84, returned from Europe in August after a student-led revolution to take up the monumental task of steering democratic reforms in a country riven by institutional decay.

His predecessor Sheikh Hasina, 76, had suddenly fled the country days earlier by helicopter after 15 years of iron-fisted rule.

Setting out his priorities in front of diplomats and UN representatives, Yunus vowed continuity on two of the biggest policy challenges of his caretaker administration.

"Our government will continue to support the million-plus Rohingya people sheltered in Bangladesh," Yunus said.

"We need the sustained efforts of the international community for Rohingya humanitarian operations and their eventual repatriation to their homeland, Myanmar, with safety, dignity and full rights," he added.

Bangladesh is home to around one million Rohingya refugees.

Most of them fled neighboring Myanmar in 2017 after a military crackdown now the subject of a genocide investigation by a United Nations court.

The weeks of unrest and mass protests that toppled Hasina also saw widespread disruption to the country's linchpin textile industry, with suppliers shifting orders out of the country.

"We won't tolerate any attempt to disrupt the global clothing supply chain, in which we are a key player," Yunus said.

Bangladesh's 3,500 garment factories account for around 85 percent of its \$55 billion in annual exports.

Yunus won the Nobel Peace Prize in 2006 for his pioneering work in microfinance, credited with helping millions of Bangladeshis out of grinding poverty.

He took office as "chief adviser" to a caretaker administration -- all fellow civilians bar two retired generals -- and has said he wants to hold elections "within a few months."

Before her ouster, Hasina's government was accused of widespread human rights abuses, including the mass detention and extrajudicial killing of her political opponents.

She fled the country on August 5 to neighboring India, her government's biggest political patron and benefactor, when protesters swarmed into the capital Dhaka to force her out of office.

"Hundreds of thousands of our valiant students and people rose up against the brutal dictatorship of Sheikh Hasina," Yunus said during his address, at times visibly emotional.

"She fled the country, but only after the security forces and her party's student wing committed the worst civilian massacre since the country's independence,"

he added.

"Hundreds were killed, thousands were injured."

More than 450 people were killed between the start of a police crackdown on student protests and her ouster three weeks later.

A UN fact-finding mission is expected in Bangladesh soon to probe "atrocities" committed during that time.

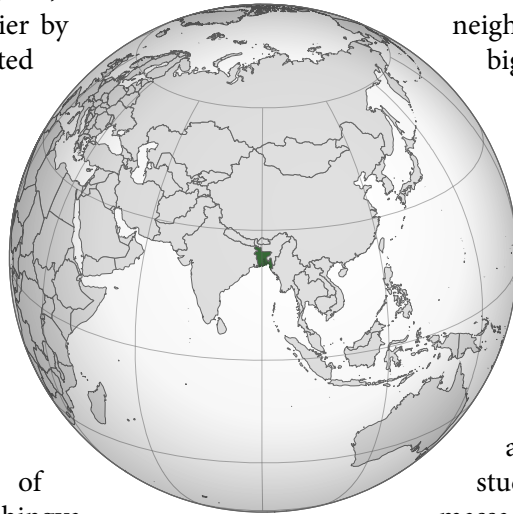
"We want an impartial and internationally credible investigation into the massacre," Yunus said on Aug. 18.

"We will provide whatever support the UN investigators need."

Yunus again committed to holding free and fair elections "as soon as we can complete our mandate to carry out vital reforms in our election commission, judiciary, civil administration, security forces, and media."

"The Sheikh Hasina dictatorship destroyed every institution of the country," he said.

He added that his administration would "make sincere efforts to promote national reconciliation." §



# Japan Commemorates Nuclear Victims

*Hiroshima and Nagasaki hold their annual ceremonies memorializing the 1945 bombings by the United States in a particularly fraught year for peace.*

August 6 and 9 marked the 79th anniversaries of the Hiroshima and Nagasaki nuclear bombings, respectively. An estimate of the bombings' combined death toll exceeds 200,000 people.

Each year, both cities hold memorials to remember the first and only victims of nuclear bombings in wartime that the world has known. The ceremonies emphasize the need for peace and the threat to humanity that nuclear weapons pose. This year, the message of peace in the face of global tensions and the threat of nuclear destruction has never been more urgent.

As we covered in the March-April edition of *NewsNotes*, the Bulletin of Atomic Scientists set the Doomsday Clock at ninety seconds to midnight again for a second year in a row, the closest to midnight the clock has ever been, due in large part to the increased threat of nuclear disaster. The war in Ukraine is ongoing, and has since expanded with a new theatre within Russian territory. Meanwhile, war has broken out in Israel-Palestine with threats of widening conflict in Lebanon, Yemen, Syria, and Iran. Israel is a nuclear power, and by all accounts, Iran's nuclear program is on the verge of weaponization.

The bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki in 1945, furthermore, were conducted using technology from eight decades ago. Nuclear weapons advanced significantly in the ensuing arms race. Today, the world arsenal of nuclear weapons adds up to 12,512 warheads, with a total power 65,000 times greater than was dropped on Japan.

Nuclear disarmament and de-escalation treaties such as the Strategic Arms Limitation Treaty (SALT) of 1979, the Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty (START) of 1991, and the New START of 2010 curbed nuclear weapons development and established a process of bilateral nuclear disarmament between the United States and Russia. The latest of these treaties, the New START, is set to expire in February of 2026, at a time when the tensions between the United States and Russia have been at their worst since the Cold War. The current stockpile of nuclear warheads between United States and Russia is over 10,000 strong, or 87% of the world's total warheads. Any one warhead has the potential to cause apocalyptic damage.

It was against this stark backdrop

that Hiroshima and Nagasaki both memorialized the 1945 atomic bombings.

## Nagasaki excludes Israel from memorial service

The city of Nagasaki's mayor made headlines in announcing the exclusion of Israel from the annual peace event that draws international attention.

Mayor Shiro Suzuki explained that security concerns for the Israeli delegation were the primary motivation for the exclusion, but this was not a concern for the city of Hiroshima, which hosted Israel in their ceremony three days earlier. Israel has been internationally criticized for its prosecution of the war in Gaza which has claimed at least 40,000 lives and displaced millions of people. Critics of Israel point to the irony of Israel's participation at a peace event under these circumstances.

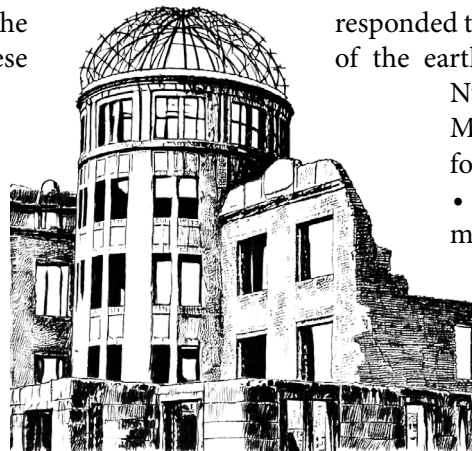
U.S. Ambassador to Japan Rahm Emmanuel and the British Ambassador to Japan both declined to attend Nagasaki's peace ceremony in protest of the decision to exclude Israel. They complained of a false implied comparison of Israel to Russia, a country likewise not invited to the ceremony.

Russia and Belarus have been excluded from the Japanese memorial events since the 2022 invasion of Ukraine. §

## Faith in action:

Follow the link here ([www.mogc.info/8-6-2024](http://www.mogc.info/8-6-2024)) to take the actions below:

- Pray and share the Prayer for Disarmament by Kim Vanderheiden of Pax Christi Northern California.
  - Read about how Maryknoll Sister Kathleen Reiley, who serves in Japan, responded to the call for volunteers in the wake of the earthquake, tsunami, and Fukushima Nuclear Plant disaster in the Maryknoll Magazine article "A Voice for Nuclear Victims."
  - Send a message to your members of Congress asking for the extension and expansion of the Radiation Exposure Compensation Act through the website of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops.



# Global Positive Peace Index Improved by 1%

*The Institute for Economics and Peace's index on the attitudes, institutions, and structures that create and sustain peace shows an optimistic trend from the baseline set ten years ago.*

The Positive Peace Index (PPI) has improved by 1 percent over the last decade across 163 countries. The PPI, developed by the Institute for Economics and Peace, is a measure of societal and global peacefulness, going beyond the mere absence of violence and incorporating indicators of eight Positive Peace Pillars, covering three main domains: attitudes, structures, and institutions. The index includes indicators of political stability, effective governance, economic equity, and social cohesion. Countries that score high on this index typically demonstrate strong institutions and robust social structures, which enhance their ability to withstand and recover from conflicts and economic shocks.

A higher ranking in the Positive Peace Index signifies not only greater peacefulness and resilience to conflict—it also correlates strongly with measures of societal resilience. Between 2009 and 2022, countries that saw improvements in their PPI experienced per capita GDP growth twice as high as that of countries with declining PPI scores. Additionally, these nations reported higher levels of happiness and life satisfaction, highlighting the broader correlation of a high PPI with quality of life and economic prosperity, which in turn further contributes to peace.

Historically, a Positive Peace deficit has been a strong predictor of violence globally. For example, Georgia had a slight Positive Peace surplus in 2009 while Venezuela had a slight deficit, and the subsequent events in these countries closely mirrored their PPI scores. Countries that face significant Positive Peace deficits as of 2022, such as Equatorial Guinea, Angola, and Laos, which currently exhibit considerable deficits, may be at greater risk of escalating violence over the next decade.

Looking closely at the index, despite the overall improvement in the PPI, the “structures” domain remains the only area to have shown global progress since 2013. This domain encompasses indicators such as GDP per capita, freedom of the press, telecommunications infrastructure, and research and development investments. In contrast, indicators within the “attitude” and “institutions” domains have generally deteriorated over the same period. This decline reflects growing challenges in social cohesion, political stability, and governance effectiveness, highlighting a widening gap between advancements in structural factors and setbacks in broader aspects of societal resilience and stability. The disparity underscores the need for targeted efforts to address weaknesses in attitudes and institutions to achieve more comprehensive and lasting improvements in global peace.

While PPI has shown notable improvements over the past decade, the disparities between the structural domain and other pillars are concerning. Advances in the economy and technology—such as increases in GDP per capita and enhancements in telecommunications—are promising. However, without parallel progress in governance, accountability, and effective institutions, these gains may have unintended negative consequences. Economic and technological advancements could exacerbate inequalities or reinforce power imbalances if not accompanied by strong, transparent, and responsive governance. This could lead to the suppression of citizens' freedoms and the undermining overall societal well-being. Addressing these imbalances is crucial to ensuring that structural improvements genuinely support global peace and stability.

Globally, the most significant deterioration in the PPI occurred during the COVID-19 pandemic. This shift is closely linked to the profound economic, social, and health impacts of the pandemic, as well as the policies implemented to curb the virus's spread. The crisis exposed vulnerabilities in societal structures and governance, contributing to a decline in peacefulness. However, countries with higher PPI scores demonstrated notable resilience and a more rapid recovery as the pandemic unfolded.

North America experienced the only significant deterioration in the PPI. This decline was primarily driven by substantial drops in the Positive Peace score of the United States, while Canada saw a more modest decrease. The largest decline in the U.S. can be attributed to fragmented elites and heightened tensions following the 2020 presidential election. Additionally, indicators such as the quality of information, legal frameworks supporting equal treatment, and group grievances have worsened, reflecting increasing divisions within society.

The Positive Peace Index (PPI) has seen a relatively significant 1 percent global improvement over the past decade, primarily driven by advances in economic and technological factors. However, this progress is complemented by deteriorations in governance, social cohesion, and institutional effectiveness. Strengthening governance and social cohesion remains essential for leveraging peace advancements and fostering long-term societal well-being. Looking ahead, addressing the significant Positive Peace deficits in nations such as Equatorial Guinea, Angola, and Laos, among many others, is crucial to preventing increased violence and ensuring sustainable global stability. §

# UN: Sustainable Development Not on Track

*An update on the Sustainable Development Goals shows not enough progress made on the improvement targets.*

The UN convened July 8-18 at its New York headquarters for the UN High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development to evaluate the progress on five of the seventeen Sustainable Development Goals. The five goals discussed: No poverty, zero hunger, climate action, partnership towards goals, and lastly, peace, justice and strong institutions.

Maryknoll was represented at the UN meetings by Maryknoll Sister Margaret Lacson and Maryknoll Father John Sivalon, as well as Dan Moriarty, Peace and Nonviolence senior program officer, and Iqbal Amhad, Kroc Institute Fellow for the Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns.

The update from the UN did not paint a rosy picture. Introducing the headline messages at the forum's beginning, UN Under-Secretary-General for Economic and Social Affairs Li Junhua shared some numbers that confirmed the belief that progress towards sustainable development has been flagging. Of the 135 measurable metrics on SDG progress that the UN and partnering organizations collected, only 17% revealed progress at the pace necessary to meet the stated goal. Roughly the same percent of the metrics showed regression against the 2015 baseline.

Meanwhile, the failure to meet the self-imposed goals was accompanied by a global erosion of trust in the United Nations, and an erosion of trust in most national governments by their citizens.

One of the least successful goal implementations was experienced by SDG1 – the alleviation of poverty. As reported by Fr. Sivalon,

“Regarding working poverty, there is tremendous regional variation with the largest number of working poor living in sub-Saharan Africa. Excluding Australia and New Zealand, Oceania experienced an increase in people experiencing working poverty. One presenter in a side event predicted that the wealth gap will continue to grow exponentially because of limited access to new technologies and especially generative Artificial Intelligence.

“The representative of the Indigenous people emphasized that rural workers are being forgotten in many of the national plans for the alleviation of poverty and that there is a real lack of democracy and an imbalance of power so that many people who are the poorest, especially women and girls, have little voice in the development of plans and strategies. Furthermore, he emphasized that a few individuals have more wealth than many countries around

the world so the whole global fiscal structure needs to be restructured to increase global equity.”

The second goal covered in the conference, SDG2 – zero hunger, is intimately related to poverty. In recent years, however, the failure to address hunger and stunting has been partly the result of failures in SDG16 – peace, justice and strong institutions. War in Ukraine, Gaza, Yemen, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Sudan, Syria, and many other areas have led to major disruption of food systems. Increased violence has also meant decreased investment in agriculture. According to a representative of the FAO, one third of arable land is degraded at this time. As a result, 1 in 10 people experience hunger, and 2.4 billion people experience food insecurity. Stunting affects 148 million children under the age of five.

On the peace front, civilian casualties world-wide rose 72 percent in 2023, the steepest rise since 2015. Among those civilian deaths, women and child made up a higher percent as compared to 2022.

But the only SDG goal for which there was no metric indicating on-track, or even moderate progress, was SDG13—climate action. The World Meteorological Organization confirmed that 2023 was the hottest year on record, with global average temperatures soaring to approximately 1.45°C above pre-industrial levels. The result has been the disruption of millions of lives and billions of dollars in economic losses. While there has been increased investment in renewable sources of energy, that investment comes nowhere near the total of fossil fuel subsidies worldwide. The scientific consensus is that emissions must be cut in half by 2030, but that is not at all likely at current rates. §

Overall progress across targets based on 2015–2024 global aggregate data

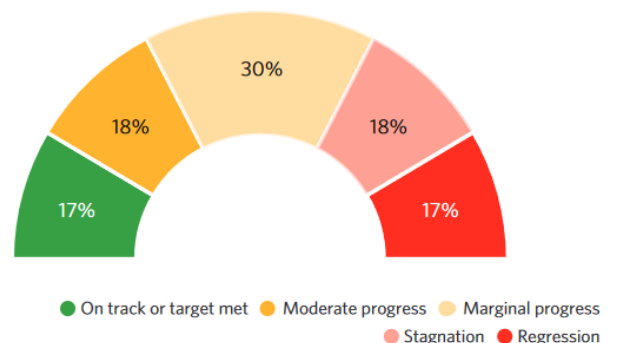


Chart from UN HLPF Preliminary Report

# UN: Discussions on Oceans, Deep-Sea Mining

*Progress made, but significant hurdles still remain, toward protections for the sea bed against exploitation by Deep-Sea Mining.*

The 29th International Seabed Authority (ISA) meeting, held in Jamaica in July, hoped to mark a significant advancement in the international governance of deep-seabed mining activities and protection of the oceans, the “lungs” of our planet. Its primary focus was the development of comprehensive rules, regulations, and procedures (RRPs) for the commercial exploitation of mineral resources from the seabed. Some progress was made towards this goal. However, disagreements persisted among member states regarding the pace and scope of these regulations, reflecting the complex interplay of environmental, economic, and geopolitical interests.

The Authority, made up of 168 member states, struggles to negotiate a balance between promoting economic development, protecting the marine environment, and ensuring that the benefits of deep-sea mining are distributed equitably among member states. To achieve these goals, the ISA is developing a regulatory framework that addresses the concerns of all stakeholders. The key point of contention is the balance between environmental protection and economic development. This highlights the contradictory role of the ISA as charged both with protecting the oceans and issuing licenses to exploit it through deep-seabed mining.

Thirty countries have called for a moratorium or pause on any exploitation until adequate research has been completed to determine the possible ramifications of seabed mining. These same countries advocate for stringent regulations to safeguard the deep-sea ecosystem, citing the potential for irreversible damage to vulnerable habitats and biodiversity. They emphasize the need for robust environmental impact assessments to ensure that deep-sea mining activities are conducted in a sustainable manner. Chile, Costa Rica, France, Ireland, and Monaco were among those countries that reiterated their national positions that commercial exploitation should not commence in the absence of appropriate RRP that would guarantee the effective protection of the marine environment.

Conversely, most countries argued for a more aggressive approach that would allow for the development of a thriving deep-sea mining industry while minimizing environmental risks. These countries highlighted the potential economic benefits of deep-sea mining, particularly for developing nations, and emphasized the importance of striking a balance between environmental protection and economic development. Nauru and other countries on

this side of the debate highlighted the need to achieve targeted milestones toward completing the draft exploitation regulations through a 2024-2025 road map. They sought support in progressing towards finalization of the RRP by the 2025 meeting of ISA.

The complexity of the issue of deep-seabed mining was epitomized by some delegates questioning whether the draft exploitation regulations would apply to all three types of mineral resources (polymetallic nodules, polymetallic sulfides, and cobalt-rich ferromanganese crusts) or just to nodules. The ISA's ability to effectively manage all these issues will be critical for ensuring the long-term sustainability of deep-sea ecosystems and the equitable distribution of the benefits of mining if it is allowed.

In addition, the meeting also addressed other issues related to deep-sea governance. Delegates were united in acknowledging the importance of corruption prevention. They discussed: expanding the regulation to encompass acts of bribery, threats, and extortion; explicitly outlining consequences of failure to comply; and whether contractors and relevant parties shall adhere to regional, national, and international laws related to anti-corruption and anti-bribery. A discussion took place under the regulation on restrictions on advertisements aiming to ensure that all public communications are factual, transparent, and do not mislead stakeholders or the public regarding ISA's decision making.

Finally, delegates elected Leticia Reis de Carvalho, Brazil, as the new ISA Secretary-General. Her election was seen by some as a victory for those advocating for a more cautious approach. Her term commences the first day of the new year.

While the 29th ISA meeting was a significant step forward in the development of a global framework for regulating deep-sea activities, delegates are still pessimistic that the 30th meeting will be able to finalize regulations governing exploitation. They pointed to unresolved matters discussed by eight intersessional working groups, including issues such as effective control, equalization measures, provisions related to inspection, compliance, and enforcement, the rights and interests of coastal states, test mining, and intangible underwater cultural heritage.

So, while some progress was made at this 29th session of ISA, a great deal of work remains before reaching agreement on regulations governing deep-seabed mining, though a moratorium or pause is unlikely. §

## Season of Creation

*The month of September is celebrated as the Season of Creation by people of faith from around the world.*

On September 1, the ecumenical Steering Committee of the Season of Creation launched the month-long celebration with a Prayer Service for Creation Day.

As the committee explains on the official webpage, “the Season of Creation is a time to renew our relationship with our Creator and all creation through celebration, conversion, and commitment together. During the Season of Creation, we join our sisters and brothers in the ecumenical family in prayer and action for our common home.” The website explains that what began as a declaration by orthodox Christian has since been adopted by many of the major Christian churches.

The ecumenical nature of the season was on full display in the September 1 Prayer Service, where leaders joined representing the Lutheran, Methodist, Anglican, Episcopal, and Roman and Coptic Orthodox churches.

Catholics had substantial representation at the prayer service, including from Bp. Girardo Alminaza of the Philippines, Sr. Alessandra Smerilli, Secretary of

the Vatican Dicastery for Promoting Integral Human Development, and Suzana Moreira of the Laudato Si’ Movement.

Pope Francis has been particularly dedicated to the Season of Creation, writing a message for the Day of Creation for each September 1 since 2015. This year Pope Francis released a separate message in the form of a two-minute video on YouTube addressing the question, “Do we hear the pain of the millions of victims of environmental catastrophes?”

Through September, the Season of Creation committee plans to host two other events: a conversation on the Fossil Fuel Non-Proliferation Treaty on Tuesday, September 10 at 9am and a Global Day of Action for a Fossil Fuel Treaty all day on Saturday, September 21. \$

**Faith in action:** Learn more about the Season of Creation and sign up for the upcoming events at [www.seasonofcreation.org](http://www.seasonofcreation.org)

## Announcing U.S. Election Webinars

*The elections in the United States is only two months away.*

Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns is offering a series of webinars to educate our audience on issues of policy that are significant to the Maryknoll family as we near the 2024 United States elections. Our hope is to share insights from the lived experiences of missionaries on topics of policy that will be of interest to faithful voters or concerned global citizens.

The webinars and details are as follows:

- **Peace, War, and Human Rights**  
Wednesday, October 2  
6pm ET | 3pm PT  
Dan Moriarty, Peace and Nonviolence senior program officer, will address the global peace and nonviolence issues that we hope the candidates will address.  
Register: <https://mogc.info/10-2>
- **Faithful Stewardship of Creation**  
Wednesday, October 9  
6pm ET | 3pm PT  
Lisa Sullivan, Integral Ecology senior program officer, will cover the environmental concerns the next U.S. President must confront.  
Register: <https://mogc.info/10-9>
- **Debt Relief in a Jubilee Year**  
Wednesday, October 16  
6pm ET | 3pm PT  
Susan Gunn, director of the Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns will share the need for debt relief to developing countries and the impact the presidency can have on the issue.  
Register: <https://mogc.info/10-16>
- **Faith-based Migrant Justice**  
Wednesday, October 23  
6pm ET | 3pm PT
  - Maryknoll Lay Missioner Heidi Cernaka, immigration lawyer in El Paso, Texas,
  - Maryknoll Sister Susan Nchubiri, program associate at MOGC, and
  - Iqbal Ahmad, Fellow of the University of Notre Dame Kroc Institute
 will discuss the much needed immigration fixes needed and what the next U.S. president can do to uphold the human dignity of migrants around the world.  
Register: <https://mogc.info/10-23>

Register to vote in your state at <https://vote.gov>



## Resources

1. **Webinar: Afghan Migrants - Three years out from Taliban takeover** featuring Iqbal Ahmad, Fellow of the University of Notre Dame Kroc Institute and MOGC intern on **Sept. 12 at 1PM ET.** <https://mogc.info/AfghanMigrantsWebinar>
2. **Election Webinar: Peace, War, and Human Rights** featuring Dan Moriarty, MOGC Peace and Nonviolence senior program officer, held on **Oct. 2 at 6PM ET.** <https://mogc.info/10-2>
3. **Election Webinar: Faithful Stewardship of Creation** featuring Lisa Sullivan, MOGC Integral Ecology senior program officer, on **Oct. 9 at 6PM ET.** <https://mogc.info/10-9>
4. **Election Webinar: Debt Relief in a Jubilee Year** featuring Susan Gunn, MOGC director, on **Oct. 16 at 6PM ET.** <https://mogc.info/10-16>
5. **Election Webinar: Faith-based Migrant Justice** Maryknoll Lay Missioner Heidi Cernaka, Maryknoll Sister Susan Nchubiri, and Iqbal Ahmad, MOGC Intern on **Oct. 23, 6PM ET.** <https://mogc.info/10-23>
6. **Message from Pope Francis on the Day of Prayer for Creation.** <https://mogc.info/Francis-SoC24>
7. **Video: “For the cry of the Earth” by Pope Francis** for the 2024 Season of Creation (two minutes.) <https://mogc.info/Francis-SoC-YT>
8. **Catholic Liturgical Guide for the Season of Creation** (Sept. 1 – Oct. 4) on the theme, “Hope & Act with Creation.” <https://mogc.info/CC-HAC>
9. **Season of Creation official home page**, which hosts the Sept. 1 Day of Creation ecumenical prayer and the webinar “A conversation on the Fossil Fuel Non-Proliferation Treaty” on **Sept. 10, 9AM ET.** <https://seasonofcreation.org/>
10. **Discover Your Neighbor: 2024 Care for Creation edition** - program from the Maryknoll Fathers and Brothers to inspire and empower young people to live out their faith through acts of love and service. <https://hubs.ly/Q02LrRrX0>
11. **Virtual Workshop: “The Pathway to Ecological Citizenship and Spirituality”** sponsored by the Catholic Climate Covenant, the Diocese of San Diego and others, **Sept. 11 and 18.** Register for free event: <https://mogc.info/TPTECS>
12. **Guide: Project 2025 in contrast with Catholic Social Teaching** by NETWORK Lobby for Catholic Social Teaching. <https://mogc.info/NETWORK-P2025>
13. **Voter guide: 2024 Equally Sacred Checklist** by NETWORK Lobby on how Catholic teaching is at the heart of the freedoms at stake this election year. <https://mogc.info/voterchecklist>
14. **Voter guide: “Vote Our Future,”** a 2024 U.S. election education campaign by NETWORK Lobby. <https://mogc.info/VOF2024>
15. **Webinar recording: Venezuelan Election – A view from within** featuring Lisa Sullivan held on Aug. 7. <https://mogc.info/VenezuelanElection>
16. **Two-pager: Climate Change and Creation** by Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns <https://mogc.info/CC-PB>
17. **Policy Brief: Environmental Priorities of the Washington Interfaith Staff Community (WISC)** <https://mogc.info/WISC-EEWG>
18. **Webinar recording: Ending Poverty** from the Justice Coalition of Religious (JCoR) as part of the UN High Level Political Forum Lab featuring José Bayardo Chata, Maryknoll mission partner at Derechos Humanos y Medio Ambiente (DHUMA) in Puno, Peru. <https://mogc.info/HLPF-EndingPoverty>
19. **Article: “The most dangerous part of migrants’ journey”** by Maryknoll Lay Missioner Heidi Cerneka on the Darien Gap <https://mogc.info/Cerneka-Darien>
20. **Eucharistic Prayer on Gospel Nonviolence** by the Association of U.S. Catholic Priests. <https://mogc.info/NonviolencePrayer>
21. **Maryknoll Lay Missioners Webinars:** Join the discernment webinars on **Sept. 19, 2PM ET and Oct. 15, 11AM ET** to learn about Maryknoll Lay Missioners and discern if mission is right for you. <https://mogc.info/MKLM-Webinars>
22. **Maryknoll Fathers and Brothers Webinars:** See upcoming and past webinars. In the most recent recorded webinar, Fr. Stephen Judd, MM, shares of his years at the Language Institute in Cochabamba, Bolivia: <https://www.maryknoll.us/Resources/webinars>