



Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns

NewsNotes

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El Salvador: Pilgrimage to honor religious women.....	3
Guatemala: Bishops raise critical issues.....	5
Korea: Lawyer says naval base construction is illegal.....	6
Japan: A visit to Fukushima.....	7
Myanmar gold rush loses some of its luster.....	8
DRC: The U.S. can and should do more.....	9
Sudan: More than one million under attack.....	10
Syria: Between Pandora's box, new dawn.....	11
Palestine-Israel: Bring energy to peace process.....	12
Hurricane Sandy brings reminder of Fukushima.....	13
Global food security priorities for next four years.....	14
Immigration coalition urges reform.....	15
Climate disruption from D.C to Doha.....	17
A litany for ecological healing.....	18
Resources.....	19

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El Salvador: Pilgrimage to honor religious women

Last summer, the Leadership Conference of Women Religious (LCWR), in conjunction with the SHARE Foundation, issued an invitation to religious women and all faith-based groups to participate in a delegation to El Salvador from November 29 to December 6. The theme of the delegation was honoring religious women who have dedicated their lives to peace and justice in El Salvador and throughout the world. The time of the delegation coincided with the 32nd anniversary of the martyrdom of Ita Ford, Maura Clarke, Dorothy Kazel and Jean Donovan, plus that of Carol Piette, who drowned in a rescue mission just prior to the deaths of Ita, Maura, Jean and Dorothy. The SHARE Foundation aptly facilitated every aspect of the delegation's preparation for the trip and actual experience while in El Salvador. The five Maryknoll sisters currently assigned in El Salvador and Sr. Ann Braudis, MM, with the Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns, participated in the delegation. The following is Sr. Ann's reflection on some of the profoundly moving moments that made up the days and nights of the experience, which had about it the aura of a life-changing retreat.

The delegation was a time to: honor religious women; learn more about the SHARE Foundation; recognize those who gave their lives; and reflect on the aftermath of the war years.

Honoring religious women: In the current period when U.S. American religious women have found themselves cast under a harsh and scrutinizing light, the motion to pay tribute to what they and their lay companions have given their lives to, resonates forcefully in the hearts of many people. This is captured in the following words adapted from the writings of the SHARE Foundation:

For more than three decades, women religious and lay women have accompanied the people of El Salvador. Women religious responded to the cry for help during and after the war, traveling to El Salvador and working side by side with communities at highest risk. They gave sanctuary to Salvadoran refugees in the U.S., fought for fair immigration policies, and pressured the U.S. government to cease military aid in order to end the war. Religious congregations provided material aid for the reconstruction of El Salvador in the aftermath of the war and countless natural disasters and continue to support women's

projects around the country. There has been a labor of love infused with the spirit of our sister martyrs - a spirit of justice, compassion, and a willingness to speak truth to power.

One of the richest aspects of the delegation was the opportunity to meet and exchange experiences, ideas and hopes with Salvadoran women religious. One such woman was Sr. Nohemi Ortiz of the Pequeña Comunidad (Little Community). Since Vatican II issued the call to be aligned with the poor, Nohemi and her companions have lived within a peasant community developing an uncomplicated and transparent form of religious life that is faithful to the mandate of Jesus to love and serve each other. They were companions and teachers to our martyred sisters and saw one of their own sisters brutally killed while rescuing children from imminent danger.

The delegation from the U.S. was led by LCWR president Sr. Pat Farrell, OFM, who worked with Sr. Nohemi in years past in El Salvador. During the delegation Nohemi and Pat engaged in public discussions which inspired hope for a future in which the religious and human rights of all people, particularly of women, will be enshrined within the Church and within civil society.

The SHARE Foundation: SHARE is a 30-year old organization which strengthens solidarity with and among the Salvadoran people in El Salvador and the U.S. in the struggle for economic sustainability, justice, and human and civil rights.

The experience that the Foundation provided for the delegation touched the realm of the sacred and was universally received with reverence by the members of the delegation. Beyond the well planned and executed experiences, the deep effect of the time spent in El Salvador was occasioned by the dedicated young women of the Foundation who were the guides and mentors of the delegation. The eldest of these women, Bethany Loberg, is a 28-year old from the U.S., whose life is inspired by the women martyrs and who brought to bear on the delegation a keen ability to link the events of 30 years ago with contemporary events and outcomes in El Salvador. For most members of the delegation, Bethany and her companions pointed to where the future is leading humanity: To the convergence of hearts and minds within the human family through commitment to something larger than one's self and through the intelligent analysis of unjust situations that are the cause of sorrow and rupture throughout the world.

Those who gave their lives: The delegation visited the town of La Libertad where Dorothy Kazel, an Ursuline sister, and Jean Donovan, a lay missionary, lived and worked over a period of six years. During these years unrest, danger and conflict mounted relentlessly. Poor rural people were completely marginalized from the benefits of society and deprived of all normal political avenues for being heard. This led to the rise of armed guerrilla forces followed by excessive retribution and retaliation on the part of government forces. In March 1980, Archbishop Oscar Romero, who implored, begged and ordered the government to cease its repression of the people, was brutally executed while saying Mass. In the days that followed, Jean and Dorothy stood by his coffin and attended his funeral. Their vigil and their work, particularly among refugees and frightened, persecuted children, did not go unnoticed by government forces.

Because of the great need in El Salvador, Carol Piette and Ita Ford, Maryknoll sisters, went there from their mission in Chile in 1980, arriving precisely on the day of Romero's funeral. They went to work immediately in the Chalatenango area providing every class of service to the people ravaged by the mounting conflict. Both would lose their lives before the year ended.

When Carol died in August 1980, Maryknoll Sister Maura Clarke left her mission in Nicaragua in order to accompany Ita in El Salvador. This was with the full knowledge of the growing hopelessness of the escalating conflict which, in all probability, would exact from her a terrible price. This came on December 2, 1980: Dorothy, Jean, Ita and Maura, who were generous and faithful friends to each other, were taken at night to a remote area, beaten, raped, and murdered by five members of the National Guard of El Salvador.

Delegates were taken by bus on the long journey to the place of martyrdom of the four women. Silence was kept along the way as each one imagined what must have passed in the minds and hearts of the four on that horrific night of their deaths. Later, we were taken to the place of burial of the three Maryknollers, Maura, Ita and Carol, and spent the night in the community of San Anonio de los Ranchos, by the river where Carol died.

The delegation also visited the University of Central America where six Jesuit priests, their housekeeper and her daughter were cruelly murdered, also in the night, in 1989, at the height of what had become a civil war. To close the precious days of pilgrimage, we visited Romero's tomb where one feels drawn as if by a magnet to henceforth lead a life that is worthwhile, even noble.

The aftermath of the war years: It can never be forgotten that 70,000 civilian Salvadoran people lost their lives and 10,000 people, mostly youth, disappeared from 1981 to 1992. For most there are no graves where beloved children, spouses and siblings can be mourned. Witnessing so much sorrow and loss, the members of the delegation might have found themselves shattered except for the resilience of the Salvadoran people, especially the mothers of those whose lives were taken.

The delegation was privileged day after day to be accompanied by these women, mothers and wives of the lost, who shared not only their personal stories but the work they do so that the past inhumanity not be repeated. They are dauntless in constructing the historical memory of all that they lived through. They show touching gratitude for the generosity of the five women who accompanied them and mingled their blood with theirs and for all the sisters who have helped them throughout the years. Everywhere the delegation went, women were eager to speak of the impact of the lives of the sisters on their lives and to share details of how they have organized themselves to affect public policy in the promotion of justice and the common good.

Note: The SHARE Foundation accompanies many women's groups and looks for ways to support higher education for youth who otherwise would not have the chance to study and prepare themselves for leadership in Salvadoran society. www.share-elsalvador.org. §

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Photo: Delegates pray at the Maryknoll sisters' graves.



Guatemala: Bishops raise critical issues

In November the Guatemalan Bishops' Conference issued a statement recognizing the current crises in Guatemala. Many of the points raised highlight the goals that the Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns has outlined for our Sustainable Pathways to Peace and Inclusive Security (SPPS) program work. Through SPPS we promote peace based on a concept of true and just community and economies of "enough," to increase the sense of security in community and diminish the likelihood of resource wars.

Recently Guatemala has lived through massive sink holes in Guatemala City, severe flooding caused by Hurricane Irene, ecological destruction and water pollution in mining areas, and November's 7.4 magnitude earthquake in San Marcos. All these events signal ecological crises that point to the susceptibility of the impoverished majority of Guatemalans who live in extremely vulnerable areas. Additionally, recent political clashes in Guatemala (see November-December 2012 *NewsNotes*, p.9) point to the consequences of a government that shapes policy to benefit the economic elite and uses security forces to repress any opposition. All the while, the majority of Guatemalans live in a state of "not enough" – lack of health care, inadequate education, malnutrition and no means to provide food for their families.

Through all of this upheaval, how are Guatemalans to pursue peace and live in security? In mid-November, the Catholic bishops' conference of Guatemala issued a reflection on the current situation entitled *What then shall we do?* (Luke 3:10). The statement starts with the recent earthquake which caused massive upheaval; the bishops issue a call all to generosity and solidarity – to help those affected rebuild their lives. But the letter goes on to address "another type of upheaval in our country [that calls] us to serious reflection." The writers refer to the intensifying social conflict and violence that has taken a toll on Guatemalan families and on society.

The bishops state: "We are witnesses to a situation in which almost the entire population lives in fear: fear of losing their lives, fear of assault or extortion ... fear of unemployment, fear of not finding spaces to survive in the labor market, fear of going through some extreme need or illness without having the minimum resources required to handle it. All of these deep-seeded fears make people trust each other less. Often, it makes people aggressive ... [and] often willing to respond with violence or to approve of certain forms of violence that others might perpetrate."

They go on to identify the misappropriation of resources to benefit a few rather than the majority: "In recent years, a new kind of conflict has emerged due to the fact that the state has not been able to orient private investment to the common good. As state enterprises have been privatized, the prevailing dynamic has been that of enriching the private sector and rewriting economic rules to favor corporations instead of the common good. The government has not been able to gain the public support it needs to implement its energy development policies or its education policies. It has spent its budget on patronage politics with programs that focus on handouts, instead of attacking the structural causes of poverty in Guatemala. The poorest groups, indigenous people, peasant farmers, and those without formal education are largely forgotten in the system even though they continue to represent the very base and identity of the country."

The Guatemalan bishops propose several ways forward beginning with promoting the Rule of Law and respect for the common good. If this does not happen, they caution, "we will be contributing to anarchy and lawlessness and the destruction of the common good as the ultimate objective of our society."

Next, the bishops also promote dialogue – beginning on the level of government institutions which "should listen to the demands of impoverished populations and work toward reasonable agreements." Additionally, dialogue must lead to a consensus "to achieve a more inclusive and viable development model, so that development is something that is possible, not just something that is desired."

Regarding private enterprises, the bishops remark, "From small family businesses to large transnational corporations, [all private enterprises] have the task of working for the country's economic development by generating employment. An enterprise that is ethically based must have as its goal not only the generation of profit, but also the more important purpose and awareness of serving the common good of the surrounding population and of the country under whose laws it labors. The enterprise must also seek the human development of all those who are part of it. It must be careful about the environmental impact of its operations. Business activity and economic activity in general must be guided by the objective of the common good. That is to say, businesses should look at their investors' interests in the context of the interest of all of their collaborators and that of the society in which they are located."

Since the Guatemalan government has been seen as promoting policies that benefit businesses more than people, the bishops advise, “The government must help to reduce suspicions, which become rumors, that it is a militaristic, intolerant government more concerned about advancing private businesses and their projects that in advancing the common good, a government that uses force to suffocate any attempt to criticize its administration. It will be able to achieve this through the efforts it makes to strengthen democratic processes.”

Finally the bishops recommend that “[e]ach individual Guatemalan, acting out of his or her own culture and religion, must choose the culture of life. We must put an end to daily behaviors of violence, corruption, and the desire to find easy answers to difficult problems.”

To read more about the SPPS program, visit the MOGC website and click on “our focus.”

Read the bishops’ complete statement and see photos of the earthquake’s damage on our website. §

Korea: Lawyer says naval base construction is illegal

The following is based on an article written by law professor Shin Yong-In and published on the website of Save Jeju Now, the campaign to end the construction of a naval base on Jeju Island, South Korea. Opponents of the base, which include most residents of the island, fear its construction would inflict significant environmental damage to the fragile ecosystem, not to mention that it would increase tension between South Korea, its ally the U.S., Japan and China.

According to Korean law, the navy cannot maintain construction of the base without allocated funds; the monies are first budgeted by the Ministry of Strategy and Finance, and then distributed by the National Treasury. Any construction done without an allocated budget or funds is considered illegal.

On Jan. 3, 2013, the government allocated about 16 billion won (about US\$15 million) for the first quarter (90 days) for construction of the Jeju naval base. Since the base’s 2013 budget is about 200 billion won (about \$188 million), the first quarter amount should actually be 50 billion won (US\$47 million). Prof. Shin writes that the 16 billion won “is ... only for the operation and construction costs [for 20 days’ worth of work, 70 days after the start of the quarter.] ... [It] never allocate[d] the budget for the [first] 70 days’ construction costs.”

Prof. Shin writes that the Ministry of Strategy and Finance was to allocate the funds only after the navy submitted a previously requested report to the National Assembly.

But the navy already has instigated construction this year, despite the fact that the funds have not been allocated, technically making the work illegal; according to Prof. Shin, the construction companies cannot receive



In December 2012, activists demonstrated at the National Assembly building in Seoul to protest funding of the naval base on Jeju Island.

payment after the fact. He writes, “It becomes a construction for free, not a construction on credit.”

“To summarize again,” Prof. Shin writes, “there was no budget allocation [for] 70 days and there will be no allocation of funds during the period. Then how can they do construction? Does the navy personnel plan to make it up with their private money?”

According to Prof. Shin, the current construction work on the naval base is clearly illegal, therefore those who have been arrested in the ongoing civil disobedience actions – including several Catholic priests – are not guilty. “For a charge of obstruction of business to be established,” Prof. Shin writes, “the business should be a just business. However, since construction ... without allocation of budget or funds is illegal, it is not a just business. Therefore, the charge of obstruction of business cannot be established.”

Learn more about the campaign to stop the construction of the naval base at SaveJejuNow.org. §

Japan: A visit to Fukushima

Last November, Maryknoll Sisters Janice McLaughlin and Jean Fallon traveled to Japan, where Sr. Jean lived and worked for many decades. While there, they visited the Tohoku area of northeastern Japan. This area is made up of four coastal prefectures affected by the March 2011 earthquake and tsunami: Aomori, Iwate, Miyagi and Fukushima. The following reflection is written by Sr. Jean.

While the other prefectures endured the double disasters of earthquake and tsunami, Fukushima Prefecture had three: earthquake, tsunami, and the added tragedy of irradiated coastal cities, villages and farm lands. Some are not anywhere near the destroyed nuclear facility, but are located in the mountains where the radiation plume, driven by winds and a snow fall, brought the more dangerous irradiated particles into the trees and onto the ground.

In December I responded to a Nuclear Information and Resource Service's appeal; they were requesting that the U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission make GE nuclear energy generators safer.

I wrote, "Recently I have returned from Fukushima where we met and talked with those affected by the explosions of three of the Fukushima nuclear facilities' reactors. We found among the people an underlying depression and even despair in the affected areas especially where you see farms, homes, and villages that are uninhabitable.... What is worse is the false hope being held out by the government and TEPCO [Tokyo Electrical Power Company] to these people that they will be able

to return sometime in the future." [The reason that only three reactors were involved was that three of the six in operation had been shut down. The coolant pools which stored depleted fuel rods from one of the plants emptied and began the meltdown syndrome.]

During our visit, we were told by teachers and parents that children in some of the most affected areas have not yet been removed from the very real danger of residual radiation, nor have their parents and neighbors... This is because the government "drew a line in the sand" a mere 20 kilometers from the facility. Now, these adults are also suffering from guilt. They told us: We were the ones who agreed to that nuclear energy plant and it is now too late, we cannot rectify our mistake. They repeatedly said to us: "If only radiation was visible!"

From the time the facility was built, activists – many of whom were scientists, professors and other professionals – had challenged the safety of the Fukushima facility. They had repeatedly warned TEPCO facility managers of this very kind of a disaster: What will you do if a very large earthquake would cause a tsunami that would pour over your sea wall and flood the buildings beyond their capacity to pump out the deluge of sea water...

It is beyond just a tsunami that cannot be stopped. The danger of nuclear facilities is not the machinery that runs them but the people who do, especially those who make decisions about the safety and future of these facilities. We allow energy corporations and companies like General Electric to lead us to believe that nuclear energy can be safe if we but change the generators, or have better emergency protocols.

It is the industry that is keeping these time bombs running, not the need for electricity. If Japan and the U.S. were to focus on developing alternative energy production our scientific know-how could open up practical methods of safe energy production.

If it is true that this is the blind attempt to make money at any cost and the refusal to change what can be changed, then it is time to open the way to something new. But, it will not be without cost or pain.

We can start with a change of focus which must be on human life and the life of the planet. We can begin to question our energy needs. There are possibilities of clean energy but we need political commitment and unified efforts to make the necessary changes.

It is time we cease trying to salvage what has been one of the biggest mistakes humankind has made. (See related story on page 13.) §



Volunteers help clean the area in Minamisanrikucho (Miyagi prefecture); photo by Hajime Nakano.

Myanmar gold rush loses some of its luster

Myanmar, celebrating nascent political, economic and social changes, is at a crossroads. But like the widespread graffiti slogan “Plug the City,” a plea for more electric power in the capital city of Yangon, it is unclear if the prevailing powers will commit the energy and resources necessary to ensure permanent long-term progress.

President Obama’s brief visit to Yangon immediately after his re-election, following up Hillary Clinton’s visit a year earlier, was aimed at showing support for changes to date and encouraging continued progress. The president has regularly challenged Myanmar for alleged human rights violations, but the U.S. is also keen on weaning the country from its dependence on China and persuading it to stop collaborating with North Korea on a suspected nuclear weapons program.

Progress has been quid pro quo. The government allows more freedom of speech and has released a number of political prisoners, while the U.S. has named an ambassador and lifted most of its economic sanctions. Other signs of new times include the first public ceremony in 50 years honoring outstanding journalists, the first ATM transaction using an international credit card, and an explosion of graffiti – a graphic expression of free speech after a half century of repression.

Myanmar’s population – estimated at 48 million (World Bank) to 64 million (IMF) – comprises some 135 ethnic groups among eight national “races.” The largest is Burman at 68 percent. Violence rooted in ethnic differences erupted in June 2011 in Kachin State in the north, bordering on China, and in March 2012 in Rakhine State in the west, bordering on India and Bangladesh. Each conflict has caused more than 100,000 to be displaced.

Relations between the Church and state are generally good. The population, 90 percent Buddhist, is four percent Christian, including 750,000 Catholics (one percent). Initially cautious, the Church has readied a response to the seeming rapid changes in Myanmar. The Yangon Archdiocese and the Myanmar Council of Churches have organized a three-day seminar and workshop in January on “Emerging opportunities and chal-

lenges in a new Myanmar: Church response to nation building and reconciliation.”

Myanmar is blessed with abundant natural resources, but an estimated one-third of its people live below the poverty line. China, Myanmar’s largest investor, is heavily involved in extractive industries. Meanwhile, foreign firms poised to invest in Myanmar are studying a complicated new investment law that would allow 100 percent foreign ownership. However, speculation threatens to arrest long-term economic progress. For example, many property owners, anticipating an economic boom, have doubled or tripled prices, rents and the cost of hotel rooms compared with a year ago. With superior infrastructure, a better educated work force, and cheaper office and living space in neighboring Thailand, there seems a real danger that hoped-for foreign investors will settle in Bangkok rather than Yangon.

Meanwhile, the U.S. is holding out the possibility of future military ties with Myanmar, subject to improvement in its human rights record. The U.S. has invited Myanmar to be an observer this year at its annual Cobra Gold military exercise in Thailand. It is the United States’ largest multilateral exercise in the Asia-Pacific region, bringing together thousands of troops for field training. About 10,000 U.S. military personnel took part last year, with China and Russia among the countries sending observers.

The U.S. imposed economic sanctions on Myanmar’s military regime for years, and today has limited leverage in the country. However, the U.S. and President Obama are generally admired, and Thein Sein, a general and now president of the quasi-civilian government, is keen on winning points with the West. The government seems belatedly aware and a bit fearful of China’s pervasive influence and control in Myanmar.

Hopes for the future run high, but improving the quality of life for the general population might rest with the political will of parliament – a quarter of which consists of appointed military personnel. National elections are scheduled for 2015, but Aung San Suu Kyi, having married a foreign national, is barred from running for president unless the constitution is amended. Nevertheless, a modern-day Solomon – or Bathsheba – might be needed to safely steer the ship of state among the shoals of neighboring giants China and India. §



Photo by Daniel Reid

DRC: The U.S. can and should do more

The Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) is the site of the world's longest-running and most expensive peacekeeping operations, including a UN peacekeeping presence for several years after its independence in 1960 and more recent UN missions starting in the late 1990s. Despite this, an estimated five million people have died in the years since the second regional war began in 1998, and millions more have been forced to flee their homes. The people of eastern DRC, especially North and South Kivu provinces in particular, have faced displacement, atrocities, and repeated cycles of conflict; sexual violence has become a tool of war used against tens of thousands of women, men, and children. The following is an update on the advocacy efforts underway to address this volatile situation.

The March 23 Movement, known as the M23 and active in the DRC's eastern provinces of North and South Kivu, represents a continuation of fighting that has persisted since the formal end of the second Congo war in 2002-2003. The M23 is made up ethnic Tutsi soldiers who were former members of the Rebel National Congress for the Defense of the People (CNDP) who, after mutining against the government of the DRC, were supported by the governments of Rwanda and Uganda. From November 20-December 1, 2012, M23 took over the provincial capital of Goma, forcing more than 140,000 people to flee their homes. After 11 days of defending their gains and making advances, the M23 agreed to withdraw from Goma.

On November 30, the U.S. Senate unanimously passed an amendment giving authority to the Secretary of Treasury to impose sanctions on persons providing financial, material, or technological support to M23. On December 10 the Africa Faith and Justice Network joined 13 other organizations in a widely circulated and publicized letter strongly recommending that the U.S.: 1. appoint a special envoy to leverage the U.S.'s influence to ensure that all parties fully cooperate with an international political process, and work closely with the proposed UN envoy; 2. call for a UN envoy to the Great Lakes to work with the African Union and other regional and sub-regional stakeholders, leading a credible international political process that addresses the continual cycles of violence and regional interference; 3. support robust UN sanctions on all individuals identified in the UN Group of Experts' final report, including senior Rwandan government officials, and those individuals and entities supporting criminal networks through the

trade in natural resources; and 4. suspend and cut off non-humanitarian aid U.S. assistance to Rwanda while publicly condemning Rwanda's support for the M23.

When the House Subcommittee on Africa held a hearing on Rwanda's devastating destabilization of the DRC on December 11, Rep. Christopher Smith (R-NJ) asked Ambassador Johnnie Carson, Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs, why the U.S. has not taken measures to withhold military aid to the government of Rwanda. Rep. Tom Marino (R-PA) followed, asking Ambassador Carson: "How many more people have to die before you get serious about this?" Both Smith, who chairs the subcommittee, and the subcommittee's ranking member, Rep. Karen Bass (D-CA), equally underscored the fact that the U.S. has to decisively address Rwanda's ongoing destabilization of the DRC and support peace efforts for the Congolese.

On December 10, the Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns endorsed a petition to President Obama from the Association of Concerned African Scholars (ACAS), a national organization of professors and other specialists on Africa. The petition referred to the conflict as "the deadliest documented conflict since World War II" and called on President Obama to take bilateral and multilateral actions through the United Nations to protect civilians in the conflict zone of eastern DRC. Specifically, the petition calls on the president to use U.S. influence at the UN to provide its Organization Mission in the DRC (MONUC) forces with the mandate and resources to protect civilians, to sanction Rwanda and Uganda for any support to militias there, to use the Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC) to enforce the Dodd-Frank Act on conflict minerals, and to fully implement the Obama Act of 2006 on the Congolese Army for their contributions to the disorder.

The White House held a conference call on December 12 with NGOs and others invested in peace in the DRC. Though not confirmed by the White House, those in attendance from the Africa Faith and Justice Network believe that the call was triggered by the Congressional hearing which raised questions similar to those outlined by the NGOs' letter and the ACAS petition pointing to failed DRC policy on the part of the Obama administration.

Find background and other information at the Association of Concerned Africa Scholars, <http://concernedafricascholars.org>, and the Africa Faith and Justice Network, <http://www.afjn.org/>. §

Sudan: More than one million under attack

Since June 2011, government forces from Sudan have fought the Sudan People's Liberation Movement/Army-North (SPLM/A-N) in the Blue Nile and South Kordofan regions. The Sudan Relief and Rehabilitation Agency (SRRA), the relief wing of the SPLM/A-N, recently released a 21 page report on the dire situation, including details on the high instances of malnutrition and disease among the people. The following is a press release from the SRRA.

According to an SRRA press release: "... [M]ore than one million Sudanese liv[e] with constant bombing and artillery attacks from government forces In just one small area [in Blue Nile], 1,205 people have starved to death, half of them children.

"President Omar al-Bashir's government in Khartoum has consistently refused to allow aid agencies access to these people. Talks mediated by the African Union have failed to persuade his administration. Proposals from the United Nations have been rejected and ignored.

"It is vital that an air and land corridor for aid, suggested by the United Nations, and accepted, without preconditions by the SPLM-N on August 4, 2012, be implemented without further delay. The nine conditions imposed by the government in Khartoum make the plan unviable. ...

"The international community must urgently answer the scale of the suffering to ensure the faithful implementation of the Tripartite Initiative and the UN Security Council Resolution 2046 by the Government of Sudan,' says Philip Neroun, director of the SRRA. ...

"Hundreds of thousands are displaced inside [Blue Nile and South Kordofan], surviving in caves or in the bushes. They have little food and survive as best they can, without clean water and medicines. There are high levels of malnutrition.

"In the rebel controlled areas people survive on roots collected from the forest, hiding in foxholes to escape the daily bombings by Antonov aircraft and suffering from malaria, diarrhea and skin diseases. The last harvesting season has been poor."

According to the Sudan Tribune (January 1), "Under the 2005 peace deal that led to South Sudan's secession in July 2011, Blue Nile and South Kordofan - where many had fought with the southern rebels against the Khartoum government - were given special dispensation and their own accord within the Comprehensive Peace

Agreement (CPA).

"However, the elements of the CPA regarding the 'Two Areas' were not fully implemented before South Sudan's secession and the Sudan Armed Forces demanded that the northern sector of the SPLM - now the SPLM-N - disarm or move south of the new international border.

"Over 200,000 people have been displaced into South Sudan and Ethiopia by the conflict but many remain in the conflict-affected areas. There have been attempts by the United Nations, African Union and Arab League to negotiate between the two sides in order to allow humanitarian access to rebel-controlled areas but so far no international aid has been allowed to enter.

"The report says there are 515,707 civilians who reside in the rebel controlled area in Blue Nile and South Kordofan; 79,550 [internally displaced persons, IDPs] are in the rebel territory in Blue Nile where the [population] is 98,003 people. In South Kordofan the number of IDPs in the SPLM-N areas reached 436,157 people while the total of civilians in its controlled zones is 995,200."

On January 5, the BBC published a report about a meeting, held in Ethiopia on January 4, between Sudan's President Omar al-Bashir and South Sudan's President Salva Kiir

"African Union [AU] mediator Thabo Mbeki said both sides had agreed 'unconditionally' to implement a deal first struck in September," the article stated. AU mediators "will now lay out a timetable for the implementation of all outstanding agreements, according to an official document seen by the BBC.

"This is expected to be in place by the end of next week, and if the timetable is respected, a demilitarised buffer zone between the two countries will be set up. That would allow the resumption of oil exports from the south and of cross-border trade.

"They've... agreed that actions should be taken immediately - or maybe as soon as possible - to implement all the existing agreements unconditionally,' Mr Mbeki said. 'The presidents have also agreed that... the necessary decisions are taken to create the safe demilitarised border zone.'

The article noted that limited progress was made on the "disputed Abyei region, including a commitment to set up a joint administration for the area, as well as on several other outstanding issues"; however, these agreements have been signed before and never have been implemented. §

Syria: Between Pandora's box, new dawn

The following article by Syrian Fadi Hallisso, SJ was the basis for his December 13, 2012 presentation to a Pax Christi International workshop in Amman, Jordan. Fadi, who is from Aleppo, is supporting Syrian refugees in Lebanon with Jesuit Refugee Services. Noting that the number of Syrian refugees in surrounding countries now exceeds half a million, Fadi writes that as the world tries to understand what is really going on in Syria, the month-long punishment of Aleppo is leading to starvation. Immediate political, humanitarian, reconstruction, peacemaking action is essential. He continues ...

The appeals we are getting every day from different regions of Aleppo are heartbreaking; people are cutting trees from streets and public gardens in the absence of any other heating resources, nearly 40,000 people are facing the winter under tents. Fights over food between children in the streets, and kilometers-long lines in front of the few bakeries that haven't already been bombed are becoming common in what used to be Syria's industrial center. One of Aleppo's neighborhoods, after 12 days of electricity blackout, witnessed people shouting in the streets "we want freedom no more, we want an Islamic khalif"...

Increasingly, we are noticing the petro-dollar's interference; businessmen from the Arab gulf countries are financing, on their own, armed brigades to force their own salafist-wahabi agendas...

The hatred in some areas is reaching dangerous levels. Despite rumors and isolated incidents, we have not yet had religious or ethnic cleansing, but the ongoing violence, the continuous bombardment and collective punishment tactics by the regime portend a potential for vindictive mass murders in the future.

Many gangsters pretending to be Free Syria Army (FSA) are taking advantage of the chaos to kidnap people for ransom. Others in Aleppo are looting private and public factories to sell machines for low prices.

Unfortunately, bad news about Syria is all the media covers nowadays. No one is talking about the courageous civilian activists who are risking their lives on a daily basis to promote values like civil society, equality, and freedom, or even to organize life in the afflicted areas. For instance, no importance was given at all to the martyrdom of Mustafa Karahman, a Shiite young man from Aleppo (many describe the revolution as a Sunni one). Mustafa worked with a group of friends in Bustan Al-Qaser, Aleppo to organize life in their neighborhood,

clean up the garbage that the state won't gather anymore, and reopen the school. At the same time Mustafa was organizing demonstrations against the regime and the looting of some of FSA members as well. He contributed to making their neighborhood one of few called "the conscience of the revolution." Unfortunately he was one of six victims killed when the regime bombarded their demonstration.

No one will tell you about the magnificent initiatives by young Syrians to organize daily life in many areas where the state is not present anymore. No one is giving credit to the brave ones who are still trying to communicate their message of freedom and dignity through tens of newspapers and magazines produced under shelling and security forces' prosecution. No one will tell you that young Syrian activists who were forced to flee the country have nine radio stations broadcasting over the internet. One of those stations was campaigning for months for nonviolent tactics...

Syrians feel abandoned -- left alone during the last 20 months to face the most brutal dictatorship on the planet... The diplomatic failure of the international community is unacceptable, as is giving the Syrian people two hard choices: being slaughtered or asking for a NATO intervention that won't come until the last moment. The inability of international diplomacy to produce a diplomatic resolution of the Syrian crisis is shameful in one sense and unbelievable in another.

History shows that most of our fears of coming sectarian violence are justified, especially since the bad experience of countries like Lebanon and Iraq are so vividly present in our collective consciousness. On the other hand, the daily experience of surviving in the current Syria shows that this can be avoided if Syrians from different sectarian and ethnic affiliations work hand in hand to serve their citizens.

That is at least what the daily experience of volunteers who are organizing life and relief efforts in every Syrian city shows. Young Syrians are discovering each other through this crisis; they are discovering deprived towns and neighborhoods that they didn't know existed; they are discovering a Syria that they never knew about; and they are doing whatever they can to preserve it from becoming a living hell. The international community is called to support those brave women and men who can be found in every Syrian village, town and neighborhood to help them rebuild their country, because this alone [is] what could prevent complete chaos in the future. §

Palestine-Israel: Bring energy to peace process

Kathy McNeely, interim director of the Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns, along with 35 other faith leaders, recently signed a letter to President Obama calling on him to bring the full energies of his administration to bear towards facilitating a just, durable and final negotiated agreement to end the Arab-Israeli-Palestinian conflict. The letter was organized by Churches for Middle East Peace (CMEP), which is gathering additional endorsements of the letter. It will be presented to the White House on Inauguration Day, January 21.

“Dear Mr. President,

“The goal of a just peace among Arabs, Israelis and Palestinians has eluded leaders in the Middle East and in the U.S. for more than a generation. As you embark upon your second term, there is an unprecedented opportunity for your administration to play a catalytic role in the resolution of this conflict. As faith leaders deeply committed to peace and reconciliation in this land held sacred by so many, we write to ask that you now bring the full energies of your administration to bear toward facilitating a just, durable, and final negotiated agreement to end the Arab-Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

“We understand the difficulty and cost of undertaking this effort. There are groups on both sides that oppose any agreement. The losses Palestinians have experienced since the Oslo Accords were signed nearly

20 years ago have deeply marred trust and made many despair for the possibility of negotiations ever producing an acceptable outcome. Israelis fear that the losses they may face in negotiations could undermine the existence and security of their state in future generations.

“Your own administration experienced the costly challenges of working toward peacemaking during your first term, but another generation cannot wait as prospects for peace grow dimmer. The U.S. should place the full weight of its support behind the long-term well-being of Israelis and Palestinians. Proposals put forward must be feasible and convincingly address their separate national aspirations for security and justice.

“American political leadership is needed now more than ever to support both Israelis and Palestinians in creating a resilient and just peace. Conversely, the consequences of maintaining the status quo, while events further complicate the feasibility of a two-state solution, may perpetuate the conflict for generations to come.

“Mr. President, we recognize the awesome burdens you carry for the welfare and fate of so many people at home and abroad. We pray that you will be given courage, patience, and wisdom for your decisions in this and in all other matters.”

Go to CMEP’s website (www.cmep.org) to endorse this letter.

Join us: Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns welcomes interns

Interested in a faith-based approach to global peace and justice issues? Consider an internship with the Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns in Washington, D.C. As an intern at our Washington, D.C. office, you will: research current issues affecting countries where Maryknoll missionaries live and work; participate in faith-, issue- and region-based coalitions; have the opportunity to write articles for *NewsNotes* and for our website; and gain first-hand understanding of decision-making processes in Washington, D.C. (Maryknollers are especially welcome!)

Class credit is available; however we cannot provide housing, nor we can provide work visas for international students/workers. Small stipends are available for post-graduates. Interns/volunteers are also required to complete paperwork from the Maryknoll Fathers & Brothers’ human resources department.



Several months ago the MOGC welcomed Steve Nash, who is now entering his second year of the four and a half year deaconate program for the Archdiocese of Washington, D.C. When he’s not studying or helping to follow Latin American issues at MOGC, Steve is the president and CEO of Stoddard Baptist Home Foundation of D.C., which is the largest provider of skilled nursing home care in the District of Columbia.

Rhegan Hyppio began her internship with the MOGC last May. Rhegan spent several years in Brazil and Bolivia with the Franciscan Mission Service, and is now a member of the Assisi community, an intentional faith and justice community in the Petworth neighborhood in D.C. She follows a variety of topics for MOGC including torture and extractive industries.

Contact our office (ogc@maryknoll.org; 202-832-1780) for more information about possible internships.



Hurricane Sandy brings reminder of Fukushima

On October 29, Hurricane Sandy, after devastating the Caribbean and mid-Atlantic, wreaked havoc along its path as it swept across the states of New York and New Jersey. As the storm approached, people who lived along the coastal areas evacuated to safer areas but still had to bear the effects of high winds, rain, fallen trees and disrupted electrical gridlines. Some evacuated homes were flooded, washed away or demolished. In a few places power outages lasted for two weeks, leaving people in darkness and without heat. More than a hundred people died as the result of the storm. In addition, the storm's ferocity heightened the threat of a nuclear accident.

Area nuclear power plants, including Indian Point 3 in Buchanan, NY, Nine Mile Point in Scriba NY, Salem 1 in Hancock's Bridge, NJ, all shut down because of the danger of flooding. The Oyster Creek nuclear plant in New Jersey was already on a scheduled shutdown. During the hurricane, the Nuclear Energy Institute (NEI) issued a statement assuring the nation that "34 nuclear energy facilities in Hurricane Sandy's way have responded well to this powerful storm, demonstrating their resilience against severe natural forces." At the time that this statement was circulating, conditions at some of the nuclear plants were deteriorating. An alert had been declared on October 29 warning of high water level intake at the Oyster Creek plant, shut down for refueling. Salem 1 was also manually shut down due to an electrical grid disruption. Nine Mile Point 1 also shut down due to an electrical grid disruption. Similar conditions resulted in the Fukushima nuclear power plant meltdown in 2011.

At the Fukushima Dai-ichi nuclear plant, the high seawall failed to contain the tsunami waves that breached the barrier and caused a rise in the water level, compromising the cooling system and causing it to fail. David Lochbaum, who directs the nuclear safety project at the Union of Concerned Scientists, sees the attitude of the NEI as similar to "a closed narrow mindedness [that] allowed Fukushima to happen" as he goes on to say that "the risks of nuclear power generation are magnified by the fact that the plants are always located near

a river, lake or ocean. That is because producing nuclear power creates a lot of heat, which needs to be dissipated by huge volumes of water. These cooling systems are all that prevents the plutonium in reactor cores from going critical and melting down, much like what happened at Fukushima." For this reason, the fuel needs to be kept cool even when the plant is not actively generating electricity which explains why it takes a long time to decommission a plant especially in those that are plutonium fueled.

The location of nuclear plants near rivers, lakes or oceans, makes them very vulnerable to storm surge, flooding, and sea level rise. Although Oyster Creek, the nation's oldest facility, had already shut down, high winds, a rising tide, and the storm surge sent more water than normal into the plant's water-intake system. Therefore, technicians continued to monitor the plant during Sandy.

The effects of the hurricane are a reminder of how natural phenomena are non-negotiable and, when combined with nuclear power, result in accidents that are similar to or could surpass that which was witnessed at Fukushima in March 2011. As a community that upholds the integrity of creation and cares for the environment, we ought to commit ourselves to a lifestyle that is witness to these values. Phasing out nuclear power and replacing it with sustainable sources of energy will help us achieve this goal. (See related story on page 7.) §

Photo of flooded FDR Drive, October 2012, by David Shankbone



Global food security priorities for next four years

In early January a number of faith communities and allied organizations that work to support individuals and societies striving to meet basic human needs wrote to President Obama to congratulate him on his election to a second term, and to raise a number of concerns as his administration continues to develop policies and programs that address global hunger and rural poverty. The following edited version of that letter outlines the course of action needed to address the right to food and to protect our planet from further ecological destruction.

Food price volatility: While changing weather conditions and poor harvests play a significant role, it is hard to deny the impact that a massive expansion of investment in under-regulated commodities derivatives through commodity index funds by non-traditional investors has had in recent price hikes in global commodity markets. Commodity price volatility in U.S. markets contributes to increased prices and hunger in developing countries, many of which are dependent on food imports and rely on U.S. markets to set purchase prices. The United States took some positive steps to increase the transparency of those markets and to limit excessive speculation under the Dodd-Frank Wall Street Reform and Consumer Protection Act. We encourage the United States to fully implement those reforms and to work with other G20 countries, particularly those in Europe, to advance similar efforts.

At the same time, we encourage the United States to support global solutions that will protect the poorest communities from food supply shocks. In light of the continued volatility of food prices and supplies, we encourage the United States to explore and foster national and regional food commodity reserves so that developing countries can better cope with price shocks or crop failures. We ask you to explore the establishment of buffer stocks of key commodities that would be triggered when stock-to-use ratios fall to levels that put unsustainable pressures on food prices. Without protected food reserves, the market puts the entire burden of price shocks on vulnerable populations....

Agroecology: We are concerned that the U.S. government has not fully assessed the economic, social and political consequences of its current emphasis on biotech solutions to global hunger, especially the ability of poor farmers to reap benefits from research that is ultimately patented and sold. Instead, we encourage the U.S. to

consider the documented achievements of agroecological approaches – to work with farmers themselves to invest in understanding site-specific practices for soil preservation, crop rotation, conservation, forestry and water systems that enhance local food production by smallholder farmers, while protecting the environment, reducing poverty and promoting the right to food. Considerable research by the UN Environmental Program, the UN Conference on Trade and Development, the International Assessment of Agricultural Knowledge, Science and Technology for Development and the UN Special Rapporteur on the Right to Food, among others, concludes that these approaches are more successful in responding to development needs and to climate change threats....

Public-Private Partnerships and private investment: It is critically important that the both the public and private sectors contribute to advancing food security. It is equally important that the recent U.S. initiatives to increase public-private partnerships and private investment ensure that these efforts are characterized by transparency and accountability. In addition public support to agricultural development must continue to be scaled up rather than diminished. Public-private partnerships and private investments must be held to the same rigorous standards as other food security programs and reflect a “right to food” approach, addressing not only access to food, but also availability to diverse communities, nutritional adequacy and sustainability. Participating firms should affirm their commitment to the full spectrum of human rights and establish due-diligence processes to be aware of, prevent and address violations. Public-private partnerships and private investment should demonstrate specific benefits for truly smallholder farmers. Such benefits should be identified in advance and endorsed by community organizations and producer associations during consultation processes and should include locally appropriate measures and tailored programs to ensure the empowerment and participation of women farmers. In addition, government investment in public-private partnerships should not serve to unduly consolidate or expand a firm’s share of the market in a given country.

Trade: Rapid trade liberalization has often had a negative impact on the livelihoods of local farmers, rural development and national food security. Unexpected surges in imports of low-cost foods (whether because of dumping or as a result of poorly timed food assistance programs) can seriously disadvantage small-holder farmers in de-

veloping countries, and contribute to food insecurity. We urge you to support trade policies that promote strong and stable local markets to increase the availability of and affordable access to healthy and culturally appropriate foods and to increase smallholder farmers' incomes. In addition, we call on you to publish the negotiating text for the Trans Pacific Partnership to enable an informed public debate on its provisions, especially the chapters on investment, intellectual property rights and tariff liberalization that have the potential to undermine food security....

Support for the Committee on World Food Security

(CFS): We are encouraged by progress at the CFS as an inclusive, creative and effective space to bring governments, UN food agencies and civil society together to develop policies to support the right to food and food sovereignty. We urge the U.S. government to fully support the consultation process on responsible agricultural investments that was approved at the October 2012 meeting of the CFS. That process should build on the Voluntary Guidelines on Land Tenure to protect the ability of smallholder farmers and workers to stay on their land and feed their families and communities. §

Read the entire letter at www.maryknollogc.org.

Immigration coalition urges reform

The Interfaith Immigration Coalition (IIC), a coalition of 35 national faith-based organizations, including the Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns, published the following requests for action from the 113th Congress, which will be seated in January 2013.

The IIC calls on Congress to enact legislation that will:

Address the causes of migration: People of faith have witnessed firsthand the suffering caused by extreme poverty, violent conflict, political and religious persecution, and environmental destruction that prompt individuals to leave their homes in search of a better life. U.S. foreign policy must seek smart, effective ways to help reshape financial systems that unduly burden vulnerable populations – including U.S. trade policies, international financial institutions, and local economies in sending countries – toward models that support those in need.

Our faiths compel us to seek to reduce the need for people to leave their homes in order to provide for their families. Rather than current policies which undermine sustainable livelihoods in sending countries, we should invest in environmentally sustainable economic development that preserves and defends the basic human rights of all people. These policies will provide alternatives to unauthorized immigration and reduce the need for costly border enforcement, detention, and deportation.

Create a process for undocumented immigrants to earn citizenship: Any meaningful reform of our immigration system must include a fair and generous process that allows undocumented immigrants and their families to earn lawful permanent residency with a pathway to citizenship. The workability of such a program should

not be hindered by overly punitive criteria, such as mandating that immigrants leave the country or pay exorbitant fees, or by making the process conditional upon the implementation of enforcement measures. We urge members of Congress to oppose legislation that would curtail the nature of citizenship or restrict access to public benefits and child tax credits.

Keep families together: Families are the basic unit of strong communities. Today, thousands of families are separated by our broken immigration system and should be reunited. Backlogs at U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services and the limited number of visas force family members to choose between being separated for extended periods of time or illegally entering the country. A fair immigration system must improve and strengthen the family immigration process by recapturing visas lost to bureaucratic delay to reduce the current backlog; reclassifying spouses and minor children of lawful permanent residents as immediate relatives; raising the per country visa limits from seven to ten percent of total admissions to reduce long wait times for certain nationalities; eliminating unlawful presence bars for the spouse, child, or parent of U.S. citizens and lawful permanent residents; admitting surviving family members of deceased family petitioners; and eliminating the cap on the total number of family-based visas available.

Enact the Development, Relief, and Education for Alien Minors (DREAM) Act: The faith community sees the DREAM Act as vital in fixing the broken immigration system. The DREAM Act has had many iterations, and the IIC calls on Congress to enact robust and inclusive legislation that would provide a pathway to

citizenship for individuals brought to the United States at age 16 or younger, are currently no older than 35 years of age, and who have graduated from high school, earned a GED in the U.S., or are currently in school. In addition to college and military service criteria, the IIC urges legislators to include volunteer service as a method by which DREAMers can maintain legal status and earn citizenship. DACA recipients should automatically qualify for any legalization process, and their time with DACA status should count toward any conditional status period under the DREAM Act.

Protect workers' rights, including agricultural workers: There is a clear need to expand legal avenues for workers to migrate to the United States in a safe, authorized, and orderly manner. It is vital that these workers' rights are fully protected, including the right to bring their families with them, travel as needed, change their place of employment, and apply for lawful permanent residency and eventually citizenship.

Enactment of AgJobs (the Agricultural Job Opportunities, Benefits and Security Act) would provide a legal, stable labor force by offering undocumented farmworkers the chance to earn legal status by meeting stringent work requirements and legal obligations. AgJobs would revise the H-2A agricultural guest-worker program to help employers fill critical agricultural positions that have been difficult to fill, sustaining agricultural industries while also protecting workers' rights.

As currently structured, the electronic employment verification (E-verify) program has proven detrimental to migrants, employers, and citizen employees. It leads to increased discrimination and unfair hiring and firing practices. For these reasons, and because we believe all workers benefit from the enforcement of health, safety, wage, and hour laws, as well as the right to peacefully organize, the IIC is opposed to the mandatory expansion of the E-verify program.

Place humanitarian values at the center of enforcement policies: Enforcement policies must be made to be consistent with humanitarian values and with the need to treat all individuals with respect, while allowing the United States to identify and prevent the entry of persons who commit dangerous crimes. Over the past twenty years, the federal government has dramatically increased border fence and other infrastructure construction, border patrol presence, immigration detention, and the deportation of immigrants, without regard to cost or effectiveness. Over \$10 billion of taxpayers' money has been spent on border security. It is now time to reform

the broken immigration system. To truly decrease unauthorized immigration, the United States should improve access to a fair and humane legal immigration system, increasing and improving the efficiency of ports of entry, expanding visa availability, and eliminating application backlogs.

Border security has also proven to be environmentally irresponsible on many levels. It threatens already endangered species and damages public lands and interferes with business and land owners who operate and live along the border. We have also witnessed the desecration of sacred sites and the violation of religious freedom, as well as the unnecessary anguish of community members whose loved ones have suffered or died seeking entry into the United States. Above all else, enforcement policies must treat all individuals with respect and dignity. Citizens and migrants alike have the right to a fair and humane legal immigration system that respects the dignity of all persons, prioritizes the cohesiveness of families and communities, recognizes the economic contributions of immigrants, and upholds our moral obligations to provide refuge and welcome for the sojourner.

Protect refugees and migrant survivors of violence: The IIC encourages Congress to make life-changing improvements to the U.S. refugee resettlement program that would help refugees integrate in their new homes in the United States. Refugees have fled persecution into their home countries due to their race, nationality, religion, political opinion, or membership in a particular social group, and the United States has a rich tradition of welcoming refugees and helping them begin new lives. Bills such as the Refugee Protection Act, Domestic Refugee Resettlement and Modernization Act, and Strengthening Refugee Resettlement Act include positive reforms that would not only help refugees, but provide important resources to the communities that welcome them.

The Violence Against Women Act (VAWA) has a long history of uniting lawmakers with the common purpose of protecting survivors of domestic violence. Congress has consistently recognized the vulnerability of non-citizen survivors of violence by enacting provisions in VAWA that enhance safety for survivors and their children and provide tools for law enforcement to investigate and prosecute crimes. In 2012, the House of Representatives passed a VAWA reauthorization bill that would undermine years of protections for immigrant victims and would actually make immigrants more vulnerable, endangering many lives. The IIC urges that any reauthorization of VAWA maintain and improve protections for migrant survivors, not weaken them. §

Climate disruption from D.C to Doha

In the January 2013 issue of Sojourners, Bill McKibben writes about the bizarre weather year those of us in the United States experienced in 2012: In the U.S. alone, 2012 brought a March heat wave which led to fires in Colorado and New Mexico, and a “derecho” storm in June that followed the east coast heat wave, leaving five million people in the mid-Atlantic region without power. July 2012 was the hottest month ever recorded in the U.S.; the Midwest’s corn and soybean crops experienced a devastating drought. The grand finale for the year was the ferocious hurricane Sandy, which slammed the Caribbean, ripped through the Chesapeake Bay area, and tore up New Jersey and New York.

When considering climate disruption throughout the world, the picture is even starker. One of the latest examples is Typhoon Bopha, which left more than 1,000 people dead after sweeping through the southern part of the Philippines on December 4.

As Bopha barreled down, the 18th session of the Conference of the Parties (COP18) to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) and the eighth session of the Conference of Parties serving as the Meeting of the Parties (CMP8) to the Kyoto Protocol was taking place at the Qatar National Convention Centre in Doha, Qatar, from November 26 to December 8. By the end of the meetings, the UNFCCC approved a second phase of the Kyoto Protocol entitled the Doha Climate Gateway. Despite agreeing to extend the Kyoto Protocol to 2020 and to commit to future actions to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, not much was accomplished.

At the 2011 convention in South Africa, the parties agreed to work on an instrument to legally bind all parties to action, not just rich nations (as under the 1997 Kyoto Protocol). The roadmap to create this instrument (replacing the Kyoto Protocol) is to be completed by 2015, but the 2012 Doha meeting did not even hint at what that agreement might look like.

Kieren Keke, foreign minister of Nauru and chairman of

the Alliance of Small Island States, called the Doha Climate Gateway package “deeply deficient.” He went on to say, “Much, much more is needed if we are to save this process from being simply a process for the sake of process, a process that simply provides for talk and no action, a process that locks in the death of our nations, our people, and our children.” Keke fears Nauru, a Pacific island state, could become uninhabitable.

He told the delegates, “This is not where we wanted to be at the end of the meeting ... It certainly isn’t where we need to be in order to prevent islands from going under and other unimaginable impacts. It has become abundantly clear that unless the work is supported by world leaders, particularly those representing the countries most responsible for the crisis, we will continue to fall short year after year.”

Reuters reports that “Canada, Russia and Japan – where the protocol was signed 15 years ago – all abandoned the agreement. The United States never ratified it in the first place, and it excludes developing countries where emissions are growing most quickly.”

On December 12, the Friends Committee on National Legislation held a House briefing on climate disruption and is behind a petition to motivate the Obama administration to host a Climate Summit in 2013. The administration has shown interest and is asking how much support and political will is behind the effort to host the summit. Even if the U.S. government has not signed the Kyoto Protocol, it is up to the people to rally support for the urgent systemic changes needed to face climate disruption. With political will, we can make a difference.

Faith in action:

Contact your senators and representatives, as well as the Obama administration, expressing support for a 2013 Climate Summit. Also, consider participating with 350.org and Bill McKibben’s call for divestment from the fossil fuel industry. §

Photo: Don Lieber shows his support for 350.org.



A litany for ecological healing

President Obama's second inauguration will be held on Monday, January 21, the same day that Martin Luther King, Jr.'s birthday is observed. As we continue to witness the negative ecological impact our current economic, political and social systems inflict, the Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns shares these excerpts of a litany for ecological healing prepared by Ibrahim Abdil-Mu'id Ramey for a multi-faith sunrise service that was held in April 2012 at the site of the Martin Luther King, Jr. Memorial located at the Potomac River Tidal Basin in Washington, D.C.

Leader: This morning, we gather in the light and the honored memory of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., both to give witness to his legacy, and to draw from the energy of his spirit and dedication to the cause of freedom and justice for all humanity. We know that, were Dr. King alive today, he also would be moved to take nonviolent, direct action to bring attention to the climate crisis that threatens the well-being of our world, and all living things that inhabit it. The "fierce urgency of now" of the struggle for civil and human rights in his time, is now the real danger of climate change that threatens us and future generations.

All: We ask the Creator of all life to fill us with compassion for all humanity, and to recognize the dignity and inherent worth of all people.

Leader: As we come together in a place by the Potomac, a mighty river, we are conscious of the water that gives life to our planet, and the tragedy of climate change that jeopardized the health of our oceans and rivers.

All: We ask the creator of all things to make us mindful of our need to preserve and define the health of our waters, and to prevent the climate change that threatens to flood islands and low-lying areas...

Leader: In the same way that he recognized racism and militaristic violence as moral cancers that endangered us all, Dr. King also saw materialism, and the worship of irresponsible and boundless consumption, as a great evil at the root of much human misery, and an evil that now threatens the survival of the very biosphere upon which we all depend.

All: We ask the Creator of all life to grant us the wisdom to preserve and conserve our natural resources, and to always promote the individual and collective use of renewable energy, responsible, earth-friendly technology, and the consumption of foods that do

not damage our earth, our air, and the waters of our planet.

Leader: As a social movement-builder, Martin Luther King's message was one of inclusion and engagement of all people for a common good. While he recognized the importance of the Black church in the struggle for civil and human rights, his social justice movement also embraced the energy, talent, and good will of people of all races, religious and ethnicities. Young and old, rich and poor, native-born and those from other lands, were all part of the mosaic of his struggle for freedom and positive change.

All: We ask the Creator of all life for the wisdom to recognize that, because all human beings inhabit one earth, we must work as one, unified human family to overcome our divisions and build mutual solidarity to restore our common habitation and protect the climate that surrounds us all.

Leader: Even when confronted by hatred, Dr. King held true to his principles of Christian love and active non-violence. He refused to hate his adversaries, but instead, he called for us to love them, as he also called these adversaries to a higher moral plane as he sought to win them over as allies.

All: We ask the Creator of all life to help us to avoid demonizing and hating those whom we see as promoting the irresponsibility, and dangerous actions and policies that endanger our earth. Instead, empower us to win them over to our cause with positive perseverance and a genuine sense of caring.

Leader: Finally, we recognize the profound wisdom of Martin Luther King, Jr., when we spoke of all people being inextricably bound by a single garment of mutuality. All women, men, and children live on this earth, and will either share its wonders and bounty, or will all share in the tragedy of its suffering.

All: We ask the Creator of all life to give us the spiritual strength, moral vision, and political will to continue this work of struggle, engagement, and prophetic witness as we respond to our climate crisis, and ultimately, to all forms of injustice in our world. Grant that we might continue to walk in the light of your servant, Martin Luther King, Jr., and work for the restoration of our climate and the protection of all life on our planet, until we, and our earth, are free at last. §

Resources

- 1) **Enough is Enough!:** From the Center for the Advancement of a Steady State Economy (CASSE), this book explores specific strategies to limit resource use, stabilize population, achieve a fair distribution of income and wealth, reform the financial system, reduce unemployment, and more—all with the aim of maximizing long-term well-being instead of short-term profits. The book also provides some wisdom around changing consumer behavior and shifting the political conversation away from the misguided pursuit of economic growth and toward the things that really matter to people. *Enough Is Enough* serves as a great primer for achieving genuine prosperity and a hopeful future for all. Find more information at the CASSE website, <http://steadystate.org/discover/enough-is-enough/order-the-book/>
- 2) **A People's Guide to the Federal Budget:** Published by the National Priorities Project (NPP), this is a comprehensive and engaging resource on what everyone in the U.S. should know about how our government raises and spends our tax dollars. Includes a history of the budget process, details about the ongoing budget conflict, charts explaining where every federal dollar goes, and simple explanations of budget terminology. It serves as a foundation for the novice, a reference tool for a more advanced audience, and is perfect for use in high school and college classrooms. NPP is a non-partisan, non-profit research organization that makes our federal budget transparent and accessible so people can exercise their right and responsibility to oversee and influence how their tax dollars are spent. Find A People's Guide online at nationalpriorities.org/budgetbasics/peoples-guide/. 244 pages; \$15 paperback.
- 3) **Handbook for Legislation on Violence against Women:** Published by UN Women, this 68-page document serves as a useful tool in supporting efforts to provide justice, protection and remedies to victims and to hold perpetrators accountable. It outlines the international and regional legal and policy frameworks which mandate states to enact and implement laws to address violence against women. It then presents a model framework for legislation on violence against women. Finally, the Handbook provides users with a checklist of considerations to be kept in mind when drafting legislation on violence against women. Read it online at <http://www.unwomen.org/publications/handbook-for-legislation-on-violence-against-women/>.
- 4) **Secrets, lies, and propaganda: Hollywood's Zero Dark Thirty, America's liberal culture of torture, and the struggle for its abolition:** This 57-page report by Tom Reifer was released in early January 2013 in response to the film "Zero Dark Thirty," which depicts the use of torture on "war on terror" prisoners. Download the report from the Transnational Institute website, www.tni.org/publications.

At God's table: Food justice for a healthy world April 5-8, 2013

The Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns invites you to join us in Washington, D.C. for the 11th annual Ecumenical Advocacy Days (EAD) to seek food justice for a healthy world ... EAD 2013 will explore the injustices in global food systems that leave one billion people hungry, create food price shocks that destabilize communities everywhere, and undermine God's creation. Together we will seek the abundance and equality that we find reflected in the biblical image of God's great banquet table (Exodus 16:16-18 & Luke 14:12-24). Inspiring speakers will offer a faith-based vision for fair and humane food policies and practices, along with grassroots advocacy training, all culminating with Monday's Lobby Day on Capitol Hill.

EAD 2013 follows in the wake of national elections, a new Congress, a lingering Farm Bill debate, and devastating droughts and floods, all with lasting consequences for our society and world. April 5-8, 2013 will be a critical time to raise faith voices in support of ending hunger, improving nutrition, creating more just and sustainable food systems and protecting God's creation - and advocating for a "Faithful Federal Budget."

Come to EAD 2013 and help build a world in which every person, in present and future generations, has a place "at God's table." Learn more at www.advocacydays.org