



Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns

# NewsNotes

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

**March-April 2017**  
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# Toward Global Solidarity

*Less than one hundred days into the new Trump presidency and it clear that we are experiencing a profound ideological shift that will have a large impact on both the U.S. and the world. This will not just be a shift in U.S. government policy, but also a shift in how government policy is pursued.*

The wave of intolerance, authoritarianism, and exclusion that recently moved across Europe and parts of Asia and Africa has also washed over the United States. It brings with it a cold darkness.

Maryknoll missionaries recognize this darkness – its shadows have long been present in struggling, marginalized communities around the world, including the United States.

The Maryknoll missionary goes on mission with eyes wide open to the realities of the global economy, natural environment, and migration patterns. All three are broken and in various stages of crisis. Yet we believe they will not weave themselves into a global darkness that will consume us; but rather, they are part of what Joanna Macy and David Korten have called the “Great Turning.”

“The Great Turning is a name for the essential adventure of our time,” Joanna Macy says, “[It is] the shift from the industrial growth society to a life-sustaining civilization.”

We are turning away from the industrial growth society that feeds the darkness. The themes of Catholic social teaching are fuel for our lanterns to see through this time and reach what David Korten has described as a life-centered, egalitarian, sustainable, democratic “Earth Community.”

More strongly than ever, we affirm and protect life and the dignity of the human person; and the rights of people to those things required for human decency – starting with food, shelter and clothing, employment, health care, and education.

We also affirm and protect the call to family and community, and the corresponding responsibilities of people to one another, our families, and the larger society. All people have a right to participate in the economic, political, and cultural life of society. The state has a positive moral function. It is an instrument to promote

human dignity, protect human rights, and build the common good.

The moral test of a society is how it treats its most vulnerable members. A healthy society is one which gives special attention to those with special needs, to those who are impoverished, and on the margins of society – not in charity alone, but in the pursuit of justice and sustainable peace.

***“If you have come here to help me, you are wasting your time. But if you have come because your liberation is bound up with mine, then let us work together.”***

Lilla Watson, an indigenous Australian, shared this lesson which she learned from Aboriginal activists in Queensland in the 1970s during her speech at the 1985 United Nations Decade for Women Conference in Nairobi.

**This is the time for solidarity with all that is life-giving, and resistance against all that is not.**

The principle of solidarity demonstrates that “we the people” is all of us. “Solidarity highlights in a particular way the intrinsic social nature of the human person, the equality of all in dignity and rights and the common path of individuals and peoples towards an ever more committed unity.” (Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church)

As U.S. political values shift toward an avowed nationalistic orientation, we stand firmly committed to a unity rooted in inclusion of all.

Maryknoll missionaries make a life-choice to go beyond national, political, economic, and cultural boundaries. Over more than one hundred

years on mission, we have learned that we inhabit a global, pluralistic, multicultural human society that is often characterized by a warm hospitality.

From our earliest days we have been welcomed by many of the worlds’ peoples – Chinese, Korean, Japanese, Tanzanian, Kenyan, Peruvian, Samoan, Muslim,



Hindu, traditional believers, Ainu, Amayra, and Luo, to name just a few. We have been granted visas and work permits by countries in Asia, Africa, Latin America and the islands in the Pacific.

This global hospitality to missionaries from the U.S. has influenced how we think about our own U.S. society, especially when, in times of heightened nationalistic concern, it turns against certain ethnic or marginalized groups.

When the Nisei [Japanese for “second generation” and refers to the children born in North and South America to Japanese-born immigrants] were sent to internment camps in Montana, Maryknoll missionaries accompanied them.

When refugees flooded into Hong Kong, Tanzania, Mexico, and the U.S. at different moments in history, Maryknoll missionaries welcomed them.

Our long-term presence in a multitude of nations and cultural settings has made us aware of the impact that the internal life of the United States – the political arrangements, economic practices and societal values – has on people throughout the world, for good and for bad. The United States’ global presence is multi-faceted and not simply based on a narrow calculus of transaction.

**“As society becomes ever more globalized,” Pope Benedict said in 2009, “it makes us neighbors but does not make us brothers.”**

We need to connect on a fundamental level with our obligations to the whole of humanity.

With gratitude, Maryknoll missionaries have found a growing demand outside of the U.S. for an international common good, to address the broken systems that bind us all. An international common good is consistent with our belief that God is a merciful God of all people, that we must care for creation together, and that war and the path of violence are always massive failures for humanity.

**The Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns has named three priorities for advocacy efforts for 2017.**

- We need an international response to global climate change.
- We need an international response to the cries of millions of displaced people in need of a safe home where they can live and flourish.
- We need an international response to war and violence.

In each of these priorities, the world needs the United States to be a part of the response. This means investing in alternatives to the industrial growth model and turning the gaze of U.S. citizens away from politico-economic nationalism based on self-interest and toward our obligations to the whole of humanity.

When Pope Francis addressed a joint session of the U.S. Congress in 2015, he described the greatness that the United States has to offer the world as embodied by four citizens: freedom proclaimed by Abraham Lincoln, justice lived out by Dorothy Day, the dream of racial equality by Martin Luther King, Jr., and the spiritual mastery of Thomas Merton. These are the sources of greatness that the United States has to offer the world.

We face resistance. In the Joy of the Gospel, the pope says it is best to maintain a

“willingness to face conflict head on, to resolve it and to make it a link in the chain of a new process.” ... “In this way it becomes possible to build communion amid disagreement, but this can only be achieved by those great persons who are willing to go beyond the surface of the conflict and to see others in their deepest dignity. This requires acknowledging a principle indispensable to the building of friendship in society: namely, that unity is greater than conflict.”

By seeking to build communion amid disagreement, to see the deepest dignity of those with whom we have conflict, and to uphold the principle of unity, we resist the darkness and shine our light before all. §





# Nonviolence: Action on World Day of Peace Message

*The Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns co-organized an event on “Nonviolence as a Style of Politics for Peace” at the UN in New York with the Permanent Observer Mission of the Holy See and the Catholic Nonviolence Initiative, a project of Pax Christi International.*

In his recent message for the World Day of Peace, commemorated on January 1, Pope Francis reflects on “our broken world” and repeats his observation that “we find ourselves engaged in a horrifying world war fought piecemeal” or world war three “in installments.” His message is that active nonviolence is the only sure way to peace.

Read and share the World Day of Peace message at <http://bit.ly/WorldDayofPeace2017>.

In addition, the Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns has produced a two-page summary of the World Day of Peace message that individuals and parishes can use to study the message. Pope Francis selected active nonviolence as his theme for this 50th World Day of Peace Message at the request of participants of the conference. It is the first significant teaching of a pope on nonviolence, which he names as a priority of the Church:

“I pledge the assistance of the Church in every effort to build peace through active and creative nonviolence.”

On March 2, Gerry Lee, director of the Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns, was scheduled to join a panel of leading Catholic peacemakers and a representative of a UN agency at an event hosted by the Permanent Observer Mission of the Holy See at the U.N., to discuss Pope Francis’ message which is entitled “Nonviolence: A style of Politics for Peace.”

The complete list of scheduled speakers and their topics is as follows:

- **H.E. Bernardito Auza**, Permanent Observer of the Holy See to the UN, to lead the discussion about the content of the Holy Father’s message
- **Marie Dennis**, Co-President, Pax Christi International, to speak about the practicality of active nonviolence
- **Gerry Lee**, Director, Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns, to speak about the proven effectiveness of nonviolence
- **Dr. Maryann Cusimano Love**, Associate Professor of International Relations, The Catholic University of

America in Washington, DC, to speak about nonviolence, terrorism, and the responsibility to protect

- **Father Francisco de Roux, S.J.** founder, Development and Peace Program, Magdalena Region, Columbia, to speak about the practice of nonviolence in a conflict zone
- **Dr. Rima Salah**, Former Deputy Executive Director, UNICEF, to speak about nonviolence and a peaceful and inclusive society §

**Faith in action:** Watch a recording of the UN event online at <http://webtv.un.org/>.

Share with your faith community our two-pager on the World Day of Peace message (pictured below). Download it at <http://bit.ly/WDP2pager>.



## WORLD DAY OF PEACE

JANUARY 1 2017

### UNDERSTANDING POPE FRANCIS’ MESSAGE “NONVIOLENCE: A STYLE OF POLITICS FOR PEACE”

**T**he start of the new year finds many people around the world in need of healing from political, economic, and social injustice. In response, Pope Francis offers his 2017 World Day of Peace message on the need for nonviolence as a style of politics. This is the first significant teaching of a pope on nonviolence.

**Our broken world**

In his message, Pope Francis repeats his observation that “we find ourselves engaged in a horrifying world war fought piecemeal” or world war three “in installments.” His message is that active nonviolence is the only sure way to peace.

“Violence is not the cure for our broken world.”

Research has shown that continuing violence with violence does not lead to sustainable peace. Pope Francis writes that, at best, a world order maintained through violent means leads to forced migrations and enormous suffering, because resources are diverted to military ends and away from the everyday needs of young people, families experiencing hardship, the elderly, the infirm and the great majority of people. “At worst, it can lead to the death, physical and spiritual, of many people, if not of all.”

Repeating a principle he named in *The Joy of the Gospel*, the pope asks us to go beyond the surface of a conflict, see others in their “deeper dignity” and “make active nonviolence our way of life.”

**Jesus’ teaching**

With striking clarity, Pope Francis declares: “Jesus himself lived in violent times. Yet he taught that the true battlefield, where violence and peace meet, is the human heart: for “it is from within, from the human heart, that evil intentions come.” (Mark 7:21).

**“To be true followers of Jesus today also includes embracing his teaching about nonviolence.”**

**Manual for peacemaking**

Pope Francis recommends the Sermon on the Mount as a “manual” for peacemaking and challenges all people, particularly political and business leaders, international institutions and legislators to study the Sermon on the Mount and apply the Beatitudes in the exercise of their respective responsibilities. The eight Beatitudes provide a “portrait of the person we could describe as blessed, good, and authentic.”

The Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns represents Maryknoll missionaries who serve impoverished communities around the world. The office provides analysis and advocacy on issues of justice, peace and the integrity of creation. Visit us at [www.maryknollogc.org](http://www.maryknollogc.org)

# Integral ecology: Rules and regulations matter

*With the start of the new Trump Administration, Congress has gone to work dismantling agency rules directed at the fossil fuel industry.*

Using the Congressional Review Act (CRA) – a little-known law tucked into 1996 legislation tied to former House Speaker Newt Gingrich’s “Contract with America” – Congress has recently been able to not only strike down important rules related to the environment, but also bar any new rules that are substantially similar. Some of the rules currently under attack were developed after years of public comments, and in some cases, after years of litigation.

The first rule that Congress has dismantled addressed corruption in the extractives sector. The Cardin-Lugar rule required oil, gas, and mining companies to report payments they make to foreign governments. Payments include taxes, royalties, fees (including licensing fees), payments for infrastructure improvements, and community and social responsibility payments. It’s an international norm – in place in 30 countries including Canada and the member states of the European Union. The Cardin-Lugar rule made it harder for governments around the world to hide from their citizens the money they received from oil, gas, and mining companies for the right to drill in their countries.

The Cardin-Lugar rule was part of the 2010 Dodd-Frank financial reforms and came about after more than a decade of bipartisan efforts. The American Petroleum Institute lobbied Congress to use the CRA to overturn the rule, claiming that the rule was costly and burdensome, even though many companies listed on Canadian or EU stock exchanges were already complying with the similar rules in other countries. Given the strong bipartisan support for the law, even some Republicans in both the House and Senate were perplexed by this rule being first on the list. In the House, four Republicans actually voted to keep the rule in place. Due to political pressure in the Senate, not one Republican voted to defend it.

The second rule that Congress dismantled was the Stream Protection rule, which was intended to protect 6,000 miles of streams and large areas of forests over the next two decades, according to the Interior Department’s statement when it issued the rule just this past December. The department argued that the rule would protect drinking water without undermining the economy or energy supply.

The coal industry countered that the Stream Protection rule would reduce the number of mining jobs by 30 percent and make 60 percent of its existing reservoirs

uneconomic to produce.

The rubble from the explosions of mountaintops is often dumped into valleys and goes on to pollute rivers and streams with dangerous heavy metals like selenium, mercury, and arsenic. Some form of the Stream Protection rule has been around since 1983, and in late December 2016, President Obama finalized a strengthened version of the rule. The rule also called for restoration of streams that had been damaged.

The third rule that Congress is targeting for removal is the Methane rule. This rule seeks to reduce harmful natural gas emissions (mostly methane) into the environment and is an important part of combating climate change, reducing pollution, and capturing more natural gas for the energy market. In early February, the House voted to repeal the methane rule and now it is up to the Senate to save it.

With strong support from faith communities, the U.S. Bureau of Land Management adopted the Methane rule to reduce natural gas waste (methane) from fracking on federal and tribal lands. Methane is a greenhouse gas more potent than carbon.

The Bureau has a fact sheet that details the importance of cutting natural gas (mostly methane) leaks. The Bureau estimates that the oil and gas industry wastes billions of cubic feet of natural gas from leaks and flares – enough to power 6.2 million U.S. households for a year. These leaks and flares contribute to global warming, increase smog and rates of pollution-related illnesses, and waste energy. In the next decade, tax payers could lose up to \$800 million that could be put to use for the common good.

In addition to the CRA, the Trump administration is considering executive orders to remove older rules on everything from financial transparency on the use of conflict minerals in the Congo to fuel efficiency standards for vehicles. The Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns will continue to advocate for protection of all rules and regulations which uphold the integrity of creation. §

**Faith in action:** Take action for Mother Earth: Tell your Senators to protect the Methane rule <http://maryknollogc.org/alerts/take-action-mother-earth-protect-methane-rule>

## Climate action: Proposal by U.S. conservatives

*A group of conservative leaders recently shared a plan to decrease carbon emissions that could change the political possibilities for climate action.*

Though the Trump administration has shown little concerns over climate change, a newly formed group of leading conservative officials met with the White House and offered a plan to address climate change by imposing a national carbon tax, rather than using federal regulations, as done by the Obama administration.

Calling themselves the Climate Leadership Council, the group includes James A. Baker III, Treasury Secretary for President Ronald Reagan and Secretary of State for President George H. W. Bush; Henry M. Paulson Jr., Treasury Secretary for President George W. Bush; George P. Shultz, Treasury Secretary for President Richard Nixon and Secretary of State for Mr. Reagan; and Rob Walton, former chairman of Walmart.

In their report entitled “The Conservative Case for Carbon Dividends,” they write:

“The opposition of many Republicans to meaningfully address climate change reflects poor science and poor economics, and is at odds with the party’s own noble tradition of stewardship. A carbon dividends plan could realign the GOP with that longstanding tradition and with popular opinion.”

They point out that 71 percent of people in the U.S. are in favor of the U.S. government following through on commitments made in the Paris climate agreement; and that “if the Republican Party fails to exercise leadership on our climate challenge, they risk a return to heavy-handed regulation when Democrats return to power.”

The plan has four parts to be implemented together in order to be effective:

First, “the federal government would impose a gradually increasing tax on carbon dioxide emissions. It might begin at \$40 per ton and increase steadily. This tax would send a powerful signal to businesses and consumers to reduce their carbon footprints.”

Second, “the proceeds would be returned to the American people on an equal basis via quarterly dividend checks.” They propose starting with a \$40/ton tax that would provide a family of four about \$2000 per year. As the tax increased, this dividend would also increase. This would provide “new incentives that make intuitive sense: the more you pollute, the more you pay; the less you pollute, the more you come out ahead.”

Third, “American companies exporting to countries without comparable carbon pricing would receive rebates on the carbon taxes they have paid on those products, while imports from such countries would face

fees on the carbon content of their products. This would protect American competitiveness and punish free-riding by other nations, encouraging them to adopt their own carbon pricing.”

Fourth, “regulations made unnecessary by the carbon tax would be eliminated, including an outright repeal of the Clean Power Plan.”

Indeed, multiple news outlets have reported that President Trump is preparing executive orders aimed at dismantling the Clean Power Plan, which is the main component of the U.S. commitment in the Paris climate agreement to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

“A carbon tax may sound technical, Climate Leadership Council writes, “but changing market prices actually changes everything. It is pricing, first and foremost, that dictates whether utilities and governments build a coal power plant or a wind farm, whether factories install the latest energy efficient technology or whether companies choose video conferencing over flying. For individuals, prices determine the kind of car you buy, how much you insulate your home, and whether you purchase local or imported produce. Multiply this dynamic by 7 billion people across the globe making daily choices, and the full force of this solution becomes apparent.”

They argue that their proposal should be acceptable to a wide range of political outlooks and could radically reduce greenhouse gas emissions in the U.S. as well as meet commitments to reduce carbon emissions made in the Paris climate agreement.

The authors write that their plan would “relieve the economic anxiety of Trump’s voters, and speak to their populist worldview. It is their precise demographic that stands to benefit most. Meanwhile, the plan’s pro-growth bonafides and a possible path to lower corporate taxes might help turn the GOP establishment.”

Canada’s British Columbia implemented a similar tax and dividend program in 2008 with positive results - by 2012, carbon emissions fell by 15 percent while the economy outperformed other Canadian provinces. (See <http://maryknollogc.org/article/models-curb-carbon-yield-different-results>) At a time of so little agreement among members of Congress, this proposal could be an opportunity to bring parties together and address the vexing problem of climate change. §

## U.S. immigration enforcement: Shocking changes

*Eileen Harrington, Mission Activities Coordinator of the Loretto Community contributed to the following article on recent changes to the immigration enforcement policy in the United States.*

On February 20, Secretary John Kelly issued two memoranda to the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) workforce providing direction to implement the three recent executive orders from President Trump on border security and enforcement of the immigration laws.

To summarize the executive orders in one sentence: Anyone who is undocumented is now at risk of arrest, incarceration, and deportation and anyone who offers charity to an undocumented person is at risk of harsh penalties.

The Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) and U.S. Border Patrol, as well as local law enforcement cooperating with ICE, now have enormous latitude to place undocumented immigrants in custody and initiate expedited deportation proceedings.

All previous guidance from the DHS about enforcement of immigration laws is revoked, with one exception: the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) program. DACA is a policy started by the Obama administration in June 2012 that allows undocumented immigrants who entered the U.S. as minors to receive a renewable two-year period of deferred action from deportation and eligibility for a work permit.

The new memos say that undocumented persons processed by Border Patrol will no longer be released pending a hearing. They will be detained – which will require more border patrol agents, more detention centers, more immigration court personnel – and if the hearing determines that the person is undocumented, then deported.

More harshly, the new memos state that undocumented persons detained at the border will not be afforded a hearing. What was commonly known as "catch and release" will no longer be permitted. Instead, persons detained at the border will be held in detention facilities and deported immediately.

The 2011 memo that directed ICE agents not to conduct raids at or near "sensitive locations" – schools, places of worship, and hospitals – has been withdrawn. This means undocumented persons are legally no safer at sanctuary churches or college campuses than they are anywhere else.

The 2011 memo had said, among other things, that ICE agents would not enter sensitive locations for the purpose of enforcing immigration laws. The previous guidance did allow ICE agents to enter sensitive loca-

tions to look for undocumented person who had been convicted of non-immigration crimes. This prior guidance gave schools, hospital, and places of worship the ability to offer sanctuary to undocumented persons. This is now ended.

The new guidance empowers ICE and Border Patrol agents to take into custody any undocumented immigrant who is suspected of committing any crime. Entering the United States without legal authorization is a crime. This means any ICE agent, Border Patrol agent, or local law enforcement agent cooperating with ICE can lawfully detain anyone who is undocumented, and also can initiate expedited deportation proceedings.

The memos offer particular guidance for persons who seek asylum and unaccompanied minors. Asylum seekers will be held until they are interviewed by asylum officers, who will determine whether the person has a credible claim to fear for safety if returned home. Unaccompanied minors will be processed, and placed in the care of persons or organizations. Historically, 60 percent of all undocumented minors have been placed in the custody or one or both of their undocumented parents in the U.S. Under new guidance, if an undocumented minor is reunited with undocumented parents, the whole family will be taken into custody and deported.

Lastly, there is a federal criminal statute that makes it a crime to provide specific kinds of assistance to undocumented immigrants. It is a crime to knowingly harbor, provide transportation for, or give assistance in avoiding detection, to any undocumented person. The sanctions for violating this statute are up to five years in prison and criminal fines. Rev. John Fife of Southside Presbyterian was convicted under this statute in the 1980's and was given five years' probation. The sentences are much greater – up to 20 years – if the undocumented person to whom assistance is provided commits violent crimes in the United States.

In response, Bishop Joe S. Vásquez of Austin and Chair of the Committee on Migration for the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops issued a statement that said:

"We remain steadfast in our commitment to care for and respect the human dignity of all, regardless of their immigration status. During this unsettling time, we will redouble our work to accompany and protect our immigrant brothers and sisters and recognize their contributions and inherent dignity as children of God."§



# Loving Our Neighbor, Embodying Sanctuary

Isaac S. Villegas (pictured), pastor of Chapel Hill Mennonite Fellowship and board member of the North Carolina Council of Churches, shared the following reflection at the “Loving Our Neighbor: Embodying Sanctuary” conference at Duke Divinity School on January 28.

— Genesis 41:56-42:2 —

*When the famine had spread over all the land, Joseph opened all the storehouses, and sold to the Egyptians, for the famine was severe in the land of Egypt. Moreover, all the world came to Joseph in Egypt to buy grain, because the famine became severe throughout the world.*

When Jacob learned that there was grain in Egypt, he said to his sons, ‘Why do you keep looking at one another? I have heard,’ he said, ‘that there is grain in Egypt; go down and buy grain for us there, that we may live and not die.’

A lifetime ago, in San Jose, Costa Rica, my grandfather—a teenager at the time—held his infant sister as she cried her last breath. My grandfather could do nothing as his baby sister died of malnutrition. She was the second of his siblings to die while cradled in my grandfather’s arms.

A decade later, he and his wife, my grandmother, had five children of their own, and there wasn’t enough to eat at home. They didn’t have the means to feed them—not enough work, not enough money, not enough help. So my grandfather made his way to New York City, then Miami, then Los Angeles, working in restaurants, scrubbing dirty dishes.

Every payday he would send half of the money back to his wife, to feed their children, and the other half of the paycheck he would hide under his mattress, saving enough to bring his family to the United States, to economic stability.

This is my family’s story—my mother, as a girl, brought across border after border, so she wouldn’t hunger. Her family joined the multitudes of their generation, all suffering from the economic warfare led by United Fruit Company, Standard Fruit, Dole, Chiquita—companies that turned Central American countries into banana republics, buying local elections and laying waste to sustainable economies, stretching the reach of U.S. dominance further and further south.

In Genesis, when Jacob hears about food in Egypt, he tells his sons to go. “Go down and buy grain for us there, that we may live and not die.” With these words, the sons of Jacob cross into a foreign land, because they won’t let their people die from the famine.

Hunger is powerful, a force of nature. Hunger is a burning in the stomach, flaring us to mobilization, ignit-

ing our migration, kindling our desire to live, to struggle for life. Jacob and his family are fueled by hunger for life. But Egypt doesn’t care about their lives. Egypt only cares about its economy, its ability to use foreigners to fill the national treasury. Egypt opens up the storehouses for the sake of economic gain, for nationalism. Egypt first.

“All the world came to Egypt to buy grain,” it says, “because the famine became severe throughout the world.” Capitalism extracts money from bodies, resources from land, capital from labor. The lifeblood of capitalism is the ability to liberate money, to let it migrate, to cross borders, while restricting the flow of people.

The connection between Jacob’s family and Egypt, Central America and the United States, my body and yours—the connection that makes us who we are—has everything to do with who has the power to manage the flow of people and money across borders.

We—as a people, as a community, as a church—can only be who we are allowed to be by those who regulate our borders and economies. Who we are, who we love, how we worship, who we worship has everything to do with global migration patterns, with famines and wars, with hunger, with Jacob sending his sons to Egypt, and with my grandfather holding his dying sister as his country was transformed into a banana republic.

— Exodus 1:8-13 —

*Now a new king arose over Egypt, who did not know Joseph. He said to his people, ‘Look, the Israelite people are more numerous and more powerful than we. Come, let us deal shrewdly with them, or they will increase and, in the event of war, join our enemies and fight against us and escape from the land.’ Therefore they set taskmasters over them to oppress them with forced labor. They built supply cities, Pithom and Rameses, for Pharaoh. But the more they were oppressed, the more they multiplied and spread, so that the Egyptians came to dread the Israelites.*

By 2050, according to the U.S. Census Bureau, white people will no longer be the majority racial group in the United States. Latinx peoples [Latinx is a gender-neutral version of Latino] will be nearly 30 percent of the population. By 2040, Muslims will make up the second largest religious community in the United States. In that same decade, Islam will become the largest religion

in the world.

The election of Donald Trump as president is white America's fighting effort to socially engineer a future that isn't so brown. The advisors to President Trump know the demographics, the population trends. Their response is a wide-ranging detention and deportation strategy, and refugee protocols set up to turn away Muslims, in an attempt to manufacture our population, to keep America as white and as Christian for as long as possible.

In the passage from the book of Exodus, a new king is overwhelmed with fear of foreigners. "Look," he says, "the Israelite people are more numerous and more powerful than we," so the king's administration oppresses them. But, the text says, "the more they were oppressed, the more they multiplied and spread, so that the Egyptians came to dread them."

Gloria Anzaldúa, the Chicana poet, once commented on what it means to live as a Latina in this country, to refuse to give up her sense of who she is: "The overwhelming oppression is the collective fact that we do not fit," she wrote, "and because we do not fit, we are a threat."

When the Egyptians noticed the Israelite population boom, the Pharaoh identified them as a danger to their way of life, a threat to national security. Nationalism lives by fear, fear of strangers, fear of foreigners.

Are you willing to let your identity be constructed by political fear? Or are you willing to allow your understanding of self and others to grow so that "we" become something new and vibrant together? Will you construct your life, your church, in such a way that you no longer know who you are without your foreign neighbor, that you would be lost in this world without her, that your identity would be undone without him?

Deportation is about who are your people, about who you are, about who you are willing to become.

— Joshua 2:1-6 —

*So they went, and entered the house of a prostitute whose name was Rahab, and spent the night there. The king of Jericho was told, 'Some Israelites have come here tonight to search out the land.' Then the king of Jericho sent orders to Rahab, 'Bring out the men who have come to you, who entered your house, for they have*

*come only to search out the whole land.' But the woman took the two men and hid them. Then she said, 'True, the men came to me, but I did not know where they came from. And when it was time to close the gate at dark, the men went out. Where the men went I do not know...' She had, however, brought them up to the roof and hidden them with the stalks of flax that she had laid out on the road.*

Rahab betrays her people. She betrays the security of her nation. She helps two people cross the walls of the city of Jericho. She welcomes two foreigners, even though her people call them enemies, threats. She extends hospitality to strangers who sneak through the night, who climb a wall and hide from Jericho's patrol units.

Rahab harbors two undocumented immigrants. She offers her home as their sanctuary. Rahab doesn't obey the king's orders. She breaks the law. She lies to the authorities to protect the foreigners who have found sanctuary with her.

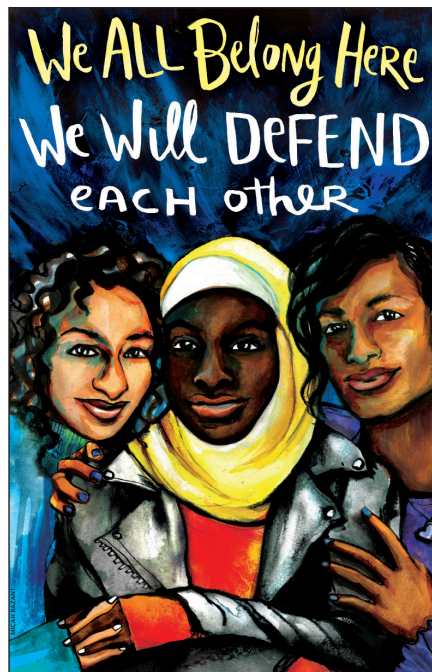
The question for us in this moment of U.S. history is this: Are you a Rahab? Are you willing to let her life become your life, to turn your home into a sanctuary for people who your rulers have identified as enemies, threats to our national identity and peoplehood?

Because if you are, you should know that you will be known as traitors. Your character will be called into question, like Rahab. And you will be traitors, in a way, because you will be betraying the legacy of white su-

premacy in this country, the legacy of the founders—the genocide, slavery, patriarchy—a heritage handed down from generation to generation.

Rahab, the one who offered sanctuary. "So the two of them entered the house of a sex worker whose name was Rahab, and spent the night there."

If you are a Rahab, you can't help but extend your hands in a gesture of hospitality, in a gesture of protest against this president's administration, reaching for the people held at airports, held in detention centers, refused entry into our communities, because these policies make you who you are, by decided for you who will be your friends, your neighbors, your coworkers. Without them, you would no longer know who you are, your life undone. §



# Myanmar: Heal, not wound

*On February 6, Cardinal Charles Maung Bo of Yangon issued an appeal to the government of Myanmar to end military offences and allow unhindered access to war-torn parts of Myanmar for international humanitarian aid agencies, media and human rights monitors. Maryknoll Sister Mary Grenough, who recently returned to New York after many years on mission in Myanmar, contributed to this article.*

In a statement entitled “Heal – not wound,” Cardinal Bo of Yangon, Myanmar, raises concerns about the ongoing fighting in Kachin and Shan states and offers prayers and solidarity with the people of Myanmar who live in conflict zones. Cardinal Bo names the states of Kachin, Shan, and in particular, the state of Rakhine, which is the subject of a 43-page report issued on February 3 by the UN’s Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights.

The UN report concludes that the abuses suffered by Rohingya Muslims by soldiers and police during a security crackdown in early October indicated “the very likely commission of crimes against humanity.”

“People of Myanmar are deeply saddened by what looks like a relapse into darker days,” Cardinal Bo says. “Myanmar needs the world’s attention to strengthen its fragile journey of democracy.”

“Let the UN’s devastating report serve as a wake-up call for us all,” Cardinal Bo says. “Let us work together to end violence and terror in our country, and to build a Myanmar where every man, woman and child of every race and religion born on Myanmar soil is recognized both as our fellow citizen and as our brother and sister in humanity.”

One week after Cardinal Bo issued this statement, Monsignor Maurice Nyunt Wai, executive secretary of the Myanmar Catholic Bishops Conference, told ucanews.com, “The church will participate in the peace process not only with prayers but with a peace conference as the Aung San Suu Kyi-led government prioritizes peace and she is pushing for it.”

According to Father Wai, Cardinal Bo will invite representatives of all of Myanmar’s factions to the peace conference in Yangon in April 2017.

The non-Burmese ethnic peoples – about 135 distinct ethnicities who represent about 40 percent of the population – have never received their rightful share of government services (education, infrastructure, representation in national government). The majority of them reside in the mineral-rich mountainous and border areas which are exploited by the military and other high ranking government officials.

To protect their lands and their lives, some of the larger groups, especially the Kachin and Shan, have developed their own armies. The resulting civil war has

continued on and off since 1947. The mining of mineral resources of jade, rubies, and teakwood have enriched military and government officials and destroyed forests, polluted rivers, and literally turned mountains into wastelands.

The peace negotiations in 2016 failed because the strongest rebel armies refused to join when the government demanded they give up their arms – even as the government was bombing and burning their villages. Another round of peace negotiations was scheduled to begin February 28, but was delayed when rebel groups held their own summit and demanded an end to military offensives by the government. They also called for China and the UN to be involved in the peace negotiations.

The majority Burman ethnic group makes up about two-thirds of the population and controls the military and the government. The minority ethnic nationalities, making up the remaining one-third, are often forcibly removed from their homes by the government-backed military in land grabs for development projects and resource exploitation. As a result, millions of people from minority groups have become internally displaced or refugees in neighboring countries. Currently, more than 200,000 people live in refugee camps in Rakhine with inadequate food, shelter, education, and health services.

Muslims, who constitute about 4 percent of the population, have increasingly been targets of mob violence and displacement over the past three years. The most serious attacks have been against the Rohingya – a minority group that the government declared to be non-citizens due to their historical origins in Bangladesh and illegal entry into Myanmar more than 30 years ago. Nobel Peace Prize laureate and current President Aung San Suu Kyi failed to act when the abuses and killing of Rohingya Muslims came to light in 2015. Pressure from international human rights organizations finally moved her to ask the United Nations to investigate in 2016.

The UN report released on February 3 cites evidence of the killing of more than a hundred Rohingya in a crackdown last October, as well as mass killings, gang rapes, and apartheid-like living conditions for the estimated 1.1 million Rohingya Muslims in Rakhine State. Those who have been able to escape to Malaysia, Thailand, Indonesia and Bangladesh, go as stateless, undocumented persons. §



## Philippines: Bishops denounce extrajudicial killings

*In a new pastoral statement, the Catholic Bishops Conference of the Philippines has unequivocally denounced President Duterte's war on drugs for creating a "reign of terror" among the poor.*

More than a thousand people a month have been killed since President Duterte began his "war on drugs" in the Philippines last June. Human Rights Watch describes the killings as a "human rights calamity." "This is nothing less than an absolute human rights disaster," said Phelim Kine, deputy director for Asia, "The numbers are absolutely shocking."

With wide popular support for a clampdown on the illegal drug trade, President Duterte has used inflammatory rhetoric to encourage extrajudicial killings of drug users and dealers by vigilantes as well as by police. In a speech at a Manila slum last August, President Duterte encouraged citizens who knew any drug addicts to "go ahead and kill them yourself as getting their parents to do it would be too painful."

Individual Catholic bishops had spoken out against the killings and the suffering inflicted on the families of the dead.

Last September, Archbishop Socrates Villegas, president of the Philippine Bishops' Conference, asked parishes to put up "Thou Shall Not Kill" posters in communities and called for a "Day of Prayer for Life" on September 14. And he issued a pastoral letter in October.

"I am ashamed of the things I read about the Philippines in the international media and more ashamed of what I hear from our leaders," Villegas said then.

There had been no unified statement by the Catholic bishops of the Philippines condemning the government's actions – until now. Catholic churches across the Philippines read a pastoral statement by the Bishops' Conference during all Masses for the weekend of February 5.

In the pastoral statement, the bishops spoke out in one voice and denounced President Duterte's war on drugs for creating a "reign of terror" among the poor.

Just days earlier, according to The Philippine Star, Jerome Secillano, public affairs chief for the Catholic Bishops' Conference of the Philippines, said that while there are individual churches that have put up banners denouncing the extrajudicial killings, some priests and bishops were afraid to speak out against the killings.

The pastoral statement begins with Ezekiel 18:32, "For I find no pleasure in the death of anyone who dies – oracle of the Lord God."

"We, your bishops, are deeply concerned due to

many deaths and killings in the campaign against prohibited drugs," it reads. "This traffic in illegal drugs needs to be stopped and overcome. But the solution does not lie in the killing of suspected drug users and pushers. We are concerned not only for those who have been killed. The situation of the families of those killed is also cause for concern. Their lives have only become worse. An additional cause of concern is the reign of terror in many places of the poor. Many are killed not because of drugs. Those who kill them are not brought to account. An even greater cause of concern is the indifference of many to this kind of wrong. It is considered as normal, and, even worse, something that (according to them) needs to be done.

"We are one with many of our countrymen who want change. But change must be guided by truth and justice.

"We stand for some basic teachings. These teachings are rooted in our being human, our being Filipino, and our being Christian.

1. The life of every person comes from God. It is he who gives it, and it is he alone who can take it back. Not even the government has a right to kill life because it is only God's steward and not the owner of life.

2. The opportunity to change is never lost in every person. This is because God is merciful, as our Holy Father Pope Francis repeatedly teaches. We just finished celebrating the Jubilee Year of Mercy, and the World Apostolic Congress on Mercy. These events deepened our awareness that the Lord Jesus Christ offered his own life for sinners, to redeem them and give them a new future.

3. To destroy one's own life and the life of another, is a grave sin and does evil to society. The use of drugs is a sign that a person no longer values his own life, and endangers the lives of others. We must all work together to solve the drug problem and work for the rehabilitation of drug addicts.

4. Every person has a right to be presumed innocent until proven guilty. Society has ways and processes to catch, prove guilty and punish perpetrators of crimes. This process must be followed, especially by agents of the law.

5. Any action that harms another (seriously) is a grave sin. To push drugs is a grave sin as is killing (except in self-defense). We cannot correct a wrong by do-



ing another wrong. A good purpose is not a justification for using evil means. It is good to remove the drug problem, but to kill in order to achieve this is also wrong.

6. The deep root of the drug problem and criminality is the poverty of the majority, the destruction of the family and corruption in society. The step we have to take is to overcome poverty, especially through the giving of permanent work and sufficient wages to workers. Let us strengthen and carry forward the unity and love of the family members. Let us not allow any law that destroys the unity of families. We must also give priority to reforming rogue policemen and corrupt judges. The excessively slow adjudication of court cases is one big reason for the spread of criminality.

Often it is the poor who suffer from this system. We also call upon elected politicians to serve the common good of the people and not their own interests.

7. To consent and to keep silent in front of evil is to be an accomplice to it. If we neglect the drug addicts and pushers we have become part of the drug problem. If we consent or allow the killing of suspected drug addicts, we shall also be responsible for their deaths.

"We in the Church will continue to speak against evil even as we acknowledge and repent of our own shortcomings. We will do this even if it will bring persecution upon us because we are all brothers and sisters responsible for each other. We will help drug addicts so

that they may be healed and start a new life. We will stand in solidarity and care for those left behind by those who have been killed and for the victims of drug addicts. Let us renew our efforts to strengthen families.

"Those of us who are leaders in the Church should strive to push forward or continue programs that will uplift the poor, like livelihood, education and health programs. Above all we will live up to — we all will live up to — becoming a Church of the Poor.

"Let us not allow fear to reign and keep us silent. Let us put into practice not only our native inner strength but the strength that comes from our Christian faith. Our Lord Jesus promised us: "You will have affliction in this world, but take courage, I have overcome the world" (Jn. 16:33).

"What will separate us from the love of Christ? Will anguish, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or the sword? No, in all these things we conquer overwhelmingly through him who loved us." (Rom. 8:35,37) Yes, indeed, "For the Spirit that is in you is more powerful than the spirit in those who belong in the world." (1 Jn. 4:4)

"As we commemorate the 100th year of the apparition of Our Lady of Fatima, let us respond to her call for prayer and repentance for the peace of our communities and of our country shrouded in the darkness of vice and death."§

## Help offered to families of victims of Philippine killings

*Faith-based group conduct trauma debriefing sessions to those left bereaved in drug war. The following article was published by ucannews.com on February 21.*

A faith-based group in Manila is conducting trauma and stress-debriefing sessions for families of victims of drug-drug related killings in an attempt to "broaden the circle of those who will speak the truth."

Carmelite priest Gilbert Billena of the group Rise Up said the family meetings aim to create a support group that will help them overcome trauma.

The priest said his group condemns the proliferation of illegal drugs but is against the methods used by the government to go after suspected drug users and peddlers.

"The very people who should be witnesses in cases against the suppliers are viciously killed, while the suppliers merely look for new pushers," said Father Billena.

Rise Up conducted its first debriefing [in mid-Feb-

ruary], seven months after Philippine President Rodrigo launched an intensified campaign against narcotics that resulted in the death of about 7,000 people.

Nardy Sabino of the Promotion of Church People's Response said some "survivors" of summary executions also attended the session. "We also want to make sure that they will be given due process of law," he said.

Brother Ciriaco Santiago, a Redemptorist missionary, said the families of victims and survivors of the killings need a community that will listen to them.

"These people are the poorest of the poor and they have no voice in our society," said the religious brother. "If the church will not act, at least to give them a chance to talk, who else will provide," he added. §

# Africa Union and the International Criminal Court

*On January 31 several news organizations reported the African Union (AU) had agreed to a strategy of mass withdrawal from the International Criminal Court.*

In February, Human Rights Watch published on its website a draft document that outlines a strategy for a collective exodus of all 55 countries on the African continent from the International Criminal Court (ICC). The document was circulated among African members of the ICC prior to the 28th African Union Summit in Addis Ababa at the beginning of February.

According to Human Rights Watch, sources close to the Summit believe this draft reflects the text of the Summit's final decision. The reality of what happened at the Summit may be more than meets the eye.

The Coalition for the International Criminal Court suggests that "while the African Union did adopt an 'ICC Withdrawal Strategy,' the decision is less conclusive than its title suggests and does not recommend mass withdrawal."

The African Union itself is not a member of the ICC and several AU members, including Tanzania and Nigeria, opposed a withdrawal strategy.

What are the events that led up to this controversial decision and why has the relationship between the ICC and the African Union become so contentious?

Since coming into force in 2002, the ICC has grown to 123 member nations. With 34 member states, Africa makes up the largest regional block of this international tribunal. Indeed, most of the court's activities are in Africa. Of the 10 "situations" around the world where the ICC has opened investigations 9 of them are in Africa. All of the 39 people publicly indicted by the ICC are Africans. Twenty five of them are now on trial. The few members of the African Union advocating withdrawal – South Africa, Kenya, Burundi and Gabon – sometimes cite these facts as an indication of the court's bias against Africans. Yet African nations themselves have submitted several of these cases to the court.

In February 2009, the AU Assembly called on the UN Security Council to defer the process against Omar al-Bashir because they felt it undermined efforts to bring peace in Darfur. Nevertheless, the ICC issued an arrest warrant on March 4 of that year for President Omar al-Bashir of Sudan for five counts of crimes against humanity.

The backlash against the ICC reached a new level

of intensity in 2013, when then-ICC suspects Uhuru Kenyatta and William Ruto were elected president and deputy president of Kenya, respectively. The AU had lobbied repeatedly for dropping charges against both men despite the fact that according to article 27, the ICC's statutes apply equally to all, without any distinction based on official capacity, in particular, official capacity as a Head of State or Government.

By June 2015, the AU decided to form the "Open-Ended Ministerial Committee on the ICC" to help implement various decisions of the AU Assembly relating to the ICC, to follow up on the AU's request for suspension of proceedings against Al-Bashir, and to develop strategies for collective withdrawal. When the government of South Africa refused to arrest Bashir during a June, 2015 visit to Pretoria, the ICC adopted a "Draft Action Plan for Arrest Strategy" that called for the use of UN peacekeepers to make arrests. The Peace and Security Council of the African Union promptly called on African leaders to reject this plan.

Throughout 2016 the committee continued to develop a comprehensive plan toward the ICC with the focus on a collective withdrawal strategy. By January, 2017 the Committee's "Draft 2: Withdrawal Strategy" document was ready for submission to the 28th Summit. Its contents represent a synthesis of the anti-ICC strain in the AU that focuses on

the issues of selectivity and inequality as well as a perceived imbalance in the international decision-making process as best seen in the decisions of the UN Security Council that have been construed by AU members as a double standard against African states.

Some African supporters of the ICC see the ICC as a valuable complement to national judicial systems that in the end, strengthens the rule of law. The fact that most of the African cases before the ICC were submitted by African states affirms this belief. The pro-ICC supporters also point out there is no evidence that human rights situations in Africa have improved or that governments have become more accountable and that there is no robust mechanism to replace the ICC.

It is important to note that the U.S. is not a member of the ICC because the Senate has not ratified the Rome Treaty that established the International Criminal Court. §



## Latin America: Brazil-based scandal spreads

*On February 16, attorney generals from 15 countries met in the capital of Brazil to exchange information related to the Brazilian construction firm Odebrecht and its involvement in corruption scandals in their countries.*

Brazilian construction giant Odebrecht agreed to pay a world-record \$3.5 billion fine for paying at least \$788 million in bribes to public officials in twelve countries. The fine is by far the biggest chapter in the long-running scandal in Brazil commonly known as the “car wash” scandal, where numerous executives of the semi-public Brazilian oil giant known as Petrobras are accused of inflating contracts to divert the extra money into campaign funds of various political parties. Now that the scandal has crossed borders, the fallout has the potential to improve anti-corruption measures throughout Latin America as well as boost the popularity of populist politicians in some countries.

Odebrecht, Latin America’s largest construction company with more than 180,000 employees in 23 countries, admitted to bribing officials so often that, according to *The Economist*, “it set up a Division of Structured Operations – a ‘bribes department’ – which directed the payments through a series of offshore shell companies.”

“Their main method was to win contracts by making low bids and then corruptly secure big increases in costs through addenda.” ... “This applied especially to contracts involving public-private partnerships (PPPs), which have become fashionable in the region.”

Indeed, former World Bank economist Jose Luis Guasch found that 78 percent of all transport PPPs in Latin America and the Caribbean were renegotiated, averaging four addenda per contract with a cost increase of \$30 million per addendum.

In Brazil, the scandal has led to more than 80 convictions and more than 50 politicians being investigated. President Dilma Rousseff was impeached, in part, due to the scandal and current president Temer’s name has appeared dozens of times in testimonies and evidence in this and other bribery scandals.

The scandal has spread throughout the region. Colombian President Juan Manuel Santos is under investigation for allegedly receiving one million dollars from Odebrecht for his 2014 re-election campaign. His opponent in that election, Oscar Ivan Zuluaga, is also accused of receiving two million dollars from the company. In Panama, two sons of former President Ricardo Martinelli have arrest warrants for allegedly accepting bribes.

Investigations in Argentina are moving more slowly, with only the director of the federal intelligence agency implicated publicly so far. In Mexico, Ecuador,

and Guatemala, investigations are in their initial stages. In the Dominican Republic, the attorney general is holding closed negotiations with Odebrecht. News sources are reporting that the company appears ready to pay a fine of \$184 million in exchange for immunity and the ability to continue operating in the country.

Venezuelan president Nicolas Maduro expressed full support for the investigations. On February 14, the military counterintelligence unit occupied Odebrecht offices and the government has frozen all Odebrecht bank accounts and assets. The president has also announced the formation of a new “social justice mission” aimed at combating corruption and crime.

Outside Brazil, Peru may be the country taking the strongest measures related to the scandal. There the attorney general has issued a national and international warrant for the arrest of former president Alejandro Toledo, accused of taking \$20 million in bribes related to a highway project. President Kuczynski issued a decree permanently barring corrupt politicians from public office. He has also announced rewards for whistleblowers who help to root out corruption, has ordered that he and all members of his cabinet will disclose their personal finances, and now requires all contracts to have an anti-corruption clause.

Hopefully, a positive outcome from the scandal will be increased vigilance and legal actions against corruption, which has long weighed heavily on Latin American societies. There may also be stronger political will for electoral reform that would limit money in political campaigns.

To make political donations more transparent, all donations could be required to be made through Blockchain, the technology that virtual currencies like Bitcoin use. This would ensure that all transactions are permanently recorded and public, and that only the final supplier of goods or services would be able to exchange the virtual money for hard currency.

“Think of it like buying chips in a casino: you can only use them in the casino, until you leave,” said Transparency International’s Mexico office director Eduardo Bohorquez. “If you wanted to contribute to a political campaign, you would have to do it with a virtual currency whose transactions can be easily traced from beginning to end.”§

## Peru: Oil companies harm indigenous communities

*The following article was written by Barbara Fraser, who has lived for more than two decades in Peru, formerly as a Maryknoll Lay Missioner and currently as a freelance journalist, based in Lima.*

Growing up in a village along Peru's Tigre River, Julia Chuje Ruíz watched the streams and lakes turn black after oil drilling began in the 1970s.

"We didn't know what it was," she says. "The company didn't tell us."

For decades, the polluted streams and river were the only source of water for washing, cooking, bathing and drinking in the community of Vista Alegre. Not far from the river, Chuje buried her teenage son during an epidemic in which most of the villagers' children died, vomiting blood.

She blames the pollution, although the deaths might also have been due to diseases that arrived with oil company workers.

More than four decades of oil production in the northern Peruvian Amazon have fouled the forest with toxic waste and radically changed the lives of the thousands of Awajún, Kichwa, Kukama and Urarina people who live along five major rivers that are overlapped by oil leases. A world traditionally governed by hunting and fishing and the seasonal rise and fall of floodwaters is now marked by oil drilling and cleanup of spills.

Until the early 1990s, Peru had no environmental regulations that effectively controlled oil pollution. And although regulations exist now, more than 1,000 sites await cleanup, according to a government count.

Meanwhile, a series of spills from aging pipelines that ferry crude from the Amazonian oil fields to a refinery and port on Peru's Pacific coast have drawn more attention to the pollution and galvanized protest.

In June 2014, a pipeline operated by Petroperú, the state-run oil company, spilled about 2,000 barrels of crude near the Kukama Indian village of Cuninico, a community of wooden, thatched-roof houses on the bank of the Marañón River.

Despite cleanup efforts, oily bubbles still ooze from the sediment beneath the pipeline, and villagers say the fishing on which they always depended for food and income has not recovered. Nearly three years after the spill, potential customers avoid buying fish from Cuninico.

When Flor de María Parana, one of the animators of the village's tiny Catholic community, testified before the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights in June 2016, she said children broke out in rashes if they bathed in the river that had always been their source of water for washing, cooking and drinking.

Families now put out buckets during rainstorms to catch water cascading from their tin or palm-thatch roofs, she said, but when days pass without rain, they must resort to using river water.

A dozen more pipeline spills followed the leak in Cuninico. While government inspectors attributed that spill to corrosion of the aging pipeline, Petroperú say most of the rest were the work of vandals. The company has accused no one directly, and community members say they are being blamed unfairly.

Oil pollution came to the lower Marañón River hand-in-hand with radical changes. A huge oil slick from a barge spill upstream blackened the river from bank to bank in 2000, recalls the Rev. Miguel Angel Cadenas, a Spanish Augustinian who worked for two decades among the riverside villages.

That disaster received little attention, but recent spills have drawn more scrutiny on social media. Journalists have reported on the oil spills and a human rights lawyer is working with village leaders who sued government agencies for negligence.

In September 2016, residents of dozens of indigenous communities blocked the Marañón River to protest the spills and decades of government neglect. The protest lasted more than 100 days as government ministers and indigenous leaders met in Saramurillo for talks.

The protest ended just before Christmas, with a series of agreements which have yet to be implemented.

Many of the oil drilling and spills are less visible, yet they have had complex, lasting economic impacts. Each spill has created dozens, sometimes hundreds, of cleanup jobs—dirty, dangerous work that pays better than any other work available in the area. With the influx of workers and cash, prices rise and families have invested in home improvements, boat motors, generators and appliances.

Once the jobs are gone, though, uncertainty sets in as people wonder if the water is safe to drink and the fish are safe to eat, and as they try to replace the lost income.

The night the final accord was signed, ending the protest in Saramurillo, Julia Chuje Ruíz said she would not stay for the closing celebration.

"How many months have we waited to sign?" she asked. "When I see things change, that's when I'll celebrate."§



## Honduras: “Deadliest place to defend the planet”

*Global Witness, an international NGO based in London and Washington, D.C., released a damning report on killings and attacks against indigenous and environmental human rights defenders in Honduras.*

The latest report from Global Witness, entitled “Honduras: The deadliest place to defend the planet,” examines five emblematic cases out of 123 assassinations of indigenous land and environmental human rights defenders since the 2009 coup. Three of the informants who contributed to the report were murdered in the course of the report’s development.

Global Witness was established in 1993 to work on breaking the links between natural resource exploitation, conflict, poverty, corruption, and human rights abuses worldwide.

The report concludes that “shocking levels of violence and intimidation suffered by rural communities for taking a stand against the imposition of dams, mines, logging or agriculture on their land – projects that are controlled by rich and powerful elites, among them members of the political class. The root causes of these abuses are widespread corruption and the failure to properly consult those affected by these projects.”

The five cases profiled in the report include indigenous communities that oppose illegal logging, mining, and large-scale dams and a Afro-Honduran community that opposes a plan to create a hotel and tourism complex in their territory.

The most famous case in Honduras is the death of award-winning environmentalist Berta Cáceres, an indigenous activist and other members of the Council of Indigenous Peoples of Honduras (COPINH) – the organization founded by Cáceres – for opposing the Agua Zarca Dam on the Gualcarque River. The one year anniversary of Cáceres’ death is March 2. While much attention has been given to Cáceres and COPINH, the report shines light on faces of other victims of violence from mega-projects.

The report identifies common threads throughout the five cases: corruption, lack of community consent and consultation on projects, outside political influence, greed, impunity, and a failure by the government to follow both the law and the orders to protect threatened defenders. Global Witness implicates high-level politicians in Honduras such as the vice president of the congress and certain business elites who are close associates of the president. They also implicate international financial institutions, companies, government bodies, the military, and even aid from various U.S. agencies as perpetrators and drivers of displacement and violence.

Global Witness recommends that the Honduran government prioritize protection of land and environmental defenders, and investigations of violence against defenders that lead to bringing the perpetrators of the violence to justice. They also recommend that the Honduran government implement existing laws that guarantee consent for indigenous communities as well as strengthen laws related to land rights and tenure.

Honduras is a signatory to the International Labor Organization’s Convention 169 that grants “free prior and informed consent” for indigenous communities. The Honduran Congress is considering another law on free prior and informed consent to include both indigenous and Garifuna. Global Witness says this new law needs to correlate with the standards of international law and include proposals put forward by affected communities.

This report was released just as the election season gets underway in Honduras. The 2009 coup was in response to then-President Manuel Zelaya’s desire to seek another term, which was against the Honduran constitution. Now current President Juan Orlando Hernandez, whose government has both perpetrated and permitted human rights violations with impunity, is running for a second term and will likely win.

The authors of the report and the individuals profiled have all received numerous death threats since the report’s release on January 31. Some Honduran authorities and extractive industry spokespeople responded immediately with calls for the arrests of all those associated with the report.

Global Witness issued a press release on February 2 saying:

“Global Witness condemns the attempts by Honduran authorities and industry spokespeople to undermine and politicize our new investigation into the killings of land and environmental defenders in Honduras. The Honduran State must guarantee the security of Global Witness’s staff Billy Kyte and Ben Leather, as well as that of the local human rights defenders associated with the report.”

The report is not only devastating evidence that many of the world’s worst environmental and human rights abuses are driven by the exploitation of natural resources and corruption, but also, that it is vulnerable indigenous and marginalized communities that are paying the ultimate price. §

# Israel-Palestine: Toward peace, justice, equality

*On February 15, the Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns and fourteen other members of the Faith Forum on Middle East Policy sent the following briefing paper to President Trump and all members of Congress.*

As U.S.-based Christian churches, agencies, and organizations, we urge Congress and the Administration to take actions which will enhance the prospects for peace, justice, and equality in Israel and Palestine, and refrain from actions that would harm those prospects.

2017 marks 50 years since Israel occupied the West Bank and Gaza and 24 years since the signing of the Oslo Accords. Over the last 50 years, but particularly since the signing of the Oslo accords in 1993, there have been significant changes on the ground in the occupied Palestinian territories that have a negative impact on efforts to achieve peace with justice. Violations of human rights and international law have continued without consequence and are enabled by Israeli legislative actions.

An example has been the continued and growing expansion of settlements, an approach long condemned by U.S. presidents as a violation of Israel's obligations as an Occupying Power under the Fourth Geneva Convention. Settlement expansion forcibly takes property and resources from Palestinian landholders, many of whom have held legal title to their lands for generations.

- Settlements now control 42 percent of all West Bank land, areas recognized by international law as Israeli-occupied Palestinian land.
- Since 1993 the number of Israeli settlers in the West Bank (not including East Jerusalem) has increased from 110,900 to 400,000; the number of Israeli settlers in Jerusalem has gone from 146,800 to over 300,000.
- More than 15,000 Palestinian homes have been destroyed since the signing of the Oslo Accords, often as a result of Israel refusing to grant permits to Palestinians for modifying or building structures on their own lands, then destroying any homes that are modified.

These changes, among others, have caused analysts, scholars, diplomats, and politicians to assert that the window of opportunity for a viable two-state solution is closing or may have closed. As that reexamination is occurring, the need for equality of rights remains.

The principle of equality is foundational to true democracies as well as to international law. It is necessary if a sustainable future is to be found for both Palestinians and Israelis. Regardless of the underlying political governance structures, equal rights and opportunities must be assured for all people in the region – not someday based on an idea of future negotiations, but as a funda-

mental human right today. Yet the present situation and trajectory neither reflect nor promote equality, as demonstrated by these facts, among others:

- Freedom of movement for individuals of Palestinian descent is inhibited, based on discriminatory and separate criteria;
- Trials for Palestinians in the West Bank take place in military courts, while trials for Israeli settlers take place in civilian courts;
- A two-tier system of laws, rules, and services operates for the Israeli and Palestinian populations in areas of the West Bank under Israeli control, providing preferential services, development, and benefits for Jewish settlers while imposing harsh conditions on Palestinians.
- The parameters that determine political participation in Israel break down on ethnic and geographic lines: in the West Bank, Jews can vote while their Palestinian neighbors – regardless of whether they live in “Palestinian” Area A or in “Israeli” Area C – are not eligible to vote.

To address this untenable situation, U.S. policymakers should make clear their commitment to ensuring fundamental human rights by:

- Urging Israel to end to the occupation and all discriminatory policies resulting from the occupation, including home demolitions and inequitable distribution of land and water;
- Applying Leahy vetting processes to all recipients of U.S. security assistance consistently;
- Upholding and protecting the rights and abilities of human rights defenders to do their work, and including them in delegation visits;
- Urging Israeli and Palestinian leaders to uphold the values of peace, justice, and equal rights for all; and urging both to refrain from actions that lead to violence while encouraging efforts to work for peace, justice, and reconciliation;
- Protecting the rights of U.S. citizens seeking to carry out nonviolent economic protests to challenge unjust policies.

Our perspectives on the situation are based on decades, and even centuries, of engagement in the Middle East. We pray for a just and peaceful resolution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, and look forward to working with Congress and the Administration to support policies that promote equality for all people in the region. §

## Resources

- 1) **Lenten Reflection Guide: A Journey with Gospel Nonviolence:** The season of Lent is **March 1 – April 15**. Download the 16-page weekly guide produced by the Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns with the support of the Catholic Nonviolence Initiative. <http://bit.ly/MaryknollLent2017>
- 2) **Lenten Novena for Protectors of Earth:** The Sisters of Mercy of the Americas and the Columban Center for Advocacy and Outreach invite you to join in prayer the first nine days of Lent, (**March 1 – 9**), for indigenous communities who speak out against the impacts of extractive industries. <http://bit.ly/LentenNovena>
- 3) **Complete the “Labeling For Lent” Survey** from the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops. Your answers will help them work with seafood companies that are engaged in cleaning up their supply chains to create a label for their packaged products. Survey: <http://bit.ly/labelingforlent>  
Flyer: <http://bit.ly/LFLflyer>
- 4) **World Day of Peace Message Two-pager:** Download our two-page summary of Pope Francis’ message. Ideal for parish bulletins and small groups. <http://bit.ly/WDP2pager>
- 5) **Peace Stories blog:** Read stories from peacemakers around the world (a project of Pax Christi International). <https://paxchristipeacestories.com/>
- 6) **Ecumenical Advocacy Days:** Plan now to attend Ecumenical Advocacy Days (EAD) in Washington, D.C., **April 21 – 24**. The theme is “Confronting Chaos, Forging Community.” Together, we will grapple with the intersectionality of racism, materialism, and militarism - the ‘triplets’ named by Dr. King in his speech fifty years ago at Riverside Church in New York. Through prayer, worship, training, and networking, we will face the triplets and advocate for change in public policy that better reflects the Beloved Community. For more information, go to <https://advocacydays.org/> or contact the Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns.
- 7) **Resources to advocate for immigrants and refugees:** Find videos, toolkits, guides, action alerts, and more at Justice for Immigrants Campaign <http://justiceforimmigrants.org/> and the Interfaith Immigration Coalition <http://www.interfaithimmigration.org/>
- 8) **New economy of nature:** Find videos, maps, and articles about attempts to place monetary value on nature, a false solution to environmental problems <https://www.boell.de/en/dossier-new-economy-nature>
- 9) **No More Deaths seeks volunteers:** The organization No More Deaths seeks trauma-informed and -experienced mental-health professionals and wellness coaches/healers willing to provide no-cost or sliding-scale mental-health and holistic-health services to undocumented border crossers, refugees, recent immigrants, and their families. Ideal candidates are those with expertise in secondary or vicarious trauma and who are located in Tucson, Phoenix, or southern Arizona or provide long-distance services via phone or Skype. Interested individuals are invited to complete a Provider Information Sheet: <http://bit.ly/ProviderInfoSheet>. To respond by email, or for more information, write to Emily Saunders, [emilylsaunders@gmail.com](mailto:emilylsaunders@gmail.com), and write "Call for Providers" in the subject line. Website: <http://forms.nomoredeaths.org/en/>
- 10) **“Disturbing the Peace” film screening:** Churches for Middle East Peace is promoting the film “Disturbing the Peace” which follows former enemy combatants, Israeli soldiers from elite units and Palestinian fighters, who have joined together to challenge the status quo and say “enough.” Watch the trailer at <http://bit.ly/DTPtrailer> . For more information: <http://disturbingthepeacefilm.com/screenings/>
- 11) **Winners of the Cool Congregations Challenge:** Get inspired by the five winners of Interfaith Power and Light’s 2016 Cool Congregations Challenge:
  - Community United Church of Christ in Raleigh, NC;
  - Temple Shalom in Chevy Chase, MD;
  - Congregational Church in in Cumberland, ME;
  - Sisters of St. Joseph in Brentwood, NY;
  - Manchester United Methodist Church in Manchester, MO.
 Learn more at <http://bit.ly/CoolWinners2016>