



Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns

NewsNotes

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

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<http://thomas.loc.gov>

Capitol switchboard:
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www.congress.gov

Living gospel nonviolence at the parish level

Recordings are available of presentations made by Marie Dennis of Pax Christi International and Kevin Carroll of the Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns on the writings of Pope Francis on nonviolence and the work of the Catholic Nonviolence Initiative.

On January 26, more than seventy people gathered at the Church of the Resurrection in Burtonsville, Maryland, to learn more about the writings of Pope Francis and the work of the Catholic Nonviolence Initiative. As part of the “Living the Gospel: Contemplation and Action” adult faith formation series, a joint venture of three Maryland parishes: Saint Camillus in Silver Spring, the Church of the Resurrection in Burtonsville, and Saint John the Baptist, also located in Silver Spring, participants meet regularly for retreats, workshops, and discussions aimed at bringing the Gospel to bear on their daily lives, an concern weighing heavily on the minds of many people in the Catholic Church, given internal and external developments that impact local, national, and international communities.

The purpose of the event was to contemplate the question: How can we live nonviolently in a violent world? Pope Francis has said “The true strength of the Christian is the power of truth and love, which leads to the renunciation of all violence. Faith and violence are incompatible.”

The Catholic Nonviolence Initiative (CNI), a project of Pax Christi International, affirms that active nonviolence is at the heart of the vision and message of Jesus, the life of the Catholic Church, and the long-term vocation of healing and reconciling both people and the planet. The Initiative was launched after the Nonviolence and Just Peace conference which was sponsored by the Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace and Pax Christi International in Rome in 2016.

Presenters for the event were Marie Dennis of Pax Christi International and Kevin Carroll of Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns. Veronica Fellerath-Lowell of Saint John the Baptist Pax Christi and a member of Pax Christi USA’s National Council served as facilitator.

In addition to examining the pope’s writings, participants examined the CNI’s appeal to the Catholic Church, written during the 2016 conference in Rome

and open to endorsement by all Catholics, to re-commit to the centrality of Gospel nonviolence. The appeal lays out a vision of a Church that supports further development of Catholic social teaching on nonviolence to reflect the Gospel and integration of Gospel nonviolence explicitly into daily life, including sacramental life and the work of the Church in its dioceses, parishes, agencies, schools, universities, seminaries, religious orders, and voluntary associations.

Marie Dennis spoke about the meaning of Gospel nonviolence and her experience at the 2016 conference in Rome, as well as appeal and the 2017 World Day of Peace message, both of which grew from seeds planted during the conference. Marie also described some of the latest developments in the CNI, including a second meeting in Rome, this time organized with the Dicastery for Promoting Integral Human Development, to be held this coming April.

A recording of Marie’s presentation is available online at: <http://bit.ly/MarieDennisCNI>

Kevin Carroll of the Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns presented details of the work of the

CNI in the United States, including concrete examples of ways to integrate Gospel nonviolence into the life of the Catholic Church. Kevin welcomed Mary Joan (MJ) Park from Little Friends for Peace to speak about her upcoming workshops for parishes called Gospel Nonviolence in Daily Life. MJ and her husband Jerry Park were the 2008 recipients of the Teachers of Peace Award by Pax Christi USA.

A recording of Kevin’s presentation is also available online at: <http://bit.ly/KevinCarrollCNI>

The presentations were followed by small group discussion and large group sharing on ways the attendees’ parishes and communities can strengthen their commitment to living the principles of Gospel nonviolence.

If you are interested in hosting a similar event in your parish or community, please contact Kevin Carroll with Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns at kcarroll@maryknollogc.org or (202) 832-1780.§



Making UN “leave no one behind” principle a reality

Reducing inequality is a top priority for the UN Social Development Commission.

Inequality – the state of not being equal in status, rights, and opportunities – is recognized by the UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs as a central concept in every social justice discourse. Growing disparities between access, opportunity, wealth, and gender undermine social, environmental and economic sustainability and fuel inequality, poverty, insecurity, crime, and xenophobia. Addressing rising disparities within and among countries is seen as a requirement for sustainable development.

Because inequality tramples the inherent and inalienable dignity of all human beings, it is crucial to shift the prevailing development paradigm to integral human development. Integral human development combats inequality through the inclusion of every individual in society in its social, political, and economic policies.

Income inequality – the gap between the wealthiest and everyone else – is one of the most persistent challenges in the fight to eradicate poverty. According to new research by Oxfam International, the world’s 26 richest people own the same wealth as the 3.8 billion poorest half of humanity. The report also said women and girls are the hardest hit by rising inequality, as men own 50 percent more of the total global wealth and control 86 percent of corporations.

The 2018 World Inequality Report found that the richest 1 percent of humanity acquired 27 percent of the world’s income between 1980 and 2016 – more than twice the rate of the bottom 50 percent, who acquired only 12 percent. This has resulted in a steady decline of public capital and stagnation among the global 50 percent poorest while private capital continued to increase. Various analyses by experts shows that these gaps are brought on by the dominance of neoliberal policies, the speed of technological change, weak global and national tax policies, the erosion of labor rights, and the corporate control of political processes and state institutions.

Neoliberal policies such as austerity measures and

budget cuts in the social sectors hit women the hardest. In his independent expert statement to the UN General Assembly last October, Juan Pablo Bohoslavsk said, “Women carry most of the burden of austerity measures, fiscal consolidation and other economic reform policies. These measures, instead of promoting women’s human rights, add to existing structural inequality, and further entrench discrimination against women.”

In July, the High Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development will review Sustainable Development Goal 10 (SDG 10): “Reduce inequality within and among countries.” One of the targets for SDG 10 is for countries to adopt fiscal, wage and social protection policies that progressively achieve greater equality. Two commissions of the United Nations, the Commission on Social Development (CSocD57) and the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW63) have chosen this important target as a priority theme, as has the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) Fourth Financing for Development Forum.

Policies on fiscal, wage and social protection offer a systematic approach to lessen inequalities within countries and among countries and align with the UN 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development’s ambitious principle to “leave no one behind.” In particular, social protection is key to sustained inclusive economic and social development, for individuals, communities and nations. In February, the UN relaunched the Global Partnership for Universal Social Protection to increase the number of countries that provide Universal Social Protection (USP). Some examples of good practices towards USP are universal old age and disability pensions by Timor Leste, China, South Africa; cash transfers by Brazil, Philippines and Colombia; and unemployment benefits by France, Malaysia and Romania.

The 57th Session of the Commission on Social Development submitted a resolution to ECOSOC on tax and wage reform to combat inequality within countries. The resolution also encourages developed countries to fulfill their development assistance commitments as a means to reduce inequality among nations. §



A girl receives services at Our Lady of Victory Youth Training Center, founded by Maryknoll Sister Cecilia Woods, MD in the Philippines in 1983. The center promotes social inclusion for people with disabilities. Photo by M. Misolas, MM.

Geo-engineering: False solution to climate change

The following article debunks myths about geoengineering and the belief that it can create “negative emissions” with carbon capture and storage technologies.

As warnings regarding climate change increase in severity, many possible solutions are being considered. Unfortunately, these include some false responses under the guise of “geoengineering” that are unlikely to diminish greenhouse gases significantly and will distract attention and resources from better solutions while strengthening the fossil fuel economy. One technology that is key for the success of many proposed geoengineering solutions is creating “negative emissions” with Carbon Capture and Storage (CCS).

Carbon capture and storage technologies remove carbon dioxide gas from the emissions of coal plants, cement factories, tar sands and other oil refineries but require significant amounts of energy to do so — using between 15 and 30 percent of original energy production — thus increasing direct emissions. The gas is then compressed to be transported by truck or pipeline, each with their own dangers and threats of gas leaks.

The vast majority of removed CO₂ is used for enhanced oil recovery, a type of extraction where carbon gas is pumped into old oil fields in order to be able to extract harder to reach oil. This additional oil increases greenhouse gas emissions.

The Global CCS Institute has shown that despite many billions of dollars in research and more than 15 years of development there are only 18 commercially operating CCS facilities in the world, 13 of which are used for EOR and three of the five in construction will be used for the same. The Guardian explored the best of these projects and found them very expensive while removing miniscule portions of CO₂.

The Institute for Energy Economics and Financial Analysis released a report in November showing that transporting and storing a meaningful amount of CO₂ in the U.S. would require “financing, permitting and construction of a massive new national pipeline system—one on the magnitude of the existing oil and gas pipeline network.” David Schlissel, co-author of the report said, “The technology remains unproven at full commercial scale, it is wildly expensive, there are serious questions regarding after-capture transport, injection and storage of the captured CO₂ and—most important—more reliable and far cheaper power-generation options exist.”

Carbon dioxide can also be used in industrial products like synthetic fuels, petrochemicals, plastics and cements (called carbon capture use and storage - CCUS). The fundamental problem here is that the CO₂ is not re-

moved but rather imbed in products that release the gas later when burnt or while decomposing. This process also creates additional emission in making the products, so few, if any, CCUS projects are truly carbon negative.

Many see the combining of bioenergy projects with CCS (BECCS) as the negative emissions technique with the most potential. This entails growing trees, switchgrass, corn or other forms of biomass to be burnt to create energy while capturing the carbon dioxide produced in the process and storing it. Biofuel Watch has a infographic showing the problems at each stage of BECCS, from deforestation to monocropping and land grabbing and how the majority of captured gas will likely be used to extract oil from older wells.

Studies have also shown that for BECCS to remove even one gigaton of carbon annually (about 2 percent of global emissions) it would require unrealistic amounts of land (estimates range from BECCS requiring 25 to 80 percent of current global cropland) and water (BECCS alone could require more than double the amount currently used for irrigation in food production).

Despite these stark limits, almost all of the IPCC’s future scenarios depend on a increase in carbon dioxide removal, mostly through BECCS. Across the scenarios with a 66 percent or better chance of limiting warming to two degrees, the median amount of CO₂ to be removed by BECCS is equivalent to more than 25 percent of current emissions — a very unlikely possibility.

Yet the biggest problems with CCS and its derivatives are the fact that this solution benefits the fossil fuel industry most of all, as well as the “moral hazard par excellence” that it creates for society. The Center for International Environmental Law recently released a report showing how CCS “is valuable to the fossil fuel industry in three key ways: it expands oil production, provides a lifeline to a declining coal industry, and further entrenches the overall fossil fuel economy.” It is no surprise that fossil fuel corporations have been leading research and advocacy for carbon removal technologies.

Also, focusing on technologies like CCS distracts from developing more realistic and workable solutions and further entrenches the fossil fuel economy. Simon Holmes à Court, senior adviser to the Energy Transition Hub at Melbourne University sums up the issue well, “One way to reduce coal’s impact is to capture, compress and bury its emissions – but it’s much simpler, cheaper and safer to simply leave the coal in the ground.”§

U.S.-Mexico border: Migrants are not criminals

Listen to voices on the border to learn the truth about the life of migrants in need of refuge.

Just as President Trump was touching down in El Paso for his border wall rally on February 11, Annunciation House, the El Paso-based house of hospitality for migrants, held a press conference to allow migrants to speak for themselves and “provide a more truthful narrative reflecting the reality of refugees on our border.”

The message was clear: migrants are not criminals.

Ruben Garcia, Executive Director and founder of Annunciation House, lead the press conference which was his first since last June, when Annunciation House served as the center of a massive operation to meet the urgent needs of thousands of parents and children recently reunited and released by U.S. Border Patrol.

“The separation of children from their parents continues,” a statement released before the press conference reads. “The narrative that refugees and immigrants are criminals is not true. Annunciation House and our partner organizations and faith communities have been providing hospitality to thousands of these families every week. The idea that refugees and immigrants make our country dangerous is not true. Rather, the truth is that they overwhelmingly become productive, contributing citizens of our community and of our country.”

The speakers included:

A mother from Honduras forcibly separated for over 115 days from her three and four-year-old daughters by Border Patrol Agents on October 11, 2018.

A newly-arrived parent who fled violence and persecution in Central America to lawfully seek asylum in the United States.

A former refugee who was granted asylum in the United States and who has since become a valued member of our vibrant border community.

“I’m a mother and I don’t know what people see when they look at me, if they see a criminal,” one speaker said. “All I want to do is protect and save my family.”

“If I had to do it all over again I’d do it again,” the mother went on to say, “because it was for the wellbeing of my daughters. It’s my responsibility to fight for my daughters. I’m going to fight for my daughters no matter what happens.”

The 30-minute press conference was live streamed on Facebook and a recording is available at <http://bit.ly/AnnunciationHouse02112019>

Local press reported on February 23 that a record number of migrants was released to Annunciation House in the week of February 17-23 – a total of 3,637. This is higher than any number in the 40-plus year history of Annunciation House, Garcia said.

Garcia said he expects the numbers to rise in the upcoming weeks as the weather warms and allows for easier travel through Central America and Mexico. The high number of migrants released by federal officials in El Paso is coupled with an extremely high number of migrants waiting for processing in Juarez. Also in February, officials in Coahuila, Mexico, transferred more than 300 migrants waiting for entrance into the U.S. to Juarez. The move angered Juarez mayor Armando Cabada who threatened to sue the state of Coahuila.

The record 3,637 migrants were housed at 15 to 16 hospitality centers in El Paso and Las Cruces. The increase has caused an increased strain on the organization which has been dealing with an increased number of migrants being released since 2018.

Annunciation House is urgently asking for monetary donations through their website at <https://annunciationhouse.org> (click on Donate). In addition to monetary donations, they are also in desperate need of organizations or large groups willing to prepare meals for large numbers of migrants as well as long-term Spanish-speaking volunteers. To learn more, visit <https://annunciationhouse.org/volunteer/> or email volunteercoordinator@annunciationhouse.org §



Guatemala: Retreating from human rights

In the past few months, Guatemala has seen dangerous efforts to rollback key human rights protections instituted after the Guatemalan Civil War.

On January 7, President Jimmy Morales expelled the UN-supported Commission Against Impunity in Guatemala (CICIG). The CICIG investigations had led to the arrests and convictions of prominent military officers, politicians, businessmen and others engaged in corruption and human rights violations from the Civil War from 1960 to 1996 and up to present day.

Morales supported the CICIG when he began his presidency in 2016, until the CICIG charged his brother and nephew in a fraud scheme one year later. CICIG soon began investigating Morales for campaign finance violations. These actions precipitated the Morales administration to deny visas for CICIG officials and find other ways to stifle the CICIG's efforts. Other prominent politicians such as the former president Otto Perez Molina were brought down by CICIG corruption investigations. The former Guatemalan dictator Gen. Efraín Ríos Montt was also convicted for war crimes through a CICIG investigation. His conviction was later overturned.

With elections approaching in June, when Morales will lose immunity to the corruption charges, he and his party are doing what they can to tamp down institutions of accountability. Maryknoll missionaries in Guatemala are deeply concerned about these efforts to erode the institutions and the small gains that have been made under the CICIG for accountability and justice.

The CICIG's expulsion has been widely condemned by the international community including the Organization of American States and the UN. The U.S. Embassy released a statement in support of CICIG. CICIG international staff had to leave the country immediately.

The Guatemalan Constitutional Court has ruled on separate occasions that this move to abolish the CICIG's mandate is unconstitutional. The CICIG agreement functions like a treaty.

Now the court faces political retaliation. Congress plans to vote on a bill that would strip immunity from three of the Court's judges and call for an investigation into whether or not the judges "exceeded their functions". The Guatemalan congress is currently controlled by the president's party.

Some analysts point to certain corporate interests supporting the CICIG's departure. An op-ed by Action Aid and Friends of the Earth cite that the Guatemalan palm oil industry federation applauded the decision. There have been cases of human rights abuses and corruption on the part of palm oil companies in the past few years such as by REPSA in the Petén region. Maryknoll missionaries have voiced concern about this project. Pesticide runoff from a palm oil plantation led to a large fish kill. One activist was killed, and others have been threatened for bringing attention to the contamination.

The Roundtable on Sustainable Palm Oil is currently considering expanding membership to Guatemalan palm oil companies despite these controversies.

Two pieces of legislation considered by the Guatemalan Congress will further erode rights. One bill, the National Reconciliation Law reforms, known as 5377, would grant blanket amnesty to convicted perpetrators of crimes against humanity. This policy, if passed, would apply immediately and retroactively.

Another bill, the Law on Non-governmental Development Organizations (5257) would limit the activities of NGOs in the country. The law would likely limit freedom of expression and action by NGOs and their staff. The law could restrict the

processing of international funds to Guatemalan NGOs unless they can show it is only for charitable assistance.

The bills were supposed to have another "reading" in mid-February but they have now been delayed.

For more details and updates on these events, visit Peace Brigades International at <https://pbiousa.org/tags/guatemala>

Faith in Action: View a recording of a presentation by Guatemalan human rights lawyer Ramon Cadena hosted by the Guatemalan Human Rights Commission on February 15 to better understand the current socio-political context and hear about ways to support at-risk human rights defenders in Guatemala. <http://bit.ly/GuatemalaHR>



Guatemalan President Jimmy Morales. Photo Credit: U.S. Embassy Guatemala.

Venezuela: Pain of hunger, fear of violence

The drumbeat for war has been growing louder in recent weeks. How alarmed should we be?

On February 23, the world watched as Venezuelan troops fired tear gas at angry protesters unable to cross into Colombia to gather humanitarian aid placed there by the U.S. government after President Nicolas Maduro closed the border to stop the opposition. Attention has since turned to National Guard troops stationed at the border crossing to see if they would fulfill President Maduro's orders to maintain the blockade.

As the humanitarian and economic crisis worsens in Venezuela – the people of Venezuela are facing shortages of food, medicine, and basic services amid widespread corruption – the fear of foreign intervention grows. Opposition leader Juan Guaido, Venezuelan National Assembly Speaker who has been recognized as the country's acting president by over 50 countries, ignored a court-imposed travel ban and toured Latin American allies to boost support for his campaign to oust President Maduro. At the time of this writing, it is unclear what will happen if he were to risk arrest by returning to Venezuela.

Guaido has proposed that the United States consider "all options" to oust Maduro, including a coup. All the while, Maduro insists he is the legitimate president, and is backed by China, Russia and Cuba.

"Intervention in Venezuela would be a complete nightmare," said Geoff Ramsey, the Assistant Director of the Venezuela program at the Washington Office for Latin America (WOLA). "One thing is the regular armed forces. Another is the presence of irregular armed groups. There is a real chance of any kind of armed intervention turning into a protracted inter-armed conflict that could last decades. But the good news is that even though it's on the table, and I'm alarmed by that, it's definitely not the basis of a U.S. or international strategy and I'm encouraged by that fact."

Listen to Geoff Ramsey in his new podcast "How to Get Back to Democracy in Venezuela Without Military Intervention" at <http://bit.ly/WOLAVenezuela>

The Lima Group – the now 14-country group that has criticized the breakdown of democratic order in Venezuela under the Bolivarian Government that stretches from 1999 with the election of Hugo Chávez to the presidency, the installation of his Bolivarian Revolution and spanning in to the present day – has stated clearly that it does not support a military intervention as a means to mediate the crisis in Venezuela. "No one [in the Lima Group] supports a military solution to the

situation [in Venezuela]," said Brazilian Vice President Antonio Hamilton Mourao in February 25. "It is necessary to look for other ways to deliver humanitarian aid to Venezuela."

On February 28, former Maryknoll Lay Missioner Lisa Sullivan, who has lived in Venezuela for 30 years, posted on her blog from her home in the countryside of Sanare, Venezuela: "Many have asked what can you do. Your prayers, your concerns your love, first and foremost. And anything to stop U.S. military intervention by calling your Senator and Member of Congress. While the fear of real bullets hangs over us daily, the pain of food bullets is a raw and open wound."

Lisa writes from the perspective of el pueblo ("the poor"), whose hunger is driving them to extremes of looting grocery stores and violently protesting the government. You can read more of Lisa's blog at <https://lisavenezuela.blogspot.com/>

For balanced assessments of the Venezuelan crisis, read the Washington Office on Latin America's Venezuela Blog (<https://venezuelablog.org/>) and the North American Congress on Latin America (NACLA): <https://nacla.org/news/2017/05/03/why-venezuela-spiraling-out-control>

Some U.S. Churches are speaking out. Leadership of the Presbyterian Church of the U.S.A. issued a statement to members calling for prayer for peaceful resolution of the crisis in Venezuela.

Global Ministries, a common witness of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in the United States and Canada and the United Church of Christ, sent a letter to President Donald Trump to ask him not to authorize a military intervention. "It could bring back the darkest pages in the history of the country when the military overthrew civil governments to install dictatorships and de facto presidencies. Every time Venezuela, or any other country in Latin America and the Caribbean, has suffered a military episode in its recent times, the lives of the poorest and the most vulnerable populations have been severely damaged," the letter states. §

Faith in Action: Tell your Members of Congress to oppose U.S. military intervention in Venezuela. This action alert is organized by SOA Watch. <http://bit.ly/SOAWatchVenezuela>

Brazil: Another mine waste dam collapses

CIDSE, an international alliance of Catholic social justice organizations which includes the Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns, issued the following statement after the collapse of a mine waste dam in Brumadinho, Brazil.

Just a few days ago, on 25th January 2019 in Brumadinho, Minas Gerais, Brazil, the collapse of a dam operated by the Brazilian mining company Vale caused another terrible socio-environmental disaster. Rescue operations are still ongoing and the exact number of victims is still unknown, but it seems that as many as 300 people were killed (Environmental Justice Atlas) – most of them employees of the company itself, Vale, who were at work or taking their breaks.

Vale was one of the companies involved in the burst of the Samarco dam (managed by BHP Billiton Brasil Ltda and Vale) near Mariana, Minas Gerais, Brazil in November 2015, causing the death of 19 people and a huge environmental disaster that to this day affects the livelihoods of people in the region. The “Mariana” disaster highlighted already four years ago a huge gap in the international justice system – still today, many of the victims are waiting for justice.

Vale is among the mining companies still receiving investments from several large European banks despite the recurrent violations of environmental and human rights, as investigated in the Dirty Profits 6 report. Such banks, according to the report, keep turning a blind eye and are not taking strong enough action to ensure that mining and extractive companies respect human rights and environmental concerns. The international investment context and banking system brings European citizens very close to the tragedy that just took place in Brazil. Beyond the responsibility of actors in Brazil, companies from European countries, citizens’ own finances or own consumption of products containing minerals could have a link with the disaster. To prevent human rights violations in several contexts around the world, CIDSE and its members advocate for a UN Binding Treaty on Business and Human Rights that can bring value to global efforts towards preventing adverse human rights effects of business activities and providing access to justice for affected people and communities.

Several partners in Brazil such as the Movimento dos Atingidos por Barragens (MAB) (also active on twit-

ter with many updates and opinions about the tragedy), Iglesias y Minería, Movimento Pela Soberania Popular na Mineração (MAM), Comissão Pastoral da Terra (CPT) and Conselho Indigenista Missionário (CIMI) are denouncing the situation of impunity around mining companies, which enable these types of events. As reported by this press release by DKA, MAB described the event as an “announced tragedy”.

As expressed by Iglesias y Minería in this statement, indeed impunity and the lack of complete reparations for the victims of previous crime was one of the main conditions that allowed the new crime of Brumadinho. Another important factor has been the pressure brought by powerful companies to corrupt and weaken governmental supervision and inspection. Iglesias Y Minería also believes that there are fundamental problems surrounding the operations of mining companies, and one of them is the hypocrisy that leads most of the consultation with the local population and civil society. These take place through “false dialogues” whose ultimate purpose is to legitimize the work of the mining companies without taking into account the real needs and opinions of the people.

In the final declaration of the Thematic Social Forum (Johannesburg, South Africa, November 2018) which brought

together activists from all over the world, participants described the extractivist economy as a “destructive model based on the exploitation of so-called ‘natural resources’ and people of which mining is a prime case.” They demand the right for communities to say no to extractive activities in their territories, while adopting alternative ways of living.

CIDSE supports their demands and, in light of the latest events in Brumadinho and of the countless violations of human rights that the mining sector has perpetrated throughout the years, strongly advocates for alternatives to extractivism that respect people and nature. §



Image of the Brumadinho dam disaster on January 26, 2019, one day after the dam collapsed. Credit: Screenshot from video by TV NBR.

South Sudan: Concerns about peace accord

The future of the young nation's peace agreement, signed last year to end a five-year civil war, is unclear.

The bishops of the Catholic Church in South Sudan said in a statement on February 28 that, while they welcomed the five-month-old peace agreement as a step forward, "the concrete situation on the ground demonstrates that it is not addressing the root causes of the conflict in South Sudan."

Root causes of the war that need to be addressed

Corruption: Income from oil (\$500 million per month) constituted 98 percent of the revenue at the time of independence in 2011. As these funds were diverted, allegedly to increase the personal wealth of government officials and their allies, state revenues shrank, and members of the opposition were sidelined and excluded. In 2013 Vice President Machar publicly accused the president of corruption, tribalism, insecurity, a poor economy, poor foreign relations and the movement's loss of direction. Several days later, he and the rest of the cabinet were dismissed from their government positions. Peace will require giving the opposition a share in governance and income from oil.

Violence and negative ethnicity: Conflict between farmers and powerful ranchers in the southern part of the country has caused a large movement of refugees to Uganda. Multi-ethnic cities like Yei, Yambio and Wau have seen similar tensions with conflicts between the national army and local rural people. In some areas, renegade soldiers have been restrained but no justice has been meted out to perpetrators of murder, rape, torture and looting of property and land.

Violence in Unity State: Fighting continues between the national army and the Nuer who are ethnically related to Vice President Machar. In November, Doctors Without Borders publicized a mass rape that occurred near Bentiu but the government continues to deny there is a problem.

What is needed for the agreement to succeed?

National and international agencies need to support ordinary people who must rebuild their own lives. This includes those who remain displaced both inside and outside South Sudan.

Opposition groups need to share in governance and income from oil revenues. In addition to followers of Machar, the National Salvation Front, comprising 'non-signatory or hold out' groups, insists on a national federal system which deserves consideration.

All ethnic groups need to participate equally in peace and development plans. The violence in Unity

State needs special attention and action.

What is the reality on the ground?

People are very tired of war. However, they may be able to tolerate corruption for some time if violence decreases. Problems with corruption are not addressed in the peace agreement.

People in the capital city of Juba seem hopeful but not optimistic. They know that history is strewn with recurring failures. Most people who left Juba are waiting to see what happens and few have returned. Churches are constantly praying for the peace agreement to succeed.

Security has improved in recent months in Yambio, located on the southern border with the D. R. of Congo. The roads are safer and women and children are able to walk alone.

Security has also improved in Wau, a city in northwestern South Sudan. There have been no clashes outside the town for several months. Rebel leaders were cordially welcomed when they attended a recent official peace gatherings. The number of protected civilians in the UN camps has decreased from 40,000 in 2016 to 15,000. The number of people sheltering in church compounds has decreased from 20,000 to 4,000. People are returning home and preparing their fields for cultivation.

The 2013 peace agreement in Old Fangak continues to hold. People in the remote, northern community know peace is possible with good leadership.

Many rural people have lost everything and are malnourished. The fields will require extra work because they lay fallow for several years. People need to rebuild homes and procure seeds and tools. Previous donors are inclined to think the crisis will end soon when Juba appears quiet. Without their support food production will languish.

Concerns in Sudan

Meanwhile, ongoing daily protests over rising bread and fuel prices have been met with violence from masked security agents in Sudan. BBC Africa Eye has analyzed videos showing militia chasing, beating and dragging protestors to secret detention centers. Witnesses who say they have survived torture describe a holding facility known as "the fridge" where cold is used for torture. The outcome of the uprising in Sudan will certainly affect the success of the peace agreement in South Sudan. Some fear the worst is yet to come. §

Hanoi Summit: Short on diplomacy and treaty

On February 27 and 28, North Korean leader Kim Jong-Un and U.S. President Donald Trump met in Hanoi for their second summit, a meeting which abruptly ended without an agreement.

The disappointing outcome of no nuclear weapons agreement at the summit between the leaders of North Korea and the United States in Hanoi, Vietnam, leaves open the possibility of further meetings but illuminates the importance of preparation. Dialogue and diplomacy are the ways to achieve peace on the Korean Peninsula, but they are needed on more than the highest levels.

The current U.S.-North Korean nuclear negotiation process is flawed and in need of more sustained efforts and detailed negotiations at the diplomatic level. Reports after the second summit indicate that working-level negotiations will continue, as U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo stated, which is a source of hope.

The failure to reach an agreement is disappointing but should not be taken as a sign that diplomacy is not working. We have not advanced nearly far enough, but where we are now is far better than where we were just months ago, with Trump and Kim exchanging threats of fire and fury. Dialogue is always a step in the right direction and diplomacy is still the best path.

In the immediate aftermath of the summit there were conflicting reports on what occurred. President Trump initially told reporters, “Basically, they wanted the sanctions lifted in their entirety, and we couldn’t do that. We had to walk away from that.”

North Korea’s Foreign Minister Ri Yong Ho and Vice Foreign Minister Choe Sun Hui made their own statements to the press that contradicted Trump. They insisted Kim only asked for partial sanctions relief, specifically the end of sanctions which impede the civilian economy and people’s livelihoods in exchange for shutting down its main nuclear facility in Yongbyon and a permanent halt of the country’s nuclear and intercontinental ballistic missile tests. Ri and Choe said the U.S. demanded “one more” measure beyond the Yongbyon dismantlement, however. A senior official at the U.S. State Department conceded that Ri’s claims regarding the specific sanctions – that impede the civilian economy and people’s livelihoods – were indeed accurate.

Reports of the United States demanding additional terms in the final negotiations – specifically attempts by U.S. National Security Adviser John Bolton to bring North Korea’s biological and chemical weapons into the agreement – are troubling. The failure to achieve any sort of agreement in Hanoi is a missed opportunity that proves the need for deeper diplomatic efforts.

In addition, the time is right for Congress to take

action. U.S. Rep. Ro Khanna of California has introduced a resolution for a peace agreement to formally end of the Korean War. Congress can move the diplomatic process forward by supporting this legislation.

H. Res. 152 has 19 cosponsors and has been referred to committee. The resolution calls on the current U.S. administration to provide a clear roadmap to achieve a final peace settlement and highlights the importance of reciprocal actions and confidence-building measures between the parties. Former President and Nobel Peace Laureate Jimmy Carter supports the resolution and says ending the Korean War is “the only way to ensure true security for both Korean and American [sic] people.”

Almost 70 years have passed since the Korean War began and while the direct conflict ended with the signing of an Armistice Agreement in 1953, the war never officially ended through a peace agreement. North Korea, South Korea, and the United States have been officially at war since 1950.

Rep. Khanna, a member of the House Armed Services Committee, said via press release that: “Historic engagement between South and North Korea has created a once-in-a-generation opportunity to formally end this war. President Trump must not squander this rare chance for peace. He should work hand in hand with our ally, South Korean President Moon Jae-in, to bring the war to a close and advance toward the denuclearization of the peninsula.”

President Moon is chiefly important on the heels of summit. Another Inter-Korean summit could go a long way in moving the diplomatic process forward. As Stéphane Dujarric, Spokesperson for the UN Secretary-General said following the summit: “Courageous diplomacy...has established the foundation to advance sustainable peace and the complete and verifiable denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula, and we all very much hope that these discussions will continue in that direction.”

The official end of the Korean War and a formal peace agreement would be mutually beneficial to both parties to the second summit in Hanoi. It is not only symbolically important but an imperative for sustainable peace on the Korean Peninsula.

Faith in Action: Ask your Member of Congress to support the resolution for a peace agreement to formally end the Korean War. <http://bit.ly/HRes152>

Muslim Congresswomen face divisive issue of Israel

The debate within U.S. political parties over Israel's treatment of Palestinians continues despite critics charging two new Muslim members of Congress with 'anti-Semitism.'

The unprecedented number of women in the incoming Congressional class of 2019 includes Democrats Ilhan Omar of Minnesota and Rashida Tlaib of Michigan, the first Muslim women to serve in Congress (the first Muslim man being Rep. Keith Ellison, also from Minnesota). In their short time in Congress Palestinian-American Tlaib and Somali-American Omar have already come under intense scrutiny from both sides of the political spectrum for their criticism of the government of Israel, pushing the limits of acceptable political discourse on the subject.

Tlaib and Omar are the only House members to have stated their support for the Boycott, Divestment and Sanction (BDS) movement, an international campaign aimed at compelling the Israeli government to end the occupation of Palestine through economic pressure. Both have been called “anti-semitic” for taking such a controversial stance, which some equate to a declaration that Israel does not have the right to exist.

Rep. Lee Zeldin (R-NY) went so far as to call Tlaib and Omar out by name in a Resolution co-sponsored by 95 of his Republican colleagues named, “Rejecting anti-Israel and anti-Semitic hatred in the United States and around the world.”

In response to criticism, both Tlaib and Omar released statements defending their positions on Israel and BDS: “This respect for free speech does not equate to anti-Semitism”, said Rep. Tlaib. Rep. Omar stated, “I will never apologize for standing up against oppression and injustice in Israel or anywhere else.”

Legislation to outlaw the practice of BDS in the U.S. has spread quickly in recent years. As of November 2018, 26 states passed anti-BDS laws and in January 2019 the Senate passed the Combatting BDS Act of 2019—providing legal coverage for states to implement their anti-BDS legislation despite concerns voiced by groups such as the ACLU who deem such laws unconstitutional. Although the Combatting BDS Act of 2019 passed in the Senate with a vote of 77-23, it is worth noting that five of the current Democratic presidential

candidates voted against it and only one voted in favor—perhaps an indication of the shift in public opinion away from unconditional support of Israel and in favor of challenging the occupation of Palestine. Despite its popularity among lawmakers, a recent Google survey found that 74 percent of responders were opposed to anti-BDS legislation and only 22 percent were in favor.

Further stoking cries of antisemitism—this time from her own party—Omar insinuated in a tweet on February 10 that American politicians were influenced by the lobbying group American Israel Public Affairs Committee (AIPAC) to take pro-Israel positions because of financial contributions. Democratic leaders, including Speaker of the House Nancy Pelosi, publicly denounced

Omar’s comment as an “anti-Semitic trope” in a joint statement, prompting Omar to apologize for her insensitivity while also defending her view of the “problematic role of lobbyists” in U.S. politics. “It’s gone on too long and we must be willing to address it, Omar said.

Further pushing the status quo of acceptable behavior in Congress, Tlaib and Omar have both announced that they will not join an AIPAC tour to Israel later

this year, a trip seen as a rite of passage for incoming members of Congress. Palestinian Tlaib instead intends to organize her own delegation to Palestine.

Rep. Eliot Engel (D-NY), chairman of the Foreign Affairs Committee, when asked to respond to Rep. Tlaib’s announcement of her plans, said “instead of [Tlaib] talking about things, she’s new here, she ought to listen and learn and open her mind and then come to some conclusions.” Rep. Tlaib’s response was to invite Rep. Engel to join her trip to Palestine, where her grandmother still lives in the West Bank.

Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns is working with interfaith partners in Washington, D.C. to support Rep. Tlaib in her efforts to organize a congressional delegation to Palestine. §

Faith in Action: Ask your Members of Congress to amend the Anti-Terrorism Clarification Act so that Palestinians can continue to receive humanitarian aid. <http://bit.ly/Aid4Palestine>



U.S. Reps. Ilhan Omar (D-MN) and Rashida Tlaib (D-MI)

Resources

- 1) **Lent begins March 6.** We offer two resources for examining your relationship with creation and your role as a consumer. English: <https://justresponse.faith/lent-2019-resource> Spanish: <https://justresponse.faith/cuaresma-2019>
- 2) **Commit to eating simply this Lent** with the Global Catholic Climate Movement. Add a day of plant-based meals to your diet this Lent, or strive to eat only plant-based meals throughout the Lenten season. <https://catholicclimatemovement.global/lent-2019/>
- 3) **10 Databases You Can Use** in Your Solutions Reporting How to use the “positive deviant” approach to find outliers worth investigating <http://bit.ly/WholeStoryDatabase>
- 4) **Plan now to attend Ecumenical Advocacy Days (EAD)** in Washington, D.C., **April 5 – 8.** The theme is “Troubling the Waters for the Healing of the World.” More information is available at www.advocacydays.org
- 5) **International Endangered Species Day is May 17.** Creation Justice Ministries has developed a bulletin insert and toolkit to help your faith community celebrate. <http://bit.ly/CJMinistries> Find accompanying faith-based resources at www.creationjustice.org/endangered
- 6) **Take action with the Catholic Climate Covenant.** Urge your Members of Congress to support (co-sponsor) energy innovation and carbon dividend. Learn more: <http://bit.ly/CCCTakeAction>
- 7) **Pax Christi International details 12 policy actions** that have proven to be effective in reducing violence and conflict through nonviolence approaches. <http://bit.ly/2VB23LZ>
- 8) **New Publication:** Strengthening FAO’s Commitment to Agroecology <http://bit.ly/FAO2Agro> The publication by the Agroecology Now! group, provides strategic advice to civil society groups for influencing global policy-making on food to support agroecology while avoiding co-optation.
- 9) **FAO Food Vision:** The FAO has announced its plan for addressing food insecurity in 2019.
- 10) **South Sudan: New backgrounder by CLINIC** explaining why TPS must be extended for 18 months AND re-designated for South Sudan. The Secretary’s position is due in March. <http://bit.ly/TPSSouthSudan>
- 11) **Book recommendation:** “A Rope from the Sky: The Making and Unmaking of the World’s Newest State” by Zach Vertin, Amberley Publishing, 2018. Recommended by Maryknoll Father David Schwinghamer in Uganda. <http://bit.ly/RopeFromtheSky>
- 12) **Haiti: Ten Things to Know about the Current Crisis.** Since Feb. 7, protests have erupted across Haiti over misappropriated government funds and devaluation of the currency. Renate Schneider, a Maryknoll Affiliate from Chicago, is in Haiti and recommended this summary of the current crisis written by The Haiti Collective on February 15, 2019. <http://bit.ly/HaitiFeb2019>

