



Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns

NewsNotes

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

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Nonviolence: A culture, a way of life.....	3
Global impact of U.S. militarization	5
Encounters: Newsletter on faith-economy-ecology.....	6
Trade: What does renegotiating NAFTA mean?.....	7
Economy of right relationship: CEO pay problem.....	8
The Trump effect on the environment.....	9
Nuclear disarmament needed now.....	10
Korea: Moving from crisis to peace.....	11
Global migration crisis: Border walls destroy life.....	13
Faith in action: Protect Haitians in the U.S.....	14
El Salvador votes for water over gold.....	15
Maryknoll supports environmental defenders	16
Israel/Palestine: 50 years of occupation.....	17
South Sudan: Shifting the Lens on Famine	18
Resources.....	19

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Nonviolence: A culture, a way of life

This past April marked the one year anniversary of the landmark Nonviolence and Just Peace conference in Rome. Gerry Lee, Director of the Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns, served as one of the organizers of the conference and has continued to work with members of the Catholic Nonviolence Initiative to promote the vision and practice of active nonviolence at the heart of the Catholic Church.

“A culture of nonviolence is not an unattainable dream, but a path that has produced decisive results. The consistent practice of nonviolence has broken barriers, bound wounds, healed nations.”

—Pope Francis

Since the Nonviolence and Just Peace Conference in Rome in April 2016, the Catholic Nonviolence Initiative (CNI) – a coalition of Catholic religious communities, including the Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns – has been leading a comprehensive effort to build grassroots support for integrating Gospel nonviolence throughout the Catholic Church. The goal of the Catholic Nonviolence Initiative is to develop resources on nonviolence, highlight successful experiences of practitioners of active nonviolence in conflict zones, and serve the Church as it explores the development of innovative Church teaching, including an encyclical on Nonviolence and Just Peace.

the Catholics of Chicago, quoted above, where he advocated nonviolence as an effective response to the gun violence that is wracking that great American city.

The Catholic Nonviolence Initiative partnered with the Holy See Mission to the United Nations to present a panel discussion on the Pope’s World Day of Peace 2017 message in March and organized a similar event at the European Union in Brussels in April to illustrate the power of active nonviolence.

Hundreds of religious congregations have endorsed the appeal written by conference participants and many are promoting educational materials, including our Advent and Lenten reflection guides on nonviolence and the World Day of Peace 2017 discussion guide.

A constant stream of workshops on Gospel Nonviolence, the World Day of Peace Message, and the Catholic Nonviolence Initiative have been held in Uganda, Kenya, Philippines, UK, Belgium, Mexico, United



Fred Goddard, a returned Maryknoll Lay Missioner and former executive director of the Maryknoll Affiliates, works with the Mindanao Peacebuilding Institute in the Philippines, to bring together people of diverse backgrounds, to share and learn peacebuilding skills in a conflict area. Read more in the May-June issue of Maryknoll Magazine.

A lot has happened in the year since that landmark conference in Rome: CNI was instrumental in the crafting of Pope Francis’ World Day of Peace message on nonviolence on January 1, 2017. This was the first official teaching of the Church on nonviolence.

A number of bishops’ conferences around the world have endorsed the final statement of the conference and are promoting active nonviolence in diverse corners of the Church, from South Sudan to Japan to the Philippines to Uganda.

Pope Francis himself has repeatedly spoken of the importance for Catholics to embrace Gospel nonviolence, most recently in a letter to Cardinal Cupich and

States, Australia, Japan, and many other countries. CNI sponsored a series of four webinars about the practice of active nonviolence, Jesus’ way of Gospel Nonviolence, and to offer examples of the successful practice of nonviolence. You can watch the webinars at <https://nonviolencejustpeace.net/webinars/>.

Numerous Catholic universities, including Marquette, DePaul, the University of San Diego, and the Louvain have sponsored or are planning conferences on nonviolence, drawing on speakers from CNI.

Maryknoll Magazine, with assistance from the Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns, will feature stories of missionaries engaged in active nonviolence in each

issue of the magazine in 2017.

What is new for the Church in all of this is the decisive affirmation of Gospel nonviolence – not only as an effective response to violence, but as a way of life for Christians. By highlighting the rich experience of practitioners of nonviolence in situations of extreme violence around the world, the Church is more actively promoting Gospel nonviolence as an effective alternative to endless wars and vicious cycles of violence.

Pope Francis is expected to make a small but symbolically significant act to mark this new moment for the Church: On June 20, the pope is scheduled to visit the small town of Bozzolo in Lombardy, Italy, to pray in private at the tomb of Don Primo Mazzolari, a priest who advocated nonviolence, opposed the Fascists, and protected Jews during World War II, and because of his positions, was silenced by the Vatican.

For advocating a special love for the poor, a simple lifestyle, empowerment of the laity, religious freedom, and “dialogue with those who are far away,” in 1954, Mazzolari was banned from speaking outside his parish and from publishing articles on social issues. The following year, he published an anonymous essay called “You must not kill,” criticizing the doctrine of a just war, arguing that in a nuclear age it was obsolete. Many of Father Mazzolari’s positions anticipated the views of the Second Vatican Council. Just before his death in 1959, Father Mazzolari was recognized by Pope John XXIII as the “the trumpet of the Holy Spirit” in Lombardy.

We, too, can embrace the ‘culture of nonviolence’ and make it a part of our daily lives. For Pope Francis, active nonviolence is not just a proven strategy but a spirituality, based on the Beatitudes and in solidarity with our enemies, recognizing God’s presence in each of us. In his World Day of Peace message the pope prays “May we dedicate ourselves prayerfully and actively to banishing violence from our hearts, words and deeds, to becoming nonviolent people and to building nonviolent communities that care for our common home.”

Adopting this ‘culture of nonviolence’ as our way of life is difficult, especially when it calls on us to love our enemies and to seek ways to reconcile with opponents who are denying our basic human rights, or worse. In the United States, we are contending with a hostile political climate where nationalistic and violent rhetoric is common, and abusive language against Muslims, women, and people of color is too often accepted, even by our president. How then, do we engage with our elected officials or others who disrespect or attack us, our neighbors, or our deeply held values?

The challenge for us is to oppose unjust policies

that harm the poor, the immigrant, Muslims or those of other faiths but, at the same time, to embrace the humanity of the politician or fellow American who espouses bigoted, hateful, or harmful positions.

In a thoughtful reflection on the spirituality of nonviolence during the campaign against nuclear weapons in the 1980s entitled “Civil Disobedience as Prayer”, veteran peace activist Jim Douglass wrote of this challenging truth of active nonviolence:

“...[U]nless we accept deeply the spirit of nonviolence, we can end up waging our own form of war and contributing to the conclusion we see to overcome . . . A spiritually based nonviolence, one that truly seeks change from within, has to engage deeply the spirits of both sides of a conflict . . . Our hope should not be for any strategic victories over such representatives of the state but rather loving, nonviolent relationships with them in the midst of our arrests, trials, and prison sentences . . .”

Douglass echoes Thomas Merton who suggested that in defining the other as evil, external to us, we end up deepening and hardening its presence in ourselves, in our ego. “There is no evil exclusively out there, over us.”

In a similar way, the spiritual writer Henri Nouwen describes the struggle to humanize our opponent instead of demonizing him or her in terms of accepting our personal responsibility for the structures of evil:

“As peacemakers we must have the courage to see the powers of death at work even in our innermost selves. We find these powers in the way we think and feel about ourselves. Yes, our most intimate inner thoughts can be tainted by death. When I reflect on my own inner struggles I must confess that one of the hardest struggles is to accept myself, to affirm my own person as being loved, to celebrate my own being alive.”

Gospel nonviolence acknowledges that God can transform even the most hardened and hateful opponent. This love, in reality, as Dorothy Day famously said, can be a “harsh and dreadful thing,” and difficult for us to accept. It is, Douglass writes, “not an act of defiance but an act of obedience to a deeper, interior will within us and within the world which is capable of transforming the world. ‘Thy kingdom come, thy will be done.’”

Thomas Merton, who Pope Francis celebrated in his speech to Congress in 2015, seems to speak directly to us in this time, as we struggle not to despair at the venom and demagoguery in our political discourse: “We have to have a deep, patient compassion for the fears and irrational mania of those who condemn us.”§

Global impact of U.S. militarization

Ecumenical Advocacy Days brought together nearly 1,000 in Washington, D.C. April 21-24, for its 15th national gathering and lobby day. This year's annual event focused on Christian advocacy to support a moral federal budget which retains key spending in support of vulnerable populations while rejecting exorbitant Pentagon spending. The following article is a summary of international plenary on the third day of the conference.

Ecumenical Advocacy Days is a movement of the ecumenical Christian community, and its recognized partners and allies, grounded in biblical witness and our shared traditions of justice, peace and the integrity of creation. At this year's gathering in April in Washington, D.C., nearly 1,000 people, through worship, theological reflection and opportunities for learning and witness, grappled 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. Together they advocated for change in public policy that better reflects the Beloved Community. The theme for this year's gathering was "Confronting chaos, forging community."

The international plenary at Ecumenical Advocacy Days focused on the topic of the "Global Impact of U.S. Militarization." Raed Jarrar, Policy Impact Coordinator for the American Friends Service Committee and expert on the impact of U.S. militarization in the Middle East, moderated the panel. The panelists represented snapshots of global militarism from three perspectives: Jeju Island in South Korea, Tent of Nations in Palestine, and African nations with dictatorial leaders. The panelists were Amal Nassar, a farmer and peace advocate from the West Bank in Palestine, Ezekial Gebissa, Professor of History and African Studies at Kettering University, and Father Pat Cunningham of the Columban Missionaries, who is on mission in Seoul, South Korea.

Father Pat Cunningham was the first to present, and spoke about living in South Korea for many years and working as an activist to protect Jeju Island - an island off the South coast where the South Korean government is building a naval base that is meant to serve as strategic positioning for U.S. navy ships to contain China. Fr. Pat spoke of the beautiful rocky coast and the rich habitat of coral reefs that make up the biosphere reserve, home to bottlenose dolphins and abalone, and protected by international law as a UNESCO heritage site.

On this island is a village called Gangjeong, which has become a gathering site for international activists since 2011, when the first fence was built to keep villagers out of the building site for a naval base. Father Pat and many other international peace activists have joined the villagers in nonviolent demonstrations, vigils, and liturgies every day for the last six years.

Father Pat told a story about one day in 2012, when twenty international activists, himself included, paddled kayaks along the sea-side of the building site of the naval base. They came ashore and climbed over the fence, subsequently getting arrested - an action they called "kayaking to save our seas". This case has drawn the attention of activists around the world who see Jeju Island as symbolic of the global struggle against increasing militarism, with governments making decisions based on the pretenses of "security" and "protection" for the people, while the people suffer the consequences. Father Pat quoted Bishop Peter Kang U-il of Jeju Island, a strong defender of the people of the village: "We have never given up the hope that one day we will be able to live peacefully without the massive naval base for nuclear warships. We will keep praying."

Amal Nassar spoke next about her family's farm in Palestine, which were grandfather started in 1916. Despite having official documentation of land ownership from the Ottoman, British, Jordanian and Palestinian authorities, in 1991, the government of Israel declared her family's 100 acres "state land." Amal's family has been fighting the eviction in Israeli court ever since. Amal believes the Israeli government is using a tactic against her family that they use in regard to Palestinians generally: wear them down until they lose hope and give up.

Amal's family, with support from the international community, persists to this day and intends to continue until justice is served. The Israeli court continues to stall the decision on their case, demanding further documentation (aerial photos, affidavits, witnesses to appear in court); meanwhile, the Israeli government allows a new reality to be created on the ground in the surrounding areas by continuously expanding illegal settlements and encroaching on their property. The family has frequently faced hostility from settlers that live in the five surrounding settlements, including threats and destruction - mainly the uprooting of trees from their orchards of figs, olives, apples and apricots. Sometimes hundreds or even thousands of trees are destroyed. And what is the family's response? Persist: plant more trees. They now host youth camps on their property to offer hope to Palestinian children. They invite international groups to camp at their "Tent of Nations" and plant trees as a witness to their struggle for justice. "If we knew the world

was going to end tomorrow”, Amal said, “we would continue to plant trees today”.

Amal Nassar did not mention, perhaps because she assumes the audience is already aware, that the U.S. contributes more aid to Israel’s military – by far – than to any other country in the world, propping up the occupation of Palestine.

Third to speak was Ezekiel Gebissa, Professor of History & African Studies at Kettering University. Dr. Gebissa spoke about his recent trip to northern Europe where he saw thousands of refugees from the Horn of Africa who had survived the harrowing journey overland through Libya and across the Mediterranean to seek asylum in Europe. Professor Gebissa suggested that concerned U.S. Christians can start by praying for those dying in the Mediterranean while searching for a better life – and then take the next step by working to change U.S. policy which allows African governments to continue

stifling their citizens’ rights and hopes for the future.

Over the last sixty years, since most Africans countries have achieved independence from colonialism, the U.S. has supported numerous military coups and dictatorships, including funding support of billions of dollars annually to the current repressive regimes in Ethiopia and Egypt. While some U.S. citizens are of the opinion that the military has caused tremendous pain and suffering around the world, Dr. Gebissa said the popular belief is that the U.S. military is a “force for peace,” which, at times, has “prevented a third World War.”

This mindset blinds U.S. policymakers to the limits of power and encourage overreach, Dr. Gebissa said, “in the quest for security and self-preservation.” He urged the audience to use nonviolent pressure to alter the mindset of our policymakers, because “the advantage of democracies is not that they understand the limits of power, but that they are better able to curb it.”§

Encounters: Newsletter on faith-economy-ecology

The world political order is shifting. It is more important than ever that we shine light in dark places and promote alternative economic systems to create a more inclusive, equitable, and sustainable world.

We are excited to offer you our newly redesigned monthly e-newsletter, *Encounters*. Read it online at <http://bit.ly/Encounters10>

Each issue of *Encounters* features the challenges posed by the current economic growth paradigm and shines light on the hopeful ways communities are responding to protect human dignity and God’s beautiful Creation.

Encounters is timely – Sign up to receive a new issue by email on the 15th of each month.

Encounters is concise – You can print the two-page PDF version to share with your community.

Encounters is unique – Learn about real actions people are taking now to meet their needs for social justice, environmental sustainability, and alternative economics. The issue for April introduced the solidarity economy in Brazil and highlights a women’s collective there. Don’t miss the excellent video.

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Be sure to click on the “Encounters” box, and click “Sign up.” Note: The sign-up box will remain on your screen after you click “Sign up.”§



ENCOUNTERS
A newsletter on faith, economy, and ecology

**Alternative economic systems are possible:
Solidarity Economy in Brazil, Part I**

A number of economic and social justice issues have been raised by the current economic growth paradigm. This newsletter explores the challenges posed by the current economic growth paradigm and shines light on the hopeful ways communities are responding to protect human dignity and God’s beautiful Creation.

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Economic Crises in the 1990s and 1990s

Throughout the 1990s and 1990s, the economy in Brazil had been in a state of crisis. More and more people found themselves without jobs and without the financial means to sustain their own households. There, at the time, **solidarity economy** emerged as a response to these challenges. It was a form of economic organization that sought to create a more equitable and sustainable society. It was a form of economic organization that sought to create a more equitable and sustainable society. It was a form of economic organization that sought to create a more equitable and sustainable society.

World Social Forum of 2001

A key moment in the development of the solidarity economy in Brazil was the World Social Forum of 2001. This forum brought together a large number of people from around the world who were interested in the development of the solidarity economy. It was a forum where people from different countries and cultures came together to share their experiences and ideas. It was a forum where people from different countries and cultures came together to share their experiences and ideas.

Trade: What does renegotiating NAFTA mean?

President Trump has agreed “not to terminate the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) at this time” but to “to bring NAFTA up to date through renegotiation.” How the lives, livelihoods, and the environment in Canada, Mexico, and the U.S. will be affected is uncertain.

Statements and tweets made by President Trump in recent weeks indicate that the long-rumored internal dispute among his advisors is causing the White House to issue competing visions and messages on trade. The *Wall Street Journal*, *Politico*, and the *New York Times* have reported on the tensions and the actors involved, all based on leaks from unnamed administration officials.

On one side of the dispute are White House chief strategist Steve Bannon and Peter Navarro, the head of President Trump's newly-established National Trade Council. They have been advocating for the U.S. to withdraw from NAFTA, the North American Free Trade Agreement signed by Canada, Mexico, and the United States that created a trilateral trade bloc in North America in 1994. On the campaign trail, Trump called NAFTA the "single worst trade deal ever approved in this country."

On the other side are President Trump's son-in-law, Jared Kushner, and White House economic adviser Gary Kohn, a former Goldman Sachs executive. They are reportedly in favor of the U.S. remaining in NAFTA but forcing a renegotiation of terms. A leaked draft proposal to the Senate Finance Committee in March indicates that their proposal is similar to the terms of the Trans Pacific Partnership (TPP), a 12-nation deal that had been negotiated by President Barack Obama but which President Trump called "another disaster done and pushed by special interests." President Trump formally withdrew the United States from the TPP on his first full weekday in office.

The draft proposal to remain but renegotiate NAFTA was sent to the Senate Finance Committee just days before Steve Bannon and Peter Navarro offered President Trump a draft of an executive order to unilaterally withdraw from NAFTA – a move legal scholars are uncertain the president has the authority to make without congressional approval.

On April 27, administration officials told reporters that the president was preparing to begin withdrawing the U.S. from NAFTA. The following day, however, the White House said President Trump told the leaders of Canada and Mexico in phone calls that the U.S. will remain part of NAFTA, while the president seeks to renegotiate the deal.

What does this flip-flop mean? President Trump seems to be straddling two positions. He has, for now,

committed to remaining in NAFTA yet also committed to pushing for renegotiations. If NAFTA does not become, in his words, a “good deal for the United States,” he says he will follow through on his threat to withdraw. At this point, though, it is unclear whether the president is really considering withdrawing from the agreement. The threat to withdraw from NAFTA seems to be a failed negotiating tactic.

Social movements from Mexico, the United States, and Canada released a statement before Trump's inauguration which raised concerns about NAFTA renegotiations. They said that any trade deal needs to improve lives, livelihoods, and the environment in all three North American countries.

Over the past twenty-five years, we have seen NAFTA fail on all three of these counts. Especially egregious is the provision which allows corporations to sue governments for perceived loss of profit when their investments are threatened by environmental, social, or other regulations. Countries must then defend themselves in private, opaque courts in front of a three-judge panel of corporate lawyers.

Although there have been recent wins, such as El Salvador fending off a suit from the mining company Pacific Rim (now Oceana Gold) over a country-wide mining moratorium, these cases cost millions of dollars for countries to litigate. The provision allowing corporations to sue countries over perceived loss of profit is now in every trade agreement the U.S. negotiates other than the U.S.-Australia agreement.

Other provisions of concern undermine livelihoods of small farmers with the imports of subsidized U.S. corn and provisions opening up a market for genetically engineered seeds that has indebted many small farmers with fees on seed patents. The deal also lacks environmental and labor standards, reduces access to life-saving generic medicines. It also includes an energy chapter that prevents Canada's ability to restrict climate-polluting tar sands while allowing companies to sue governments over laws to curb climate change.

If these provisions in NAFTA are opened for renegotiation, we will raise our voices for the care of the environment, for the care of people's livelihoods, and for life. §

Economy of right relationship: CEO pay problem

The city government in Portland, Oregon is trying to address economic inequality by raising corporate taxes on companies whose CEOs make significantly more than their employees.

Catholic social teaching identifies economic inequality as a threat to the basic dignity and equality of all human beings. In “Economic Justice for All: Pastoral Letter on Catholic Social Teaching and the U.S. Economy” the U.S. Catholic bishops write “unequal distribution should be evaluated in terms of several moral principles: the priority of meeting the basic needs of the poor and the importance of increasing the level of participation by all members of society in the economic life of the nation.”

Economic inequality is also a threat to the integrity of Creation. Wealthy countries, and in particular, the wealthiest people in those countries, contribute the most to causing climate change but tend to be most immune to its effects. Some people have mistakenly blamed overpopulation as the principal contributor to climate change but in reality, the countries with the largest populations – India and China – contribute very little to global climate change.

Oxfam has estimated that the richest 10 percent globally create about half of greenhouse gasses while the poorest 50 percent have created only 10 percent of climate-changing gasses. This is because the lifestyle of the ultra-rich is highly taxing on Earth’s bounty. As Sam Pizzigati of the Institute for Policy Studies has said, an unequal planet can never be green.

Most policies created to address economic inequality focus on increasing the earnings and benefits for people with lower incomes. The city council of Portland, Oregon, however, recently set an important precedent by focusing on the other end of the income inequality spectrum: excessive pay for chief executive officers (CEOs).

Starting in 2018, corporations in Portland whose CEOs makes more than 100 times median worker pay will pay an additional 10 percent and those whose CEOs make more than 250 times will pay a 25 percent surcharge.

Explaining the need for the ordinance, the City Commissioner Steve Novick wrote, “Average worker compensation has grown just 10.3 percent since 1978, while compensation of chief executive officers has increased about 941 percent. Data from the Economic Policy Institute show that chief executive officers in the nation’s largest firms made an average of \$15.5 million in compensation in 2015, or 276 times the annual average pay of the typical worker.”

“Rising inequality nationally is a major factor in Portland’s housing crisis,” Novick explained, “because huge disparity in income allows high-income people moving to Portland to drive housing costs out of reach of middle-class Portlanders.”

Inequality has also been linked to decreasing life expectancy and child well-being, increasing crime rates, higher levels of mental illness, worsening health, and decreased social mobility.

High levels of income inequality also affect those businesses negatively. A review of pay ratios and long-term shareholder returns by CtW Investment Group found that “companies with high estimated CEO pay ratios perform worse than companies with low CEO pay ratios over the following five years.” Business management guru Peter Drucker has written that the ratio of pay between executive and worker can be no higher than 20-to-1 without damaging company morale and productivity.

One major reason for the explosion in CEO pay is a tax reform law passed in 1993 that, ironically, was designed to rein in excessive CEO pay. It capped the tax deductibility of executive compensation at \$1 million. But it included a loophole for stock options and other “performance” pay. As a result, the more corporations hand out in executive bonuses, the lower their tax bill. “This perverse incentive for excessive compensation has been a major factor in the explosion of CEO pay,” Sarah Anderson of the Institute for Policy Studies said.

To respond to this, Senator Jack Reed (D-RI) has introduced the Stop Subsidizing Multimillion Dollar Corporate Bonuses Act that would treat bonuses as salary and continue to cap salaries at \$1 million.

The Portland law takes advantage of a part of the Dodd-Frank financial reform law passed in 2010 that requires corporations to publish the pay ratio between their CEO and the median wage of their workers. Corporations are to begin providing this information in their 2017 tax returns. A top priority of the Business Roundtable, which represents CEOs nationwide, is the repeal of this part of the Dodd-Frank Act.

Portland is the first of what will likely be more cities, and possibly states, to implement such laws. The states of Massachusetts, Connecticut, Illinois, Minnesota and Rhode Island are currently considering similar proposals. §

The Trump effect on the environment

Over the past several months, President Trump has appointed staff and made changes to environmental regulations that affect U.S. efforts to address climate change, protect public lands, and ensure clean air and water.

By appointing Scott Pruitt to head the Environmental Protection Agency – a man most known for suing the EPA while Attorney General of Oklahoma – President Trump has laid out a vision for the EPA that contradicts its mission. When Pruitt addressed EPA staff and the media in February, he spoke mostly about protecting jobs, industry and "the marketplace." But the EPA's basic mission is to protect human health and the environment. Pruitt went on to say that he will seek dialogue and compromise to address issues related to "our environment and natural resources."

Since Scott Pruitt became administrator, the EPA staff has been silenced, pages about climate change on the EPA website have disappeared, and major cuts to staffing and budget have been proposed to what is already a financially strapped agency. President Trump's budget proposal for fiscal year 2018 reduces the EPA's budget to \$5.7 billion from the current \$8.1 billion. It also includes an overall cut of 25 percent of the current federal workforce, which would eliminate or severely curtail entire programs.

Programs slated for elimination include anything climate change related (including international programs); programs regulating or policing pesticides, toxic chemicals and related pollution; the Energy Star Program, which allows industries to include an energy efficiency certification on appliances; scientific research; the environmental justice office and other programs that benefit communities in Appalachia, low-income communities, communities of color, tribal nations, and much more.

One test of Pruitt's commitment to science and the environment was his recent decision to ignore scientific evidence and recommendations previously supported by the EPA to ban the pesticide Chlorpyrifos. Pruitt argued that more research is needed. He had until the end of March to make a decision in accordance with a court order. The EPA will now face another lawsuit for failing to ban the chemical linked to cognitive impairment in children and farmworkers. Chlorpyrifos is still one of the most widely used pesticides on farm fields.

President Trump has also issued several executive orders that up-end plans from the Obama administration that are critical to meeting our commitments to the Paris climate agreement.

First, on March 15, President Trump instructed the EPA to review the planned increase in fuel economy standards for cars and trucks by 2025. In 2009, the government set a fuel economy standard of 34.1 mpg for cars and light trucks by 2016. In 2012, it set a new target of 54.5 mpg by 2025. Since the rules went into effect, the consumption of gas has declined and the U.S. auto industry has revived. Cars are contributing less to climate change and poor health outcomes associated with emissions.

Then, on March 28, the Administration announced an executive order to review and rewrite the Clean Power Plan rule. The plan, which is a key part of the U.S. commitment to the Paris climate agreement, was set to go into effect in 2021. It instructed states to replace coal-fired power plants with natural gas, wind, coal and hydroelectric energy infrastructure which would create jobs, improve health, and reduce emissions. The plan set targets for states to reduce their carbon emissions and gave them flexibility in terms of how they achieve these goals. Many states, including states that sued the EPA over the regulation, were already on their way to achieve the targets set in the plan.

The executive order also directs the Department of Interior to rewrite a rule restricting fracking on public and tribal lands. Hydraulic fracturing is used to extract gas and oil and releases methane and other toxic chemicals linked to cancer. The department can also now lift a moratorium on coal drilling on public and tribal lands.

Lastly, the executive order rescinds an Obama-era order that required federal agencies to consider climate change impacts in all decision making.

On April 26, President Trump signed another executive order directing the Department of Interior to review all national monuments larger than 100,000 acres. Many of these monuments are located on land sacred to indigenous communities and which contain reserves of coal, oil sands, natural gas, and other minerals that industries would like to extract. Monuments mitigate climate impacts by keeping fossil fuels in the ground or protecting forests.

All of these actions have global consequences for clean water, air, and climate change. §

Faith in action: Submit your comments on these changes to the EPA at <http://bit.ly/EPAregulationscomments>

Nuclear disarmament needed now

In March, UN member states held the first round of controversial negotiations on a nuclear weapons ban. One month later, amid rising tensions between the U.S. and North Korea, the Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns co-sponsored a conference on nuclear disarmament at the U.S. Capitol where leading voices for nuclear disarmament were heard.

On April 27, just one day after President Trump summoned all 100 U.S. Senators to the White House for a briefing on the situation with North Korea, a conference on nuclear disarmament was held at the U.S. Capitol. Congressman Hank Johnson opened the conference, which was entitled “Toward a Fundamental Change in Nuclear Weapons Policy,” with strong remarks in favor of nuclear disarmament, particularly in light of statements made by the Trump Administration about the possibility of a military response to threats from North Korea.

The U.S. is considering unilateral missile strikes on North Korea, without regard to relations with South Korea or Japan, both long-time strategic partners of the U.S. in the region. Unfortunately, Rep. Johnson ended his remarks by speaking in favor of modernizing the U.S. nuclear arsenal – but with the goal of eventual nuclear abolition.

Rep. Johnson’s remarks were immediately called into question by Professor Zia Mian, a physicist and co-director, with Alexander Glaser, of the Program on Science and Global Security at Princeton University. Professor Mian expressed his strong disagreement and dismay with Rep. Johnson’s support of modernizing the U.S. nuclear arsenal while at the same time advocating for disarmament. Professor Mian called such a contradiction in policy from one of the few strong proponents of disarmament in Congress a “tragedy” that “shows just how far we have to go.”

The panels at the conference examined potential flashpoints for nuclear war: tensions between India and Pakistan, North and South Korea, the U.S. and China, and the U.S. and Russia. The irrationality and unsustainability of the idea of “deterrence” were reiterated. Research about the catastrophic humanitarian and environmental consequences of nuclear war was also shared.

One panelist who particularly moved the audience was Setsuko Thurlow, a survivor of the atomic bombing of Hiroshima who has worked her entire adult life to impress upon the world that we must never again subject human beings to the horrors that she and the other victims of nuclear weapons have faced.

Setsuko Thurlow’s story is unspeakable, yet she has chosen to relive it over and over for the sake of helping people understand the atrocity. Her memory of that

day included words such as “bluish-white flash,” “the sky was dark as night,” “sensation of floating,” “pinned by a collapsed building,” “ghostly figures who did not look like human beings,” “hair standing straight up, naked and tattered, bleeding and burned,” “everything burning or smoldering,” “began to hear cries of ‘God help me,’” “someone said to me ‘don’t give up, I’m trying to free you.’”

Thurlow said that her hope lies in the potential for the UN to negotiate a nuclear ban treaty, an initiative in progress with 130 member states participating. The first week-long session began March 27 with the eventual goal of producing a legally-binding instrument to prohibit and eliminate nuclear weapons.

Unfortunately, the U.S. led a boycott of the talks by nuclear-armed nations and allies. U.S. Ambassador to the UN Nikki Haley says the world is too unsafe to give up nuclear weapons. “We can’t say that we can protect our people by allowing the bad actors to have [nuclear weapons] and those of us that are good, trying to keep peace and safety, not to have them.”

Nevertheless, the conference continued with overwhelming support from the majority of member states. Faith groups met at the Isaiah wall every morning during the conference to pray for successful negotiations.

Monsignor Antoine Camilleri, the Holy See’s Undersecretary for Relations with States, read a letter of support to conference participants from Pope Francis. In it, the pope reminded them that the UN Charter is founded on the peaceful solution of disputes and the development of friendly relations between nations. “An ethics and a law based on the threat of mutual destruction – and possibly the destruction of all mankind – are contradictory to the very spirit of the United Nations,” Pope Francis wrote.

The dynamics that took place at the opening of the Conference are an indication of the serious obstacles to the elimination of nuclear weapons. The second round of negotiations will be held at the United Nations in New York June 15–July 7. §

Faith in action: On June 17, the Women’s International League for Peace and Freedom will coordinate a rally and march in New York City to demand a strong and effective treaty. For more information, go to <https://www.womenbanthebomb.org/>

Korea: Moving from crisis to peace

The following article is written by Irish Columban missionary priest Pat Cunningham, SSC, who lives and works in Seoul, South Korea. Father Cunningham is an active member of the Catholic Nonviolence Initiative and the Catholic solidarity movement for peace on the Korean peninsula which opposes the construction of a military base to host U.S. military ships and personnel on the beautiful island of Jeju.

It seems we are trundling along from one crisis to the next when it comes to the tit-for-tat exchanges between the United States and North Korea. Many people in South Korea feel on edge as the rhetoric grows more belligerent and the military exercises by both the United States and North Korea become more dangerous.

On April 25, North Korea conducted live-fire drills off of the east coast of the peninsula as South Korea, Japan, and the United States carried out its own military exercises. North Korea responded with a warning that it would conduct its sixth nuclear weapon test. The U.S. military then moved its Terminal High Altitude Area Defense (THAAD) anti-missile defense system into South Korea as fears of increasing nuclear weapons capabilities by the North grow.

The THAAD nuclear defense system has angered residents of the village in Seongju county where it has been installed in South Korea and drawn protests from officials in China. Beijing says that the system will do little to deter North Korean leader Kim Jong-un but will destabilize the regional security balance.

At the same time, the U.S. moved the USS Michigan guided missile nuclear submarine to South Korea, for what a U.S. defense official described as a “show of force.” The USS Michigan is the most destructive nuclear submarine in the United States’ arsenal.

The latest series of showdowns are taking place against the backdrop of the highly provocative annual joint military exercises by the United States and South Korea, which engaged 300,000 military personnel in war drills during the final week of April. The drills simulate North Korean regime change and ‘decapitation’ of its political leadership on the border of the two Koreas. For numerous years, North Korea has insisted that it will

suspend its nuclear weapons program and missile tests only when the U.S. and South Korea put a stop to these joint military exercises.

In order to de-escalate the situation and move beyond the crisis, both sides need to employ constructive language as a first means of engagement. The United States needs to show serious intent by redirecting the USS Carl Vinson, the U.S. Navy’s third Nimitz-class supercarrier, and the USS Michigan, away from the peninsula. Not only does the U.S. continue to feed the tension by deploying warships to the Korean peninsula, it also uses North Korea’s possible launch of ballistic missiles as a pretext for moving the THAAD anti-ballistic missile system to South Korea before the presidential elections

in South Korea on May 9.

China is watching all of this. Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi recently stated, “THAAD is not a simple technical issue, but an out-and-out strategic one.” China sees the missile defense system and its radar, against which it has protested vehemently, as a direct violation of



Columban Father Pat Cunningham (left) joins women demonstrating for peace and standing in opposition to the construction of naval base on Jeju Island in South Korea. Photo courtesy of the Columban Missionaries UK.

its national security interests.

U.S. Vice President Mike Pence said during his recent visit to South Korea that “the era of strategic patience is over” and that “all options remain on the table.” These remarks are akin to President George W. Bush’s use of the infamous and highly inflammatory term “axis of evil” to describe governments that his administration accused of sponsoring terrorism and seeking weapons of mass destruction.

North Korea has responded with its own inflammatory verbiage. “Whatever comes from the U.S., we will cope with it. We are fully prepared to handle it,” North

Korea's top diplomat, Han Song Ryol, said, according to an Associated Press report. North Korea views these joint military drills as nothing short of an occupying imperial army based in South Korea overreaching and engaging in belligerent actions too close for comfort on its border.

It is important to remember that North Korea developed its nuclear weapons program during the years when the "six party talks" were suspended. The six party talks are a series of multilateral negotiations held intermittently since 2003 and attended by China, Japan, North Korea, Russia, South Korea, and the United States for the purpose of dismantling North Korea's nuclear program. The talks are hosted in Beijing and chaired by China. While the talks were suspended, the other countries increased economic sanctions on North Korea in the hope that the North Korea leadership might suddenly collapse of its own accord. On the contrary, what we have witnessed is an incredibly resilient and emboldened North Korea.

Unsurprisingly, few media outlets have reported on North Korea's repeated requests to the United States to sign a peace treaty that would bring the unresolved

ideas of mobilizing women across the peninsula and around the world to bring an end to war and violent conflict. On May 24, International Women's Day for Peace and Disarmament, the group of thirty women peacemakers successfully crossed the 2-mile wide De-Militarized Zone (DMZ) that separates millions of Korean families, as a symbolic act of peace. Like these women, the majority of people in South Korea wish to move beyond a truce to a peace treaty.

The facts presented by Women Cross DMZ are stark:

- 4 million people died in the Korean War of 1950–53, most of them Korean civilians.
- 10 million families are still separated by the demilitarized zone.
- 70 million Koreans live in a state of war due to unresolved conflict.
- 60+ years after the war ended with a temporary cease-fire agreement, we are still waiting for a peace treaty.
- \$1 trillion has been spent by the U.S., China, Russia, Japan, and South Korea on militarization, fueled by unresolved conflicts.



Women peacemakers organized by Women Cross DMZ walk for an end to the Korean War and for reuniting families on May 24, 2015. Photo by Stephen Wunrow and on the website <https://www.womencrossdmz.org/>.

Korean War to a long-overdue end.

In a recent workshop on peace and reunification during Ecumenical Advocacy Days in Washington, D.C., I spoke about the powerful witness led by Women Cross DMZ, a group of thirty international women peacemakers who in May 2015 – the 79th anniversary of Korea's division into two separate states by Cold War powers – walked with thousands of women from both North and South Korea to call for an end to the Korean War, reunification of families, and women's leadership in the peace-building process.

Women Cross DMZ also held international peace symposiums in Pyongyang and Seoul where they listened to Korean women share their experiences and

A peace treaty is the way to sustainable peace and is what the people of the Korean peninsula deserve after the horrendous loss of four million lives during the Korean War. The urgent need for peace on the Korean peninsula and the important role of women in the peace process have never been more keenly felt, especially as governments and politicians fail to deliver.

It is crucial to acknowledge that the military solution never works and that listening to an alternative civilian voice from an internationalist, feminist perspective is the way to build bridges. It is time to increase civilian exchanges and women's leadership, highlighting the need for all parties involved to de-escalate immediately, and move toward a peace treaty. §

Global migration crisis: Border walls destroy life

On April 28, the Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns joined 38 national faith-based organizations and 41 state & local faith-based organizations and congregations in a letter to all members of Congress urging them to oppose funding for a border wall and further militarized infrastructure along the U.S.-Mexico border. Instead, we ask Congress to appropriate funding that supports our shared faith principles and reorients the Department of Homeland Security's strategies toward more sensible and humane solutions that are informed by and to the benefit of border communities. The following is the full text of the letter. The list of signatories is available at <http://maryknollogc.org/article/us-border-wall-proposal-inconsistent-interfaith-values>.

We write to you as communities of faith to ask you to oppose any efforts to build a wall or other barrier across our southern border. Though we come from different faith traditions, we are united across theological lines by principles of compassion, stewardship, solidarity, and justice. Our unique traditions call us to value the dignity and worth of every person and to protect creation.

A border wall and other forms of senseless border militarization are inconsistent with these values. A border wall is not only an irresponsible use of public funds, but also hurts people and the environment, interferes with the sovereignty of indigenous communities along the border, harms businesses and communities in the border region, involves the confiscation of private land, and further militarizes a region that has already seen an erosion of civil rights.

The January 27, 2017 executive order, *Border Security and Immigration Enforcement Improvements*, and the Department of Homeland Security's subsequent implementation memo propose to expand the current border wall and further militarize the border region. We see these proposals as counterproductive efforts that directly conflict with the faith principles we hold dear.

Walls do not deter migration. The construction of border walls and increased enforcement tactics focus on the symptoms rather than the causes of migration. Rather than deter migration, the current 650-miles of barrier along the southern border has pushed vulnerable migrants – sometimes at the direction of traffickers – into more dangerous and sometimes fatal routes. This further complicates a complex situation rather than increasing security. As long as poverty, lack of opportunity and violent conflict push people to come to the U.S.—and, as long as opportunities, safety, and family members pull people here—there will be migration. When the legal routes are either not available or severely restricted, as they are in the U.S., people will seek safety and family reunification whatever way they can. And no wall will stop them.

Walls are an ineffective and immoral use of public funds. At an estimated initial construction cost of

over \$21 billion, a border wall represents irresponsible and wasteful government spending. To date, taxpayers have already paid more than \$2.4 billion for approximately 650 miles of border fencing- and many millions more have been spent on maintenance. This will only increase with further construction.

Such public funds should not be wasted on a border wall, but instead dedicated to education, health care, housing, and other basic human needs programs, in addition to addressing root causes in the countries from which people are migrating.

Walls hurt communities, businesses and land-owners in the border region. Over the past twenty years, the federal government has dramatically militarized the U.S.-Mexico border region, infringing on the civil rights of border residents, and sowing distrust and fear between communities and law enforcement entities. Gone largely unchecked, these operations have stifled the economic vitality and overall wellbeing of U.S. border communities. Much of the land along the Texas border is in private hands, meaning the government will need to seize this land through eminent domain, leading to lengthy court battles and the loss of private property for hundreds of land owners, including ranchers and farmers.

Walls increase risk of flooding and cause other environmental harms. Dozens of laws that protect the environment, public health, and sacred lands were waived to build existing fencing and walls. We should not sacrifice clean air, clean water, and decades of investments in our public lands for dubious promises of increased security, particularly not when our border security agencies and border communities tell us such drastic measures are not necessary. These proposals, using heated rhetoric over border security, will undermine longstanding human health and environmental protections. Nearly one-third of U.S. land along the border lies in public hands, including national wildlife refuges, national parks, and national forests. Fencing and walls, while doing little to stop human migration, are effectively severing wildlife migration routes and destroying thousands of acres of natural habitat. Physical barriers have also resulted in

extensive flooding and soil erosion. Further construction of fencing and walls along the border will only serve to exacerbate the destruction of God's creation.

Walls infringe on the rights of indigenous border communities. A border wall would further divide historic tribal lands and communities; prevent tribal members from making traditional crossings for domestic, ceremonial, and religious purposes; and disturb or even destroy tribal archeological, sacred sites, and human remains. Any border security measures – including patrols and checkpoints– affecting or accessing tribal lands must involve meaningful consultation, collaboration, and direct participation by all affected tribes.

Our faith communities have ministries and rela-

tionships deeply rooted in border communities. We have witnessed how current border enforcement policies have torn families and communities apart, contributed to the deaths of thousands of migrants, harmed wildlife and border ecosystems, and violated the rights and humanity of U.S. citizens and immigrants alike. As communities of faith, we believe that government spending should reflect our values. Funding for further border militarization falls far short of these values. Therefore, we ask you to stand against any funding for a border wall and further militarized infrastructure and instead to reorient the Department of Homeland Security's strategies toward more sensible and humane solutions that benefit and are informed by border communities. §



Faith in action: Protect Haitians in the U.S.

Right now, there are more than 50,000 Haitians in the U.S. who could be deported after July 22. Send a letter to Homeland Security Secretary John Kelly asking him to extend temporary protected status for Haitians.

A top Trump administration official is recommending an end to Temporary Protected Status, or TPS, for Haitian immigrants, a designation that has allowed tens of thousands to live and work legally in the U.S. as their country recovers from a devastating earthquake in 2010 and a massive hurricane in 2016.

To force these vulnerable people to return to Haiti – the poorest nation in the western hemisphere – as it struggles to recover from natural disasters, would be inhumane and untenable.

As part of the Justice for Immigrants Campaign, which is organized by the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, we ask you to send a letter to Homeland Security Secretary John Kelly asking him to extend the Temporary Protected Status for Haitians in the U.S.

On April 21, *USA Today* reported that James McCament, acting director of U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services, said in a letter that conditions in Haiti have improved enough to end TPS for Haitians in the

U.S., according to a copy of the letter obtained by *USA Today*.

After the massive earthquake hit Haiti in 2010, the U.S. government pledged to provide protection through TPS for Haitians already in the United States. Today, about 58,000 Haitians have been able to rebuild their lives and work, and raise families in safety, while their remittances support loved ones in Haiti.

When Hurricane Matthew hit Haiti in October 2016, recovery efforts were up-ended. Tens of thousands of homes and schools were destroyed, as well as agricultural crops and livestock, which resulted in widespread food shortages and exacerbated the cholera epidemic – already the worst in the world. To send these vulnerable people back to Haiti would be a terrible hardship on both the individuals and the country to Haiti.

Please take action by going to the Justice for Immigrants Campaign website at <https://justiceforimmigrants.org/category/action-alerts/>

El Salvador votes for water over gold

After a 12-year campaign, Salvadoran lawmakers have voted to ban mining for metals. The following article was written by Pedro Cabezas, coordinator of the International Allies against Metal Mining and originally published on Inequality.org.

The people of El Salvador and their international allies against irresponsible mining are celebrating a historic victory. After a long battle against global mining companies that were determined to plunder the country's natural resources for short-term profits, El Salvador's Legislative Assembly has voted to ban all metal mining projects.

The new law is aimed at protecting the Central American nation's environment and natural resources. Approved on March 29 with the support of 69 lawmakers from multiple parties (out of a total of 84), the law blocks all exploration, extraction, and processing of metals, whether in open pits or underground. It also prohibits the use of toxic chemicals like cyanide and mercury.

In the lead-up to the vote, communities in the town of Cinquera had rejected mining through a local referendum and the Catholic Church of El Salvador had called for massive participation in a public protest to demand legislators to start discussions on the prohibition of mining. When the protest arrived at the legislative assembly, on March 9, they were greeted by a multi-party commission that committed to start discussions immediately and have legislation ready before the Easter holidays.

Despite the fact that there is a national consensus among communities, civil society organizations, government institutions, and political parties for a mining prohibition, the Australian-Canadian company OceanaGold and its subsidiaries in El Salvador have consistently attempted to slow the bill's progress and sought to gain support for their so-called "Responsible Mining" campaign.

The company launched the campaign at a fancy hotel in San Salvador after losing a \$250 million lawsuit against El Salvador in October 2016. The company had filed a claim with the International Center for the Settlement of Investment Disputes (ICSID), demanding compensation when the government declined to grant the firm a permit for a gold extraction project that threatened the nation's water supply. In the face of tremendous opposition from a wide range of groups inside and outside El Salvador, the ICSID tribunal ruled against the company.

When legislators announced that they would begin serious discussion on the mining ban, the company intensified its activities. Besides publishing paid com-

muniqués in local pro-business newspapers, social organizations reported that OceanaGold representatives met with government officials to lobby against the bill.

On March 23, a pro-mining protest was organized by the El Dorado Foundation (the foundation created and funded by OceanaGold) in front of the Legislative Assembly while the Commission deliberated over the bill. It was later reported by FMLN Representative Guillermo Mata, President of the Environment and Climate Change Commission, that the busloads of people brought by the foundation from the Department of Cabanas had each been paid \$7 plus a free lunch to attend. They were also directed not to talk to the press. Also on March 23, Luis Parada, the lawyer who led the defense team for El Salvador in the ICSID case, denounced through his twitter account a letter sent by OceanaGold and its subsidiary Pac Rim containing veiled threats of further legal action should El Salvador vote to ban mining.

But the push for a mining prohibition remained strong. To support the anti-mining coalition, Carlos Padilla, Governor of Nueva Vizcaya in the Philippines, visited El Salvador to share his province's adverse experience with OceanaGold. On March 28, in presentations to El Salvador's Environment and Climate Change Commission, Padilla reported that the mine had brought no significant economic growth, had violated human rights, and posed a threat to the province's agricultural activity, the environment, and future generations.

His testimony helped break down the myths of economic growth and responsible, sustainable mining propagated by OceanaGold. After Padilla's presentation the legislators on the Commission unanimously voted to advance the Law to Ban Metal Mining to the floor of the Legislative Assembly.

Also in advance of the assembly vote, many foreign organizations and individuals wrote to the president of the Legislative Assembly, Guillermo Gallegos, expressing solidarity with the people of El Salvador and support for the law.

By voting in favor of the mining ban, these lawmakers in El Salvador have chosen water over gold, and people and the environment over corporate profits. And they showed that even a very poor country can stand up to powerful global mining firms. §

Maryknoll supports environmental defenders

In March, the Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns supported two delegations from Latin America who spoke at separate hearings at the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights in Washington, D.C.

Two delegations addressed the plight of environmental human rights defenders at separate hearings at the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights on March 17. Both described ongoing threats to the right of communities to a fair and adequate consultation process when a development project is proposed in the area.

At the first hearing, indigenous and Afro-descendant activists from Panama spoke about their nearly twenty-year opposition to the Barro Blanco dam. We and the Sisters of Mercy of the Americas Institute Justice Team sponsored the hearing.

In the last year, communities opposing the Barro Blanco dam have faced violent oppression from the police. As the reservoir fills, some communities have been flooded and others left with little to no water at all.

Large-scale hydroelectric dams are a harmful source of renewable energy because they are energy-intensive to build, and destructive of riparian zones and the way of life of surrounding communities.

After hearing their testimony, the commissioners ruled that the government of Panama and the community activists need to enter into dialogue and find resolution by the end of the year. The first such meeting was held in Panama on March 27, and Maryknoll Sister Melinda Roper attended.

“My impression was that the atmosphere was one of clarity and openness on the part of almost all the people there to continue the process of dialog,” Sister Melinda said in an article about the meeting in the Global Sisters Report. The Global Sisters Report also published a series of articles on Panama and environmental human rights defenders.

The second hearing at the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights was sponsored by the Pan-Amazon Ecclesial Network, also known as REPAM. We, together with other Catholic groups, the Latin American Episcopal Conference, Caritas International, and the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, supported the delegation of indigenous activists, peasants, and faith leaders who spoke about the right to consultation for indigenous peoples. We also organized a series of lobby visits for them to share their stories with policymakers and trainees to equip them in their advocacy back home.

The delegation included roughly 20 people from Brazil, Ecuador, Peru, and Colombia. Luis Sanchez, a Shuar indigenous leader, spoke about a Chinese company that is displacing indigenous communities in South-

ern Ecuador to extract copper. Sister Maria Angel from Spain accompanies Luis and the community in their advocacy efforts. She collaborates with the Ecumenical Center for Human Rights (CEDHU), of which Maryknoll Sister Elsie Monge is a founding member.

Rosildo da Silva, an indigenous leader from the Jaminawa tribe in Brazil, was there to represent the Jaminawa as well as other indigenous communities who do not have legal recognition of their territory. Together the communities oppose a large-scale REDD+ project (Reduction in Emissions from Deforestation and Degradation). REDD+ is a carbon trading scheme that allows wealthy countries to offset their carbon emissions by protecting forests. California is currently in negotiations with the state of Acre in Brazil to allow California to offset their emissions in exchange for the forest in Acre, where the Jaminawa live, to be left untouched.

The communities oppose this plan because it would require them to limit the sustainable use and relationship they have with the forest. Will they be able to forage or hunt for food? Will they receive enough compensation from Brazil’s Green Fund, which pays families not to cut down trees, to meet their basic needs? Will communities that haven’t had their land formally recognized by the state be given the right to consultation or to refuse the project?

Sister Digna Ochoa of Ecuador represented the indigenous communities around Yasuni National Park, deep in the Amazon. Yasuni is one of the most biodiverse hot spots in the world. Sister Digna is concerned about the expansion of oil drilling in the park, especially the risks to uncontacted indigenous communities there.

Zebelio Kayap represented the indigenous communities of Awajun and Wampis in Peru. They had filed a court case asserting their right to be consulted about an oil project in their territory. Already, the rivers have been polluted and the health of the community and the entire ecosystem has been compromised.

After they returned from Peru, the Catholic News Service reported that the Supreme Court in Peru ruled in favor of Awajun and Wampis. The court ruled that since Peru signed on to the International Labor Organization’s Convention 169 in 1996, all development projects since then must give indigenous communities the right to free prior and informed consent. The ruling could have implications for other indigenous communities with similar cases. §

Israel/Palestine: 50 years of occupation

2017 marks 50 years of Israel's military occupation of Gaza, the West Bank and East Jerusalem and 10 years of Israel's blockade of Gaza.

The U.S. Campaign for Palestinian Rights and other solidarity organizations will mark this 50th anniversary with nationwide actions June 5-10: For more information, go to <https://uscpr.org/campaigns/50actions/>.

Churches for Middle East Peace will also host a "50 Years Too Long" summit, June 4-6 in Washington, D.C. Learn more at www.cmepsummit.org

Earlier this year, the United States Catholic Bishops Conference (USCCB) participated in an annual delegation of North American and European Catholic bishops to Israel and Palestine seeking a peaceful resolution to the conflict. Former Director of the Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns and current Co-President of Pax Christi International, Marie Dennis, participated in the delegation, which is known as the Holy Land Coordination.

After visiting the occupied West Bank and Gaza, the delegation issued a statement on the injustice of the occupation which includes an appeal to U.S. Catholics to act on behalf of justice and peace for Israelis as well as Palestinians.

The statement, which is available on the USCCB website, is as follows:

"For fifty years the West Bank, East Jerusalem and Gaza have languished under occupation, violating the human dignity of both Palestinians and Israelis. This is a scandal to which we must never become accustomed.

"Our Coordination has called for justice and peace every year since 1998, yet the suffering continues. So this call must get louder. As Bishops we implore Christians in our home countries to recognise our own responsibility for prayer, awareness and action.

"So many people in the Holy Land have spent their entire lives under occupation, with its polarising social segregation, yet still profess hope and strive for reconciliation. Now, more than ever, they deserve our solidarity.

"We all have a responsibility to oppose the construction of settlements. This de facto annexation of land not only undermines the rights of Palestinians in areas such as Hebron and East Jerusalem but, as the UN recently recognised, also imperils the chance of peace.

"We all have a responsibility to provide assistance for the people of Gaza, who continue to live amid a man-made humanitarian catastrophe. They have now spent a decade under blockade, compounded by a political impasse caused by ill-will on all sides.

"We all have a responsibility to encourage non-violent resistance which, as Pope Francis reminds us, has achieved great changes across the world. This is particularly necessary in the face of injustices such as the continued construction of the separation wall on Palestinian land including the Cremisan Valley.

"We all have a responsibility to promote a two-state solution. The Holy See has emphasised that 'if Israel and Palestine do not agree to exist side-by-side, reconciled and sovereign within mutually agreed and internationally recognised borders, peace will remain a distant dream and security an illusion.'

"We all have a responsibility to help the local Church, its agencies, volunteers and NGOs. In the most testing circumstances they show great resilience and carry out life-changing work. It is our faith in God that gives us hope. It is the witness of Christians in the Holy Land and especially the young people we met that inspires us.

"The Bible tells us: 'You will declare this fiftieth year to be sacred and proclaim the liberation of all the country's inhabitants.' [Leviticus 25:10]. During this fiftieth year of occupation we must pray for the liberty of everyone in the Holy Land and practically support all those working to build a just peace."

Signatories:

Bishop Declan Lang, England and Wales (Chair of the Holy Land Coordination)

Archbishop Riccardo Fontana, Italy

Bishop Stephen Ackermann, Germany

Bishop Peter Bürcher, Bishops' Conference of the Nordic Countries

Bishop Oscar Cantú, United States of America

Bishop Christopher Chessun, Church of England

Bishop Michel Dubost, France

Bishop Lionel Gendron, Canada

Bishop Felix Gmür, Switzerland

Bishop Nicholas Hudson, Commission of the Bishops' Conferences of the European Community

Bishop William Kenney, England and Wales

Bishop William Nolan, Scotland

With the support of:

Mgr. Duarte da Cunha, Council of the Catholic Bishops' Conferences in Europe

Fr. Peter-John Pearson, South African Bishops' Conference§

South Sudan: Shifting the Lens on Famine

For the first time in six years, the United Nations has declared that a situation of famine exists on the continent of Africa.

By early February the population of two counties of South Sudan had reached a level 5 on the Integrated Food Security Phase Classification (IPC), a scientific measurement of determining levels of food insecurity. Declarations of famine are more than just statistical measurement. They are political acts intended to spur rapid responses to the threat of human starvation.

In recent months advocacy organizations and international humanitarian agencies have begun to lobby the U.S. government to respond and have debated a wide range of actions that should be taken toward the dire situation in South Sudan.

South Sudan's plight may soon be matched by three other places: Yemen, Somalia, and Nigeria's north-east region. Because all four of these emergencies are taking place amid situations of severe, violent conflicts, some advocates of humanitarian assistance have begun to use the term "man-made famine" in order to draw a connection between violent conflict and hunger. For example, Simon O'Connell of Mercy Corps stated recently that "only if we understand conflict can we understand hunger."

In testimony before the House Foreign Affairs Sub-Committee on Africa Matt Nims, Acting Director of USAID'S Office of Food for Peace, Bureau for Democracy, Conflict, and Humanitarian Assistance, claimed that there has been a "remarkable shift in the drivers of humanitarian crisis over the past decade. Ten years ago, conflict caused just twenty percent of emergencies. Today that number is eighty percent according to the U.N."

As warnings about impending famines and calls for increased food aid grow louder, an all-too-familiar scenario is emerging in the media that omits many important aspects of what takes place when humans experience famine.

Too often the media's description of those enduring the burden of famine's bite is one of helpless, starving individuals whose plight can only be alleviated by the interventions of global humanitarian organizations. They depict disaster relief specialists ready to combat the roadblocks set up by venial government leaders who themselves are the cause of the conflicts that engender famine.

But as anyone who has worked with people in situations of extreme food shortages knows, hungry people themselves take decisive and courageous action when

they are threatened by famine. They adjust their lifestyle by cutting down on food consumption. They search for alternative sources of income and often share what little they have with those less fortunate.

When all else fails, those facing famine often undertake long migrations in the search for food and security. As weather and security conditions improve, they exhibit an amazing resilience as they plant crops and reconstruct their broken lives.

Despite the resilience of people in South Sudan, prolonged military conflicts have led to such a truly precarious situation that 1.77 million people have fled as refugees into neighboring countries and 1.9 million remain as internally displaced people. Five million South Sudanese are considered to be in a state of crisis and at least 100,000 are already living in famine. These deadly conditions call for a further shift in the lens of how we understand and respond to the challenge of famine.

At a recent Africa Policy Forum sponsored by members of Congress, expert panelists put forth widely differing responses to the crisis in South Sudan. Jon Brouse of the World Food Program reiterated the famine and conflict link when he noted that while drought disrupts productivity, conflict disrupts everything, including the intervention of humanitarian aid organizations.

John Prendergast of the Enough Project questioned whether, in conflicts like those raging in South Sudan, humanitarian aid is the sole response required. If famine is man-made and if the men making the famine are doing so by waging war, then a peace strategy needs to be put in place that gets at the core vulnerability of those waging war. In the case of South Sudan, this means finding ways to close off the transfer of looted financial assets as well as oil and gold by those currently in the seats of power.

In the midst of these conflict-related famines, there are hopeful grassroots approaches aimed at building peace and resolving the underlying cause of hunger. The South Sudan Council of Churches (SSCC), through its Action Plan for Peace, is laying the foundations for a national peace process. The impacts of the council's efforts at the local level are already apparent.

The Catholic Church's Solidarity with South Sudan also continues to train teachers, midwives, and agricultural extension agents. Learn more at <http://www.solidarityssudan.org>

Resources

- 1) **Maryknoll Mission Institute 2017:** Join continuing education and renewal programs for missionaries and others engaged in cross-cultural ministries, sponsored by the Maryknoll Sisters Congregation, in Monrovia and Los Altos, California and Maryknoll, New York. Two programs NewsNotes readers may find of interest: Fr. Elias Opongo, SJ on “Structures of Sin and Personal Conversion toward Social Transformation” **June 18-23** and Melanie Harris on “Eco-Womanism Wisdom” **July 9-14**. For a description of these and other programs for 2017, contact the Maryknoll Mission Institute at (914) 941-7575, missinst@mksisters.org, or go to: <http://bit.ly/MKMissionInstitute2017>
- 2) **Interfaith Drones Network:** Watch the new 30-minute film *Moral and Safe: War, Peace, Drone Warfare, and the Religious Community*, which is designed to introduce faith groups to the topic of lethal drones. Watch a preview of the film at <https://vimeo.com/212115370>. Sign up for the link to the film at: <http://bit.ly/MoralandSafe> A study guide for group discussion is available at <http://bit.ly/MoralandSafeGuide>
- 3) **"50 Years Too Long" Advocacy Summit:** Join Churches for Middle East Peace for their Advocacy Summit in Washington D.C., **June 4-6**. The Summit will take place at the Mount Vernon United Methodist Church. Learn more at <https://cmepsummit.org/>
- 4) **Women's March to Ban the Bomb:** Join the march in New York City on **June 17**. Organized by the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom during the second round of the nuclear weapons ban negotiations at the UN. <https://www.womenbanthebomb.org/>
- 5) **Send your comments to the EPA:** The Environmental Protection Agency is seeking comments from the public on plans to revise or repeal environmental regulations. Submit your comments at <http://bit.ly/EPAregulationscomments>
- 6) **The Lazy Person's Guide to Saving the World:** Acknowledging that each one of us can make a difference, the United Nations offers ways you can take action of the Global Goals for Sustainable Development. The guide is sectioned into three different levels of effort, ranging from things you can accomplish from the comfort of your home, like canceling paper bank statements in favor of digital ones, to things you can do while you're out and about, like grabbing a bit less than an indulgent handful of napkins at the neighborhood cafe. <http://bit.ly/UNSDGTakeAction>
- 7) **Instruments of Pain (II): Conflict and Famine in South Sudan:** Read this eight-page report from the International Crisis Group on the roots of the crisis in South Sudan and the measures necessary to prevent further deterioration. <http://bit.ly/CrisisGroupSouthSudan>
- 8) **Animated Resettlement Guide Video for People Affected by Dam Development:** Watch this 10-minute animation video by International Rivers on the process of resettlement caused by large dam projects. The video educates affected communities on their rights during resettlement. <https://www.internationalrivers.org/node/13136>
- 9) **Freedom's Journey, Understanding Human Trafficking:** Explore this guide by Suzanne Dworak-Peck School of Social Work at the University of Southern California on the areas where trafficking is most prevalent, the forms of exploitation that exist, and the root causes of this epidemic. <http://bit.ly/FreedomsJourney> Find more resources on this topic at <http://www.stopenslavement.org/>
- 10) **No One Should Be Forced From Home:** Download this four-page fact sheet on the intersection of immigration, trade, and climate by the Sierra Club. <http://bit.ly/SierraClubFactSheet>
- 11) **Food Sustainability Index:** Explore this ranking on the sustainability of food systems of 25 countries across three themes: Food Loss and Waste, Sustainable Agriculture, and Nutritional Challenges. The index contains three types of key performance indicators: environmental, societal, and economic. <http://foodsustainability.eiu.com/>