



Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns

NewsNotes

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Laudato Si': Interconnected relationships

The following reflection, written by Chloe Schwabe, faith-economy-ecology program director, is the last in our year-long series of opening articles in NewsNotes that examines the teachings of Pope Francis in Laudato Si'.

In Bolivia, it is common for people to celebrate a ritual known as *Q'oa* ("smoke offering") on the first Friday of each month. Families, businesses, friends, and communities gather together a mixture of seeds, cocoa, animal fur, and other objects and lay them out on a special offering plate to *Pachamama* (Mother Earth). The offering is then burned over charcoal as a symbol of reciprocity to bring abundance and well-being for the community.

I had the opportunity to walk through the streets of the city of Cochabamba during the *Q'oa* ritual this past October while visiting the Maryknoll Latin American Mission Center. I saw families and businesses burning the *Q'oa* plates and I joined in the celebration with a large gathering at a local club.

The *Q'oa* ritual is a beautiful display of the Andean concept of *Buen Vivir* or "good life." Indigenous intellectuals such as Gustavo Soto Santiesteban describe *Buen Vivir* as a system of reciprocal and interconnected relationships. *Buen Vivir* promotes cooperativism, community, and a circular, harmonious relationship with all life and nature. It contrasts with the Western paradigm of domination of top-down linear thinking, separation of nature and humanity, competition and divisions.

Pope Francis offers a vision similar to *Buen Vivir* in his encyclical, *Laudato Si'*, which also critiques the dominant development paradigm. He promotes "integral ecology," which he describes as "Taking time to recover a serene harmony with creation, reflecting on our lifestyle and our ideals, and contemplating the Creator who lives among us and surrounds us." (225)

The pope speaks about the interrelationship of creation and humanity, "It cannot be emphasized enough how everything is interconnected." (138) "We are part of nature, included in it and thus in constant interaction with it. Recognizing the reasons why a given area is polluted requires a study of the workings of society, its economy, its behavior patterns, and the ways it grasps reality ... Strategies for a solution demand an integrated approach to combating poverty, restoring dignity to the excluded, and at the same time protecting nature." (138)

However, Santiesteban has described contemporary Bolivians reinterpreting the *Buen Vivir* tradition and values to fit the dominant paradigm. For instance, some-

times people include requests for more wealth or some other personal petition when burning their offerings during *Q'oa* rituals.

The reinterpretation of *Buen Vivir* can be seen in government policies as well.

For example, Cochabamba is experiencing its worst drought in twenty years largely due to the disappearance of Andean glaciers and the recurrent El Niño meteorological phenomenon – both caused by climate change. Maryknoll Missioners and many families in Bolivia have little to no running water. When there is water flowing from the taps, people stockpile it in bathtubs, buckets, and sinks. At various international meetings concerning climate change, the government of Bolivia has advocated for *Buen Vivir* policies such as language

on the rights of nature in the Paris Climate Agreement and more support for developing countries to adapt to impacts of climate change. Yet, domestically, the government's economic model under President Evo Morales is based largely on the extraction of natural resources such as natural gas, petroleum and hydropower which include fossil fuels that are destructive to *Pachamama*.

While Bolivia's extractives policy is not that different from other countries with natural resource wealth, it stands in direct contrast to their *Buen Vivir* policy. In particular, the government is allowing more and more Chinese companies, propelled by rising demand for energy and minerals in China, to finance extractive projects in Bolivia. Chinese companies have been repeatedly criticized across Latin America and Africa for weak environmental and human rights standards.

Equally egregious is the country's import of cheap, dirty diesel fuel from Venezuela which pollutes the air and creates a serious threat to public health. Cochabamba lies in a bowl-like crater and the resulting cloud of smog is so thick that it sometimes blocks the view of the surrounding mountains.

The most controversial project in Bolivia right now is a planned road and oil and gas extraction projects in Tipnis National Park, including the indigenous territories of the Moxeño-Trinitario, Yuracaré, and Chimáne peoples. Indigenous peoples and those following the teachings of *Laudato Si'* need to continue to seek dialogue and reframe the dominant paradigm to respect the interconnectedness of relationships. §



Climate change: New global agreements

Leading up to the next United Nations Climate Change Conference (known as the Conference of Parties or COP22) scheduled to meet in Marrakesh, Morocco November 14-15, countries and industries have been moving forward with new agreements to further greenhouse gas emissions.

There have been some landmark agreements to mitigate and adapt to the impacts of climate change in recent weeks, as countries prepare for the U.N. Climate Change Conference in Marrakesh. The question remains, however, will these efforts be ambitious enough and timely enough to prevent some of the worst climate change scenarios.

On October 5, the Paris climate agreement passed an important threshold and was set to enter into force thirty days later, on November 4. Thanks to more than 70 countries adopting the agreement, the percentage of global emissions accounted for topped the 55 percent threshold needed for the treaty to take effect.

“This is an important achievement,” Gerry Lee, the director of the Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns said. “Not only does it demonstrate the power of dialogue and negotiation in addressing a truly global injustice, but also it begins to move the Earth away from certain destruction and toward a more sustainable future for all of us.”

On October 6, the International Civilian Aviation Organization agreed to cut carbon emissions. The agreement lacks strength, however, in that it relies on the goodwill of companies to both participate and self-regulate; and it allows for carbon offsets. It is difficult to accurately measure the amount of carbon they claim to save.

The agreement also encourages a shift to alternative fuels. This could include biofuels, which are problematic because they are generated from crops grown on land that otherwise could be used to grow food for consumption, or land that was previously forest and savannah. When demand for food crops such as corn increase because of demand for biofuels, food prices may spike as they did in world food price crisis of 2008.

On October 15 another landmark climate change agreement was reached in Kigali, Rwanda. 170 nations agreed to phase out the use of hydrofluorocarbons (HFCs), found in most refrigerants and air conditioning units. Once an important replacement of ozone depleting chlorofluorocarbons, HFCs are now recognized as one of the fastest growing and most potent classes of greenhouse gases. There are safer alternatives on the market today that do not contribute to climate change or ozone depletion. Because HFCs are regulated under the

Montreal Protocol, a legally binding agreement, rather than the Paris climate agreement which is not legally binding, signature countries will need to adhere to their commitments or face legal consequences.

Beginning in 2019, the U.S. and other wealthy countries will need to start reducing HFC emissions to about 15 percent of 2012 levels by 2036. Some less wealthy nations, particularly those in hot climates – China, India, Pakistan, Iran, Saudi Arabia, Kuwait – pushed for a more lenient time frame given the rising demand for air conditioning in their countries and the current higher costs of HFC alternatives. In a notable display of solidarity, all of the African nations present chose to phase out their HFCs faster than most other less wealthy nations. “Africa is a continent that is deeply vulnerable to climate change,” said Vincent Biruta, Rwanda’s minister of natural resources as reported in the *New York Times*. “We are witnessing disastrous droughts — our people are losing lives. We need to address climate change if we are to address poverty.”

The HFC phase out will be done gradually with countries operating on different tracks with the goal of reducing global HFC emissions by 80-85 percent by 2047. This action could reduce global warming by 0.2 to 0.5 degrees.

These agreements will influence the discussions at the COP22 in Marrakesh. Some countries are scheduled to unveil their plans to reduce carbon emissions by 2050. Many anticipate that negotiators will discuss the roadmap released by developed countries on October 17, which detailed the plan to meet their commitment to mobilize \$100 billion of climate finance per year by 2020 to support developing countries.

It is also likely that they will begin discussing the “facilitative dialogue to take stock” scheduled to be held in 2018. The dialogue will be an opportunity for nations to evaluate their progress on their current climate commitments as well as opportunities for increasing those commitments by 2020. In 2020, nations are expected to announce even more ambitious national goals to meet the overall goal of the Paris climate agreement, which is to “limit global temperature rise to well below 2 degrees Celsius, and given the grave risks, to strive for 1.5 degrees Celsius.”§



Climate change: Concerns about green bonds

As green bonds approach their tenth anniversary as a capital-raising and investment tool for projects that have positive environmental or climate benefits, questions remain over how well they are managed.

To avoid the worst of climate change and prepare for its effects globally will require trillions of dollars in investment in coming years. Not only will governments need to increase investments in mitigation and adaption, but also private investors will need to participate.

An increasingly popular way for investors to participate is to buy green bonds, which are similar to traditional bonds but with the caveat that the money raised be earmarked for projects that benefit the environment. The past three years has witnessed an explosion in the number of green bonds available to investors. While they can be a useful way to raise money, the lack of clear rules and verification processes for green bonds currently leave many investors wary.

The World Bank issued the first green bonds in 2008 to “raise funds for projects seeking to mitigate climate change or help affected people adapt to it.” In 2013, municipal and state governments began to issue green bonds as well, to raise money for a host of activities from buying more fuel-efficient buses to improving energy efficiency in public buildings, to improving sewage and waste treatment. Utility companies also entered into the market that year in an attempt to finance replacing coal plants with greener options and improve efficiencies.

Since then, more and more corporations, banks and investment firms have started issuing green bonds. In just three years’ time, three key actors – state and municipal governments, utility companies, and the corporate sector – have grown to dominate the impressive market growth. Market analysts expect that more than \$100 billion of green bonds will be issued during 2017.

While green bonds are an important tool for addressing climate change and environmental destruction, there are some major concerns that need to be resolved to ensure that they are truly effective. First, the market needs a standard definition for “green.”

“Any company or municipality that wants to raise money by means of a green bond can do so,” Sophia Grene, asset management reporter for the Financial Times, recently wrote, “and all it has to do is convince the buyers it is justified. If those buyers are fund managers attempting to fill up their sustainable investment quota, they may not be motivated to be hypercritical. After all, building a motorway could be justified as ‘green’

if it is intended to cut congestion.”

The lack of clarity of what “green” means has already allowed some environmentally and socially destructive projects to be funded by “green” bonds. In 2014, French energy company GDF Suez issued a green bond of 2.5 billion Euros to fund, among other initiatives, the Jirau hydropower mega dam in Brazil. This project displaced tens of thousands of people, mostly indigenous families, without their free, previous and informed consent, as required by law. Also, while hydropower is often considered to be a green energy alternative, numerous studies have found that, especially in tropical areas like the Amazon region, dams actually create large amounts of greenhouse gases through the flooding of dense jungles and deforestation for power lines and roads.

In addition to the lack of consensus on the definition of “green,” the fact that there is no requirement for verification of green bond projects by outside parties concerns many investors. The Environmental Defense Fund reports that “while roughly two-thirds of global green bonds issued in 2015 received either third-party verification or second-party opinion, only two U.S. municipal offerings re-

ceived any external review, casting doubts on the U.S. market’s credibility.”

In response to these concerns two groups created standards for green bonds in 2014. First, a group of issuers, investors and environmental groups created the Green Bond Principles (GBP), a set of voluntary standards designed to reassure participants that the bonds are legitimate and effective in benefitting the environment. Each year since they have updated the principles based on feedback from the public. While not perfect, the GBP addresses most concerns. Second, the Climate Bonds Initiative developed a similar set of standards as well as a list of independent verifiers prepared to certify the bonds.

The hope is that these two efforts will mature into a universal set of definitions and requirements for green bonds. Until then, it is important for interested investors to do their own due diligence to determine if a green bond has outside verification and supports legitimate environmental projects. §



Global migration crisis: New York Declaration

On September 19 the United Nations held its first-ever Summit for Refugees and Migrants. The purpose of this gathering was for heads of state to adopt the New York Declaration, a lengthy political declaration that “expresses the political will of world leaders to save lives, protect rights and share responsibility on a global scale.”

To meet the challenges arising from the 65.3 million displaced by conflict worldwide and the 3.2 million refugees who have applied for asylum in industrialized countries global leaders committed themselves to the following actions:

- Protect the human rights of all refugees and migrants, regardless of status. This includes the rights of women and girls and promoting their full, equal and meaningful participation in finding solutions.
- Ensure that all refugee and migrant children are receiving education within a few months of arrival.
- Prevent and respond to sexual and gender-based violence.
- Support those countries rescuing, receiving and hosting large numbers of refugees and migrants.
- Work towards ending the practice of detaining children for the purposes of determining their migration status.
- Strongly condemn xenophobia against refugees and migrants and support a global campaign to counter it.
- Strengthen the positive contributions made by migrants to economic and social development in their host countries.
- Improve the delivery of humanitarian and development assistance to those countries most affected, including through innovative multilateral financial solutions, with the goal of closing all funding gaps.
- Implement a comprehensive refugee response, based on a new framework that sets out the responsibility of Member States, civil society partners and the UN system, whenever there is a large movement of refugees or a protracted refugee situation.
- Find new homes for all refugees identified by UNHCR as needing resettlement; and expand the opportunities for refugees to relocate to other countries through, for example, labor mobility or education schemes.
- Strengthen the global governance of migration by bringing the International Organization for Migration into the UN system.

The agreement to move toward this comprehensive framework is a momentous one. It means that migration will be guided by a set of common principles.

Many migration advocates were disappointed, however, because clear commitments including resettling 10 percent of the world’s refugees annually and providing refugee children education within 30 days were deferred until 2018.

The countries did agree to develop guidelines on the treatment of migrants in vulnerable situations. Countries also agree to seek a more equitable sharing of the burden and responsibility for hosting refugees.

In both the General Assembly session and in the various roundtable discussions several important themes emerged regarding the plight of refugees and migrants:

First, the current crisis is dire due to the tremendous number of people on the move, the multiple reasons for their flight and the complexity of migration patterns. Migration is considered to be the mega trend of the early 21st century and the number of people expected to be on the move will continue to increase.

Second, the world needs to work together in partnership to address this crisis. No country can do it alone and host countries, especially in Africa, are bearing most of the burden.

Third, a framework exists to address the crisis – the Agenda 2030 and the Sustainable Development Goals. Goal 16 of the Sustainable Development Goals is dedicated to the “promotion of peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, the provision of access to justice for all, and building effective, accountable institutions at all levels.”

Finally, the positive contribution made by migrants to development, both in their host countries and through remittances estimated to be \$400 billion a year, should be stressed as a means of countering the toxic narrative heard in many countries.

In their evaluation of the declaration both the Center for Migration Studies and the Scalabrini International Migration Network maintain that it “falls short of creating a new framework for the protection of refugees and migrants around the world. Instead, it reaffirms the status quo, and, in some areas, weakens current protections for these vulnerable populations.” A major concern about the document is that it delays for two years the adoption of a global compact for refugees. §

Global migration crisis: U.S. detention rates soar

The U.S. immigration detention rates are spiraling out of control, reinforcing what advocates have been saying for years: Immigration detention is unfair, unnecessary, and too costly. The following article was written by Alfonso Buzzo, Peace Fellow with the Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns.

The Obama administration is finishing its final months with record-level immigration detention rates. According to the Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) of the Department of Homeland Security (DHS), since early summer 2016, average daily population has exceeded 37,000.

In addition, the agency estimates they will have roughly 42,000 detainees by the end of October. This shatters all prior detention records and far surpasses the congressional imposed detention bed quota of 34,000 per day.

Beyond these record-high numbers, the composition of the detainee population has dramatically changed in recent years. Previously, the majority of detainees had some type of criminal conviction. But since May 2016, the bulk of new detainees have no convictions whatsoever. These recent border crossers, many of whom are asylum seekers from Central America and Haiti, are detained for prolonged periods while pursuing their claims in the immigration courts, which remain backlogged.

At the same time, the DHS is facing an emergency crisis over immigration detention funding – \$136 million shortfall in the short-term. DHS has asked the White House to quickly transfer money to continue detention-related costs.

According to the Wall Street Journal, if DHS does not receive more funding by early November, it will be forced to curtail detention. Beyond the short-term budget impact, ICE has reported that it will need significantly more resources in fiscal year 2017 to continue detention.

The Advisory Committee on Family Residential Centers, established by DHS in July 2015 and comprised of education, health, and immigration experts, was tasked with recommending best practices for implementing family detention. After thorough research, much deliberation, and visits to all three existing family residential centers in Texas and Pennsylvania, the Advisory Committee announced during a public meeting on

October 7, that their primary recommendation is to “end family detention altogether, and that profound, fundamental changes must be made to family detention if it is to continue at all.” In particular, they assert that the current conditions in detention are not sufficient for ensuring the basic rights and well-being of children and families.

However, according to a statement by 27 advocacy organizations, including the Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns, ICE Director Sarah Saldaña responded by accusing the committee of going beyond their mandate by recommending the closure of family detention facilities.

She told the committee that she had not read their full report, and would “put it in a binder” for the next administration.

Three weeks later, on October 25, the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops launched a communications campaign in support of immigration reform. Bishop Eusebio Elizondo, Chair of the USCCB’s Committee on Migration and Auxiliary Bishop of the Archdiocese of Seattle, wrote the campaign’s first blogpost. In it the

bishop highlights the position of the Catholic Church on migration.

“Catholics know that every person is made in the image of God,” Bishop Elizondo writes. “Everyone is due our respect and our love. We’re called to care especially for those who most need our welcome, including newcomers to our country. Because the Church in America has always been an immigrant Church, Catholics feel this responsibility in a particular way ... The language we use in the public square matters. It should reflect the best of our American traditions – traditions of welcome; of unity in diversity; of care for those in need.”§

Faith in action: Read the blogpost by Bishop Elizondo <http://www.usccb.org/media/blogs-and-columns/entre-amigos/english/entre-amigo-oct-english-2016.cfm>

Ask President Obama and Congress to end detention and eliminate the detention bed quota for immigrants. <http://bit.ly/StopImmigrantDetention>



World AIDS Day: Prayer vigil

World AIDS Day is held on December 1 each year around the world. It is an opportunity to raise awareness, commemorate those who have died, and celebrate victories such as increased access to treatment and prevention service.

There were 36.7 million people living with HIV, the virus that causes AIDS, “acquired immunodeficiency syndrome,” in 2015. More than thirty years into the epidemic, there are signs of hope for an AIDS-free world.

Since the beginning of the epidemic in 1981, Maryknoll missionaries in Asia, Latin America, and Africa have worked in ministries serving persons living with HIV and AIDS. We have accompanied people dying of AIDS, worked with children orphaned by AIDS, supported women and girls who are at risk of violence or sexual abuse, and witnessed the direct impact of debt, trade issues and poverty on societies decimated by AIDS.

Over three decades more than 25 million people have died of AIDS worldwide. The world has responded by committing billions of dollars for research, programs and medicines, and innumerable efforts to change behaviors and lower the number of transmissions.

According to the latest estimates from UNAIDS:

1.1 million people died of AIDS in 2015, a 45 percent decrease since its peak in 2005. Deaths have declined due in part to antiretroviral treatment (ART) scale-up. HIV remains a leading cause of death worldwide and the number one cause of death in Africa.

There were about 2.1 million new infections in 2015 or about 5,700 new infections per day. This is a significant decline since the mid-1990s.

HIV has led to a resurgence of tuberculosis (TB), particularly in Africa, and TB is a leading cause of death for people with HIV worldwide. Between 2004 and 2014 TB deaths in people living with HIV declined by

32 percent, largely due to the scale up of joint HIV/TB services.

Women represent half (51 percent) of all adults living with HIV worldwide. HIV is the leading cause of death among women of reproductive age. Gender inequalities, differential access to service, and sexual violence increase women’s vulnerability to HIV, and women, especially younger women, are biologically more susceptible to HIV.

Globally, there were 1.8 million children living with HIV, 110,000 AIDS-related deaths, and 150,000 new infections among children in 2015. Since 2001, new HIV infections among children have declined by more than 70 percent.

Sub-Saharan Africa, the hardest hit region, is home to nearly 70 percent of people living with HIV but only about 13 percent of the world’s population. §

Faith in action:

Learn more about World AIDS Day at <https://www.worldaidsday.org/>

Plan a Worship Service on World AIDS Day or the weekend before or after. You can

find ecumenical worship service outlines in English and Spanish at the Ecumenical Advocacy Alliance web site: <http://www.e-alliance.ch/en/s/hivaids/world-aids-day/index.html>.

Join the World AIDS Day prayer vigil on December 1: Sign up for a one-hour time slot during the 24-hour vigil at <http://maryknollogc.org/aids-day-vigil>.

Pray with the Maryknoll AIDS Task Force prayer at <http://bit.ly/MaryknollAIDSprayer>.



Maryknoll Sister Mary Annel, MD with HIV/AIDS patient in El Salvador. Photo courtesy of the Maryknoll Sisters.

Trade: Indigenous peoples say “Water is life”

Maryknoll Sister Patricia Ryan and members of the indigenous community where she works in Peru came to Washington, D.C. in September to pursue legal efforts to stop a mining company from polluting their sacred land and water. At the same time, Native American Sioux Indians from Standing Rock Reservation in North Dakota were leading demonstrations in front of the White House with a very similar goal.

“We are the people. You can’t ignore us. We will not let you build this pipeline . . . We are the people. You can’t ignore us. We will not let you build this pipeline.”

Again and again, hundreds of people, many of them Native American Indians, chanted in unison outside the White House. They had come to protest the construction of an oil pipeline on the Standing Rock Reservation in North Dakota because of the devastation a potential oil spill would cause to the soil and water.

In the crowd was Yolanda Flores, a 45-year old Aymara indigenous woman who works as a secretary in the impoverished *altiplano* (“high plains”) of Puno, Peru, where companies mining for silver, lead, copper and other minerals have devastated the soil and water that her people have revered as sacred for thousands of years.

Yolanda was impossible to miss in her traditional Aymara dress: Her long hair plaited into two dark braids gathered at the end by a black tassel, a many-layered floral skirt, a sweater to ward off chilly Peruvian mountain air not present in late summer in Washington, D.C., and a bowler hat.

How Yolanda came to be in Washington, D.C. and why she supports this cause of the Sioux indigenous peoples in North Dakota – a place she has never been – is a story crafted over more than seventy years with accompaniment, service, and advocacy by Maryknoll missionaries.

Yolanda grew up as the daughter of peasant farmers in Puno, a cold, remote highland region in southern Peru notorious for its difficult living conditions. Since her parents were children, Maryknoll missionaries have been actively involved in the Catholic Church and community life in Puno and throughout Peru.

In their desire to promote the culture of the people they served, Maryknoll missionaries established the In-

stitute of Aymara Studies in 1974. The Aymara culture teaches that a sacred and spiritual connection exists between the Aymara people and the land and water.

“Water is life and cannot be privatized,” explains Benecio Quispe Gutiérrez, an Aymara intellectual and activist, quoted by Jeffery Weber in his book *Red October*. “They cannot privatize water, llamas, sheep, cows, and trees. We need them all.”

The Aymara peoples include their traditional reverence for Mother Earth in their Catholic faith life. They make offerings to Mother Earth in gratitude for a good harvest and good health.

“For [indigenous communities],” Pope Francis writes in *Laudato Si’*, “land is not a commodity but rather a gift from God and from their ancestors who rest there, a sacred space with which they need to interact if they are to maintain their identity and values. When they remain on their land, they themselves care for it best.”

Unfortunately, rapid and uneven economic development, coupled with longstanding racial and social inequalities, has often made the Aymara peoples vulnerable to exploitation by the government and by national and international private corporations, particularly in the mining industry, which is the country’s largest export industry.

Where Yolanda lives, the land is rich with silver, lead, and copper. Over the years, mines have polluted the soil with heavy metals and cut off many-decades-old sacred communal wells from their farms. In 2008, Yolanda witnessed her neighbors’ frustration overflow

into violence when Canadian Bear Creek Mining Corporation received a permit to build a mine on Aymara land through what many of the people believed to be duplicitous behavior and false claims, then failed to attend a public meeting where hundreds of community



Yolanda Flores holds a “End Fracking” sign outside of the White House on September 14, 2016. Also pictured is Chloe Schwabe (left of Yolanda), of the Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns.

members hoped to have their questions answered. Some people destroyed one of the mining company's empty buildings.

But violence is not the way of the Aymara peoples. The Aymara culture teaches a social obligation to help other members of the community. An Aymara peasant might ask a neighbor for help building a house, digging an irrigation ditch, or harvesting a field. In return, he or she is expected to donate the same number of days' labor to the neighbor. Mutual aid and care for the common good supports right relationships between the Aymara peoples and between each person and the land and water.

There was another meeting in 2011. More than a thousand people came but the meeting space could only accommodate 200. This time company representatives did attend but they offered information about the mine in technical terms that few people understood and in Spanish rather than the Aymara language. They also said they would only accept inquiries in written form. Since Aymara is a spoken rather than written language, this was seen by many as yet another tactic by the company to obstruct their right to refuse the concession.

With the accompaniment of Maryknoll Sister Patricia "Pat" Ryan, the Aymara people embarked on a massive campaign of nonviolent resistance. More than 15,000 indigenous peoples blocked roads in and around Puno for nearly six months. "There were strikes on the border with Bolivia," Sister Pat recalled. "When they weren't heard there they came in closer to Puno until eventually they closed the road all the way from the border with Bolivia to the city of Puno, which is about 150 kilometers. Everything was immobilized: The markets closed; there was no transportation; tourism was shut down. They were trying to get their voices heard about this mine being allowed into their area without their consent and without their full knowledge of what this would mean for their lives."

The government, faced with the possibility of more demonstrations and more lawsuits, took a surprising step – it revoked the mining company's permit and shut down construction of the mine.

"Being an indigenous woman from a remote area," Yolanda said, "I always thought that the world was tiny: you grow up, you get married, you have a family, and you work the fields until you die." . . . "Meeting Maryknoll Sisters and Fathers and Brothers helped me to go further. I work on issues I never thought I could, like protecting Aymara people's human rights and the care of the environment."

Yolanda works for the Association of Human

Rights and the Environment (Derechos Humanos y Medioambiente), or DHUMA. This nonprofit was formed in 2007 after the closure of the Vicariate of Solidarity of the Prelature of Juli, which was founded by the Maryknoll Fathers and Brothers, to carry on the work of defending the rights of impoverished and marginalized people and to create a climate of peace in the region. At that time, in a highly controversial decision, the newly-appointed Bishop Jose Maria Ortega Trinidad instructed all Maryknoll Fathers and Brothers to leave the diocese of Juli after 65 years of service. In a public letter signed by more than 1,000 people, the parishioners of Juli said "The Maryknoll Fathers will never be far from our hearts or out of our memories and this we want to express publicly to the world and to the whole Church."

"I feel the spirit of Maryknoll Sisters and Fathers in the daily struggles of our Aymara communities," said Cristobal Yugra, an Aymara indigenous man and lawyer at DHUMA who traveled to Washington, D.C. with Yolanda and Maryknoll Sister Patricia 'Pat' Ryan. Together they offer educational services, information and legal advice to local communities impacted by mining.

Yolanda, Cristobal, and Sister Pat came to D.C. from Peru at the invitation of an international court established within the World Bank to arbitrate grievances concerning trade deals. The court was hearing a case brought by Bear Creek Mining Corporation against the government of Peru after the government revoked the company's mining permit in Puno.

The company is suing Peru for \$522 million in future expected lost profits not just from their initial silver mine but also from a second mine they had planned to develop with the profits from the first mine.

The court accepted DHUMA's amicus brief which refutes many of the company's arguments. "We're trying to make known what really happened in the area according to the Aymara peoples' perspective," Sister Pat said.

This is the first time that the Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns is aware of this controversial international court not only accepted a brief written by community members, but also invited them to attend the hearings in order to call on them to respond immediately to requests for additional evidence. It may also be the first time that the court hearings were livestreamed.

It was on their one day off from the week-long court hearings that they joined the Dakota Access Pipeline protest. It was a remarkable moment to have indigenous Aymara peoples from Peru join indigenous American Indians as water defenders and protectors of Mother Earth. §

Fair trade: The Human Thread Campaign

The Human Thread, a Catholic advocacy group for garment workers, launched a national postcard campaign that asks Macy's and Kohl's to add a fair trade clothing item to their department store racks and shelves.

"When we visit a grocery store, we can purchase organic and fair trade items," the postcard produced by the Human Thread reads. "When we visit the auto dealer, we can buy a hybrid. When we visit Macy's / Kohl's, we want the option to buy clothing that is fair trade and sustainable."

The timing of the campaign – beginning shortly after Labor Day (September 5) and running through Black Friday, November 25 – is meant to connect the struggle for workers' rights in this country with today's consumer culture which often supports goods produced by people working in sweatshops in distant countries. In an article with the National Catholic Reporter, Capuchin Father Mike Crosby, founder of The Human Thread, said that means these workers earn wages unable to support their basic needs.

"If you really look at it, Father Mike said, "there's probably not a piece of [clothing] that you are wearing at this moment, or anyone, that is not coming from a

sweatshop. We live and breathe that reality of exploited labor," he said.

The Human Thread website details the impact of the fashion industry not only labor practices, but also on human trafficking and the environment. The fashion industry is among the top industries accountable for human trafficking and is responsible for 20 percent of water pollution worldwide. §

Faith in action: To request that we mail postcards to you that you can sign, stamp, and mail to Macy's and Kohl's, email ogc@maryknoll.org or call (202) 832-1780. There are two postcards - one to the CEO of Macy's and one to the CEO of Kohl's. Let us know the number of postcards you want, and your name and mailing address.

Learn more about the Human Thread Campaign at <http://www.humanthreadcampaign.org/>.



Dear Mr. Lundgren,

When we visit a grocery store, we can purchase organic and fair trade items. When we visit an auto dealer, we can buy a hybrid. When we visit Macy's, we want the option to buy clothing that is fair trade and sustainable.

As a loyal Macy's customer, I encourage you to build on Macy's corporate social responsibility commitment and sustainable practices to develop an apparel brand that pays a just wage to those who make our clothes.

We want better choices in our clothing. If Macy's will lead, we will buy.

www.humanthreadcampaign.org

Signature

City, State

El Salvador: A rare win against mining company

The government of El Salvador recently won a long-running legal battle when an international trade tribunal ruled that it did not have to pay compensation to a mining company that was denied a permit to drill for gold. El Salvador declared a moratorium on mining concessions in 2009, in an attempt to protect its water supply from being pollution, despite having previously signed international trade agreements.

One of the most controversial aspects of trade agreements signed over the last 22 years has been the right granted to individual companies, acting as foreign investors, to sue countries for alleged discriminatory practices in court-like international tribunals. Known as investor-state dispute settlements (ISDS), these cases challenge national laws and regulations that protect public health, the environment, and human rights.

In one such case, the Canadian mining company Pacific Rim, under the Central America Free Trade Agreement, filed a grievance against the country of El Salvador in 2009 for \$314 million in compensation for the loss of expected profits from a proposed gold mine. El Salvador had stopped issuing new mining permits just months earlier, after mining operations polluted the water supply in San Sebastián. The case was heard at the tribunal housed at the World Bank in Washington,

D.C. before a three-judge panel of corporate lawyers. Sometimes these same judges represent corporations or governments in other ISDS cases.

Surprisingly, on October 14, the tribunal ruled in favor of El Salvador, stating that the company had never acquired the rights to all the land it wanted in its concession, which the government rejected in 2005.

Civil society groups have been arguing for decades that private companies are using the dispute settlements to avoid regulations and to bully governments. Manuel Pérez-Rocha, an associate fellow of the Institute for Policy Studies in Washington D.C., said: "The fact that it took more than seven years to release the ruling, and that a country like El Salvador, with so many economic difficulties, has had to pay millions for its defense, is immoral. ... It shows the complete discretion with which these tribunals operate."

Haiti: U.S. deportation policy in flux

The United States is set to resume deportations to Haiti despite authorities reporting that it may take decades for Haiti to recover from Hurricane Matthew.

On October 4, Hurricane Matthew hit Haiti. According to the United Nations, more than 1,000 people were killed, tens of thousands homes were destroyed and the overall level of destruction is "catastrophic."

One way to support recovery efforts in Haiti is offered by Renate Schneider, a Maryknoll Affiliate from Chicago who coordinates Haitian Connection (<http://www.haitianconnection.org/>). Renate lives part of the year in Haiti and part of the year in Chicago. Haitian Connection focuses on three main projects: housing for women, a mental health services in Jeremie, and building of the University of the Nouvelle Grand'Anse.

In an e-mail update from Haiti on October 8, Renate said, "Close to 90 percent of the smaller houses with tin roofs [in Jérémie] have been completely destroyed." The University of the Nouvelle Grand'Anse was inundated due to flooding from a near-by river. She writes that classes will need to be put on hold. "Nobody escaped the devastation," Renate wrote. "Most people have lost everything, clothes, photographs, and what is more important: birth certificates and other important documents. In other words, almost everybody starts at zero."

In a strange twist of events, just days before Hurricane Matthew hit Haiti, the U.S. government announced that it planned to resume deporting undocumented Haitians. This would end a six-year moratorium put in place after the devastating earthquake on January 12, 2010.

One week after the hurricane, The Associated Press reported that the U.S. has "put a hold" on plans to restart deportations. But Homeland Security Secretary Jeh Johnson said the U.S. will restart deportations as soon as the recovery from Hurricane Matthew is "addressed."

Haitian authorities and international agriculture officials say it could be decades before the country recovers. The uncertainty in U.S. immigration policy has caused a panic among Haitians hoping to migrate to the U.S. There are news reports of hundreds of Haitians converging on the U.S.-Mexico border at Tijuana, in the hope of presenting themselves at the San Ysidro Port of Entry before border patrol officers are instructed to send undocumented Haitians to detention centers.

Faith in action: Ask Homeland Security Secretary Jeh Johnson to reinstate Temporary Humanitarian Parole for Haitians.

<http://maryknollogc.org/alerts/ask-us-welcome-haitians>

Colombia: What we have won by losing

On October 2, voters in Colombia rejected by a very slim margin a peace deal that would have ended a 50-year civil war. Colombian Fr. Francisco de Roux, SJ, one of the participants in the Nonviolence and Just Peace conference held in Rome last April, wrote the following reflection immediately after the result of the vote were announced. This reflection was originally published by the Catholic Nonviolence Initiative, <https://nonviolencejustpeace.net/>.

We had issued an invitation to a vote of conscience, with full respect to those who think differently, to participate in the referendum, making it clear that we would accept and build from the result, whatever it was.

In good conscience, we explained the reasons that led us to fight for a Yes vote, convinced that it was best for the country and that our reasons would convince the majority, and we lost.

We did not fight for the political future of President Santos, nor against the political future of former President Uribe, nor were we fighting for the political future of the FARC [the guerrilla movement engaged in war with the government]. We cared only to be able to live as human beings. This was the reason for our struggle.

We struggled to overcome the spiritual crisis in the country that plunged us into our own destruction as human beings. We dreamt of taking a first step by approving the negotiations with the FARC, but we did not achieve this aim. Probably because we ourselves are part of the crisis, as the Colombians we are.

Thank God, Colombia is a democracy. And democracy, with its call for the people to make decisions, has the virtue of making us all face reality, whether we like it or not. As Machado's couplet says: "The truth is what it is, and remains true though we may think the opposite."

And yet this truth, the result of the referendum, may be the way that leads us to overcome the deepest of our problems – namely, ourselves – people who, as evidenced by this vote, exclude one another, are unable to grapple together on deep issues; and with the knowledge that our animosities and aggression – expressed in politics, in the media, in academic and faith-based debates, and within families – have lethal consequences among rural communities, and in the madness of war, where our young lose their lives, while other serious problems of the country remain unresolved.

Fortunately the statement of President Santos has given solace to all, because he has recognized the victory of "No" as a democratic outcome, maintained the bilateral ceasefire, called for a rethinking of the peace agreements incorporating those who won, and ordered government negotiators to resume dialogue with the FARC within the new political reality.

It is also important to emphasize the constructive and conciliatory attitude of former President Uribe,

who reiterated his will for peace, invited the FARC to continue in negotiations, and spelled out the legal, institutional, social and economic conditions that those who voted No consider essential for incorporating in the agreements.

We have to accept with realism and humility that we must reexamine ourselves. Perhaps we had not accepted the uncomfortable notion that we are part of the problem, and precisely because we are part of the problem, part of the crisis, our responsibility to be part of the solution becomes more salient.

This is the time to listen to one another, to understand and reconcile with those who, for social, political, institutional and ethical reasons, think differently; to accept our differences; to examine from all viewpoints, what is it that each person must change, so that all of us may live in dignity and in a peace that brings us well-being to every woman, man and child.

We will maintain and intensify the enthusiasm with which we give ourselves to the cause of peace, but we will do so by incorporating others, accepting their different understandings, listening to their arguments, fears and angers, and embodying the human being that we all are.

We believe that the central elements of the agreements of Havana and the method of the peace process remain valid. Six years of work were invested by people of extraordinary courage and the most serious dedication, men and women, civilian and military who are true human treasures of Colombia, and at their side, insurgents willing to put a stop to the war who were transformed in that very process. They deserved the admiration and support of the international community. But the result of the vote shows that the agreements have to be reformed to be politically and institutionally viable in Colombia today. And what matters in the end is peace, which requires moments of heroic generosity, so that we can overcome the barbarity of political violence in an effective way in a reconciled country.

I am confident that God is accompanying us on this path. Jesus' claim that "the truth will set us free" is more valid today than ever. May the truth of the result of the referendum, with all its mix of human and political realism, purify and refine this process. May we today set out to become humanly greater. §

Taiwan: Justice for migrant workers

In October Taiwan's legislature passed an amendment to the Employment Service Act, which eases a significant burden on the country's migrant workers.

The Ministry of Labor in Taiwan estimates that some 14,000 migrant workers will benefit from a new law which cancels the requirement for migrant workers to exit Taiwan after working for three years. Previously, migrant workers were required to exit the island every three years for at least one day before being rehired for another three years.

In the lead up to the vote, thousands of foreign workers took to the streets of Taipei to demand changes in the law that allowed unscrupulous employment brokers to collect brokerage fees from legal foreign workers when they had to leave and re-enter the country every three years.

"The scrapping of the requirement will be the first step toward cutting the exploitation of migrant workers and toward Taiwan becoming a country that adheres to human rights", said Chen Jung-jou, secretary general of Taiwan International Workers' Association, which organized the protests.

Maryknoll Father Joyalito "Joy" Tajonera, who ministers to the migrant community in Taiwan said the new Taiwan Labor law will save foreign migrant workers from paying exorbitant brokers fees, which range from \$3,000 to \$7,000.

"The Ministry of Labor also said that in order to protect the workers' rights, employers will be fined up to U.S.\$10,000 if they refuse to pay migrant workers their wages while they take annual leave in their home countries," Father Joy explained.

Migrant labor is one of the largest international industries and especially important to developing countries where unemployment is high and income from remittances sent home by foreign workers can boost the national economy. A report from the International Organization for Migration estimates that the Philippines sent 1.8 million migrant workers overseas in 2013 to 190 countries, including Taiwan. The remittances that those workers sent home to their families in the Philippines totaled \$27 billion in 2014, nearly 9% of that country's Gross National Product.

For migrant workers, however, the opportunity to find employment in a foreign country comes at a high cost: Not only do they endure separation from their family for years on end but they also must pay employment

brokers, in both the sending and the receiving country, thousands of dollars in fees for finding a job.

In June, Gerry Lee, the director of Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns, visited Father Joy at the Ugnayan Migrant and Immigrant Center, a project of the Maryknoll Fathers and Brothers in Taipei that serves mainly Filipino migrant workers who endure hardships in order to support their families back home. Most Filipinos working in Taiwan work as factory workers, domestic workers, construction workers, and fishermen. Father Joy explained that Ugnayan means "connecting" in the Filipino language of Tagalog and that the center is set up like a Catholic Worker house of hospitality, whose doors are always open to those in need of connection. The center has a chapel, a library and classrooms, a kitchen and dining hall, and rooms for workers to sleep, rest, or hold social events.

"The migrant workers I spoke to at the center prefer to go back home," Lee said. "but they can only find work overseas." One 35-year-old mother of two teenage boys described had come to Taiwan as a migrant worker for a second time. "She first came to work as an elder care aide in order to pay the medical bills of her ailing parents in Manila," Lee recalled. After her parents passed away, she needed to find work to pay for her son's education but with few jobs available in the Philippines, she was forced to return to Taiwan. "She told me that, after 11 years in Taiwan, she is still paying off the broker's fee for her jobs."

Heartbreaking stories like this bring to mind Pope Francis' condemnation of the global "economy of exclusion" that condemns people to inhumane choices that break up their families:

"Such an economy kills," Pope Francis says in *The Joy of the Gospel*. "Today everything comes under the laws of competition and the survival of the fittest, where the powerful feed upon the powerless. As a consequence, masses of people find themselves excluded and marginalized: without work, without possibilities, without any means of escape."

With Pope Francis, we are called to build a more just economy that supports families rather than separating them, and that affirms life and the dignity of workers. §



Philippines: Respect the dignity of life

Voices of the church continue to denounce the massive wave of extrajudicial killings in the Philippines incited by President Rodrigo Duterte.

On September 21, the UN's International Day of Peace, hundreds of students of Miriam College, an institution founded by the Maryknoll Sisters, took to the streets of Quezon City, where they lit candles to remember the lives lost in the government's war on drugs.

Jasmin Galace, director of Miriam College's Center for Peace Education, and the head of Pax Christi Philippines, explained that thousands of students had also sent a letter to President Duterte calling for an end to the killing.

"We will say our piece, we will speak up for peace," said Galace, who is also a member of the Catholic Initiative for Nonviolence, and attended the historic Non-violence and Just Peace conference at the Vatican last April.

On October 17, the social action network of the Philippine Catholic bishops added its voice to calls for a stop to drug-related killings in the country. In their statement, "Respect the dignity of life," the network of religious, priests, and laypeople from 86 dioceses called on President Duterte "to put a stop to extrajudicial violence." Members of the network said Duterte has a "greater obligation to be in the forefront of respecting the rule of law, which calls for respect for the judicial process in his fight against crime and illegal drugs."

"Killing of suspected drug traffickers without due process, even in the name of a just cause, is morally unacceptable," said the group. The network was set up by the Philippine Catholic bishops in 1966 "to accompany the poor and marginalized in the just and legitimate struggle for social justice and transformation."

The Catholic network called on the judiciary to initiate reforms in the justice system, saying that extrajudicial violence can be an expression of "mistrust in our corrupted justice system." They are also concerned that most of those killed are poor people living in slums.

Other Catholic voices have urged Filipinos to be a "visible force" and to take a stand against the killings.

In a commentary published by Catholic News Asia (UCAN) on October 12, Irish missionary Columban Father Shay Cullen writes:

"The Philippine government's war against illegal drugs has become a challenge to Filipino Catholics, not only to church leaders but to 'the people of God' who believe in the sacredness of life and in mercy and compassion."

President Duterte has responded to church leaders' criticisms of extrajudicial killings by attacking them.

"I'm really appalled by so many groups and individuals, including priests and bishops, complaining about the number of persons killed in the operation against the drug problem," said the president.

He singled out retired Archbishop Fernando Capalla of Davao, where the president was mayor for two decades. He accused the bishop and priests — who had voiced concern over the rising number of killings — of having mistresses. "Those priests, sons of whores, they keep preaching morality," said Duterte.

He has since told reporters that he heard the voice of God telling him to stop cursing and that he plans to obey.

Archbishop Capalla's remarks that incensed the president expressed concern for the unabated spiral of killings of poor drug users and pushers: "Wrong is wrong even if everybody is doing it and right is right even if nobody is doing it," the prelate said in a television interview. The archbishop urged Duterte "to listen to the people, to the poor people who are also suffering."

Meanwhile, on October 13 in Geneva, Pax Christi International and Franciscans International expressed their grave concern for these human rights abuses to the UN Human Rights Council. They called on the international community to push for impartial investigations and they called on the government of the Philippines to seek nonviolent solutions to the problem of drugs and crime and to build a culture of peace. §



May halaga ang bawat buhay ("Every life has value") sign hanging at a prayer vigil for the victims of President Duterte's war on drugs in the Philippines on September 26. Photo courtesy of Maryknoll Sister Marvie Misolas.

Myanmar: "Peace is the only way"

The people of Myanmar have seen hopes for peace intensified in recent months, only to have them threatened by further human rights abuses and warfare.

"Peace is the only way [for] this nation whose date with destiny has arrived. The nation is in the throes of a new birth," said Cardinal Charles Maung Bo of Yangon, as Aung San Suu Kyi's democratically elected government held the 21st Century Panglong Peace Conference in the first week of September, with nearly 1,600 participants seeking to end decades of ethnic civil wars.

Suu Kyi's father, General Aung San reached an agreement giving autonomy to the Kachin, Shan and Chin ethnic groups in 1947 in the first Panglong Peace Conference, but the deal was never fulfilled. Aung San was assassinated shortly after the conference, and the ethnic groups took up arms against the central government.

Speaking of the importance of Aung San Suu Kyi's peace initiative, the 67-year-old Cardinal Bo said that this is an historic moment, an opportunity of immense significance for the people of Myanmar — millions of whom are refugees, migrants and internally displaced people (IDP) because of the civil war.

The all-inclusive Panglong agreement signed in 1947 must "serve as the foundation to build a great peace and this conference is a first step in the long pilgrimage of hope," he said.

Since the 21st Century Panglong Conference in September, however, the military has stepped up air strikes in Kachin State and begun to attack positions of the Kachin Independence Army (KIA). The fighting between the KIA and the Myanmar military in Kachin and Shan states is considered the most severe of the country's four ongoing conflicts.

The KIA took up arms against the military in 2011 after a 17-year-long ceasefire in the Christian-majority region. Since then, more than 120,000 people have been forced into 167 IDP camps.

"Recent events have raised serious concerns that the Panglong conference might be a false dawn," Cardinal Bo said in a statement released on October 17.

"War for peace? Just war? In Kachin State? War can never be just," he said.

Meanwhile, in western Rakhine state, following an October 9 attack against border police posts, security

operations of the military have been accused of numerous extrajudicial killings of civilians, including children, and the displacement of upwards of 15,000 people, mostly Rohingya Muslims. Yanghee Lee, the U.N. Special Rapporteur, expressed concerns about the human rights situation in Myanmar in a statement on October 24.

Aung San Suu Kyi has moved to address the plight of stateless Rohingya Muslims in Rakhine state by appointing former UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan to head an advisory commission to look into the problem. This news was welcomed by activists and rights groups, but vehemently opposed by some hard-line Buddhist political parties. The commission's mandate is to seek national reconciliation, human rights and humanitarian assistance. Over 120,000 Rohingya have been confined to desperate camps in apartheid-like conditions where they are denied citizenship, freedom of movement, health care and education.

A movement for peace may be growing across Myanmar, however, with demonstrations being held in several cities and in Chin and northern Shan states.

John Zaw, of Catholic News Asia (www.uncan.com) reports that at least 30,000 people from different faiths and

ethnic groups were estimated to have taken part in a demonstration in Myanmar's northern Kachin State on October 22 where they demanded an end to military operations in the region.

Protestors, including Catholic priests and nuns, held placards that read, "stop civil war" and "may there be peace in Myanmar" on the streets in Myitkyina, the capital city of Kachin State.

The fighting between the KIA and the military in Kachin and Shan states is considered the most severe of the country's four ongoing conflicts.

Bishop Francis Daw Tang of Myitkyina said armed Kachin groups must return to the negotiating table.

"Our people need to be involved in the peace process, not only with our prayers but also taking part in demonstrations," said Bishop Daw Tang, who encouraged priests, nuns and laypeople to join the protest.

He told Catholic News Asia that "people have repeatedly called for an end to civil war."§



A boy in Sittwe, Rakhine State, Myanmar on September 7. Photo by Flickr user DYKT Mohigan and licensed under CC BY 2.0.

Syria: Bring the killing to an end

Pax Christi International issued the following statement on the occasion Action Day for Peace in Syria on October 24.

On this UN Day of Action for Peace in Syria, we join all friends of peace around the world in calling the international community:

1. To immediately halt all aerial attacks on Aleppo and to expedite medical evacuations and unimpeded humanitarian access. Simultaneously efforts must be encouraged to restore a nationwide ceasefire with strong monitoring and enforcement mechanisms.
2. To lift all sieges in accordance with the full implementation of UN Security Council resolutions 2139 and 2165, and to especially demand an immediate end to the “surrender or starve” siege strategy by the Syrian government. The UN should also strictly adhere to the humanitarian principles of neutrality, impartiality and independence.
3. To protect civilians and promote accountability in Syria. EU member states need to support current calls for the UN General Assembly to hold a special Emergency Session on Syria.
4. To support the hundreds of peaceful Syrian civil society organizations delivering services and laying the foundations for a future peaceful Syria. Such organizations form a middle ground in between the Syrian regime and extremist terrorist groups.
5. To impose additional coercive measures on Russia and the government of Syria if they continue to

commit war crimes and crimes against humanity in Aleppo and other places in Syria.

6. To undertake bolder diplomatic efforts like the recent condemnation of Russia and the announcement of a dialogue with key regional actors to prepare the ground for a political transition and post-conflict preparations.
7. To demand that Russia stop its military support of the Syrian authorities and extend the short term cease-fire.
8. To impose an arms embargo to all warring parties in the Syrian conflict.

Syria is and will continue to be a broken, war-torn place for years to come, perhaps decades, if the international community doesn't act more forcefully to stop the conflict. We call upon the international community to increase its support for a solution in Syria and bring the killing to an end. §

Faith in action: The United Nations Refugee Agency (UNHCR) UNHCR offers a petition to governments to act in solidarity and a 5-minute film based on a poem entitled ‘What They Took With Them’ by Jenifer Toksvig, inspired by first person testimony from refugees of items they took with them when they were forced to flee. <http://www.unhcr.org/refugeeday/us/>



Syrian children wave peace signs on October 2 as they stand in front of their tents at a refugee camp in Aarsal, a Sunni Muslim town in eastern Lebanon near the Syrian border. The town has become a safe haven for war-weary Syrian rebels. Photo by Flickr user William Proby and licensed in the public domain.

Israel/Palestine: Settlements obstacle to peace

The United Nations Security Council recently held a special meeting to discuss Israeli settlements in the West Bank and East Jerusalem.

On October 14, the United Nations Security Council held a special session entitled "Illegal Israeli Settlements: Obstacles to Peace and the Two-State Solution." The countries of Malaysia, Venezuela, Egypt, Angola, and Senegal requested the meeting using the Arria Formula clause which allows Security Council members to call for debates on subjects of specific interest.

Even though attendance is not mandatory and no vote is taken at this kind of meeting, all fifteen members of the Security Council were present. The impetus for this "informal" meeting as outlined in the concept note was that "[t]he viability of the two-State solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and the prospects for realizing it are being seriously jeopardized by the presence and continuing growth of illegal Israeli settlements on Palestinian land occupied by Israel since June 1967."

Each representative named the Israeli settlements as an "obstacle to peace" and called for Israel to stop expansion immediately.

Two organizations working for peace between Israel and Palestine were invited to present –notably, both with very strong ties to Israel. Lara Friedman of Americans for Peace Now began her remarks by sharing that she is "someone who proudly and unapologetically cares about Israel and defends its existence." Nevertheless, she went on to charge that settlements are not only tolerated by the government of Israel but "actively encouraged."

Friedman explained that settlers in the West Bank live under Israeli law while Palestinians are subject to military law, resulting in "a dangerous and ugly political reality...Two populations live on the same land, under different legal systems, separate and entirely unequal, with the governing authority serving one population at the expense of the other." She concluded that "these policies reflect a deliberate strategy designed to prevent the emergence of a viable, contiguous Palestinian state."

Hagai El-Ad of B'Tselem, spoke next. B'Tselem is an Israeli organization working to build support for peace with Palestine among Israeli civil society. El-Ad, an Israeli citizen, lamented that throughout his entire life his country has occupied Palestine. He openly accused Israel of "putting off" the peace process in order to buy time to expand the settlements, and "changing the facts on the ground" with the intent of affecting the outcome. He concluded by addressing his country directly: "You cannot occupy a people for fifty years and call yourself

a democracy." Next year will mark the 50th year of occupation.

International law expert Professor Francois Dubuisson also spoke of his work as representative of Palestine before the International Court of Justice when that court considered the legal implications of the Separation Wall. Dubuisson reminded his audience of the laws which Israel is breaking and of the responsibility of the member states to not only verbally condemn violations, but also actively defend those laws. Since the settlements are illegal, he reasoned, the UN member states should collectively adopt boycott, divestment and sanction (BDS) measures against products produced in West Bank settlements, Israeli companies operating in the West Bank, and foreign entities with links to those companies. He compared the system of control Israel has created to apartheid and suggested that UN sanctions against Israel could be as effective as those used against South Africa. "We should be inspired by that precedent," he said.

In response to these discouraging facts and bleak predictions, each Security Council member responded with a statement regarding their country's position – all in agreement that settlement construction must stop immediately. Ambassador Rafael Ramirez of Venezuela was particularly forceful in his words, stating that the ongoing presence of Israel in Palestine "should bring shame to the Security Council" which has allowed the United States to "maintain a permanent blockage" on this issue.

Remarks by U.S. Deputy Ambassador David Pressman echoed the others' condemnation of the settlements and described recent statements by the Obama administration as "particularly strong" in their opposition to new construction. But while words may have gotten stronger, actions have not yet followed. Ambassadors Ramirez and others in attendance named the U.S. as the obstacle to peace. If not for the U.S. blocking resolutions against Israel in the Security Council, they could have taken action long ago. Some speculate that with President Obama's time in office rapidly approaching its end, he may choose to leave a legacy mark at this table – one can only hope. §

Faith in action: Ask Congress to work to end Israel's demolition of Palestinian homes to make way for Israeli settlements. <http://maryknollogc.org/alerts/ask-congress-work-end-israels-demolition-palestinian-homes>

Resources

- 1) **Advent reflection guide, A Season to Embrace Gospel Nonviolence:** Download the 10-page guide produced by the Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns with the support of the Catholic Nonviolence Initiative. It contains reflections, questions, prayers, and actions based on each week's Gospel reading and topics raised by Catholic peacemakers at the Nonviolence and Just Peace conference held in Rome in April.
<http://bit.ly/MaryknollAdvent2016>



- 2) **Catholic Nonviolence Initiative webinars:** Watch all four webinars about the Nonviolence and Just Peace conference held in Rome in April. The fourth and final webinar will be held November 18.
<https://nonviolencejustpeace.net/webinars/>
- 3) **World AIDS Day prayer vigil:** Sign up for a one-hour time slot during the 24-hour vigil on World AIDS Day, December 1.
<http://maryknollogc.org/aids-day-vigil>
- 4) **Maryknoll AIDS Task Force Prayer:** Use and share this prayer written for World AIDS Day.
<http://bit.ly/MaryknollAIDSprayer>
- 5) **Follow the Money to Justice:** Use this new online resource for fighting land grabs and other corporate abuses produced by Inclusive Development International. This resource is for advocates working to support communities who have been affected by harmful investment projects. It will help you follow the money to identify and analyze the companies, investors and other actors behind these projects. It also explains how to collect evidence and develop tailored advocacy strategies to hold these actors accountable and defend land, housing and resource rights. www.followingthemoney.org
- 5) **Trafficking in Women and Children Information and Workshop Kit:** Download the 65-page kit produced by the Justice and Peace Committee of the International Union of Superiors General, Rome. Available in English, French, Spanish, Italian, Romanian, and Polish.
<http://www.jpicroma.org/anti-trafficking-c224>
- 6) **Key studies: Why local matters:** Read the roundup of the important research that are putting numbers to the "harms of bigness and the benefits of local ownership" compiled by the Institute for Local Self-Reliance.
<https://ilsr.org/key-studies-why-local-matters/>
- 7) **New economy of nature:** Watch videos, study maps, and read articles about the "new economy of nature" which is placing monetary values on different aspects of nature produced by the Heinrich Böll Foundation.
<https://www.boell.de/en/dossier-new-economy-nature>
- 8) **The Human Thread Campaign:** Sign, stamp, and mail postcards to the CEOs of Macy's and Kohl's asking for fair trade clothing to be sold in their stores. To request that postcards be sent to you, email us at ogc@maryknoll.org or call (202) 832-1780. There are two postcards - one to the CEO of Macy's and one to the CEO of Kohl's. Let us know the number of postcards you want, and your name and mailing address. Learn more about the Human Thread Campaign at <http://www.humanthreadcampaign.org/>
- 9) **U.S. Advisory Council on Human Trafficking Annual Report 2016:** Download the first annual report by the 11-members of the advisory council, all of whom were appointed by President Obama in December 2015 to serve on the first U.S. Advisory Council on Human Trafficking. Each member is a survivor of human trafficking, and together they represent a diverse range of backgrounds and experiences. <http://www.state.gov/j/tip/263114.htm>